



# Imagining Identity!

## Re-Imagining Carnival in Cape Town







## **Impressum**

District Six Museum and the Art Peace Project  
facilitated by the Artists Hasan and Husain Essop

Sponsored by Goethe Institut Johannesburg

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## Re-Imagining Carnival in Cape Town

### **-PHOTO- AND PERFORMANCE WORKSHOP-**

**from 14th- 16th of. September 2012**

**at District Six Homecoming Centre, Cape Town**

**Art Peace Project, University of Hamburg/Germany**

**and Goethe Insitut Johannesburg**

**facilitated by the artists Hasan und Husain Essop**

A workshop over one weekend at the District Six Museum with young people from different communities in and around Cape Town. The District Six as our cooperator implemented the project as part of the Baluleka! Youth Network Programm that follows a similar learning approach of collaboration, exploration, discovery and re-imagination.

The use of culture as resistance and for community can be traced back in Cape Town to the arrival of the colonists. The Minstrels (or Coon) Carnival has since then continued as an important site of contestation for working-class people. Its roots can be traced to spaces which slaves created to find meaning and to build community, using music and dance. Carnival troupes are part of a broader tradition of community mobilization in the Cape which was prevalent in places like District Six. The idea of carnival offers to play, to leave old-established roles, to revolt against the dominant order, and to capture new space!



»The workshop was a great success in terms of opening dialogue between cultural identity and globalization that are affecting youth culture today. My brother and I have a strong link with District six as my Father was brought up in this area and was forcefully removed before I was born. The Cape Carnival was an important celebration for Capetonians of colour because of the emancipation it represented. To focus on this part of our culture and to highlight it as an important aspect of Cape Town history, is vital for future youths as it is being threatened by ever changing cultures and globalizing forces.

The workshop allowed the participants to think about their own identity and how their surrounding affects their perceptions of this. The collaboration between the District Six Museum, ourselves (Photography) and the University of Hamburg created a three day workshop that provided the participants with all the necessary tools in order to create art and to allow them to formulate their own opinion on important issues affecting them and their surroundings.

The workshop did not only provide a platform to experiment with Photography but also to explore different creative avenues such as performance and masquerades. Participants were taken into various scenarios that are in the classroom to the outdoors and finally concluding in the computer labs. The images and dialogue that was presented at the end of the workshop proved to be extremely informative, considering the short period of time that the participants had to work with.«

Hasan Essop

»The workshop was essential in reminding the youth of today of our past history as well as key lessons in learning from it. It was also an opportunity for all of us to learn something about our city and what the people of Cape Town had to endure. It is always exciting when Art is combined with culture and history and I found it truly rewarding to see how the learners examined who they were and how they fitted in within our history. The various portraits and group work depicted the view the learners had about identity and carnival. Everything about the workshop was a success mostly the guest speakers that came in to talk about their past and how Carnival affected their lives. We all learned something from that and was key in setting the conceptual element needed to mind map ideas to create a work of art or photograph. This was also an opportunity for us to impart some of our knowledge about photography and conceptual Art onto learners from our community, and that has its own rewards.

I feel that more workshops like this needs to be implemented in order to bring a consciousness to our youngsters about the importance of history and our people. The youth today need guidance and workshops like this are ideal in teaching a skill, even though it was just three days, the knowledge gained is essential for them to carry on learning and implementing what they learnt.«

Husain Essop



**Tazneem Wentzel: History knows**

I chose not to make use of too much colour, paint, fabric. I did this because I wanted the t-junction of words to be obvious on my face. Playing with the idea of knows, nose, strategically placed deliberately because of the nose, like hair, and its in classification. Also, the idea of history, knowing, knowledge, the face, the race. Face as markers of identity, history as embodied, the body as an archive, a corporal archive.



**Tebuo Makoetiane**

**I am not Culture, I am Cultured**

Defining the structure of African & Western human existence through Identification



**Khayaletu Ndolela**

**Portrait**

The dry lands of the Karoo and the bright colours of the flowers, as the cloth that is the representative of my Klopse history. A cloth on my head represents the gold and the inspiration of the culture that we have. My eyes represents the future.



**Andie**

**"Fuck it!"**

In my picture I'm holding the middle finger proudly & wearing a rag over my mouth that says "FUCK!". This my "protest picture", inspired by punk or feminist protesters. I'm defying all conformities & "moral behavior".

**Grant Jurius**  
"Blood Sweat & Joy"

For me what came out of pain & struggle is celebration, freedom of expression, embracing colour, I did not want to express facial emotions of happiness or anger but rather the look of experience, endurance



**Lusapho Hlatshaneni**  
Self Portrait – I am woman

Inspired by all the African woman who were enslaved and some which still are. We are beautiful, colourful and are one person. We don't have to be loud to be heard or seen, endure a lot of hardships and many try to silence us but we remain strong.



**Thomas Mitchell**  
Colour of life



**Aloisesses Marshall: Confluence**

forgive them not  
for they knows of / they misdeeds  
feed them not with / bread and butter  
but with the understanding  
of their anger and hatred  
for one another  
it is evident they  
lack the loving touch  
of a mother





**Asanda Ngaba**

My picture represents me as a whole. The red teardrops stands for how I feel inside and what I've been through. Also the pain I've have endured. The black line stands for how I am on the outside and what people perceive me as. Black means brave, tough, confident. Red means pain, love, fear.



**Lee: »Betty«**

The idea was to stick to the slavery and carnival theme. Therefore the picture has bright colours, representing happiness and celebration (which is part of carnival), whereas the facial expression goes with slavery part, slaves were always sad and worried. And for the slave I used a maid called Betty.



**Chadwyn Matthews**

**Portrait (Identity unknown)**

I wanted people to see that I'm focused and serious yet soft. The black eyes show a sense of seriousness. The blue scarf shows that I am focused and free. The facial expression is soft.



**Ramazani Lenda**

Put my thoughts in a dark room at the back of my mind, thinking about what my alter-ego is capable of. I have a scar on the other side of my eye which shows two characteristics. The scar represents misery, a dark twisted world of today.

**Keasha Wentzel**

**Be a Change**

Be a change, be a difference,  
be the reality.  
Make the difference, try and  
see what the eye sees instead  
of the I which sees you.



**Chanell Oliphant**

**"Free Carnival"**

The portrait of myself sees me being shackled by the bright satin cloth which is knotted to indicate that it is shackles. In one hand I have scissors kinda indicating that I am cutting it. On the cloth there are words written in each division knot. The words are labels such as Coloured, Black, Slave. Each knot indicates division and compartmentalizing. Ending with coloured where I start the cutting. The cutting symbolizes breaking from compartmentalizing and division which wants to hold me captive and indicate the freedom of the cloth and the self through carnival.



**Scott Williams**

This piece is introspective.  
Sometimes I feel gagged. The  
mouth is drawn very cartoonish  
and the actions are animated.  
So maybe my gag is self-imposed,  
exaggerated, imagined.





**Tharaah**  
"Innocence & happiness"



**Sameerah Mollagee**



**Nthabiseng Lerotholi**  
**We are One**

The concept of the portrait is "We are One" because we might have different skin or may not come from the same background but we have the same colour of blood and that is RED. The black and white face symbolizes the colour of the skin, while the red fabric is for the blood.



# Carnavillian

## **Andie, Tazneem**

His picture has 2 central characters, "SLAVERY" & "CELEBRATION". In this scene they can be seen moving from pillar to pillar, but never really making contact or colliding. It's a statement saying, slavery & celebration can't live in existence.

We chose to make use of elements/fragments of carnival to refabricate / reframe a scene of villains of history and heroes of time. Also, we made use of the memorial as a podium of remembering / forgetting / engaging with a past of winners and losers / what gets "written" in and left out. This links to the speech bubbles in which we framed text & words "celebration" and "slavery", a way of visually engaging with one of history. The power dynamics to write yourself / archive history in concrete and stone. Also playing with or the emphasis on the textual archive opposed to the spoken, the oral as historical. Relating back to carnival, we chose to develop characters, masks, to engage with space.



SLAVERY

CELEBRATION

CELEBRATION

SLAVERY

SLAVERY





# It's a Cycle of Life

**Tharah, Keasha, Lee**

Developing 3 different stages in life and by using the stairs as it emphasizes the levels from slavery, moving towards the Klopse (celebration) and going into modern life. We're calling it the "Cycle of Life" because once you're an ordinary person/working person (rich or poor) you go back to being a slave in order to make a living. So you don't have to be a low life in order to be part of the Klopse.

"Life is a memory, the picture is the words being spoken"

"Some people live in a life of the past, not realizing that the future is still to come and that ow is greater than all times could be"

# Stairs of Oppression

**Lusapho Hlatshaneni, Thomas Mitchell,  
Nthabiseng Lerotholi**

Celebrating the spaces that once caused pain, "Reclaiming the city"

We chose our performance and space because we wanted to show the progression made from the time of slavery to the emancipation of slaves. By performing in front of the building that used to hold female slaves and our performance being carnival which originated in celebrating of the freedom of slaves.





WE HAVE STOLEN  
WE HAVE LIED  
WE HAVE KILLED

NOW HERE I AM  
WAITING 4 MY 2MORO  
ENJOYING MY 2DAY

# Still I Rise

**Asanda Ngaba, Scott Williams, Ramazani Senda**

This piece makes reference to the Coon Carnival, slavery and the transition from past to present. The makeshift nature of the boards resemble public protest placards with statements referring to the past and the actions of slaves as well as the current positive outlook on ourselves.

The statements on the placards are stanzas from asanda mgaba (one of our contributors) poetry. We felt they related strongly to our central themes. The vibrant colors in the symbolic chains of slavery, the posters and our clothing were inspired by the jubilant protest of the coon carnival.

# Thoroughfare of Space & Time

**Tebuo Makoetlane, Chadwyn  
Matthews, Grant Julius**

Dealing with the perception & stigma that goes with carnival also what its re-aim about & the journey the carnival has made through time.





# Cosmopolitanism?

**Khayelethu Ndolela, Chanell Oliphant, Sameerah Mollagee**

Our picture shows how Fashion can be inter-linked with the Klopse-Culture, with certain elements being fashion and other elements being klops.

The DNA linked to our ankles shows that we are all inter-linked, we all have slave blood and that we are all in fact slaves to fashion, thus it deals with “commercialisation of culture”, “fashion”, “metaphorical connection through history”.

The picture deals with many aspects, art, fashion, culture, history and heritage which shows how they are all combined.

The picture we took, we wanted to show how Carnival is part of society through a fashion shoot, using 3 key elements of carnival like an umbrella, bow tie & a hat. It deals with art, fashion, culture, history and heritage through the location it was shot at, in our different poses. Yet it is open to different interpretations. The DNA that has connected at our legs indi-

cates how we all are connected through not only blood but history as well yet it could also mean the “slave to fashion”, “capitalism”, “ commercialization of history, culture and heritage”.

**Khayaletu Ndolela**

## Klopses

I am the young Klopse. I smile with my soil of District Six. The brown green life of hope and the dusty happiness of joy of freedom.

I'm not a slave any more.

I dance and jump with my umbrella that gives me solutions of life.

My grandmother fought and gave me revolutionary thought.

My grandfather fought and gave me the history of the Klopse.

I'm the young Klopse.



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