Chapter 2: Artistic Archival Interventions and Memory Conversions[1]

> "One cannot transform society without transforming the art and culture it creates and consumes every day. Art is invested with deep meanings of belonging, group identity, patriotism and social values [...] It is deeply political because it catalyses emotive politics."
> — *Nomusa Makhubu*[2]

Art historian, curator and artist Nomusa Makhubu's quote touches on many of the central issues introduced in the previous chapter and further explored in the following pages. She points to the ways in which the arts, in a broader sense, serve to negotiate questions of belonging and identity or to critique societal issues by allowing for empathetic openings and by catalysing "emotive politics."[3] Continuing my interrogation of creative methods used to trouble the archive, this chapter shifts the focus from literary expressions to artistic practices and to their potential for navigating complex colonial legacies. I will examine a selection of artworks by Tuli Mekondjo (b. 1982) and by Imke Rust (b. 1975) to explore how both women use their art to negotiate the past and to situate the self by drawing on and contesting public and private archives. My choice to bring their works into conversation with one another was inspired by Mekondjo's and Rust's shared repertoires of visual vocabularies, which speak to themes such as dislocatedness, rupture, genealogy and longing. However, while both artists work with photography, multi-media art and performance to interrogate Namibia's colonial history and their subject positions therein, they use distinct strategies of archival intervention to do so, which are strongly connected to the

1 Many points and themes discussed in this chapter were raised in instructive conversations with Nomusa Makhubu, whom I would like to thank for sharing her thoughts on the matri-archive, on arboreal symbolism as well as on the limits and rules of engagement of artistic archival interventions.

2 Nomusa Makhubu, "Art-Rage and the Politics of Reconciliation," in *Babel Unbound: Rage, Reason and Rethinking Public Life*, eds. Lesley Cowling and Carolyn Hamilton (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2020), 233.

3 Ibid., 233.

specific resources with which the artists engage. In the analysis that follows, we will take a closer look at the *troubling* archives that Mekondjo and Rust explore as well as at the archival formations that both artists produce as part of their creative interventions.

While chapter 1 has shown how Amulungu and Dentlinger safeguarded, cherished, secured and *archived* photographs from the past, through their auto/biographic practices, we will now direct our attention to how artists approach photographs as raw material. The question of accessibility to personal family archives is a crucial one here, as was also the case with Amulungu and Dentlinger. Rust, as a Namibian of German descent, was able to draw from vast archival repositories that document her family's history, while Mekondjo only possessed single photographs of deceased loved ones and herself as a child. In the face of a sparse family estate that could attest to her childhood in exile and back home, she began photographing herself to generate her own archival repository. Additionally, she turned to public institutions to gain visual access to the past. What unites both artists in their engagement with photography is a shared sense of unsettlement with the past and an interest in contesting prevalent memory politics. Rust and Mekondjo turn to histories that preceded them, or that they experienced indirectly (as children, for instance) in order to understand prevailing senses of disconnection, uprootedness and rupture. These reverberations of the past impinge upon the ways in which they can position themselves in post-colonial Namibia – or Germany, where Rust lives at present. Being born in 1975 and 1983 respectively, Rust and Mekondjo are part of the generation that succeeded Amulungu and Dentlinger. Thus, the artists perceive colonialism, apartheid and liberation differently. Both grapple with specific challenges related to questions of inheritance. In addition to the colonial era's material legacy (in the form of archival photography), the renegotiation of intergenerational trauma and postmemory are central modes of interrogation in their works. To unpack these aspects in greater depth, I will draw on Marianne Hirsch's concept of 'postmemory' and Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela's theory of 'intergenerational transmission of trauma' which help to examine the role of archives in artistic quests for healing.[4]

The links between the archive and memory, absence, silence and forgetting as well as the role of photography as a mnemonic device are prominent issues of debate in scholarly research in the fields of history, memory studies and photography, as we have seen in the introduction. Confronted with archives and a visual economy in which they do not see themselves and their perspectives on the past represented, Mekondjo and Rust use their creative practices to alter visual worlds and one-dimensional commemorative routes that trouble them. I was inspired by Makhubu's

4 Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*; Gobodo-Madikizela, *Breaking Intergenerational Cycles of Repetition*.

theory on 'visual currencies' in my thinking about these interventionalist strategies. Analysing how contemporary South African artists use performative photography to both challenge and recalibrate "the representational value of images," Makhubu shows how "the politics of photography operate like currency through recurrence, repetition, circulation and exchange."[5] Drawing on this theory, I propose reading Mekondjo's and Rust's practices as a form of *memory conversion* that enables both artists to remember the past differently, foreground previously suppressed memories and to proffer a "conversion of representational values" about historical and personal photographs.[6]

As part of their interventionalist strategies, the artists' specific approaches to the material are crucial and will be considered against the backdrop of a growing interest in ethics of care. Driven by feminist discourses, the recuperation of a care ethics found its way into various fields, spanning from art institutions to museums and universities.[7] Increasingly, for artists and curators, the term has become a buzzword for conceptualising the engagement with particular themes and materialities. Curators, creative practitioners and scholars all propose care as a crucial mode of engaging with material from the colonial era.[8] In this regard, Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor, for example, argue for the need for radical empathy, affect and responsibility – what they call a "feminist ethics of care" – in handling archival repositories.[9] This is crucial since, as we will see, all kinds of archival engagements – from indexing and ordering to creative refigurations of archival material – are practices of power that raise moral and ethical questions, such as those posed by Temi Odumosu: "Who looks after and who receives care? […] How do we accommodate needs? And what are the rules of engagement?"[10] With a view to this chapter's central interest in artistic archival interventions, we might add: *are* there any rules of engagement for those who set out to actively disturb the archival order? When and how does artistic care materialise? Drawing our attention to Rust's and Mekondjo's approaches to archival photography will help to elucidate how care figures in their practices, for whom they

5 Nomusa Makhubu, "Visual Currencies: Performative Photography in South African Contemporary Art," in *Women and Photography in Africa: Creative Practices and Feminist Challenges*, eds. Darren Newbury, Lorena Rizzo and Kylie Thomas (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021), 229.

6 Ibid., 245.

7 Nomusa Makhubu, "After All Is Said and Done: On Fluid Solidarity and Survival," *African Arts* 55, no. 3 (1 September 2022): 6.

8 "Curator Conversations #15 | Renée Mussai," *1000 Words Mag*, 15 July 2020, https://www.1000wordsmag.com/renee-mussai/; see for example: Belinda Kazeem-Kamiński, "Unearthing. In Conversation: On Listening and Caring," *Critical Ethnic Studies* 4, no. 2 (Fall 2018): 75–99.

9 Caswell and Cifor, "Revisiting A Feminist Ethics of Care in Archives," 1–6.

10 Temi Odumosu, "The Crying Child: On Colonial Archives, Digitization, and Ethics of Care in the Cultural Commons," *Current Anthropology* 61, no. 22 (October 2020).

care and *how* the difficult task of caring for hurtful histories can be performed by means of archival intervention.

2.1: Rhizomatic Identities, Nature and Embodiment

Let us briefly return to Édouard Glissant's take on identity in order to bridge the last chapter's discussion on identity construction and the connection of the self to places, land and the national space of Namibia. Glissant argues:

> We have shifted from believing in identity as a single root to hoping for identity as a rhizome. We must have the courage to admit that identity conceived as a rhizome or as a form of relation is neither an absence of identity, a lack of identity, nor a weakness. It is a vertiginous inversion of the nature of identity.[11]

Figure 1 (left): Tuli Mekondjo, Bedloe Landscape II/The Naked Soul/Of the Hermit/Tree, *c. 2007–2008. Courtesy of the artist.*
Figure 2 (right): Tuli Mekondjo, Chant, Shawoman, Chant, *2015. Photograph, acrylic paint/ink, paint markers, permanent markers on canvas, 46x61cm. Courtesy of the artist.*

11 Andrea Schwieger Hiepko, "A Europe and the Antilles: An Interview with Édouard Glissant," in *The Creolization of Theory*, ed. Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih, trans. Julin Everett (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 259.

There is something aspirational and hopeful about the framing of identity as rhizomatic.[12] Glissant critiques conventional ideas of identity as tied to a single root, instead arguing for an enmeshed root system as a metaphor for a network of relation that defines exilic identities.[13] The selection of artworks above and below resonates strongly with the imagery that Glissant evokes, and they offer a visual entry to recurrent themes in Mekondjo's and Rust's artworks.

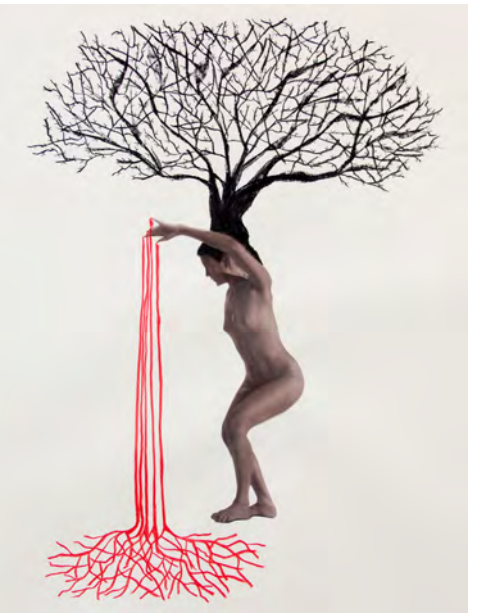

Figure 3 (left): Imke Rust, Verwurzelungsversuch1, *from the* Roots and Branches *series, 2019. Collage, charcoal and forestry marker on paper, 59 x 80 cm. Courtesy of the artist.*
Figure 4 (right): Imke Rust, Burning with the Bush *(detail), from the* Home, Land & Me *series, 2019. Mixed media on paper, 29 x 42 cm. Courtesy of the artist.*

In both Rust's *Verwurzelungsversuch1* and *Burning with the Bush* as well as in Mekondjo's *Bedloe Landscape II* and *Chant, Shawoman, Chant,* both artists entangle the human body (their own bodies) with rhizomatic trees and branches. For this, they transfer photographs of themselves onto new backgrounds (figure 4), edit and

12 In his development of the rhizome theory, Glissant has been significantly influenced by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's thinking. However, a more detailed discussion of their work *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), for instance, falls beyond the scope of this chapter.

13 Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 11.

redesign the prints (figures 2 and 3) or use their mirror images as models for their drawings (figure 1). Their bodies are enmeshed with nature; the human form or face is intertwined with shrubs or superimposed by roots and twigs. These plant-like rhizomes recall veins or nervous systems in a variety of Mekondjo's other works – a resemblance that makes the entanglement of nature and body even more explicit. However, and in contrast to Glissant's positive conception of the rhizome, Rust's and Mekondjo's uses of the arboreal symbolism in the works shown above appear rather tragic. We see a photomontage of Rust's naked avatar bleeding roots into the ground and a remodelled photo of Mekondjo with her eyes closed, tears stretching like roots down her face. Arms and legs, entangled with (or morphing into) branches, seem to long for a hold or grounding. In many ways, these notions of disconnectedness, uprootedness and disjuncture resonate strongly with Namibia's history of rupture and displacement in general, as well as in terms of the biographies of both artists in particular.

Born in 1982 in an exile camp in Angola and growing up during the liberation struggle, Mekondjo uses her art to 'work through' the early death of her mother and what it meant to live in unstable family conditions at times of political transition.[14] By entangling personal and national histories, many of Mekondjo's works reference early missionary influences, the loss of Kwanyama cultural traditions as well as collective and individual experiences of the genocide during both the German colonial and the apartheid eras. In contrast, Rust artistically interrogates human connectedness to land as well as her own place in the world by critically reflecting on her genealogy. Her descendants from her maternal and paternal side of the family were German missionaries, settlers or members of the German Schutztruppe who emigrated to the country for diverse reasons, with the earliest arriving in 1874.[15] As a fifth generation German-speaking Namibian, Rust grew up in Windhoek on her parents' farm near Okahandja and attended the boarding school in Swakopmund. In 2015, she moved permanently to Germany and lives in Oranienburg today; however, she repeatedly returns to Namibia – physically as well as metaphorically by means of her artistic practice.[16]

For both, claiming an untroubled sense of belonging to Namibia remains complicated. In Mekondjo's work, the painful experiences of discrimination and the repression of those who lived during the colonial eras, as well as her own grappling with scattered roots, are brought back to the surface like roots that break through the soil. In a national climate in which certain memories of the colonial past are silenced, even though colonial continuities continue to mark the present (see chap-

14 Tuli Mekondjo, pers. comm., via WhatsApp, 14 May 2020.

15 Imke Rust, pers. comm., 30 September 2020.

16 Ibid.

ter 1), Mekondjo grants visibility to those legacies and explores them artistically. In a social media post from 23 June 2021, she states:

> Within my being/
> Trauma/
> Created a permanent/
> Map/
> Of/
> Loss and pains/
> Of the self/
> And of the/
> Land/
> Permanently/
> Logged/
> Within my being/[17]

Her words powerfully evoke the relations between identity, the self, trauma, space, land, (dis)possession and loss. Together with this poetic reflection, she uploaded a photograph of a piece that she was working on during her contemplation on the aforementioned issues. For Mekondjo, her artistic practice allows for a therapeutic mending of traumatic experiences, which remain forever inscribed in the self ("logged within my being").[18] Her words and the use of arboreal symbolism further evoke how knowledge is stored and inscribed in the landscape, which is a concern that is increasingly explored by artists and scholars from different practices and fields.[19] The most prominent example is South African photographer Santu Mofokeng, who argues that places are "steeped in history and memories."[20] In his photographic essay, "Trauma Landscapes and Landscape and Memory," he approaches landscapes and sites where historical events played out as "silent witness[es] to history and narrative."[21] Silent, because these locations do not reflect the past in unmediated ways:

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17 Caption: "SWA Namibia Postcards Series II/Generational stitches of pains/work in progress," *Facebook*, accessed 28 June 2021.

18 Mekondjo, pers. comm. via WhatsApp, 25 June 2021.

19 For other examples, see: Uriel Orlow, *The Memory of Trees* (2016). Orlow approaches trees "as witnesses of history," arguing that they "hold an embodied memory of events and, like ghosts, remind us of how the past lives on in the present." See: Uriel Orlow, "The Memory of Trees," *Uriel Orlow*, accessed 5 April 2023, https://urielorlow.net/work/the-memory-of-trees/. For academic discussions on the topic, see: Pamela J. Stewart and Andrew Strathern (eds.), *Landscape, Memory and History: Anthropological Perspectives* (London: Pluto Press, 2003).

20 Corinne Diserens (ed.), *Chasing Shadows: Santu Mofokeng, Thirty Years of Photographic Essays* (Antwerpen: Extra City Kunsthal, 2012).

21 Ibid.

> What is not in the photograph is in the memory, in the mind; there is no violence, it is what you know that is violent. That's when I began to look at the landscape and trauma, landscape and memory. When people come to me and say, 'This place is beautiful,' I say, 'We have to look at what 'beautiful' means.'[22]

Referencing Mofokeng, artist and scholar Nicola Brandt argues about the ways in which landscape as a genre, and the depiction of nature through artistic practices, has been compromised for Black South Africans – and by extension Namibians – in light of the countries' shared histories of dispossession, denial of access to land and heated debates around the issue of land redistribution.[23] Additionally, with the constructed colonial dichotomies of European modernity and civilisation in contrast to African 'primitivism,' Black artists rejected nature and landscapes as motifs in their works. However, like Mofokeng, they increasingly came to reclaim these motifs as objects for their artistic interrogation.[24] For 'white' artists in Southern Africa, the representation of landscape is also a fraught project with regards to the legacy of settlers' and colonial officials' claims to space and their practices of usurping the prerogative of photographing and visualising landscapes and places. I follow Mofokeng's understanding of the term 'landscape,' who uses it broadly and in order to encompass its diverse meanings and the ways in which people view, appreciate and relate to landscape. He argues that the term is "informed by personal experience, myth and memory" as well as "knowledge and, sometimes, stories."[25]

While the representation of landscapes is, thus, historically charged, we see how it remains a prominent motif, particularly as settings in Rust's practice. With a view to her larger oeuvre, it becomes striking that her depictions of Namibian sites repeatedly go hand in hand with a figuration of herself and her own body. One example is *Under the Witgat Tree* (figure 5), which is an assemblage of a post-edited photograph, a linoleum print based on a photograph and painting.

Similar to landscape representation, the artistic turn to the body is loaded with questions of power. As Brandt argues: "Historically in documentary fine art or lens-based work, the use of one's own body – particularly by black, female and genderqueer artists – was extremely limited."[26] Black artists are grappling with the legacy of eras of misrepresentation and visual regimes that are discursively labelled as the 'colonial or ethnographic gaze.'[27] Reflecting on the developments in

22 Santu Mofokeng quoted in Corinne Diserens, "Santu Mofokeng in Conversation with Corinne Diserens," in *Chasing Shadows* ,93–99.

23 Brandt, *Landscapes Between Then and Now*, 1–2; 27–28.

24 Diserens, *Chasing Shadows*, 148.

25 Ibid., 149.

26 Brandt, *Landscapes Between Then and Now*, 172; 191.

27 Ibid., xix.

the South African art scene after apartheid, Penny Siopis, Sarah Nuttall and Nontobeko Ntombela attest how, from the 1990s onwards, artists began recalibrating the ethics of representation in response to the history of "speaking for and to 'the Other.'"[28] Siopis describes: "With liberation came both crises and opportunities for renewal of selfhood. For many 'white' artists this prompted an inward turn. And many black artists went public. The body figured in both tendencies."[29] With a view to contemporary art scenes in Namibia, South Africa and Angola, Brandt identifies a "burgeoning of new creative subjectivities" and emerging, cross-disciplinary and multi-media artistic expressions, in which the physical body remains a central focus of interrogation for both Black and White artists alike, while simultaneously functioning as a medium through which to transmit ideas.[30]

Figure 5: Imke Rust, Under the Witgat Tree, *2019. Mixed media on paper, 42 x 29 cm. Courtesy of the artist.*

28 Nontobeko Ntombela, "Shifting Contexts: Contemporary South African Art in Changing Times," in *Tribing and Untribing the Archive*, ed. Carolyn Hamilton and Nessa Leibhammer (Scottsville: University of Kwa-Zulu Natal Press, 2016), 101; Sarah Nuttall and Penny Siopis, "An Unrecoverable Strangeness: Some Reflections on Selfhood and Otherness in South African Art," *Critical Arts* 24, no. 3 (November 2010): 457.

29 Nuttall and Siopis, "An Unrecoverable Strangeness," 457.

30 Brandt, *Landscapes Between Then and Now*, 23.

Rust's use of her own body in her work appears as one such self-reflexive, inwards move. The artist recalls grappling with a sense of not belonging while in Namibia, due to her positionality and family history. She senses a deep connection with all of the places conjured in her artworks, as explained in an interview. The artist stresses, however, that this sense of affiliation always felt troubled. Appropriating the motif of roots and inserting herself back into Namibian spaces allowed her to contemplate this condition. In figure 5, she entangles her body with the Witgat tree that, for her, is deeply connected to childhood memories of climbing the tree to gaze into the vast landscape.[31] By inserting herself and her naked body into her artwork, she turns herself into the object to be gazed at. She assumes a posture that is humble, yet restrained and protective.

As we will see, motifs such as Namibian landscapes, plants and nature as well as her own body are similarly prominent in Mekondjo's works, but they are realised through different aesthetic techniques. Both Rust's and Mekondjo's practices are responses to the historically charged politics of representation outlined above. Photography and performance are central tools in the artists' efforts to subvert the power dynamics in depicting landscapes and bodies, as seen both in the examples introduced thus far and in the works to be discussed.

2.2: Matriarchives and Transgenerational Trauma

Ferdinand de Jong observes how, in the last two decades, artists have increasingly turned to archives as "source or resource, matter or metaphor" to address and critically scrutinise the past.[32] The archive, he argues, "enables them to confront the legacies of our colonial pasts and provides them with possibilities to conceptualize the hidden histories and counter-memories that have been suppressed."[33] For Mekondjo and Rust, the search to unearth what has been hidden and suppressed is a deeply personal endeavour. Both turned to either inherited archival material or family photographs. As we will explore in the following sub-chapters, their mother's, grandmother's and female ancestor's perspectives, as well as their own memories and photographs, occupy a central position in their works.

When speaking about both Namibia and her own personal history, loss figures prominently in Mekondjo's reflection on the past. Having lost many family members at a young age, with the most tragic being her mother's death in 1994, Mekondjo holds her memories of the past as sacred. She grapples with the absence of loved ones, the weight of trauma, and the fear of forgetting.

31 Rust, pers. comm., 30 September 2020.

32 Ferdinand de Jong, "At Work in the Archive," 3.

33 Ibid.

Figure 6: Tuli Mekondjo, Elende Lange lo Malududi/My Headdress of Feathers: Ode to Mother, *2019. Mixed Media on canvas, 90 x 61 cm. Courtesy of Guns&Rain Gallery.*

Loss is also reflected in her personal family archive: there is little personal documentation of her childhood growing up in exile. Being born amid the war in the Kwanza-Sul refugee camp in Angola, Mekondjo's and her mother's lives were marked by instability, conflict and separation. When Mekondjo was around four years old, her mother went to study in the UK, leaving her daughter behind in the care of others at the Nyango camp in Zambia.[34]

34 Mekondjo, pers. comm. via WhatsApp, 24 July 2021. We have seen, in chapter 1, how sending its cadres abroad for further education was central to "construct educational infrastructures"

The experiences of family division, dislocation and the longing for her mother are addressed artistically in Mekondjo's interventions with the few family photographs that she safeguards. In an interview, the artist repeatedly stressed the immeasurable emotional value of those photographs that she possesses as *aide-mémoires* that connect her to her mother and to the time they had together.[35] This sanctity is also observable in the ways in which the artist has protected her mother's archive ever since she inherited it at the age of 12. Stored in a box, the slim photographic estate accompanied her to all of the different places that she lived in Namibia. At times, it was sealed and left in the possession of relatives when Mekondjo was abroad; yet, younger relatives have opened the box and interfered with the material.[36] Recognising the dangers of material transience, Mekondjo began incorporating photographs from her personal archive into her art, transforming the material within her creative practice.

In figure 6, we see how Mekondjo inserted a print of her mother's photograph into botanical, colourful landscapes. The idyllic, florescent plants are coupled with signs of decay that signal both ephemerality and pastness. Her mother's face is nearly obscured, almost melting with the background's sepia, golden and brown tones. The strategy that the artist uses to evoke this tone has become her signature technique. Mekondjo applies resin on her canvasses onto which she sprinkles Mahangu meal which then fuses with the canvas. She transfers the archival images onto this textured surface in order to draw over them, adding feathers, leaves and plants with acrylic ink and permanent markers.[37] In this special procedure, Mekondjo deploys the Mahangu as a natural product to create texture while the plant simultaneously functions as a metaphor in many of her paintings. She reminisces how, as a young girl, she would work in the field with her mother and grandmother and together they worked the land, throwing the seeds of the Mahangu in the soil, later harvesting the plant to then pound and process it.[38] This gendered labour, as well as the consumption of Mahangu, encompass a broad span of memories, as the artist explains.[39] The plant conjures memories of home and belonging; it is a symbol for a landscape with which she affiliates.

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for SWAPO during the period of the freedom struggle. See: Akawa, *The Gender Politics of the Namibian Liberation Struggle*, 6.

35 Martha Langford, *Scissors, Paper, Stone: Expressions of Memory in Contemporary Photographic Art* (Montréal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 287; Mekondjo, pers. comm. via WhatsApp, 24 July 2021.

36 Mekondjo, pers. comm. via WhatsApp, 24 July 2021.

37 Ibid.

38 Tuli Mekondjo, *Ways of Reading: Contemporary Art and African Studies*, University of Basel, Basel, 23 March 2021.

39 Ibid.

Upon close inspection of the painting, we detect another typical trademark strategy. A delicate line runs horizontally across the canvas, a suture which refigures in the vast majority of Mekondjo's paintings. Her canvasses are cut and then carefully stitched back together, often with additional embroidery that provides extra texture. In his analysis of South African photographer Muholi's artworks, Andrew van der Vlies centres the meaning of the seam, arguing how "representations of suturing recall a metaphor that has received much in attention in South African cultural studies over the past decade."[40] Van der Vlies references writer and academic Leon de Kock who invokes the metaphor to think about South African literature, explaining that the seam stands for "the representational suture" that holds together a body of literature that was, in reality, diverse and quite distinct.[41] Van der Vlies extends this imagery to cultural productions more broadly, claiming, "it is to be found in imagery of fissures [...] scars, and in the representation of inequality of conflict."[42]

If we think along these lines about embroidery in Mekondjo's work, we can see how, for the artist, engaging with the seam may help to meditate, process and reflect on the past as a way to reconcile with it. Additionally, Julie Taylor reminds us how stitching is a "gendered modality," an activity traditionally exerted by women, as confirmed in Mekondjo's connection with embroidery.[43] Mekondjo explains: "It's rooted in the memory of my mom, but mostly my grandmother. Whenever we'd go to the village she would be sitting and she'd be weaving these traditional baskets with the needle, using these natural fibres from the makalani tree."[44] Hence, embroidery allows her to keep both this tradition *and* the memories thereof alive, as the stitching is her way of mending the connection between her and her ancestors.[45] Suturing also upholds the promise of healing, as Mekondjo continues: "This process of stitching is bringing back all the broken pieces of pain and trauma which are scattered all over. Embroidery means bringing it all back, so that the mending process can come

40 Andrew van der Vlies, "Art as Archive: Queer Activism and Contemporary South African Visual Cultures," *Kunapipi* 34, no. 1 (2012): 100.

41 Leon de Kock, "Does South African Literature Still Exist? Or: South African Literature Is Dead, Long Live Literature in South Africa," *English in Africa* 32, no. 2 (October 2005): 71; Leon de Kock, "South Africa in the Global Imaginary: An Introduction," *Poetics Today* 22, no. 2 (1 June 2001): 276.

42 van der Vlies, "Art as Archive," 100.

43 Julie J. Taylor, *History, Gender and "New Practices of Self": Re-Interpreting Namibia's Independence War through the Work of Tuli Mekondjo and Helena Uambembe* (Master's thesis, unpublished, University of Witwatersrand, 2021), 2.

44 Mekondjo, pers. comm. via WhatsApp, 25 June 2021.

45 Elize van Huyssteen, "A Conversation with Tuli Mekondjo," *ASAI* (blog), 18 January 2021, https://asai.co.za/a-conversation-with-tuli-mekondjo/.

about."[46] As a form of therapy, stitching allows Mekondjo to contemplate on the images with which she works and the pain and trauma that they conjure. She explains: "It's like bringing the traumas to the foreground because the images are now in the background and the embroidery is now quite vibrant on top."[47] Thus, embroidery is a tool for deliberate and active confrontation with the past. This creative interference is quite physical in its form of intervention, considering how the stitch both punctuates and fractures the canvas.

Despite this heavy interference with the material, the notion of care is crucial in Mekondjo's practice. In an interview, the artist shared how *Elende Lange lo Malududi/My Headdress of Feathers: Ode to Mother* was her way of honouring her mother and her beauty. The picture was taken when her mother was around the age of 18. In the original image, she was seated in a field of long grasses and reeds. While Mekondjo knows nothing about the context of it, she marvels at the look of her mother who seems pensive, resting her head in her hand, contemplating, as Mekondjo suspects.[48] While single photographs can be important "tokens of affection" for the artist, this photograph also represents what is irretrievable – the knowledge of the past that rests with her mother.[49] The artist's reconfiguration of the print allows for visual conversion: she exchanges notions of loss, absence or pain that resonate from the original photograph with an aesthetic that evokes the unknown and the mythic but, at the same time, is peaceful and idyllic. In the act of intervention, Mekondjo's ethics of care are devoted to the photographed subjects and her deep sense of affection for them. Care, as understood by Tamar Garb, is "a mode of attention" which, as it is increasingly argued by scholars engaging with historical photography, needs to be applied when interpreting and working with photographs. Garb calls for cautious, attentive readings of clues and signs in the images in order to avoid misrepresentation and to avoid instrumentalising them for one's own "political or ideological agendas."[50] However, Mekondjo seems less occupied with the danger of misinterpretation. Her strategies to exercise care take the forms of suturing, cutting, layering and altering, as similarly reflected in figure 7.

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46 Mekondjo, pers. comm. via WhatsApp, 25 June 2021. Similar notions are evoked in Memory Biwa's dissertation. Biwa refers, for example, to the work on the patchwork quilt as an alternative way to remember the past, where weaving becomes a way of 'writing,' transmitting and representing knowledge on history with a view to diverse commemorative practices in southern Namibia that recall the colonial war. See: Memory Biwa, "*Weaving the Past with Threads of Memory*," 1–10.

47 Mekondjo, pers. comm. via WhatsApp, 25 June 2021.

48 Ibid.

49 Langford, *Suspended Conversations*, 18.

50 Tamar Garb and Hlonipha Mokoena, "Navigating the African Archive: A Conversation between Tamar Garb and Hlonipha Mokoena," *Critical Arts* 33, no. 6 (2 November 2019): 43.

Figure 7: Tuli Mekondjo, Nyango Refugee Camp, Zambia 1987/My Mother's Request: "Natuminwe Odelela Yaye Noka Ndjeva Ee"- Send Tuli-Mekondjo's Odelela (Traditional Attire) and her Ondjeva (Traditional Waist Beads), *2020. Photo transfer, collage, acrylic, millet grain and resin on canvas, 61 x 81 cm. Courtesy of Guns&Rain Gallery.*

For *Nyango Refugee Camp, Zambia 1987/My Mother's Request* (figure 7), the artist again returned to the family estate where she encountered the second, and last, existing single photograph of her mother. Again, the slim personal archive does not provide any background information on the portrait that she juxtaposed with one of the only two photographs that she has of herself as a toddler. Both image transfers are sewn together by a vertical stitch and additionally encircled with a golden thread. The oval shape of the embroidery resembles the kind of golden frames common as home décor for portrait photographs. The aesthetics and associations connected with portrait photographs are important. Looking back at the history of photography in Africa, Patricia Hayes and Gary Minkley argue that in light of the negative colonial mode of portraying African people and African life, studio, personal and family collections are conceived of special importance.[51] Scholars and curators celebrate the subjectivities that, as they argue, studio portraits are able to express

51 Patricia Hayes and Gary Minkley (eds.), *Ambivalent: Photography and Visibility in African History* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2019), 12.

and capture, as well as their ability "to redeem Africans from their histories of objectification."[52]

This evocation of subjectivity is furthered by the association with the photograph in figure 7 as home décor, but is then ruptured by two additional horizontal seams. These seams are stitched in beige and red across the canvas. Other signs of radical intervention figure in the form of heavy stains, burn marks and holes as well as delicate embroidery on the mother's collar or the toddler's balloon. Reminiscing about the photograph of herself, Mekondjo recalls that it was taken together with her adopted brother at the Nyango refugee camp in 1987 in Zambia. Both children were dressed up in their Sunday best, carrying their balloons, perhaps as a special set-up for the sake of the photograph.[53] However, the burn hole in the canvas at the place where Mekondjo's face is located unsettles this evocation of harmony and childhood innocence, functioning as a powerful reminder of the war context in which the image was taken. The physical photograph carries further meanings that Mekondjo translates in her title, thereby replicating the inscription that was scribbled onto the back of the photograph. This reference is a way to celebrate her mother's attempts to uphold a connection to Avambo culture in her daughter while living abroad. Nura Yuval-Davis points out how women are often assigned the role of transmitting a wide array of cultural customs and traditions, which illuminates how they are conceived of as "intergenerational reproducers of culture."[54] Mekondjo understands her mother's practice as actively counter-acting a looming loss of culture while in exile. Her mother sent the photograph to her relatives back in Namibia, instructing them to dispatch the traditional Odelela costume and the Onjeva waist beads back to Mekondjo in the camp while simultaneously using the photograph as a channel to communicate and maintain her own connection to her family back home.[55]

This gendered dimension – in acts that pass on cultural customs as well as safeguard family inheritance, memories and knowledges – is a crucial link between Mekondjo's and Rust's archival interventions. Uhuru Portia Phalafala's analysis of 'the matriarchive' in Es'kia Mphahlele's work is particularly instructive as a concept to think about this dimension. Phalafala conceptualises the matriarchive as "matrilineally inherited influences, values, wisdoms, relational subjectivities, philosophies, and aesthetics" which are, thus, diametrically opposed to colonial

52 Ibid.

53 Wolfram Hartmann, Jeremy Silvester and Patricia Hayes (eds.), *The Colonising Camera: Photographs in the Making of Namibian History* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 1999), 9.

54 Nira Yuval-Davis, "Gender and Nation," in *Women, Ethnicity and Nationalism: The Politics of Transition.*, ed. Rick Wilford and Robert E. Miller (London: Routledge, 2005), 25. First published 1998. See also Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender & Nation* (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 67.

55 Mekondjo, *Ways of Reading*.

archives that are "male, patriarchal and patrilineal."[56] Phalafala's matriarchive encompasses corporeal memories and other "modes of knowledge" that were previously silenced and that fall outside of the value system of conventional archives.[57] While her analysis focuses on Black women's repertoires of resistance against South Africa's racial and patriarchal order of apartheid, I would extend the argument that matriarchives can also be exilic archives or archives of migration. As knowledges, memories, values and materialities scattered across places, these archives are held together by women transgenerationally. In Mekondjo's work, creative interventions with personal photographs and her evocations of several cultural and personal refences emerge as strategies to (just like her female ancestors) pass on, safeguard and contribute to these archives. However, her devotion to matriarchives extends the framework of inheritances beyond immediate family members. When reflecting on her work, the artist repeatedly stresses how she conceives of herself as a "channel" for all of those women that came before her, including ancestors that she never knew, arguing:[58]

> They are seeking: are we doing anything to heal our traumas? Not only our traumas in our current bodies and mental state but they are asking us: are we doing anything to also heal *their* traumas and of those ancestors that came before us and before them?[59]

Her approach resonates with a growing awareness of the multidimensional itineraries of residues from the past. In this respect, for example, Pedzisai Maedza explains, with regards to performance practices in Namibia, how "memories circulate across time and place – transnationally and across generations."[60] Looking more closely at the South African context, Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela underlines the subtle ways in which trauma is being passed on intergenerationally, for example "through stories or silences, through unarticulated fears and the psychological scars that are often left unacknowledged."[61] In an online panel discussion, scholars and cultural practitioners Jay Pather, Nomusa Makhubu, Senzeni Marasela and Rémy Ngamije considered intergenerational trauma to be "the black family archive" –

56 Uhuru Portia Phalafala, "The Matriarchive as Life Knowledge in Es'kia Mphahlele's African Humanism," *A/b: Auto/Biography Studies* 35, no. 3 (1 September 2020): 733.

57 In developing the concept, she reworks Derrida's notion of the matriarchive and draws from the project "Matriarchive of the Mediterranean" by Silvana Carotenuto. See: Phalafala, "The Matriarchive as Life Knowledge in Es'kia Mphahlele's African Humanism," 733–734.

58 van Huyssteen, "A Conversation with Tuli Mekondjo."

59 Mekondjo, pers. comm. via WhatsApp, 12 October 2021, my emphasis.

60 Maedza, *Chains of Memory in the Postcolony*, 4.

61 Gobodo-Madikizela, *Breaking Intergenerational Cycles of Repetition*, 3.

narratives from a dire past that are being passed on to descendants in Black families.[62] Mekondjo explores this archive with her practice, most prominently with her vast body of work that remodels historical photographs from the colonial era, one example being *Onangula/Sacred Cattle as Human Soul (Kwanyama 2)*.

Figure 8: Tuli Mekondjo, Onangula/Sacred Cattle as Human Soul (Kwanyama 2)*, 2019 Mixed media on canvas, 61 x 45 cm. Courtesy of Guns&Rain Gallery.*

62 Jay Pather, Nomusa Makhubu, Senzeni Marasela and Rémy Ngamije, Black Family Archive: Unpacking Intergenerational Trauma through Literature and Performance, Zeitz MOCCA, Cape Town, 29 July 2021, accessed 30 August 2021, https://zeitzmocaa.museum/exhibition/events/black-family-archive-unpacking-intergenerational-trauma-through-literature-and-performance/.

In figure 8, we see a woman embedded in a golden, shimmering Mahangu field. Again, the plant figures as a cultural reference to Namibia's natural resources. The woman's face and body emerge in a sepia tone, visually harmonising with the Mahangu abundant beside her as well as with her headdress in the form of a bird and its extensive feathers that extend the scope of the canvasses' frame. With her body slightly turned to the side, she directs her eyes at the viewer. Her posture is upright, exuding a sense of strength and pride. Apart from her face and her upper body, she is fully submerged in the plants, but as her breasts are only half-covered by the Mahangu, she seems to be photographed naked, adorned only by a pearl necklace and the painted bird feathers on her head. With the title, Mekondjo gestures to Avambo spirituality and to the belief that the dead live on through their cattle.[63] The artist honours how the Ovambo people maintain a strong connection to their ancestors. To signal this, she recurrently deploys the symbol of the bird which alludes to the presence of the ancestors and the ways in which "they are hovering above."[64]

The tone of the image and the woman's gaze evoke gracefulness. For the artist, it was a similar sense of power that drew her to the original photographic image. In an interview, she described how she encountered it in a book on Namibian hairstyles (*Mythos Haar: Ethnographische Photographien aus Alten Sammlungen Südwestafrikas)* by Anneliese and Ernst Scherz that she found a rejected copy of in a book shop in Windhoek. She later came across the image again in the National Archive of Namibia (NAN) in Windhoek, where she actively sought to engage with the past by seeking out historical photographs. Reminiscing about the encounter, Mekondjo explains how she was touched and amazed to see, for the first time, how the Kwanyama people looked like and how they dressed. Nobody in her family, let alone in her village, had spoken about this, which made her curious to learn more about what her ancestors' lives looked like prior to the introduction of Christianity.[65]

For Mekondjo, the photograph visualises loss and the absence of knowledge about the past. It provided her access to a forgotten heritage and to lost cultural practices. In this sense, photographic archival repositories emerge as sites for the preservation of history for the artist. The image allowed her to both claim and regain fragments of a culture to which she feels affiliated, but that remains distant and elusive. Interestingly, however, in contrast to Mekondjo's emotive responses to the material, academic discourse is much more sceptical about the alleged ways in which photographic repositories speak to and preserve history. While critical archival studies do not deny the potential of archives to function as sources through

63 Mekondjo, *Ways of Reading*.

64 Inspired by famous Namibian printmaker John Muafangejo, Mekondjo repeatedly uses bilingual names for her artworks in order to indicate her affiliation with Ovambo culture. Mekondjo, pers comm. via WhatsApp, 12 June 2022.

65 Mekondjo, pers. comm. via WhatsApp, 4 July 2021.

which to access the past, they heatedly contest conceptions of archives as reflections of reality or "repositories of unvarnished historical truth," as stated in the introduction.[66] We have seen how, in this respect, Stoler argues for an approach to archives as sites of "knowledge production," which becomes graspable when looking at Mekondjo's creative engagement with the material. To unpack her strategies of intervention, let us first consider the image's origins and itineraries.

The publication by the Scherz couple is a collection of ethnographic photographs of Namibian hairstyles, many of which Anneliese Scherz took herself of the Ovambo people in the 1940s or, in later years, other Namibian communities whom she photographed during her travels through the country.[67] Interested in "lost hairstyles," the German couple who emigrated to Namibia in the 1930s, began turning to other collections and to archival repositories in search for documentation of earlier styles and cultural practices.[68] One of the collection holders from which they drew was Kurt Schettler, who was a resident officer who worked and lived in Northern Namibia from 1930 to 1948 and, according to ethnologist Gregor Dobler, worked as a rodent inspector in Ondangwa from 1932 to 1948.[69] From the publication *Mythos Haar*, we can glean that the couple gained access to a number of photographs from the Schettler collection after his death as well as permission from the museum in Swakopmund to reprint further negatives that are part of their repositories.[70] These images found their way into the BAB repositories through the transfer process of the Scherz collections to the Basler Afrika Bibliographien (BAB)

66 Harris, "The Archival Sliver," 65; Jason Lustig, "Epistemologies of the Archive: Toward a Critique of Archival Reason," *Archival Science* 20, no. 1 (March 2020): 68.

67 Anneliese Scherz and Ernst Rudolf Scherz (eds.), *Mythos Haar:* Kopfbedeckungen & Schmuck in Namibia & Südangola (Windhoek: Gamsberg Macmillan, 1981), 4.

68 Scherz and Scherz, *Mythos Haar*, 4; "Ernst Rudolf Scherz," *Namibiana Buchdepot*, accessed 15 July 2021, https://www.namibiana.de/namibia-information/who-is-who/autoren/infos-zur-person/ernst-rudolf-scherz.html; Lorena Rizzo, "Seeing Through Whiteness: Late 1930s Settler Photography in Namibia under South African Rule," in *Visualizing Fascism: The Twentieth-Century Rise of the Global Right*, eds. Julia Adeney Thomas and Geoff Eley (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 145. Central to their publication were photographs taken by colonial officials, one of them being C.H.L. "Cocky" Hahn, who is a rather prominent figure who is referenced in various publications. See, for example: Patricia Hayes, "'Cocky' Hahn and the 'Black Venus': The Making of a Native Commissioner in South West Africa, 1915–46," *Gender & History* 8, no. 9 (November 1996): 364–392; Napandulwe Shiweda, *Omhedi: Displacement and Legitimacy in Oukwanyama Politics, Namibia, 1915–2010* (PhD diss., University of the Western Cape, 2011).

69 "Angaben zur Datierung," BAB, S032; Gregor Dobler, pers. comm., 7 October 2021.

70 A. and E. Scherz express their gratitude to A. Weber for granting permission "to use the photographic material of Mr Schettler available in the Swakopmund Museum for this publication," Scherz and Scherz, *Mythos Haar*, 6, my translation. See also A. Scherz' notes in her manuscripts, such as: "Nach dem Tod von Mr. Schettler erwarb ich dessen Negative" BAB PA.4 X.III.1.4.

in Switzerland.[71] Consulting the archive in Basel brings to light how these complex acquisition processes complicate endeavours to disentangle questions of material belonging. Diverse routes led to the dissemination of conflicting information with regards to authorship and the ownership of images in the process of archiving. While Anneliese Scherz labelled herself as the photographer of the image in her book, research in the BAB reveals that the photograph used in figure 8 was indeed taken by Schettler during his residency in Ovamboland between 1930 and 1948.[72]

According to the BAB, the images that are stored in their repositories as part of the Scherz collection today, and in the NAN repositories as copied prints, should no longer be protected by copyrights that regulate public access thereto.[73] This particular archive is quite open in granting access to its repositories. However, the artist highlights that this is rather an exception, as, in her experience, archival structures often still hinder accessibility for untrained users. One example being that her requests to use historical photographs artistically were repeatedly denied by various institutions and stakeholders. She argues:

> I always wonder: what is the purpose of housing these images in institutions so that anyone who wants to make use of them has to ask permission and have to give – in some cases – extremely good reasons why they need these images or why they want permission to use them in their work?[74]

Even if copyrights may no longer be in place, in many instances, institutions reinforce their claims to possession of historical photographs by virtue of archiving them (which comes with its own rules and regulations). However, with a view to the images' historical contexts, and the power dynamics in place during the time of colonialism and apartheid, we may question whose laws and claims to possession should apply when it comes to Namibian historical photography. Mekondjo cannot comprehend why institutions continue to hold a grip on the images, with the consequence that "the contemporary people are unable to look at their ancestors."[75]

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71 BAB team, pers. comm., 1 October 2021.

72 The information on envelopes and boxes indicates which collections were part of Schettler's photographic work in the Scherz repositories. Additionally, the difference in aesthetics of Scherzs' and Schettler's photography allows us to identify this image as part of his photographic works. BAB, S032.

73 BAB team, pers. comm., 1 October 2021. As established with the Copyright and Neighbouring Rights Protection Act in 1994, images become public domain 50 years after the photo was taken or 50 years after the creator's death. See: Business and Intellectual Property Authority, "Copyright," *BIPA* (blog), accessed 18 October 2021, https://www.bipa.na/intellectual-property/copyright/.

74 Mekondjo, pers. comm. via WhatsApp, 12 October 2021.

75 Ibid.

In this regard, Marika Cifor calls for a reform of archival practices, arguing how the archival field should "expand its ethical orientation to address considerations of emotional justice."[76] In a similar vein, scholar of photography and visual culture Ariella Azoulay notes how questions of accessibility and material belonging are too often approached with a narrow view to legal aspects based on current policies, arguing for the need to reform these frameworks to acknowledge that the collections were "formed under regimes of violence" – a violence that is perpetuated if the original photographer or institutions remain the central stakeholders.[77] Azoulay proposes that we redress predominant foci in debates around access, restitution and claims to photographs from the colonial era, arguing that a "photograph is a social document, not an object to be possessed."[78] What possibilities of redress and restorative justice does Mekondjo's artistic archival intervention with the Scherz/Schettler photograph conjure?

With a view to the historical material, we learn that Schettler produced a vast collection of photographs during his time in Namibia, of which the large amount of close-up shots of African women strikes the eye.[79] Casting a critical glance at his portraits of Africans or the position of the young women's pictures in the Scherz book brings forth how his images were often framed in line with ethnographic and anthropologic methods as can be seen in the front, back and profile views and the variety of angles used to capture the young Kwanyama woman's hairstyle.[80] Attending to these 'colonial' conventions of representation lays bare how the camera in Africa was central for the production of difference as Makhubu states, explaining that "colonial photography became a tool to justify, spectacularise and commercialise scientific racism."[81] Without recording people's names, to attest to their subjectivities, such images served to categorise 'types' instead of portraying individuals.[82] However, scholars, art historians and curators lament how simplistic framings of 'colonial aesthetics' or the 'colonial gaze' are reductionist and blind to "the multiplicity of

76 Marika Cifor, "Affecting Relations: Introducing Affect Theory to Archival Discourse," *Archival Science* 16, no. 1 (March 2016): 9.

77 Ariella Azoulay, "The Captive Photograph," *Boston Review*, 21 September 2021, https://bostonreview.net/race-philosophy-religion/ariella-a%C3%AFsha-azoulay-captive-photograph.

78 Ibid.

79 BAB, S032.

80 Natalia Krzysztofek and Vishruti Shastri, "The Image-Text Event: Framing Famine in Namibia 1953," in *Sites of Contestation: Encounters with the Ernst and Ruth Dammann Collection in the Archives of the Basler Afrika Bibliographien*, eds. Julia Rensing, Lorena Rizzo and Wanda Rutishauser (Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2021), 119.

81 Makhubu, "Visual Currencies," 236.

82 Campt, *Listening to Images* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 49.

possibilities, histories and counter histories lodged within photographs," as Elisabeth Edwards reminds us.[83]

For Mekondjo, connecting the historical image to her own memories of land and landscape from northern Namibia allows her to convert how the photographed subject emerges in front of the viewers' eyes. A glance at the original archival photograph shows how the camera centres on the woman's upper body, choosing an angle slightly from below that lays bare the view of her breasts. Upon close inspection, we can detect blurred schemes of trees in the background, yet a proper view of the landscape is denied. As is the case in the great majority of the photographs from the Schettler repository, the photographer works with stark contrasts: the bright background sets the focus on the subjects' features, the back of their heads and hairstyles. We can locate the girl neither in terms of space nor biography because clues about the context are unknown.[84] Inserting the young woman into the Mahangu field allowed Mekondjo to restrain the view of her body and to shift the focus of attention.

Moreover, for the artist, the archival photograph specifically enabled her to revisit the celebration of *efundula* – the traditional female initiation ceremony, in which young women pass from girl- to adulthood.[85] According to Napandulwe Shiweda, at the onset of efundula, the girls' *elende* hairstyle is crafted from "*eefipa* (sinews), fat, hair and *ombaba* (cowrie shells)."[86] Mekondjo was in awe at the sight of the elende: "It's a reminder of who I am and where I come from."[87] Re-embracing the ancestral traditions, Mekondjo laments how, with the introduction of Christianity, missionaries rejected local customs and practices. People were forced to change their hairstyles, shave or cut-off their hair ornaments. "It is almost like a death, the death of a culture, the dying of an art," the artist claims.[88] Contemplating these issues, she marvels at the beauty of the image, but also elucidates the challenges of working with historical photography:

> There are times that I really step away because there is too much intensity. You feel the intensity of the pains of the people in their faces, you start seeing their trauma, they have it in their expression. Even though they are made to stand in this stylised manner, you could see it in their body language.[89]

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83 Amkpa, "Africa," 242; Edwards, *Raw Histories*, 12.

84 Research at the BAB only revealed that Schettler took his images in Namutoni and Ondangwa, but no further specific information is provided (BAB, S032).

85 Hina MuAshekele, Michael Akuupa, Erastus Kautondokwa, Onena Shivute, Saara Katariina Kuoppala, Hiskia Akuupa, *Olufuko Festival: Practice and Perspectives of the Female Initiation Rite: A Research Study Prepared for Outapi Town Council* (Windhoek: Outapi Town Council, 2018), 39.

86 Shiweda, *Omhedi*, 48, emphasis in original.

87 Mekondjo, pers. comm. via WhatsApp, 4 July 2021.

88 Ibid.

89 Mekondjo, pers. comm. via WhatsApp, 12 October 2021.

Mekondjo is unsettled by the power dynamics at play between photographed subjects and the photographer, grappling with, what Rizzo and Makhubu describe as the "heightened visibility" or "hypervisibility" of African women's objectified, sexualised, naked bodies in archival photographic records.[90] By means of conversion, Mekondjo replaces previous registers connected with the image with a positive, celebratory visuality to honour the photographed subjects and their traditions. Like currency, she trades the meanings of certain visual signifiers and replaces them with other multi-dimensional cultural references.[91] Her care and devotion seem to be focused on the matriarchive and on the impulse to contribute to its preservation and transmission. In this mode of archival intervention and image conversion, however, something of the old remains intact. As a resource to access material, the archive pertains its prevalence. Okwui Enwezor is critical about this perseverance, arguing how our familiarity and continued, almost obsessive usage of historical photographs of Africans locks the photographed subjects in a state of Otherness.[92] His argument hints at the limits of image conversion that draws on the colonial era's visual economy of photography. In a similarly sceptical tone, Makhubu reflects on the archive's stubborn presence and its role for contemporary artists, arguing: "You are sort of stuck with the colonial archive, you were once rejecting it and once critiquing it but also sort of drawn [to it], and your work is entrenched in it."[93] Her contention shows that the ideological and material legacies of colonialism remain persistent, troubling and need to be addressed.

2.3: Refiguring Postmemories

Shifting the view to Imke Rust's artistic responses to troubling photographs and abstract legacies of the past, we come to see how the notion of the matriarchive can also be applied to her archival refigurations. In 2005, the artist created a series called *Memories*, in which she casts a critical glance at her own biography, her family histories and at a memorial culture that she considers partial, flawed or distorted. When the artist inherited her grandmother's family estate, the material prompted

90 Lorena Rizzo, "Reframing Women in Namibia's Early History of Photography," *The Conversation*, 7 September 2020, http://theconversation.com/reframing-women-in-namibias-early-history-of-photography-144678; Art on Our Mind (AOOM), "Art on Our Mind Creative Dialogue: Curating As World Making (Excerpt 1)," 22 October 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DVe-6rKKCso.

91 Makhubu, "Visual Currencies," 229.

92 Okwui Enwezor, "Reframing the Black Subject: Ideology and Fantasy in Contemporary South African Representation," *Third Text* 11, no. 40 (September 1997): 28.

93 Art on our Mind (AOOM), "Art on Our Mind Creative Dialogue."

her to question family narratives, relationships and the members' role as 'white' settlers in Namibia.[94] Notably, the matter of inheritance for Rust has been rather overwhelming, when compared to Mekondjo's slim family estate. In an interview, Rust explained how her grandmother had always been adamant about passing on the family history to her. As the only granddaughter, Rust was often chosen as the interlocutor with whom to share the family stories and, after her grandmother's death, she would be entrusted with a vast and diverse family estate, encompassing various objects, furniture, jewellery and memorabilia.[95] Her grandmother meticulously and conscientiously recorded and secured the information on the items' backgrounds to pass them on.[96] Rust also came into possession of family photo albums and a cookie box with well-kept and neatly filed postcards and single photographs. The postcards functioned as the medium for communication between her grandmother and grandfather during his imprisonment in a detention camp at the time of the Second World War until the family's reunion after six years of separation, as we will see.[97]

Rust's grandmother took it upon herself to preserve the family history – a gendered labour division that resonates with Phalafala's observation that "(grand)mothers and (great) aunts are tasked to stand in for the collective, as guardians and transmitters of knowledge, and they have done so through informal modalities of the domestic, the intimate, the corporeal, and the oral."[98] Continuing this tradition and the task to keep the matriarchive alive, Rust's grandmother implored her to ensure that the material prevails. Rust felt a "deep respect" in the face of the extensive heirlooms and a sense of responsibility for the material.[99] In a similar vein, Cifor speaks about the need for respect as well as an affective, empathetic and ethical approach to archives, arguing how "witnessing is a relation that comes with certain responsibilities."[100] Paraphrasing Ann Cvetkovich, Cifor considers archival material to be "repositories of feelings and emotions," stressing how archivists (and by extension estate heirs and those who engage with archives) are implicated in "webs of affective relations."[101] Similar to Mekondjo, Rust's care for the material would, however, not be enacted through conventional measures of preservation and safekeeping, but instead through interference and modification. The artist chose this path as she realised, when studying the material, that the narratives that she encountered did not

94 Rust, pers. comm., 30 September 2020.
95 Ibid.
96 Ibid.
97 Exhibition catalogue *Memories*, 2005.
98 Phalafala, "The Matriarchive as Life Knowledge in Es'kia Mphahlele's African Humanism," 736.
99 Rust, pers. comm., 30 September 2020.
100 Cifor, "Affecting Relations," 9.
101 Ibid.

match the stories she knew so well from her grandmother and mother. Being confronted with multiple versions of the past, Rust decided to engage more deeply with the theme of memory. The artist interrogated the elusive memories connected to the photographs, including those that were not necessarily her own. She turned to postmemories that were passed on to her, to evoke Marianne Hirsch's famous concept, which the literary scholar defines as follows:

> Postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are displaced by the stories of the previous generation, shaped by traumatic events that can be neither fully understood nor re-created.[102]

With a view to the family's traumatic experiences and their historical background, the *Memories*-series speaks to the fate that many German speakers in South-West Africa shared at the time of the Second World War. In 1940, Rust's grandfather Paulo Doll was taken to the detention camp Andalusia in South Africa, 3,000 km away from his family. It is estimated that 1,966 German-speaking men from South-West Africa had been interned in camps in the period between 1939 and 1946.[103] Many wives and children stayed behind, suddenly responsible for running the farms and businesses, while others were interned in their houses or on the farms and were only allowed to leave those with prior permission.[104] These developments were related to the political changes that followed after World War I, when Germany lost its colonies and DSWA came under South African mandate administration. In due course, more than 6,000 settlers were either expelled or repatriated voluntarily to Germany, while approximately 7,000 German speakers remained and, with the London Agreement of 1923, this group would be naturalised as British South African citizens.[105]

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102 Marianne Hirsch, "Past Lives: Postmemories in Exile," *Poetics Today* 17, no. 4 (1996): 662.

103 Paul Schamberger, "Ein Besuch in Andalusia weckt Erinnerungen und Fragen," *Allgemeine Zeitung*, 10 January 2011.

104 Martin Eberhardt, *Zwischen Nationalsozialismus und Apartheid: die deutsche Bevölkerungsgruppe Südwestafrikas 1915–1965* (Münster and Konstanz: LIT Verlag, 2007), 414; Rolf Kock (ed.), *Erinnerungen an Die Internierungszeit (1939–1946) Und Zeitgeschichtliche Ergänzungen: Berichte, Erzählungen, Fotos Und Zeichnungen von Kameraden, Die Dabei Waren* (Windhoek: Selbstverlag Andalusia, 1975), 34.

105 However, in the years that followed, the demographic structure changed again: with new migration movements, Germans returned to South-West Africa and until the 1930s, the number of German speakers in the colony rose again to just under 10,000. Simultaneously, White Boers increasingly migrated from the Union to South-West Africa, with the effect that, by 1936, Germans made up just under one-third of the White population out of a total of 30,677 people. Reinhart Kößler, "Historischer Wendepunkt, Strukturelle Kontinuität," in *Deutschland Postkolonial? Die Gegenwart Der Imperialen Vergangenheit*, eds. Joachim Zeller and Marianne Bechhaus-Gerst (Berlin: Metropol, 2018), 53; Eberhardt, *Zwischen Nationalsozialismus und*

In the years that followed, German speakers obtained the status of a "tolerated minority" in the colony, as this remained relevant for South Africa who needed their 'white' allies as a "buffer against the 'black peril,'" as Martin Eberhardt explains.[106] South Africa's aspirations to strengthen the 'white' camp to control the African population were the reason why the mandate administration was rather lenient towards the defeated colonial power.[107] However, resentments and tensions amongst the 'white' settler societies in South-West Africa prevailed and increased with the rise of National Socialism and the Second World War.[108] The German speakers' loyalty to the "motherland" and to a persistent "mythical devotion to the *Kaiserreich*" was increasingly considered to be a threat by South African authorities, which culminated in the establishment of the NSDAP in South-West Africa and the foundation of a local group (*Ortsgruppe*).[109] In September 1939, the parliament decided to join the war against Germany, siding with England, which heralded the internment of German-speaking men.[110]

In her configuration of this chapter in settler history, Rust shifts the focus to the implications of the political transitions on family relations. She centres the emotional labour of settler women, their practices of photographing, writing, communicating and archiving as means to maintain family bonds and to construct a sense of family identity in times of separation and in the face of estrangement after reunion. Figure 9 shows scenes just before Rust's grandfather was taken to the internment camp when daughter Freya was only seven weeks old. Figure 10 visualises the first reencounter of father and daughter six years later.[111] What strikes the eye in both pieces is the material intervention that Rust conducted by adding a translucent curtain with butterflies onto the photograph with a replication of her grandmother's original inscriptions from the photo album.

Rust explained how she engaged artistically with the family estate in search of understanding the tense relationship between her mother, Freya, and father Paulo Doll.[112] The passed-on memories and archival photographs functioned as clues for her interrogation. From family narratives, Rust learned about the grandfather's

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Apartheid, 17–18; 150; Joachim Zeller, "Review: Creating Germans Abroad by Daniel Joseph Walther, Ohio University Press, 2002," H-Soz-Kult, 10 May 2004.

106 Zeller, "Review;" Eberhardt, *Zwischen Nationalsozialismus und Apartheid*, 62.

107 Kößler, "Historischer Wendepunkt, Strukturelle Kontinuität," 54; Zeller, "Review."

108 Kößler, "Historischer Wendepunkt, Strukturelle Kontinuität," 54.

109 Tobias Pech, "The Internment Camp 'Klein-Danzig' in Windhoek 1939–1941," *Journal of Namibian Studies* 21 (2017): 92, emphasis in original.

110 Kock, *Erinnerungen an Die Internierungszeit (1939–1946) Und Zeitgeschichtliche Ergänzungen*, 34; Eberhardt, *Zwischen Nationalsozialismus und Apartheid*, 410.

111 Portfolio *Memories*, 2005.

112 Ibid.

prestigious status amongst the settler community, where Doll was well-respected and conceived of as a charismatic, charming figure.[113]

Figure 9 (left): Imke Rust, Ein (Letztes) Küsschen *(diptych), 2005. Digital print on film, A0. Edition 5/5. Courtesy of the artist.*
Figure 10 (right): Imke Rust, Wiedersehen *(diptych), 2005. Digital print on film, A0. Edition 5/5. Courtesy of the artist.*

In contrast, however, her mother's recollections of the father tell a different story. Rust's mother recurrently spoke of a sense of distance and alienation from her father, considering him to be an aloof character, with a sense of coldness defining the father-daughter relationship.[114] The artist's cautious, creative and lighthearted mode of intervening with the inherited material (in the form of the butterfly curtains) allow her to carefully explore these dissonant perspectives. Upon close inspection, the notions of estrangement might emanate from the original photographs, for example, as seen in the father's and daughter's upright postures or their averted gazes. However, the images also show a sense of proximity, figuring in the father's gentle kiss or in his hand holding onto his daughter gently. In observing these different notions, I was reminded of Elisabeth Edwards reflections on photography, who underlines that photographs mislead their viewers because images "do not lend themselves to being dealt with in any definite way,"

113 Rust, pers. comm., 30 September 2020.
114 Ibid.

although they do suggest a kind of immediate reflection of 'truth' or reality.[115] Rust superimposed the images with additional layers that complicate easy readings of them, thereby mirroring their deceptive character in order to visually depict the frictions between memories, the photographs 'truth-claims' and family narratives. The curtain emerges in many of the pieces that Rust edited. Symbolically, it reflects the dynamics of commemoration.[116] Over time, memories seem vague, fuzzy or slippery, and historical events become coloured by one's own perspective and ideas.

Figure 11 (left): Imke Rust, Fading Memories (Butterflies), *2005. Digital print on Material Tyvek. Edition 5/5. Courtesy of the artist.*
Figure 12 (right): Imke Rust, Fading Memories (Roses), *2005. Digital print on Material Tyvek. Edition 5/5. Courtesy of the artist.*

Rust further explores the "subjective component" in how we remember in figures 11 and 12. The "rosy veil" in the artwork *Fading Memories (Roses)*, which partially covers certain elements from the original photograph (the mother) while highlighting others (the father), is a gesture to the German saying, 'seeing the past through rose-tinted glasses,' indicating how people idealise or reframe the past positively in retrospect.[117] The sense of nostalgia also features in the artistic ruse of blurring the images. Many of the photographs only become properly recognisable when viewers take a step back, which reflects the critical distance Rust herself assumes towards

115 Edwards, *Raw Histories*, 9, emphasis in original.
116 Irmgard Schreiber, "Hinter Einem (Dusch)Vorhang Aus Rosen: Imke Rust Verarbeitet Erinnerungen an Eine Afrikanische Kindheit," *Allgemeine Zeitung*, 7 October 2005.
117 My translation, original: "Die Vergangenheit durch eine rosa-rote Brille sehen." Exhibition catalogue *Memories*, 2005.

her family history and the archival material. The fabric used for her modification was Rust's grandmother's original flower curtain that featured prominently in her home décor. This reference to cherished material resonates with an earlier observation introduced in chapter 1, concerning how objects can function as triggers of memories and emotions.[118] In summoning and scrutinising postmemories, Rust's artistic intervention takes on the form of memory conversion. By layering, cutting out, highlighting and blurring certain elements, she exchanges the status of formerly accepted family narratives and exposes passed-on memories as myths.

Figure 13: Imke Rust, His Absence Filled Their Lives, *2005. Digital print. Edition 5/5. Courtesy of the artist.*

In figure 13, Rust engages with the format of the family photo album for her interrogation of the subjective and constructed character of memory-making by means of family pictures. She photographed the open book and post-edited it digitally. Martha Langford understands the family photo album as a "mnemonic framework" that serves to keep memories accessible and alive, arguing how organising photographs into albums is a way of "preserving the structures of oral traditions for new uses in the present."[119] In line with this thought, Hirsch contemplates photo albums and their function for the heirs of family estates and bearers of postmemory. For her, the personal and often difficult work of analysing family pictures allows viewers to reassemble and reconnect with the past.[120] Her own practice of reading family narratives and images against one another allowed Hirsch to reconstruct

118 De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile Identity, Agency and Belonging*, 60.

119 Langford, *Suspended Conversations*, 21.

120 Hirsch, *Family Frames*, 214–215.

a sense of familial continuity in light of a fractured personal history.[121] However, she also draws our attention to the potential of the artistic modification of family photographs, which centres on notions such as fragmentation, discontinuity, and rupture, arguing that "[i]t is the consciousness of a break, exposed in the radical and irreverent manipulation of images, that enables intervention, contestation, and change."[122]

South African artist Lebohang Kganye, for example, explores the potential of contestation and engages with the constructed nature of family narratives, identities and memories by elucidating the "fantastical elements" of the family album, which she considers as a form of "storybook."[123] In her process of curating the family archive, Rust similarly exposes, to use Kganye's words, the "orchestrated fiction" around family narratives.[124] She intervened with her grandmother's affectionate compilation by digitally inserting the grandfather's contours and shadows onto the women's photographs. With this, she violates the photo albums' original order and inserts her own ideas into the material. By adding the whitened silhouette, she emphasises the (grand)father's absence and visualises his ghostly presence.

The ethics at stake here are connected to the disturbance of her grandmother's archival project. If the original archivist of the family estate attempted to construct a certain family identity and transmit a particular version of the past, the power over interpretation and presentation was now in the hands of Rust as the objects' heir and the keeper of postmemories. The grandmother's endeavour to document family life at a time of separation may have followed the desire to reassemble, collect and connect what in reality was dispersed and fragmented. At the same time, the album may have functioned as a way to secure and transmit that which could not be shared physically during the years of separation. It would allow the (grand)father to return to and visually witness a past from which he was excluded. After their death, and with the material now being in Rust's hands, their original functions are being discarded and the heirloom now serves as material for both knowledge scrutiny and production.

The aspect of critical reflection on past narratives also figures in the title, *His Absence Filled Their Lives*. In an interview, the artists explained to me how it is a reference to a drawing by William Kentridge.[125] In a scene from Kentridge's film *Sobri-*

121 Ibid., 214.

122 Ibid.; Examples from the artistic scene that engage creatively with the photographic family archive are: Isabel Katjavivi, *An Everyday Archive of Independence* (2021); Loraine Kalassa, *Untitled* (2018); Hans-Peter Feldberg, *Retrospective* (2016) or Maria Miesenberger, *Sverige/Schweden* (1993–2000).

123 Astrup Fearnley Museet, "Interview with Lebohang Kganye | 'Alpha Crucis – Contemporary African Art,'" *YouTube*, 23 July 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZKt2cFQpO_s.

124 "Ke Lefa Laka – a Solo Exhibition by Lebohang Kganye."

125 Rust, pers. comm., 30 September 2020.

ety, Obesity and Growing Old (1991), we see an old man alone with his cat, standing on top of a hill with the words "her absence filled the world" looming large in the open space above his head. While the film centrally revolves around the invented character Soho Eckstein (a "greedy mining magnate" and "symbol of South African white power") whose wife leaves him for another man, the message has a broad reach, resonating with viewers in different ways.[126] For Rust, this statement mirrored how, at the time of family division, life revolved centrally around absence and the longing for reunion. While this conception has been repeated constantly, perpetuated and handed down amongst generations, it was also in dissonance with other postmemories that the artist inherited. From her mother, the artist learned that, indeed, the father's absence accompanied her throughout those six years of her life and beyond. However, she also actually conceived of her childhood as a happy one – the sense of lack was partially constructed through the narratives themselves.[127]

Figure 14 (left): Imke Rust, Passed by Censor, *2005. Digital print on Material Tyvek. Edition 5/5. Courtesy of the artist.*
Figure 15 (right): Imke Rust, Gruesse an Internierten Vater, *2005. Digital print on film. Edition 5/5. Courtesy of the artist.*

Rust's reprints from the family archive partially recover the "banal, cute mundanities" of her mother's fatherless (but happy) childhood. At the same time, the imposition of texts and additional layers as well as her strategies of distorting, blurring

126 The story metaphorically reflects the political changes that were unfolding in South Africa in the 1990s. For the image, see: Zeitz MOCCA, "William Kentridge Drawing For Sobriety," *Zeitz MOCAA*, accessed 15 September 2021, https://shop.zeitzmocaa.museum/product/postcard-multi-colour-william-kentridge-drawing-for-sobriety-a5/.

127 Rust, pers. comm., 30 September 2020.

and editing the images are reminders of the ambivalences of postmemories.[128] Figures 14 and 15 illustrate the impact that the political climate, as well as the father's internment, had on the family's life. These are invoked literally by the imprint on the material. Simultaneously, both works also elucidate the multifaceted usages of photography in these historical contexts. During the period of interment, all modes of communication were monitored by the South Africans and, to pass their censor, Rust's grandmother wrote her letters from the child's perspective, assuming an innocent tone, focusing only on "straightforward reports on banal happenings" and anecdotes.[129] Carefully perforated, bound together, filed and stored in a box, the texts and attached photographs still bear witness to the grandmother's efforts of informing her husband about the everyday affairs at home, thereby securing a sense of connection in the family.

Opening the family archive, revealing these private dialogues to the public and interfering with the material, was a sensitive task for the artist due to her deep attachment, particularly to her mother and grandmother. Rust explains how she often felt confronted with German conceptions of the 'white' settler woman as the culprit who actively maintained 'white' supremacy.[130] Against this background, Rust was wary about rendering the women in her family vulnerably and probed ways to navigate their potential exposure cautiously, or to argue with Cifor and Caswell, with a (feminist) "ethics of care."[131] In their proposed approach to historical photography, they engage with the literal meaning of the word care as the "ability to understand and appreciate another person's feelings, experience, etc."[132] Similar challenges apply with a view to private archives. But to whom should Rust direct her loyalties – to her grandmother's memories, the historical context or her own view towards the past?

The artist was two years old when her grandfather died but, from passed-on narratives, she learned that Doll's father came to Namibia first as a trader and later as a volunteer to join the Schutztruppe.[133] With her critical distance towards the politics of German speakers in colonial Namibia, the family's background as well as the members' motivations to actively participate in the war against the Herero and Nama remain troubling and ungraspable to her. In light of these uncertainties, her artistic response seems to follow Penny Siopis' "inward turn," as Rust relegates the attention away from broader political issues and questions concerning power and

128 Schreiber, "Hinter Einem (Dusch)Vorhang Aus Rosen."

129 Exhibition catalogue *Memories*, 2005.

130 Rust, pers. comm., 30 September 2020. In Chapter 4, we will engage in more depth with the complex entanglements of German (settler) women in colonialism.

131 Caswell and Cifor, "From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics," 24.

132 Ibid.

133 Rust, pers. comm., 30 September 2020.

privilege in favour of the private family sphere, its tensions, emotions and memories.[134] In doing so, the careful approach she uses centres her female relatives and is devoted to keeping the matriarchive alive. In this mode of archival intervention, the structural and political dimensions of the family archive remain intact. However, a meaning-conversion takes place through Rust's challenging of inconsistent family narratives. By adding additional layers to the material and by entangling different symbols and references, Rust evokes the subjective and elusive nature of memories, thereby elucidating, how Ciraj Rassool states that "commemorative politics can take the form of participation, inscription and of contestation."[135]

2.4: Troubling Legacies Revisited

The drive to actively shape commemorative politics and to propose new routes of remembrance is also a central impulse in Mekondjo's archival interventions. She is continuously pulled back to historical photography during her artistic interrogation of transgenerational traumas and her ancestors' experiences during the colonial and apartheid eras. As stated previously, this prevalence of the colonial archive is due to the fact that Mekondjo's matriarchive is a shattered one. As an exilic archive, it is dispersed across continents and institutions. For her relatives, it was impossible to generate and safeguard an encompassing and stable material family archive. Hence, the artist continues to search for clues to access the past in other archives and to build, reshape and transmit her own matriarchive for the future.

One of the troubling chapters in Namibian history to which she returns is the liberation struggle and the intergenerational traumas of those who went into exile. The earlier introduced piece, *Nyango Refugee Camp, Zambia 1987/My Mother's Request*, is part of a body of works from the exhibition *The Borders of Memory* (2020).[136] In the 14 artworks that she produced for the show, Mekondjo shifts attention to the implications of the war on individuals, particularly the ways in which women and children crafted their lives in unstable conditions. In doing so, as Taylor argues, she uses strategies of "counter-rupture," as a way to push back against "dominant Eurocentric and/or 'patriotic history' discourses" and to "proffer new ways of knowing about the past and being in the present."[137] We have seen how SWAPO's patriotic history was centrally constructed by its male members and leaders, who celebrated the

134 Nuttall and Siopis, "An Unrecoverable Strangeness," 457.

135 Memory Studies Association, "MSA Conference 2019, Keynote Roundtable 'Connecting Memory Traditions Around the World,'" *YouTube*, 22 October 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_4u1eJhznig.

136 The exhibition was a collaboration with artist Helena Uambembe and curated by curated by Julie Taylor of Guns & Rain Gallery, Johannesburg.

137 Taylor, *History, Gender and "New Practices of Self,"* 31.

"liberation gospel" as Henning Melber puts it, which "swept under the carpet contestations about the past."[138] One example of painful events that Mekondjo revisits is the Cassinga Attack on 4 May 1978, when South African army forces bombed the refugee camp in Angola, killing approximately 600 people.[139]

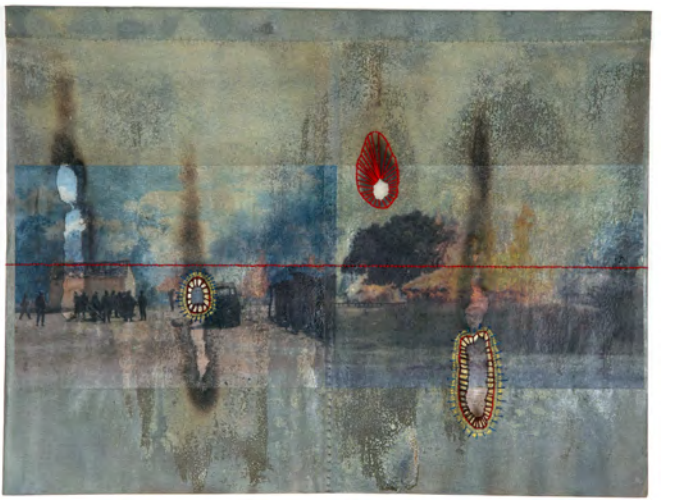

Figure 16: Tuli Mekondjo, Om'dilo Mo Cassinga/Fire at Cassinga, *2020. Photo transfer, collage, acrylic, millet grain and resin on canvas, 62 x 82 cm. Courtesy of Guns&Rain Gallery.*

In *Om'dilo Mo Cassinga/Fire at Cassinga* (figure 16), the artist uses fire as both metaphor and method to reimagine the chaos at Cassinga when bullets were fired and people moved in all directions while the camp was being destroyed. Mekondjo also attempts to capture the strange silence and eerie sensation of death that lingered in the air after the conflict.[140] In depicting the pain of the massacre, Mekondjo hopes to further efforts of healing, arguing: "We need more dialogues to discuss the pain, but unfortunately our communities are silent. They are fearful to speak about

138 Melber, *Understanding Namibia*; Taylor, *History, Gender and "New Practices of Self,"* xvi; 19.

139 South African authorities claimed that Cassinga was a SWAPO military base and this was the reason why they attacked the site. However, it was civilians who died in this massacre. Ever since Nambian Independence, on 4 May their loss is being commemorated (Cassinga Day). See: Akawa, *The Gender Politics of the Namibian Liberation Struggle*, 94–95.

140 Mekondjo, pers. comm., via WhatsApp, 14 May 2020.

what happened at Cassinga."[141] Due to the scope of this chapter, I will not provide a detailed analysis of figure 16. Rather, I will continue to centre on artworks in which Mekondjo and Rust share a focus on the entanglements of land, identity and the role of the matriarchive in negotiating troubled legacies. However, what is crucial in the *Border of Memory* series overall is how the artist engages with memories and traumas that were not directly her own. Her concern with her ancestors' experiences of the liberation war resonates with Hirsch's argument that descendants of perpetrators, victims or bystanders can connect with the memories of previous generations so deeply that they adopt these memories as part of their own.[142] Hirsch stresses that "[p]ostmemory is a powerful form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through projection, investment, and creation."[143] Let us look more closely at this aspect of investment in commemorative practices and how it aligns with my contention that Mekondjo's archival intervention takes the form of memory conversion.

Figure 17: Tuli Mekondjo, Ohango Ya Meme, Ko Mbada/My Mother's Wedding In Exile, *2020. Photo transfer, collage, acrylic, millet grain and resin on canvas, 61 x 82 cm. Courtesy of Guns&Rain Gallery.*

141 van Huyssteen, "A Conversation with Tuli Mekondjo."

142 Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 3.

143 Marianne Hirsch, "Projected Memory: Holocaust Photographs in Personal and Public Fantasy," in *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, eds. Mieke Bal, Jonathan V. Crewe and Leo Spitzer (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1999), 8.

For *Ohango Ya Meme, Ko Mbada/My Mother's Wedding In Exile* (figure 17), the artist paired a photograph from the National Archive of Namibia of women in the camp in Kwanza-Sul in Angola with a photo transfer from her own private family archive. Mekondjo gleaned that the photograph was taken in Angola in 1983 from information provided in the public archive. It shows women laughing while working the fields, cultivating the land with their hoes. The wedding photograph was taken when her mother married Mekondjo's stepfather on 31 May 1986 at the Nyango camp in Zambia. The interesting mélange of the guests' dresses strikes the eye: while bride and groom wear rather conventional Western wedding costumes, the women to the left are wearing skirts that resemble the more contemporary traditional *odelela* dresses, reminding us again of women's social roles in furthering and transmitting a sense of cultural affiliation.[144] The ruse of pairing the material from different archives shows how, for the artist, neither the private nor the public archive alone invokes to the past adequately. When asked about her reason for pairing the photographs, the artist stated how, for her, both images tell "the same story of the work of women living life in these camps."[145] For Mekondjo, they offered insights into everyday life in exile, where people got married, cultivated the land and where it was "still the duty of the women to make sure that everyone was taken care of."[146] Mekondjo honours how women fulfilled several roles at once, being mothers, wives, freedom fighters and refugees as well as individuals with hopes and dreams in an atmosphere of instability and conflict. Akawa similarly emphasises women's diverse (and crucial) forms of participation in the struggle, which implied that gender roles would partially shift – women were emancipated, involved in politics and claimed access to the public sphere, which implied that they entered "into the male arena *in addition* to doing traditional 'women's chores.'"[147] Besides emphasising women's perseverance and strength, with figure 17, Mekondjo is accentuating positive sceneries and events. The photographs show the celebration of love in the form of marriage and a social activity (the cultivation of land) in which participants express a sense of light-heartedness, which is captured by the camera. In her refiguration of the historical images, the photographs function as testimonies to the ease and beauty of the *everyday* in exile, a visual proof of positivity, despite all hardships.

And yet, as is the nature with postmemories, these recollections are not mediated by recall, but by Mekondjo's projections and her imaginative recreation of past events.[148] By means of converting the images' resonances for her own use, the artist

144 Mekondjo, *Ways of Reading*; Yuval-Davis, "Gender and Nation," 25.

145 Mekondjo, *Ways of Reading*.

146 Ibid.

147 Akawa, *The Gender Politics of the Namibian Liberation Struggle*, 60–65; 106–108.

148 Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 5.

uses the "malleability and slipperiness" of photographs and the impossibility to retrieve their "true" meanings, which opens up the potential for imaginative interference.[149] In intervening with the material, she trades the predominant conception of the war period as a time of sacrifice and misery for a visuality that recalls both the adversities (evoked by the sombre tone) and the love, togetherness and mundanity that defined people's lives. In shifting the predominant registers of historical photographs from the colonial and apartheid eras, in which the photographed subjects are often exposed to the photographer's and viewers' gazes, the power dynamics in her works are inverted: "Now their gaze is upon us, and they are asking us questions, like: Do we actually know who we are, where we come from? […] we are being looked at now by our own ancestors and they have a lot of questions."[150] In centring their gazes and experiences, the artist refigures historical photographs to illuminate her ancestors' agency and achievements. However, what is reinvoked in these pieces is a red stitch, as we have seen previously in figure 7, which functions as a symbol to indicate the lines of division that continue to separate the nation, as Mekondjo explains.[151] It represents the veterinary defence line in Namibia, which was established by the German colonial authorities in 1896, originally erected, as Giorgio Miescher argues, to control animal diseases and prevent their spread from northern into central Namibia.[152] However, he highlights how, in reality, the separation of territories allowed for better protection for "white-owned livestock and the white settler economy to the south," a strategy that was further refined with the establishment of the 'Police Zone' under German rule in 1906, which comprised central and southern Namibia and was intended as an exclusively 'white' settlement area.[153] Under South African rule, these forms of territorial control were extended, and the exact line of demarcation has been relocated a number of times.[154] Simultaneously, the visualisation of a drawn border line – a red line – on Namibian maps became a common inscription.[155]

During the liberation struggle, the South African military used the fence as a military border to control the mobility of Africans, particularly preventing people

149 Patricia Hayes, "Introduction: Visual Genders," *Gender & History* 17, no. 3 (November 2005): 525.

150 Mekondjo, pers. comm., via WhatsApp, 12 October 2021.

151 Mekondjo, pers. comm., via WhatsApp, 14 May 2020.

152 Giorgio Miescher, *Namibia's Red Line: The History of a Veterinary and Settlement Border* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 1.

153 Miescher, *Namibia's Red Line*, 1; Taylor, *History, Gender and "New Practices of Self,"* 43; Patricia Hayes, Jeremy Silvester, Marion Wallace, and Wolfram Hartmann, *Namibia under South African Rule: Mobility & Containment, 1915–46* (Oxford: James Currey, 1998), 3.

154 Miescher, *Namibia's Red Line*, 1–2.

155 Ibid., 2.

who engaged in the liberation struggle from crossing the territories.[156] Mekondjo conceives of the territorial separation as "a political 'cage,'" explaining how the Red Line was "instrumental as a regulator of contract labourers in colonial and apartheid Namibia" and was also used to control the movement of the PLAN fighters (People's Liberation Army of Namibia) and for South Africa to plan its attacks in Angola and Zambia.[157] The border remains in place, even after independence and until this day. With it, the post-colonial government controls the traffic within the inner-Namibian territories, particularly monitoring the transportation of livestock and animal products.[158] Namibian activist and politician Job Amupanda took legal actions to have the fence removed and declared it unconstitutional; however, his case was dismissed by the High Court, and at the time of writing, Amupanda is preparing an appeal to the Supreme Court.[159] Reflecting back on the history of this border, it becomes visible that, by evoking the Red Line and its implications, Mekondjo brings multiple narratives of the past into conversation with one another. She is reminding us to pay closer attention to colonial continuities and ruptures that are, like a thread stitched onto a map, inscribed in the land, thereby impacting people's livelihoods and freedom.

Circling back to figure 17, and to the question how the artist engages with archival images to speak to the entanglement of identity, land and belonging, helps to elucidate how her art emphasises the perseverance of the people and the notion of togetherness, even at times of disruption and despite colonial aspirations to displace the people, shatter communities and to divide or claim the territory. The artist conjures the tragic histories of resettlement and dislocation, which then become part of her visual currency: the notions are exchanged by a shift in focus on people's continued connection to land across national borders. In cultivating the land, her ancestors provided for their families, communities and the generations to follow and, as evoked in the wedding photograph, they built new relations and families in an atmosphere of rupture.

Rust's performative video work *A Thorny Issue* (2017) (figure 18) foregrounds a different perspective on the issue of access to (and separation from) Namibian land. Her "lens-based mediative performance" begins with an extreme long shot showing a wide, dry field with bushes, an adjacent forest and a bright blue sky. From this perspective, the artist, standing in the field, is barely recognisable.

156 Ibid.

157 van Huyssteen, "A Conversation with Tuli Mekondjo."

158 Miescher, *Namibia's Red Line*, 2.

159 Werner Menges, 'Amupanda Wants to Redo Redline Lawsuit', *The Namibian*, 14 February 2024, https://www.namibian.com.na/amupanda-wants-to-redo-redline-lawsuit/.

Figure 18: Imke Rust, A Thorny Issue, *2017 (film still), 2017. Courtesy of the artist.*

The natural scenery and the vastness of the setting prompt associations with the "popular settler trope of […] empty land."[160] Lorena Rizzo interrogates this colonial construction in depth in her analysis of photographs by a German settler and amateur photographer and she argues:

> Vacant land is a well-known *topos* in imperial and colonial imagery, suggesting the absence of indigenous people and visualising territorial claims by the colonisers. Colonial spaces appear as if willing to be appropriated and occupied by particular groups – in southern Africa, ideally male settlers.[161]

Through her performative engagement with the landscape, Rust speaks to these historical legacies. She frames her work as a "quiet reflection about my ancestors, my personal connection to the land, the colonial history of Namibia and the land issue."[162] The camera zooms onto the performing artist, showing her predominantly from the back and from the side. The video was filmed on Rust's father's farm Otukarru, in the Otjozondjupa region.

160 Hayes, "Introduction," 530.

161 Lorena Rizzo, "A Glance into the Camera: Gendered Visions of Historical Photographs in Kaoko (North-Western Namibia)," *Gender & History* 17, no. 3 (November 2005): 690, emphasis in original.

162 Imke Rust, "A Thorny Issue – Performance," *Imke Rust* (blog), accessed 21 April 2023, https://imkerust.com/video-2/2017-a-thorny-issue-performance/.

Figure 19: Imke Rust, A Thorny Issue, *2017 (film still), 2017. Courtesy of the artist.*

Accompanied by meditative music, the video shows the artist picking up large, thorny branches from the ground, which she then holds up high above her head, as an allusion to "a family tree."[163] Again, the use of arboreal symbolism and the choice to stage the performance on the farm remind us, like Nicola Brandt does, how "[t]he concepts of space and place, land and landscape, are closely related and are simultaneously entangled with identity, belonging and power."[164] With her broad reference to "the land issue," Rust gestures to the ways in which, as a member of the 'white' community and of a family owning farmland in Namibia, she is implicated in discourses on land redistribution.[165] By 'implication,' I am drawing on Michael Rothberg's proposition to understand *the implicated subject* as a person who is connected to "regimes of domination" and "who participates in injustice, but in indirect ways," a concept which will be explored in further depth in chapter 3.[166] Ever since colonial times, the topic of land has been a bone of contention that remains unresolved and that impacts heavily upon the country's gross inequality today. Luregn Lenggenhager and Romie Vonkie Nghitevelekwa note that "about 70% of the freehold agricultural land is still owned by white people. The previously disadvantaged (black and

163 Ibid.

164 Brandt, *Landscapes Between Then and Now*, 1.

165 As, for example, demanded by the Namibian Economic Freedom Fighters (as a political party) but also groups such as members of either the Herero or Nama communities.

166 Michael Rothberg, *The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019), 1–20.

coloured people) own only 16%."[167] Lenggenhager and Nghitevelekwa further explain how the persistent injustice results from the fact that those who profited from owning land in the past and accumulated capital are still those with economic power today: "A national and international elite has withdrawn its capital from the land, while the majority of the people never had a chance to accumulate land or capital."[168] Rust's voice-over in the video offer clues on her perspective on these issues:

> I am standing in a waterless dam during a time of drought. We are white. We do not belong here. They say. We stole this land. They say. Give back the land. Holding up these stamps like a family tree, I remember – and dare I say honour? – my ancestors. I am acutely aware of the thorns of the past. The violence and genocide. The weight of the past is heavy. The pressure is high. The wind is strong. I sense the accumulation of personal suffering, loss and dreams of my ancestors aching in my body. Yet I dare not. I open my hands to let go, release the past into the wind. Thorns are crashing down.[169]

The datura ferox, as a "naturalised alien plant" (as the video tells us), emerges as a metaphor for Rust's own troubled belonging: while Namibia is her country of birth, she remains forever conceived of as alien, outsider or intruder.[170] Once again, the artist evokes arboreal symbolism to interrogate the implications of being a 'white' Namibian and the impossibility of claiming a sense of affiliation to the land.[171] From her voice-over, we learn that expressing affection, empathy and connection to her ancestors is equally problematic. Her relatives cooperated with or were beneficiaries of the colonial regime, albeit in different ways and to different degrees – a legacy that is hard to reconcile with the artist's own critical view towards colonialism and apartheid. Her self-reflexive voice-over stresses being "acutely aware of the thorns of the past," acknowledging the genocide and violence committed by the 'white' minority. At the same time, however, the repeated use of "they say" expresses uncertainty about potential restorative justice by means of land redistribution. The artist questions those narratives that generally attribute land ownership by 'white' Namibians

167 Luregn Lenggenhager and Romie Vonkie Nghitevelekwa, "Why Namibians Want Fresh Impetus behind Land Reform," *The Conversation*, 26 September 2018, http://theconversation.com/why-namibians-want-fresh-impetus-behind-land-reform-103379.

168 Ibid.

169 Rust, "A Thorny Issue – Performance."

170 Ibid.

171 Various other White creative practitioners from Namibia explored their practices as a way to grapple with their positionality. See, for example: Erika von Wietersheim's *Nur 24 Zeilen: Eine wahre Geschichte über den Krieg, die Liebe und den langen Weg zurück nach Afrika* (2017), *Aus-Zeit. Mit Mozart und den Buschleuten in der Namib* (2017), or *Guten Morgen, Namibia! Eine Farm, eine Schule und unser Weg von der Apartheid zur Unabhängigkeit* (2019); Sylvia Schlettwein's short stories, such as "Framing the Nation" (2010) or artist Silke Berens' *Brothers in Arms* (2017).

to land grabbing. To shift the perspective, she brings attention to postmemories of her ancestors' hardships and traumas that have been passed on intergenerationally: "I sense the accumulation of personal suffering, loss and dreams of my ancestors aching in my body."[172] Enacting the image of a family tree, she summons the matriarchive that contains these postmemories and posits them as counter-memories to the dominant presupposition of a general 'white' privilege in Namibia.

The role of the body is polysemiotic in the performance and for the matriarchive: we are reminded of Brandt's observation that contemporary artists turn to the body as "a vessel to transmit ideas," or of Mekondjo's approach to her own body as a "channel" for her ancestors.[173] Both functions are being engaged in Rust's embodied performative practice. With a view to the postmemories and traumas that are "aching" in the artist's body, we may also consider how her body *becomes* the matriarchive: the storage site of transmitted knowledges from the past. This consideration resonates strongly with Julietta Singh's book *No Archive Will Restore You*, in which the scholar and writer rejects conservative approaches to "what constitutes an archive, what knowledge is and how it can be stored," and proposes understanding her own body as an archive.[174] Nashilongweshipwe Mushaandja follows a similar line of argument when he explains that his body incorporates memories connected to experiences beyond colonial or post-colonial timelines and that "the homes of our families in Namibia, the places where our everyday life takes place, are also archives."[175]

In following this turn away from conventional (and predominantly material) archives towards conceptions of archives that are abstract, embodied or spatial (the land, the farm), Rust enacts the difficult quest to express empathy for those who came before her and made her who she is today. Throughout the performance, her face is only momentarily captured by the camera and remains mainly averted, with her eyes closed. There is something restrained and vulnerable in these gestures. She upholds the family tree in the video, speaking to her longing to honour her genealogy, to claim a belonging to a Namibian community and to cherish her ancestors' histories and achievements. Yet, she 'dares not,' as the voice-over explains towards the end of the performance. The artist lets go of the branches, "releas[ing] the past into the wind. Thorns are crashing down."[176]

The imagery offers prompts to speculate on the layers of meaning in letting go of thorny issues and of setting the past free. The tone of the performance frames the

172 Rust, "A Thorny Issue – Performance."

173 Brandt, *Landscapes Between Then and Now*, 23; van Huyssteen, "A Conversation with Tuli Mekondjo."

174 Julia Rensing, "Lost or Found: Reckoning with Archival Ruins," in *Lost Libraries, Burnt Archives*, eds. Sindi-Leigh McBride and Julia Rensing (Cape Town: Michaelis Galleries, 2023), 74; Julietta Singh, *No Archive Will Restore You* (Santa Barbara, CA: Punctum Books, 2018).

175 Quoted in: Wellershaus, '"Let's Have Tea and Sing Love Songs!"'

176 Rust, "A Thorny Issue – Performance."

artist's troubled legacy as something that seems irresolvable. Since the matriarchive that stores postmemories and transgenerational traumas is an embodied one, there can be no redemption, no 'letting go' of the heavy weight of the past. In this vein, the site-specific performance foregrounds the inescapable entanglement of history, identity and the land. And yet, her 'letting go' may also gesture to an acceptance of the position as an "implicated subject" and an attempt to move forward with the past.[177] While the video does not provide final answers, it once again reminds us of the predicament of how the representational politics of bodies and landscapes are connected to positionality. Rust's work asks rather straightforwardly: as a 'white' artist, how much and what may she dare to say about her ancestors, the land and about the intricacy of representation? To continue this exploration, and to further unpack the potentials and limits of artistic meaning conversion, let me bring other examples of Rust's performative works into conversation with Mekondjo's practices.

2.5: Performative Archival Interventions

As we have seen in the selection of Imke Rust's and Tuli Mekondjo's works, the role of their own bodies is central to both artists. They are mindful that the body, as Nandipha Mntambo reminds us, "is a complex political space," which Rust's *A Thorny Issue* demonstrates vividly.[178] Arguing in a similar vein, Awam Amkpa explains:

> I come from a continent where the body is spoken for. We don't have the luxury of stepping in and out of the textuality of the body. From that very moment when the body is born, that body is immediately named and sometimes mired with all kinds of social crisis.[179]

Amkpa then notes how performers use the body to challenge such prescribed meanings and labels, which resonates strongly with Makhubu's theory on visual currency. In looking at a selection of performance artists who link their practice with photography, she argues that "performative photography is […] not only a mode of conveyance (of ideology) but it is the locale for the conversion of representational values."[180] Mekondjo's impulse to use the body as a "performance venue" and as a means

177 Rothberg, *The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators*.

178 Quoted in: Sean O'Toole, "Through the Lens: How Photography Became Africa's Most Popular Art Form," *Art News*, 19 June 2018, https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/photography-africas-most-popular-art-form-10519/.

179 Awam Amkpa, "A State of Perpetual Becoming: African Bodies as Texts, Methods, and Archives," *Dance Research Journal* 42, no. 1 (2010): 83.

180 Makhubu, "Visual Currencies," 245.

to reinterpret established signifiers, ideas and conceptions was prompted by political and moral questions connected to the medium of photography.[181] The artist felt urged to engage more deeply with the ethical concerns connected with the medium after having produced a vast oeuvre of artworks based on historical archival images. For her solo exhibition *Limbandungila* (2019), she decided to step out of the archives and to "go on the street" in Windhoek.[182] She felt inspired to pay homage to the women that she encountered and wanted to capture their strength.[183] Hence, she asked strangers for permission to take a picture of them, reflecting:

> That's when I realised there is a certain way you approach people. You cannot out of the blue say, 'Let me take a picture of you.' You need to explain yourself and do it with compassion and be vocal about why you are doing this. That's the most difficult part because people need to earn your trust, trust you that you are going to do the right thing with their images.[184]

Figure 20 (left): Tuli Mekondjo, performance with Oihanangolo/White Things I, *2020. Photograph uploaded on Facebook, 9 July 2021. Courtesy of the artist.*
Figure 21 (right): Tuli Mekondjo, Oudano Wo Ma Kishi/Spirits at Play I-III, *2019. Mixed media on canvas, 120 x 44 cm. Courtesy of Guns&Rain Gallery.*

These experiences confronted Mekondjo with the implications of photographic authority. Paraphrasing Martha Rosler, Nicola Brandt explains how, at the heart of representational politics lies the question, "'What right have *I* to represent you?' or, as increasingly and more relevantly demanded in current discourse, 'What right

181 Amkpa, "A State of Perpetual Becoming," 87.
182 Mekondjo, pers. comm. via WhatsApp, 12 July 2021.
183 This is reflected in the Oshiwambo title *Limbandungila*, which means "doing things with your own strength," as the artist explained.
184 Mekondjo, pers. comm. via WhatsApp, 12 July 2021.

have *you* to represent *me*?'"[185] Facing these issues for *Limbandungila*, the artist would increasingly direct the camera towards herself. Following different strategies of figuring the self as both subject *and* object in her art, her photographs would be incorporated as either prints in her multi-media artworks (figure 21) or function as performative conversations with her paintings (figure 20).

Her picture, taken in front of the large-scale painting *Oihanangolo/White Things I* (figure 20), and the piece *Oudano Wo Ma Kishi/Spirits at Play I-III* (figure 21) are two examples of the artist's versatile engagements with the photographic medium. In both cases, Mekondjo used her typical resin and Mahangu infusion method, transferred photographs onto canvasses and inserted them into bountiful landscapes and botanical vines. While the pictures in *Oihanangolo (White Things) I* (background of figure 20) were again retrieved from the Scherz publication, Mekondjo chose herself as the model to pose for the camera for *Oudano Wo Ma Kishi*. In multiple ways, the photographed subjects in both works (as well as herself as the model in *Oihanangolo*) reference the *efundula* or similar traditional ceremonies from Northern Namibia, introduced previously. This shows in the *omhatela* headdress, with its characteristic horns, that married women would wear as part of the female initiation rite or in the *efungu* cattle tail that Mekondjo holds. Both are central elements during different stages of the ceremony.[186] However, the most prominent feature that Mekondjo recurrently references is the practice of smearing the body with white clay and ashes, which transforms the initiates into *oihanangolo*: 'white things.'[187] Their temporal transition to *oihanangolo* allowed for an experience of "gender inversion" since, as white things, the young women assumed roles that were typically reserved for men.[188] In an interview, Mekondjo celebrated this empowering aspect of the efundula, fascinated by how women were "reclaiming their masculinity" and were allowed to express that side of themselves.[189] As various Namibian scholars have shown, cultural practices were repressed and altered extensively due to Christian influences and the eras of colonialism, the liberation

185 Brandt, *Landscapes Between Then and Now*, 19.

186 Vilho Shigwedha, "The Pre-Colonial Costumes of the Aawambo: Significant Changes under Colonialism and the Construction of Post-Colonial Identity," in *Aawambo Kingdoms, History and Cultural Change: Perspectives from Northern Namibia*, eds. Lovisa T. Nampala and Vilho Shigwedha (Basel: P. Schlettwein Publishing, 2006), 150–156.

187 Heike Becker, "Efundula Past and Present: Female Initiation, Gender and Customary Law in Northern Namibia" (paper presented at *Gender, Sexuality and Law Conference*, Keele University, Keele, UK, June 1998), 7.

188 This included wandering freely through the villages, being entitled to food at every space they enter or either mocking and beating the men. See: Becker, "Efundula Past and Present," 7.

189 Frac Nouvelle-Aquitaine MÉCA, "Entretien Avec Tuli Mekondjo," *YouTube*, 8 February 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jSvbStHQr7U.

struggle and post-independence – and yet survived.[190] Mekondjo is concerned with the lack of collective memory of the pre-Christian traditions and this motivates her to search for the practices and customs that were celebrated *before* Christianity.[191] In re-enacting and embodying these cultural traditions, Mekondjo revitalises them, staging a form of reconnection to past practices and to the natural material that they incorporate (the clay).

In approaching the archival images as interlocutors, the artist restages the postmemories and cultural practices that the historical photographs allowed her to rediscover. However, accuracy and authenticity seem secondary in this endeavour. Instead, her invocation of lost traditions and memories is more committed to "projection, investment, and creation," as is the nature of postmemories, according to Hirsch.[192] In this way, Mekondjo's work is responsive to the unreliability of both memory and photography. With a view to the latter, this becomes more graspable when casting a glance at the historical photographs used in figure 20. Reprinted in the hairstyle publication, they were originally taken by C.H.L. "Cocky" Hahn, who held the position of 'Native Commissioner of Ovamboland' from 1921 to 1946. He worked to ensure that traditions in Ovamboland, especially efundula, would be maintained and documented the cultural practices meticulously in order to ensure this.[193] A lot has been said about Cocky Hahn, and I do not intend to explore this character in greater depth.[194] Interestingly, however, he was against Christian conversion and disagreed with missionaries who were eager to abolish the efundula.[195] His practice of recording and photographing emerges as an attempt to both secure and preserve knowledge of vanishing traditions. However, Napandulwe Shiweda's intriguing study on Hahn's photographs uncovers how he composed many of his images as a way to portray the illusion of untouched, timeless traditions in idyllic, rural homelands.[196] Hahn instructed the people to pose in a certain way or in certain roles that were not genuinely theirs, to the point that "[s]taged photography was the order of the day."[197] This context and background of his photographic practices is

190 MuAshekele et al., *Olufuko Festival*; Shigwedha, "The Pre-Colonial Costumes of the Aawambo."

191 Mekondjo, pers. comm., via WhatsApp, 14 May 2020, emphasis mine.

192 Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 3; Hirsch, "Projected Memory," 8.

193 Hayes, "'Cocky' Hahn and the 'Black Venus,'" 5; Patricia Hayes, "Northern Exposures: The Photography of C.H.L. Hahn, Native Commissioner of Ovamboland," in *The Colonising Camera: Photographs in the Making of Namibian History*, edited by Wolfram Hartmann, Jeremy Silvester and Patricia Hayes (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 1999), 171.

194 For further extensive studies on Hahn, see: Hayes, "Northern Exposures"; Hayes, "'Cocky' Hahn and the 'Black Venus'"; Shiweda, *Omhedi*.

195 Hayes, "'Cocky' Hahn and the 'Black Venus,'" 5.

196 Shiweda, *Omhedi*, 58.

197 Ibid., 57–58.

quite revealing with regards to the fiction of photography as an unmediated reflection of reality.[198] Mekondjo's response to these visual fabrications offers insights into how artistic archival interventions are committed to knowledge production, rather than knowledge retrieval from archival repositories. She argues: "I am very much aware – I look at that history and I can see the people were really stylised to stand in a certain way. But for me, it's about my ancestors. I am taking these pictures and I create my own narrative."[199]

How and where does *care* materialise in this form of archival engagement? We learn from Patricia Hayes that physical force and the production of knowledge were central to exerting colonial power.[200] In reference to Hahn's role as Native Commissioner, she outlines in-depth how physical violence was part and parcel of how he exercised his job.[201] How, then, can we use and engage with his photographs through care? Mekondjo's response to this ethical challenge is to centre the cultural practices, dignity and beauty of the photographed subjects. And yet, in doing so, she revitalises a moment that was marked by power asymmetries and (quite likely) by violence. I am reminded here again of Saidiya Hartman's reflection on the role of narrative to fill archival gaps and to resurrect biographies of those who were historically erased, silenced and violated. She asks: "What do stories afford anyway? A way of living in the world in the aftermath of catastrophe and devastation? A home in the world for the mutilated and violated self? For whom – for us or for them?"[202] We may extend this thought to artistic archival intervention and ask once again: whom does it serve? Who grants authority to re-expose, refigure, reimagine the lives of those who are locked in the archive?

Mekondjo's solution is to free her ancestors from this form of imprisonment by allowing them to reappear in a different light. Additionally, in response to the issue of authority, she exposes herself to the camera too, thereby entering into a conversation with her photographed subjects. One example for this is figure 22, in which she explores and redesigns historical postcards that she discovered at a stand in the Windhoek CBD, which usually targets tourists. The vendor was an elderly German-speaking Namibian who explained that his range of old postcards and stamps were part of his own personal collection. The prevalence and continuous circulation of this visual economy speaks to an undimmed interest and an ongoing hunger for imagery that perpetuates ethnographic modes of representing Black life. Upon this discovery, Mekondjo felt urged to purchase the postcards and claim them as part of *her own*

198 Lorena Rizzo, *Photography and History in Colonial Southern Africa*, 244.
199 Mekondjo, pers comm. via WhatsApp, 15 July 2021.
200 Hayes, '"Cocky' Hahn and the 'Black Venus,'" 386.
201 Ibid., 380.
202 Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," 3.

archival collection, which would allow her to decide on the frameworks and conditions of their visibility.[203]

Figure 22: Tuli Mekondjo, Olutu Lange Nomutima Wange Owa Mangwa Mokaxwa/ My Body and Heart is Tied in a Bush, *2021. Image transfer, collage, mahangu, resin, acrylic ink, cotton fabric, and cotton embroidery threads on canvas, 219 x 91 cm (variable). Courtesy of Guns&Rain Gallery.*

203 Mekondjo, pers. comm. via WhatsApp, 12 April 2023.

Neither the previous owner nor the postcards reveal information with regards to the origins of the material or the background of the photographer. For the artist, the unknown offered an opening to approach the photographed subjects as potential ancestors and to creatively interfere with the material. She transferred the postcards' imagery onto the canvas, inserted miniature photographs of herself next to them (bottom right corner in figure 22) and added further texture in the form of embroidery for the body of work that she produced for the Investec Cape Town Art Fair 2022. Her stitching of plants and stems serve as lines of connection between her avatar, the photographed subject and the figure of a baby, which is embroidered onto the extension of the canvas. Mekondjo repeatedly incorporates imagery of organs such as wombs, brains, embryos or veins into her works in order to invoke transgenerational connectedness. She argues how this allows her to represent "the essence of trauma," which is "constantly being birthed and rebirthed. And the only place in which these traumas are stored is within our bodies and within the organs we have."[204]

The sense of intergenerational connectedness is additionally evoked by the avatar's interaction with the photographed woman. While both seem to be turned to each other, the woman's upper body is directed to the camera and to the viewer – a reminder of the photographic moment in which she might have been prompted to face the photographer. I chose this piece of work as the cover image for this book because it speaks so powerfully to the central concern of this publication; namely, to interrogate how Namibian creative practitioners respond to troubling (hurtful/problematic) archives *by troubling* (as in subverting and contesting) these themselves. Inserting her own avatar into a historical setting that played out in a colonial power dynamic between the photographer and the anonymous photographed subject changes the modalities of viewing – and is thus troubling the archival order. While the act of intervening in archives is an important political move, it is also evoked here as something playful and cheeky, if we direct the attention to how Mekondjo's little avatar lifts her arms in a gesture of engagement, playfulness and confrontation. *Olutu Lange Nomutima Wange Owa Mangwa Mokaxwa/ My Body and Heart is Tied in a Bush* converts the meanings and resonances of the historical photograph as it does not foreground the question of objectification either explicitly or exclusively. What is special about this piece is that it is able to convey these heavy topics implicitly while remaining frisky at the same time – through clues such as the photographed woman's subtle smile and the depicted interaction between Mekondjo's figure and the woman. Choosing a miniature format for her avatar, the photographed woman remains the focus of attention in the work, which speaks to the artist's care and affection for her.

However, to return to the opening questions raised in the introduction to this chapter, we have to ask: what are the rules of engagement for creative archival in-

204 Ibid.

terventions? Are there any at all, or is everything allowed for artists at work in the archive? The problem in setting ethical parameters for artistic archival work is that care and empathy are deeply subjective notions. The contentions of gender activist and decolonial education scholar Wanelisa Xaba are insightful with regards to the limits and potentials of empathy and care in working with historical photographs. She argues for the need to secure "ancestral consent" for those who engage with the colonial past.[205] This implies developing ethical methods to centre the concerns of ancestors. Xaba explains:

> Ancestral consent is the belief that [...] we need consent about which stories to tell. You cannot just tell your ancestors' story as if you have ownership to their life and journey when there may be parts of their lives that require privacy. Our ancestors' lives and stories require the very same deep care, sensitivity and respect we would require from our grandchildren when they write about this current historical moment.[206]

Since there are no available background information on the historical photograph used in *Olutu Lange Nomutima Wange Owa Mangwa Mokaxwa/My Body and Heart is Tied in a Bush*, the task to secure a form of consent from her ancestors for using the specific image creatively is almost impossible to achieve for Mekondjo. However, she is actively seeking routes and methods to connect with her ancestors (i.e., by 'channeling' them) and to gain an understanding of their lives and situations. Spirituality is also crucial in this endeavour, as Xaba states. Another factor that speaks to Mekondjo's deep sensibility to the issue of representational politics and consent is her decisions to insert herself into the sceneries that she creates. In this way, she turns external gazes at the self too and does not expose the photographed subject from historical images to the public eyes alone. To do so, she gets into costume, as seen in figures 21 and 22. In both instances, she is covered in white clay, wears necklaces made of leaves and skirts from sticks as well as elaborate headdresses (one resembling the traditional Herero hat, a horizontal horned headdress, the other a basket, originally a fishtrap that she bought in Rundu and found useful for her performances). In combining these elements, the artist does not follow particular dress codes for specific cultural practices. Rather, she cross-references transnational mythologies and draws from elements of Avambo culture and modern-day Namibian landscapes.

The role she assumes in costume is, as titled in a Facebook post (figure 23), that of a *kishikishi*. Mekondjo explains how, in the Oshiwambo language, *wo ma kishi* refers to Avambo oral narratives about spirits that roam around in the villages to scare the

205 Xaba, "An Awkward Dance With the Black Middle Class," 87.
206 Ibid.

children.[207] What fascinated her about this figure is how it re-emerges in myths of various Bantu-speaking communities (i.e., in Zambia or Angola), from which she concludes that there are cross-cultural experiences, connections across borders and shared stories to tell.[208] Mekondjo converts the original meanings of cultural rituals and activates multidirectional memory politics by evoking these multi-dimensional and transnational references. Thinking along these lines about performative practices, Amkpa argues how performers are "deliberately subverting the sanctity of […] mythologies," explaining how, for stories to be useful, artists dig in the archives, but reject the laws and rules connected with the material and stories they find to create something new.[209] Artists use their bodies to craft alternative texts and they carry these to spaces in which they previously did not appear.[210]

Figure 23: Tuli Mekondjo, untitled photographs uploaded on Facebook, 3 September 2021. Caption: "modern day female kishikishi." Courtesy of the artist.

207 Mekondjo, pers. comm. via WhatsApp, 12 July 2021.
208 Ibid.
209 Amkpa, "A State of Perpetual Becoming," 86–87.
210 Ibid.

Reflecting on Mekondjo's approach to archival material and historical narratives elucidates how she also engages with performance to embody, re-embrace and subvert fragments from the past and grants visibility for what she conceives of as having been lost. In this way, she claims presence for her own body in spaces, sites and in fashions that have not been seen before. These notions highlight the potential of conversion through art, as opposed to more pessimistic conceptions of African artists being merely "stuck with the colonial archive," as we have discussed previously or the predicament of Black cultural practitioners continuously having to speak to "the burden of history," as Ntombela writes.[211] For Mekondjo, engaging the archive and 'taming' the technology of photography are liberating acts in her artistic practice.[212] Can archival interventions and performative photography offer the same modes of free expression for Rust?

In a selection of her more recent works, the artist edits and remodels photographs of herself as site-specific responses to certain spaces and landscapes in Namibia. Prominent in Rust's exhibitions *Roots and Branches* (2019), *Home, Land and Me* (2019) or *Schwarz—Weiss* (2021) is a recurring motif: the pieces conjure divergent formats of the artist's naked body, taken in 2013 at Spitzkoppe in the Erongo region (originally seen in figure 24). She transfers the images onto different backgrounds, painting and stitching the photocopies and linoleum prints or digitally editing the picture. In some instances, she reduces the body to its silhouette, additionally highlighting and redesigning the backdrop (figure 25).

Figure 24 (left): Imke Rust, Höhle 1/Cave 1, *2013. Photographic print on photo paper, 29 x 42 cm. Courtesy of the artist.*
Figure 25 (right): Imke Rust, The Comfort of the Bush, *2019. Digital print, acetate, wool and ink on paper, 21 x 29 cm. Courtesy of the artist.*

211 Art on Our Mind, "Art on Our Mind Creative Dialogue"; Ntombela, "Shifting Contexts," 91.
212 Amkpa, "Africa," 245.

What strikes the eye with regards to the broader body of work in the *Roots & Branches* or *Home, Land and Me* exhibitions is that her photographs show her in a protective posture. By way of comparison, Mekondjo (re)figured the self in a rather extroverted, subject-centred fashion (we may think here again of figure 1, copied from Mekondjo's mirror image that shows her rather explicitly naked). In an interview, Mekondjo emphasised the ease with which she modelled for her photographic interventions: "I was never shy with my body, I have always been very comfortable. It just came naturally to me to pose and take a selfie of myself and use those as references."[213] In contrast, we see Rust's bodily representations enmeshed and entangled with rhizomes, twigs and roots, crouching in foetal positions to partially shield the naked body from external gazes.

Figure 26: Imke Rust, Memories of the Bush 1*, 2019. Collage and charcoal on paper, 59 x 80 cm. Courtesy of the artist.*

The imagery of Namibian plants and landscapes, coupled with the assumption of protective postures, once again speaks to the artist's grappling with her positionality and the sense of uprootedness. Experiencing the constant sense of not belong-

213 Mekondjo, pers. comm. via WhatsApp, 12 July 2021.

ing while in Namibia, due to her family history, the artist additionally faced the challenge of building new connections and affiliations in and with Germany. The relocation made her realise, much more forcefully than ever before, how she was formed by the landscapes with which she grew up.[214] Hence, the motif of roots and the ruse to re-insert herself back into Namibian spaces allowed her to contemplate a lost home, a troubled identity and to reassert a sense of connection. We see her in the caves of Spitzkoppe (figure 24), in what appears as a farm setting with animals and trees (figure 25) or her body morphing into a bush (figure 26). With all of the sites and plants conjured in the artworks, Rust feels a deep connection that seems to be denied to her, however. She conjures her own memories and reconnects to what is inscribed and buried in the soil, the complex family and settler history, by engaging in an embodied conversation with these plants and sites. Rust further reminisces on how her decision to visualise and centre the naked body – the "trope for acute vulnerability," as Jay Pather and Catherine Boulle call it – was additionally prompted by the fact that her body had not been well after moving to Germany.[215] Being subjected to physical pain and bodily unease uncovers, once again, how corporeal experiences of spaces, uprootedness and positionality are interlocked. When Rust opens her private archives, she not only allows for personal insights onto "the most intimate space" (the naked body), but she also grants access to identity struggles, personal and family matters.[216] In this vein, she conjures a *visuality of retreat*, to borrow loosely from Lorena Rizzo.[217] Rust shifts away from broader politics to the most personal sphere. The visuality that she conjures centres interiority and subjectivity and they reject an alignment to broader political discourses.[218] However, there are further implications in using the naked body in performance art or performative photography that warrant attention. In an interview, the artist explains how she feels strongly and yet ambivalently about nudity as artistic expression:

> When you are naked you are very vulnerable, and it shows even more your skin colour which has always been this issue. So, on the one side, nakedness shows a big vulnerability, but on the other side I realised as well that it is our most natural

214 Rust, pers. comm., 30 September 2020.

215 Jay Pather and Catherine Boulle (eds.), *Acts of Transgression: Contemporary Live Art in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2019), 1.

216 Rust, pers. comm., 30 September 2020.

217 In her study of photography from the late 1930s taken by German women, Rizzo analyses how politics and ideologies manifest themselves aesthetically and argues how the images centre the family's privacy, intimacy and farm worlds as a way to "elude any overt absorption into the political hegemony of late 1930s propaganda," see: Rizzo, *Photography and History in Colonial Southern Africa*, 119. And Rizzo, "Seeing Through Whiteness," 147–148.

218 Ibid.

> state. So, it has become the double meaning. And it is also a very powerful image to present my body as a naked body and say: 'Here I am, and here I stand.'[219]

We are reminded of this assertive aspect in the act of publicly staging nudity when revisiting Rust's *Verwurzlungsversuch1* (figure 3) and with a view to the piece *Verwurzlungsversuch2* (figure 27), in which the artist discards the restrained postures and reveals the naked body more overtly to the viewer.

Figure 27: Imke Rust, Verwurzlungsversuch 2, *2019. Collage, charcoal and forestry marker on paper, 59 x 80 cm. Courtesy of the artist.*

Reflecting on these works against the backdrop of the prevalent (and, as some argue, over-excessive) use of the naked body in performance art elucidates how it not only functions as a trope of vulnerability but, more importantly, acts as a transgressive element and ruse for provocation.[220] With regards to its potential for transgres-

219 Rust, pers. comm., 30 September 2020.

220 Pather and Boulle, *Acts of Transgression*, 1; Mary Katharine Tramontana, "Skin in the Game: Is Live Artistic Nudity More than Titillation?" *The Guardian*, 3 December 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/dec/03/artists-nudity-mischa-badasyan-deborah-de-robertis-nona-faustine.

sion, Portia Malatjie reminds us that "historically it was white men who gazed at the white female nude," and, for decades, women artists have been pushing back against men's fetishisation and idealisation of their bodies in what has ever since been debated as "the male gaze."[221] Reflecting on the struggle to claim power over representational politics and self-representation, from a feminist perspective, nudity was a means to counter masculine traditions.[222] Even today, women (particularly Black artists) work against oppressive visual regimes and turn to embodied performances to set and choose the modes in which their bodies are represented.[223]

Following this line of thought, Andrew Mulenga argues how, "in performance or live art, the body has increasingly become an integral component for addressing complex social subjects, particularly by tackling stereotypes and legacies of representation."[224] We witness a similar impulse in Rust's work. In enacting restrained postures, she recalibrates the power dynamics of representational politics. Rust's method to acknowledge the complex role that she inhabits in German and Namibian spaces prompts an exchange of values and meanings inscribed in both: the imagery of the self and the implications of representing landscapes through the 'white lens.' Makhubu has intriguingly shown how performance photography engages with an "oscillation in meanings of disempowerment and empowerment" and, in a similar mode, Rust's designs convert the visuality of 'white' bodies in control of space with an aesthetic that evokes vulnerability.[225] And yet, the paradox of nudity as vulnerable and transgressive is not resolved. It remains as a powerful ambivalence that resonates with the viewer.[226] The artist's performative photography does not aspire to play into the sexual, sensational or erotic themes that nudity in the arts traditionally aims to provoke. Instead, a sense of sadness prevails. We see this in the example

221 LP Malatjie, "Framing the Artwork of Tracey Rose and Berni Searle through Black Feminism" (Master's thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 2011), 53. The concept of the male gaze has been coined by Laura Mulvey. See: Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16, no. 3 (1 September 1975): 6–18; Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

222 Carolee Schneemann quoted in Tramontana, "Skin in the Game."

223 Brandt, *Landscapes Between Then and Now*, xix; Malatjie, "Framing the Artwork of Tracey Rose and Berni Searle through Black Feminism," 53.

224 Andrew M. Mulenga, "Does Overexposure of the Black Female Body Draw It Closer to a Sell-by Date?" *Rhodes University* (blog), 23 August 2018, https://www.ru.ac.za/artsofafrica/writingoutputs/writingreviewsthinkpieces/doesoverexposureoftheblackfemalebodydrawitclosertoasell-bydate/.

225 Makhubu, "Visual Currencies," 229.

226 With regards to the transgression, I am drawing on Pather and Boulle who evoke the term's multiple meanings, such as "the transgression of boundaries between the aesthetic and the political, performativity and everyday acts, as well as the inclusions and exclusions of archive," and they also refer to the "provocativeness" of live and performance art. See: *Acts of Transgression*, 10.

of figure 27, in which the avatar is engaged in the heavy labour of growing bloody roots into the ground and shouldering branches as lines of connection. These evocations show how, in expanding the matriarchive and generating alternative photographic and multi-media repositories to those she inherited, Rust creates artworks that call for empathetic approaches. Her performative archival interventions speak to the viewers' emotions, not only by exposing private histories and memories, but by centring on larger societal phenomena: the search for a home and grounding, identity crises and longing for acceptance.

2.6: Conclusion

In "Constituting an Archive," Stuart Hall writes:

> Archives are not inert historical collections. They always stand in an active, dialogic, relation to the questions which the present puts to the past; and the present always puts its questions differently from one generation to another.[227]

The analysis of selected artworks by Tuli Mekondjo and Imke Rust has shown how the connections and ruptures between generations impact the archive's uses and functions. Both artists turn to inherited archival photographs to critically interrogate chapters in history that preceded them as well as memories that are not their own (postmemories). In their creative interference with the material, they add their personal projections onto the images to make the distortions in contemporary memory practices visible and proffer different routes of remembering in the endeavour to find healing. Both women share an interest in photographic archives as windows to the past and as access points to the intergenerational traumas with which they struggle. In addition to family pictures from their mothers and grandmothers, they draw on memories, cultural practices and knowledges that were passed down to them matrilineally, across generations. With reference to Uhuru Portia Phalafala, we have seen how the artists' matriarchives are exilic, migratory, scattered and 'living.'[228] As part of their creative practices, the artists recompose the fragments that they find, renegotiate and expand the repositories in the process. In this vein, Rust and Mekondjo approach their inherited matriarchives as resources for continuous interference and alternative knowledge production, instead of mere knowledge retrieval.[229]

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227 Stuart Hall, "Constituting an Archive," *Third Text* 15, no. 54 (March 2001): 92.

228 The term 'living' invokes Hall's theory on archives as discursive and dynamic formations again. Ibid., 89.

229 Stoler, "Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance," 87.

Drawing on Nomusa Makhubu's theory of visual currencies elucidated how the artists' archival interventions do not aim at factual historical recuperation. Rather, they are committed to contestation and exchange. They engage in practices of meaning conversion with regards to representational and commemorative politics by layering, transferring, stitching, covering and altering the photographs. In the case of Mekondjo, this implies translating diverse traumatic (post)memories from various eras into the present to exchange one-dimensional commemorative approaches for more nuanced, subjective ones. Moreover, her work with historical photographs from the colonial era trades visual signifiers of the 'ethnographic' or 'colonial gaze' with aesthetics that accentuate the photographed subject's pride, grace and dignity. In this way, she is "converting the visual currency of colonial imagery."[230] The effect is a disruption of the power dynamics associated with historical photographs from so-called 'colonial archives.' A central predicament to such archives is that the large majority of photographs taken by Europeans and that they house are not accessible to Africans, a condition to which Mekondjo responds by claiming the right to exhibit the images and to define the means of representation of the photographed subjects.[231] In doing so, she approaches the photographed women as possible ancestors. Her ethics of care are devoted to them and to the restoration of their subjectivity.[232] However, while cherishing, securing and celebrating her ancestors' lives is a driving motif and ethical commitment in Mekondjo's work, Wanelisa Xaba's reflection on "ancestral consent" has shown that confirmation or approval to represent and reimagine the stories of the photographed subjects through art is impossible to obtain. The issue of reconnecting with ancestral legacies is equally intricate in the case of Rust due to her positionality as a 'white' Namibian artist. Rust uses her practice to negotiate the difficulty of feeling empathy for her ancestors, openly expressing a sense of ancestral connection or to claiming belonging to the country of her birth as a 'white' Namibian. Similar to Mekondjo, albeit with different foci, Rust's archival interventions challenge representational politics. As a way to navigate her implication in colonial histories, she disrupts traditional codes of representing family life (by interfering with her grandmother's logic of archiving family photographs) and re-positions herself in Namibian spaces by questioning the power dynamics of representing 'white' bodies and landscapes. Rust, much like Mekondjo, turns to her own

230 Makhubu, "Visual Currencies," 243.

231 Amkpa, "Africa," 245.

232 Memory Biwa's reading of embodied practices and vocal performances in Namibia understands such endeavours as practices to "rematerialize[…] bodies as subjects, as ancestors." See: Memory Biwa, "Afterlives of Genocide: Return of Human Bodies from Berlin to Windhoek, 2011," in *Memory and Genocide: On What Remains and the Possibility of Representation*, edited by Fazil Moradi, Ralph Buchenhorst and Maria Six-Hohenbalken (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 99.

naked body, performance art and photography as media for expression and meaning conversion.

In a way, both artists' works oscillate between notions of assertiveness and longing. Their visual vocabulary of arboreal symbolism and their diverse references to Namibian landscape and to nature repeatedly accentuate the impossibility of growing roots and the tragedy of unattained rootedness. At the same time, Rust and Mekondjo insert themselves into their works by means of *asserting* a place for themselves in Namibian visual cultures. In this vein, they produce their own matriarchives that attest to past and present traumas, unfinished histories and troubling memories that linger on, calling for future engagement by generations to come.