DIGITAL ARCHIVAL PRESERVATION AND CULTURAL HERITAGE: A PRACTICE-LED STUDY AND PRESERVATION PROJECT OF THE WORK OF LATE SCULPTOR BONGINKOSI MICHAEL GASA

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Abstract

This paper presents a current MA study that addresses the research problem, "What issues and insights about the role of digital archives in the preservation of South African cultural history are raised via the production of an archival documentary and archival website on the life and art of the late sculptor Mr. Bonginkosi Michael Gasa?". This study hopes to show, through the presentation of research and archival material curated thus far, not only the importance of the role archival documentary film and the digital platform play in the preservation of heritage but also how this archival project promotes the idea of an African gaze, which is essential for preserving an authentic cultural voice and heritage. This study is conducted by following a practice-led slant, meaning the research primarily leads to new information about the practice. In this case, the practice will investigate the key elements that go into the production of an archival documentary and secondly the digital archiving of the project online. Mr Bonginkosi Michael Gasa was a sculptor who passed away on the 18th of April 2019 at the age of 55. The film about Mr. Gasa will be reported in a critical reflexive MA dissertation, which will also serve to elucidate the critical, theoretical, and cultural matrix from which the film emerges. The documentary film will be preserved on a website, which will also serve as an online repository, curation, and record of Mr. Gasa's sculptures. In detailing the study thus far, this paper aims to highlight the potential of digital archives to preserve marginalized voices, such as Michael Bonginkosi Gasa, whose life and work would otherwise remain largely unknown. Moreso, this paper and study hope to show that archives exist to be used for present and future generations, and in this way, to preserve our national heritage.

Keywords: Archive, documentary film, preservation, heritage, archive footage, digital preservation, cloud computing, digital curation

1 Introduction

This paper examines the importance of archives and preservation through the mediums of archival documentary film and the digital platform. This discussion details how these archives can act as vital repositories for documentary evidence. I will discuss the short archival documentary film about the late South African sculptor Michael Gasa and his work as an illustration, as well as the website I am working on to digitally archive the project (film and the dissertation). The discussion focuses on the various methods of the archive that I am using in creating both the film and the website. Theorists such as Beattie, Barons, and Nichols inform my research on these platforms. While these theorists illuminate the broader characteristics, importance, and nature of archival platforms, my study is also informed by Kamatula

and Mkuwira, who detail why it is vital to preserve South African heritage. Michael's short documentary will be digitally archived using SITE123 and YouTube.

It is important to understand what is meant by the term 'African gaze' that this study claims to promote within the creation of the documentary film. This term is understood in the context of contemporary critical discourse that challenges dominant Western perspectives. As asserted by Luckett:

> …the critique by many African intellectuals would be that historically colonial power relations permitted the knower codes ('social' and even 'born gazes') of European philosophies to be imposed as universal knowledge codes. . . (2019, p.g.201).

In the context of the above, the African gaze in this study refers to the notion of the reverse gaze, which reclaims and decolonises the gaze that denotes a Western perspective. While Luckett may be referring to the philosophical gaze as it applies to historical and intellectual agency, it equally applies to visual studies, which includes artists and filmmakers. Campt (2021) posits a notion of the African gaze that refers to artists and filmmakers who dismantle the colonial gaze. She claims this

> idea of a gaze opens up a different set of possibilities for understanding other potentialities of a Black gaze. It unleashes some of the multiple meanings of the gaze that are impossible to imagine when it is understood as always already tethered to a prior … structure of dominance (p.g.22)

As Campt implies, the term 'African gaze' is a nuanced and complex term. It is vital to note that even though the term has been utilized in the recent decade in academia, the term still does not have a definite or widely acknowledged definition. Broadly, it refers to a method of perceiving, understanding, and reflecting on the world, culture, and experiences through the eyes of an African. But Campt implies the African gaze does more than just represent something from a Black perspective. She claims that more recently the term has come to include an approach that challenges the idea that Black life needs to be shown through a distance lens of pity and something that is seen as disparate to whiteness (p.g.7). This study and approach to the documentary film is influenced by this interpretation of the African gaze in that it aims first and foremost to highlight the value of the life and work of an artist, and not through the lens of pity or the notion of the other. Moreover, and in keeping with Campt's notion of the African gaze, the filmmaker hopes that his own embedded cultural knowledge and context, one that he shares with the artist will add authenticity and some complexity to how the artist's works and life is presented, understood, and interpreted.

In Garritano's book review of *African Cinema: Decolonizing the Gaze,* the reviewer makes a point regarding the gaze and African films, "Barlet suggests that African cinema offers another way of looking, one that revealed the African's belonging to humanity" (2003, pg. 215) Echoing Campt's views, Garritano implies that a gaze has to do with the perception that Africans belong to humanity in general rather than being part of a distant other.

The application of gaze in this study is not in the context of the subject being perceived as the 'the other', but rather from the context of a filmmaker with a shared cultural and ethnic knowledge to that of the subject of the documentary film and its main participants. In terms of the creation of the documentary on Micheal Gasa, the filmmaker takes heed of Simon Njami's comment as observed by Bester during the Africa Remix exhibition "that continental and diaspora artists had a responsibility to create the African gaze." (2008, p.g.83)

The concept of the African gaze comprises a range of perspectives, artistic manifestations, and worldviews founded on the history, cultures, and settings of the African continent. However, it commonly draws on wisdom and pools of knowledge, identity, experience, and understanding shared by ethnic groups and individuals from the African continent. The concept is further illuminated by Anasiudu who describes a volume of poetry by Odia Ofiemun (Nigerian poet and polemicist) as offering:

> … a unique form of African gaze to the discourse on Africa, African identity, and modern Africa. The poems in the two collections incarnate a vanishing tradition of oral poetry in Africa similar to Okotp'Bitek Songs of Lawino. The poems are crafted in the dithyrambic-elegiac mode, and they also draw extensively from the African ethnophilosophical worldview and contemporary history of South Africa. (2022, p.g.107)

Even though Anasiudu makes a reference to the African oral tradition, in relation to an African gaze, implicit in his commentary is the potential of this notion to offer a uniquely African worldview and cultural and philosophical outlook which has equal potency in visual narrative and the genre of film.

An example of a uniquely African philosophy is that of "Ubuntu" – which some African commentators perceive as the driving force when creating art. Ubuntu, according to Msila, 'represents an ancient African philosophy, a lifestyle akin to a spiritual belief in pre-colonial African communities. It emphasizes the principle of communal living. This ethos reflects the practice of sharing, selfless sacrifice for others, and the protection and care of fellow humans. Ubuntu is founded on the idea that the well-being of both me and others is interconnected and dependent on our collective environment.' (2015) It ties to the notion brought forward by Barlet about 'Africans belonging to humanity', meaning we Africans create from a place that is for humanity, and such philosophies as Ubuntu attest to that. This spirit of Ubuntu is what helped in the creation of this film about Michael. The people involved in the production of the film were committed selflessly to its success, and everyone sacrificed their time to make sure the story of Michael was shared with dignity.

2. Archive as documentary evidence

An important underlying characteristic of archival documentary films is that they rely on evidence-based realism. In documentary film, Keith Beattie contrasts realistic fiction and documentary realism. He argues documentary realism relies on an "inferential relationship" which is a relationship based on evidence. Archives are defined as historical evidence, documentary heritage, and collective memory of the individuals, organizations, or governments that created them. As such, these one-of-a-kind records have the potential to promote a national heritage that can be passed down from one generation to the next. Furthermore, Baron implies that:

> archives, moreover, hold the promise of retaining a trace of "the real," and while both material and digital audio-visual archives offer us traces of "the real," our encounters with material and digital traces each produce a unique experience of the difference between the archival document and our lived experience of the world these traces claim to represent. (2012, p.g.474)

Moreso, Beattie's view correlates with Barons in his breakdown of documentary film's original definition which was first coined by Grierson:

the documentarian draws on past and present actuality – the world of social and historical experience – to construct an account of lives and events. Embedded within the account of physical reality is a claim or assertion at the centre of all non-fictional representation, namely, that a documentary depiction of the socio-historical world is factual and truthful. (2004, p.g.10)

My approach towards the creation of the archival documentary film about Michael Gasa draws strongly on Baron's and Beattie's definition of documentary realism and the evidence-based nature of making these types of films. For example, reviewing various records as archives can prove to be insightful for learning about one's history and culture, as these records hold evidence of history and culture. Beattie reiterates that:

> Truth claims reflect a tacit contractual agreement or bond of trust between documentary producers (whether an individual filmmaker or broadcasting institution) and an audience that the representation is based on the actual socio-historical world, not a fictional world imaginatively conceived. (2004, p.g.11).

Baron adds when she speaks of the experience of archives in documentary films for viewers:

> This foundness of the archival document exists in contradistinction to documents that we perceive as produced by the filmmaker specifically for a given film. Indeed, this sense of "foundness" is integral to the experience of the archival document. It is part of what lends the archival document its aura of "authenticity" and enhances its seeming evidentiary value. (2012, p.g.103)

My documentation relies on found documents – such as photos, archival footage, and newspaper articles. About Baron's point regarding the "foundness" of the archival document, I am using

subtitles to provide more information about the archive document being displayed by a scene, and I plan to use captions on the archive images of the artist's works, such as the title of the image, medium and year. I believe the captions as they appear, emphasize the archive as having "evidentiary value".

Figure 1: Image of The Witness newspaper article about the One Man Craving at the Tatham (22 March 2005)

Accessing these archive documents to create this short documentary film, aids in the furtherance of not only national but also cultural heritage. For example, the film is going to be using an archive newspaper article as seen in (*Figure* 1) that I have digitized, the article is about the One-Man Carving exhibition Michael hosted at Tatham (opening from 23 March to 17 April 2005). The archival document on the exhibition also includes photos of the exhibition and the exhibition opening. These documents were originally only in the possession of one individual, whom I managed to seek out and gain permission for inclusion in my project. The documentary film will also act as a form of a catalogue, I have managed to access most of Michael's artworks, through private collectors, friends, and the Tatham Art Gallery. These works have been photographed and filmed to be captured to form part of the B-roll footage of the documentary film. My presentation will include visual examples of this documentary evidence, including archival footage of Michael's

funeral, exhibition reviews, and photos of Michael and his work, as well as photos of his homestead. The film is going to feature footage I have shot, including the interviews with Boetie (a brother of Michael) and Peter (a friend of Michael), and the footage/stills of the places (Drummond and Valley of a 1000 Hills) where Michael used to sell his sculptures.

The importance of creating content that is of African (South African for this case) gaze is stressed by Diaro,

> In the era of globalization, films have become a tool of cultural transmission. Supported by online streaming platforms such as YouTube, audio-visual content is becoming readily available to individuals across the world. While globalization brings diverse people from all races together, there is the danger of emphasizing Western cultural values as dominant and preferred. (2021, p.g.18).

In this sense, I believe it is important to document Michael's work in this way, from an insider perspective and by drawing on the memories and information of those who knew Michael and were part of his cultural heritage, and those who may not have been within his culture but who were close to him and his work.

An important part of my documentary process has been bringing together and curating Michael's large body of work. In this regard, in May 2023, I curated an exhibition that had over 50 sculptures/artworks that were created by Michael from the early 2000s till his untimely death in 2019. I was able to capture the footage of the exhibition, and I was also able to photograph and create a catalogue of the sculptures/artworks, see (*Figure 2*). The footage and photographs I shot at the exhibition will be integrated into the film and the website. The exhibition was reviewed and reported on in the University of KwaZulu-Natal's

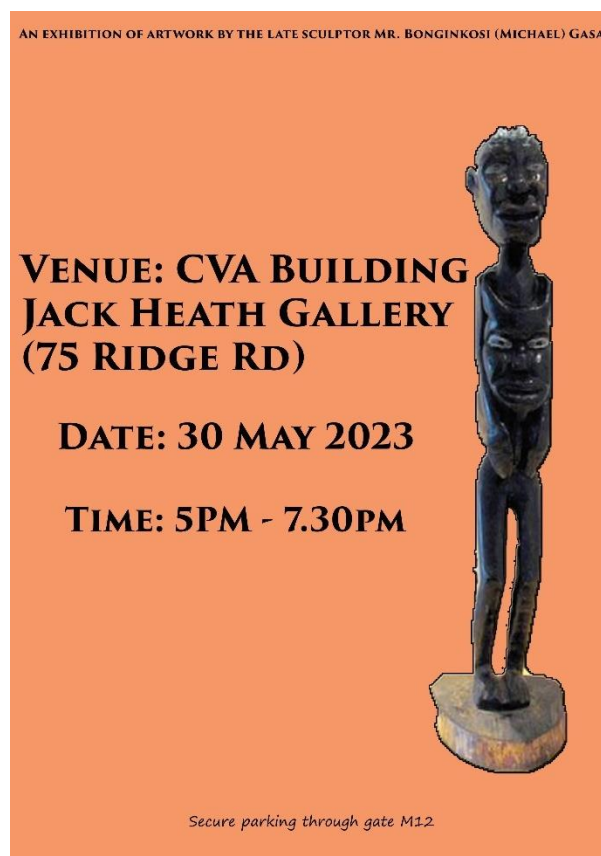online newspaper, the Ndaba. This will go toward the archive.

Figure 2: The poster of the exhibition at Jack Heath Gallery (2023)

The exhibition was held at Jack Heath Gallery on the 30th of May 2023 (see *Figure 2*). This was an evening event and due to the time, we were only allowed to put up the exhibition for one day. This was a restriction placed by the gallery, at the last minute. The point of the exhibition was to archive the work in a clean gallery space and to document it professionally. The plan is to exhibit the work again in 2024. We are working on motivations for the work to be exhibited at a local gallery in KwaZulu-Natal, where the work can be seen and engaged with more extensively by the public. The footage of the exhibition that is used in the film is from that day at Jack Heath Gallery. The exhibition is also another way to preserve heritage, even though it does not warrant a long period. My paper presentation will include visual

documentation of the exhibition and the photographic catalogue.

3. Importance of preserving South African heritage.

To comprehend the importance of preserving our heritage, one must first understand what is meant by preservation. It can be described as the 'protection of cultural property through activities that minimize deterioration and prevent loss of informational content. The primary goal of preservation is to prolong the existence of cultural property.' (NEDCC, 2015) The concept of heritage has evolved significantly over time. Initially referring only to cultural monuments, the concept of heritage has gradually expanded to include living culture and contemporary expressions. A nation's heritage represents its collective identity - national, regional, and local. Furthermore, it refers to humanity's historical experiences and contributions, as well as the values that have come to define a nation's distinct place in the world. Commemorating and preserving one's cultural heritage is a sure way to nurture pride, inspire a sense of civic duty, and promote social cohesion. Likewise, Kamatula et al. reiterate in their introduction:

> Heritage can refer to anything that has been carried over from the past. It includes evidence of the past, such as documents that are to be considered the inheritance of present-day society. Manaf and Ismail (2010:107) also describe heritage as "our legacy from the past". Therefore, national heritage can refer to anything of national significance that is handed down and preserved through generations, especially documents, architecture, landscapes, and other artefacts. (2013, p.g.109)

The same points are echoed on the UNESCO website about the importance of preserving our heritage, "as a source of identity, heritage is a valuable factor for empowering local communities and enabling vulnerable groups to participate fully in social and cultural life. It can also provide time-tested solutions for conflict prevention and reconciliation." (2021) Likewise, Mkuwira observes:

> Documentary heritage is important to the society. Majumdar (2005) reported that documentary heritage is important as it depicts culture through various types of tangible circulating knowledge. Kamatula and Mnkeni-Saurombe (2013) also reported that documentary heritage provides people with enjoyment and inspiration, cultural values, learning potential, economic prosperity, and social equity. (2015, p.g.57).

> Singh distinguishes between the two types of cultural heritages we find and their importance, Cultural heritage is a term that refers to tangible cultural heritage such as ruins, temples, and buildings and intangible cultural heritage such as traditional music, dance, performing arts and craftsmanship. Both the important forms of cultural heritage are closely linked together with each country's history, culture, and lifestyle customs. (2012, p.g.289)

Abid echoes similar views when he talks about the impact of documentary film on the idea of collective memory and preservation, 'The collective memory of the people in this world is of vital importance in preserving cultural identities, in bridging the past and the present and in shaping the future.' This study aims to also continue adding to this collective memory mentioned by Abid, this paper will also highlight the diversity in cultures because the short documentary is going to be in two languages. The two languages will be Isizulu and English. The reason for doing this is because of the location where the study will be conducted, these two

languages are the most prominent around this province.

This study is important because not only does it show the role an archival documentary plays in the preservation of heritage, but it also promotes the idea of African gaze to culture, which is something one does not see often as Diaro noted. It is important to preserve our cultural heritage because "the cultural heritage of any nation symbolizes the history and legacy of the nation's values and artefacts transmitted from one generation to another for cultural longevity." (2021, p.g.2) Likewise, Alegbeleye notes,

> In any society, heritage materials play very important roles in establishing the identity, accomplishments, and values of the people. Masakazi (2009) has therefore argued that in the present information society, every nation must ensure the preservation, promotion, and dissemination of its arts, culture, and overall heritage using the tools in the present age. This is because heritage is a source of strength and confidence that puts the changes of the society into perspective and therefore enables the society to build a better future. (2009, p.g.20)

By creating documentaries such as the one about Michael, we can attain the goal of preserving our heritage. To further understand why it is vital to preserve our heritage, Dr. Booms observes,

> If it is true that individuals exist only as human beings in so far as they belong to a group, a community, or a society, and that consequently, they are unable to separate themselves from the socio-historical conditions of their existence, it follows that they are also not able to avoid the specific posited values which are part of these conditions. This social context is all the more circumscriptive since individuals are unable to provide an absolute answer to the question of what they, in their daily lives, consider valuable or meaningful (unless, of course, they operate under ideological statements or philosophical creeds). They can only answer by referring to popular conceptions, ideas, or opinions that are deemed worthy by their social environment. Individuals share their esteem for such opinions with others in their respective life circles, which is why a person's origins, education, and social situation play such a significant role in determining to what extent an individual is influenced by the dominant values of society. (1987, p.g.74)

This is certainly the case for filmmakers, the society around us inspires us. We create meaning because of all the collective memories we share with the communities that raise us. These values are crucial in the way we tell our stories, these stories are always easier and more meaningful if they are told by a member of a certain community about their community. We are usually provided with necessary insights about the culture/society being spoken about. Booms tries to explain the role of the archivist in shaping our future:

> The person who decides which events in social life are transmitted to us through the record, and, as a result, decides which are preserved to form part of a society's memory and which are not, is thereby making decisions that are important for society. (1987, p.g.78)

By this quote, we are shown the importance of those who hold the key to our collective memory as societies. This highlights the reasons why we should preserve our history as much as we can, this is because the past plays a vital role in shaping the future. If we get a better grasp of our history, it is not so much harder to predict how our future might look like. To further understand the

significance of preserving our heritage, we must understand what the importance of history is, as Boom further iterates:

> History serves as "a medium for illuminating human existence" (Schieder), as a means of obtaining a "clearer understanding of human action" (Kosselleck), "as an element of our reconciliation with the present and as a necessary criterion for our blueprint for the future," or as "an aid for living and making decisions" in present-day society. (1987, p.g.79).

Also, the reason for us to continue to preserve our cultural heritage is highlighted by Singh, "The threat of the disappearance of this cultural heritage as a result of the progress of globalization has been pronounced around the world." (2012, np) This is because during globalization, there is an emphasis put on other cultures than others, this results in some cultures' heritage being not valued the same and not even accepted the same. It is vital that "the digital heritage of all regions, countries, and communities should be preserved and made accessible, to assure over time representation of all peoples, nations, cultures, and languages." (2012, p.g.290)

In the chapter "Constructing National Identity" in his book, Nichols describes the importance of community, this togetherness is vital to consider when we are trying to preserve a culture/tradition. Since documentaries reflect and shape the social and cultural context in which they are produced and consumed. They have the power to reinforce existing societal narratives or challenge dominant perspectives, and this has an impact on how events are collectively remembered:

> The construction of national identities involves the construction of a sense of community. "Community" invokes feelings of common interest and mutual respect, of

reciprocal relationships closer to family ties than contractual obligations. Shared values and beliefs are vital to a sense of community, whereas contractual relationships can be carried out despite differences in values and beliefs. A sense of community often seems like an "organic" quality that binds people together when they share a tradition, culture, or common goal. (2001, p.g.141)

These films can provide a complementary perspective to written historical accounts. They offer a sensory and emotional experience that can enhance understanding and engagement with historical events. "Documentary represents the historical world by shaping its photographic record of some aspect of the world from a distinct perspective or point of view." (2001, p.g.168) This is certainly the case with the Documentary film about Michael. It refers to historical times, firstly in the sense that what we are speaking about in the film has already happened, and secondly, because the person the film talks about is no longer here.

Since documentaries have the potential for long-term preservation and accessibility, this allows future generations to engage with historical narratives dynamically. It can contribute to the perpetuation of specific cultures/memories over time. Documentaries can play a crucial role in representing and preserving the cultural identity of marginalized communities or underrepresented perspectives. This can be achieved by giving marginalized communities a voice to speak and share their beliefs with the world. This is certainly the case with the short documentary film about Michael. Doing a film about his life will help preserve his story and work for future generations.

Documentaries are often used as educational tools in classrooms, museums, and other places where we study/inquire. They can introduce viewers to

historical events and encourage critical thinking about certain topics. As these films are not only for the sake of aesthetics but Nichols also corroborates when he notes this:

> Documentary work does not appeal primarily or exclusively to our aesthetic sensibility: it may entertain or please but does so in relation to a rhetorical or persuasive effort aimed at the existing social world. Documentary not only activates our aesthetic awareness (unlike a strictly informational or training film), but it also activates our social consciousness. (2001, p.g.65)

What this means for preservation is that, by preserving certain documentary films, you are furthering the spread of information through another medium that can be stored for subsequent generations. The value that comes with utilizing this medium includes the fact that as Nichols noted some documentaries 'spark our social consciousness.

4. The digital platform as an archive repository.

Figure 3: An example of a page in the catalogue (2023)

Since Michael utilized sculptures as his favourite medium of artistic expression, it is important to note that sculptures have a certain life span, that varies with the type of material that was used in their creation. This is the case with some of the sculptures that were created by Michael, when I was cleaning some of them for the exhibition, there were ones that appeared to be aging. This study will be accompanied by an archival website which will entail the material I collect for this study - including the film, a biography, a catalogue of the artists' works (that was at the exhibition I curated) see (*Figure 3)*, and my MA dissertation that will critically contextualize the study and reports on the documentary processes used in archiving this work. This will be a form of digital archiving, which means these documents will be stored in a computerized format on the website. The concept of digital preservation is explored by Deepak Yadav:

> The management and maintenance of digital objects so they can be accessed and used by future users. The main goal of

digital archives is to ensure the long-term preservation of digital data so that it remains accessible for appropriate use in the future. (2016, p.g.64)

Before we discuss the process that will be used to archive, host, and distribute all aspects of this archival documentary project, it is necessary to locate this aspect of the study within the context of the Digital Humanities. Burdick et al define the Digital Humanities as referring to "new modes of scholarship and institutional units for collaborative, transdisciplinary, and computationally engaged research, teaching, and publication." (2012, p.122) Importantly, they point out that the Digital Humanities is not limited to a 'study of digital culture', nor is it only about the traditional understanding of the humanities. Rather, the Digital Humanities calls for critical and methodological reworkings of established parameters within the humanities via critical and practical engagement with digital technology, digital media, and the digital platform. While it includes the development and application of digital methods of research within the humanities, it also considers the impact of these digital methods and processes on existing disciplines within the humanities. This in turn questions and exerts an influence on relationships between disciplines and genres (Schwand, 2021, p.7) The specific area of the Digital Humanities that this study gives credence to is the emerging genre of digital curation. This genre embraces all manner of visual and textual media and data processing and collection. In particular, it embraces digital preservation, digital curation, exhibition, and archival and management practices. (Poole, 2015, p.2) Poole illuminates the importance of digital curation as the focus to preserve and enhance the significance of a reliable collection of digital data, ensuring its usefulness for both the present and the future. (2015) This is supported by Sabharwal who notes:

Digital curation involves the preservation, promotion, and providing long-term access to born-digital and digitized collections of heritage material, data, and publications supporting research with surviving (albeit considered obsolete), current, and emerging digital technologies. (2015, p.g.1)

It is this curational area within the Digital Humanities that this project draws upon. The documentary film and subject of this paper is a digital archival document within itself. However, the film will form part of a digital archival repository that will also include a detailed visual and textual catalogue of all the artist's sculptures, and visual and textual documentation of recent and past exhibitions. Thus, the various textual and visual materials relating to the archiving and preservation of the work and life of the artist is going to be curated, documented, organised and preserved digitally on a dedicated website. It is expected that this repository will be added to and updated as further data related to this project is accumulated (this can include data related to the film being presented on future film festivals, or further on-site exhibitions of the artist's work.
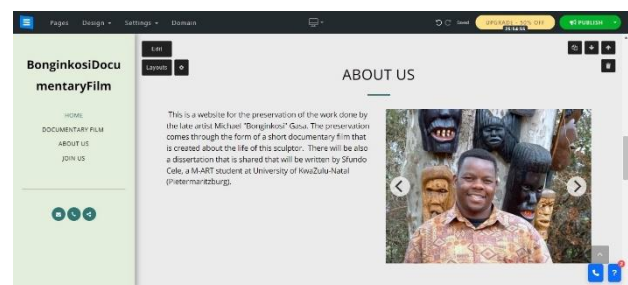

Figure 4: Example of Michael's Website built using SITE123 (2023)

The curational platform that will be used is SITE123. This was chosen as it accommodates various file and data formats, On SITE123, you can create a page for your documentary film as seen in (*Figure 4*). To embed the documentary on the created website, one needs to upload the film

to a platform like YouTube, as this platform is best suited for video hosting and streaming. Since there is an option to embed your video from YouTube to other websites, it is important to tick this option before uploading on YouTube. http://64141b09360f4.site123.me/, the domain is written like this to show that it is a free version. Creating such a digital archive is crucial as it helps preserve and protect valuable information, historical records, and cultural heritage for future generations. It allows for easy access and retrieval of data. This helps with fostering research (education) and the continuity of culture. Additionally, it ensures data longevity, minimizes physical space requirements, and allows for efficient sharing and dissemination of information globally.

4.1 Importance of cloud computing in digital curation.

Carter (2013) notes that cloud computing has altered the way we do things as human beings in this digital age. Cloud computing refers to the "number of activities and services that are hosted on distributed servers located in numerous physical locations." (2013, p.g.97) These include various activities and services, applications such as "word processors, image, and video editing programs, presentation, and other productivity applications, as well as services such as file storage, cluster computing, market-oriented computing, communication servers, and more." (2013, pg. 97-98) This is certainly the case for this study, we utilized Microsoft Word and Adobe Acrobat for word processing, Adobe InDesign, Illustrator & Premier Pro for image and video editing. We also used the services of file storage to digitally archive the project (from film to catalogue), this is done through the creation of the website using SITE123 and YouTube. The cloud platform aids with providing a shelter online for our work, the

notion being, that with a device that has internet connectivity, one can easily retrieve the data stored.

5. Conclusion

This study explored the genre of documentary archival film as a vital medium for the preservation of cultural heritage. Using the case study of Michael "Bonginkosi" Gasa, we hoped to illustrate the value of presenting and approaching South African narratives, cultures, and traditions through and within an African perspective and the associated nuances that have been attributed to the notion of the African gaze. This is also a notion that we discussed within the context of cultural preservation and heritage. It further investigated the value of preserving South African heritage and using the digital platform as an archival repository for a project that draws on digital curation and cloud computing. Locating this study within the Digital Humanities (and not just the digital arts and archival documentary film – the disciplines from whence the study emerges) has expanded the methodological framework and broader approach to archive and preservation to include digital curation. In terms of the long-term preservation of this digital repository, we acknowledge that digital assets are fragile, and can be lost, corrupted, or become redundant, despite backup and cloud storage. This is recognised as a challenge with digital archiving and digital curation in general and one that is still being addressed. (Burdick et al, p. 131). In many cases, this responsibility falls to the institution attached to the research project. In this case, while this challenge is addressed, the data will be stored in digital and hard copy format within the library archives of the University of KwaZulu as well as within digital cloud platforms. The digital repository creates a valuable and accessible archive and serves to preserve the life and art of a South African artist who is not broadly accessible or well documented.

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