



UP MUSEUMS e-NEWSLETTER

December 2020 ISSUE 3

MESSAGE – Dr Sian Tiley-Nel

As this year draws to a close, we are reminded that Covid-19 and over 280 days into lockdown, resilience is a key factor. Optimistically, Covid 2020 has brought many opportunities for the University of Pretoria Museums. One of which is a much stronger online trajectory, a virtual presence and the reconsideration of future plans that are more adaptable, more practical and more boldly improvised. We are thrilled to report that the pandemic brought about an instant embrace to technology and this year, the museum figures and analytics demonstrate more than 84 600 engagements and impacts, this includes 7892 physical visitors received between January and March 2020.

Looking back retrospectively, much has been accomplished these past few months, sometimes with very little and sometimes only with what we have. The forward thrust of the UP Museums lies in its staff, the dedicated personnel and the support from our internal community and all our external partners.

Reflecting on this past year, much is based on our engagement, impact and the ability to adapt during uncertain times. As university museums, we perform our 'social' work which helps build the community, as well as an institutional identity through access to the diverse museum collections and the vast breadth of archival material. As Museums we ground our institution's responsibility towards caring for, maintaining and safeguarding the arts, history and heritage on behalf of the nation and wider continent. The museums within the higher education landscape no longer play a supportive role, but now encompass a vital professional role. Since the UP Museums are tasked with the overall responsibility of curation, conservation, engagement and sound collections management of the UP's heritage holdings- this remains our greatest social responsibility.

Looking ahead to next year, some exciting initiatives will be launched, such as our new partnership with the Google Cultural Institute with four online exhibitions and over 500 items digitised from our collections on the global and popular Google Arts & Culture platform. Other new partnerships include the GLAM initiative for Galleries (including Gardens), Libraries, Archives & Museums with Alumni Relations and other internal key partners. A co-curated temporary exhibition is planned with the City of Tshwane's, Pretoria Art Museum and Ceramics Southern Africa in launching the Corobrik contemporary ceramic collection as the opening exhibition for 2021. We are also amplifying efforts to contemporise the sculpture gallery, which is undergoing a major transformation as phase 1 of this major capital project is now completed and showing great promise. In the coming year, the Mapungubwe Gallery devoted to the bead assemblage will also be installed and promises to be a never-before-seen once in a lifetime experience of the single African bead.

While firmly understanding and recovering our institutional history, we remain grounded in the present as we are committed to decolonising and catalysing new conversions as we reframe our purpose in putting our 2020-2025 strategic plan into action, including a revised business model for much needed income generation. We look forward to re-opening on the 1 February 2021 and physically seeing the community come through our doors. Be assured, we have compliance, protocols and the Covid measures are all in place to ensure a safe and secure visit. Thanks again to all our colleagues, academics, partners, researchers, supporters and the community for a grateful 2020 as we step more mindfully into 2021.

Top Stories

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Save the date: UP Museums plan to re-open in February 2021

The University of Pretoria Museums have been closed since March 2020 and are working closely with the wider community of the University of Pretoria to safeguard against the spread of the Covid-19 to ensure the safety of campus visitors, staff and students. We are pleased to announce that our proposed re-opening of the UP Museums is planned for 1 February 2021 (subject to change). Please note that as of 2021, the new admission rates for external visitors will be implemented in the UP Museums and introducing exciting tour packages and museum trail options to bring a wider offering of heritage to all visitors. Please visit our website for more [information on admissions and tours](#).

IN CONVERSATION

Two Curator's - Two Decades - Two Exhibitions



Sian Tiley-Nel interviews Christopher Till as outgoing Director of Javett-UP

Briefly describe your entry into the museum world in South Africa, first impressions and how things have changed? After completing my master's degree in 1976 at Rhodes University with a thesis on African Art, I applied for a curatorial job at the National Gallery of Rhodesia. I moved to Rhodesia at the time of the country's independence in 1977 and in 1980 was appointed Director of the renamed National Gallery of Zimbabwe. In 1984 I returned to South Africa having been appointed Director of the Johannesburg Art Gallery (JAG). Through my experience working with black artists within a democratic Zimbabwe and collecting traditional and contemporary black art, I was able to bring programs and a collecting policy to the JAG with a new focus on exhibiting the art of Africa. Such exhibitions included the *The Neglected Tradition: Towards a new history of South African art (1930-1988)*, *Art and Ambiguity* which opened in late 1991, and

the securing of the Brenthurst collection of traditional African Art for the JAG. At the time, these were seen as radical but are of course now a primary focus of the post-colonial moment and very much part of the mainstream discourse and re-focusing being undertaken by galleries and museums worldwide.

Describe your first introduction to Mapungubwe and your initial impression on seeing the Mapungubwe Gold Collection? An introduction to the Mapungubwe Gold collection is thrilling and was certainly in keeping with my interest in African Art and traditional historic material. The Mapungubwe site with its connection to other sites such as Thulamela and Great Zimbabwe piqued my interest, I was excited to discover more about these national treasures. The mystique of the iconic gold rhino figurine, sceptre and bowl were an obvious attraction since they are national icons. To see the depth of the collection and the hundreds of items, as well as the extent of the research that has taken place over many years and continues, was an eye opener.

Back in 2000, what was your curatorial intention when you decided to bring the Gold of Africa, Mapungubwe Gold and Thulamela Gold collection under one exhibition in Martin Melck House in Cape Town? The opportunity to engage directly with the collection and put it into its cultural and artistic perspective, juxtaposed with the Anglo-Gold Barbier Mueller collection of West African gold, was realised when I was approached by the Marketing Director of AngloGold Ashanti, Sarah DaVanzo. AngloGold Ashanti had secured the collection and asked my advice on what to do with it. I saw this as the moment to create the nucleus of the Gold of Africa Museum, looking at the continent and its highly-developed technical, artistic and design talent and to situate this within the historical and cultural context. In addition, we aimed to present the collection as inspiration for contemporary design. The University of Pretoria was approached to include the items on

temporary loan from the Mapungubwe collection and then later the Thulamela gold collection to set out to extend the gold footprint of the continent.

When you first met the Mapungubwe Curator, Sian Tiley in 2000 and were then introduced to the Mapungubwe Gold Collection at the University of Pretoria, what were your initial thoughts of this young 23 year old? Sian's reputation preceded her and she is synonymous with the Mapungubwe collection and its curation, conservation and public persona.. As a long-standing colleague in the museum fraternity, we had engaged frequently at several conferences over many years. The opportunity to work together in a less abstract, and more focused way through our collaboration with the presentation of the Mapungubwe exhibition at the Javett-UP has been a greatly rewarding experience and we are both proud to bring *National Treasures* to the wider public, cementing two decades of working together.

Fast forward nearly two decades later - bringing the Barbier-Mueller Gold Collection and the Mapungubwe Gold collection into a single exhibition - what was your inspiration? The energy, effort and satisfaction of developing the Gold of Africa Museum in the historic Martin Melck House in Cape Town and operating this jewel of a museum came to an end after thirteen years with the recall of the collection by AngloGold Ashanti to Johannesburg. The invitation to take on the establishment of the new Javett Art Centre at the University of Pretoria in a purpose-built space, which included a wing to house the Mapungubwe Gold collection reignited the excitement of re-creating the magic of a Gold Museum around the extended Mapungubwe gold items and the Barbier-Mueller collection in a dramatic space. This was coupled by the satisfaction of making both collections more accessible to the public.

How did you experience co-curation on the exhibition of National Treasures of the Mapungubwe Gold Collection at Javett-UP, particularly when not many curators are fortunate to work with valuable and priceless gold collections? The secret to unlocking the power and aura of the Mapungubwe collection in the new exhibition was Sian Tiley-Nel's deep knowledge and curatorial passion for the items to bring them to wider cognisance for society. By advising on select items from the Mapungubwe collection to juxtapose with the Barbier-Mueller collection, she shared my passion for the project. This was the underlying principle for the successful joint curation and we both agreed to focus on the indigenous materiality of gold as an iconic precious mineral from the African continent. There is no other exhibition like *National Treasures* in South Africa.

What advice would you give younger generations about art curatorship and leadership within the museum sector? I have enjoyed a long career curating and facilitating the creativity of the art of Africa. This remains a cause which brings great reward when the value and possibilities of these inanimate objects are creativity applied to tell wonderful stories, provide lessons and raise questions to current society. The possibilities are endless and the extent of these diverse elements are a gold mine for a younger generation to take the lead by allowing their imaginations to explore the intersection of historical and future narratives.

How would you like to futurise museums or what would a museum in 2065 look like in South Africa? The trajectory of museums has a long, complex and in recent times controversial history with the first example dating back to 530 BC with the display of antiquities from Mesopotamia! Recent calls for the redefinition of the role of museums in a changed world by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) are contested and museums need to reinvent themselves or face the very real possibility of disappearance. Societies are being rebooted. We are questioning how we will live, interact and experience life going forward. This, coupled with technological advances and the world of virtual reality presupposes the abstract idea of the replacement of reality with a virtual space making for an 'Star Trek' experience. The form which museums of the future will take has yet to be charted and even popular films such as 2001: A *Space Odyssey* and *Game of Thrones* repeatedly look back to the future. The motivation which gave rise to *Ennigaldi-Nanna's* Museum circa 530 BC, and ongoing present-day archaeological activity assists us with understanding the past. Revealing this evidence to humanity provides us with the clues to the altered form of future museums.



NEWS

GLAM-UP: an initiative by the UP Museums in association with UP Alumni

The University of Pretoria Museums as part of its strategic campaign (2020-2025) to widen access and deepen engagement has partnered with the UP Alumni Relations Office to launch a cultural campaign, named GLAM: Galleries/Gardens, Libraries, Archives and Museums. Internationally, GLAM is a well-recognised acronym and is an industry sector common in Australia, Canada, the US and the UK, amongst others. Its earlier form in the 1990s was called “Libraries, Archives & Museums” or LAM, which did not specify galleries.

Many GLAM's started as small initiatives to create a working group to bring the wider value of collections to their inner society. Later, they expanded to identify areas where partnerships could be developed that would enhance engagement and spark creativity. Other aims range from widening research into GLAMs on their social and economic value of memory institutions such as those in higher education, which is why several GLAMs originated within

university collections.

GLAM-UP would be the first African GLAM at a university. UP's GLAM already provides legitimate services that are both professional and practitioner-based. For several years now, both formally and informally, they have brought together partners, colleagues, professionals, specialists and collections within the UP Museums with those they most often partner with. GLAM will play a central, almost ambassadorial and brand role in collecting and promoting access to cultural, art, archive and historical collections, including heritage on behalf of the institution. It makes natural sense, and it is apparent that collections, whether artworks, books, documents, manuscripts, plant specimens or artefacts, are not only an institutional grouping, but also a collective responsibility of a wide diversity of information resources held within a university

With the support of the UP Alumni Relations Office and the Department of Institutional Advancement, GLAM brings together the UP Museums, the UP Archives, the UP Library and the Botanical Gardens, including other partners such as a research and academic GLAM space with the Department of Architecture and the campus landscape both natural and cultural. GLAM-UP will be an ideal conduit for the UP Museums and its partners to raise awareness of their efforts in curating and conserving valuable art collections which form an integral component of the memory of an institution. As a “cultural instrument”, GLAM hopes to serve as a conduit to the critical role in promoting research and public access to UP's cultural works. It allows UP to widen impact, accessibility, inclusivity and honours the diversity of UP's art offerings. The UP alumni will find value in learning more about GLAM through bespoke museum tours, features in alumni publications and the UP Alumni App, special GLAM events and online discussions. Watch out for GLAM-UP!

UP MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

New acquisitions for 2020



Attic Head, 2008
Robert Hodgins (1920 - 2010)
Signed and dated 5/2008
Glazed stoneware
255mm x 25mm



Elephant and Stork Embracing, 1987
Bonakele (Bonnie) Ntshalintshali (1967 - 1999)
Signed and dated 1987
Painted Ceramic
440mm x 400mm x 250mm

STAFF FEATURE

Meet the Museum Archivists

The University of Pretoria Museums manage two archives, which contain primary historical records related to their collections. The Mapungubwe Archive and the UP Museum Archive, which is in the process being established in order to support the curation, conservation, engagement and research agenda of the museums. Our two archivists, Helma Steenkamp and Michelle de la Harpe are introduced this month in the form of a question and answer session about their roles and responsibilities. They also reflect on some personal insights into their personalities so that our supporters see those who are dedicated to caring for and preserving our valuable institutional documents and photographs.



Interview with Helma Steenkamp: Archivist for the Mapungubwe Archive

Tell us briefly about where you come from, your background and upbringing?

My parents are both from the Western Cape Province (West Coast) and I was born in Saldanha. We moved to the old Transvaal when I was 5 years old, because my father was a policeman. We moved a few times during my childhood, but eventually settled in Sabie, Mpumalanga, where I completed my last 4 years of high school. I have an older brother, Leon, 4 years older than me, who lives in Australia.

Where and what did you study and why did you choose that field? I studied BComm Marketing Management at the University of Pretoria and completed my Honors degree in 2003. It really was a last minute decision to study, but my career

went into a completely different direction when I began working at the UP Museums as an Assistant Conservator in 2013 and have now moved into Archive preservation.

What do you do in the archive day to day - what is your responsibility? I manage and oversee the Mapungubwe Archive. For the past few years, we have been engaged in the US Ambassadors Cultural Preservation Programme (AFCP) in association with the US Embassy in Pretoria and feel privileged to be part of this global preservation programme. My responsibilities also include to receive, accommodate and assist researchers, many local and some international, that access the Archive. A majority of the time is spent on the preservation of historical photographic records, overseeing the maintenance, care, environmental control and upkeep of the archive facility, as well as general administration duties.

What do you find fascinating about the archival world? Somehow there is always something “new” to discover, information that you perhaps have overlooked previously or not paid much attention to. This can be a link to making sense of other archival records.

How is your experience working on the archive during Lockdown? It has been difficult working remotely on the archive from home, but the AFCP project had to continue and adequate space to work on photographic preservation was an issue. In working with archives, one needs to have few disturbances. This was challenging with children and noise at home, especially having online meetings. Preservation, however, continued to keep momentum.

What do you enjoy beyond the work environment? I enjoy doing anything creative... arts and crafts, cross stitch, gardening. I would have loved to be an artist or an interior decorator. I adore anything with loads of colour, florals and leaves. I also enjoy reading fiction and building jigsaw puzzles. For exercise, I like doing yoga. Fortunately, I have had the opportunity to design the interior of the Mapungubwe Archive and make recommendations to ensure it looks modern and fresh- not all archivists have that opportunity.

Tell us something that we do not know about you. I hate jogging. Science fiction bores me to death – I have not seen one Star Wars movie, ever. Luckily archives don't require jogging or science fiction - but history.

Who has inspired you and driven you to working in the archive sector and why? I think the archives chose me and my preservation journey within the museums provided immense opportunities. So far, it has been an enriching path that I have been walking at UP ever since.

What are your future aspirations for the archives? That the Mapungubwe Archive will be fully utilised by researchers and serve as a valuable source of information, context and insight to everyone that finds it interesting and compelling, be it academics, students, school children or the public in general. The Mapungubwe Archive is a wealth of untapped information and I am proud to have been part of the archive's journey and its development.



Interview with Michelle de la Harpe: Archivist for the UP Museums

Tell us a briefly about where you come from, your background and upbringing? I was born in a little town called Fochville. Our family moved to Kwa-Zulu Natal and lived in Richards Bay for most of my primary school years, before moving back to Gauteng to Benoni, where my parents still reside. I matriculated at Hoërskool Kempton Park in 2013 and recently married Ben Botha, but also retained my family surname as well.

Where and what did you study and why did you choose that field? I studied Heritage and Cultural Tourism at the University of Pretoria. In the 9th grade, my history teacher told me about this course at university, and I chose my high school subjects based on that. I have always enjoyed history as a subject and loved to visit historical museums. My parents would tell you that I would always beg to visit nearby museums on our family trips. It really was a no-brainer to work in the field. I only discovered archival sciences as a career path at university.

What do you do in the archive day to day - what is your responsibility? I first worked in Special Collections in the Department of Library Services and then moved into the UP Museums to be a researcher for the Mapungubwe Preservation Project funded by the US Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) in association with the US Embassy. My priority was mainly the preservation of documents and maps. This involves me securing historical documents and maps in an environment ideal for preservation. I need to mitigate possible risks to the archival collections, so part of my job is to ensure that the environment has the right conditions, is dust- and pest-free, and that historical manuscripts are safely tucked in an acid-free environment.

What do you find fascinating about the archival world? I always thought I was just an over-sentimental child with a love for history and museums. Turns out, there is a whole field of people who are like me. People who love organization, feel passionate about different histories, and want to preserve it to the best of their abilities. With archivists I find it is a passion, much more than a career, that they are pursuing.

How is your experience working on the archive during Lockdown? It was really tough in the beginning to figure out how physical preservation will work remotely from home. Until I realized that a big part of archives, like planning and developing finding aids can take place from home. I also realized that nothing beats working in a physical archival space and missed walking up to the beautiful Old Arts building to start work in the morning.

What do you enjoy beyond the work environment? My husband, Ben and I are avid tabletop gamers. Other than that, I love reading classic books and I also play the guitar.

Tell us something that we do not know about you. I write poetry in my free time and won a national poetry competition at university.

Who has inspired you and driven you to working in the archive sector and why? As a third year student at the University of Pretoria, I worked part-time for the Heritage Foundation's shop located at the Voortrekker Monument on weekends. They have an archival facility located on the premises, and that was where I met the head archivist, Zabeth Botha - she is well established in her profession. She showed me the archive and what it is that she does and I immediately knew that this is what I would want to do. The organized spaces and working with historical documents and photographs daily made the career choice very appealing and I began volunteering at the Mapungubwe Archive soon after and also had an opportunity to work with old manuscripts in the UP's special collections.

What are your future aspirations for the archives? That the new UP Museums Archive becomes the country's leading university museum archive and a well-known research archive on par with international standards. I would be part of that establishment's growth and have an opportunity to make a meaningful contribution towards its future.

ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

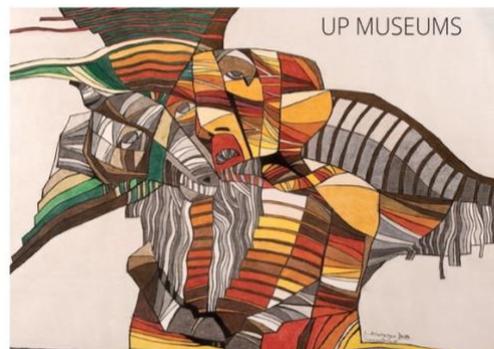
Forum for School Museums and Archives support UP Museums

On 21 September 2020 the UP Museum Interpretive Officer, Nicole Hoffmann, presented online via Microsoft Teams, a 'digital tour' to the Forum for School Museums and Archives or FSMA (Gauteng Branch) based in Johannesburg. The online presentation outlined an exciting first introduction to the UP Museum galleries and collections in an answer and question session. This digital engagement was a resounding success and all the participants enjoyed the online connection and expressed their distinct interest in physically visiting the UP Museums, once they would reopen to the public in 2021. The University of Pretoria Museums wish to thank Mrs Alison Orpen in particular from the St Andrews School of Girls for the Forum for School Museums and Archives financial donation and support.

FOR SALE

UP Museums' postcard range now available

For the festive season coming up and for keeping in contact with loved ones in South Africa and abroad, we offer a unique selection of individual or a set of University Museum postcards. The selection of six postcards features renowned works in a variety of media from the University of Pretoria's collections. This includes ceramics, archives, artworks and sculpture to name a few. See also the wide range of publications and catalogues from the University of Pretoria Museums and some recent titles published for further information. Please email the UP Museums at museums@up.ac.za to order your books or postcards today.



UP Museum Postcards | 2020 | R25.00 each | R150.00 set of six.

MAKE A CONTRIBUTION

Support the UP Museums' efforts

The University of Pretoria Museums rely on support from those who enjoy the collections and treasure the contents of our diverse galleries. Please make a donation today to support our continued engagement, and to maintain our high-quality exhibitions, and efficient services. We are planning a new UP Museum Art Gallery dedicated to the art collection of the institution and a ground-breaking Mapungubwe exhibition devoted to the singular and minute bead. Plans are also underway to transform Tukkies Lane into an Art Street, linking museums, the beautiful campus gardens, the architectural heritage and archives towards the new Javett-UP Art Centre. The University of Pretoria has several convenient ways in which you can support the UP Museums and benefit. All manners of giving are secure and only take a few minutes. Please support the UP Museum's efforts by visiting the [UP Fundraising Page](#).

The UP Museums team wish you a very happy holiday season and a peaceful and prosperous New Year