

## Impact case study (REF3b)

<b>Institution: University College London</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 34A – Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory: History of Art</b>
<b>Title of case study: Exhibiting South African photography and the African Archive</b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Tamar Garb's curation of two thematically linked exhibition projects at the Victoria &amp; Albert Museum in London and a series of shows at the Walther Collection, along with related activities and publications, raised awareness of contemporary photography in southern Africa; brought African photographic history and related political/aesthetic issues to the attention of scholars and publics; impacted exhibition programming, acquisitions policies and educational activities of a museum and private collection; created new audiences for contemporary African and South African lens-based work; and offered cultural enrichment to a wide public audience.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Tamar Garb's research has long been concerned with identity, race and representation, from the 19th century to the present. More recently, she has focused on contemporary South African (SA) art and photographic histories. She has explored the intersection of contemporary practices and historical genealogies, looked at the way that SA artists' engagement with archival materials informs contemporary work while providing historians with a filter through which to re-examine the past. Garb's interests in figural representation and body politics predate the focus on Africa (particularly in her feminist writing on French art and culture) but she has developed these themes in a number of projects dealing specifically with SA artists, including in 2007, the exhibition she curated (<i>Reisemalheurs</i> or <i>Travel Woes: the work of Vivienne Koorland</i>) at the Freud Museum, London. She edited the catalogue and wrote an essay on the references to European and SA history in Koorland's work in relation to Freud's ideas about travel and displacement [c]. In 2007 Garb published an essay on SA artist Berni Searle looking at her mobilisation of a local 19th-century folksong as a filter for surveying the politically vexed landscape of the Cape today. In 2008, Garb curated <i>Home Lands/Land Marks</i> at Haunch of Venison Gallery, London [d], in which she explored the imprint of historical events and traumas on contemporary landscape in South Africa, as evidenced in the extensive catalogue.</p> <p>In her 2011 exhibition at London's Victoria and Albert Museum (V&amp;A), titled <i>Figures and Fictions: Contemporary South African Photography (F&amp;F)</i> Garb built on these earlier explorations to examine how 17 contemporary photographers negotiate dominant filters for depicting the figure: <u>documentary</u> – with its particular SA history in the anti-Apartheid movement; <u>portraiture</u> – manifest in the rich heritage of the African studio tradition; and <u>ethnography</u> – with its colonial and anthropological associations, showing how these form the basis for contemporary re-workings and critical engagement [a].</p> <p><i>Distance and Desire: Encounters with the African Archive (D&amp;D)</i> at the Walther Collection in Neu-Ulm (2013–2015) was the culmination of a series of three smaller shows at the Walther Collection, New York (2012–2013). The Walther Collection has amassed one of the largest and most significant collections of African photography in the world. <i>D&amp;D</i> represents the first time that its historical work has gone on show and been the subject of sustained research and analysis. The exhibition/catalogue extends the dialogue of contemporary artists with earlier portraiture and ethnographic materials. It juxtaposes historical African photographs with recent work from Africa and the African diaspora produced by 20 contemporary lens-based artists. While both shows demonstrate the variety and critical acuity of contemporary practices – with their varied use of pastiche, parody, re-enactment, repetition, satire and homage – <i>D&amp;D</i> also seeks to complicate our understanding of the 'African Archive' by showing early photographs in a variety of formats [b]. The aim here is to undermine monolithic interpretations of colonial photography, to take seriously its various mediations and material identities, and to allow for close looking and reading of individual bodies of work.</p> <p>Both projects [a, b] foreground the ethical and political questions raised by traditional representations of Africans by Europeans. They question the strategies artists from, in and of Africa use to confront and critique historical precedents. They seek to complicate formulaic readings of the 'colonial gaze', opening up the possibility of criticality and curiosity both within the historical archive and in contemporary re-workings of it.</p>

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Tamar Garb joined UCL as a Lecturer in 1989, becoming a Reader in 1995 and Durning Lawrence Professor in 2001.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

[a] GARB, T. (2011). *Figures and Fictions: Contemporary South African Photography* [EXHIBITION] Victoria & Albert Museum, London. Nominated for a Lucie Award in Curatorship.

Documented in GARB, T. (2011). *Figures and Fictions: Contemporary South African Photography* [Catalogue]. London: V&A and Steidl. Favourably reviewed by Elizabeth Edwards *Journal of Museum Ethnology*, no. 25, 2012, pp. 189–194: ‘excellent... provides an excellent analysis of the complex strands of influence that entangle the emergence of this vibrant current practice...’ Submitted as REF output.

[b] GARB, T. (2012–15). *Distance and Desire: Encounters with the African Archive* [EXHIBITION] Walther Collection, Neu Ulm. *Distanz und Begehren* (the German version) comprises an expanded version of the three shows held in the Walther Collection Project Space, New York: *Archival Encounters, Contemporary Reconfigurations and Poetics and Politics*, September 2012–April 2013 [EXHIBITION].

Documented in: GARB, T. (ed.) (2013). *Distance and Desire, Encounters with the African Archive* [CATALOGUE] incl. introduction by Garb (10,000 words), Conversation between Garb and Walther, Essay by Garb (9000 words) and eleven edited essays, Göttingen: Steidl. Submitted as REF output.

[c] GARB, T. (2007) ‘*Reisemalheurs (Travel Woes): The Paintings of Vivienne Koorland*’ [EXHIBITION]. London: Freud Museum.

Documented in: GARB, T. (ed.) (2007) *Reisemalheurs (Travel Woes): The Paintings of Vivienne Koorland* [CATALOGUE] London: Freud Museum. Incl. introductory essay (10,000 words) and 2 edited essays and interview. Available on request.

[d] GARB, T. (2008). *Land Marks/Home Lands, Contemporary South African Art* [EXHIBITION]. London: Haunch of Venison Gallery.

Documented in: GARB, T. (ed.) (2008). *Land Marks/Home Lands, Contemporary South African Art* [CATALOGUE] London: Haunch of Venison Gallery. Incl. introductory essay by Garb (12,000 words, republished as independent essay in Nka, *Journal of Contemporary African Art*, Issue 26, Spring 2010) plus two edited essays. Available on request.

### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The exhibitions *Figures and Fictions* and *Distance and Desire* described in section 2 deepened a wide international public’s understanding of questions of race, identity and representation in the works of contemporary African photographers, as well as the rich historical holdings of SA photography at the Walther Collection.

The *reach* of this is demonstrated by the large number and types of audiences attracted by the two exhibitions. *F&F* was the first ambitious exhibition of contemporary SA photography in a major UK museum and, as described below, attracted large audiences (over 35,000) [1], generated multiple events and activities, affected museum exhibition, educational and outreach programming, prompted acquisitions and was the focus of public discussion and debate as well as extensive media attention. *D&D* was the first exhibition in the US or Germany to bring together archival photographs of Africans with contemporary artists who critically engage with similar materials. It stimulated collaboration with a public museum, attracted a substantial audience (5,000 in New York, Ulm still ongoing) diverse educational events, an academic symposium, an expansion of a collection and huge critical attention in the USA and Germany (receiving more than 100 reviews in total) [2].

The *significance* of the two exhibitions is demonstrated, most fundamentally, by the important role they played in bringing debates on identity and representation, particularly in African photography, to an international public. This not only exposed the general public to these issues, it also provided a pathway to broaden audiences at these cultural institutions. For *F&F*, Garb worked in collaboration with the Black Heritage and Culture initiative at the V&A to organise a series of evening tours and talks intended specifically to attract new publics to the museum and gallery setting. These included special tours and events for African/Caribbean women (a group of 30), attendees from ethnic minority backgrounds, and

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those interested in African art and culture [3]. For example, the Afropolitans event on 24 June 2011 took its cue from *F&F* to offer over 500 attendees a free evening of music, workshops and performance celebrating African photography, fashion, and style, designed to introduce contemporary African culture and debates to UK audiences. The event received widespread coverage in African-interest blogs, such as *MsAfropolitan* and *African Art in London* [4]. Another special event, 'Museums at Night – SA Figures & Fictions' (13 May 2011) had about 700 visitors, of whom at least 40% were new to the V&A ('with a strong South African presence') and feedback forms describe the show and related events as 'inspirational' [3].

The exhibitions also consolidated existing viewers and provided educational events for the general public and specialist audiences. *F&F* was accompanied by three lunchtime lectures, an artist's panel and a two-day symposium entitled 'Poetics and Politics of Photographic Depictions of People'. All were sold out, with 150 attendees each. There were also three curator-led walkabouts (50 attendees each). In New York, five gallery talks were held to accompany *D&D* (all sold out, 50 attendees each) in addition to a 2-day symposium at New York University (NYU) entitled 'Encounters with the African Archive' (175 attendees) chaired by Garb. There were also class visits from NYU, Cooper Union and the Fashion Institute of Technology (20 students per group) [2]. These events collectively exposed a wide range of attendees to SA and African photography and the critical debates around colonial and post-colonial representational practices that surround it.

Through the enormous media coverage they generated, both shows raised awareness and critical discussion of African photography and related issues of race and representation beyond the gallery walls. Thus the reach of the events was extended to far wider audiences than those who visited the shows and related events. For *F&F*, Garb collaborated on eight films for the V&A TV channel with an estimated 4 million viewers [1]. These were combined into an hour-long documentary which was shown, under a pre-existing agreement with British Airways, to passengers on long-haul flights over three months (although exact viewing figures are not available, about 3 million passengers a year have access to inflight entertainment on the airline) [1].

The strong press response to both exhibitions demonstrates how vividly the research contributed to wider public debate on the issues explored by the research. Critical media discussion immediately engaged with the major themes of *F&F*, bringing issues around pictorial genealogies, documentary, ethnographic and portrait traditions, and post-apartheid practices to public debate. Examples include [5] coverage in the *Guardian* (23/4/2011; 263k ABC print circulation, extended by the substantial web presence) *Observer* (17/4/2011; 303k circulation), and the *Independent on Sunday* (10/4/2011; 154k circulation). Several media outlets provided pictorial coverage, further extending the reach of the original exhibitions, including the *British Journal of Photography* (April 2011), a 12-page spread in *The Sunday Times Spectrum Mag* (April 2011). Coverage extended well beyond the UK; for example, the SA contemporary web-based art magazine *Artthrob* (6–8,000 visitors per month according to the website) reviewed it in depth [5]. TV and radio coverage was similarly broad, reaching a combined total of over 78 million people. Programmes included BBC 3 Nightwaves (11/4/2011; 2.25m listeners per week), BBC World Service, The Strand, (13/4/2013; 1.9m listeners per week), BBC World News (20/6/2011), BBC4 News, and BBC World Television (21/6/2011; 74m per week) [1]. This considerably extended the audience for the show and all programmes contained substantive discussion of works, photographers and themes connected to the show.

*D&D* had a similarly vast reach. The three New York exhibitions were widely reviewed in both the mainstream press and in publications targeting African American audiences. These included its selection as *New York Times* critics' pick (28/9/2012), and review (20/8/2012; 1.6m print and digital circulation according to the Audit Bureau of Circulations), *New Yorker* Photo Booth (March 2013) and the *International Herald Tribune*, (13/8/2012; 44.2m online readers) [6]. Special interest publications included reviews in the New York art and lifestyle *Whitewall* magazine and *Another Africa* (later reprinted in the *Guardian*) [6]. German press coverage included, for example, on TAZ.de (06/7/2013); Deutsche Welle (22/7/2013) and the C& Platform for International Art from African Perspectives. Many of these engaged directly with the questions raised by Garb's research; TAZ pointed out, for example, that the 'extraordinary research enabled the exhibition to showcase pictorial programs in ways that deconstructed the multiple strategies in which the West has imagined Africa' [7].

Through extensive discussions and collaborations with colleagues in both the V&A and the Walther Collection, Garb's research transformed the knowledge base of her curatorial, museum and academic partners, and impacted on museum/ collection programming. Working with her on *F&F* enabled the V&A to redress an imbalance in its exhibition programming which had not till then shown SA work in any depth [8]. This exhibition prompted the invitation to collaborate with the

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Walther Collection: Artur Walther invited her to curate *D&D* after seeing *F&F* [9]. *D&D* was also accompanied by a closed scholar's forum, convened by Garb, for eight curators from the US, Europe and SA to discuss the Walther Collection works. These discussions culminated in the published catalogue [see above, b].

Acquisition policy at both collaborating institutions was informed by the shows, reflecting a new awareness of the shifting geographies of art history and the impetus to extend collections beyond historic centres and especially in the direction of Africa, and contributing to national and international cultural heritage by ensuring that these works are recognised and made available to the public through important national and private collections. For example, the V&A expanded its SA holdings and purchased 14 works first exhibited at *F&F* [8]. The Walther Collection, which was already dedicated to collecting African photography, acquired 20 contemporary works, 30 postcards and 8 albums under advice from Garb for display in *D&D* and as part of its ongoing expansion of the collection [2].

At both the V&A and Walther Collection, the collaboration stimulated related exhibitions demonstrating its impact on an expanded interest in African work. Prompted by *F&F*, in April–July 2011 the V&A hosted a separate and parallel exhibition of 120 vintage prints by the SA photographer David Goldblatt, which were held in the collection but had not been shown since 1987 [10]. Garb advised on this show, which contributed new research and educational resources made publically available on the museum website, and through a micro-site dedicated to this photographer [10]. For the Goldblatt exhibition itself, Garb edited the wall texts, captions and pamphlets, bringing her research expertise to bear on contextualising Goldblatt's work. In Neu-Ulm, Germany, *D&D* prompted the Walther Collection to collaborate with the Ulmer Museum on a related exhibition entitled 'Woven Identities', making links between cultural artefacts and images and situating textiles from the museum in dialogue with photographs from the Walther Collection featuring related patterned fabrics [7]. To complement this, Garb provided a guided tour of *D&D* for the curators of 'Woven Identities' and convened a discussion of interrelated themes for curators and museum educators in Ulm in June 2013.

#### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

[1] *F&F* viewing figures, media coverage and information on the V&A TV series and the British Airways agreement provided by Senior Press and Publicity Officer, V&A. Available on request.

[2] *D&D*: visitor events, attendees and acquisitions provided by The Walther Collection, New York.

[3] Letter from Audience Development Officer (African Caribbean) Learning & Interpretation Division Victoria & Albert Museum confirming Afro-Caribbean special event and Afropolitans attendees. Available on request.

[4] Blog coverage of Afropolitans: Ms Afropolitan: <http://bit.ly/1iEoF3u>.

[5] Examples of broadsheet media coverage include the *Guardian* (23 April 2011) <http://bit.ly/1i13m1b>; the *Observer* (17 April 2011) <http://bit.ly/18UVmVQ>; the *Independent* (11 April 2011) <http://ind.pn/1i13oWX>. Circulation figures from 2011 ABCs reported in the *Guardian* at <http://bit.ly/16x8eDP> (dailies) and <http://bit.ly/1akOa51> (Sundays). Arthro coverage: <http://bit.ly/17Ap3Rw>; visitor numbers from <http://bit.ly/1aTSNY3>.

[6] *New York Times* 20 September 2012 <http://nyti.ms/18slsSI> (readership: <http://nyti.ms/16YrIZV>). *International Herald Tribune* readership: <http://bit.ly/Hv0BVB>. *Whitewall* <http://bit.ly/1aG3qq5> and *Another Africa* <http://bit.ly/1bdTbCP>.

[7] German media coverage and relation to Ulmer Museum described in a statement provided by Head of Press, Bureau Muller. Available on request.

[8] Statement describing the impacts of *F&F* on institutions and acquisitions provided by Senior Curator (Photography), V&A. Available on request.

[9] Artur Walther and Tamar Garb: A Conversation, in *Distance and Desire, Encounters with the African Archive, Walther Collection, Steidl*. 2013. Artur Walther connects Garb's work on *D&D* to her previous work on *F&F* on page 14; available on request.

[10] David Goldblatt exhibition page, corroborating that it accompanies *F&F*: <http://bit.ly/17FqhsW>; The Goldblatt microsite: <http://bit.ly/16YseBL>.