

African Critical Inquiry Programme ACIP Workshop Awards

Founded in 2012, the African Critical Inquiry Programme (ACIP) is a partnership between the Centre for Humanities Research at University of the Western Cape in Cape Town and the Laney Graduate School of Emory University in Atlanta. Supported by donations to the [Ivan Karp and Corinne Kratz Fund](#), the ACIP fosters thinking and working across public cultural institutions, across disciplines and fields, and across generations. It seeks to advance inquiry and debate about the roles and practice of public culture, public cultural institutions and public scholarship in shaping identities and society in Africa through an annual ACIP workshop and through the Ivan Karp Doctoral Research Awards, which support African doctoral students in the humanities and humanistic social sciences enrolled at South African universities. For further information, see <http://www.gs.emory.edu/about/special/acip.html> and <https://www.facebook.com/ivan.karp.corinne.kratz.fund>.

African Critical Inquiry Programme Workshops

Each year, ACIP invites proposals from scholars and/or practitioners in public cultural institutions in South Africa to organise a workshop that identifies and addresses critical themes, fundamental questions and pressing practical issues concerning public culture. ACIP Workshops might focus on notions and issues related to publics, visibility, museums and exhibitions, art, performance, representational and institutional forms, from methodological, practical, and theoretical vantages. They might examine forms and practices of public scholarship and the theories, histories, and systems of thought that shape and illuminate public culture and public scholarship. Workshops encourage comparative, interdisciplinary, cross-generational and cross-institutional interchange and reflection that brings into conversation public scholarship in Africa, creative cultural production, and critical theory. Below is a list of ACIP-supported Workshops:

2022 Unsettling the Single Society



Anthropologist Max Gluckman's seminal "bridge paper" (1940) analysed the dedication ceremony for the Malugwana bridge in Zululand as demonstrating a complex "African-White community" with crosscutting relations and interactions. This stood in stark contrast to the dominant anthropological approach at the time, where the units of analysis were conceptualised as distinct cultures via the problematic frame of tribalism. Contemporaneously, historians W. M. Macmillan and C. W. De Kiewiet were among the first to criticise the academic portrayal and production of South Africa as a set of separate societies rather than a single society. Decades later, the first post-apartheid democratic elections in 1994 marked the country's formal

political unity. The workshop *Unsettling the Single Society* will challenge the myth that settler colonialism and the attendant idea of separate societies ended in 1994. By returning to Gluckman, it will encourage questions around how settler colonialism was and still is a structure of domination that continues into the present. South African society has been built materially and symbolically upon racial difference naturalised through legal regimes of segregation, statecraft guarding minority rule, and economies of racialised labour extraction. Settler colonialism thus has a genealogy caught between the materiality of claims to labour and private property, and the affective claiming and practicing of home.

By bringing together debates in the fields of history and social anthropology, this workshop will encourage critique of the idea of separate societies. It will do so through themes that structure the historical and ongoing composition of our settler colonial world: themes of belonging and unbelonging; symbolic and material labour; land and landscape; structural and direct violence; and contested knowledges. Such critique will bring new insights to contemporary concerns over how institutions of public culture might work to redefine the terms of integration. The three-day workshop, held in Potchefstroom, will begin with a public roundtable discussion, be coordinated with an exhibition at NWU Gallery, and later result in a special thematic journal issue.

2022 1985! People's Parks, Sites of Struggle and the Politics of Plants



1985! The People's Parks, Sites of Struggle and the Politics of Plants is a hybrid scholarly-curatorial project which connects Gauteng Province-focused academics, activists, artists, students, and curators to look back at the botanical and spatial power of 1985, which saw radical parks emerging as political and artistic responses to apartheid. The People's Parks, sometimes known as Peace Parks, were a short-lived phenomenon that occurred in 1985 in the South African 'townships' located within what was then known as the PWV (Pretoria, Witwatersrand, Vereeniging). In Oukasie, Atteridgeville, Mamelodi, Alexandra, Soweto, Mohlakeng, Tembisa, and Kagiso, participatory political processes (variously attributed to the African National Congress, the United Democratic Front, 'yard committees', and independent youth-led groups) resulted in a multitude of small-scale place-making activities. These radical sites of struggle were called People's Parks by the activists, photographers, and academics who witnessed and documented the grassroots activity.

The workshop is part of a longer-term programme of research, art practice, and public activities aimed at critically activating the 'People's Parks Archive', a collection of documentation compiled primarily in the 1980s. In the months leading to the workshop, this will involve reading groups, archival working groups, artists' commissions, research, and working with activists, gardeners, and cultural practitioners through the Nothing Gets Organised platform in downtown Johannesburg, Mamelodi and Brits. Through this range

of engagements, the workshop seeks to:

- ◆ Revisit and re-theorise modes of popular resistance in the 1980s and conceptualise alternatives to the established visual cultures of 'Resistance Art'
- ◆ Generate plural narratives of the struggle against apartheid and challenge dominant nationalist discourses
- ◆ Conceptualise ephemeral archives, scavenger methodologies, and strategies for digital archiving, and
- ◆ Explore contemporary approaches to political ecology through engagement with critical plant studies and botanical and landscape humanities.

The three-day workshop, to be held in April 2022 at the University of Pretoria, will include academic papers, artist talks, performances and practice-based sessions. It will result in two journal special issues, an exhibition at Javett-UP, and submission of a significant research grant application for support to continue and expand the project. The interdisciplinary, cross-institutional collaboration of *1985! The People's Parks, Sites of Struggle and the Politics of Plants* will build an ambitious digital humanities project and exhibition programme that develops avenues for new research, artistic production, and curatorial work.

2020 Rethinking Resilience



Organised by Janeke Thumbran and Ruth Sacks, this three-day workshop brings together early career scholars and visual artists to engage with the concept of resilience and its co-optation by neoliberal governance. The concept of "resilience" has a long history in psychology, but in the past decade or so it has become a pervasive buzzword in humanitarian and development circles, as well as in politics and governance, business, education, and more. The workshop will examine problematic prevailing narratives that expect previously disenfranchised citizens to cultivate forms of self-reliance and informal networks in the face of collapsing infrastructure. The workshop also thinks with resilience as the manifestation of pervasive political and material remains from the past that shape everyday life. We reconsider historical systems that emphasise inherited societal inequalities and how they have been repurposed out of necessity.

Our focus on the afterlife of the infrastructural constructions of former regimes (including institutional policies, architecture, and industrialisation) will allow for discussions on the politics of materiality and its affective influence on social relationships and structures. The multi-disciplinary forum (including history, fine art, maritime archeology, anthropology, and agricultural science) will include participants who work with creative practice research to help expand critical humanities methodologies and work across disciplinary barriers. In imagining the critical public culture we wish to build, we seek ways to challenge the capitalist structures that co-opt academic and artistic practice into neoliberal narratives. We will explore interpretations and manifestations of resilience as a way to develop new spaces for interaction through publications and

future events that are accessible to a wider audience. Taking place in Makhanda (Grahamstown), South Africa and pointedly starting from the particular situation of a destabilised Eastern Cape environment, we will consider ways to grow a group of researchers concerned with how we operate as academic citizens and lecturers. Postponed by the COVID-19 pandemic from its original dates and venue in Makhanda, *Rethinking Resilience* was reconfigured as a virtual online workshop later in the year and will result in a special issue of *Social Dynamics*.

2019 African Ethnographies



While the practice of ethnography has a long history in Africa, insufficient debate has emerged around it recently on the African continent. Far from being specific only to anthropology, ethnography has become a widespread mode of knowing inside and outside academic spaces. We would like to prompt reflection around this concept and practice, which is slippery, changing, dense, polysemic, and composed of plural voices. The *African Ethnographies* workshop raised questions about ethnography across disciplines, its contemporary forms (not exclusively written), and its publics. Ethnography enables conceptual work that transcends simple divides between the empirical, the methodological, and the theoretical. The workshop was particularly interested in understanding how ethnography and its conceptual work can allow us to grasp the complexities of contemporary African worlds, their precariousness, and their becomings. It explored: (1) the work of theorisation that ethnography makes possible; (2) understandings of public ethnography today; and finally (3) ways to re-rethink ethnography from the African continent. The workshop sought to open a space of dialogue by bringing together emerging scholars across different disciplines and from institutions across Africa. By engaging in discussions around theory, methods, public engagements, and ethnographic sensibilities and modes of expression, we sought to better understand the challenges of doing ethnography in Africa's contemporary worlds. The workshop included a performance/lecture that explored the performative potential of ethnographic work and will result in both an edited book and a series of podcasts about ethnography based on the workshop and interviews with participants. The organisers were Jung Ran Annachiara Forte, Sakhumzi Mfecane, and Kelly Gillespie.

2018 Missing and Missed



Missing and Missed: The Subject, Politics and Memorialisation of South Africa's Colonial and Apartheid Dead concerned the unfinished business of South Africa's colonial and apartheid dead, whose recovery and reburial have largely happened through the modalities of nation-building and nationalism, as a way of constituting a post-apartheid society. This unfinished business has become a matter for both

public life and policy. Considering questions of ‘missingness’ and the associated practices of investigation, exhumation and memorialisation via an understanding of the *forensic* as both field and forum suggests a more contested space of debates, disputes, and questions. This has produced a more indeterminate idea of the ‘missing person’ and the ways that institutions, instruments, scholarly disciplines, and modes of governmentality intervene to shore up indeterminacy. It prompts us to explore ‘missingness’ as a condition that is epistemological, ontological, historical, political, legal, and aesthetic, and which evades recovery, inclusion and representation. Among the questions and provocations that this approach calls for are:

- ◆ Elaborations and contestations of missingness/ forensics/ counter-forensics;
- ◆ Governmentalities/ rehumanisation/ citizenship/the dead and the nation;
- ◆ Dilemmas of how to write beyond politics/history/law/art, and broach the question of justice;
- ◆ The ethical, political, epistemological dilemmas involved in naming the missing subject;
- ◆ Critical engagements with testimonial discourse, life-writing, and biographies of the missing;
- ◆ The social, familial, and affective networks in which the missing are inscribed, spectrality, haunting, the uncanny, and affect;
- ◆ Visual and aesthetic grammars of the missing;
- ◆ Reparation, restitution and the limits of the evidentiary.

Organised by Nicky Rousseau and Ciraj Rassool, the *Missing and Missed* workshop placed interrogations of specific encounters with the missing dead of Southern African colonialism and apartheid into conversation with those emerging from state and administrative violence across numerous settings. Bringing together local and international scholars and graduate students, the workshop re-examined categories such as enforced disappearances, abductions, missing persons, missing dead bodies, ‘the missing’, agency, materiality, context, and evidence from scenarios of colonial, apartheid and totalitarian violence, and other scenarios of political violence. This enabled more careful thinking about questions of absence, loss, presence, temporality, spectrality, memory, politics, history, forensics, and justice. In addition to the workshop, international scholars gave a master class/seminar to graduate students and/or participated in a roundtable with members of Iziko Museums. A special journal of *Kronos* based on workshop papers appeared in 2018.

2017 *Secret Affinities*



Das Passagen-Werk, Walter Benjamin’s unfinished reflection on modernity and history, was the starting point for this two-day workshop – *Secret Affinities: A workshop in critical reading and an interrogation of the city in Africa via Walter Benjamin’s “Passagen-Werk”* – in which sections of Benjamin’s text (known in English as [The Arcades Project](#)) were discussed with the aim of facilitating cross-disciplinary discussion in relation to heritage, architecture and

public history practices associated with cities and the African present. As with Benjamin's positioning in Paris, his 'capital of the nineteenth Century', we worked from our vantage point in Johannesburg, city of an African (but also hybrid) modernity, arguably the 'African capital of the twenty-first century.' We followed Benjamin's endeavour to construct 'a world of secret affinities' in which his assemblage of notes, reflections and citations on a host of topics, could begin to inform each other in unpredictable ways.

The very site of the workshop illustrates the layered urban histories, experiences, transformations and architectural imaginations that the workshop sought to examine through particular sites. It took place at what is now known as Satyagraha House, built as a residence in 1907 by German-born Lithuanian architect Hermann Kallenbach with a rondavel-inspired design. Mohandas Gandhi lived there with his friend Kallenbach and others for two years. Today the buildings have been renovated as a heritage site, museum about Gandhi's time in South Africa, and guest house. It is a place steeped in history that we cannot recover outside of imaginary recreation involving rhetorics of display and heritage curation; a place that cannot now be divorced from re-invention or politics, but that nevertheless has been re-invented in austere opulence by a French tourism company working with an historian, curator and heritage architect.

The *Secret Affinities* workshop formed small discussion and working groups made up of established scholars, artists, architects and postgraduate students. Groups defined projects located at the intersections of architecture, public history, spatial planning, heritage and urban studies, many to be developed through regular meetings during the following year. Among the outcomes of *Secret Affinities* are two special editions of journals, *Anthropology Southern Africa* and *Critical African Studies*. The *Secret Affinities* workshop was organised by Noëleen Murray and Brett Pyper, both of University of the Witwatersrand.

2016 Other Universals



Other Universals examined and thought through "universals" that have emanated from experiences of marginality in three Southern Hemisphere regions: the African continent, the Indian subcontinent, and the Caribbean. Ruchi Chaturvedi, Victoria Collis-Buthelezi and Premesh Lalu organised two *Other Universals* workshops, in May and October 2016, bridged by an ongoing, interdisciplinary, cross-institutional working group composed of post-graduate students and faculty based at University of

Cape Town and University of the Western Cape. This allowed extended and intensive engagement with work revolving around anti-colonial and anti-imperial thought and *Other Universals* that have been formulated both from an anti-imperial vantage point as well as from marginal positions in parts of the Global South. Each workshop revolved around the work of a key scholar who writes on universals crafted outside the fold of Western humanism; each did public lectures and taught a master class with the working group. The May 2016 workshop with Dr. Aaron Kamugisha (University of West Indies) helped plot shifts in Caribbean identities inflected by experiences ranging from the

abjection of slavery to diasporic, internationalist histories; his public lecture considered the Caribbean as a non-national space. The May 2017 workshop with Prof. Gopal Guru (Jawaharlal Nehru University) focused on universals that Dalit groups in India, once known as “untouchables”, might aspire to, challenging their marginality and addressing the pain and humiliation born from the stigma of untouchability. *Other Universals* is defining new research directions and fostering academic and public discourse attentive to these other universals and political thought from the Southern Hemisphere. The reading group and workshops continued for two additional years with further funding from the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences and have now become a thematic group at the Centre for Humanities Research with Mellon Foundation support.

2015 Red Assembly – Time and Work



The *Red Assembly* workshop, held in August 2015, revolved around the question of what it would mean to place art at the center of a historical reading. Simon Gush’s installation and film, both entitled *Red*, were returned to the Eastern Cape and exhibited at the Ann Bryant Art Gallery, in East London, South Africa, the workshop’s venue. Gush’s work was inspired by the commitment of Mercedes

Benz autoworkers to produce a (red) car for Nelson Mandela after his release from prison in 1990 and a nine-week wildcat strike and occupation of the factory by those workers later that same year. Workshop themes related to these events and their presentation in Gush’s work. Participants responded to the different forms of expression invoked by the exhibition (film, photography, installation, sculpture, oral and written text, sound) to embark on a discussion around time, work and artwork that returned to questions of how particular subjectivities (racial, gendered, classed) are established and contested and of the role of public culture, cultural institutions and critical scholarship in the postapartheid era. Coming from a number of South African and U.S. institutions, over forty people attended -- artists, curators, public intellectuals, philosophers, historians, activists and postgraduate students in the humanities, humanistic social sciences and beyond. The workshop was convened by Gary Minkley, Leslie Witz and Helena Pohlandt-McCormick and resulted in special issues of both *parallax* and *Kronos*.

2014 The Arts of Intervention



The inaugural ACIP workshop, *The Arts of Intervention*, took place in April 2014 in Oudtshoorn, South Africa in coordination with the 20th anniversary of the annual Absa Klein Karoo Nasionale Fees (KKNK; Little Karoo National Arts Festival). Organised by Brett Pyper, Heidi Grunebaum and Premesh Lalu, the workshop brought together two dozen students, public scholars, and artists for three

days that alternated between workshop sessions and discussions and attending festival events – art exhibits; musical performances; plays; discussions with curators, artists, actors/director; a township tour with a local musician/activist and more. Workshop sessions discussed notions of intervention and the post-apartheid arts and culture landscape, seeking to enable new perspectives on the relationship of the arts to questions of public institutions, politics and critique. By coordinating with KKNK, the workshop drew on questions raised by an arts festival that has attempted to address some pressing questions of the transition to a postapartheid South Africa related to non-racism and anti-racism, notions of institutional transformation particular to public culture, the politics of language and community, and scripts of nation and belonging in the arts.

