RESEARCH ARTICLE

Hauntological engagements: Visual redress at Stellenbosch University

Iingxoxo ngeHauntology: Ulungiso lwembonakalo kwiYunivesithi yaseStellenbosch

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ABSTRACT

This article asks the central question of how to practically engage in the ongoing production of space at Stellenbosch University (SU) as to reimagine and redefine spaces. Spaces, which affect people indirectly and subconsciously, can act as microaggressions on one hand and places of safety connected to identity on the other. The Visual Redress (VR) project at SU focuses on removing or replacing contentious visual elements on campus and facilitating engagements to alter experiences of places and spaces. The VR project is not only interested in physically transforming the space, but also in facilitating critical dialogue and physical interventions to engage in spatial memory and emotional remembrance. In this article Hauntology is used as a methodology to remember and reflect on visual elements on the Stellenbosch campus of SU and how the memory of the past and the dead in the form of visual elements still haunts the present. These hauntological engagements include crucial interactions with students, lecturers, and the various publics of the university. In this article the researchers will provide an overview of VR at SU and show and discuss the processes of three specific VR projects that were implemented at SU to illustrate the importance of hauntological engagements with the aim of reconstructing spaces.

KEYWORDS

Hauntology, space, visual redress, Stellenbosch University, South Africa

ISISHWANKATHELO

Eli nqaku liphakamisa owona mbuzo ungundoqo wendlela yokuzibandakanya kuqulunqo lweqonga oluqhubayo kwiYunivesithi yaseStellenbosch (iSU) njengokucinga ngokutsha kunye nokuchaza ngokutsha iqonga. Amaqonga, achaphazela abantu ngokungathanga ngqo yaye bengaqondanga bona, anokusebenza njengohlaselo olungaqondakaliyo kwelinye icala kunye neendawo zokhuseleko ezihambalena nobuni kwelinye icala. Iphulo loKulungiswa kweMbonakalo (VR) eSU ligxile ekususeni okanye ekutshintsheni iimbonakalo ezinokuxabanisa ekhampasini kunye nokuququzelela iindibano zokutshintsha amava eendawo kunye nawamaqonga. Eli phulo leVR alijolisanga kuphela ekuguquleni iqonga ngqo, kodwa likwajolise ekuququzeleleni iingxoxo ezibalulekileyo kunye nokungenelela ngokuthe ngqo okubandakanya iinkumbulo ngendawo kunye neenkumbulo ngokweemvakalelo. Kweli nqaku iHauntology isetyenziswa njengendlela yokukhumbula kunye nokucamngca ngezinto

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ezibonakalayo kwikhampasi yaseStellenbosch yaseSU kunye nendlela inkumbulo yexesha elidlulileyo kunye nabalishiyayo eli limagade ahlabayo ngendlela yezinto ezibonakalayo ezisakhathazayo kule mihla. Olu nxibelelwano lwe-hauntological lubandakanya uthethathethwano olubalulekileyo nabafundi, abahlohli, kunye noluntu lweyunivesithi ngokubanzi. Kweli nqaku abaphandi baya kubonelela ngesishwankathelo seVR eSU kwaye baya kubonisa ze baxoxe ngeenkqubo zamaphulo amathathu eVR athe aphunyezwa yiSU ukubonakalisa ukubaluleka kothethathethwano lwe-hauntological ngenjongo yokwakha ngokutsha iziko..

AMAGAMA ANGUNDOQO
iHauntology, iziko, ukulungiswa kwembonakalo (VR), iYunivesithi yaseStellenbosch, uMzantsi Afrika

Hauntology and production of space as methodology

Jacques Derrida (1994) coined the term 'hauntology', a portmanteau of the words 'haunting' and 'ontology', to contemplate the idea that both the past and the 'lost future' haunt the present like a ghost. Hauntology is real, like ontology, but silent and perceived as absent. Derrida's work, *Specters of Marx* (1994), specifically references the spectres of communism, but it could be relevant in many other contexts. Derrida deliberates on what we can learn from the dead and what the past could inflict on the future. Powel (2016, p. 258) refers to Derrida's connotation of inhabitation to hauntology that refers to a body that is inhabited by a foreign guest, a "sense of obsession, a constant fear, a fixed idea, or a nagging memory" that unconsciously lies within the body. Mark Fisher in his book *Ghosts of My Life* (2014), refers to cultural hauntology and argues that we are haunted by the lost futures that never arrived – a type of continuous nostalgia. Auchter and colleagues (2019, p. 670) emphasise the ongoing process of haunting and argue that "to be is to be haunted". Carol Taylor and Nikki Fairchild (2022, p. 195) refer to Karen Barad's (2017) view on hauntings, they "are not simply rememberings of a past fixed and frozen in time but […] then-now, [and] past-present-future".

Bozalek et al. (2021) argue that hauntology is about engaging with the historical ghosts, to reject the fixities of the past and to reimagine a different future. Zembylas et al. (2019) refer to Avery Gordon's (2008) focus on violent systems of power that emerge in everyday life that seem to go unnoticed and not have an effect because they are not concrete or visible. An hauntological analysis, according to Taylor and Fairchild, (2022, p. 195) "moves beyond the calculations of current hegemonic formations to engage with the incalculable". Haunting is not only material, it is also embodied and works affectively. According to Brian Massumi (1995), affect is a matter of autonomic responses that are occurring below the threshold of consciousness and cognition and rooted in the body. Affect can be cautiously described as the way we feel things in our bodies, a visceral and unnameable sense and experience of which we may not fully be aware, but that affects us (Massumi, 1995). Zembylas et al. (2019, p. 25) ask: what can we do "to expose the materiality and affectivity of a colonial university, the ruins, traces, fragments, gaps, absences and displaced actors and agencies that register affectively?" They continue by referring to Derrida: How do we "provide openings for new political claims that do not naturalize the past or the present, but see it as 'getting ready to speak at length about ghosts, inheritance, and generations, generations of ghosts'" (Zembylas et al., 2019, p. 45).

Spaces are entrenched with haunting narratives of the past. Haunting experiences enable us to feel the "historical injustices and violences as already threaded through the places we move on/through" but also allow moving beyond where alternative stories can be told and recognised (Shefer & Bozalek, 2022, p. 33). Spaces that experienced trauma can be 'read' through hauntology in a historical sense, but also in anticipation of what is to come (Gordon, 2008). Unresolved social issues reveal themselves in the present and will continue to do so in the future through haunting experiences of spaces.

Space is a mental and material construct, and Henri Lefebvre (1991) says that spaces shape those who inhabit and move through them – they could naturalise behaviour and privileging certain modes of being over others. Spaces can act as microaggressions, and spaces affect people indirectly and subconsciously. Space, therefore, involves cognitive thinking as well as a feeling or emotional connection or disconnection to a space. We create a mental perception of space, of what is symbolically signified, with an additional emotional and embodied dimension. Kurt Abrahamson (1999) refers to this as creating a cognitive map. Lefebvre (1991) specifically emphasises the practical emotional and embodied dimension of space apart from the epistemological conceptualising of space.

Contextualising space in South Africa and at Stellenbosch University

The traces of colonialism and apartheid are still deeply embedded in countries with a past similar to that of South Africa, and this is reflected in the curriculum, landscape and inequities present at higher education institutions in these countries. The relationship between the coloniser and colonised and the "psychological, material and cultural effects of these relationships" (Ratele & Duncan, 2007, p. 110) needs to be engaged with and reflected on. As Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020, p. 896) argues:

> *What emerges poignantly is that the struggles to decolonise knowledge are never separate from other struggles against patriarchy, racism, sexism, capitalism and other repressive, exploitative and dehumanising logics. At the centre of resurgent decolonisation of the twenty-first century is the broader issue of re-humanisation of the dehumanised.*

The structures of historically entrenched power involved and continue to involve dispossession in many areas, including public spaces (Phala, 2016).

The attention on addressing lived spaces has been emphasised globally with the removal of colonial or oppressive statues and changing of names of places and streets in various countries around the globe. The USA, specifically after the murder of George Floyd, but also Australia and various European countries, have in recent years experienced many protests and the defacement and removal of statues that symbolise a history characterised by oppression and discrimination that played out in practices of slavery, racial and gender divisiveness, amongst others. In Africa, these processes have been taking place for years without media coverage or consistent documentation. These processes include the fact that numerous statues have been removed, moved, or contextualised; new artworks have been added; street names and names of buildings have been changed; and new buildings have been erected to house cultural artefacts

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and modify the way these artefacts are exhibited and used (Costandius & de Villiers, 2023).

In South Africa and at Stellenbosch University (SU), there is an urgent need for redress that includes an embracing of justice, responsibility, and equality aligned with the values of the South African Constitution (1996). The establishment of democracy in South Africa in 1994 was aimed at liberating people who had been denied basic political and socio-economic rights (Bentley & Habib, 2008). The legislation on redress identifies three very distinct categories of disadvantage that warrant attention: race, gender, and disability (Bentley & Habib, 2008). SU, in particular, has a history that is strongly tied to a colonial and apartheid past. White, privileged students and lecturers tend to experience the campus culture of historically white universities, such as SU, as natural and welcoming (Badat, 2016). Black and/or disadvantaged students and lecturers tend to find this culture "discomforting, alienating, disempowering, and exclusionary" (Badat, 2016, p. 85). Achille Mbembe (2021) argues for rejecting politics of otherness that defines centre–periphery relations and calls for re-centring Africa on the continent. The spaces at higher-education institutions (mind, body, classroom, curriculum) should also be decolonised (Mbembe, 2016). Approaches to these spaces can be to erase, replace, or re-interpret them. Given its history, this rings true for SU. Although SU has moved a long way from its apartheid based realities, it continues to be criticised for its apparently slow pace of change and transformation also in relation to the VR project (Van Rooi, 2021, pp. 52–53).

The draft revised South African 'White paper on arts, culture, and heritage' (DAC, 2017) aims to promote a vibrant arts, culture, and heritage environment that is based on the principles of freedom of expression, equality, openness, balance, and sustainability. This white paper highlights the recognition of the equal dignity of and respect for all cultures, including the cultures of persons belonging to minorities and of indigenous peoples (DAC, 2017).

Policies for higher education institutions in South Africa show great progress towards transformation, but transformation requires moving beyond policy to practical projects that require deeper cognitive and embodied engagements (SU, 2021, p. 2). It is normal practice to write a policy before starting a project, but in the case of the SU Visual Redress (VR) project, the practice and engagements took place before the policy was written and approved. This is demonstrative of a deeply formative process that only later culminated in the establishment of a policy and a structure. The SU VR policy was approved by the SU Council 2021 (effective 2022) to "guide visual redress and the processes linked to the (re)naming of buildings, venues and other facilities and premises of SU" (SU, 2021, p. 1).

Participant contribution

This article discusses the importance of engagement processes of three VR projects implemented on SU's campus from 2019 to 2022. This includes responses from one campus-wide (Stellenbosch campus of SU) online survey (2020) and two rounds of in-person interviews (both in 2022) conducted to collect data regarding responses

to the VR project and general feelings on campus. The respondents' identities were anonymised according to their self-identified racial category (B=Black; W=White; C=Coloured; I=Indian) and self-identified gender (F=female; M=male). The number included is only utilised to help differentiate the respondents. The researchers have included these metrics because race and gender are two aspects of our society that need to be redressed (Bentley & Habib, 2008) and, especially for South Africa, these are aspects that affect the ongoing production of space also in relation to VR at SU.

Overview of redressing space at Stellenbosch University

The VR project started in 2013 in the Visual Arts Department with the aspiration of moving projects outside the studio space and into the main square of the university to engage other students on campus in transformation and social justice related projects. The concept 'visual redress' spontaneously developed from a student group project on National Women's Day (a South African holiday celebrated yearly on 9 August that commemorates the historically significant Women's March of 1956) that addressed the absence of statues/artworks of women on campus (Figure 1). The words 'visual redress' were used for the first time in the course of this project and it then became a concept that was used in various projects that aimed to make the campus a better and more welcoming space for all students.

Figure 1: Eva: Sprout, grow blossom. Addressing the absence of women in the visual spaces on campus. National Women's Day, 9 August 2013.

In South African higher education institutions, the student protests from October 2015 to late 2016, now commonly known as the Fees Must Fall protests, called for the decolonisation of higher education spaces and equal access to these spaces. Student activism is described by Sonwabo Stuurman (2018, p. 1) as a "form of action or practice that seeks to make changes to how the university systems function, or which challenges a particular paradigm, be it politically, socially, economically or otherwise". He also argues that student activism is informed by the prevalent conditions of economic and political crisis, which directly affect student's financial situation. This, therefore, also affects the status of students and their personal identities, and that could lead to the infusion of financial and identity issues in student protests (Stuurman, 2018). Engaging and understanding historical pain, forgiveness and healing can help in addressing identity issues related to social injustice.

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During the abovementioned student protests, this article's first author worked with one of her master's students, to identify sensitive spaces such as statues, names of buildings, and plaques that were offensive or hurtful, one such issue was the Jan Marais statue. At the centre of the Stellenbosch campus of SU, on what is called the Rooiplein (Red Square), is the statue of Johannes Henoch (Jan) Marais. In 1915, Jan Marais made a distinctive financial contribution towards the establishment of SU with the money that he had accumulated in the mining industry. During the 2015 and 2016 protests, the students called for an inquisition into historical statues and symbols at the university, and in particular called for the removal of the Jan Marais statue (Figure 2). Protesting students in 2016 attempted to set the statue on fire. This event specifically led to the implementation of actual measures by the SU management to create a welcoming space for all on campus. It was decided to retain the statue and create opportunities to engage students and staff in conversations about the history of the university and Jan Marais. The importance of having these engagements is highlighted by a student: "*I don't know the history of Mr Jan Marais but … I feel like I can assume with the history of South Africa … just leaving it there is not really addressing stuff in my opinion*" (BM1). The statue must be questioned and engaged with, not allowed to just stand unproblematised on campus.

A staff member (WM1) made the following comment that supported the retention of the statue and the possibilities for interventions with it:

> *If we forget the past, there is a strong possibility that we are repeating it, maybe just in a different form. I would like to see the things that are there from the past explained, rather than removed … Explain it and make it an educational thing, instead of remove it, out of site out of mind – we tend to forget.*

Keeping the statue allows for it to be contextualised and for history to be interacted with. As a contrast to the Jan Marais statue, a sculpture of a circle of women, *The Circle*, has been erected on a stretch of grass next to the statue and will be discussed in the following section.

In 2017, a VR Plan was written up based on students' projects and suggestions during the protests, and this was presented to the SU Rectorate, the management body of the SU. This plan was written into a

Figure 2: Statue of Johannes Henoch (Jan) Marais on the Rooiplein at the centre of the Stellenbosch campus of SU

financial project request to the university based on which substantial funding was made available to implement projects linked to the plan. Aslam Fataar (2021, p. 8) in the book, *Evoking Transformation: Visual Redress at Stellenbosch University*, writes: "Visual redress refers to processes involving changes in the university's visual environment and culture that promote restitution, inclusivity and institutional cohesion". VR at SU is interlinked with the SU Transformation Plan (2017), as it is included as one of the crucial aspects to redress: Programmes, People and Places; where VR falls under 'places' to redress. But it is clear that the theme of transformation and decolonising place could invite varying intensities of interest – from a sense of belonging, activism, curiosity, to distance or fear. A dedicated VR committee was also established in 2018 to facilitate an institution-wide discussion on and implementation of public artworks. This committee complements the SU committee for the naming and renaming of buildings, venues, and other facilities/ premises and as such there is direct interaction between these two institutional committees. It should therefore also be mentioned that these two committees are guided by the same policy (SU, 2021, p. 2).

Spatial interventions

This section discusses three projects on campus that evolved from the VR project and the need to redress and redefine spaces on campus to overcome its hauntological aspects. These interventions, all installed on and around the Rooiplein in 2019, are the welcome benches, Stellenbosch area maps, and ***The Circle*** sculpture

The first intervention discussed is the welcome benches (Figure 3). Welcoming messages in 16 different languages and dialects were inscribed on benches around campus. South Africa currently has 12 official languages, namely Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, Sepedi, Sesotho, Seswati, Xitsonga, Sestwana, Tshivenda, isiXhosa, isiZulu, and the recently added South African Sign Language. Braille and dialects of Afrikaans, Kaaps and Moeslim Kaaps, were also added to the benches. isiNdebele, Sepedi, Sesotho, Seswati, Xitsonga, Setswana, Tshivenda, isiXhosa, isiZulu are indigenous African languages. Afrikaans, a language that developed during the 19th century in South Africa, is mainly based on Dutch but also has Malay, Indonesian, and Khoekhoe (Khoi) and San influences. The language of the San and Khoi people, Khoekhoegowab, was also added to the benches. The San and Khoi people are the indigenous people of Southern Africa and are regarded as the first nations of South Africa. It was they whom the Dutch colonisers met when they landed in the Cape. Khoekhoegowab is still a spoken language and its speakers are currently struggling to have it recognised as an official language of South Africa.

The idea for these benches came from Monique Biscombe, a student of SU at the time. In 2019, lecturer Sima Mashazi from the General Linguistics department at SU volunteered to contact first-language-speaking students to ask them to contribute welcoming messages. However, because of the hierarchies of languages created in the colonial and apartheid past as well as the impact of current social realities and dynamics, this was not a straightforward task. Even after the installation of the benches, differences emerged in the meaning of the messages, for instance the saying 'koppel 'n

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Figure 3: Welcoming messages on benches: Zulu, Kaaps and San, 2019

lyn' (connect a line) in Kaaps has different meanings depending on which area you are from. One meaning is to 'put people in contact with each other' and the other refers to using drugs. Students who understood the message as referring to drugs felt that SU was trying to devalue their culture because they connected their culture with drug use. They felt so strongly about the matter that they considered transferring to another university. This event catalysed many discussions between students and lecturers who speak Kaaps themselves and also opened up the conversation in general about diversity and inclusivity regarding languages on campus.

In 2019, student Maambele Ambie Khosa indicated that she appreciated the diversity and inclusivity regarding language use on the benches when she came across one that included her own language. The bench held a proverb in Xitsonga: 'Dyondzo i xitlhangu xa vutomi', which means 'Education is the key to a good life' (SU, 2019b). She posted a picture on social media (Figure 4) with the caption: "Thank you for acknowledging our home language. I had to dress up and locate this bench because it reminds me of home and who I am" (SU, 2019a). During data collection in 2022, a student said about the benches: "*I think it's a*

Figure 4: Maambele Ambie Khosa in her traditional Xitsonga dress in front of the bench on the Rooiplein, 24 September 2019

good initiative because it makes everyone feel welcome" (BM7). Another comment also notes the issue of language diversity and inclusivity: "*I think they are good because we always sit by these [benches] with the braille, and I feel like it brings more of an awareness that we are living in a very like multicultural, you know, world and country*" (CF3). These responses acknowledge that including all of these languages increases cognizance of the multicultural – and multilingual – nature of campus.

The debates regarding inclusivity and languages led to discussions on segregated living areas in Stellenbosch that are still a reality for most citizens of the town. Student Joshua Mclean developed the idea of adding maps of Stellenbosch areas to the outside walls of the library on the Rooiplein (Figure 5). What seemed to be a relatively clear and manageable project again turned into a long discussion and interaction. People from some areas/neighbourhoods in the broader Stellenbosch region saw themselves as living in independent towns/communities/villages, while others saw themselves as being part of the town of Stellenbosch. This resulted in engaging discussions by the members of the VR committee, which represents people from different areas in Stellenbosch.

Because of apartheid laws linked to forced removals (Group Areas Act of 1950), some people of colour had been forcibly removed from their homes in central Stellenbosch from an area known as Die Vlakte (The Plains) to the outskirts of the town in established neighbourhoods that catered, under law, for specifically pre-designated groups of people. Through engagement it became clear that people who had been forcibly removed felt that they were part of Stellenbosch, whereas other communities that had been formed as mission stations, for example, felt that they were independent towns. These discussions also opened up issues of land ownership that resulted from pre-colonial, colonial, and apartheid-linked occupations. The VR committee proposed to add bridges between the maps to show that it was a continuous process of building relationships between people of different areas in and around Stellenbosch. As Ratele and Duncan (2007) argue, the relationship between the coloniser and colonised needs to be deeply reflected on. Through these interactions, new insights emerged on the different perspectives of the sensitive issues, and it was only through these processes that we could learn from each other and finally move on to the implementation of the maps.

Figure 5: Maps of the broader Stellenbosch on the walls of the SU library, 2019

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The last intervention to discuss in this article is ***The Circle*** sculpture (Figure 6) that was placed on an area of grass across from the prominent and towering Jan Marais statue on the SU Rooiplein. The idea for the artwork originated during the 2015/2016 student protests when Stephané Conradie, who was part of the Open Stellenbosch student movement, initiated discussions on the matter. The Open Stellenbosch movement specifically opposed culture and language based exclusionary practices and policies at SU and linked directly with the larger Rhodes Must Fall and the later Fees Must Fall protest (Van Rooi, 2021, p. 51). Conradie's rationale for the artwork was that during the protests there was "a lot of animosity and confusion and the idea came if everyone could sit down in a circle and humble themselves and talk, then maybe we would move forward" (Anthony, 2019). Conradie suggested that, because women are underrepresented on campus, the artwork should comprise 11 South African women. This contrasts the Jan Marais statue, which follows a traditional art historical format of a heroic male figure on a pedestal.

However, there was difficulty in deciding whom to include. A survey was launched on campus that included about 300 female students of different racial and cultural groups to vote for women that they considered role models. The survey was structured in such a way that the same number of students from different racial groups on campus voted. In the end, the women selected, based on most voted received, were: Krotoa/Eva, the Khoi ancestress of many families in South Africa; Prof Thuli Madonsela, former Public Protector and current Law Trust Chair of Social Justice in the Faculty of Law at SU; anti-apartheid activists Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, Fatima Meer and Lilian Masediba Ngoyi; actress Quanita Adams; author and poet Antjie Krog; Wimbledon wheelchair tennis player Kgothatso Montjane; artist and activist Zanele Muholi; and music artist Dope Saint Jude.

Figure 6: 'The Circle', 2019

A long process of engagement was followed with either the women themselves or, if they were deceased, with their living relatives to obtain permission for adding the art figures to ***The Circle***. One family decided not to include their mother, as they felt the university was connected to the apartheid past and is still today associated with that history. It was then decided that the eleventh woman would be an anonymous woman to represent the voices of all other women who are encouraged to take part in the discourse.

As is the nature of our engagement with art and symbols in public spaces, informal conversations occur from time to time. Given its significance, one such conversation is noted in this article. After installation of ***The Circle***, an interesting observation was made by a male staff member during a visual redress walkabout who felt that the women in a circle symbolised subservience to the man (Jan Marais) standing on a pedestal. A student reacted to that comment during the walkabout and said that in some cultures in South Africa women would sit on the floor while men would sit on chairs in traditional cultural meetings and that could be the reason for the interpretation. Conradie, however, felt that it was a mindful decision to move away from single people on pedestals and towards and a new way of engagement with each other: on equal ground. SU has to work very hard to become a more inclusive and welcoming space for all because of its problematic history, but that also means that channels for dialogue are always open and in that way these important conversations stay alive.

One respondent noted: "*I really think the women sculpture is a good thing. Women are not always given credit for what they do. I think [gender] equality is important. Many times, we only represent male figures and forget about women*" (CM3). Historically, and in the Western world especially, statues have focused on male figures and their contributions. This response acknowledges that women also deserve to be praised for their contributions to society. CF3 indicated that ***The Circle*** is helping to do this: "*… we're always on the grass by [it] and then we read all of them like, all the women and what they have accomplished and it's really interesting to know about these women and be made aware of it*". However, there are also those who do not believe that there is benefit to initiatives such as these: "*Why spen[d] money on these things, the pain sit inside people, fix this first. You will spend millions on this [VR] … Instead of changing names they should apologise to us*" (CM7). He feels the university has not done and is not doing enough to alleviate the pain and foster healing for those who were previously disenfranchised.

Others suggested that the public art on campus is a visual cue that the university is making strides towards transformation. WF7 said, "*I think it's really cool to have sculptures on campus, especially in public places. It does make you aware that the university is making an active effort to change the institutional associations*." CF4 agreed:

> *I think it serves a purpose, it's showing that change is happening and people are being acknowledged and that we are trying to become more connected as a people. I think it's also making students more comfortable, especially people of colour.*

These comments imply that the VR Project promotes the ideas of the South African 'White paper on arts, culture, and heritage' (DAC, 2017) and the VR policy (SU, 2021). They show that the university is making an effort to transform and to make campus more equal and diverse; more welcoming.

Reimagining and redefining space

As Mbali Phala (2016) suggests, space is never neutral. This is especially true of SU's campuses, campuses of a historically white university. BM1 spoke to this issue, "*I just feel like, there's not a lot of people who look like me [in class] ... So that kinda makes me*

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nervous, I guess, so that would probably be the main cause of my discomfort." Another respondent commented:

> *I think, everyone sort of warned me before I came like, "oh don't go to Stellenbosch – it's the racist university; it's the white university"… I don't think the university itself is like hostile and racist to me at least, but my experience of the students and staff being the majority white was really disappointing, cause it's not really a true reflection of the whole South Africa.* (WF7)

This relates to Zembylas et al.'s (2019, p. 25) question on how "to expose the materiality and affectivity of a colonial university, the ruins, traces, fragments, gaps, absences and displaced actors and agencies that register affectively". Haunting is not only about the tangible. It is also about the intangible, about how it is embodied. Space affects people – it makes them feel nervous, uncomfortable, disappointed, etc.

This feeling of space is not only confined to SU, but also to the town in which it sits. As BM3 stated:

> *There is an invisible line [in town], and you don't get to see it, but as a person of colour you know that as I cross here ... it feels like Europe basically. Those are the type of things that I would like to see being addressed and transformed. Yes, as a university we can change and make benches, but how are we influencing the community? Because it's one thing for students here to be accepting and loving but, as you leave out the door, the town sings a different tune. And you still feel so isolated. Still, like, 'you are our guest, you don't belong'.*

These comments highlight the deep and entrenched perceptions about Stellenbosch – as a town and university. They demonstrate the long and hard engagements towards transformation that need to continue to assure everyone that all spaces at SU belong to everyone and no one is a guest. They also indicate that these engagements need to happen not only on campus, but also in collaboration with the town, with the public spaces that the university borders, so that these can also become more welcoming spaces. Embodied engagements enable us to associate sensitive spaces with something more pleasant, where people can feel safe. This is something the VR project hopes to facilitate with these and other initiatives.

How do we 'heal' spatial trauma? In physical interactions, body language and facial expressions are more prominent, and that can assist in creating a more respectful space for communication and understanding. Healing from historical pain begins with engaging and understanding. This means that the body needs to be present – and a mind/body learning and healing experience is necessary. The construction of new spaces and a deeper engagement with issues to create more inclusive and diverse visual landscapes also have the potential to be extended and implemented within communities around campus.

There is potential to foster healing and forgiveness through the combination of VR with collaborative engagements. Opportunities for learning and healing were opened through the deeper engagements sparked by these projects. Therefore, an important

aspect of VR on campus is not only the changing of the visual landscape, but also the processes that are followed to enable new understandings. An important aspect of VR activity is inclusive dialogue and consensus-generating processes at the various sites on campus. These processes emphasise the deliberative participation and collegiality necessary for ensuring that VR contributes to a cohesive and inclusive campus culture (SU, 2021, p. 3).

Concluding remarks

There are deep silences around material histories, such as statues and spaces, but they are also heavy with the presence of ghosts. VR brings these ghosts to life, offering a voice to the various emotions affected by material histories. It is about being able to "provide openings for new political claims that do not naturalize the past or the present, but see it as getting ready to speak at length about ghosts, inheritance, and generations, generations of ghosts" (Zembylas et al., 2019, p. 45). South Africa, Stellenbosch, and SU are certainly burdened with "generations, generations of ghosts" (Zembylas et al., 2019, p. 45).

Hauntological engagements remind us that colonialism is not over and done with and its oppressive nature still has intergenerational impacts. Rather than a static memorialization, engaging in a hauntological encounter encourages us to remember and to participate in conversations with each other. It urges us to think about our roles in decoloniality (and implicatedness in coloniality). As Bozalek et al. (2021, p. 3) refer to Barad (2017, pp. 47–48):

> *The past is not fixed, not given, but that isn't to say that the trace of all memories can simply be erased. Memory is not a mere property of individual subjects, but a material condition of the world. Memory—the pattern of sedimented enfoldings of iterative intra-activity—is written into the fabric of the world. The world 'holds' the memory of all traces; or rather, the world is its memory (enfolded materialization).*

The haunting informs our understanding of what was and shapes what will be. It could also serve as a call for more mourning; to hollow out memories and remind us of our shared vulnerabilities. And, as is the nature of the spaces of higher learning, the lessons learned through these engagements could also be applied to other university campuses throughout South Africa and abroad.

Ethics statement

Ethical clearance for the project was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee: Social, Behavioural and Education Research of Stellenbosch University (Project ID 9525).

Potential conflict of interest

We confirm that there is no conflict of interest.

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