

(Re)defining Reconciliation
in Moshekwa Langa's
*Temporal Distance (with a
Criminal Intent) You Will
Find Us in the Best Places*



Moshekwa Langa, *Temporal Distance (with a Criminal Intent) You Will Find Us in the Best Places*, 1997.

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The 1995 South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) intended to “provide a forum for both victims and perpetrators [of apartheid] to share their stories and bear witness to historical harms and injustices in an open, public forum.”¹ The terms and expectations for the TRC’s notion of reconciliation, however, did not account for the lasting effects of the legacy of apartheid on post-apartheid South Africans. Neither did it account for the complex and highly personal processes of the (re)construction of national identity and the tentative navigation of “home” that would follow such an immense period of destabilization in South African history. As such, how may we navigate socio-political and cultural reconciliation within a post-apartheid South African contemporary art forum? How might we propose a form of visual reparation? By “visual reparation” I refer to a specific means by which these processes of mapping national, cultural, and personal identities operate outside of the TRC and its conflation of absolution with closure. Consequently, visual reparation instead offers a platform upon which post-apartheid artists may (re)define and interrogate the impact of the TRC’s definition and implementation of “reconciliation.”

At the heart of this paper’s analysis is the shifting, uncertain notion of “home” in post-apartheid South Africa. Subsequent to the implementation of the apartheid regime in 1948 under the Afrikaner National Party, the institutionalized segregation of the races resulted in the forced eviction of non-white South Africans from their homes and the resettlement of black South Africans into ten *bantustans* (“tribal homelands”). While tentatively “reconciled” under the banner of a democratic republic

following the abolition of apartheid in 1994 under the African National Congress (ANC) party, post-apartheid South Africa was a new, shaken nation. The formulation and impact of the TRC in 1995–97 and the opening of the Second Johannesburg Biennale in 1997 made clear that “home” to many non-white South Africans was imbued with a complex history of socio-cultural and political tensions, memories, and national and personal trauma that could not be so easily reconciled. For South African-

born, Amsterdam-based artist Moshekwa Langa, his 1997 multimedia floor piece *Temporal Distance (with a Criminal Intent) You Will Find Us in the Best Places*, showcased in the Second Johannesburg Biennale, explores “home” through geography, memory, and the detritus of urban living. A metropolis of miscellaneous bric-a-brac linked by a network of thread, empty whisky and Coca-Cola bottles, toy cars, and rubber mice make up a dynamic, sprawling map. This paper argues that by understanding *Temporal Distance* as a form of visual reparation, the piece throws into relief the unreliability and insufficiency of state-sanctioned, state-supervised national reconciliation. *Temporal Distance* instead speaks to the role of post-apartheid contemporary art in the examination of the TRC’s strictly linguistic and frequently evangelical definitions and expectations of reconciliation.

I propose that by apprehending and analyzing post-apartheid South African contemporary art as a form of visual reparation, a more nuanced and necessarily critical (re)definition of reconciliation for a contemporary art historical reading can be tentatively reached. To explore this route, this paper will engage with four areas: 1) the socio-historical contexts of apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa that led to the introduction of the TRC; 2) the impact of the TRC; 3) the role of the Second Johannesburg Biennale as a contemporary art forum; and 4) an analysis of *Temporal Distance* as a form of visual reparation, contextualized within Langa’s biography, oeuvre, and the Second Biennale. I will discuss how understanding its specific works as forms of visual reparation allow us to analyze how they engaged with or challenged notions of national and/or personal reconciliation as outlined by the TRC. More specifically, I will interrogate how these works engaged with reconciliation without directly representing, and therefore being restricted by, the TRC’s much-criticized and limited definition of “reconciliation.” It is through this art historical lens that I will engage in a critical reading of Moshekwa Langa’s *Temporal Distance*, ultimately exploring the impact of framing his work as a form of visual reparation.

APARTHEID AND POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

Following the election of the National Party in 1948, the system of apartheid institutionalized the segregation of races through rigid economic, social, and political separations. Many of these separations originated in the 1959 Bantu Self-Government Act, which enabled the forced eviction of non-white South Africans from their homes. Through the policy of “resettlement,” they were placed into self-governed but strictly monitored segregated neighbourhoods and business sectors in urban areas, as well as ten *bantustans* to which the black population was restricted. Families were often separated. Under the Bantu-Self Government Act, the white minority legally owned most of the country and relied on black labour to increase white economic power. In addition, non-white South Africans experienced immense social and racial stratification as a result of the formalized racial classification system established by the Population Registration Act of 1950. In accordance with this act, the South African population was divided into four distinct racial groups based on the specific physical appearance, ancestry, and socio-economic status of individual citizens: “Black,” “White,” “Colored” (a multiracial ethnic group), and “Indian.” “Home” became an unstable, unreliable concept for non-white South Africans, one of shifting geographies, subjective citizen rights, racial violence, and enforced censorship.

The road to dismantling the apartheid regime was violent and unpredictable. An immensely transitional period between 1990 and 1993 led to the 1994 general elections, in which the African National Congress party took the majority of parliamentary seats² and Nelson Mandela was sworn in as South Africa’s first black president. The newly elected ANC implemented a number of socio-economic reforms to address the racial inequalities institutionalized by the apartheid regime. Yet, a black-led political government functioning under a white-dominated economy, high rates of unemployment and poverty, and sustained racial violence led many South Africans to ask one question: how can a nation that has been dismantled into factions be reconciled? Many hoped that the introduction of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission would answer this question.

THE TRC

The TRC was instituted as a restorative justice body per terms set out in the 1995 Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act. The act mandated a series of public hearings in which victims of human rights violations would give statements about their experiences during apartheid and perpetrators could offer testimony and request amnesty from civil and criminal prosecution. This body was designed to offer reparation and rehabilitation to victims of apartheid as “part of the bridge-building process designed to help lead the nation away from a deeply divided past to a future founded on the recognition of human rights and democracy.”³ As stated by chairperson Archbishop Desmond Tutu in the *Final Report* of the TRC, “By accounting for the past we can become accountable for the future.”⁴ Here, acknowledgement of the gross human rights violations under apartheid was intended to provide a foundation upon which a new democratic, empathetic, and unified Republic of South Africa could build itself. While the TRC was domestically and internationally recognized and many visitors found it successful, others deemed it insufficient due to the restorative rather than retributive justice process. For many, the commission’s call for confession and catharsis functioned to “absolve the sins of apartheid through a form of communal expiation aimed at the evolution of a new pattern of public morality,”⁵ and, in the very words of the TRC, to “shut the door on the past—not in order to forget it but in order not to allow it to imprison us.”⁶ The TRC’s prescription of forgiveness as a method of healing and nation-building risks containment of the atrocities of apartheid and enforced closure of wounds that cannot be healed simply through testimony, and so soon after apartheid itself. While the TRC acknowledges that the past has “the uncanny habit of returning to haunt one,”⁷ it neither accounts for the extent to which the past would come to haunt post-apartheid and contemporary South Africa, nor provides adequate methods of reconciliation beyond confession and contrition.

To “shut the door on the past” is to necessarily enact a state-sanctioned containment of history to a singular, past occurrence, thereby isolating the events and

atrocities of apartheid to one specific period of time and de-legitimizing or glossing over the aftershocks. Post-apartheid incidents of racial violence and discrimination included sustained xenophobic rhetoric enculturated in schools and urban centres, fractured communities, and families that struggled to reorient themselves while establishing some stable notion of “home.” These socio-economic and political effects of South Africa’s international isolation during apartheid were relegated to the realm of the past or went largely unacknowledged. The hearings-based, court-ordained transcription of the victims of apartheid’s narratives locates reconciliation within a strictly linguistic forum that is inherently teleological and privileged in its format. It assumes the universal accessibility of verbal and written language and communication for all South Africans, that talk therapy—and, ultimately, that was what the TRC came down to—entails neat psychic closure for all.

David Gaertner identifies TRCs as “an important part of the way nations and politicians resolve conflict arising from historical injustice, civil unrest, war, and dictatorship ... [the South African TRC] is widely viewed as a triumph because of its ability to identify the events and emotions surrounding the apartheid regime, while also positively influencing the state’s political and economic circumstances.”⁸ Reconciliation depends on the acknowledgement of place and of memory and the apartheid regime’s denial of both of these things. The TRC attempted to enact this acknowledgement in its testimonies, certainly, but a state-sanctioned notion of reconciliation did not sustain an effective space for addressing the effects of the legacy of apartheid felt by post-apartheid South Africans. To limit the dialogue of memory and trauma to a linguistic forum mediated by a government and judicial body and filtered through evangelism is to implicitly re-enact the apartheid regime’s censorship of other mediums of expression and resistance.

The Medu Art Ensemble, for example, was founded in 1977 by a coalition of “cultural workers” who had fled the South African *bantustans* and lived in exile in Gaborone, Botswana. Their political posters held the greatest sway for resistance groups in Botswana and South Africa, as they were accessible cultural products

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that operated outside of privileged, white spaces and institutions (such as galleries). This accessibility meant that Medu was often subject to pressures of self-censorship in Botswana (which occupied a tense position as a border country where many exiled South African political and socio-cultural activists fled) and to outright censorship in South Africa. Censorship laws doubled during the state of emergency declared in 1985 following increased outbreaks of violent resistance, three years after the 1982 Culture and Resistance festival hosted by Medu in Gaborone. The festival discussed the role of art in the pursuit of a future democratic South Africa, highlighting the fact that “artists were not only used by the progressive movement to serve its needs, artists were in the forefront of the changes happening in the country and they were often ahead of the game when it came to figuring out what the next step should be.”⁹ As a result, the ruthless enforcement of censorship laws sought to contain the cultural production of the artist-activist precisely because of the accessibility, breadth of expression, and empathy a visual forum offered to all levels of society.

While empathetic in its intention, the TRC implicitly mirrored aspects of the apartheid regime’s censorship of cultural production and consumption. It

limited the ability for a victim to express the traumas and memories that the victim sustained, thereby restricting the notion of “reconciliation” to the realm of judicial, governmental language and rhetoric. The “success” of the TRC is largely due to its effective mobilization of linguistic capital; however, for those who participated in the hearings and who did not necessarily possess this linguistic capital or the means to mobilize it, a language-based forum was immensely restrictive. Reconciliation therefore necessitates a new definition beyond those articulated by “the language of the church, psychotherapy, and nation-building,”¹⁰ one that challenges the use of forms of linguistic capital as “euphemising tools when dealing with narratives of trauma.”¹¹

For a nuanced art historical reading of South African artists’ responses to apartheid and reconciliation, the answer to this (re)definition lies in the implementation of visual reparation. As such, a new platform for reconciliation was needed, one that the 1997 Second Johannesburg Biennale tentatively initiated in the form of a contemporary art forum.

THE SECOND JOHANNESBURG BIENNALE

Exploring displacement, migration, exile, and trauma in the formation of concepts of identity and home, the Second Johannesburg Biennale, “Trade Routes: History and Geography,” took place from October 1997 to January 1998 in Johannesburg and Cape Town. It was co-curated by Nigerian-born, New York-based Okwui Enwezor and six other curators, and diverged sharply from its predecessor, “Africus” (1995), in its intellectual framework and focus on issues of postnationality and globalism. More than 160 artists from sixty-three countries participated in the biennale,¹² though only thirty-five artists were South African.¹³ Conceived in a rapidly changing socio-cultural and political environment, the Second Biennale witnessed two defining events in South African history: the 1997 implementation of the 1996 South African Constitution and the public hearings of the TRC. In the Constitution draft, an all-inclusive constitutive assembly outlined the rights and duties of its citizens; it introduced, for the first time, an extensive bill of rights that listed the civil, political, economic, and socio-cultural human rights and protections for *all* South African citizens. For those participating in the TRC or watching its proceedings, the public hearings demonstrated just how subjective and privileged those human rights were up until 1997.

What of visual reparation as reconciliation, then? In her analysis of the role of artistic representations of and responses to trauma in post-apartheid South Africa in the wake of the TRC, Erin Mosely observes that the TRC’s method of articulating trauma through the mediation of language has certain limitations. She agrees with the large body of criticism the TRC received prior to and during its proceedings, stating that “the subjective, personal and multi-layered experiences of living during the Apartheid era were reduced to nothing more than a series of legal violations—and civil/political rights violations at that.”¹⁴ Mosely instead calls for an alternative method of expression that she believes the open forum of the art gallery provides. She argues that following changes in cultural institutions in the wake of South Africa’s transition to democracy, art galleries provided public and nationally recognized spaces within which contemporary artists could navigate, respond to, and contemplate the

atrocities they had witnessed or had faced personally during apartheid. More specifically, these artists were empowered by a mode of expression that functioned outside of the court-sanctioned terms and constraints of the TRC.¹⁵

However, what is significant about this suggestion, and what makes it critical to my proposal for visual reparation as reconciliation, is that Mosely identifies the art gallery as a “memory site,” or as a platform through which “individual memories can function as a valuable resource—sometimes the only resource—in establishing the ‘truth’ about a particular historical period.”¹⁶ Memory is at the centre of atrocity and recovery, and therefore the methods by which we frame memory, the specific ways in which we remember and interrogate the past—what may be broadly understood as “memory work”—are critical. For the TRC, for instance, language functions as tool of the linguistic memory work enacted in the hearings and transcription of the hearings. In contrast, visual culture in the art gallery enacts memory work through visual production, expression, and consumption. The Second Johannesburg Biennale operated as one such memory site. It was a controversial, often locally detached memory site, criticized for its ironically restrictive international focus despite its position at the heart of a socio-political moment of such paramount importance to the precarious establishment of a nation, but it was a memory site, nonetheless. Apprehending it as such allows for a broader understanding of the visual memory work that the Second Johannesburg Biennale facilitated despite the public’s misgivings, particularly by that perhaps problematically small pool of South African artists involved, who produced provocative interrogations and confirmations of memory and place that the TRC did not discuss as effectively.

The biennale was internationally lauded for its erudite sophistication in its step away from the pluralistic approach of “Africus.” Locally, however, the Second Biennale was seen as too detached, too isolated from the realities felt by South Africans at the time. Carol Becker makes the poignant observation that for many South Africans, “It did not seem to facilitate the conversation that South Africans were having with themselves,”¹⁷ and she argues that discussing postnationality in a nation

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that was struggling to articulate itself *as a nation*, let alone a postnational one, was an abstract debate that left South Africa out of the critical dialogue that was being conducted.¹⁸ Nevertheless, Becker makes a particularly compelling argument in her postscript for how the repositioning of the biennale’s focus on the issue of reconciliation might reposition South Africa not as the isolated host but as the active leader and participant in the biennale. Relocating the biennale from its globalized, postnational heritage to that of a specifically South African historic moment¹⁹ is vital—particularly when that very historic moment was occurring only blocks from one of the exhibits: in the opening days of the biennale, the TRC hearings were being conducted in the Sanlam Centre near the *Electric Workshop* exhibition in Newtown, Johannesburg.

Becker’s suggestion and many of the criticisms of the Second Johannesburg Biennale are essential for their focus on postnationality in a country that was only just starting to grasp what it meant to be a nation. However, to articulate or incorporate reconciliation (as defined by the TRC) in a visual forum is to expect those works that interrogate processes of reconciliation to conform to the

linguistic and court-sanctioned structure and method of mediation that the TRC utilized. This also implies that in order for those works’ interrogation of reconciliation to be recognized, they must conform to this specific structure and method of mediation. It is not simply a case of translating “reconciliation” into a visual forum. Gaertner makes the important distinction that “the very idea of ‘reconciliation’ is altered whenever it is conveyed into another language and socio-political context.”²⁰ The word “reconciliation” cannot simply be translated into other languages, cultures, or specific contexts like the biennale without that word undergoing some sort of recontextualization or implicit redefinition. Understanding these works as forms of visual reparation, then, as works that respond to personal or national reconciliation through a *visual* vocabulary or a visual rhetoric rather than just a linguistic rhetoric, would correspond to Becker’s suggestion. It would also offer a nuanced, specifically art historical reading in memory sites like the Second Johannesburg Biennale. Consequently, it is through this lens that I will now turn to *Temporal Distance*.

MOSHEKWA LANGA AND *Temporal Distance*

Moshekwa Langa (b. 1975) was born in rural Bakenberg in northern South Africa in what was then the semi-independent *bantustan* of KwaNdebele. Despite Langa having no formal artistic training prior to his first solo show in September 1995 in the Rembrandt van Rijn Gallery in Johannesburg, his sudden success saw to his participation in several biennales—Johannesburg (1997), Istanbul (1997), Havana (1997), São Paulo (1998 and 2010), Gwangju (2000), Venice (2003 and 2009), and Lyon (2011)—as well as in solo and group exhibitions. It was his considerable portfolio that effectively cemented his spot in the small elite of black artists that would emerge from post-apartheid South Africa. He later studied at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten in Amsterdam in 1997–98. Langa’s work is primarily multimedia-based and is often oriented around the processes of documentation and mapping. Drawing on his experiences growing up in apartheid South Africa, when “home” became an increasingly distant, dislocated concept for many black South Africans, Langa creates intensely abstract, conceptual, and figurative pieces that “map” geographical and cultural networks and relationships of his past. He utilizes multiple materials in a single given work, incorporating paint, spray paint, ink, masking tape, and miscellaneous objects whose quotidian function often imply a nostalgia for stability, for objects of permanence in an ever-shifting world. His early works were largely conceptual and industrial in their tone and materials in a way that appealed to the international aesthetic at the time. Sabine Marschall suggests that the sudden elevation of Langa’s work to the status of international “high art” at this time was largely due to how his works were interpreted; it was a question of “whether they can be seen to cater to concerns raised by current art debates and whether they lend themselves to interpretations privileged in contemporary theoretical discourses.”²¹ For Marschall, Langa’s incorporation of the miscellaneous detritus and discarded remains of a developing modern democratic South Africa, in twisted sheets of corrugated iron and mutilated cement sacks, spools of wool and hundreds of empty glass Coca-Cola bottles—those scrapyards objects—allows for a certain element of adaptability to his work.

It creates a surface upon which intellectual discourses of the contemporary art world, most originating in the international urban centres of Western Europe, may converse, conflict, or cohabitate simultaneously.

Langa’s works are often likened to maps or networks and seen to be engaging in some form of spatiotemporal or personal navigation of memory, place, and self, and for good reason. He frequently recalls his growing up in the rural village of Bakenberg under apartheid and having to navigate what “home” constitutes for him. Bakenberg did not appear on official maps of the area used in his school—thus his home, and therefore he himself, did not exist within the national eye. Bakenberg was part of one of the ten *bantustans* to which the black population was displaced and restricted under apartheid. As previously discussed, from 1950 to 1983, the apartheid government’s policy of mass “resettlement” literally restructured the very geography of the country, and with the abolishment of apartheid in 1994—and the subsequent abolishment of these *bantustans*—black South Africans experienced yet another wave of displacement. As such, there is an immense sense of a desire to be tethered to some kind of tangibility in Langa’s work, a nostalgic longing to belong to something fixed and knowable in an ever-shifting landscape, a sea of objects, a space relegated to snatches of memory and dreams by the systematic erasure and denial of something as nebulous but as important as “home” by the apartheid regime. As Tracy Murinik observes, “Bakenberg became for Langa a deeply personal marker of relative distance from wherever else he found himself or felt himself or had to explain himself; a strongly formative location of belonging and un-belonging.”²² It is from this need to contextualize himself in relation to the landscape of Bakenberg—both its physical reality and his memory of it—and to reconcile old and new changing definitions of “home” and self in the wake of physical and socio-political displacement and re-placement of post-apartheid South Africa that *Temporal Distance* emerged. In order to understand how Langa engages with national and personal reconciliation within a visual forum, the nuanced art historical lens of visual reparation is not only necessary, but essential. *Temporal Distance* is a large multimedia floor installation first commissioned by Colin Richards for the

Graft exhibition. The 1997 iteration initiated a versatile but immensely personal, intriguingly conceptual series that spanned several years and several exhibitions, and whose shape and independent elements changed in every new environment depending on whatever objects or materials were at Langa's disposal at the time. As previously mentioned, the 1997 iteration makes use of a vast web of thread linked to spools of various sizes and colours, empty whisky and Coca-Cola bottles like skyscrapers, rubber mice, and toy cars caught in thread or paused as if consulting a map in the vast and consuming network of contained yet seemingly endless chaos. The frenzied, erratic movement invoked by the webs and lines of thread work in tension with the tall, static singularity of empty bottles and tall spools.

For his 2013 multi-piece installation *Counterpoints: Mogalakwena* at the Krannert Museum in Urbana-Champaign, Illinois, we witness this same mapping and indexing of objects in the floor installation. For this part of the exhibit, Langa "spent almost a week shopping and collecting objects from libraries, schools, shops, flea markets"²³ to source second-hand books and used vinyls, unshaded lamps and dolls stripped of their clothes, linked by that characteristic myriad of wool and monolithic spools to create works that Ashley E. Sheriff uniquely refers to as "second-hand landmarks" in an endless, tangled world. A comparison of the two floor installations reveals an attachment to a certain sense of liminality in Langa's works, an almost dreamlike, fluid in-between-ness despite the intense disorder of the collected bric-a-brac. I have mentioned before the surface-like quality of Langa's works upon which interpretations may inscribe themselves. Certainly, within these disorganized maps, the objects in each installation, with no context, present themselves as empty signifiers, as hollowed-out commodified rubbish.

This is not to say, however, that the work is devoid of meaning by virtue of its lack of context or its chosen items. There is an undeniable sense of play threading through these works that suggests a cognizance of the desire to draw meaning from an otherwise miscellaneous or arbitrary display of items, and from this perspective *Temporal Distance* positions itself as distinctly self-aware of the deliberate choices that it is making. In a way, if

we approach *Temporal Distance* as visual reparation, it becomes evident that the work is centred on a denial of language, of signification—a denial of the precise terms with which the TRC was conducted. Instead, *Temporal Distance* occurs in the imprecise realm of memory and contained temporality, of abstract streets, fictitious avenues, and incomplete second-hand landmarks frozen in time and in motion. It is a landscape of memory in which Langa may reconstruct the Bakenberg of his childhood, which the atlases and maps of his school denied him; of a home, as tenuous and contrived as it was; and of a sense of self and self-existence the apartheid regime sought to systematically efface from the surface of the country. For Murinik, "The relative distance that Bakenberg represents as a point of evaluation for all of Langa's experiences has become not only spatial and experiential, but also temporal—an imagined, longed for time in containment and relative simplicity and uncomplicatedness."²⁵ Interestingly, while the work presents the image of a sprawling, busy city, the piece is nevertheless overtly contained to its designated floor space. It does not encroach upon the surrounding works; it is at once self-consciously self-contained and regulated by the space of the exhibit. Understood within the context of Bakenberg and the forcible resettlement of black South Africans into *bantustans*, a visual reparation lens reveals how *Temporal Distance* interrogates the spatial and political containment measures of the apartheid regime outside of a linguistic forum. Rigidly contained within the space of the exhibition, *Temporal Distance* pushes up against the unseen but strictly observed borders that designate the separation of "piece" from "gallery," "home" from "nation." Despite bursting with chaos and life within, the geographic and spatial dynamics of *Temporal Distance* articulate the non-white South African's struggle to bridge that separation. Reconciliation of self and memory is attempted by Langa here, but it is deliberately not wholly realized.

There is no certainty or closure that comes from reading *Temporal Distance*. Despite its construction as a fantastical, abstract cityscape positioning Langa and his place in his constantly changing worlds of apartheid/post-apartheid South Africa, Amsterdam, New York, and Paris, it remains, ultimately, a memory. In it we witness

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what Colin Richards, when discussing what he envisioned for the *Graft* exhibition, calls the “shifting layers and undertows of cultural and political violence”²⁶ that subtly weave through the work, that persist even in this dreamlike state and that refuse both the work and Langa closure. Through a visual reparation art historical lens, *Temporal Distance* refuses the expectation of immediate clarification or amelioration that the TRC outlined in its manifesto of national healing, and instead interrogates and makes manifest the lingering effects of separation, of those invisible borders that continue to define the realities of post-apartheid South Africa.

Visual reparation for Langa, then, manifests in mapwork, in visual navigation, as functioning beyond the linguistic and evangelical rhetoric of the TRC to develop a vocabulary of bric-a-brac, of fragmented memory, place, and self. It denies the particular truth that the TRC sought to establish and instead participates in the larger collective counter-memory that was being formed and publicized in the memory site of the Second Johannesburg Biennale. By viewing *Temporal Distance* as visual reparation, then, this paper has tentatively explored a new method by which to navigate national and personal reconciliation of self and home in contemporary art in post-apartheid South Africa. This new method does not rely on, and, in fact, confronts and even denies the restrictive linguistic and evangelical rhetoric of the TRC and its expectations of national healing through holistic amelioration and the construction of a specific, nationalized “truth.” The systematic erasure of memory and of place by the apartheid regime manifests in the dreamlike, liminal maps of Langa’s early works that attempt to contextualize and position Langa within the Bakenberg of his memory. Langa’s specific form of visual reparation places *Temporal Distance* as quietly provocative and pervaded by an intimate longing for tangibility, for

substance, and for closure in a piece that denies all three simultaneously. Understanding these post-apartheid contemporary works as forms of visual reparation, then, offers a nuanced art historical lens through which to approach works like Langa’s in a manner that necessarily touches upon and critically questions the presence and consequences of the TRC on post-apartheid South African contemporary art. ■

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Sagorika Haque & Yige Wu

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