# Gazing at black bodies: Historically entrenched race relations in the interpretation of Brett Bailey's Exhibit B

**Submitted by**

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# Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

This dissertation has not been, nor is it to be submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

Tina Simanyene Vellem

# Contents

# Acknowledgements

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# Abstract

Race has played a significant role in how art in and from South Africa has been experienced, especially in light of the recent history of segregation and oppression that South African history holds. In light of this, many South African artists explore themes of identity and classification, symbolism and interpretation, and the issues of agency around the black voice.

This dissertation explores how South African Art is received in different contexts, both locally and internationally, using the installation *Exhibit B* (2010-2016) by the South African artist, Brett Bailey, as a case study. I consider the role that the intention of the artist might play when confronting problematic subject matter and how this impacts the politics of representation, specifically with regard to who has the right to speak on specific topics. In particular, I will consider how issues of race have the power to shift the dynamics of how South African art is interpreted.

To do this, I take a qualitative approach using arts-based methods that understand art as objects of inquiry as well as modes of investigation . I use Critical Race theory and Performance Theory to examine the notion of the White Gaze and representation of the 'other' through Laura Mulvey's conceptualization of the Gaze, as well as Postcolonial Theory as it applies to *Exhibit B.*

*Exhibit B* (2010-2016) is an art installation that explores the historical abuse of black bodies by literally placing the bodies of black actors on display as a form of art. Bailey's intention with the creation of this installation was to tackle themes of racism, objectification of black people and colonialisation by producing a critique of a repressed memory of racism. In this dissertation I argue that he instead manages to insert himself as a victim and becomes an instigator by perpetuating the very notions he is attempting to speak against.

The findings of this research indicate a need to further investigate and problematise ideological whiteness as the standard against which the black body and the black voice are examined, and the extent to which these are used by white artists to further their own agendas. I argue that when engaging with controversial subject matter, such as that presented in *Exhibit B*, artists have a duty of care to prevent the reification of stereotypes and narratives that affect marginalized groups of people, many of whom still experience the lingering effects of racism, representation and colonial repression.

# INTRODUCTION: BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

Race has played a significant role in how art in and from South Africa has been experienced, especially in light of the recent history of segregation and oppression that South African history holds. In light of this, many South African artists explore themes of identity and classification, symbolism and interpretation, and the issues of agency around the black voice. This dissertation will explore how South African Art is received in different contexts, locally and internationally. I will consider the role the intention of the artist might play when confronting problematic subject matter and how this impacts the politics of representation, specifically with regard to who has the right to speak on specific topics. In particular, I will consider how issues of race have the power to shift the dynamics of how South African art is interpreted. To do this, I will use Laura Mulvey's conceptualization of the Gaze together with aspects of postcolonial theory, such as ideas of Otherness concerning black bodies, as a theoretical framework to critique Brett Bailey's *Exhibit B* (2010-2016).

*Exhibit B* is an art installation by South African Artist Brett Bailey that explores the historical abuse of black bodies by literally placing the bodies of black actors on display as a form of art. There are many iterations of the installation; I will be focusing specifically on the one displayed in London at The Barbican Centre. As a young, black South African artist and researcher, I felt a profound dissatisfaction with yet another white man narrating the black story, of which he has no direct experience. My feelings towards the work evoked a need to understand why he, a white man, had felt the need and authority to do so. The work made me feel unheard and misunderstood as a black person by emphasising the black body as oppressed or somehow “less than”. The subject matter felt raw and has prompted my investigation into the mechanics of this complex experience.

Press coverage of the exhibition demonstrated public outrage, with many subsequent academic critiques rooted in issues of the Western Gaze and Otherness as we shall see. Notably, the difference in reactions to this work seems rooted in the socio-political context. How (mostly black) African critics reported on the work differed from how the (mostly white) international press received it. (For examples, see my comparison of *Odunam & Andrews* (2014), *Wyatt* (2014), and *Memela & De Beer* (2014)). As explained by Memela and De Beers, while black people seemed to feel various degrees of shame on viewing the exhibition, many white viewers were also confronted by the shame of being implicated in the atrocities of European colonisation of Africa and the atrocities enacted in the name of this cause (Atkin, 2015). In this way, Lara Atkin and Peter Crawley also note that viewers predominantly experienced the artwork based on their own (racial) identities, biases, and lived experiences.

In his *article "Exhibit B, the Human Zoo is a Grotesque parody-boycott It (2014)*", Kehinde Andrews emphasises that the show perpetuates the objectification of black bodies and the act of even putting up the exhibit as well as paying to view it is a form of racial abuse. South African writer Sandile Memela, in *Three Ways to Look at Exhibit B* (2014), shares similar sentiments and introduces the idea that Bailey may have created "disturbing work" due to economic reasons; however, in all its forms and intentions, the work is disturbing given South African history. While both were against the work, there is a sense of anger against Bailey as an artist for recreating this type of history and re-enacting the ideologies that fuelled the original Human Zoo exhibits rather than subverting them.

Other writers and critics, such as Daisy Wyatt and Diane de Beer (both white women), wrote more about the protests to the work and Bailey as a misunderstood artist being silenced. In the article *Exhibit B, 'Human Zoo' Show Cancelled by the Barbican Following Campaigner Protest (2014)*, Wyatt wrote about the protests and shutting down of the show and about the Barbicans' views on the situation and expressed almost nothing about what the exhibit symbolised. In her debate with Sandile Memela in *Three Ways to Look at Exhibit B* (2014), De Beers sensationalised Bailey's actions and described him as an artist forcing people to look at themselves and their views in order to help them become caring human beings. Within the two pieces of writing, there is a sense of avoidance. Wyatt shifts attention to the violence of protests, and De Beer shifts attention to Bailey as a "victim". These shifts also highlight ideas of the treatment of black bodies, particularly within the sphere of the white Gaze and Representation, and the re-centering of white privilege.

My research aims to explore how considerations and experiences of race can potentially shift how art impacts the viewer. My analysis of Brett Bailey's *Exhibit B* will catalyse a discussion of how race continues to colour experiences of South African Art today by unpacking the ways in which Bailey engages with the discourse around the black body and voices that have been historically silenced as well as exploring why *Exhibit B* is experienced so differently by Western and South African audiences. Lastly, by showing the importance of understanding the intention of the artist and what the work is trying to communicate when addressing controversial and historical subject matter.

## Research Methods and Approach to Study

This study adopts a qualitative approach, specifically using Arts-based Research methods. Arts-based research is the use of art as objects of inquiry as well as modes of investigation (McNiff, 1998, p. 29-40). The process of creating and making the art forms part of understanding and examining its experience by viewers, researchers, and creators. Essentially, art is used as data that is analyzed and studied within academia (McNiff, 2008, p. 29-40). The output for this project will be a contextual analysis in the form of a written dissertation that uses Critical Race Theory and Performance Theory to examine notions of the white Gaze and representations of the other elicited by the controversial

exhibition *Exhibit B (2010-2016),* by Brett Bailey. A contextual analysis is based on putting meaning and understanding behind viewpoints presented in a piece, object, or text through an examination of the background, the social and historical environment and so on. Such data on texts, people, context, or settings are often studied and presented as qualities that characterize the subject of the study (Iverson, 1991, p. 6-15).

My approach is also informed by object biography methods (Brenner *et al*.,2016, p. 1-16), whereby the research revolves around an object (in this case, an installation) and is driven by a thread that follows a linear direction to create a clear storyline. To create this storyline, the object is studied through key questions: "What is it? Where is it? How did it come about? What is its function? Who made it? ". These questions are about identity, origin, function, history, ownership, and form context, which then helps to create a storyline. I plan to draw on this method by asking the same fundamental questions to build timelines and context within the study. In this instance, this will include an analysis of the relevant historical context, Brett Bailey, and the ideas that resulted in these installations.

I will analyse visual data, acknowledging the perspective in visual culture that explores a social theory of visuality, which unpacks how visibility and power, seeing and knowing, are interrelated. It examines how we let visuals impact us, how we engage with them, and how that is linked to how society has systematically arranged knowledge and power. This means studying visual art in a way that explores history and reveals socially constructed narratives that emphasise identity, in this case, Otherness and the representation of the black body. This approach also allows for studying the relationship between visual culture and the power dynamics of oppression and dominance.

All data gathered is available in the public domain. The data collection process mainly includes analysing various books, reviews, and articles written by critics and academics who write in the fields relevant to this research, and in particular, those that offer critiques and analyses of *Exhibit B*. The international COVID-19 pandemic meant a shift in data collection processes, initially limiting access to places like libraries and galleries due to a ban on public visitations, which would soon change after the beginning of this research. Therefore, this research became a desktop study based on the process of acquiring soft copies of books and articles. Another data collection process utilised is the inclusion of looking at video clips on YouTube, online news outlets, and other websites that popularised and publicised *Exhibit B*. These were crucial in discussions of *Exhibit B* when its popularity rose. To assist with data analysis, I applied the use of Discourse Theory, which emphasises social texts, symbols and more, to find the best ways to "read" content within the power structures that exist in society. This then assisted me in creating comparisons and context, highlighting some aspects of my research, and positioning myself as a researcher and critic.

# CHAPTER 1: ART AND CONTEXT IN SOUTH AFRICAN ART

South African Artists Brett Bailey's *Exhibit B* is the second part of a trilogy of art installations that refers largely to the history and model of the human zoos of the 19th century (a result of European colonial conquest often characterised as racism that had begun as scientific "raciologism" (Mayer, 2016)). The work itself is a series of installations consisting of live black actors placed on display, sometimes in glass cabinets and sometimes in conjunction with other significant materials. The original human zoos on which the work is based attracted many visitors during the 19th century and continued into the mid-20th century, and consisted of actual black people who had been sold and imported from various colonies. These people were constructed as "exotic beings" and placed in cages and living dioramas for display among animals and "wild beasts" (Mayer, 2016). The exhibits were a form of propaganda intended to feed the white imagination and support the dehumanisation necessary for colonisation, aiming to establish superiority over black Africa (Mayer, 2016).

In each of the human displays made by Baileys, the exhibited people are intentionally objectified, known only by their number or description, including their country of origin. They have been stripped of their names; a process intended to place emphasis on how black people have historically been rendered nameless possessions. In both the original human zoos and Bailey's iterations, some were described as "Found Objects", an art history term that underpins the artistic fulcrum of appropriation, referring to the use of an object (or fragment of an object) that is then recontextualizing it for its aesthetic value (Arya, 2018, p. 27-38).

The actors are voiceless, and viewers are required to observe in silence. Megan Lewis described her experience of the iteration of the performance when it was held at the abandoned train terminal and its tracks at the edge of the city of Makhanda (then Grahamstown). The station was situated by the ruins of the desecrated 1820's settlers' cemetery and the township of Joza, where the majority of the town's black and brown residents live. Only thirty-five people were allowed into the waiting room at a time and were then randomly called, one by one, to begin the viewing. Lewis recalls a hand belonging to a small boy gently grasping hers and reminding her to remain silent by placing his finger to his lips upon entering the dark train platform. As they travelled across the tracks, Lewis witnessed a series of Bailey's signature tableaux: "scenarios of complex and troubling racial and sexual dynamics and provocative visions of South African politics, often set into corners of the train station and on the tracks themselves, behind security gates, and beside gravestones in the cemetery" (Lewis, 2018, p. 115–144). Similar to the various iterations of the exhibits Bailey has held of this installation series, the requirement of silence was upheld. Lewis and the boy who was her guide never spoke, and their hands were their communication system. A squeeze to show the direction from him and a squeeze

from her when she needed comfort. At the end of the viewing, he disappeared as quietly as he had appeared at the beginning (Lewis, 2018, p. 115–144).

According to Bailey, *Exhibit B* is about three things: racism, the objectification of black people, and colonization. The work, irrespective of historical and political function, is intended to emphasise the relevance of art, its ability to convey a memory that is often hidden away, and the effects of reinforcing or upholding a moral ideal. According to Mayer, *Exhibit B* pushes the viewer to analyse the content provided, the artist's perspective, and the impacts on the society that struggles deeply with being empathetic towards "the other".

In exploring the intersection of art, critique, and public reception, Brett Bailey's consistent silence in response to criticism offers a unique perspective on how artists engage with societal issues through their work. This is particularly relevant when considering the complexities of art that tackles challenging topics such as race, colonialism, and identity.

*Exhibit B* discussions rehash many unresolved discourses in the contemporary context. During the exhibit at The Barbican Centre in London, public outrage ensued over the work (2014). Viewers stated that the exhibition reinforced the objectification of black bodies and reproduced the idea that black people were objects on which white audiences could have conversations and reinforce their superiority (Atkin, 2015), which was a similar reaction to the other versions of the work. For example, some South African audiences felt the work was a reiteration of Apartheid. Placing the relationship between the suppressor (Bailey, a white man) and the oppressed (black actors) in the spotlight through similar circumstances, such as economic standing, in which the black actors may have found themselves.

Once again, Bailey's choice to maintain silence in the face of criticisms such as these could be because his art deals with complex and sensitive topics like race and history, and it is extremely difficult to put these issues into verbal language. As well as being challenging, recording his perspective in this way would also fix the meaning. By not responding, he allows his work to speak for itself and encourages people to think about it deeply in their own way and from their own perspective. Silence is also a method of avoidance when it comes to conflict or arguments, especially when the topic is as difficult and as critical as much of the media coverage.

Critiques such as these lie in direct opposition to Bailey's intention to himself provide a "critique of a repressed memory of racism" through the bodies he displayed. Modern-day societies, particularly people of colour, still experience various versions of racism. Labelling it as a "repressed memory of racism" also brings into question his ideas of what racism looks like in modern societies and his

ability to exercise discernment. As I will note in Chapter 3, Bailey, in his determination to expose a systemic imbalance of power, creates a negative situation, which then calls for introspection and places the viewer in the position of the "voyeur". The black body is again denigrated to the position of the cultural pariah.

## The academic landscape

Academics like Duma Ndlovu questioned Bailey's right to "tell Black stories" As a white man. Given the historical background of South Africa, namely the Apartheid/Post-Apartheid era, Ndlovu ultimately argued that Black experiences should only be spoken of and shared by Black people (Atkin, 2015). Ndlovu's perspective seemed to match many of the public's views, which had labelled and dismissed Bailey as a "racist South African" (Crawley, 2015).

As mentioned above, *Exhibit B* rehashed many unresolved discourses around the use of the black body in art. For example, this quote from Nigerian born, then New York-based critic Okwui Enwezor's seminal text, "Reframing the Black Subject" (1997), aptly pinpoints the deep routed problematic of *Exhibit B* and could easily have been written in direct relation to the installation:

> Despite the sincerity of the artists who have so far brazenly maintained a relationship in their work with the black body, there is a certain over-determination that accompanies their gestures. They seem to neglect the fact that the black form is as much a grotesque bearer of traumatised experiences as it is the abject vessel of race as a point of differentiation. More than alerting us to how the stereotype fixes its objects of desire in that freeze-frame of realism, as prior knowledge, the work of these artists that act of surrogacy which emphasises the subject's muteness and silence, while embellishing their positions as the voices of reality, as the vocal integers of truth. (Enwezor, 1997, p. 37-38)

Enwezor was amongst the loudest voices when such discussions first came to the fore in the early '90s in South African socio-political discourse. The release of "Reframing the Black Body" was one of the cornerstones in discussions of the appropriation of the black body, particularly by white artists, made possible by the process of historic anonymization. His article received various responses, many of which were gathered together to form the anthology *Grey Areas*, compiled by Brenda Atkinson and Candice Breitz. This book was a collection of responses to Enwezor by white artists who agreed or disagreed with his writings, including Siemon Allen and Sue Williamson. Allen focused on the aspect of the black voice and how experiences differ based on race, and Williamson tackled curatorship and the idea that whiteness has provided a blueprint within the arts. Both Williamson and Allen found themselves grappling with their "whiteness" and their own treatments of black culture.

While *Grey Areas* is also considered a seminal text for continuing the complicated and nuanced discussion of Representation in the South African art world, black artists were intentionally or unintentionally excluded from the anthology. This ironically emphasised the notions Enwezor had spoken of rather than providing a counterpoint, and ultimately reinforced the rendering of black voices as insignificant. This mirrors Bailey's unintentional reification of ideological trauma, primarily based on his inability to subvert the power relations inherent in the act of looking or the Gaze.

To Gaze implies more than to "just look at" and introduces power relations whereby the gazer is superior to the object of the Gaze (Schroeder, 2003, p. 209-246,). This then affects systems of power and the construction of knowledge. Laura Mulvey famously discusses these relations in her essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema (1975).* Here, Mulvey challenged the usual way of "seeing", which had been applauded in film, unpacking power relations through social and political aesthetics (Mulvey, 2011, p. 14-26). While Mulvey is primarily interested in the objectification of women through what she terms the male Gaze in Hollywood cinema, the idea that the subject of the Gaze

becomes objectified in a particular way by the gazer has been taken up by theorists of race studies as well. Similar to the subject matter explored by Mulvey, *Exhibit B* highlights the racial, as opposed to the patriarchal, dimensions of looking.

George Yancy (2005) explores the notion of racial looking, specifically theorizing that there exists a white gaze that objectifies the black body. As seen in the reactions to *Exhibit B*, placing the black body and the white body in opposition to one another leads to the interrogation of subjectivity. The white body is fundamentally seen as symbolic, a standard for beauty, innocence, order, restraint, and nobility. In contrast, the black body is often seen as the direct opposite. According to Yancy, the body has the ability to produce contested meaning because it is both a physical thing, a fixed object that does not change according to context, and a being with an identity that is constantly changing and shifting in history, subject to cultural configuration (Yancy, 2005, p. 215-230). This second role of the body describes the body as symbolic. Its meaning and messages are passed through repetition and the iterations that emit certain stereotypes and norms (Yancy, 2005, p. 215-230). Lastly, Yancy describes the body as a battlefield on which wars are fought repeatedly, across particular historical moments, and within social spheres (Yancy, 2005, p. 215-230).

Within these different dimensions of looking at the black bodies, exist issues of the normative Gaze. A category on which the apartheid gaze and the anonymization of black bodies grew. Not without the various problematics it created seen through the dynamics of black history and contemporary life. The normative Gaze itself is categorized through the use of history to provide information that upholds the ideals of beauty and white supremacy within society. (Van Dyke, 2009) These ideas become "normal", a standard upon which all are compared. This "normality" includes body proportions and facial structures, which are used to compare and categorize, resulting in classifications based on skin colour and ethnicity. This need to classify is seen as “natural” based on its history among white supremacists (Van Dyke, 2009). The ideals provide the platform on which the apartheid gaze grew.

I argue that Brett Bailey’s work enables the white Gaze instead of subverting it, primarily because of the points Yancy raises on the uses of the body, particularly black bodies. This also speaks to the fact that there exists an assumed invitation that white people grant themselves when creating and narrating the lives and experiences of people of colour (Marcia, 2019). This often includes the infiltration of non-white spaces without hesitation. The narratives created or written are often based on the "white standard" (Marcia, 2019). Bailey has honoured this "assumed invitation" and created such narratives within *Exhibit B* and through his misrepresentation of black bodies and the positions they are placed in.

Understanding the white Gaze and the impulse to “see” colour within *Exhibit B* is not an isolated incident. Although not well documented, race issues began well before apartheid. While already present in an ideological sense, issues of race within South Africa begin to be more firmly entrenched within legislation as far back as 1948 when the National Party led the white minority government. This rule ended in 1994, yet such issues and topics are still being discussed. Being aware of and engaging in the discussion of how these issues began and how they have developed in the contemporary sphere, with particular reference to the Apartheid era, underpin this research. I plan on using these narratives to build context within my research and provide a foundation on which historically entrenched race relations in the interpretation of *Exhibit B* can be explored objectively.

To use these narratives appropriately, I will utilize Critical race theory. An academic theory that emerged in the late 1970's and early 1980's spearheaded by legal students such as Derrick Bell, who many refer to as "the man behind the movement"(Sawchuck, 2021). Critical race theory is an academic theory used as a tool in the understanding of how racism has and often shapes policy (Sawchuck, 2021). It views race as a social construct as well as a component that is ingrained in legal systems and policies. It branches out to studies of sociology, political legal structures, and power distribution by focusing on the concept of race itself and the experiences of racism. (Kahn,2021). This is often enacted by challenging alternate views of racism based on aspects such as the social conceptions of race and ethnicity as well as the systems that uphold racism (Lati,2021).

This research will use Critical Race Theory partnered with Performance Theory as a lens through which to critique Brett Bailey's *Exhibit B* and the socio-political discourses raised by the installation. Performance Theory provides a way in which assessments of context can be examined to achieve further understanding regarding human behaviour and interpretation of society. Performance theory, first associated with Victor Turner (1988) and Richard Schenchner (1985), suggests that we individually play specific roles in which we perform as part of society depending on context. These roles ultimately form part of our identities and often determine our places within society. Theorists such as Butler (1993) and Derrida (1990) emphasize how performance reinforces and communicates our identities in society, enabling an assessment of how individuals react and behave. Overall, it is a way in which understanding can be found when examining the actions of others within particular social settings and situations. It also informs the notion that identity is socially constructed.

Within this study, aspects of socialization will be a driving force. Socialization itself is the process of learning various societal beliefs and gathering knowledge of society, which occurs as we grow from infancy into adulthood. (Merriam-Webster,2023) Human nature and identity inform race issues. Critical Race Theory (CRT) is often revisited in race studies and seeks to examine how prevailing conceptions of race (including identity) perpetuate relations of domination, oppression, and injustice

(Modiri, 2012). South African history has also given rise to this theory due to its background of

institutionalized white racial privilege characterized by the Apartheid regime (Modiri, 2012). This history and its effects still linger on today in various forms. This makes CRT particularly significant in examining the critical race perspectives thrown up by *Exhibit B*. The Gaze, as discussed above, is also an aspect of CRT.

*Exhibit B* is a catalyst through which the Gaze, representational politics, and Otherness may be assessed. Understanding *Exhibit B*'s historical and societal context will allow this research to extend to themes such as white privilege and racial perspectives.

## The socio-political landscape

As mentioned above, South Africa's segregated history informs the notions, (physical and ideological) of policing bodies and placing certain bodies in opposition to other bodies. Such notions are often assumed void when independence is gained. However, the contemporary socio-political landscape often reveals this as an unrealistic expectation, rooted in ideas of hope as seen through South African history's concept of the rainbow notion.

On the 31st of May 1910, South Africa became a self-governing dominion with the British Empire after the Act of 1909 granting nominal independence was passed. Following this, the 11th of December 1931 ushered in a new change for the country, which had now become fully sovereign from the United Kingdom even though the British monarch still remained the head of state. The country finally became a republic on the 31st of May 1961 and was granted its independence from Europe in 1994 in the country's first election. Prior to that, the country had been led by the National Party, an Afrikaner-dominated group which promoted racial segregation and ethnic separatism. This was called The Apartheid era, which began in 1948 and ended in 1994 to make way for what was then later, called the post-Apartheid era (Peffer, 2009). This emphasis is important as this was the era in which Brett Bailey grew up, having been born in 1967. As we have seen, socialization plays a vital role in how we perform and carry ourselves in the world.

Apartheid means "apartness" in Afrikaans and is a system based on the segregation of non-white citizens and white citizens in a country, in this case, South Africa. This system was enforced through various laws and official policies by the National Party, which came into power in the country in 1948. The National party (founded on the belief in white superiority and led by Dr. D.F Malan) won the 1948 elections through the slogan " Apartheid", the campaign highlighted this "apartness/segregation" as an idea that would provide peace and prosperity and went on to try and maintain this image to the rest of the world (Stevens, 2010).


*Figure 1- White Area (1976)*

Under Apartheid, the majority of citizens categorized as 'non-white' were forced into segregation, which also meant the use of separate facilities and areas. The Land Act of 1913 was the beginning of territorial segregation, forcing black Africans to live in Reserves and work as labourers for white citizens. This also included making it illegal for them to be sharecroppers.

In 1950, The Population Registration was passed. This became the basic outline of what Apartheid would entail and, with the inclusion of the basic rules that it came with. The policy birthed Racial Classification under four categories: Bantu (Black African), Coloured (mixed race), White, and Asian (Indians and Pakistani). The policy also banned relationships between Whites and non-whites, including marriages; this separation split families, and, in some cases, this included coloured children born from white and non-white parents (Stevens, 2010). According to the government, this was also done to ensure the survival of the white race and to keep separation in all aspects of life and levels of society (Evans, 2009). This policy was known as the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949 which had been modified into the Population registration in 1950 (Evans, 2009).


*Figure 2:Passbook check,1960. Photograph by Eli Weinberg*

The Population Registration Act of 1950 was the core of Apartheid and was often revisited. In 1952, it introduced the use of "Reference books" instead of identification passes, which had previously been used. In SA, these were later known as *idompass*. People were fined and even imprisoned if they did not present or carry these books. The Group Areas Act of 1950 initiated the need for these identification books. The act made it illegal for people to live in areas that had been designated for race groups outside of their own. This resulted in thousands of Africans being uprooted from their homes and into what were called Homelands (Evans, 2009). In conjunction, the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act of 1953 was passed and meant that black people could only use public transportation, stores, restaurants, and so on, explicitly allocated for them in the white cities that some of them worked in. This segregation also included the use of separate doors, benches, counters, and water fountains. The Native Urban Areas Act of 1952 and The Native Labour of 1953 also placed restrictions on the non-white majority of South Africa (Evans, 2009).

## The Colonization of South Africa

Within the discussion of Apartheid is another aspect of history that holds significance, which will be explored in subsequent chapters. The colonization of South Africa was the era before Afrikaner rule within the country. It is an era that underpins many discussions within the sphere of arts and identity within the South African context, which can be seen and experienced in discussions of Bailey's work in the chapters to come. South Africa was colonized by the Dutch. Dating back to the days of Van Riebeeck and his expedition with Dutch Calvinists on 6 April 1652, who set up a station for the ships to restock. Within the years to follow, the treatment of the indigenous populations would not only be problematic, but it would also feed into a culture of raids and warfare. The year 1657 marked the allotment of farms to European settlers, growing their population as they took over the lands. In short, the arrival of Van Riebeeck and the Dutch would eventually pave the way for European settlers. Resulting in the colonisation and occupation of South Africa, upon which, the ideals of Apartheid were based. This would be followed by the discovery of diamonds in 1867 and the discovery of gold in 1884. The discoveries would result in the Cape settlers moving up north, causing many historical battles within the country and the country finding itself under British Colonial rule (SAHO, 2011).

The history of colonisation holds significance, particularly when we begin to unpack the indigenous groups the Dutch had first encountered. The Khoisan people were made up of two groups, The San people (referred to by the Dutch as Bushmen) and The Khoi-Khoi, referred to as the *Hottentots*—a term which would later be used to label people placed in the exhibits by Brett Bailey. Anthropologists used the term Khoisan to differentiate the aboriginal people of southern Africa. Having been the first to encounter the Dutch, the San would then live in their own various sections when the invasion began. The Namaqua group – in the present North Eastern Cape, The Korana lived along the Orange

River, The Gonaqua lived among the Xhosa groups in the present Eastern Cape, and the largest group lived in the well-watered pasturelands of the south-western Cape (Adhikari, 2010).

Other groups of black people would be called the “Negroids”. Known as the Fokeng people, of the original Nguni culture and various kingdoms such as the Swati and Twana chiefdoms, who would now face various invasions and migration to then be what is presently known as the Zulu, Xhosa, Mpondo, Swazi and Thembu. This in itself is arguably an example of colonisation – the unofficial version. Eventually, the original indigenous people, the Khoikhoi, were forced out of their land and merged into the Xhosa chiefdoms (Giliomee, 1996).

South Africa essentially experienced an official invasion by the Europeans and an unofficial invasion by immigrants, upholding notions of segregation and superiority by white groups over black people through means of forced labour, land confiscation, violence, and cultural suppression through colonial rule. These notions mentioned above resulted in a culture and rule upon which Apartheid was born and upheld. (Gilliomee, 2007). These invasions would form the basis of further racial transformations, particularly in discussions pertaining to the black body, as noted in the following chapter.

## The Resistance and Key moments

*Figure 3: Soweto uprising- Mike Mizleni/AFP/Getty images*

Dutch colonizers began formulating and establishing laws and regulations that separated white settlers and native Africans as early as 1788. The laws and regulations continued after the British occupation that took place in 1795, which resulted in the process of moving Africans into specific areas, which would be known as Homelands. In the year 1910, there were an estimated 300 reserves for Natives throughout the country which had now become known as the Union of South Africa through the unification of the Boer Republics as well as the British Colony (Evans, 2009).

While many other laws and policies were being passed in South Africa, resistance was also brewing in the streets of South Africa. During the 1940s-1970's, Apartheid had taken many forms; despite this,

organized black resistance was established. It began with many protests and boycotts under the direction of the communist party of South Africa (CPSA). A group formed in 1921 and managed by a majority of white leaders. However, it was the birth of the ANC Youth League in 1944 that changed the direction of the resistance and plunged South Africa into its most historical moments throughout the resistance movement.

In the 1950's, South Africa had now reached an overwhelming stage of Apartheid, with calls for civil disobedience. This resulted in many campaigns and protests against apartheid laws, starting with the Defiance campaign by the ANC in 1952: a programme of planned disobedience and breaking the law using peaceful methods to flood prisons. In the Eastern Cape, this act was met with violence by the police, resulting in its sudden end. Another critical form of resistance was the compilation of the Freedom Charter, created through an alliance called the Congress Alliance, which included the ANC, the South African Indian Congress, The Coloured People's organization, the South African Council of Trade Unions, and lastly, the South African Congress of democrats (an organization of white people who opposed Apartheid). Unfortunately, the Freedom Charter was regarded as a document of treason, resulting in 156 members of the Congress alliance being arrested, resulting in a trial that took place in 1956-1961, which ended with their acquittal. It is also important to note that the women of South Africa were also involved in the resistance. Women began forging their own paths through to resistance as they had fewer laws imposed on them regarding their movements. This was met with harsher treatments and stricter pass laws, the same faced by men (Lodge, 1983).

The 1960s took South African history to a new phase with the beginning of the armed struggle. With the formation of the Pan African Congress, black Africans had begun questioning their relationship with white people who claimed to be against the apartheid regime and sought out their own path in the form of the PAC. On the 21st of March,1960, the PAC led a non-violent march in protest against pass laws. The plan was to drop off identity books and hand themselves over to the police for arrest at the police station in Sharpeville (Vereeniging). Again, this action was met with violence, resulting in 69 recorded deaths and 180 wounded. The Sharpeville Massacre, as it would be known, yielded international and national outcry, marking a new turning point in the form of protest. The PAC and ANC were banned resulting in a policy of "armed resistance" within the two groups (Lodge, 1983).

The ANC would now have "Umkhonto we Sizwe", the spear of the nation also known as the "MK", and the PAC would have "POQO", standing alone. These military wings would garner over 200 acts of sabotage in South Africa during 1961-1963. MK leaders were then arrested during a raid on their headquarters in Rivonia, in Lillie's Farm. They were charged with the recruitment and training of people for sabotage as well as guerrilla warfare, resulting in violent revolutions within the country. This era is popularly known as The Rivonia Trials and marked a new turning point for the youth of

South Africa with the death of Steve Biko (1977), who died under torturous circumstances while being detained by the police (Lodge, 1983).

What followed would be known as the Soweto uprising of 1976, which marked the beginning of the end of Apartheid in South Africa. In 1975, the minister of education, MC Botha, ordered African schools to teach half the subjects in Afrikaans. This was an order for grades 7 and 8. There was opposition by the people as they believed this new order would weaken the already failing education systems in African schools, and it was firmly believed that the language (Afrikaans) was the language of the oppressor. On the 16th of June 1976, students marched through Soweto in an uprising and were met with gunfire from the police. Hector Pieterson (aged 13) was the first child to die. This was met with violence and unrest throughout the country, and although eventually crushed by the regime, the resistance could no longer be ignored or silenced. This had been the biggest challenge to the regime.

The United Nations General Assembly (1973) denounced Apartheid, and The United Nations Security Council followed by voting and imposing a mandatory embargo on the sale of weapons and arms in the country. In 1985, the United Kingdom and the United States followed these efforts and imposed economic sanctions on the country as well. The pressure from the international community forced the National party, now led by Pieter Botha, to reconsider its policies, which included the abolishment of pass laws and the ban on interracial relationships and marriage. With no follow-through, Botha was replaced by F.W.de Klerk, whose government passed the Population Registration Act as well as the laws that formed the legal framework of Apartheid (Stevens, 2010).

February 11, 1990, marked the release of Nelson Mandela, who was an anti-apartheid revolutionary and political leader who would then later become the first democratically elected president of the country, by De Klerk. 1994 marked the end of the apartheid regime through democratic elections and the coalition of the apartheid government and also resulted in a new constitution by black people and other racial groups. Officially, Apartheid policy began in 1948; however, the practice of racial discrimination had deeper roots within the South African Society.

## The legacy of Apartheid

It is difficult to look at the past and ignore the lingering effects of it within the present and the future still to come. This often shows up in discussions of the rainbow nation and the post -apartheid era. The underlying question lies in the representation left behind by apartheid. There is still a power difference between black South Africans and White South Africans often seen in symbolism and action that seems insignificant that is framed by institutional systems.

Police brutality has been a prominent part of the South African experience. This is made evident in famous incidents such as the Soweto uprising of 1976 and the brutality that led to the death of Steve Biko mentioned above, on the 12th of September 1977.

The lingering effects of apartheid still shape life today. Since the dismantlement of the regime, security forces within the country have taken on a brutal stance, seen through the 2012 massacre in Marikana. The South African justice system is still framed by the apartheid institution. Even the German Shepherd, a dog ubiquitous in police forces throughout the world, to many black South Africans, remains a relic of the Apartheid regime. Its ancestors were synonymous with the enforcement of racism, and its descendants remain an integral part of the police service. And like the police themselves, formerly white and now predominantly black, these dogs are still trained to attack black bodies. (Magaisa. 2021) How then do we look at and frame bodies within society?

> Any acts when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack, murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation or forcible transfer of population, imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty in violation of fundamental rules of international law, torture, rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity, persecution against any identifiable group or collectively on political, racial, national, ethnic, cultural, religious, gender and lastly other inhume acts of a similar character intentionally causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health. (Mikhail Petersen)

The United Nations named Apartheid, a crime against humanity, specifying that certain acts that caused harm and were intentionally committed were problematic, but it did not do well with the effects of apartheid on the people it affected. The people it left behind. Black South Africans seem to wrestle with who they are, their identities within certain spaces and how to carry themselves in a society that has been historically trained to view them as the other, and White South Africans have an aversion to acknowledge it or ignore it or like Bailey choose to not talk about it regarding themselves. White people often wrestle with a system that was a crime against humanity but at the same time, a crime that gave them privileges and still benefits them today. On the other hand, denying apartheid allows people to continue to benefit from the system without dealing with consequences such as guilt, moral dilemmas, and acknowledgement. Acceptance would also mean challenging racism and white privilege which is often too difficult for some (Petersen, 2019). This is a consequence Bailey is yet to process within his work. *Exhibit B* is riddled with white privilege. That kind of privileges and the historical narrative Bailey emerges himself in does paint a picture of a racist, white man.

## Exhibiting African Bodies

Human zoos were extremely popular in the 19th and 20th century. They were public displays of people in their primitive state, also known as "ethnological expositions". They functioned as tools of colonization used primarily to support colonial endeavour by presenting indigenous communities as spectacles and tools to spread propaganda. The displays often emphasized the inferiority of the

"exhibits" and implied the superiority of "Western society". These exhibits began as "freak shows" and "circus shows", displaying "exotic beings" through an emphasis on body features and then transitioned into likening these figures to the animals that they were displayed amongst (Mangubat, 2017).

Human zoos began in 1870 with an increased interest in "Exotic Populations" by the Western world. Found in Europe's large cities, the first of these was Carl Hagenbeck, an animal trader who had been advised by Heinrich Leutemann in 1874 to show an exhibit that featured the Sami people (Mangubat, 2017). This was called the Laplander Exhibition held in Leipzig, Germany during the Leipzig Internation Trade fair. The Fair was part of an annual tradition in Leipzig which had begun in the Middle Ages and typically ran for several weeks beginning on March the first and ending in late March and sometimes early April. Leutemann attempted to re-create the environment by placing the people on display with animals and plants and sold it to the people as "a feeling of travelling to exotic areas" (Mangubat, 2017).

With the exhibit's increasing successes, the shows became more extensive and more elaborate. These shows began to grow more stereotypical, and ideas of superiority of specific people and races were projected. This introduced new levels of scientific racism, which was promoted through various scales, labelling Western Europeans as the most civilized (Mangubat, 2017). Hagenbeck also had more shows that garnered more success, such as the Nubian Exhibit in 1876 and an Inuit exhibit in 1880,the most popular being Saartjie Baartman and Ota Benga.

### The Hottentot Venus: Miss Sarah Baartman.

Sarah Baartman was born on the 29th of December in 1789 in the Eastern Cape in a village by Gamtoos River, South Africa. Her name is from the Afrikaans language, and the popular name "Saartjie" given to her is a diminutive version of her name, often spelt as Sara. Sarah was a Khoekhoe woman (Khoikhoi) who was famously exhibited throughout Europe as a "freak show" for her features (Willis, 2010).

In these exhibits, she was named Hottentot Venus, a name also given to other women with her features in later exhibits. The term "Hottentot" was a colonial term for indigenous people, namely the Khoi Khoi people of the areas in the Southern west of Africa; the term is now received as offensive by the Khoisan due to its history. The name "Venus" was often used as a term to designate feminine features to women, and originated from the Roman goddess of love and femininity (Willis, 2010).

Hendrick Cesar, a Dutchman she had been working for as a maid, first started displaying her at a city hospital in Cape Town. Initially, she had agreed voluntarily due to promises of fame and riches.

People like Sarah had been forced to move to Cape Town to find work after the Dutch had begun colonisation in South Africa in the 1650s. Alexander Dunlop, a surgeon, suggested that they travel to London to exhibit Sarah for larger amounts of money. Although she did become internationally famous, she never received any of the dividends promised to her (Kelsey-Sugg, 2021).

Baartman's popularity even inspired an early 19th-century fashion trend: The Bustle. It was a style of dress that included an artificial hump around the bottom, created with padding to have a similar look to Baartman's behind (Kelsey-Sugg, 2021). Sugg explains that this was in some senses rooted in anxiety on the part of European women: "Women were really anxious that their men were going to be lowered *(sic)* into wanting this sort of exotic, hyper-sexual African woman, so they tried to emulate her" (Kelsey-Sugg, 2021).

In 1814, Sarah began shows in Paris, where she was sold to an animal trainer named S. Réaux, whose original name was Jean Riaux, a ballet master deported from the Cape colony for sedition. Her living conditions worsened, and she was then used as a showpiece at parties and private gatherings held by the wealthy. Audiences could touch her and poke her, and it is suspected that she may have been prostituted as well (Kelsey-Sugg, 2021).

Essentially, the Europeans exhibited and made money off of Baartman and then sold her to various ‘owners’. (Kelsey-Sugg, 2021). Saartjie Baartman died sick and alone, even though her exhibits had been world famous. The ill-treatment of her body continued even in death as she was, again, displayed as a museum object. Her remains were dissected and kept for further studies in the French Museum (Afrika is woke, 2021).

Based on her living conditions, it is assumed that Sarah may have died of pneumonia in December 1815. Georges Cuvier, a French anatomist, dissected her corpse and performed an autopsy in an attempt to prove the scientific supremacy of white men (Kelsey-Sugg, 2021). The autopsy did not examine her cause of death but was an examination of her body, bones, and genitalia. His report interpreted her remains as having ape-like traits and, according to his theories on racial evolution, monkey-like behaviours. A full-body cast of Baartman was also made by Cuvier and displayed along with her skeleton in the Paris Muse de l'Homme for 150 years before being placed in storage in 1970 (Kelsey-Sugg, 2021).

In 1940, calls for the return of Sarah's remains began, and the calls gained momentum after South African poet, Diana Ferrus, also of Khoisan descent, wrote a poem entitled “I've Come to take you home" in 1978. More figures came forward in their efforts to return Baartman; however, it was after the 1994 South African general election victory by the ANC that things took a new direction.

President Nelson Mandela made a formal request to France that listed the return of Sarah Baartman's remain back home. After numerous debates and legal action in the French National Assembly, the request was formally accepted on the 6th of March 2002. Baartman was returned to her homeland, The Gamtoos Valley, on the 6th of May 2002 and then buried in Vergaderingskop, a hill in a town named Hankey, on the 9th of August 2002. This was done over 200 years after her birth.

### The caged Congolese boy: Ota Benga

Like Sarah's story, Ota Benga a pre-adolescent Congolese boy, was also placed on display for the amusement of an audience. Benga was kidnapped in March 1904 by US trader Samuel Verner in Congo. Taken by ship, he was kept under brutal conditions and eventually exhibited at the age of 13. With him were eight other young men. His tribe, the Batwa or Mbuti people, as well as his family, were murdered by the Belgian government's military force, which led to his capture and sale. Benga was exhibited in September 1906 for 20 days at New York's Bronx Zoo and kept in a monkey house for 3 weeks. His captors had often described his space as the best room in the zoo. Many visitors were eager to see his teeth, which had been filed into sharp points. Although he was finally released after various outcries by the public and many Christian groups, he would never return home. Having struggled with living a normal life at the end of his exhibitions, Ota Benga committed suicide. He could not be integrated into American society. His body was buried in an unmarked grave, and his remains were never returned to his homelands (Afrika is woke, 2021). Benga’s suicide places a deep emphasis on the mental turmoil that can come from displacement as well as the vulnerability enforced on the exhibited versus the gains experienced by the captors. While the physical trauma is alarming, there is an accompanying psychological trauma that continues long after the acts of violence cease.

### The beginning of the end

As time progressed, the shows took a deeper dive into European propaganda and scientific racism. They evolved and often reflected racial ideologies that promoted notions of European superiority and justified colonial domination as well as exploitation. The focus was increasingly on ways to reinforce stereotypes and colonial domination instead of the initial perspective based on showcasing cultural differences. In 1870's Germany, ethnological studies took a different approach by including human displays in Zoos, labelling them as "educational" to the general population. This was also a way to emphasize how Europeans had evolved into a superior way of life. Ethnographic museums in the late 19th century were seen as an empirical study for human culture and contained artefacts that visitors would use as a way of creating comparisons between groups (Bradford, 2017). 1903 saw the beginning of the end of human zoos with the first protests against these shows occurring. This was at the Human Zoo pavilion in Osaka, Japan. The last recorded show was in 1958 in Belgium.

What often goes unacknowledged is how these zoos and racism tactics have formulated and aided the development of modern racism. The use of the black body and how it is seen is informed by these roots. The roots that many, like Bailey, choose to pick apart and use only when it is convenient to uphold the desired narratives. What gets left behind seems unrealistic and unproblematic for those who are not experiencing the negatives. In the end, Human Zoos were just an extension of the racial hegemony of colonialism. They allowed Europeans to experience "exotic" places and people while also legitimizing exploitation and discrimination. The Africans placed in these displays were from African empires that were eventually destroyed via colonialism (Afrika is woke, 2021).

Overall, human zoos were used as colonial tools for propaganda, made to feed the white imagination while supporting colonisation, and ultimately assisted in establishing superiority over black Africa. Many of these unequal scaffoldings of power continue into contemporary life in surprising ways. Brett Bailey's installation interacts directly and intentionally with the historical narratives outlined above. What he intends, however, is not necessarily what he achieves, and this is at least in part because of the systemic imbalances that underpin socio-political discourse. Within exhibit B, Brett Bailey claims the work to critique the objectification of black people and colonisation, primarily intended to highlight the relevance of art and its ability to convey memories that remain hidden, as well as the effects of upholding and reinforcing certain moral ideas. Within South Africa, the work was largely received as an iteration of Apartheid displayed through the relationship between the oppressor (Bailey, a white man) versus the oppressed (Black actors). Various academics and critics of the work found it problematic, especially Bailey's right to tell black stories as a white man, a singular person, and as a representation of many white people who tend to use black stories and identities as a means to grapple with their whiteness.

Black voices are often excluded from narratives due to the actions made based on the white perspective/gaze. This introduces various power relations, such as the objectification that Laura Mulvey unpacks, which inform ways of looking at and experiencing others, in this case, Racialised looking. The notion of racialised looking, as Goerge Yancy (2005) explains it, is seen through theorising what exists as a white gaze that objectifies the black body, where the black body and the white body are in constant opposition. White is the standard, and Black is less, often seen through the body as a fixed object. Yancy also theorises the body as symbolic (filled with stereotypes and norms) and frames the body as a battlefield on which many historical and contemporary issues are dealt.

As we have seen, issues with the black body are rooted in the way it is seen and presented through the types of gazes which underpin the apartheid gaze and anonymization that often occurs toward black people. Classifications born through scientific racism also support this type of seeing through skin colour, history, body proportions, etc. These aspects help segregation grow and allow for the

infiltration of black spaces. They were also used in the laws that governed South Africa during Apartheid, which determined the treatment of people.

Bailey inserts himself into a long history of suffering of black people under white colonisers, who not only took control of their lives and dictated how they would live but also caused various physical and psychological traumas through forced labour, land confiscation, violence, and cultural suppression through colonial rule, all aimed at the superiority of white people. The exhibition of bodies functioned as tools of colonization as in the examples of Baartman and Benga above, which is another historical era that Bailey inserts himself in—made to emphasise the inferiority of "exhibits" and the superiority of "Western society". Indigenous people were used to make money, entertain, and provide pleasure for the privileged elite.

Bailey, unfortunately, takes on the major tools that made colonization progress much easier. Human zoos were an extension of the racial hegemony of colonisation, which was legitimised through exploitation and discrimination while creating "exotic" different people and places. Experienced precisely the same way as the experience of the creation and experience of *Exhibit B.*

This dissertation is an examination of the complex dynamics of race, representation and artistic expression in Brett Bailey's Exhibit B, highlighting the historically entrenched relations that influence how South African art is received. It serves to interrogate the ethical implications of a white artist sharing black stories and experiences in the context of South African history of oppression and colonisation as well as the differences in how the work was received through a theoretical framework such as Laura Mulvey's concept of the gaze. This includes issues of representation as well as otherness.

The different responses to the exhibit highlight the importance of identity and individual lived experiences in the interpretation of art. Calling for an acknowledgment of the power dynamics present even in the way artists create work. This exploration of Exhibit B advocates for the examining of those given authority to tell stories and challenge historical injustices and how they, sometimes recreate the very things they are speaking about as Bailey has done within this body of work.

# CHAPTER 2: RACE, REPRESENTATION AND THE GAZE

## Race

To be able to unpack some of the problematics within *Exhibit B* also includes understanding the effects of race, representation, and the gaze- the human relationship between looking and representation, and identity. These aspects are based primarily on socialization as we saw in Chapter 1. The concept of race is essentially the categorisation of humans, primarily based on identifying shared physical and social attributes of specific society (Barnshaw, 2008).

The term came into use in the 16th century as a way of describing familial relations and in the 17th, century began to take a new meaning. It was first based on physical attributes and then later, national affiliations. This constant shifting of the boundaries reveals and underscores the fact that the notion of race is a social construct. One thing that never shifted, however, is the power relations that this term carried, characterised by the superiority and inferiority of specific groupings often at opposite ends of the spectrum. The concept of race is the foundation of the belief that humans can be divided based on particular criteria, resulting in the superiority of one race over another. The categories and groupings on which these divides are based have varied based on societal standing and even political affiliations, however skin colour is the most prominent and consistently invoked.

Much of the thinking around race in the 20th century is driven by false theories of so-called 'scientific' racism. Biological racism is another term to describe a pseudo-scientific form of racism. Essentially, the term was used to support and justify racial discrimination through science by looking at certain aspects such as intellect, and physical attributes and then applying various discriminatory, explanatory models to them to create narratives which included an emphasis on placing certain groups as inferior and others superior (Templeton,2016). Unfortunately, although most theories under scientific racism were proven false, the perception of race that they espoused continue to exist and show up in various forms within modern society. For example, discussions around the pain tolerance between black and white people is still a discussion within medical fields due to certain studies written that stated that Black bodies took pain better. Even though this claim has been proven to be false, it continues to show up in the analysis of experiences of black women in labour wards (Brown, et al. 2021).

Racial identities are essentially the reflection of cultural attitudes of imperial powers during the colonial expansion. This notion also rejects the idea that race is only defined based on biology although historically, biology did often drive the stereotypes and biases that affirmed such boundaries. Biological arguments that were historically used to "justify" racial categorizations have long been

debunked, but the stereotypes and biases they perpetuated have had lasting consequences. These ideas about racial difference were often weaponized to reinforce oppression, through practices like slavery, segregation, and colonial subjugation. Race may have been a social construct, but its structures of inequality still persist today. The impact is there and addressing it also means challenging outdated systems.

As discussed in Chapter 1, in South Africa, racial categorization went as far as being officially legislated during the Apartheid years. Characterised by laws, such as the Population Registration Act of 1950 that governed South African lives up until the democratic elections of 1994. The Act aided in the segregation of South Africans and classified them under four racial groups: Black, White, Coloured and Indians. Coloured and Indian were the last of which included sub-classifications.

Although racism is often seen as "Black versus White," there is more to the narrative. Racism shows up in many ways and it is how such issues are dealt with that often directs the narrative. Either based on the victim's perspective or the aggressors and all too often, the victims are black minorities who have been historically stripped of their power finding themselves navigating what it means to be black in the 21st century in a world that often allows white people to anonymize Black voices and exercise their whiteness on black bodies.

As we have seen, racism appears in various forms and in some cases gets shifted by the way we view things. Our own varied perspectives are driven by our own individuality. Historically entrenched relations often appear as triggers among black people based on the intensity of historical narratives upon black minorities and the journeys it took to move past certain periods. White communities experience certain divides rooted in the experiences and exploration of their whiteness. Well-intentioned actions might profess equality but within ambiguous circumstances and spaces, racism makes a visit. Social psychologists,' Dr Jack Dovidio and Dr Samuel L Gaertner unpack this discussion with a simple explanation, "when faced with certain situations, white will pick white over black". A sociological perspective argues further that learned behaviours and experiences can impact this decision as well in a country with such a petrifying history and a relatively new sense of freedom (Davido, et al, 2004). Given this perspective, it becomes difficult to believe that someone like Brett Bailey, an artist and individual fluent in such a history, would have nothing to say about the racial narrative he was casually immersing himself in. His immersion in these narratives is not a passive experience but a conscious and inevitable interaction with legacies of the past, as I will argue in the writing to come.

Racism can also appear as microaggressions: small, seemingly harmless incidents that reflect subtle racial bias. These actions are easier to understand from the perspective of those affected and how they are impacted. This perspective requires an honest psychological understanding of the process of bias

and stigmatization. Microaggressions include a great deal of uncertainty and aid in placing black people in distress, reinforcing many stereotypes about black people such as “Angry and violent” with triggering actions and sometimes underhanded jokes alluding to certain things that may appear harmless such as “It was just a joke”. When these incidents are dismissed as “just a joke”, it invalidates the victim’s experience and portrays them as overly sensitive. This creates a situation where the victim’s response is misinterpreted as retaliation, making them appear defensive and even hostile. This dynamic is known as “Aversive Racism’, a form of unconscious bias that manifests in everyday interaction (DeAngelis. 2009, p.42).

Such situations create a psychological bind, for the person of colour. The perpetrator can easily deny these actions, resulting in invalidation and leads to anger and frustration. On the other hand, the perpetrator might not even be aware they have done something “racist” or acted out in a racist manner. Which creates a view that a person of colour is being sensitive. Unless the action was clearly outlined as a racist act, the lines are easy to blur, often resulting in unsavoury experiences regarding race issues and a spotlight on things such as “whiteness.” Columbia University Psychologist Derald Wing Sue, PhD, framed Aversive racism under microaggressions using three words: microassault, microinsult and microinvalidations. A micro assault is an intentional and conscious action taken and done deliberately. This could be helping a white person and providing better service in a commercial setting while blatantly offering a subpar experience to a black person. A microinsult is verbal and nonverbal communication that subtly conveys a negative message. This includes insensitivity, rudeness and demeaning someone’s racial heritage and identity. For example, implying that someone was hired in the workplace not because they were qualified but because of race by questioning a person of colour about how they got the job. Lastly, microinvalidationis communication that excludes and erases the thoughts and feelings of people of colour as well as their experiential reality such as implying that certain things are not real because “white majorities” are not experiencing the same things (DeAngelis, 2009, p.42).

Race, as Nell Irvin Painter says in *The History of White people*, is an idea not a fact. Making it clear that regardless of the physical and powerful implications of race, whiteness is an ideology that is privileged in racial discourse. Whiteness itself is a social construct, an elaborately constructed mosaic of social and cultural meaning which often goes unnamed and as Dyer said, it is invisible as it is viewed as the normative state of existence.

Whiteness as an ideology derives from the historical practice of institutionalizing “white supremacy” which is recorded as having begun in the 17$^{th}$ century. “White” appeared as a legal term and social designator determining social and political rights. It then became a tool used to decide the allocation of various privileges such as living arrangements as well as legal and social regulations. The term

white is used primarily to describe light skinned people and those of European descent. Whiteness is a socially and politically constructed behaviour , as well as systems rooted in preferential action towards people raced as white. All this began from a long history of European imperialism and epistemologies, based not only on skin colour but an ideology (beliefs, values, habits and attitudes) resulting in unequal power and privilege distribution based on skin colour (Jay, 2005). This ideology is more about power than it is about skin colour.

The main distinction between ideological whiteness and white supremacy is history and culture. White supremacy calls for the support of white power over black people and often uses various systems such as legislation to enforce and advocate for white people. Ideological Whiteness, however, encapsulates the subconscious predisposition in society to elevate white people while simultaneously oppressing black people through tools such as microaggressions, stereotypes and complacency of racism as mentioned previously within this study,
Ideological whiteness also includes the larger historical and cultural scope, including the history of white supremacy which is known to include traits of violence such as racial terrorism as seen in many historical eras.

Race then becomes denigrated to black versus white, because categorising racial actions carries aspects of what many refer to as “the victim mentality.’ This places importance in the way we view things and how they are presented to us. Representation and race are closely linked due to the way in which different racial groups are portrayed in politics, media and culture shapes public perceptions and reinforce social hierarchies. Such presentations reinforce stereotypes, marginalise certain groups and even affect how people view themselves. An examination of the relationship between race and representation reveals deeper threads that affect identity, power and equality within society which make the representation of black bodies within this study, important.

## Representation

While there are many ways to describe what representation is and why it matters, within this study, it is the action of speaking and acting on behalf of someone as well as providing a description of them that portrays them in a certain way by assigning various attributes to the person in question. These attributes can be negative or positive, true or false. The attributes can also be placed on a person’s identity to achieve various outcomes which have varied results in the larger scheme of things. For example, attributing characteristics such as tagging someone as a criminal based on the colour of their skin when in actual fact, they may not be a criminal but a respectable member in society. Historically, people were placed in categories and fundamentally labelled based on skin colour. In this study, the racing of people as either black or white was and is based on western understandings of the world, which have filtered into everyday experiences and interactions with mainstream media.

In mainstream media, black people and white people are seldom presented as the same which is an aspect that speaks of the various stereotypes and identity narratives attached to these classifications. The concept of "Unified white" of the 17th century is where it all began. The Unified white movement was a decentralised network of white supremacists and far-right extremist groups unified by the core belief of the superiority of the white race and the desire to maintain a predominately white society. To achieve this, violence was often used in the form of hate crimes, domestic terrorism, etc. This concept gathered universal acceptance in Europe as it called for the solidarity among racial separatism and anti-immigration ideas, resulting in what we know as Racialized slavery and unequal social status in European colonies. These results came with rendering Africans as "the colonized" and the oppressors "the colonizer." Historically, many restrictions were approved that ensure the power dynamics within this relationship were upheld and the idea of a 'unified white" remained.

This view strengthened western studies of race and ethnicity (scientific racism) as seen in 1758, when Carl Linnaeus created a system of "Objective classifications" whereby descriptions of non-white groups of people included derogatory stereotypes on the basis of "taxonomic categories". These categories looked at the body and geographical roots and evolved into subdivisions that feed into the fetishization of the black body. In 1775, Johaan Friedrich Blumebach, in support of these growing narratives, declared that "white colour holds first place, such as is that of the European people". This declaration and the representation of many others would plant a seed that would grow far beyond into the future, the growing of ideological whiteness. A standard that would always result in the perception that "the white race is better in all aspects (Nirenberg, 2009).

Like microaggressions, racial discrimination may emerge in indirect ways, such as through the application of the white gaze. Discriminations can appear in subtle gestures and signs as well as more obvious explicit actions. It also appears in the portrayal of people, through racialised tropes, marketing, and reinforcement of stereotypes

This can be described as misrepresentations. For example, the constant representation of non-white people in mainstream media as "gangsters, criminals or ungovernable" and white counterparts as "the standard, law abiding citizen." white portrayals remain consistently positive in this domain. Classic studies of both news and reality-based programming show whites overrepresented as officers and victims (Dixon, 2015). These classic studies directly and indirectly feed into the idea that people of colour are, at their core, criminals. Not only does this reinforce a stereotype, but it also plants a seed of fear when confronted by people of colour in reality. Such stereotypes result in various other notions which often garner unsavoury experiences among black communities. This makes representation a crucial tool in building a specific identity and is often aided by the anonymization of black bodies and silencing of black voices. The overshadowing colonisation of apartheid has ensured that this can be

carefully done through the narration of African stories and imagery presented by white people.

Sue Jewell (2009), an American urban sociology researcher, speaks about the three main archetypes prevalent in the representation of black women. These ideas are primarily based on western experiences of enslaved people, specifically the "mammy archetype", which was created during slavery and appears in many films and literature. This archetype specified how a slave woman should behave, look and what they could say. It was translated as a 'maternal figure." The second is The Sapphire woman popularly known as "The angry black woman.' An archetype used to describe a woman who is seen as hostile, who emasculates black men through insults and often displays vulgar language when upset. This term came into use in the 1940's and 1950's on the Amos & Andy show. Lastly, The Jezebel was a term used in contrast to the Mammy slave women. The role of this woman was to satisfy the needs of white slave masters and to justify the rapes of black slave women. The women who fit this archetype were women who fit the European beauty standard in comparison to other women. These archetypes are simplified into what we presently know as the welfare queen (makes money through schemes), the gold digger (exploits good men) and the video vixen (known for sexual promiscuity). These archetypes are very prevalent within mainstream media regarding black women in all parts of the entertainment sphere and trickle into communities with different names often carrying the same characteristics (Jewell,2009).

> "The portrayal of black women as lascivious by nature is an enduring stereotype. The descriptive words associated with this stereotype are singular in their focus: seductive, alluring, worldly, beguiling, tempting, and lewd. Historically, white women, as a category, were portrayed as models of self-respect, self-control, and modesty – even sexual purity, but black women were often portrayed as innately promiscuous, even predatory. This depiction of black women is signified by the name Jezebel "(Pilgrim, 2002).

The reason behind misrepresentation in most instances is that the system was not created to serve black people. Mass media was built on the foundation of European culture and as such, carried European prejudices. The European standard which frequently did not serve black people in a meaningful or respectful way. Mass media such as television, art, print media, all fed into the European standard often reflecting the perspectives and experiences of white European life, excluding misrepresenting black people (Hooks, 1992). This is historically important because mass media remains an important source of information and imagery. It influences public image, perception and has the ability to reinforce certain opinions and drive certain narratives and stereotypes against groups of people based purely on the beliefs of those who are in charge of it (Hall,1997). This is why representation holds value within a society. It contributes to the way we see each other and ourselves, which highlights problematics in the way white people tell black stories and push certain narratives on behalf of black people and about black people. Within this study, this is seen in the representation found in *Exhibit B.*

Media constructions of culture, race, and ethnicity remain important to study because of their potential impact on both sociological and psychological phenomena. Specifically, researchers have utilized two major theoretical constructs to understand the potential impact of stereotyping. Priming and cognitive accessibility suggests that media consumption encourages the creation of mental shortcuts used to make relevant judgments about various social issues. For example, Repeatedly hearing and seeing a stereotype about a person, feeds into how you make judgements about them which often affects how you treat them- in most cases, negatively. Repeated exposure feeds into various cognitive links within people which primarily dictates stereotype-based actions (Dixon, et al, 2019).

## The Gaze

As mentioned in the previous chapter, academics like Duma Ndlovu (2015) questioned Bailey's right to "tell black stories" as a white man. This questioning, in many ways, is a principle factor when considering the narratives engrained in in non-white populations since the 17th century. Given the historical background of South Africa, namely the Apartheid/Post-Apartheid era, it is arguable that black experiences should only be spoken of and shared by black people as Ndlovu suggested. Labelling Bailey as a "racist South African" also places emphasis on his upbringing, his way of seeing and looking. which would have been in direct contrast with the way that a black South African experienced the world - as filled with viewing themself through a white gaze. *Exhibit B* rehashes many unresolved discourses around the use of the black body in art and as Enwezor has said, the work could have carried a very different dynamic had the work been used as a conversation to unpack these discourses. As quoted before,

> Despite the sincerity of the artists who have so far brazenly maintained a relationship in their work with the black body, there is a certain over-determination that accompanies their gestures. They seem to neglect the fact that the black form is as much a grotesque bearer of traumatised experiences as it is the abject vessel of race as a point of differentiation. More than alerting us to how the stereotype fixes its objects of desire in that freeze-frame of realism, as prior knowledge, the work of these artists that act of surrogacy which emphasises the subject's muteness and silence, while embellishing their own positions as the voices of reality, as the vocal integers of truth (Enwezor,1997, p. 37-38).

The early 1990's in South African history are filled with a magnitude of discussions around appropriation of the black body by white artists through anoynymization,often as an exercise of whiteness on black culture and an exclusion of black artist. This is essentially where differences are formed. To gaze implies more than "just looking" and it introduces power relations, a dynamic where the gazer holds the power over the object of the gaze. The concept of the gaze reinforces body politics by positioning the white standard as ideal, marginalizing non-white bodies and shaping societal perception.The white

gaze introduces a dynamic of racial looking that objectifies the black body and as seen in *Exhibit B* , this often leads to conflict based on power within every sphere of life. George Yancy broke this relationship down into the three points as mentioned in chapter 1 namely. Historically, these dynamics of friction are essentially based on the "white standard", a standard that goes as far back as 1948 in South Africa, hence the term Apartheid Gaze.

***The Apartheid Gaze***

Given the Apartheid "vision," or way of looking, imbued with the colonial ideals that govern the White gaze, researchers and academics often speak of *the apartheid gaze.* It is essentially a way of looking and seeing through a lens that colonises (Richards,2012). It is a gaze that regulates meaning, interrogates it and controls it. Although it is primarily based on race, it carries an exploitative nature of sexism, classism, and ethnic prejudice. It is rooted in the western vision of racial purity and whiteness and ultimately produces discrimination (Richards,2012). Confronting it means dissecting Apartheid culture and facing resistance built and instilled through traditions that have been in existence for multiple generations. It is not just the culture; it is a way of life passed on from generation to generation and requires an openness as well as critical introspection to shift past. Culture at its core, is who we are. Rooted in our personal paths and it this case, the way Apartheid has shaped us as both black and white people. Past and present. Concepts such as the apartheid gaze and the normative gaze function by reinforcing racial hierarchies. One shaped perception under apartheid while the other functions by establishing the white body as the standard of beauty and worth in various societal contexts and in broader spheres.

***The Normative Gaze***

The normative gaze is based on Normative theory. This theory involves arriving at certain "moral" standards and judgements that regulate and decide whether an action is correct or incorrect. The ability to decide wrong versus right in order to achieve "proper behaviour" within society. Normative behaviour itself is defined as behaviour that communicates a specific message filled with notions of social pressure, action that may not even have any direct punishments but also affects how one connects within society. There are two types of normative behaviour, Consequential behaviour which means that the outcome of the action is what decides whether or not an action is good or bad. Secondly, deontological and teleological behaviour which means that the action is based on moral obligation and does not include the consideration of consequences even when they affect human life.

This outlook is what made up the apartheid gaze and normative gaze. However, The normative gaze theory is defined by the relation between beauty standards and the effects of white supremacy. Ideas of beauty are those that seem rooted in plainness and symmetry and are eventually what become "normal." This idea of normality appears in art and literature and also delves deeper into the proportions of the body (Van Dyke,2009). Each analysis provides comparisons between differences,

variations, and measures to allow for classification. Classification itself comes from the various scales often used when race is concerned, the idea and tendency to classify and categorise as in the notions of white supremacy.

Overall, the normative gaze is a gaze that combines the many facets of heteronormative white privilege, This analysis of the gaze also places emphasis on the sub-classifications of the gaze which often apply. These sub-classifications often function as an extension of the white gaze. Which by default is grouped under the colonialism experience as well as the apartheid gaze and normative gaze. To begin with, is the Objectifying gaze. This type of gaze is based on the lived experiences of women seen through a lens of sexual objectification. Which essentially means that the body or parts of the body are valued for the consumptions of others, therefore resulting in the absence or rather, the removal of one's own bodily agency, sexuality and humanity. This conceptualization of a predominantly heterosexual perspective (Fredrickson,1997) was first introduced in Laura Mulvey's explanations regarding the "way of seeing" in her essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema (1975).* This can be elaborated on in the experiences of Sarah Baartman and how she was presented and seen. She was placed in positions reinforcing her inferiority which reinforced certain narratives regarding her worth and "use." Men were attracted to her bodily features which European women tried to imitate by wearing Victorian styled dresses with undergarments that made for bigger features which they did not naturally have.

Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) developed Mulvey's theory arguing that sexual objectification or the objectifying gaze occurs in three arenas: Interpersonal or social encounters, which includes everyday lives and normal interactions with other people, in visual media that depicts social encounters, and lastly visual media that depict bodies. The objectifying gaze exists through looking at a person as an object and for specific consumption such as pleasure or entertainment. Media itself portrays certain looks which affect life and opinions and perceptions therefore small media such as a poster, can feed into such objectifications. Although this theory applied to women, it did also feature and call into question the way men are seen as well, based on their bodies, an aspect which was just as important, in human zoos.

What also makes this theory important is the reaction to it which enables self-objectification. This occurs when one adapts to living in a world that constantly objectifies them. It essentially includes presenting yourself in a certain way to fit the mould placed on you and even presenting yourself in a way that rebels against it. Often done to regain control that comes with being sexualised or objectified (Fredrickson, et al.1997). This is similar to what most African authors refer to as "writing for white audiences" when they create work. Or even the way Africans present themselves to be able to survive in certain spaces by displaying a sense of perfectionism so that there can be no complaints rooted in racial biases. On the other side of this, is an assumption that white subjects are central, particularly

within the male gaze, which assumes the centrality of the male subject. In simple terms, this is the imperial gaze through which white men are the standard on which Africans are viewed. This way of looking is shaped by colonialism, reflecting attitudes of power and superiority for those doing the colonising.
The dominance of the heteronormative gaze in all of the theorizing above, foregrounds once again the problematics of *Exhibit B*, specifically in Bailey's failure to position himself effectively.

A gaze rooted in whiteness often requires reflection and analysis through a non-white perspective, which is essentially how the post-colonial gaze operates—a concept used to explore and explain the relationship between colonial powers and the colonized. The placement of colonized people in the position of the "other" which shaped and established the colonial identity as being "powerful" and superior. The postcolonial gaze has the function of establishing the subject/object relationship which provides the basis for the colonizers understanding of themselves and their identity. In order to understand the appropriation of power, the post-colonial gaze theory is used by formerly colonised people to deconstruct barriers that colonizers enforced on them particularly through cultural, economic and politics (Beardsell, 2000). Therefor by providing a platform on which the uncomfortable issues of race can be unpacked as seen in most interactions within works by many artists such as Bailey's and various artists like Zanele Muholi particularly within the south African context.

## A different South African Perspective: Zanele Muholi

Discussions around South African artists and their works on the black body, race as well as culture are essential for interrogation and self-reflection. They are crucial for understanding the complexities of identity and societal issues, encouraging critical examination and insights born though various perspectives. Particularly, differences in the storytelling that occurs when black artists take ownership of the narrative as opposed to white artists who often exercise their whiteness. An apt example of such ownership can be experienced in Zanele Muholi's *Being (T)here* (2009). The work depicts Zanele Muholi in a store window display, topless but dressed in a Zulu bead skirt. This is done in the Red-light district of Amsterdam, which is known for prostitution, brothels, sex shops and museums. Amsterdam embraces the idea that people may engage in prostitution, drugs, and the like and is open and tolerant of such things. Prostitution is legal in the Netherlands but illegal on the streets, which is why prostitutes stand in window displays and have their own rooms with red lights that highlight where the women are working (Red light District).

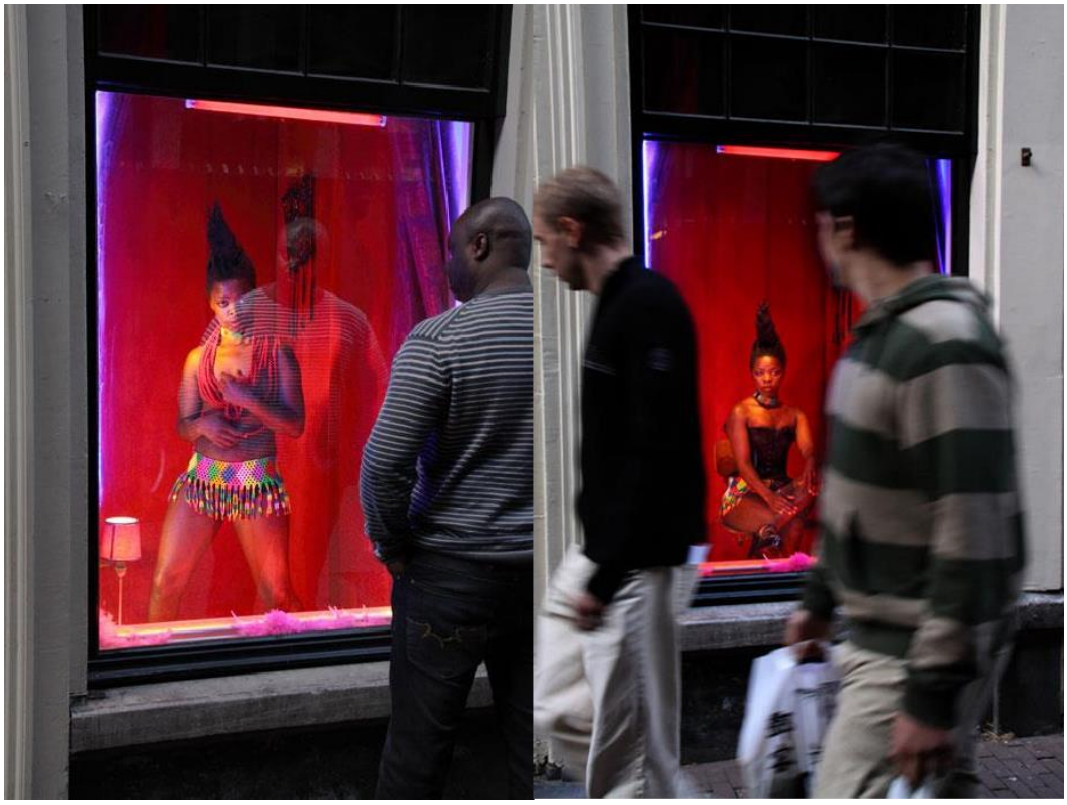

*Figure 4: Zanele Muholi Being (T)here,2009,photographed by Sean Fitzpatrick. Documentation of Intervention- Red light District.*

Zanele Muholi (1972), is a black South African artist who specializes in Photography, video, and installation. Similar to Brett Bailey, Muholi explores themes of race, gender and sexuality. Muholi has very particular interest in the documentation and celebration of South African lives, through storytelling, with the primary subject often being of the LGBTQIA+ community. Muholi's work introduces an intense perspective in terms of the way we look at the body and experience it, from visually bold power relations, identity, context, and art placement discussions and how these elements affect how the work is received. This plants a seed of interest regarding the choices made by Bailey, placing a question mark over his choice of location and why he chose to attach the various tones and sombre ambiance his work carried within those spaces.

Muholi's work offers a new viewpoint, particularly in the aspects of power relations observed between the viewer and Muholi who stares directly at the viewer. Zanele's attire and positioning contribute to the discussion of identity, highlighting the significance of context and the influence of the individual controlling the narrative being presented. Muholi's work also calls for the analysis of work placement and how that affects how work is received. It also draws attention to why certain exhibit spaces make better sense to the artist. For example, understanding why Bailey moved his exhibit to London can provide a new perspective on his work, especially when comparing the different audiences in each location. These differences and similarities, much like Bailey's work, offer valuable insights for the research.

Bailey's methodology presents bodies as a colonial commodity however, in Muholi's work, Muholi is photographed in a store window display section, as if she was a product on display to entice a consumer to buy. In the renditions, they are wearing a black corset and a beaded Zulu skirt with their hair in a braid whereas in some images, they are left only with a Zulu beaded skirt and hands covering their chest as Muholi stands looking directly out at passers-by, while in other pictures, beaded necklaces cover their chest.

The room Muholi is in, is a window display. The room itself is painted red with the lighting also in various shades of dimly lit reds and blues. Passers buy get to view them through the window while they continue to place themselves in this room at various positions. The positions themselves do not place them as inferior but as a person with ownership of their being, challenging you to look as many would.

Muholi is not presented as an inferior person even in the objectification that occurs in being placed in a store window. To some, the history of the red-light district might make them seem inferior but the act of placing themselves there, removes the inferiority created when the choice is made by someone else on their behalf. This aspect of choice is problematic within Bailey's work. By placing themselves in the display, Muholi claims ownership of self. Regardless of any narrative that may emerge, the choice of how to manage their body and where to place it, remains with them.

***The Red-Light District***

Situated between the Rokui and Ddamrak, the Denmark harbour is essentially where the first red light district made its appearance. De Wallen (the Red-light district) is a network of alleys with over three hundred one room cabins. The cabins are rented out by sex workers/prostitutes who use them as "shops" in which various sexual services are offered, usually from behind a window or a glass door. The rooms are often characterised by the use of blue or red lighting and the colour red often found on the walls or backdrops of the displays. Window prostitution is the most popular of these services. The area is a major tourist attraction in Amsterdam, housing a number of shops such as sex-based museums, shops, and theatres. Among these are regular attractions such as coffee shops and other monumental buildings such as the cannabis museum or the Oude Kerk, Amsterdam's oldest monument.

During the Medieval times, married and "holy "men were forbidden from entering the area and by 1578, Fornication was deemed a punishable act which resulted in the banishment of sex related work. The sex workers were driven underground and had to seek protection and shelter by working for a "Madam" to continue working. This would mean that by the 18$^{th}$ century, men would have to visit parlours to get these services. The rich however, did not find the parlours appealing as they lacked

luxury furnishings. This resulted in the birth of gambling houses which operated eventually as high-class brothels, which authorities found less problematic.

This way of life eventually propelled the ban against prostitution in 1811, a decision spearheaded by religious groups at the time. French soldiers had become the main customers for sex workers and to protect them various disease, a Red Card was in introduced. The Red Card was a permit to work, which meant that sex workers had compulsory health checks in order to receive one. The card was then revoked if a worker was ill and only reinstated when the worker was proven heathy and with Venereal diseases which soldiers needed to be protected against. In 1911, a law banning brothels and pimping was passed and with rise in religious organizations aimed at ending prostitution, workers were driven underground again. Only to then disguise themselves as parlours selling beauty treatments.

With every period within the redlight district's history, the Christian movements would assert their beliefs and tighten their grip on Dutch society. Towards the end of the 19th century, religious representatives would go out into the night, with the intention of converting clients who sought out these sexual services and the people who provided and ensured that these services were available. This would include the singing of hymns and various iterations of songs to highlight the wrongfulness of such acts as well as waving Bibles in the faces of these people and reading verses to them. Essentially this how 'underground" brothels were born. With all these fierce oppositional acts, the city council in 1897 and 1902 banned brothels. The bans did have the opposite effect, Amsterdam did become known as "The City of Sin" as more service providers did move into the city to try their luck, especially in the underground markets.

Among the series of changes occurring at the time, the police then did not allow woman to entice their clients by standing in their doorways, instead they could now only do so by standing behind windows and curtains. This resulted in a substantial increase in women standing behind glasses attempting to seduce men walking by. This increase also meant that windows would become a scarcity. The window owners raised rents to enormous amounts to counter this need. Through this change made by the police, the beginnings of window prostitutions found in Amsterdam. Birthing and instilling the Dutch derogatory meaning of "Asking for it" when you stand within the window display.

The use of coloured lights within the district is essentially a language between the sex workers and the customers. Red lights are used by Cisgender women and blue lights are used by Transgender women. While the rooms themselves are often left red, the lights help customers tell the difference between Transgender women and Cisgender women. Men are typically found in parks, gay clubs and through various websites instead of the Red-light District and the term "Prostitute" is only used to refer to

women. Men only ever get placed in the window displays as models to raise awareness for the lack of Male representation within the district.

While the place is a tourist attraction, it is also known for the crimes such as the Sex trafficking and the pimping of underage children. Not only does it serve as a place of sexual freedom and exploration, but it does also carry negatives that call into discussion the motives of tourists coming in and the people who choose to keep it alive knowing what happens in the darker parts of the district (Asthana, 2007).

Although previous attempts have been made to legalise prostitution, awareness has been raised on behalf of the prostitutes working in the district. There are groups being made to work against their will. Some were brought in from abroad under false pretences by pimps, others are trafficked and stolen to form part of the illegal working forces under various pimps. Similar to the traditions found in the roots and history of human zoos. The culture has not disappeared but simply taken a new identity with an added element of power dynamics driven by sexual exploitation. In the year 2000, brothels became legal in the Netherlands and today, prostitution is regarded an official profession bound to the same rules and regulations as any other profession.

Zanele Muholi's experience of the Redlight district in *Being (T)here (2009)* revisits and highlights the problematics found in Bailey's work starting with the discussion of ownership. Muholi uses their own body to tell their own story of their own experiences and in this case, only the photographer who took the pictures engages in how the story is told, based on her direction. That in itself places a big emphasis on who the power belongs to. The power of storytelling, narrative control, direction. Muholi is in control of how they want to be viewed and received. Muholi is not minimised into just another piece of a story, which is often what happens when black stories are told by white voice. The work was conceived during a residency in Amsterdam. Muholi had been experiencing a newly found fascination with the redlight district and the way it presented the sex industry (Dlungwanana,2013). Within the district, sex is everywhere. Advertising includes everything from miscellaneous products to ordinary things like soap adverts and cafes.

As mentioned previously, Muholi is dressed in a Zulu beaded skirt, wearing a corset in some images and in others, presented as topless, using only their hands to cover their breasts. Muholi's hair is in dreadlocks, styled in a braid. To understand why this look is important, means understanding Muholi's cultural identity. Muholi is from the Zulu tribe of KwaZulu-Natal. Being Zulu changes a lot regarding how this look is and can be received by those who understand the culture versus those who do not understand it. Within the Zulu culture, Zulu maidens are often seen in this look. Especially during cultural events and ceremonies. The attire often includes skirts and beadworks, a very traditional look characteristic of Zulu people. Such look is often celebrated. Muholi wore their

traditional Zulu outfit essentially to pose a challenge for the passer-by to interact with a fully clothed woman in the window.  In Zulu culture, Muholi is fully dressed but is, according to Dutch terms, half naked and “asking for it” (Dlungwana, 2013).

Unlike the western cultures which often view such nudity as a type of disgrace or vulgarity, African cultures do not shy away from it. In many jurisdictions, nudity is viewed as “indecent exposure” unless the woman is breastfeeding, a stark difference to traditional African cultures who deem it acceptable. Within western cultures, there are social norms based on female modesty which form the driving force behind such beliefs. These differ in some cases based on context and location. And in most instances, these differences are found in artistic media or medical and educational media hence the otherwise derogatory views that often show up when nudity is discussed.

The notion of exposed breasts inherently relates to the sexualisation of the female body, a critical aspect of its representation. How the body is perceived through various lenses raises important questions: what messages emerge when the body embodies conflict? In Western society, nakedness is often viewed as derogatory, while in many African cultures, it can be celebrated. When these cultural frameworks are stripped away, issues of distaste and arousal come to the forefront. The female body frequently becomes a site for discussing sexual identities and preferences, predominantly from a male perspective. It also serves as a platform for exploring themes of power, shame, and vulnerability, coloured by women's insecurities. The frameworks of looking, the gaze, and representation are significant, shaped by whose norms and values prevail—typically those of the white perspective in most narratives.

The use of the corset, in Muholi’s work feeds into such ideas and notions mentioned above. Not only was it worn by elites in Europe, but it was also an undergarment worn to help shape the body. And mostly importantly, a garment worn underneath and made to not be seen. It was aimed at raising and shaping a women’s breasts while tightening the midriff to appear somewhat smaller. It aided in supporting and improving the women’s posture by straightening it into an image of what would be described as a modest woman (Lynn,2014).

In Western society, particularly in historical contexts, Muholi's appearance would directly align with notions of the "exotic other." The combination of nudity, dark skin, beads, and hair aligns with the stereotypical trope of the "exotic being." In Zulu culture, beads hold specific meanings, with their colour and patterns conveying particular messages. The dreadlocks and braiding, commonly worn in protective styles within black communities, also serve as markers of cultural significance, including the communication of status and royal lineage, as well as the mapping of historical or geographical routes. However, these details, while rich in cultural significance, also contribute to the fetishisation

of black culture, where features such as darker skin, fuller lips, or wider hips are often reduced to the "exotic" and commodified as desirable traits.

What makes placement and intention extremely important is understanding what narratives the artist is in control of and what other possibilities could come of it. Muholi's work creates discussions and makes room for exchange. It does not directly re-instill various narratives on a set pedestal for viewers to grapple with. It is not a set body of work that forces you to grapple with history by confronting you with it again through the same processes. Muholi does not engage in providing the sexual services.
Instead, Muholi challenges you to look. By just looking, a whole experience is attained. They are in control of how you see them not how someone else has made them seem. Muholi is not presented as helpless but as a strong figure grappling with identity within a foreign space. The objectification is a choice made by them, and it is here that their installation diverges from that of Bailey's.

There are multiple layers to Muholi's objectification seen through the commodification of self. By placing themselves on a sales window display not as a sex worker but an artist who has commodified their sexuality, body and culture. To the audience, presenting in Zulu attire brought in a new experience and context within the redlight district. The use of their body and sexuality is a commodification of self through the objectification Muholi has chosen however in making a choice to do so, Muholi retains bodily autonomy unlike some of the sex workers in the redlight district who may have found themselves in those windows through different circumstances. By controlling the narrative and presenting in a way they want to and are comfortable with, the objectification the differs to that of Bailey's and his actors.

Muholi holds a space for themselves as a challenger. Inviting viewers to gaze at them, but they are also gazing back at them. They are the object, but importantly by their own choice for their own research and storytelling. This is a courtesy not given to the black bodies who often get rendered anonymous. To understand the need for this specific location within Muholi's work starts with understanding her own identity. The importance of their experiences regarding freedom, sex, preferences, and their overall views on what the redlight district is about and essentially where they are situated in all of it. Throughout their work, Muholi details the experiences of being part of the LGBTQIA+ community as a woman and as a person who identifies as "They/Them." Muholi is not impersonal to the narrative. Muholi is the narrative and a representation for many others. Which is an aspect that Bailey refuses to acknowledge within his body of work. Starting with the lack of acknowledgement regarding his whiteness while dealing with black storytelling and aspects of black trauma.

> To insert myself in the images I make is to reclaim and reconstitute the image of Blackness, not as a mere subject of some else's gaze. Through visualising my own Blackness, I offer an alternative to the way Black subjects have been historically perceived. (Mohau Modisakeng, 2019)

The redlight district is famous for its sexual freedom. The freedom to provide sexual services and the freedom to receive such services. Many tourists visit the area for assorted reasons, curiosity being the biggest one. The freedom aspect of it could be enticing to a person like Muholi. Having grown up in South Africa and experiencing certain injustices. The Freedom offered and found in the Redlight district emphasizes certain problematics experienced within Muholi's story such as the lack of freedom of being and the lack of freedom of expression as a person within the LGBTQIA+ community. Accompanied by the negatives such as the illegal dealings that ensue such as the human trafficking and use of children in not so good places, a horrid reality carrying parallels within the south African spheres as well. The LGBTQIA+ community in the South African sphere has its own toxicity and dreadful narratives. From hate crimes such as curative/ corrective rape to the erasure of various groups in society. The parallels are separated only by a thin line, a line Muholi is used to walking.

Muholi, grew up at the height of apartheid. As a black domestic worker, Muholi's mother was subject to such legislation and what being unable to move and live freely. Sexuality was also included in the sphere of government control during the apartheid era. In relation to both race and sexual orientation. For example, The Morality Act of 1957 criminalised interracial relationships but also homosexuality. In 1996, the post-apartheid institution became the first in the world to outlaw discrimination based on sexual orientation and later became the fifth country to legalise same-sex marriage (Abel-Hirsch,2021). The struggle against systematic racism and discrimination against the LGBTQIA+ community share a complicated past, which extends into the present. It was not until the 1980s that multiracial lesbian and gay activist organisations emerged. Today, the enduring impact of apartheid, both economically and socially, and ongoing sexual discrimination, continue to impact the lives of black LGBTQIA+ South Africans particularly. Muholi's work entered into a void of representation when it came to presenting positive imagery of black Queer lives in South Africa, explains Sarah Allen

> I picked up the camera because there were no images of us that spoke to me at the time when I needed them the most. I had to produce a positive visual narrative of my community and create a new dialogue with images (Zanele Muholi, 2021)

In another perspective of the work, the viewer looking in on the display has a lot to process. Muholi stares directly at the viewer with an unapologetic look which automatically presents Muholi as superior. What this does, is place the viewer at a crossroad. They either meet their eye with shame or meet their eyes with the same level of intensity. One results in a shame filled viewer who instead shy's away because they have been caught looking and two, shy's away because they do not want to

be seen as interested in buying what is being sold. The other, results in an onlooker who is proud of this figure who presents herself so confidently. This viewer will take the time to look and even analyse which results in an open-ended question. Are they looking because they find it interesting? Are they looking to buy? Are they looking because it feeds into the "exotic" being imagery?

Muholi is responding to a lack of visual evidence of their life and their reality in post-apartheid South Africa and is in turn, creating an archive and rewriting history. That is inclusive of themselves. Muholi states, "My images are portraits, so if my work is being exhibited, someone else's existence is also being affirmed. What matters is having a dialogue — with people, with institutions and with history. It is a collective project of reclaiming space" Muholi also uses performance to explore the perceptions of black bodies in foreign spaces and how they cause debate. *Being (t)here* (2009) turns the tables on how black women's bodies are perceived (Havmøller, 2010).

Whether seen through the various aspects and perspectives of "seeing,' Muholi has directly and indirectly addressed George Yancy's notions on racial looking that conjectures the existence of a white gaze that objectifies the black body. Within *Being there (*2009), Muholi addresses what it means to be part of the LGBTQUI+ community as a non-white figure. By addressing this, the black body is used as a symbol. One that addresses stereotypes and disclination. The body is also used as a place on which the lack of historical writing about LGBTQUI+ people is addressed and by doing so, is an act of inserting them within the sphere of history being made and documented. Identity is addressed, particularly in a way that brings various perspectives into to one setting. The body, Muholi's in this case, reflects what it means to be objectified, to own your narrative, to be an object both in a physical sense and in a metaphoric sense. Muholi is also a representation with a constantly evolving and changing narrative on what reality truly looks like and is in many unexplored territories. These conclusions are seen not only through the work but in the information communicated and given by Muholi. The work takes one through the various perspectives and versions of "seeing," with information communicated here and there to direct the narratives. The work is a personal experience for each individual, but Muholi takes ownership of how we follow the narrative and draws the line in terms of the intention to harm versus the intention to teach and document. A simple task which may have been the missing element in the experience of *Exhibit B*.

### The rainbow nation: Ubuntu

All too often we speak about the rainbow nation in the South African historical sphere. A metaphoric term originated by Bishop Tutu that encapsulates the idea of unity within the post-apartheid era amongst south Africans. The rainbow nation holds promise of a brighter future, one filled with hope. In a country once filled with great division, it calls for various ethnic groups to collaborate without a sacrifice of identity. In simpler terms "Nation building." One cannot speak of the rainbow nation without "Ubuntu.", which is a Nguni term that means "humanity." Ubuntu is a way of behaving well

towards other people and carrying yourself in ways that do not cause harm but uplift and build others within communities. One of the key principles within these metaphors is a respect for humanity and dignity.

Having been born in 1998, these metaphors made up what my identity is -a born free (a South African term for young people born without the burden of apartheid, born with the expectation to bring change and be the change). It does call into question Bailey's upbringing. Born in late 1960's, he would have experienced apartheid in some way or other, and its effects, and although he does not speak much about it, there are clear narratives his work partakes in. During that time, children, black and white, were raised in a social system that prioritised white children over black children, and this would have a lasting impact on their experience of society and their interaction with each other. That is the difficulty within Bailey's work. While his intention may not be racism, the power he steals by his exhibition evokes trauma. His silence is complacency.

## Orania

In post-apartheid South Africa, racism did not just disappear. Representations of it remain through symbolism that seems harmless but is silent remainder of not so peaceful times. This symbolism and representation are a shared identity within Bailey's exhibit. Orania, like *Exhibit B*, has these lingering unspoken narrations. Created in 1991, a year after Nelson Mandela's release and it is a quiet white only town in the southern outer banks of the orange river. The town is home to Afrikaans people who believe in preserving white Afrikaner culture. The old apartheid town is filled with flags ad monuments in remembrance of the architects of segregation. Although deemed to be a "peaceful town where all are welcome," the symbolism prevalent in the town fuels fear, particularly for black people who know what the symbols meant throughout the apartheid era (Webster, 2019).

The town was created based on the ethnic Bantustans that were established by Hendrik Verwoerd, often referred to as the father or architect of Apartheid. The town was established by his daughter and her husband, who towards the end of apartheid, believed like most Afrikaners in South Africa that democracy would was a threat to their existence. A community of non-white occupants were evicted in the outskirts of the Orange River to make this town attainable using violent methods such as dogs, guns and beatings (Webster,2019), methods that were used by the apartheid government to achieve compliance.

The reality with race and representation is that South Africa is still new to the democratic way of life. Racist culture has been around for much longer that the culture of equality. There is a need for mindfulness that is often overlooked in many spaces. Revisiting history is often used an exercise for whiteness that neglects the journey that it took to arrive in certain spaces. The rhetoric's engrained in racial issues remains through the reinforcement of similar narratives and methods. Bailey inserted himself in a problematic racial narrative and essentially refused to award it the acknowledgement and

grace it required to read as conversation instead of another racial attack. Non-white artists still have more to be aware of beyond their own socialisation and growth. Ubuntu often reads as a theme in the lives of black south Africans but when the reminders of traumas keep being reinforced, it may be unfair to expect non-reaction. A problem when the stories of black people are told is often the expectancy to not look at colour, but how does one not look at colour in a country riddled with politics, suffering and struggle on its basis. Both sides require graceful attitude that is not always willing to dismiss the cries of others to justify one sole perspective.

### White victimhood

The introduction of Orania within this discussion serves as an example of the victimhood and fragility that exists among some white people. There are many other groups and places that are growing in numbers with similar ideas to those of the residents of Orania. These ideas are rooted in the belief that there is an imminent attack on the white race. Another prominent group within the country is called the Suidlanders. An exclusive group of white people who live in suburban areas and work as farmers and businessmen who function based on the prophecy of a Doomsday. What characterises these groups is the idea that the white people are being attacked and in some ways being eliminated, often followed with the actions that move to create 'white-only' spaces such as residential areas and refugee camps for when the prophecy comes true (McKenzie al. 2018).

What sets these groups apart is the way they frame themselves as victims, creating stories that are not the reality of many South Africans. While there has been violence targeted at both races, white people have grown to avoid being seen as the aggressors, a trait that has grown with varied discussions of race within many spaces. There is a fragility that exists within these discussions. The acknowledgement that white people hold social and institutional power over people of colour seems to act as a trigger of victimhood. There is a disconnection with reality when racial acts are brought into discussion. Whiteness is surrounded by privilege and status, protective layers of resources and benefits and when those are stripped away, a defensive layer is upheld.

The expectation for racial comfort also lowers the ability to tolerate racial stress, which is why some white people view certain race conversations as an attack or something that induces fear. Conversations about race are often in coded language which reproduces the act of racism. The coded language acts as a barrier for white communities. Other barriers of this defensive reception show up as isolation, some sort of punishment or penalty as well as ostracisation within social spheres as well as placing blame on people of colour which serves as a way of attaining and protecting the comfort of white people. Which, when accessing the result of historical racism, appears as comfort attained through violent measure and death.

Representations form part of this coded language. The symbolism of victimhood and fragility can be seen through the imagery within Orania. The monuments of apartheid forefathers or in the most recent

years, in the north of Johannesburg where private citizens erected a monument commemorating the farm murders occurring within the country. The monument is called “Plaasmoorde” or “Farm Murders”. This is word is written out on the mountainside with large white letters. The place itself is filled with hundreds of white crosses which each have the name of the victim, their age as well as the date of their murder. The aim in creating this monument was to show the number of white farmers who had been murdered and to give names to the them as they often went nameless in the press. While there is no proof for an epidemic of white danger or murders, there is a narrative of victimhood that is growing, expanding these various groups. Such displays often carry forward numerous narratives especially to those who find relevance in them. Like how *Exhibit B* may have for some who still see black people as inferior.

In a country where white skin was once a guarantee of eternal privilege, the introduction of affirmative action and other policies designed to redress historical imbalances are experienced by some white South Africans as threats. This feeling is not grounded in reality but in a digressive victimhood response when white people are faced with what they view as discrimination in this environment, equality can be experienced as disprivilege. While some White individuals may respond to discussions about race by acknowledging and addressing systems of privilege that contribute to issues like inequality, negative reactions, denial of these issues, or distancing from them can also be more commonly observed in certain White communities. (Danbold, et al.,2022) Danbold et al explain:

> A digressive victimhood response … involves the dominant group claiming victimhood on a dimension of victimhood distinct from the original charge of discrimination, thus shifting the conversation to a new topic (e.g., “The non-dominant group claims we are discriminating against them, but their accusations threaten our free speech” (Danbold, et al, 2022)

This appears as symbolic racism, often found in controversial narratives in art works created by white artists and is essentially rooted in the beliefs that black people no longer face the problems born through racial issues such as discrimination and in some instances, violence. White people acknowledge that they hold these views yet will also deny that they are racist. Essentially it seems that the real issue is being *tagged* as “Racist”. Symbolic racism is often expressed through subtle, indirect ways instead of explicit actions or attitudes. It operates through cultural or political symbols and ideas such as stereotypes and narratives about race instead of direct racial hostility, reflecting a covert and socially acceptable way of maintaining racial inequality (Sonders, et al.1996).

Once the framework of being called a racist person is removed, there is no need to distance oneself from the title nor provide an acknowledgment of acting in racist manner. While most black people grow up expecting racism and being taught how to navigate it, there are norms within white communities that also make up the identities of white people as well which may or may not counter this expectation held by black people. Symbolic racism can be pervasive in white communities

(Sears, 2003). Overall, symbolic racism is rooted in racial prejudices and broader cultural values influencing political behaviour and social policies that continue to affect contemporary life through its subtle influences (Kinder, 1996).

The conflict comes from historically being awarded privilege to the extent that change is received as attack on culture, ancestry, and personal identity. To confront racism as a white person involves a critical analysis of self. It becomes a threat or an attack on whiteness, the group image which has been directed to look a certain way. When white people are painted as racist, there are limitations such as those of free speech, victimisation and discomfort due to the learning and changing that needs to occur. Reorientation needs to occur in the way of thinking, addressing racial privilege and historical violence. This often results in the denial, distancing and dismantling of race in some cases with white people offering themselves as just "human" (Dyer,1993), however within the work *Exhibit B*, Bailey unfortunately chooses to deny and distance himself, a behaviour Richard Dyer (1993) simplified as "Angry when attention is drawn to their whiteness when they are seen by non-white people". Dyer also emphasises the need for invisibility, a reflection of the primacy of whiteness that even Bailey taps into at the height of the criticism against him by choosing to not fully engage in further discussion of his exhibit. In the reception of his work, he takes on a defensive stance and plays on the discomfort of others by portraying himself as a victim of censorship and misunderstanding.

An "attack" can look like various other things beyond the discussion and questioning of white people, it can be minor things that occur in ordinary life. People of colour talking about race and racial perspective, which often results in conflict and black people feeling the need to protect the feelings of white people by not challenging their "white" perspective. It can also appear as the retaliation that occurs when a person of colour is in a leadership position or questions group membership and white solidarity. Hence the idea that white people must prepare for genocide. (DeAngelo, 2010) White victimhood is governed by inversion, projection and victimisation also characterised by the three types of racial assaults highlighted previously.

Various aspects of socialisation also feed into these ideas of fragility. Growing up in segregated communities with segregation on multiples levels such as education systems, health systems and economic systems whereby the segregation is representational and informational is a profound aspect. Many white people grow up in white dominated society and the lessons they are taught are often projections of certain beliefs that result in an inability to think critically about privilege (McIntosh, 1988). Media, workplaces, schools and historical perspectives are filled with pro-whiteness narratives. Some white communities are taught that the absence of people of colour in certain spaces is "good", a code that carries a message that is reinforced and internalised through daily discourses.
This racial segregation dynamic, a big part of white socialisation, spread and spoken via coded language that is understood by is denied when white communities are confronted (DeAngelo, 1992).

White people are taught to see themselves as more important, that their objectivity and positioning as white people makes up what society is and believes. This creates the impression that white people see themselves as the Universal human, representatives of humanity. This also means that whiteness is then not viewed as an identity. This perspective also means that white people see themselves as humanity with the exclusion of other races in most cases which makes it easier to not award other races empathy. There is a declaration of universalism that occurs within the white race that functions to deny the significance of race and the advantage of being white (Morris, 2016).

The assumption that white people and people of colour experience the same realities creates a false narrative that feeds into the trope of white victimhood, ignoring the systemic inequalities that people of colour face. White people are taught to view themselves as both part of a group and as individuals. The individualism removes the history and privilege passed on generationally which many benefit from today. This also adds to the idea that they, as white people, are unique, a blueprint, free from all the socialisation and racial messaging within the culture. Individualism allows a white person to distance themself from the racial group and demand the "benefit of the doubt" that may exempt them. There is an understanding that "whiteness" exists and can be a problem in terms of racism among white people which evokes a negative response because no one wants to be received and thought to be racist. This results in discussions of not wanting the tag but the ignorance of the actual issues that victims are highlighting as seen in Bailey's interactions with being called racist and how the work appears racially problematic.

History dictates in both racial identities, a way of navigating life in narratives that often begin before an individual's birth. What differs is the treatment of these narratives and how one essentially handles them by accepting and learning to eliminate the frameworks that create space for hostility instead of recreating the trauma.

This chapter demonstrates the complexity of the gaze, race and representation with an emphasis on race as a socially constructed concept which is shaped by contexts such as the historical, political and cultural. Furthermore, highlighting the varying aspects of race that go beyond "Black versus White" and acknowledges individual experiences in terms of navigating racial identity in society. There is an outline of how the categorisation of humans is often based on physical attributes that are then used to create hierarchies that are underpinned by "scientific theories" that continue to affect societal perceptions. These racial constructs are unpacked in the context of Suth Africa's apartheid era.

The exploration of the intersections of personal perspectives, history as well as power dynamics shapes the lived experiences of both black and white people who often find themselves in the positions of "superior versus inferior". Ultimately, there is a call to challenge these outdated

structural systems and to advocate for the acknowledgement of the inequalities that continue to survive in society often founded upon race issues.

# CHAPTER 3: A CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF BRETT BAILEY'S *EXHIBIT B*

Brett Bailey is a South African playwright, director, installation artist, and the artistic director of the performance company, Third World Bunfight. Born in 1967, Cape Town. He holds a BA degree in Drama and English from the University of Cape Town as well as a Post- graduate diploma in performance studies from the Das Theatre in Amsterdam. (Third world Bunfight, 2010) He is also the curator of South Africa's only public arts festival called Infecting the City, in Cape Town which ran from 2008 to 2011, (Bailey, 2011) and which has recently returned to the South African art scene.

Having been born in the late 1960s, Bailey creates work that questions the lingering effects of racism that consciously and subconsciously affect society, particularly the segregated society in which he grew up (Festival De Marseille, 2017). Within his works, he investigates the many layers found in colonial and post-colonial Africa. This is exemplified in the focus of my study, *Exhibit B.*

Brett Bailey's *Exhibit B* is the second part of a trilogy of work (installations) that refers largely to the history and model of human zoos. These were based on racism that had begun as scientific "raciologism" (Mayer, 2016) as discussed in Chapter 1. The work itself is a series of installations that depict these human zoos. The installations consist of live Black actors placed on display in glass cabinets, together with other props and objects. The actors re-enact the Human zoos of the 19th century as part of the installations. These types of exhibits attracted many visitors during the 19th century to 1958 and consisted of many people that had been sold and imported from various colonies. These people were described as "Exotic beings" and placed in cages and parks for display among animals and "wild beasts"(Mayer, 2016). The exhibits were a form of propaganda intended to feed the white imagination and Western constructs that aimed to establish superiority over the rest of the world (Mayer, 2016).

In each display, the actors are intentionally objectified through labels that assign them each a number and/or a description, including their country of origin. They are stripped of their names, a process that places emphasis on how they were viewed and renders them nameless. Some were described as "Found Objects", a historical term referring to the use of an object (or fragment of an object) for its aesthetic value (Arya, 2018). The actors do not speak, and viewers are required to observe in silence.

According to Bailey, *Exhibit B* is about three things. Racism, the objectification of black people, and Colonisation. The work, irrespective of historical and political function, speaks about the relevance of art, its ability to convey a memory that is often hidden away, and the effects of reinforcing or upholding a moral ideal. The positions of the artist, of the performers, and of the viewers are challenged (Mayer, 2016). *Exhibit B* pushes you to analyse the content provided, the artist's

perspective and intentionality, as well as the impact it has on society, which struggles deeply with being empathetic towards "the other".

*Exhibit B* discussions rehash many unresolved discourses in the contemporary context. Public outrage ensued over the work; viewers stated that the exhibition reinforced the objectification of black bodies and reproduced the idea that black people were objects about which white audiences could have conversations and reinforce their superiority (Atkin, 2015). Bailey, in contrast, felt he was providing a "critique of a repressed memory of racism" through the bodies. The use of the body and how it is seen informs the discussion. In his determination to expose a systemic imbalance of power, I argue that Bailey instead creates a negative situation, which calls for introspection, placing the viewer in a position of the "voyeur". In this way, I argue, the black body is again denigrated to the position of the cultural pariah.

## An Analysis of Brett Bailey's *Exhibit B* tableaux & discussions

***Synopsis.***

The exhibition was originally conceived in 2010 as a different creation by Brett Bailey. A human installation entitled *Exhibit A. Exhibit A* (2010-2012) began in Vienna, Austria at the ethnology museum and then travelled to Germany. The work was about human zoos and went on to birth two more installations in the series, the second (and the focus of this discussion) was called *Exhibit B* (2012-2016) and the third: *Exhibit C.*

*Exhibit A (2010)* was focused on the theme of dehumanisation and how race as well as colonialism shape the portrayal of black people in western history. While *Exhibit B (2014)* focused on the human zoo*, Exhibit C (2015)* challenges audiences to focus modern-day exploitation and the persistence of systematic race such as the commercialisation of black culture and the ongoing dehumanisation of marginalised groups. The differences within the series are the tones used and the ways in which they are presented. *Exhibit B* however offered a more confrontational and direct approach to the representation and use of the black body within the art contemporary space.

As a sequel *to Exhibit A, Exhibit B* included a variety of installations focusing on tableaux which were based on colonialism and the treatment of black people within this history and present-day contexts. The tableaux document and offer narratives on the atrocities of nineteenth century colonial forces, inspired by the histories of Belgian influences in Congo, and other European interventions in Africa. Some installations show the violent nature of deportations experienced by African immigrants as well as the horrors of the apartheid regime.

The *Exhibit B* was first experienced by South African audiences at the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown (now formally known as Makhanda) before travelling to Europe. The installation received positive reactions from critics and reviewers when it first opened in London, but the situation

soon turned negative, as it would shortly spark protests resulting in its cancellation and negative media coverage. Before travelling to more places, the work had been previously shared and put up in some places such as the Barbican Centre and it had received positive reactions from reviewers and critics, however it did spark protest wherever it travelled. That became part of the identity of the exhibits.

As mentioned in chapter one, the presentation of *Exhibit B* relied on viewing and experiencing the performance through silence, led by a silent cast member who directed audiences into viewing twelve silent tableaux arranged along a specific path. The tableaux themselves were arranged according to the conventions of museum displays and curatorship. A series of glass installations housed in individual rooms with glass cabinets featured skulls and human matter such as bones and skeletal items, mirroring those that were found in colonial ethnographic museums and science displays during the nineteenth and twentieth century (Maedza,2017).

While the work does interrogate colonial practices such as racism, the unethical application of pseudo-sciences, social Darwinism as well as other historic atrocities, I argue that the work replicates rather than subverts them. The process of recreating these various constructions of indigenous African people in sets resembling what might be considered as their "natural habitats" does make for an unsettling parody when compared to the typical presentation style used in museums. The use of advanced framing techniques as well as objects and set design elements such as pedestals and lighting in comparison, creates an ongoing and complex discussion within contemporary art.

***The analysis of the 6 tableaux***


*Figure 5: African woman chained to Bedpost. Photo credits -The Guardian*

One poignant example that allows us to begin unpacking this relationship between *Exhibit B* and colonial exploit can be seen in *Figure 1* (Chapter 1). In *Figure 5*, there is a woman whose back is to the audience and the only view of her face is through the mirror, which is positioned in the middle of two picture frames. The picture frames themselves hold significant value by way of their inclusion. This example engages specifically with the 1904-1908 Herero-Nama, Namibian genocide and the systematic rape of Africans by European settlers and forces in colonial Namibia.

The rape of indigenous women was a norm for German colonial settlers, gaining the practice special names such as Verkafferung, meaning "going native" as well as Schmutzwirtschaft which means "dirty trade" (Rohrbach, 1907). For the longest time, the genocide has been studied and unpacked however it is the experiences of women within the sphere of the genocide that have been left untouched and rather poorly investigated and shared.

These experiences include news and reports of indigenous women that would never be investigated in the German courts, symbolised in the depiction of the woman chained to the bedpost in a soldier's room as seen in the tableau. Despite this, the year 1904 would mark a year of great importance for the Herero people. This was the year in which the Herero people revolted against the German colonial rule as well as the year in which the very first case of violent acts against an indigenous woman would be heard in a German court.

The seminal case was of the attempted rape and murder of Louisa Kaman, the wife of Chief Zacharia's son. The German national known only as Dietrich had killed Louisa for rejecting his sexual advances towards her and was given only three years of imprisonment. This angered the Herero people because of the lack of care displayed by the German courts for indigenous women but most importantly for the lack of care displayed for a woman of higher regard, in this case the Chiefs daughter in law (Madley, 2004).

To address the uprisings that had begun by the Herero people, the Germans then created concentration camps for the indigenous population in 1905. The installation (*Figure 1*) is a recreation of a German military soldier's living area symbolic of the experiences of African women in the concentration camps during the war which raged from 1904 until 1908 (Maedza, 2017). The woman sits stiffly in the room, on the bed while shackled. Her neck, hands and feet are all shackled to the bed using a chain. She is also presented naked from the waist up and her back is to the audience. There are a variety of objects hanging on the walls of the room: a cross, hunting trophies, guns as well as images and, the mirror that sits in front of her. Through the mirror the woman stares back at the viewers', making eye contact with audience members as they enter the room. While the audience members gaze (with its many connotations) at the woman presented to them, the woman gazes directly back at them. They lock eyes and see their images reflected back, a conversation resting upon the mirror itself.

The overall performance offers a visual representation of the untold stories and many experiences of women whose names and identities remain lost and unknown, many of whom served as sexual slaves or “comfort women” during the war. Instead of words, the performer uses her body to convey the sensitive intimacy of the moment captured in time.

To ensure that this is achieved, Bailey offers a summarised version of the history of these German concentration camps and the experiences of women to ensure that the performer understood how to bring the performance to life (Maedza, 2017). This narration, however, is reserved only for the performers and not the audiences. While the sharing of these lesser-known stories is an important and well-intended outcome, the pain and history of African people has here been used as a means to achieve an end, which is problematic given the historically entrenched imbalance of powers at play.

The cross is a symbol of religion, used to signal Christian missionaries and their activities that often preceded and accompanied traders, military troops and settlers. Within the colonial sphere, Christian missions were prolific. While they did bring education and access to Western medicine, churches were often used to support colonial practices by reinforcing colonial belief systems to ensure compliance of the indigenous populations. The hunting trophies and guns, also depicted in Bailey’s tableaux, would also act as a means of control and fear mongering. Many of these indigenous groups of people did not have access to the type of advanced weaponry which the colonial military troops would use to ensure discipline. Bushmen hunting was also a popular sport during colonialism much like game hunting.

The framed images hanging on the wall also tell harrowing stories. In some of the images, young girls and women are forced to pose nude, exposing their bodies while the German soldiers are seen laughing and smiling around them. Many of these images were sent back to Germany by the soldiers in the form of souvenirs and postcards, as memorabilia (Maedza, 2017). In some of the frames, are images of hangings.

*Figure 6: A close up view of the frame with prisoners of Congo as seen in Figure 5*

For example, if you look closely into the frame as seen in *Figure 5*, the image is of the prisoners of the Congo, free state, 1905. The image is of 22 men, two of which are symbols of authority based on their positioning (standing upright in attention) as well as their attire, which is essentially full dress compared to the other 20 black men who have been presented on their knees with rope on their necks, with their bare chests out and makeshift pants or rather bottoms made from ill-fitting and worn-out material. The prisoners themselves are presented as subordinate not only through attire but also the because of the positioning of their bodies on their knees, and the improvised leashes around their necks (Momodu,2023).

In his background research, prior to the creation of *Exhibit B*, Bailey investigated the history of the Democratic Republic of Congo as it is now known. His intention for pairing this seemingly unrelated image in a tableau focussing on German occupation of Namibia is unclear, other than to provide a generalised (though far from comprehensive) overview of colonial atrocities. To one a viewer who lacks prior knowledge of the details of these images and staged symbols, the image does not hold much significance other than its persuasive depiction of skewed power relations and general issues relating to slavery. Bailey does share some of this background in public interviews regarding the aftermath of his show, offering some degree of clarity, this information is not made available to viewers. The choice of imagery can also serve as offensive however when left for personal interpretation in light of human zoos.

Discussions around the history of human zoos is not diversely known, therefore the suggestions by Bailey on colonial history do not serve as enough information. The Congo Free state, presently known as Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), was privately owned by King Leopold II of Belgium, Leopold established his claim on Congo in 1880's as a private holding of a group of European investors which he led. His interest in the place was sparked during Sir Henry Morton Stanley's

exploration of the Congo river in between 1874-1877. In November of 1877, Leopold sought to open the lines of trade along the Congo river and by 1884, the association of Internationale du Congo had signed treaties. 450 independent African entities would make the African European trade possible. The treaties would also allow them power to rule over the Congo free state.

These treaties would be written and finalised during the Berlin conference of 1884-1885 where European nations gathered and partitioned their lands. This then allowed Leopold to be the sole owner of the colony, under the guise of bringing civilisation to Congo. However, the early 1980's marked the beginning of the ill-treatment of the Congolese people in his quest rooted in colonial belief systems of superiority. This type of ill-treatment went on to involve the inclusion of slavery utilised in the form of forced labour for the harvesting of rubber, palm oil and ivory. These included rape, brutal beatings murders, and the amputation of hands of the Congolese men, women and children (Georges, 2002). Death rates increased for Congolese people who would suffer under his reign. In 1908, after pressure from international groups and backlash, the Belgian government that ruled through colonial possession relinquished and Congo would gain its independence in 1960 after years of suffering and genocide. With its colonial past, Congo experienced many atrocities such as exhibitions for human trafficking such as human zoos, in which the display and sale of slaves was promoted and encouraged. In 1897, King Leopold II took 267 Congolese people and placed them on display at the Palais du Colonies, an estate that he owned outside of Brussels that would eventually become what is today the Africa Museum.  The setting was made to look like an African village by simulating indigenous environments with building sets such as wooden houses made of thatch (Kakissis,2018)


*Figure 7: King Leopold's Congo harvest. Image by Valeria Zalaquette*

***King Leopold and The Red rubber hands***

The other tableaux in Bailey's installation cover a wide range of brutality experienced in Africa during colonial rule as mentioned previously, however it is note-worthy to look at these various

tableaux through the web of connectivity they weave. One of the discussions raised by the previous discussion, is Kind Leopold II's history in Congo, evoking specifically the memory of the brutal rubber collection systems which were implemented there by Leopold. Within this system, people were enslaved and forced to work in rubber plantations. The slaves would either be killed through a series of shootings, or their limbs and hands would be brutally amputated, if they did not manage to meet the standards set out for them in terms of deliveries and rubber collections on the plantations. This was done to ensure that the plantations were kept functioning as they had been privatised from the state by Leopold. (Maedza, 2017)

When King Leopold took over Congo, the state had been dealing with an economic decline. However, Leopold identified palm oil and ivory as clear sources of financial gain. The ivory was primarily used in jewellery making, sculptures, false teeth and even in piano keys before the popularity and birth of plastics. Throughout the years to come, the ivory trade would stop making enough profits and debts would increase exponentially. The state was facing bankruptcy which would only change when the demand for natural rubber, a resource found in many Congolese forests, was suddenly at an all-time high in the 1890s. Initially, the course of the Rubber boom was the bicycle however, the development of the automobile and expansion of the tyre industry propelled by the invention of rubber tyres for cars (Weinstein,1983). This kind of demand resulted in the privatisation of vacant lands within Congolese states which reinforced forced labour and additional violent means of collecting rubber in efforts to increase profit margins.

The atrocities used to keep up these margins were then enforced by colonial officers who would collect the rubber and export it. Unfortunately, this also contributed towards a major decline in the Congolese population due to poor healthcare and disease, famine and low birth rates primarily caused by the nature of violence experienced by the female population, who were often kidnapped and assaulted. The Congolese economy would then be held together by ivory sales, rubber plantations, road building and wood chopping for steamboats which was all done through the work of the enslaved work force of labourers. Labour was demanded by the administration from indigenous Congolese population in lieu of taxation.

First alluded to in the tableaux depicted in *Figure 5* and *Figure 6*, Bailey continues to reference the violent relationship between Belgium and the DRC throughout the installation. As another example shown in *Figure 7*, a performer appears dressed in a colonial styled, police uniform. His face has been painted white and he holds a basket filled with latex hand casts. The entire tableaux places emphasis on the disturbing harvest of the rubber, observed within the rubber collection system outlined above, at the hands of military forces known as the Force Publique.

The Force Publique was a military group in the Congo free state which had been placed in charge of the enforcement of labour policies. The Force Publique was used to campaign against Arab slave trade in upper Congo, with the directive to protect King Leopold's economic interests and suppress uprisings which had become a frequent occurrence. Their directives eventually took a negative turn, which called for their participation in the abuse of the Congolese people (Maedza,2017). The Force Publique, a 19 000 men army would march into the villages, taking women and children as hostages, forcing men to scatter and disappear into forests in search of rubber. Unfortunately, with the extreme nature of demand for the rubber, the vines would be drained dry. Therefore, resulting in further travel into more forest in search for more. These trips would last weeks for some, as they could not return home without enough rubber to free their family members. (Hochschild, 2024)

> The baskets of severed hands, set down at the feet of the European post commanders, became the symbol of the Congo Free State..... The collection of hands became an end in itself. Force Publique soldiers brought them to the stations in place of rubber ; they even went out to harvest them instead of rubber.... They became a sort of currency. They came to be used to make up for shortfalls in rubber quotas, to replace.....the people who were demanded for the forced labour gangs; and the Force Publique soldiers were paid their bonuses on the basis of how many hands they collected. (Forbath,1977)

Workers were sent into the jungle to slash down vines that held the latex and they had to lather their bodies with the raw rubber latex. As the latex would dry, they would collect multiple layers on their bodies and then later when it had hardened, to remove it and collect it, they would scrape it off their skins. This method would sometimes pull off their hair and flesh, leaving the skin open to infections. The work was extremely labour intensive and a health hazard, especially as there were no good healthcare systems in place (Stanley, 2012).

The Congolese villagers themselves also fell under the same treatment of the enslaved workers. They were sent quotas to meet in terms of rubber collections and the Gendarmerie (a military force with law enforcement duties) were sent to collect the quotas, using violent methods such as rape, looting and arson to enforce their demands. Villages were often burnt down, and hostages were taken. The men were enslaved or executed for failure to meet quotas while the females were used for sexual pleasure of the colonial officers and as motivation for the men in the villages to collect and bring back more rubber (Stanley, 2012). To ensure that the Gendarmerie did not squander bullets on murdering slaves and hunting for food, they were required to produce the hands of their victims as proof of each bullet spent. This act became policy, and the funds from it went to King Léopold. This period in time is sometimes referred to as the Red Rubber Scandal, in reference to the blood of Africans harmed and killed during the collection of rubber.

The rubber boom began in 1890's and was kickstarted by the invention of the inflatable bicycle tyre by John Boyd Dunlop, which would then lead the way for new inventions such as the automobile. The automobile, presently known as the motorcar, required rubber for their wheels. Rubber also became important for industrial belts, gaskets, as well as coatings for wires used in the telephone as well as

the telegraph (Hochschild,2024). This increased demand for rubber created a large and actively growing international market which would contribute to death tolls in Congo approximated at a horrific 8-12 million people (Maedza, 2017). Although rubber trees took longer to grow, many rushed to plant and find them in the tropics and in wild areas and forests. Similar forced labour systems were also adopted in the Germans, French and Portuguese colonies, which would yield the same violent consequences as in the Belgian Congo (Maedza,2017).

Based on the gruesome historical context of the rubber boom and what the loss of limbs meant for the Congolese people, what Bailey presents is a somewhat whitewashed version of these historical events that has a catastrophic effect on the lives and futures of Congolese people, and references a dark history faced by previous generations. To begin with, Bailey shows an actor posing as a Gendarmerie holding a basket of latex cast hands. While the narrative is clear to a viewer who has knowledge of the history of Congo, Bailey has managed to mute the actual atrocities he attempts to light through his symbolism. The basket of hands cast in latex is a sanitized version that risks trivialising the loss of life and limbs that was an extreme and brutal occurrence during the Red Rubber Scandal. It also does not speak to the negative impact experienced such as famine, and the decline in the Congolese populations.

The work presents a summarized version of this history, primarily translated for white audiences, many of whom are yet to grapple with their own histories as descendant of colonisers. The black story is taken and adapted in ways that white audiences can palate. The tone in which Bailey has inserted this tableau glosses over the trauma and tragedy experienced by the indigenous Congolese people and their descendants and does not adequately account for the complicity of the European coloniser in this genocide. While he does attempt to the turbulent interactions of the Congolese experience with King Léopold II, his sanitisation of the circumstances involved trivialises this experience for mass (Western/White/European) consumption.

***Whitewashing the Black Body.***

The use of the colour white is also quite jarring. While it does reference the colonial officers who were of fair skin and of Belgian origin, by rendering the black actor as ‘white’, serves as a confusing juxtaposition. The narrative being offered is unclear in terms of historical context more so because it is known that some members of the military forces in Congo were in fact black. W.E.B Du Bois described the complexities involved in this juxtaposition of roles (such as black officers made to fight in colonial armies) as producing what he terms double consciousness, or the situation where two identities exist in one body (Du Bois, 1903, p5-10) .

The three elements that underpin the Du Bois theory of double consciousness are the veil, twoness and second sight. The veil works as a one-way mirror, a colour line that controls the subjectivity of racialised modernity. The social world is seen differently on either side of the colour line however, the

veil itself is taken from the dominant world of white people who project their own constructions of blackness onto the veil resulting in these projections being reflected in the one-way mirror. In this situation, the dominant white person owns the power to define themselves, while the racialised subject is invisible. The way white people place Projections of their perceptions on the veil becomes the reality that black people must confront as they navigate and shape their individual identities (Du Bois, 1903, p5-10).

This internal process of reformation gives way to twoness. The racialised subject must account for the views of two social worlds. The constructed black world behind the veil and the world of white people which dehumanises black people through the lack of recognition of their humanity. Second sight is the term Du Bois uses for the world in which black people get to see themselves through the evolution of their world. Black people have to deal with the constant dehumanisation but on the other hand, their obedience, or willingness to mimic Western/European ideals of 'civilised' conversation allows them to glance into the white world and provides access to certain privileges (Itzigsohn, 2020).

By demonstrating obedience, the black subject must carry themself a certain way - speak, behave, look and present in a certain way – in order to assimilate within the white world and access these limited privileges. This whitewashing, both physical and psychological, does grant certain access, but this access is always temporary, partial, and can be withdrawn at any time.

*"Whitewashing caused people of colour to develop a 'bleaching syndrome' which causes an inter of preference for dominant white cultural ideas"- Ronald Hall, 1995*

The combination of two identities presented in one body, is a means to cover direct shame and confrontation. The black identity p masquerading as white identity places the use of the black body into question. Although we know what the actor represents and symbolises in the tableaux, one cannot remove the actor's blackness from the equation. Essentially, the actor is still a black person, playing a white person and representing white, colonial history. A person he can never be but also a person with privilege that he does not have in his own skin. It is also important to note that the use of the black actor calls for a different reaction from the viewers in comparison with a white performer taking up the tableaux in a colonial officer's uniform. In the performer's objectification, Bailey acts as a puppet master, pulling the strings to tell a whitewashed version of the history and protect the white community from the reactions that would have occurred had the actor been white.

While Bailey tries to trouble the idea of a single narrative, he once again reifies a history of trauma rather than subverting it. His actions tap into the theory of re-traumatisation which states that certain experiences and environments can trigger a renewed emotional, psychological and sometimes physical response, perpetuating the original trauma. To alleviate these reactions, safe spaces that allow for conversation are created, which Bailey does not do. His work may be provocative due to the

themes of race and colonialism, however marginalised communities still experience the lingering effect of such history that often include violence and stereotypes that can evoke trauma (Alexander, 2012).

The discussion could have been different if he had left room for it and presented the complicated web of fault, blame and trauma without falling into the trap of whitewashing historical events.. Had the actor remained in his own skin colour, the discussions could have been about the black natives who were part of the military forces too and their participation in the Congolese experience. Again however, the black body is placed in a position to discuss what is presented as black history but is actually centred on white history, told from a white perspective. As Enwezor has relayed, "the black body is used as a place on which history is discussed and rewritten" (Enwezor, 1997). Using a white actor would have directly confronted white complicity in colonial atrocities without the invisible veil that Bailey has offered in the form of a black body. To remove the privilege and power engrained in his whiteness, an unbiased approach would have been more impactful in meeting his supposed intentions. Using the black body to protect the white body and stealing the black voice feed directly into the contemporary systematic abuse of black people, perpetuated by puppet masters in places of power.

*Figure 8: The Age of enlightenment by Sophie Knijff,2014.*

The whitewashing is not isolated to a single tableau but is consistently repeated. For example, the use of white in the tableaux regarding the gloves as seen in *Figure 7*. Within this image, a black man is cosplaying a man in Victorian clothes, similar to the iteration done in the previous image, *Figure 7*. His skin is also whitened using specific pigments to cover his black skin.

The powdery substance on his skin does little to hide his African features seen though the texture of his beard as well as the darker undertones peering through the white powder on his face. The outfit he wears is symbolic of a well- off man in Victorian styles of clothing.

What is fascinating within this image is the representation of the other. The man, like the previous actor in uniform, is representing two. Fashion is always linked with status and authority and within Congo, although rubber and ivory trade were the dominant exports, textiles were also important. The indigenous textiles would be worn and displayed for special ceremonies and occasions. They were often made for important figures such as royalty before King Léopold II's rule, after which they became hot commodities for his bureaucratic administrations who would use it to differentiate themselves as well as wear to show off amongst the elites (McDonnell,2018). The Patterns on the clothes, the gold accents and laced linen trimmings allude to a very wealthy and important figure within society. This can also be seen in the way his bedding of beautifully embroidered and cut linen, which speak to expensive and exclusive artistry. The image offers a profound representation of the complexity of power. There is a lot to be taken in ,which is a stark difference when looking at the other tableaux on display, even scary when one thinks of the atrocities involved within this era. This tableau, unlike the others, holds dynamics of the confrontation of power. This confrontation addresses race, wealth, white privilege and vulnerability, unlike the other tableaux which directly deal with specific historical aspects.

The way he is laid on the bed and whitened also reminds me of death or rather a man waiting on his bed for death to visit, almost as if it would offer some escape. In death, bodies often turn pale and blue due to the lack of blood flow, and the undertones of the actor's skin seem to be a slight shade of blue. There is something deathly about the image – he lays there as if he is ready to be viewed for the last time before he is buried. This is a ritual which is done within the Xhosa culture when one has passed, and is commonly practiced in other African cultures as well which also includes inspecting the body and cleaning it with medicine and holy water before it is viewed (Nkabinde, 2012) The deathly implications of the tableaux find stark parallels in the following description that Hochschild shares regarding the first encounter between the native Africans and the Portuguese.

> This boat had wings all of white, sparkling like knives. White men came out of the water and spoke words which no one understood. Our ancestors took fright; they said that these were vumbi, spirits returned from the dead. (Hochschild, 1998).

The juxtaposition of the assumed identity of the actor as well as the real identity of the person playing the character is an eery confrontation. Again, the black body is used in place of a white body to tell a story. The use of the number not only objectifies the body, but it offers a bizarre perspective. For if he was actually a representation of a dead man, then the number on the label would speak of not only the number of people who were objectified and sold but also the number of the people who lost their lives in these processes that were carried out during the colonial regime and even the number of lives he

had contributed to ending. Overall, the actor is placed in a position of a different kind of exchange. The set up makes the interaction even more intimate. The act of laying down on ones back holds a lot of vulnerability. To lay there for hours in silence offers direct confrontation to the performer who is placed in a vulnerable position while under the protection of the black body.

It is inappropriate for Bailey to use black bodies to implicate them with colonial practices by placing himself (as the white coloniser) in the position of the victim and initiating the process of re-traumatisation. This action is unsettling, not in terms of production but through the lens of normative power relations. Any reaction offered here, takes into account of Bailey's positioning as well as the fact that the man in question within the tableau is a black man representing a white man. Therefore, a white man is protected through of the black body in a situation that could have prompted violent reactions born from the simulation of a colonial officer whose reputation is negative. On the other hand, Bailey functions on the power he has yielded, behind the scenes.

There is a level of victimisation within this tableau which makes one quite uncomfortable. For even in evil, there is a level of appeal being passed on to the viewer. One can get lost in the beauty of the set and clothing and the luxury that power seems to carry which is a jarring experience in the space of confrontation. Bailey again has offered a form of protection. At first, it was the invisible veil offered by the use of the black body and now, it is the beauty and vulnerability offered in this display. Anything to escape the real history of white people in this instance. And accounting for his whiteness, it is not shocking that he carries a certain bias when it comes to white people. As seen through various discussions of race, each person is often more likely to operate in the realm in which his identity holds similarity.

***The Exotification of the Black Body.***

*Figure 9: Brett Bailey's Exhibit B: Origin of the Species. Image credits- Material World,2014*

In comparison to the previous tableau, there is an emphasis on the recreation of an exotic look. In this tableau *(Figure 9)* are two actors, one female and one male, depicting the Nama people. The Nama people are an African ethnic group found in South Africa, Botswana and in this case, Namibia. Originally known as the Khoi Khoi, who lived along the Orange River and moved due to colonial conquest. They were known as "Hottentots" by early colonialists. The two figures are presented standing upright, forward facing and half-dressed. The man stands with his upper body uncovered and his lower body covered in what resembles a brown, wrap around skirt. His chest s left bare, with a few patches of his chest hair left visible. He is adorned with arm bands and headgear which holds his dreadlocked hair in place. He also stands barefooted.

Like the man, the woman is also half-dressed by Western/European norms, covered in a brown skirt which seems to be made from a material that resembles animal skin. She also has arm bands, a waist band as well a necklace also made from animal remains such as animal skin, bones and teeth. She also wears some headgear which sits like a crown on her head. She too, is barefooted.

They are both labelled with numbers and presented in makeshift human-size, doll-packaging boxes. The boxes themselves have been designed and created to look like fragments of the wild forest or jungle. The background wallpaper is filled with greenery such as trees and bushes. The floor they stand on with their bare feet is covered with a sandy mixture of soil. Within both their enclosures, there is an effort to recreate a specific scene, framed by special effects such as lighting to complete the set design. As in any typically conventional museum display, they are numbered and labelled.

Looking at the set, this was all done in efforts to recreate their places of origin, which for the Nama people were desert areas filled with greenery and wild animals. These dioramic representations directly mimic the strategies used in the constriction of settings and display of black bodies in the Human Zoos discussed in Chapter 2.

*Figure 10: 267 Congolese people placed on display in a mock African village by Belgian King Leopold at his country estate in Tervuren. Image by Alphose Gauter, 1897*

The placement of the animal hunting trophies is quite problematic through the lens of objectification. There is a loss of autonomy through the act of placing people on display however it is taken further when placing them on the same level as (dead) animals while presenting them as equals to these animals. Placing people alongside wild animals does much in insinuating that they are to be viewed as those animals, mirroring the ethnographic pseudo-sciences such as anthropometry discussed in Chapter 2. Other victims of such atrocities were the San people. The San people were branded as bandits and hunted down due to their resistance of Dutch advances, a process that moved for the extermination of the San people. This in itself highlights more problematics of objectification which in this case, is aligning human beings as hunting trophies (Lee, et al,2010).

The performers in *Exhibit B* have their arms and legs circled and decorated with measuring tape as well as biometric data charts displayed alongside their bodies. The use of such props again places emphasis on the anthropometric techniques of the 19$^{th}$ century racial science experience, which fuelled the othering and pathologising of non-European bodies. *Exhibit B* preserves and also transmits knowledge about the ways of the past, but problematically, I argue, also participates in the recreation of its problematic nature in the view of the black body in contemporary context.

***Exploitation of the Black body***

The tableaux of the women evoke the memory of Saartjie Bartmann, popularly known as the Hottentot Venus discussed above. Her exploitation which consisted of rape and humiliation is etched

in the history of the diasporic communities especially in its embodiment of race relations exercised in the act and popularity of human zoos. As mentioned previously in chapter 2, Baartman was displayed for her anatomy as a freak attraction, marking her body as a symbol of sexual African inferiority. Even in death, her body was still not hers, as she became yet another obsession for others to use and study for personal gratifications. Under the guidance of the French scientist, George Cuvier, a post-mortem was conducted resulting in the creation of a full body plaster cast of Bartmann as well as the removal of both her brain and genitalia. These body parts would then be used for private display as well as public display (Maedza,2017).

*Figure 11: Herero Concentration camp skulls. Image by Valeria Zalaquett*

Within *Figure 11* is an installation which portrays the story of the concentration camps on Shark Island whereby the survivors of the brutal genocide, carried out by German colonial forces, were kept imprisoned. Many of these survivors were the Herero and Nama people. Shark island was initially for the Ovaherero inmates who were needed as forced labour. They were brought in and exploited to build critical infrastructure for the German colony such as the Lüderitz-Aus railway. The Nama inmates would only arrive later in 1906. Shark Island was known as the most notorious concentration camp due to the extreme environment which was weaponised against the inmates.

The conditions consisted of freezing temperatures, tough winds and fog, a stark contrast to the poor shelter, unsanitary conditions as well as the scarcity of food dealt with by the inmates. These conditions resulted in diseases such as scurvy and Typhoid as well as deaths from hyperthermia and exhaustion. Many inmates who managed to survive through these conditions, died from the excruciating physical labour required of them on the tracks and the harbour as well as working as servants to the white settlers.

To ensure discipline and compliance, intimidation methods such as various forms of torture, rape, poisoning, medical experiments as well as public executions were used. The women captured in this camp, were forced to boil and scrape the heads of the dead inmates which were then shipped to Germany for pseudo-scientific research as seen displayed in *Exhibit B.* Many who died were thrown into the sea and had their remains eaten by sharks and in some instances left for the hyenas to scavenge.

This was called a period of suffering, a ritual that they were forced to endure. In these concentration camps, people were also used a research specimen for collectors that would eventually utilize them in Nazi Anthropology. They would also be sent to German museums, private collections and research centres to be used as evidence for specific racial theories by many other anthropologists to fuel the narratives which had been booming in the 19th century (Horst, 1980).

A large woman, regal in her Herero traditional dress, sits with her distinctive knotted cow horn kerchief around her head with her knees spread apart. She faces forward and returns the audiences gaze, covered in glass shards, small as they glisten in the light like little diamonds. Within the image, the woman holds a shard of glass in her right hand and a human skull in her left hand, and the wall below her holds a large cross symbolic of the Christian religion. Strands of barbed wire hang, strung between two high wooden posts and a German sign warns of electrocution, should one attempt to flee and escape. Torn clothes sit on the barbed wire signalling that someone had made an attempt to escape, ripping their clothes in the process.

Decorating the installation are human skulls, referencing an unnamed colonial administration that used barbaric methods to maintain order and power which in many interpretations of the exhibition, are believed to be those found in the Belgian Congo. Within the pedestal, lay glittering shards of glass covering the floor, said to be symbolic of South African diamond mines. The collision of capitalism and colonialism laid bare for spectators to assess. Diamond companies used and birthed the concept of using colonial prisoners and slaves to ensure cheap labour (Welle, 2016).

The discovery of diamonds in South Africa in 1869 placed the country in the international economy. Drawing attention to the British Empire who then decided they wanted to control the mines, resulting in conflict as this would affect white farmers' economic interests as well as their land. Government then decided to pass the Natives Land act in 1913 to ensure that land ownership was reserved for white people only. This meant that black people would turn into cheap labour for their own survival due to the loss of their land and farms which now belonged to white people. To ensure that cheap labour was constantly available, migrant people were used. They were kept in compounds and hostel systems that ensured compliance through rough conditions.

Within these compounds, “native” groups were kept segregated to prevent them from making connections and rioting. The workers were accompanied to clinics and shops within the compound by guards and were prohibited from any outside communication. They lived together in poor ventilated and packed rooms which caused a spike in diseases. This would also be worsened by the routine which included marching to work and marching back to their rooms when the day’s work was completed, with little to no rest. Any workers who retaliated were expelled and more workers were brought in from poorer and more rural areas (Levy, 1983)

*Figure 12: Herero concentration camp skull. Image by Robbie Jack/Getty images*

Within the tableau of the Herero woman in *Figure 12*, the props play a symbolic role. Masks and bones also seem to tell their own stories within the works. Skulls became a memory of unacknowledged genocide, considered as mortal remains and as evidence, especially in the calls for restitution that would follow in the contemporary context. The masks themselves raise questions around the rights of collectors, museums and researchers and research institutions to use human remains as cultural products and property to collect, study and even preserve for future use. This also references the knowledge systems and racial biases that have been become a norm through preconceived practises that still remain in use in the present.

For example, unclaimed bodies in medical facilities such as morgues are often kept for a period of days before being buried or cremated. The cremated remains are sometimes kept for almost a year. When the bodies are not buried and cremated, they are also sent to medical schools where students are trained using them. This is a practice that is legal in some places in the world. Many of these bodies belong to the poorest of people such as the homeless with no next of kins and funds for proper burials (McNamara, 2023). Although governed by various laws, places such as the United states, Australia

and even Canada to name a few, follow these practices through body donations as well as unclaimed bodies in public health and service departments (Michaux,2024).These bodies themselves in current medical systems and spaces are treated in similar ways as those who fell victim during the colonial era propelled by scientific racism studies however , some are protected through confidentiality and conduct agreements enforced in various institutions(Milbrath,2024). This is all important as it not only places emphasis on the lack of experienced by those in inferior positions but the similarity of the treatment of bodily remains that is still prevalent in modern systems. Protocols, no matter how legal, allow for the ownership of others, even in their death.

The use of bones or rather, items resembling human remains in *Exhibit B* serves as a reminder of the contested issue of lobbying and negotiations for colonial governments to formally recognise and apologise for their action and roles in the colonial regimes they led. For example, the German government and the actions of Kaiser Wilhelm's troops in the 1904-1908 war on Namibia, which ultimately was a genocide. Some colonial governments oblige however many avoid taking accountability by offering silence, deflections and plain refusal to participate and offer any co-operation.

Many institutions remain in the shadows due to the extensive nature of the network and market of human remains and artefacts in colonial times. The circulation is often much larger than the reported information tells. Doctors sent remains to various research centres such as hospital and universities as well as museums, explorers kept souvenirs and those who believed in scientific importance also acted as collectors of human remains. Bushmen hunting was also a popular sport like game-hunting during colonialism.

*Exhibit B* is also part of the wave of museum and archaeology practises that offer new methods of curating and managing looted material during colonialism while specifically choosing which part of the negative categories to dabble in. There is an act of highlighting and echoing the legacy and continuation of racial scientific systems in *Exhibit B*. This can be seen in the recovering of human remains in basements or burial sites where they were buried after the sciences that underpinned their importance became void while also reusing them to generate various conclusions through bias filled intentions.

The intention is to address the injustice of the acquisition of these artefacts such as skulls, once held as objects and specimens in anatomical arches by reclassifying them as "human remains". This effort is accompanied by efforts to recontextualise the exhibits by returning them to the custody of their communities and origins such as the return of Sarah Bartmann's remains to South Africa (Vogel, 2011). In Namibia, skulls acted as powerful assets in both international and domestic affairs around the colonial genocide of 1904-1908. For the Namibian Herero people, the skulls were about cultural identity. The Herero people would file down their upper incisors to produce delta-shape hole in the

middle and knock out the incisors as a cultural practice used to mark identity (Vogel, 2011). Germany, however, would use the skulls as evidence for German racial anthropologists in their attempts to proof theories of the superiority of Europeans. They were held as objects before being renamed "Human remains" or "body parts" before travelling in coffins as both mortal remain and material evidence. Under a new name and different package, the bodies are still in use and lack autonomy.

Overall, Bailey attempts to provide a summary of colonial violence, one that is in the context of Foucault's theory of colonial violence (Taylor, 2003). According to his exhibition statement, *Exhibit B* aims to reclaim the murdered and the violated from visual archives of racial sciences and redresses them with visibility and a voice through speech. The entire exhibition, I argue, is actually a performance that exhibits otherness through the emphasis based primarily on physical and cultural differences which are explored within a category of symbolism based on power dynamics, economic value and racial science and fetishisation. The placement of people as objects and subjects is done for them to be seen in certain spaces and dissected through the lenses of imagined and real differences.

***Performance theory within Exhibit B***

Performance theory originates from a variety of theories but is associated primarily with the work of Richard Schencher,1985 and Victor Turner,1988, who drew attention to the performative nature of society within the world whereby actions and activities we participate in are governed by the code of performance. This field is often seen through ethnographic studies in different contexts and societies, primarily for human understanding. Performance theory suggests that everyone puts on a performance in society which is designed to show our place in society and social groups, through the ways we carry ourselves and even in the conversations we hold through communicative aspects of life such as dress code, work we do, how we eat, etc. (Goffman, 1969) This is visible within *Exhibit B*. Through the use of ethnographic studies which Bailey seeks to share, he recreates their use. He appropriates aspects particular of cultures to communicate certain narratives that hold significance in the identities of those subjugated in the colonial regime. Although Performance theory argues that our performances are not always voluntary but rather that we are socialised to perform our identities in various ways.

However, because identity is often viewed as something that is performed, it places Bailey in a critical position. Bailey masquerades as a non-racist white man who has come to shed light on the atrocities hidden in the past, however, as soon as the world begins to view him in the opposite way, he reacts through defensive action. A natural reaction when the performance of one's identity is shattered. The persona of a non-racist person can viewed as a performance he upholds for social approval and to maintain his position within a racial society. Created to align with progression and growth but received negative through challenges that create tension. He then takes on the defensive persona which then becomes a new performance created to shift narrative and to preserve his image.

Foucault discusses how power is also exercised through daily performances of authority and social norms. Bailey's defensiveness can be read as White fragility made to reinforce the status quo by eliminating any meaningful discussions of race and privileged. Overall, his reaction highlights the power dynamics that allows white people to position themselves as exempt from responsibility and critiques of racism.

There is an extremely performative nature in the way he also seems to react and respond to negativity around his work. Not only is he defensive but instead of facilitating conversations, he plays a victim under attack and chooses silence. He operates from a place of privilege in the way he chooses to refuse to acknowledge his race as a white man dealing with stories belonging to a race that is not his, almost as if, being questioned is an act of censorship towards him. The idea of censorship , in his interviews and media releases, becomes a focal point for him and his work and yet the narrative begins as a way of shedding light on colonial atrocities that underpin contemporary society. What he seems to negate is that the act of silencing begins with his request within and throughout his work, from the actors as well as the viewers. From the arrival of the viewers, there are instructions from him, for them maintain silence. The same silence that is expected of the actors and even those who help viewers navigate through the exhibition.

Butler (1993) and Derrida (1990) also suggest that the performances seek to reinforce narratives and communicate identities in society. Individuals play certain roles and ask audiences to be invested in viewing and believing what is being portrayed. This also makes for various consequences of what is being told and shared. Bailey does not see the way his work reinforces and communicates certain stereotypes to observers. Placing his actors in vulnerable positions and recreating historical contexts that hold their demise also triggers various consequences that move beyond his control such as the enforcement of more racial action towards black people. He specifically places himself beyond the outside world of his black performers who still experience racism in the present world. There is life beyond the parameters of the performance of *Exhibit B* with real people and real experiences.

Performance theory can also be used to exploit, resist and assist certain individuals and agendas. The exploitation exists in the way that performance theory can also influence and shape perceptions and behaviours within a society. While this can assist as a tool for growth, it can also empower others against oppressive systems while also having negative effects depending on the person wielding it. There is a level of exploitation of black bodies within the work, minus the monetary gains for the actors who, within the economic sphere, may need the financial support. The use of black bodies to assist Bailey within his work reads as problematic. The specific choice to use only black people within his production leaves room for the questioning of his integrity as an artist based on the ways in which the work influences and shapes perceptions.

By only using black actors, even to play White colonial officers, it appears as if he is trying to protect

his own racial group which would have been placed directly under scrutiny if it had not been for the use of black actors. He has inserted himself under the guise of unbiasedness and impartiality but in some ways acts as the protector of his racial group from the potential consequences of angry protestors who questioned him. By neglecting to acknowledge the problematics within this work, the whole production and experience of *Exhibit B* becomes problematic. As explained previously in discussions of mimesis, Bailey acts as the dominant person wielding the veil and acting on the process of transformation, creating an identity of twoness, just as the colonial rulers did for their inferior subjects.

Words affect mental and physical conditions of people and are given significance. When there is a lack of words, an authoritative force is created where one has to consider the implications of filling the void of silence and consequences that may arise, that authority is derived from power and is often distributed as law within society. Words express identity and shape behaviours in society especially from authoritative forces. The lack of words created by Bailey and the work holding his directive voice does little to exempt him from the notion of racism. Taking away the voices of a specific group and choosing to be that voice on their behalf is no different to the white people in previous centuries who chose to be authority figures over minority groups.

Within this performance, it would seem that the notion of authority, especially of white people, is the driving force. Overall, Bailey is re-entering his whiteness, claiming the powerful position of the victim, while attempting to align himself with decolonial narratives. If whiteness is an invisible privilege and the normative standard, with effects that linger on, its fluidity is power.

The installations are presented as a performance whereby the audience has the ability to choose and negotiate how to view and react to the work. The use of the mirror offers a place in which the audience can decide how to gaze, and the performer returns the spectators gaze directly and even indirectly through the mirror. Engagement exists only through the meeting of the eyes; however, it does seem to be underpinned by a colonial identity which is underpinned by Bailey's whiteness.

Viewing and even documenting *Exhibit B* through photography and written work requires a form of engagement. A device that gives it its subversive and highly effective power. The work subverts the gaze of the powerful who can watch in the shadows and remain unseen. It also places the viewer into spectacle by suddenly placing them under scrutiny alongside the performers. The use of silence requested from the audience and the choice of silencing the actors imposed by Bailey reinforces this level of scrutiny being observed as well as any other interactions that go beyond the gaze and the act of gazing.

The audience is directly forced to reflect on their placement as consumers of the human zoo, placing them in the same category of the people of the 19$^{th}$ century regardless of their personal intentions behind participation in this viewing. They are also forced to reflect on their own complicity in the

historical systems being staged for them to experience. The observers also form part of the exhibition, playing the part of the white Europeans who would travel to view these works. The viewer is here constructed in direct opposition to the exotic beings being displayed. Bailey carefully implicates all viewers of his work into this frame, irrespective of race, yet somehow simultaneously managing to place himself outside frame in a tactic similar to that of King Leopold. While art can be made to teach, there is a disturbing nature of colonial behaviours that govern this exhibition.

### Problematics and Counteractions.

As we have seen, the responses and reactions to *Exhibit B* shifted into various forms requiring specific attention to each point in order to unpack the various reactions and problematics. The most dominant of these points is the problematic role of silence(ing). This silence and silencing also has multiple applications depending which perspective is being considered. While many people had formulated their own personal stances and opinions on the work itself, there are groups of people, as in many situations of conflicts and disagreements, who chose silence. This choice was delivered under the guise of the need to understand who has the right to question the exhibition and those involved in its production and performance. A thoughtful response because reviews and opinions can be unfounded and the ways in which we communicate can reinforce certain beliefs and opinions. The choice to remain silent, then can be viewed as a form of complacency.

Silence within the work is a central theme, primarily in the presentation and performance of *Exhibit B*. Audiences are confronted with the literal presence of silence through the silence of the actors. Silence that calls for reflection and thoughts as well as silence that represents the absence of voice. This absence of voice emphasises the oppression and erasure of marginalised groups. And because they are not treated as humans, the silence present, belonging to an object is given and requested from human beings, creating “human, art objects”. Brett Baily demands silence form the audience; in the same way he has demanded it from the actors. As the creator, producer and person in charge, Bailey the position of power throughout brainstorming and the actual show. He requires the actors to be present in various poses, in silence, as they have been paid for this silence.

Ironically, this produced protests which demanded the cancelling of *Exhibit B,* and the silencing of the exhibition, many of which were led by activist and journalist Sara Myers who had the support of British cabinet minister, Lord Boateng (Jason, 2014). This was primarily a result of the shared frustrations many viewers and protestors had for the work, due to the magnitude of emotions it raised.

When the petitions began, the primary concerns were the use and retelling of black history by a white man, using foreigners to put together the show as well as the indignity experienced by these actors through placing them in cages (Greig, 2014). The issues of retelling history were led by South African activists emphasising the problematics with Bailey, a South African white man choosing to tell "their" history as black people. Reaction from the British activist groups were more focused on silencing and shutting down the exhibition due to painful emotions and derogatory displays of black people, who historically, had often been placed in these positions through various forms of oppression.

The silence, although uncomfortable and impactful, did allow for spaces of reflection through the explorations of symbolism and the power dynamics, within the relationship of the observer and the observed. The silence of the cast of black actors emphasised the history of black identity for both the living and deceased. The actors are asked not to speak, they are not given a voice and yet the images and poses they find themselves in, speak on their behalf. It is primarily dependant on whether the audience members themselves "choose" whether or not to listen. The actors are also hired to "speak" on behalf of Bailey, who remains out of the frame but directs the action occurring. Through the actors' actions, they exercise his vision, bringing his thoughts to life without him uttering a word to audiences. The actors are also hired to speak on behalf of their ancestors, who themselves were not allowed to speak up against their oppressors and remain silenced in death, with the stories of their lives left unknown.

The work provokes different and contested responses in this regard because while seemingly harmless to some, there is an act of silencing black voices that takes place. Historically, the black voice has been silenced and placed in brackets of inferiority, resulting in other voices stepping up and taking ownership of the black voice even when it does not belong to them and when they lack understanding of it. Within the performance, Bailey takes ownership of the black voice through the silencing demanded from the performers, who are also black. In his retelling of these horrific colonial stories, they are still not given a chance to speak or unpack their own thoughts and feelings through the performance. The issue of the voice is also taken a step further, symbolised in the act of paying the actors for their silence. Failure to comply from the actors within the performance also means a termination of their work contracts. Another aspect to this is that payment itself acts as a reason to be silent, similar to the stories of those in concentration camps who worked as comfort women in order to receive various goods such a food for their children if they had complied with the requests of those in positions of authority.

In reality, they are not given the choice to speak. That choice has been stripped off them and exercised only through their eyes and body language. This is different for non-black spectators and members of Bailey's team who worked on the production of the work as well. They do not have to wait until the show ends to speak. The white voice is present in all aspects of the work, through Bailey's

management of the installation, but also in his direction of the exhibition.

Throughout the protests, people were peacefully articulating that their anger shouldn't be silenced and used for attention-grabbing headlines within the media. Their voices were not weapons used to silence Brett Bailey as an artist but bring forth their concerns and problems which were overlooked especially in the coverage of the protests. The people were angry about ticket prices and the whole concept of paying to view people was not well received because the disturbing parallels to methods of the slave trade. There was also a big gap between what the exhibit was attempting to say, and what it was actually saying, specifically in terms of the black voice, the black body and the homogenisation of the black experience. As noted previously, the narratives being shared are curated from a white perspective, even though Bailey parades the intentions as all-inclusive and unbiased. The lack of diversity in the curatorial team also affirmed the gap in telling of black stories. These points proved to be triggering and emotionally charged for a minority of people who have consistently been systematically silenced and excluded through institutionalised power dynamics.

This duality, however, is not only produced by the curation of the show, or by Bailey himself. Interestingly, an actor within the *Exhibit B* cast, Stella Odunlami, explained that she felt silenced by the protestors. A perspective that is not easy to grapple with and understand given that she was hired and not given much if any control and power within her role as an actress. The idea behind the exhibition's creation was to "make a period in history that is often erased, visible," (Bailey,2014). Could it then be argued that in some respects, the protests of the thousands who participated, is in a sense an act of erasure to a minority. In this case, the actors form the minority. The actors are also part of the minority as black people. This is due to them being black themselves and portraying parts that reflect black history as well as the terrible circumstances surrounding it. There is a contradiction in the way they carry themselves as if they are not affected by the historical context there are participating in, but only affected as actors either being silenced or having their jobs affected.

Art rarely produces unanimous perspectives. It is often the intention of art to move and divide and call to action no matter how seemingly insignificant and irrelevant the issues may be. However, when those in privileged positions use art as a means to objectify and use unprivileged minorities as a topic for "White conversation", the marginalised are bound to feel emotions such as anger, vulnerability, fear and triggered emotions of frustration and victimisation. In this case, the art is no longer just art but a problematic medium that goes beyond simple provocation to being the cause of possible re-traumatisation. White conversation, although a critique of how white perspectives and concerns can dominate discussions about race, can lead to the erasure of other voices and sugarcoat the truth about racial inequality.

The act of witnessing a performance can deeply influence perception and participation within society often with life-changing consequences. Questions raised by performances in the works of Bailey highlight the history of the atrocities experienced by black people which can provoke confrontations. These confrontations can either be positive or negative however Bailey does not take any responsibility for any of the outcomes even though history has proven that time and time again, actions of a white man can carry significant power and consequences.

# Conclusion

This dissertation is an examination of the complex dynamics of race, representation and artistic expression in Brett Bailey's *Exhibit B*, highlighting the historically entrenched relations that influence how South African art is received. It serves to interrogate the ethical implications of a white artist sharing black stories and experiences in the context of South African history of oppression and colonisation as well as the differences in how the work was received through a theoretical framework such as Laura Mulvey's concept of the gaze. This includes issues of representation as well as otherness.

The different responses to the exhibit highlight the importance of identity and individual lived experiences in the interpretation of art, thus calling for an acknowledgment of the power dynamics present even in the way artists create work. This exploration of *Exhibit B* advocates for the examining of those given authority to tell stories and challenge historical injustices and how they, sometimes recreate the very things they are speaking about as Bailey has done within this body of work.

This demonstrates the complexity of the gaze, race and representation with an emphasis on race as a socially constructed concept which is shaped by contexts such as the historical, political and cultural. Furthermore, highlighting the varying aspects of race that go beyond "Black versus White" and acknowledges individual experiences in terms of navigating racial identity in society. There is an outline of how the categorisation of humans is often based on physical attributes that are then used to create hierarchies that are underpinned by "scientific theories" that continue to affect societal perceptions. These racial constructs are unpacked in the context of South Africa's apartheid era.

The exploration of the intersections of personal perspectives, history as well as power dynamics shapes the lived experiences of both black and white people who often find themselves in the positions of "superior versus inferior". Ultimately, there is a call to challenge these outdated structural systems and to advocate for the acknowledgement of the inequalities that continue to survive in society often founded upon race issues

The show perpetuates the objectification of the black body. Not only through the recreation of human zoos but in the way the show has been handled. Rather than subverting the white gaze, Bailey's work enables it primarily in the way he uses the black body. Bailey places the white body and black body in opposition. He uses the black body to directly speak about colonialism, not to represent the black body but to use it as a vehicle to unpack colonial history and the continuing impact of such systems. This is evident from the assumed position he awards himself to speak on matters of the black body and in the way he uses the black body, as a white man.

Importantly, I have argued that Bailey uses the black body in the three ways that George Yancy set out as explained in the previous chapters. He uses the black body as an object, which he then uses as a site on

which to have discussions about racial history and colonialism. He does not create his own space - he recreates a place in which the horrors of black people were experienced during the colonial regime. He directly places focus and culpability on the black body and not the white bodies responsible for carrying out the objectives of the colonial regime. In this way, he uses the black body to offer white people space to interrogate themselves without being asked to stand on the same pedestal to be gazed upon from a black perspective. I argue that in doing so, he protects the white body from the possible reactions that could have occurred against the white body if the roles had been reversed. The White body is placed at a safer distance just as it had been during the colonial era, only this time, physical violence is not used to keep order. The black body is exploited as a site for conversation while providing a veil that protects the white body from direct confrontation.

The Black body is also used as a historical subject, an event with multiple reactions and results. Bailey inserted himself into the history books, using the black body in actions that sparked outrage and gifted him with popularity that not only served his career but also marked him as an innovative artist despite the potential negative impact that this may have. He has also inserted himself into a place that holds its roots in racism and suffering of many indigenous people by not challenging its intention and instead reinforces them.

Human zoos were made for the sales of indigenous people as well as the entertainment of colonial settlers. Bailey recreates this type of spectacle, the difference here is that the people on display are not actually being sold. However, the act of paying to view the show is in many ways, active participation in racial abuse and uncomfortably mirrors the slave trade.

Some of the performers within the glass containers are represented as objects as one would display in an ordinary gallery or museum. However, they are placed in derogatory poses alongside animal remains. This, I argue, feeds directly into some of the stereotypes often associated with the black body. This also allows the spectators to not view the performers as actual people, opening the door to more negative expressions placed on the black body.

> "Exhibit B is offensive because it perpetuates the objectification of the black body that is a standard trope of society. A performer when the show ran in Poland had the experience of a group of men "laughing and making comments about my boobs and my body. They didn't realise I was a human being. They thought I was a statue."- A performer in the Poland show (Andrews,2004)

Although his desire was to create commentary on racism and the history it holds, Bailey fails to make any commentary by being quiet when it matters most. Instead, he honours the assumed invitation that white people grant themselves when creating and narrating the experiences and lives of people of colour. Both during and after the protests, Bailey chose to play victim instead of opening up more

spaces to have more conversations around *Exhibit B*. In the media, he presented himself as a victim being typecast as racist. Refusing to acknowledge the various implications of his work beyond his intentions. In his silence, he also takes away the opportunity to deescalate and process the traumas which he shares. He has created work that speaks of the black experience but then refuses to facilitate the actual conversations of the black experience, especially from the black people he affects through the creation of his work. Bailey opens a can of colonial history but picks and chooses which parts he thinks are important and valuable to him while discarding the rest because they do not neatly support his agenda.

Bailey's  has used the black body as a "strategy" to provoke reactions and push audiences to reflect on the historical roots of present-day problems around race such as systematic, stereotypical policies and prejudices. The sincerity of his intentions is weakened because he then places the black body in a position of objectification by recreating and planting the idea that black people and black bodies are the objects about which white people can gather and have conversations with each other. Thus, using the black body as passive agents with no autonomy. (Andrews, 2014)

The work itself rehashes many unresolved discourses of the black body within the arts. The black body, even in this work is presented as a fixed object, unchanging according to any forms of context. The black body is presented with no autonomy, the aspects of being human are removed from the work. Identities of black people beyond victims and in this instance, objects, is removed.  The body is also used as a battlefield on which historical wars are repeatedly fought.  This is often done across historical and social contexts, as it is exemplified within *Exhibit B*. Bailey address genocides, war and colonial conquest, using the black body as a pedestal on which his discussions can stand.

Laura Mulvey emphasises how the way a body is displayed or placed in vulnerable positions, is often done for the white gaze, with the implication of the white gaze in power systems being juxtapositioned on the backdrop of black identity. The conversation around human zoos itself and their creation practices this concept, and one cannot choose to separate themselves from it while pursuing a concept that is rooted in the entertainment of white audiences and social experiments.

Within the actual conversations being held, the power of white privilege is also the reason that any debate on the exhibition's acceptability exists. Historically, black people or rather people of colour were refused the option and opportunity of "freedom of choice" and within the discussion are then reinserted in the same position which denies them "choice". This kind of disempowerment itself is represented by the exhibition, is part of a major problem whereby certain meaningless struggles to non-black people, represent struggles of racial opposition. (Andrews, 2014)

Brett Bailey as a messenger in this instance is also a problem, having grown up as part of the oppressive minority in South Africa. Despite his explanations, John Mullen, a history professor at the

University of Paris East was not impressed by his work stating that the work tells and showcases a lie: - "It shows the victims without the perpetrators. The black victims are silent, immobile and fetishised, while the colonialists are absent." (Mullen, 2014) This emphasises Bailey's inability to view and handle himself in ways that go beyond his whiteness in the retelling of such stories.

His belief that his work is progressive is also flawed. Racial exploitation, abuse, and the grotesque parody of black people is complicit racism, as is his presentation of voiceless actors. The art in question not only participates in these negative themes, but it also participates in the devaluation of black life, suffering and experience. Ultimately, as I have consistently argued, the work can also be considered a form of exploitation of black bodies. The act of silencing an already silenced minority group is a form of racist behaviour and instead of sensitizing people as he intended, he does little to ensure that his actions are not in active participation of the issues he wishes to subvert.

Bailey also leads with the beliefs that he was placed on trial in the public court of opinion for his work, which instead of trying to understand him, is used as evidence against him. Reviewer Peter Crawley (2015), named the exhibition, "a mock exhibition" upon its arrival at the Galway Internation Arts festival, citing it as work that is inspired by the 19th century colonial period in which black bodies, both living and dead, were used as displays for the entertainment of white audiences. Crawley equates *Exhibit B* with the historic exploitation of Sarah Baartman's 1810 show and that of Ota Benga in 1906. If anything, Bailey's work was no different in basic descriptive terms.

The work takes on a series of unsettling tableaux alluding to the politics of a dehumanising spectacle, which not only fails to offer an innocent and pure version of "spectacle" but replicates it in its negative light. When Bailey first showed the work in 2010 in Vienna, it seems the protests to follow in 2012 were a surprise and one that was unanticipated based on his reaction which took on a primarily defensive stance. Although the intention was to provoke, the outcome primarily shocked Bailey into what he called "Having to defend his work and explain it". A stance he then argued was also a useless thing to do because audiences had him typecast as a "Racist white south African". The refusal to explain himself, although not important to him, did emphasise a key factor of white privilege that many white South African artists have engaged with in the past - the freedom of choice. (Crawley, 2015)

The freedom of choice and the silencing of voices is also a consistently problematic point. As we have seen, the only voice present is that of Bailey, who gets to choose when he can use it and refute it. Within the work, he often casts local black actors to play asylum seekers, or rather what he labels as "found objects". In his determination to implicate audiences through his work, he miraculously negates himself as part of the problem. The power and exploitation on display through his work also exists through his action as the white man in charge. He implicates himself as an artist albeit as the

director and storyteller, which appears as an unresolved issue for him to still revisit when the defensiveness has been broken down.

The work, he explains serves as an expose of the historical barbarities of "civilising the natives" through torture and mutilation, sharing of stories that society prefers to leave hidden and buried, the unspoken invitation to look the other way. The intention, among others, was going out of his way to implicate audiences in the reality that objectification and mistreatment of the other is not only confined to history but can also be found in the present, contemporary world.

Bailey could have just created work that embraces the white gaze instead of presenting himself as unbiased and neutral while functioning on its dynamics. Stories are often best told through the use diverse sources and research of people with shared and lived experience. To help prevent the perpetuation of stereotypes Bailey could have done more. The work could have been better received had Bailey used a different approach that showed inclusivity of various races and cultures to avoid creating work that reads as primarily for white audiences.

A different approach could have been the use of black researchers and books of black authors who write directly from their own perspectives. Their voices, which have been historically silenced may have been part of his process of bringing certain aspects to light which are often neglected through research, books and media which are garnered mainly for white audiences. Work created by white artists is by default, made for white audiences primarily due to the lens it is filtered through, which is shaped by the standard of white audiences. This can only be shifted through the inclusion of black voices on an equal level, creating a space for both sides to be acknowledged removes the idea that the work is unbalanced or whitewashed. (Vahal,2020)

Unfortunately, Bailey has also admitted that the work was made for European audiences with the assumption that they would be "Intelligent enough to make their own deductions". In many ways, Bailey consistently demonstrates that he is a white man performing his ideological whiteness, with Bailey, "acting in his whiteness" is seen throughout the conceptualisation of his work, to its finalisation and presentation. Firstly, he engages in microaggressions that communicate racial bias. These microaggressions reinforce the power dynamics that the privileged have and use to alienate people of colour ,which often minimize the experiences and identities of people colour. This is seen though the choice of placing black bodies in inferior and vulnerable positions throughout the entire works and not including any black voices in his directorial approach to the work.

He also performs his whiteness by taking up space and heading conversations that involve black people and include black identity with a disregard for their experiences. He does not include black storytellers and historians to accurately depict the history of black people that the tableaux are depicting. Instead, he decided that his own research was enough. He excludes the perspective of non-

white people whose history is also being unpacked and placed on display for public consumption. Whiteness is treated as the universal standard and Bailey leans into this by acting in ways that reinforce cultural norms, values and behaviours. While also presenting these as the standard to which others need to conform.

Bailey's inability to critically examine his own racial identity and how it shapes his experiences, opportunities and interactions is crucial within this critique of *Exhibit B*. Dismissing and downplaying the significance of race, he ironically demonstrates rather than subverts his own racial privilege. He gets viewed as a racist white man not only for his work, but because he does not question why his whiteness poses an issue within this context. This is the performance of racial superiority.
Bailey claims the history of various black experiences and presents it as his own intellectual property.

In his reaction to the criticisms of the show, particularly in his defaulting to the powerful position of victim and refusing further discourse, he demonstrates his own white fragility. The assumed inherent entitlement that comes with being white seen through the lack of concern for systematic barriers that offer white people historical and social privileges and when confronted with the reality of their own privilege, instead of engaging in productive dialogue and reflection, he chose withdrawing, blame shifting and playing victim.

Ultimately, as seen through this interrogation of Brett Bailey's *Exhibit B,* the structures of whiteness and their intersection with Black body politics do not only expose the pervasive violence of racial privilege but also calls for a radical reimagining of social systems—one that honours the autonomy, dignity, and humanity of Black bodies while fostering justice, equity, and true inclusivity for all.

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