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Performing History/ies with Obsolete Media: The Example of a South African Photo-Film

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Abstract: *The article addresses the tension between old (analogue) media and new (digital) media usage and their specific materialities by discussing the question of the preserving and re-telling of (subjective and national) history and histories. It analyses* Pied Piper's Voyage *(2014), a photo-film of emerging South African artist Lebohang Kganye in the context of the South African photographic and filmic archive. In order to address the question of agentiality and transmission of memory through media this article interrogates the strategies of this piece, using a "hand-made" or analogue aesthetic in a high-definition video, and focuses on how the usage of obsolete media formats resonates both with the artists' own subjective history and with the (chrono-)politics of representation and in/visibility in South Africa's transnational history—including the often absent photo and film archive of black South Africans' lives under apartheid and thus the negotiation of cultural memory in the present. It asks how media technology performs historicity: how can outdated formats invoke or announce pastness? Which different temporalities can they project? What desires and "atmospheres" may they create by staging or presenting "auratic" qualities?*

Since the 1990s there has been an ongoing discussion about the return of obsolete media in so-called retro cultures as well as the creation of more archives that are based on audiovisual objects rather than simply written texts alone (Acland; Gittelmann). Media theorist Jussi Parikka contended that the interest in media's relationship to history was first initiated "in the wake of a new historicism detached from the specific emphasis on language (both the written document and the spoken word) as its sole focus. Instead, other modalities, other media materialities enter the scene and come under theoretical consideration" (9). This interest is also a symptom of the not-so-recent "material turn" that ventures to decentre the content-driven analysis of media and that rather looks at networks of object–technology–subject relations, while not forgetting the role of affect and desire (see Coole and Frost; Seier).

The Brazilian cultural critic Suely Rolnik referred to the heightened interest in history and the historicity of objects, art practices and institutions as "archive mania" and asked: "What is the cause of the emergence of such desire today? What different politics of desire have given impulse to the many initiatives focused on archives, their emergence and means of production, presentation, circulation and acquisition?" (5). Wheras Rolnik tries to give an answer by looking at this phenomenon in the globalised art world, this article concentrates on a specific artistic example and its politics of both desire and memory within visual media from South Africa. This topic, which has not been discussed widely, is concerned with the hybrid media formations between film and photography that use old (analogue) and new (digital) techniques together, alluding to both media's intertwined history. In addition, it

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provides some insight into the history, materiality, intermediality and aesthetics at play in photo-film ventures.

Photo-films are particularly relevant in the context of recreating a photographic archive from ruins, as is the case with the black (family) photo album in South Africa. According to photographer Santu Mofokeng, born in Soweto in 1965, photographs are tools of world-making and akin to language: they too make something visible, which then becomes discussable, and can thus be turned into a political agenda. Arguing in an interview that "there is no vocabulary for the non-photographed of apartheid" (Hayes and Mofokeng 43), Mofokeng tried to counteract this invisibility of the majority, and yet marginalised part of the population, by collecting photographs from black subjects and by exhibiting them in his ongoing project "Black Photo Album / Look at Me 1890–1950".

Recreating/Re-enacting a Family Photo Album

Pied Piper's Voyage (2014) of the emerging South African artist Lebohang Kganye shares a similar aim with Mofokeng's work, but uses other means. It is a photo-film that combines both old and new media. While the definition of what is perceived as "old" and "new" is problematic, as Simone Natale (2016) has recently pointed out, these terms still offer a useful everyday understanding that can help to develop a more nuanced analysis. A photographer by training, Kganye turned away from documentary to artistic practice. She lives and works in Johannesburg, and, having been born in 1990, she is part of a younger generation than Santu Mofokeng, but is not yet one of the "born-frees".[1] The apartheid regime had already made some concessions when she grew up; at the same time, the racist oppression of the apartheid government remained tangible in her family history, as evidenced for example by the noticeable absence of photographs of her whole family together.

The "homeland" laws of the apartheid state prescribed where a person classified as "African" had to live, and where he/she might work.[2] African men had to work as a migrant workforce in the "white" cities that were reserved for people classified as "Europeans". They had to sleep in male-only hostels in the townships outside of the city, whereas African women and children were confined to the rural homeland or the township outside the white city. Therefore, families were often separated, leading to the impossibility of a "normal" family life, in which, for instance, children and parents would live in the same place. In general, African lives were valued less than white European lives, with less access to socioeconomic security, education and health care. For all these reasons, hardly any analogue black and white photographs that show Kganye's family together were taken.

Family photographs are objects that do not have a direct use value as, for example, passport photos, but they do have an affective and possibly empowering worth for their owners, since they are tokens of personal history, and evidence of being in the world. The realm of visual culture, image production and (self-)representation was therefore contested in the long struggle against apartheid. In South Africa the African majority of the population also protested against the racist education system and against the erasure, oblivion and devaluation of African culture. One of their slogans was "Write your own history" (Witz). Photography was part of this effort, even though cameras and film were scarce and expensive in South Africa. As American feminist theorist bell hooks has argued:

> Access and mass appeal have historically made photography a powerful location for construction of an oppositional black aesthetic. … All colonized or subjugated people who, by way of resistance, create an oppositional subculture within the framework of domination, recognize that the field of representation (how we see ourselves, how others see us) is a site of ongoing struggle. (75)

This argument is equally true for the South African history. In her image quest, Kganye was able to obtain a few photographs, but often they only showed one or two family members in their modest living quarters. The township setting, where these pictures were taken and where her relatives were forced to live, is usually perceived as a zone of poverty, underdevelopment and deprivation. In personal memories and family photographs, however, they can be remembered as more ambivalent spaces. South African historian Jacob Dlamini has pointed out that several South Africans—including himself—also feel nostalgic about growing up in a township. He suggests, "This phenomenon makes sense only if one understands that not everything we did in townships was a reaction to white oppression. Townships were (and are) dynamic places" (108). Therefore some township residents may have some fond memories of these places whose past and present is usually not officially documented, as, for example, a municipality's history. In the whole country there exist only two museums that document the history of a particular township.[3] A corresponding lack of photographs and institutionalised sites of memory, as well as academic studies of township life, has also been noticed by cultural theorist Achille Mbembe:

> Almost ten years after the end of apartheid, we have very few postliberation ethnographies of everyday life in the townships. … we are left with a negative definition of this highly syncretic urban formation that is integral to city life in South Africa and deeply embedded in the nation's social imaginary and political unconscious. (240)

Because of the scarcity of images and other documents of townships, trying to obtain them is not simply an act of nostalgia, at least not if nostalgia is solely understood in negative terms. Stuart Tannock challenges notions of nostalgia as suspicious "sugar-coating" of the past, whereas he argues for nostalgia as a productive, contemporary structure of feeling, that "invokes a positively evaluated past world in response to a deficient present world" (454). Past and future are connected: only by giving value to one's life in the present can a positive future be imagined. Of course, the work of memory and uncovering the family's history can also bring up uncomfortable events; and yet only by actively remembering oppression, struggle and hardships can a painful past be worked through, instead of continuing to haunt the subjects. The artist herself commented in an interview for *Connect/ZA*:

> I realized I knew very little about your my history it was quite scary. For instance, how my family actually ended up in the city, Johannesburg. South African history and apartheid became more real to me after this project, because I got to find out all the things my family had gone through and it's not just the iconic faces like Nelson Mandela and there are a lot of untold stories.

For her photo-film Kganye scanned the few photographs that she had found or that people had given to her and printed them out as large as life. Then she glued them onto cardboard and thereby built a tableaux vivant or a film set of two-dimensional silhouettes. Once the set was created, Kganye took on the part of her late grandfather. She herself had never met her grandfather and there was no photograph of him, but he was a very important

figure in the family's tales that were told to her as a child. Accordingly, she re-enacted his part, as she imagined him from the family stories. She dressed in a man's suit and moved through the set, interacting with the cut-outs, thus she was doing both a cross-gender and cross-age performance, without hiding the obvious difference between her and the person she enacted. This was recorded by taking photographs with a digital SLR camera. Finally, the still images were edited into a digital video to create a stop-motion animation with a musical soundtrack composed of voices that Kganye had captured, as well as samples from the archive and an instrumental piece by the British musicians Esa and Auntie Flo. *Pied Piper's Voyage* was one of three commissioned art works that showcased emerging artists from South Africa and Great Britain to celebrate Mandela Day in 2014. The short films, co-funded by the British Council, premiered simultaneously in Glasgow and in an online forum. Later on *Pied Pipers Voyage* became part of an open-air drive-in cinema programme called *Analogue Eye* and toured both in South Africa and other European cities, reaching diverse audiences.

The whole concept of the photo-film implied the deliberate decision to adopt a cumbersome and outdated technique: after all, Kganye could have worked with the blue-screen technique and could have added herself seamlessly to a digitalised historical setting. Instead, she chose the much more elaborate way of building her complete set first "outside" the computer, in an analogue format and by hand. The final film presents the viewer with an aesthetic of handmade low-fi craftsmanship and tinkering instead of a sleek digital look. This offers the viewer a haptic and tactile dimension. In addition, there is an ironic relationship between the thinness of the flat photographic silhouettes and Kganye's own physical body taking up space in three dimensions. The gestic interaction with the figures and the jerky movement due to the stop-motion technique is reminiscent of early slapstick of the silent film era à la Mack Sennett. But alongside the comical element, it has also an uncanny element, as it calls up denigrating representations of black characters, as were common in minstrel or blackface performances. The other family being just silhouettes in 2D were marked as puppets, extras or less-than-fully-human ghosts from the past.

Kganye was separated from the people in the photographs by historical time. She marks this by leaving herself in colour, whereas the visual mannequins are in black and white like the photographs they were taken from. It is a commonplace observation that "the past was all in black and white", because that is what people used to see from mediated history through photography and film. Since black and white photographs diminish the subtleties, and often display high contrast that translates each colour into a shade of grey, they tend to simplify, abstract and aestheticise their subjects. Christina von Braun has argued in the context of filmic records from the Second World War that documentary material in general may aestheticise and thereby render abstract and artificial what is being shown (116). Furthermore there exists an uneasy correlation between black and white photographs and people classified as "black" and "white". The question of the other and the concept of race are historically connected to the invention of photography and to imperialism; this connection emphasises visual media's impetus to expose, compare and stereotype (see Nagl).

Kganye's project continues, albeit in a slightly changed and subversive way, the tradition of women as the keepers of family memories, who actively preserve them for the next generation and transfer them to them. The photo-film *Pied Piper's Voyage* signals to a specific past of apartheid South Africa and life in the townships, but it also reminds viewers of their own family memories. The title and the piece's atmosphere conjure up fairy tales, impressions of childhood and magical beliefs. Moreover, Kganye not only leaves her own mark in the re-enactment of the past, but also puts any claim of authenticity or truth into

perspective. In her photo-film Kganye manages to visualise her own reaching out for the past in the present moment. Her shadow mixes with the shadows of the paper mannequins. A yearning for an authentic reference of the past is exposed at the same time that it is de- and re-constructed.

A Short History of the Photo-Film

Photo-films are compositions of photographic still images, text and, very importantly, a soundtrack that distinguishes them from the genre of slide shows. I want to think about the format of the photo-film in a broader way, in terms of its history and its potentials: why, considering their obsolescence, do photo-films still exist? Why are they recreated in digital and postdigital times by artists such as Kganye, but also many others?[4] Obviously, photo-films present the viewer right away with the opposition of still and moving images. They thus visualise facts that are well known from the media as well as results of perception studies; namely, that film is made up of single still images, which at a certain pace and image rate per second our eyes become unable to perceive as separate.

Photo-films thus operate as an in-between format on the threshold between photograph and the simulation of movement in film, but they also point back to the early history of cinema, to the genre of silent films with intertitles or early animations. At the same time they can be considered a precursor to film. The genre of the photo-film came into existence when different photographic procedures were invented in 1839. Even one of the early photo pioneers, Louis Daguerre, already fixed different perspectives of an object or person on his daguerreotypes (Barger and White). In fact, it could be argued that the pioneers of photography were immediately interested in capturing image sequences, as well as images in 3D, and use sound to accompany the images—an endeavour that finally led to the invention of the cinema.

In the period of early cinema different ways of showing photographs were experimented with. Photographs, for instance, were shown in the so-called peep box or on the zograscope, and also on the wheel of fortune (stroboscope), which used the stroboscopic effect first discovered by Michael Faraday to animate still images. Another setup was the "Kaiserpanorama" that showed European audiences sequences with intertitles of stereoscopic views shot in famous cities like New York that could be viewed by several viewers at the same time. Early media tinkerers also already connected a visual device like the peep box or the wheel of fortune with a mechanical music box or a gramophone, striving for a cinematic effect before the advent of film. Thomas Edison experimented prominently with screening a silent film while at the same time playing sound from a phonograph. Consequently, before silent films came into bloom film was not thought of as being without sound. These photographic sequences were shown in different contexts, each with its own cultural practice of seeing, in places as diverse as the fair and the scientific lab—for example, Étienne-Jules Marey's and Eadweard Muybridge's famous photographic images series of a dove flying or a horse galloping.

When celluloid film that could be rolled was invented in 1875, it almost automatically created the blueprint of a photo-film on paper, since, unlike earlier light-sensitive paper that came in sheets, a contact print of theses strips of images in sequence looked like a filmic storyboard. This explains why the photo-film is also genealogically related to the flipbook and the photo-book, as for example the artist Marcel Broodthaer's film *Voyage to the North*

Sea recapitulated in 1974 (see Krauss). This affinity will be discussed further in the detailed analysis of the intermedial aspects of *Pied Piper's Voyage*, quoting both photo-comics and books of fairy tales.

With the invention of motion pictures in 1895, when it became technically possible to record and project more than twenty-four single images per second continuously, the format of the photo-film could have become obsolete. Media history often witnessed a transformation of the social and technical function of media. Certain formats and techniques were almost completely replaced by new inventions, as, for example, portraiture painting was replaced by photography. Others have coexisted with their successors, but have been superseded in terms of influence, as has happened, as far as mass media is concerned, to radio and television. The vinyl record was superseded by the CD, but is now enjoying a comeback; on the other hand, the Video Home System (VHS) tape is no longer produced, whereas the Digital Video Disc (DVD) has become prominent as a consumer format for watching films at home.

Nonetheless, the format of the photo-film lives on, even today, and some of these works became very prominent in art-house cinema, for example Chris Marker's *La Jetée* in 1962; but also Agnès Varda, Alain Resnais and Shelly Silver, just to name a few, have experimented with this format and continue to do so.[5] My thesis is that filmmakers, photographers and artists appreciate the anachronistic format of the photo-film exceedingly because it interrupts the simulation of movement and the affective flow, and makes the single building blocks of the film visible and thus analysable. At the same time the recipient can enjoy the knowing suspension of the illusion and watch his/her own "tipping" moment in perceiving either the single frames or the filmic sequence. The continuous soundtrack—often comprised of a spoken voiceover, dialogue and also musical pieces—aids in suggesting a continuative temporality for the ear, whereas for the eye the chopped up images may create the opposite effect.

This synesthetic clash or incompatibility creates an irritation that heightens the attention and affective involvement. It is also a subtle reminder that our way of seeing film as continuous movement is learned and culturally and technically situated. Thereby, photo-films give an example of the entanglement of media and bodily perceptions, and demonstrate the learning of certain new viewing situations, enhanced seeing, and technical apparatus as visual prostheses. While it is hard to image for us nowadays, viewers at the beginning of the nineteenth century became motion sick when watching the suddenly moving stereoscopic images of the Kaiserpanorama. This media-induced simulator sickness can currently be observed in viewers when navigating computer games or virtual reality environments, for example when wearing the 3D glasses Oculus Rift and "flying" in a spaceship, while their physical body stays in the same position. This is indicative of how new technology also changes our human perception to an extent—but can these technological changes also become political?

Both Walter Benjamin and the painter and photographer László Moholy-Nagy, who also was a professor at the Bauhaus school, located potentially revolutionary energies in the outdated or obsolete. Benjamin observed: "He came across the revolutionary potential, apparent in the obsolescent, in the early iron constructions, the first factory buildings, the early photographs, the object that are starting to dye out, the salon grand, the clothes from five years ago, the meeting places, when the vogue begins to retreat" ("Sürrealismus" 299; my translation). While Benjamin and Moholy-Nagy theorised this utopian potential of objects in

their loss of exchange value and, therefore, their being discarded by the capitalist commodity system, in the context of this article it is more relevant to note that we live today in an age in which certain formats are appearing again, like zombies or revenants. At the same time, current technology is usually endowed with a short lifespan and programmed for a "planned obsolescence", and is therefore automatically producing "zombie media" in need to be replaced in order to create more economic profit, as discussed by Garnet Hertz and Jussi Parikka among others. However, artists, tinkerers and others will continue to use "old" technology, sometimes alongside or in combination with state-of-the-art equipment, whether because they are unable to afford what is "new" or because they dislike its new design, functions or general performance. Whereas, for example, the death of analogue photography and cinema has been proclaimed several times already, it has become obvious that both the photographic and the filmic dispositifs are at the same time quite stable but also transformable, even as technical artefacts and processes for image capture change. Consequently, they live on in the digital era in different ways and in "new-old" guises, or combine seemingly outdated and state-of-the-art technological components, because both are deeply embedded in our cultural practices as well as in our order of knowledge, e.g. the production of scientific evidence, which relies heavily on the production of photographic images.

Fairy Tale and Photo-Comic

While Kganye's project documents family history by making reference to the indexicality of the photograph, it also pushes into the direction of fiction by alluding to the genre of the fairy tale and to the photo-comic. In one scene of *Pied Piper's Voyage* a speech bubble appears, while Lebohang as her grandfather plays the accordion and tells his/her family, "Follow me to the Land of Milk and Honey!"—ostensibly a reference to Pied Piper, who in the German fairy tale *Pied Piper of Hamelin* leads all the rats and all the children out of the city of Hamelin with his magic pipe. The reference opens up suggestions of the seductive and infectious power of the media, which is often conceived of as spreading like a virus.



Figure 1: *Pied Piper's Voyage* (Lebohang Kganye, 2014). Courtesy of the Artist. © Lebohang Kganye.

At the same time, it quotes the biblical expression from Moses in *Exodus*. On the formal level we encounter here two further formats: the anachronistic fairy tale and the comic strip in the age of mechanical reproduction. These are updated and make a comment on the post-colonial and post-apartheid society. In South Africa, wealth, jobs and a good life were seen to belong in its rich modern cities. Johannesburg with its dense high-rise buildings and bustling activity was prominently referred to as "eGoli", which means "place of gold" in *isiZulu*. Therefore "The Land of Milk and Honey" when read in the South African context adds an ironic comment to the disappointed hopes of the black majority of the population, who still lives below the poverty line. During apartheid cities such as Johannesburg were seen as the place of opportunity; in post-apartheid times the ruling party, African National Congress, promised to share the wealth more equally, but the situation has not changed enough regarding housing and job possibilities. Hence the promised "land of milk and honey" has not become a reality for most South Africans, who still live in socioeconomic deprivation.

For a South African audience this short film certainly also reminds viewers of the photo-novels or photo-comics that were targeting the majority of the population, who was classified as "African". The laws of apartheid prescribed segregation in daily life, in the workplace, schools and universities. Likewise the spheres of culture and entertainment were strictly kept apart, even though the dimmed viewing rooms of the cinemas later became the first spaces that allowed so-called mixed audiences. In the photo-novels black heroes were the main characters, and the plots took place in the townships, whereas in the dominant South African film production white characters lived a luxurious life in the white cites, and black characters only appeared as workers or in minor parts (see Tomaselli). Some of the photo-comics were also made into low-budget film versions with an all-black cast. These formats constructed a precarious and ambivalent visibility of urban living of the African population, which according to apartheid laws should not even exist. Documenting one's own life and experiences and taking possession of one's (not-exclusively-personal) history was in South Africa always a contestation of the injustice of the past and a questioning of how to configure the present and the future. How the specific image temporality at play in the photo-film offers itself as a suitable format for this form of documentation demands further consideration.

Image Temporalities and Material Relations

As a format the photo-film allows an experience of the specific temporality of the single frame within the narrative continuity of film. A photograph freezes the moment or, figuratively, the blink of an eye and transforms this into an "on-going moment" (Dyer). Film, in contrast, imitates the audiovisual perception of the human senses. As a consequence, it can simulate liveliness, whereas the photo signifies the standstill of time. As Roland Barthes observed: "In the cinema, whose raw material is photographic, the image does not, however, have this completeness (which is fortunate for the cinema). Why? Because the photograph, taken in flux, is impelled, is ceaselessly drawn toward other views" (89).

The single photograph, however, reminiscent of death, signifies a contemplative viewing mode: one has all the time in the world to look at one ongoing moment again and again. To take and keep photographs is the attempt to store views of the world. As Susan Sontag noted in her study on photography: "Movies and television programs light up walls, flicker, and go out; but with still photographs the image is also an object, lightweight, cheap to produce, easy to carry about, accumulate, store" (1). The photo-film makes the weight of time and passing of the still image visible, and highlights the "death" aspect—as in Laura

Mulvey's definition of film as "death 24 times a second", which modifies Jean-Luc Godard's famous dictum that "film is truth 24 times a second".

For this reason, the single photograph also serves the fetishistic format of the family photo better than the motion picture. It can be held in one's hand, or close to one's heart in a locket on a necklace. Single images can also be remembered better than a film sequence. A prominent example is Barthes's description of a photograph of his mother as a little girl. Barthes believes that, in that one particular photograph, he has finally found the "truth of her face" (67). He relates this experience to the feeling of temporal distance from his mother as a child and asks accordingly: "Is History not simply the time when we were not born?" (64). Thereby, Barthes grounds the understanding of history in his own body, its materiality and its subjective experience and memory, while at the same time analysing the particular historical experience that is mediated by photography and that changed both the personal experience and the status of historical documents. Barthes gives the example of looking at a photograph of Napoleon's younger brother Jérôme and being amazed that he was "looking at the eyes that looked at the emperor" (3). While this remark points to a network of gazes and images, it still emphasises what is pictured in the photograph, its content, over its material aspects—its technical support, the layer of light-sensitive silver salts suspended in gelatine on a baryta paper base. The photograph as both material object and as affectionate document was the starting point of Kganye's investigation.

By contrast to the analytic gaze of viewing a single photograph, film creates a state of affective immersion. Early motion picture directors Max Ophüls and Detlef Sierck/Douglas Sirk independently came up with the same catchphrase to describe this new feature of film compared to other media: "Motion is emotion" (Sirk 43). In the 1970s avant-garde and experimental filmmakers like Hollis Frampton further dissected the relationship between the material filmstrip, the technical conditions and the single image: "The act of making a film, of physically assembling the filmstrip, feels somewhat like making an object: that film artists have seized the materiality of film is of inestimable importance … But the instant the film is completed, the 'object' vanishes" (Frampton 138). Frampton observes that the viewing experience of films, when they are projected, somehow makes the viewers forget the "thingness", one of the reasons being the speed of film and the affective flow it creates. Looking at the filmstrip and single film images or photographs reminds viewers again of the materiality of both media.

Similarly, visual and environmental studies theorist Giuliana Bruno asserts that "materiality is not a question of materials themselves or a matter of 'thingness' per se but rather concerns the substance of material relations" (14). I find this perspective useful for my analysis of the materiality of Kganye's photo-film, which is at once comprised of physical objects (very large printed-out photographs) and immaterial or virtual objects (a set of digital data to be projected from a computer). In addition, it makes clear how the dimension of the political—as viable sites where various orderings and social relations become "sensible", as Jacques Rancière termed it (*Politics*)—can be discussed within a focus on media materiality.

The single image in the photo-film is virtual and actual at the same time; one cannot grasp it with one's hand and keep it, even though it protrudes out of the flow of motion images. Therefore the photographic still of a sequence is caught in a double movement as Gilles Deleuze has described:

> There is a formation of an image with two sides, actual and virtual. It is as if an image in a mirror, a photo or a postcard came to life, assumed independence and passed into the actual, even if this meant that the actual image returned into the mirror and resumed its place in the postcard or photo, following a double movement of liberation and capture. (*Cinema 2* 68)

Kganye's photo-film uses the materiality of black and white photographs as haptic objects to announce that this is a story about the past. It manages to illustrate both the photograph as print object and as two-dimensional flat surface. Kganye's final piece is a post-colonial theatrical memory set, which comments both on national and personal history and oscillates between the tangible single image and the intangible flow of the film. The final display of the *Pied Piper* work matches Kganye's investments in both film and photography. Besides the short film, she also created a series of stills from the photo-film that she printed big in a small edition, again creating large-scale material objects. Whereas the film was screened in several different settings and programmes, the photographs were sometimes shown at the same venues as an exhibit, allowing the viewers to examine all the details of the film stills. Lev Manovich proposed that certain aspects of early cinema are resurrected in the digital age: "the manual construction of images in digital cinema represents a return to nineteenth century pre-cinematic practices, when images were hand-painted and hand-animated" (175). In Kganye's photo-film we can see a wilful revisiting of early film aesthetics and practices but, beyond that, there is also an insistence on the photographic index and the creation of a family document, as well as a link to imagining a future.

Still versus Moving Image and Changed Positions of Viewership

Regarding current media formations and drawing on the photo-film as an example, I suggest that the single frame reclaims a privileged position and appears frequently in art-house cinema, but also finds its way into mainstream formats—for instance, the still-image sequences in the pilot of Jill Soloway's remake of Chris Kraus's novel *I Love Dick* (2016). On the technical side, the single frame is also re-evaluated through digital technology in high-definition video recording that uses the progressive scan capturing full frames, instead of the interlaced method of video and television that only recorded images in uneven or even lines, which then got combined. Since 2012 photography and HD video are technically linked together even more closely—often united in the same device—as digital SLR cameras not only mimic the look of analogue cameras, but also offer to record HD video at the same time as taking still images. The digital SLR cameras also refer to analogue ways in their settings, for example letting one select the film speed (ISO), even though this is meaningless for digital image recording. Thereby they merge both the knowledge of still photography and film and the previously separated still and moving image cameras in one object, and thus seem to reconnect with the early years of analogue photography and film. While interlaced video as used in analogue video and television systems was and may still be supported, it is losing significance. The very last VHS tapes were produced in 2016 in Japan; production has now stopped worldwide.

Furthermore, ever since DVD technology was introduced, it became possible for every viewer to watch films frame by frame and to extract screenshots, as well as rewind or forward the same scene in slow motion as many times as desired. DVD has evolved into Blu-ray, which has higher quality and may also already be on the decline, yet currently the options of streaming video to playback in DVD players or on computers exist side-by side. One can also

extract a single frame from a film, without the image showing artefacts resulting from the interlacing, and even print it out, creating a haptic object to hold onto one more time. All these developments changed the material condition of the viewer fundamentally in comparison to the projection settings in the cinema theatre. He/she is dissecting the film, zooming into still frames and not necessarily watching it from beginning to end as in the times of classic cinema projection. Raymond Bellour and Laura Mulvey have characterised this behaviour respectively as the "pensive" (Bellour 6) or the "curious" (Mulvey 191) spectator.

The photo-film, as a format addressing its own temporality, intermediality and materiality, invites viewers to study the single image. It makes it possible to open up time, to delay its progression in order to think about temporality and analyse the vast recorded image archive. This is part and parcel of its ongoing use and fascination despite its simplicity and apparent obsolescence. As Jacques Rancière maintained, each photographic or film image only works as part of a "(hi)story of images" (*Fable* 217–37); the format of the photo-film seems to render this claim visible by emphasising the multiplicity of photographic images and their multiple and fleeting connections. The construction process of narrating stories with images is further clarified through the format of the photo-film that offers itself for an image-analytical approach.

Conclusion

The Internet age and the advent of digital photography have made photographic images more mobile and virtual, while at the same time still attesting to the Barthesian notion that "this has happened" and "this person has existed" (Barthes 3). Technically, photography is still about a physical trace caught and recorded, although by different means; the analogue photograph by a light-sensitive film, the digital photograph by a digital camera chip. In a Deleuzian tradition of using a nontechnical vocabulary, Laura U. Marks suggests that the past can be thought of "as deeply enfolded, a virtuality that can be unfolded and pulled into actuality" (138). This statement supports the notion of having to tamper with and touch the archival materials in order to grasp them in the here and now, instead of attempting to preserve them in the pristine state of their already past lifetime. This is exactly what Lebohang Kganye and other filmmakers and artists working with historical photographs are doing in order to produce photo-films: they are rereading the photographs, putting them into their contemporary context and re-enacting the virtual past in the present moment. Thereby they are hinting at the fact that photographs are never self-evident. Even though they show visible things, Deleuze cautioned that these are "nonetheless not immediately seen or visible" (*Foucault* 57) and always need to be contextualised, framed and resurrected, since our ways of seeing are structured by cultural, technical, practical and affective conditions.

Marks's metaphorical statement, "One has to go digging into the image" (138), argues that the meaning of an image needs to be "excavated" in the Benjaminian sense. As Walter Benjamin has exemplified in a short text with the programmatic title "Excavation and Memory", the work of remembering, memory and understanding the past is akin to the work of an archaeologist, who digs into layer after layer of the ground to unearth what is hidden beneath ("Excavation" 567). Similarly, Kganye presents some historical "crosscuts" (as in the mining industry) from the past that are both personal and political and that pierce through or puncture the present, meaning that they continue to have an effect. As this article has elaborated, there is a certain attractiveness in an audiovisual collage piece over the single

silent photographic image. In addition, modifying Benjamin's claim of the "revolutionary potential of the obsolescent" ("Sürrealismus" 299) that he formulated in an age when newness was linked to social distinction and dominance, into a proposal that fits better our current situation and times. In line with media theorist Michelle Henning I suggest that "[t]o see obsolescent material and residual practices as the material for utopianism rather than (necessarily) outright opposition is to make a more modest claim for them, without excluding the possibility of resistance" (57–8).

Photography and film in all their different formats remain powerful media with which to lay claim to one's own memories and to reflect the past in the present both through their specific materiality and their content, but also in the possibly utopian mode of imagining other futures. Both media can change the look and the understanding of people, objects and places, or more precisely the way these things are being looked at, including the interpretation of history. Thereby they are always already connected to the present moment and the future envisioning the social and cultural life of an individual or a community. Even more so the interconnected format of the photo-film offers a poignant example of self-reflection and a way of reconsidering media history, as well as negotiating the past in the present and creating a document for the future. The possibilities of current technology can thus open up a dialogue with the past in a dialectical relationship—wherein what is now perceived as new media techniques can give older, still-existing formats a new life by enabling different practices and engagements with them. Moving and still images have migrated to digital online platforms that create visual and sonic vaults for outdated but not obsolete media, preserving them for future usage and recreating missing archives.

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Notes

[1] "Born-frees" is the name given to the generation of South Africans who were born after 1994, when Nelson Mandela was released from prison and the first free democratic elections were held in South Africa.

[2] The terms "race", and accordingly "black" and "white", as well as "class", are understood in this study as social constructions and not in an essentialist way. It is important to acknowledge, though, that these social constructions have "real life" implications. Therefore I want to underline that these terms are ideological terms while being central and relational for the analysis of power and hegemony in this study. The same holds true for the terms "black", "white", and "coloured" that may both be quoting apartheid terminology as well as current self-labelling and strategic political usages.

[3] These two are District Six Museum and Lwandle Township Museum.

[4] Among others, see Aykan Safoğlu's *Off-White Tulips* (*Kirik Beyaz Laleler*, 2013) and Francis Hunger's *Deep Love Algorithm* (2013).

[5] Examples of photo-films include: Agnès Varda's *Ulysse* (1982), sequences in Alain Resnais's *Night and Fog* (*Nuit et brouillard*, 1955), Shelly Silvers's *5 Lessons and 9 Questions about Chinatown* (2009).

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