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ENCOUNTERING OVER/SIGHTS. REMEMBERING INVISIBLE PASTS THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY

The article juxtaposes two fields and techniques of visual memory and memorialization – tourist snapshots and art photography – in their capacity to set memory on the move translocally. Circulating through media and exhibition spaces, both modes of engagement offer an encounter with other's memories. I propose that this encounter is enhanced when the image creatively deals with absences in the sense of missing, overseen as overtly visible, or overlooked props in a landscape. Introducing the notion of *oversight* to capture these dynamics of spatial vision in dealing with media of memory, I will illustrate the shifting visibility and invisibility of memory by zooming in on South African *memoryscapes* via a selection of images taken by tourists and South African photographers Thabiso Sekgala and David Goldblatt. I argue that a joint reading of these conventionally different media of memory shows their mutually enriching features for the study of memory, visuality and alterity.

Memory-work and alterity: The role of absences

Remembrance is a social act. It takes place through making relations between different actors, materials and media. As such it always involves a vis-à-vis, an

other, another person or object of confrontation. Though various politicized layers of otherness are at play in visual representations and tourist imaginaries of places in the Global South, and particularly Southern Africa, the article focuses on otherness as the very basic event of encountering another. This encounter on 'new ground', so I argue, is enabled through certain 'modes of engagement', a term I borrow from Jill Bennett[1], to describe cultural media and materials acting to differing degrees as points of contact, for example a memorial site, a film or a private photograph. Remembering past events and injuries is mediated in the present by artistic and other cultural reflections and representations as well as the individual appropriations these gather. Difficult heritages[2] of war, colonialism or Apartheid that caused substantial changes in a culture's self-understanding and -image are furthermore worked at in cultural tourism and the tourist heritage industry where physical memorials guide the tourist's routes through destinations. It is through art in the form of globally circulating objects and images and transnational tourism, the physical travel to and experiencing of sites of memory, and visualizing this encounter, that individuals have access to other's memories and other forms of memory. In this article, I will zoom in on ways of setting memory images on the move and how these images themselves have the capacity to move others, emotionally and physically. In a first step I will look at a specific kind of tourist snapshot taken at or in-between tourist sights out of which I develop my notion of *oversight* – a creative topology of (not) visualising memory in a site or a memorial site. With this notion in mind I will turn to the photographic work of David Goldblatt and Thabiso Sekgala to see how both artists in similar ways creatively work with absences in memoryscapes.

The notion of absence is of particular importance here proposing that gaps and voids, the missing sight in views, are most productive for keeping an interest and participation in memory work alive. Achille Mbembe reflects on absences in the postcolonial 'time of entanglement', writing: 'It may be supposed that the presence as *experience of a time* is precisely that moment when different forms of absence become mixed together: absence of those presences that are no longer so

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[1] Bennett, Jill. (2005). *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, And Contemporary Art.* Stanford: Stanford UP, 14.
[2] See Macdonald, Sharon. (2009). *Difficult Heritage. Negotiating the Past in Nuremberg and Beyond.* Milton Park: Routledge.

and that one remembers (the past), and absence of those others that are yet to come and are anticipated (the future).'[3] The article takes up on these different absences and analyses how they manifest in differently circulating cultural mnemonic forms.

Pasts are woven continuously and often unseen into places and images. While a proper monumental tourist site often features a material presence in places to remind of absences, a photograph can display an image of a seemingly empty place while nevertheless evoking a *feeling* of a present absence, or an image of a built memorial site that nevertheless appears out of sight. It is not always possible or even necessary to detect an explicit reference or pictorial representation to a difficult past or a traumatic incident in a cultural form to sense or reflect on this past. Rather do what I would like to call *intentional absences*, that is gaps, lacks and voids in both art works and, though maybe more unintentional, in tourist snapshots play an important role as they can make us backpedal, question, think and wonder. These imaginary acts are important for keeping memory work alive and fostering encounters of different people, incidents, objects and places at different times.

Voids take different forms along the tourist route: An either overwhelming monumental presence or a physical absence of a marked sight makes visitors pause and reflect. These memories do not always materialize in photographs as they don't fit the usual tourist snapshot's design but they nevertheless live on as memorable experience and 'unrealized images'. Whenever they do materialize in a picture, they also reflect on the character of sight and surrounding and the status of *oversights*.

From sight to oversight – shifting memoryscapes in tourism

Encountering other's pasts in the present is strongly connected to spatial vision, the perception of, and orientation of the body in space as well as travelling imaginaries of a place. One case in point is the tourist experience at intended or unintended sites of remembrance. Those 'sights' are situated in a shifting field of

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[3] Mbembe, Achille. (2001). *On the Postcolony.* Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 16.

visuality, ranging between visible presence and absence and involved in various struggles over the authority of visualization.[4] From the shiny built monument, commemorating the fallen heroes of an uprising, to the almost unnoticed ruins and traces of colonial apartheid segregation politics structuring both rural and urban everyday environments, South African memorial space can take the form of both *sight* and *oversight* depending on its different appropriations and manifestations. The concept *oversight* helps us to grasp moving spatial vision, the interplay of space, place and material and the dynamics of visibility and invisibility in memory work. This dynamic is understood here first and foremost as an agency not based on a hierarchy of power relations determining what and who is visible and who isn't.

In the case of Southern Africa, we face the haunting presence of colonial apartheid topographies[5] in the photographs of Sekgala and Goldblatt, while the tourist industry often transports another cultural memory, that takes the form of an imagined colonial nostalgia romanticizing vast, seemingly empty, landscapes, playing on deeply rooted fantasies of colonial travel and expansion and an imagined elegance of a colonial past.

Nevertheless, it would be too easy and unsatisfying to simply discard all tourist visual practice as conformist consuming behaviour, solely lead by global capitalist interests and simply reproducing an age-old colonial stereotype, actively preventing new visions to be spread – and the examples in this article prove this reading wrong. It is a fact, though, that many tourist markets in the Global South are geared to popular views of their travel destination in the Global North to ensure satisfied customers and to not run the risk of disappointing expectations, which naturally leads to a reproduction of out-dated, colonialist stereotypes and a degrading role allocation on the tourist front stage. But as always, there are exceptions. Some memorable scenes from each trip contradict the dominant image. We can find these prominently among snapshots of memorial sites and in-between landmarks on tour.

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[4] See Mirzoeff, Nicholas. (2011). The Right to Look. *Critical Inquiry* 3, 478.
[5] See Enwezor, Okwui. (2008). The Indeterminate Structure of Things Now. Notes on Contemporary South African Photography. In: Garb, Tamar. *Home Lands - Land Marks: Contemporary Art from South Africa (exhibition catalogue)*, London, Zürich, Berlin: Haunch of Venison.

Since what is negotiated under the term cultural tourism is on the rise in South Africa, fuelled by the heritage and conservation architects, more and more tourists visit the cities, often guided by heritage landmarks. Photos of the newly built monuments also feature famously in the tourists' private archives of memorable vacation views and moments. In these tourist snapshots we meet the problematic of oversight again, either induced through an overt presence of boring physical monuments and the ever same 'I was here photos' each and every one takes, or through the absence of focus in vacation snapshots producing accidental photos of non-sites or unusual spaces, where the photographer seemingly didn't know where to look. (see Fig. 2)

Tourists are most of the time guided on their trips and journeys by tangible, often visible, landmarks, following and restaging recognizable tourist sights. A '*sight worth seeing*' (translated from the German word for tourist site, *Sehenswürdigkeit*) is a built space popular in the 'social field of view' and accepted in the moral economy of sightseeing;[6] it is a sight having made and making a lasting – not least visual – impact, often attracting foreign tourists and their imaging technologies through its monumental, material presence or a narrative told about it, sacralizing the space in question.[7] Their status can shift, however, from being in sight to being out of sight, from unnoticed to major to overseen landmark, from presence to absence through deterioration or simply disinterest and general monumental saturation and fatigue on the part of the visitors. Interestingly, the term oversight can refer to acts of supervision at the same time as it points to an error in seeing; overseeing something can mean to monitor and see the whole field of view, to look over a broad space, and, at the same time, to unintentionally *not* see or notice something; this overlooking as not-seeing refers to an object of vision nevertheless existent in the visual field. In such moments of overlooking one does not see the wood for the trees, as the saying goes, or in this context, one cannot see the past for the monuments.

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[6] MacCannell, Dean. (1976). Sightseeing and Social Structure. In: *The Tourist. A New Theory of the Leisure Class.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 39-56.
[7] See also Assmann, Aleida. (2006). *Erinnerungsräume. Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses.* München: C.H. Beck; and MacCannell, Sightseeing.

Fig. 1. Ryan, *Student Uprising Memorial*, 2009. Colour photograph. Flickr. Courtesy of the author.

Andreas Huyssen formulates a similar concern in 'Monumental Seduction' (1996), arguing that the proliferation of monuments produces invisibility, at the same time, as it is these built formations that often manage to remain and preserve information about a past and carrying on a story over generations.[8] It mustn't always be formations built deliberately to commemorate, but a discreet hint at remainders that makes the memory of a past available to others.

Built memorials can themselves become overlooked, left aside and to the course of time and natural decay. There are plenty of disused memorial sites in South Africa, once built for commemoration practices, now taken away from the tourist map, continuing their life as traces widely unnoticed as in the photograph above

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[8] Huyssen, Andreas. (1996). Monumental Seduction. *New German Critique*, 69 (Autumn, 1996), 181-200.

Fig. 2. Fiona Henderson, *Desmond Tutu's house*, 24 December 2009. Colour photograph, Flickr. Courtesy of the author.

taken by a US-American tourist to South Africa (Fig. 1), showing London based South African artist Johannes Phokela's memorial to Teboho 'Tsietsi' Mashinini, one of the student leaders during the Soweto uprisings in1976, slowly overgrowing with grass in the park of Morris Isaacson Highschool in Soweto.

What is striking about this photo is that it is somewhat consciously designed as snapshot of an oversight in the sense that its object in focus – the student uprising memorial (corresponding to the title given) – is somewhat out of focus in the image taken: a special attention in the composition of the image is paid to the surrounding of the landmark, underlining its untypical foreground, the untended environment of Phokela's installation. It highlights the importance of the landscape and everyday surrounding of the visited site, its double narrative, weaving past memories into the present and giving that mundane present a moderate space and attention. The manifested material image, in turn, puts the past into the present and thereby facilitates its recognition by others, not least by

naming the captured scene and site, a landmark that would otherwise possibly remain overlooked.

Tourist snapshots, especially the ones taken of popular theme parks and gated, separated sights, capture the temporality of places and the memories living on in them as traces spread over and dissolving in contemporary everyday life. At the same time they can (involuntarily) offer ironic glances at the industry of sights to see and capture, like the following snapshot of another Sowetan sight, the house of archbishop Desmond Tutu.

To be precise, the image (Fig. 2) shows the upper part of a white wall with a fence on top and lots of trees and bushes behind. Its design is slightly irritating with the wall that is not readily visible as such ranging diagonal into the picture. One wonders why the author chose to capture this scene and detail and to present it – furnished with a title giving the needed explanation – in her photo stream online. No matter how untypical the image seems, it contains and raises itself a reflection about the dynamics of seeing and looking in tourism. Looking closely at such oversight snaps broadens the angle of tourist imaginary in general. I would go as far as to say that this type of 'boring image', seemingly missing the mark, importantly challenges the stereotypical repertoire of exoticising and othering images of African tourist destinations.

The encountering of oversights – be it in the form of discarded memorials (Fig. 1) or missed landmarks (Fig. 2) - is at the same time tied to the notion of secrecy and many tourists' wish to become insiders and make most unique experiences, in the sense of 'discovering' new views and sights, scenes and landscapes that have been 'unseen' and undocumented before. Encountering oversights as *othered* sights is thus increasingly becoming a status symbol and cultural capital of the traveller. One should be aware of the potential danger in this attraction of oversights as secret places, continuing the colonial adventure of discovery and the colonial imagination of the Otherness of the formerly colonised, misjudging the power of the own gaze. At the same time is the tourist's interest for the sights of the everyday or her unusual visualizations of actual or former sights a welcomed counterbalance to the exoticising and othering strategies at play in mainstream tourism industry.

I argue for yet another specificity of memorial site inherent in much of the photographic work of David Goldblatt and Thabiso Sekgala. Their views of landscapes and environments actively work with the shifting notions of sight and oversight, their photographs – similar to the snapshots – seem to hold something away from being seen at the same time as they have an eye for the oversights as discarded views of the present in which the past resonates; something latent in the image, its 'blind spot'. Jill Bennett underlines that the importance of the work that art does, lies in the moments of encounter that it opens rather than in an educational or revealing gesture.[9] In this sense, artworks and, I would argue, any circulating, mediated material, including the tourist snapshot or souvenir, can not merely be understood as repositories of (other's) memory, but as mediators, motivating engagement with other memories.

Blind Spots in (post-)apartheid landscapes.
Photographs by David Goldblatt and Thabiso Sekgala

Visiting the exhibition 'A Blind Spot' in Berlin's *Haus der Kulturen der Welt* in summer 2012 which also featured a selection of David Goldblatt's photographs, I came to think about the relations of photography, memory and what I would meanwhile call 'creative absences'. Not only did my own hesitation when looking at the images intrigue me but also the boring and clean touch that some of the works had at first sight, their 'illusory smooth aesthetic'.[10] 'Dismissing the dominant pictorial regime', the organizers write about the exhibition that was curated by Catherine David, the images 'preserve an openness and indeterminacy that precludes reducing them to a description or illustration of a specific reality'.[11] It is photographs that ask for contextualization, but do not dictate it, they

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[9] Bennett, *Empathic Vision*.

[10] Contag, Lisa. (2013). 'Bodenprobe zwei: "A Blind Spot", Catherine Davids Ausstellung zum 2. Berlin Documentary Forum'. *ARTINFO Deutschland*, 3 July 2013. online: http://at.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/924464/bodenprobe-zwei-a-blind-spot-catherine-davids-ausstellung-zum [last accessed 14 July 2013].

[11] Haus der Kulturen der Welt. (2012). 'The Blind Spot', exhibition as part of the *2nd Berlin Documentary Forum*, 31 May – 1 July 2012. Berlin: Haus der Kulturen der Welt.

Fig. 3. Thabiso Sekgala, *Homeland 1*, 2011. Colour photograph. Courtesy of the artist.

motivate recontextualizations instead; as Catherine David sums up: 'what an image is about is not necessarily visible in it'.[12] Photographs can re-establish a connection to things, events, places and times that remain invisible or have been forgotten. They can furthermore set in scene absences, which in turn motivate a range of empathic readings. I would like to focus on the openness and equivocality of the photograph, next to the feeling of absences and invisibilities that are evoked in selected works of Thabiso Sekgala's *Homeland* series (2011) and David Goldblatt's *Intersections Intersected* (2008) and *The Structure of Things Then* (1998).

Rather than deciding over a photograph's representability and indexicality of memory or a past event, I would like to reflect on physical and/or emotional presences and absences, the 'moving' qualities of the image.

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[12] Hilgenstock, Andrea. (2012). 'Kuratorin Catherine David über "A Blind Spot"' [interview]. *Tip Berlin*, 29 May 2012. online: http://www.tip-berlin.de/kultur-und-freizeit-kunst-und-museen/kuaratorin-catherine-david-uber-blind-spot [last accessed 14 July 2013].

Questions of revisiting, remediating, recycling or repairing the past keep contemporary photographers busy and there seems to be an on-going interest in memory, recycling material and place in contemporary photography in the Global South: the 9ᵗʰ Panafrican photography biennial *Rencontres de Bamako* in 2011/12 presented, under the header 'Pour un monde durable/ For a sustainable world', a range of photographic projects that were in some way or the other concerned with the afterlife of things and former structures, the in/visibility of relics and remnants from a past ranging into the present, from urban ruins to rural landscapes and mundane material objects. Many of Goldblatt's and Sekgala's photos are likewise occupied with the memories and traces that South African landscapes and cityscapes carry as well as their shifting visibility. They call on absences, the interplay and entanglement of place and site, journey and arrival, past and present. As in every post-colonial society 'land' is never only just there, building the ground for action, but always accompanied by an aura of contestation, secrecy or uncanniness.

The first photograph of Sekgala's *Homeland* series (Fig. 3), shows an old house in the winter evening sun. At first sight we notice that it is located in a rather deserted and flat area (though the lower right corner of the image displays a shadow of possibly the neighbouring house). Looking closer, we realize that it is possible to look through the windows and out again at the backside of the house. Windows are cracked. The place seems abandoned. The warm and homely light contrasts the weird feeling of emptiness and uninhabitation, coupled with an almost nostalgic gaze of the camera, an outlook on that which is no more. Then again does the white 'fast food' tag on the ochre wall appear rather fresh and the gated doors and cardboard filled windows might point towards the fact that someone is actually (still) living and working there. We seem to feel that the house has changed functions and owners and past and present uses are manifest in the image. It is an invitation to see in the image that which is not readily visible, to see an absence. Sekgala often takes landscape images of things he has noticed have changed, 'of cultivated fields that now lay bare, of spaces once occupied, now no longer.'[13]

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[13] Market Photo Workshop. (2011). *Homeland* by Thabiso Sekgala. 6 April-30 May 2011. press release. Online:
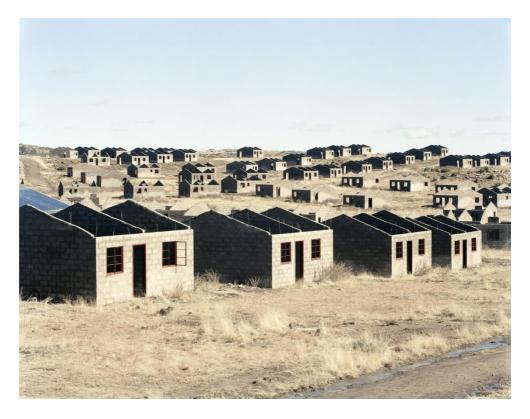
Fig. 4. David Goldblatt, *Stalled Municipal Housing Scheme, Kwezinaledi*, Lady Grey, Eastern Cape, 5 August 2006. Colour photograph. Courtesy of the artist and Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg.

Figure 4 is a similar photograph by David Goldblatt showing another housing arrangement, the settlement of approximately 40 same-model houses in the Eastern Cape. The construction site looks deserted leaving it unclear whether the houses will or have ever been inhabited. We don't know if they suffer from a past incident or wait for a future to come. The subtitle brings light to the question: Nobody has ever lived or is going to live there. Construction work has long stopped. It is a ghost town that has only ever been inhabited by apartheid segregation policies, one of the many failed resettlement projects that overlooked basic needs for infrastructure and farming of the communities to settle there. The image negotiates the notion of oversight in multiple ways, capturing at the same time that which is ignored and that which cannot be overlooked for its mere

physical presence, as well as the missing life – human and non-human – filling the emptiness. 'Goldblatt is like our social conscious', writes South African critic Mary Corrigal, 'ensuring we don't forget what came before and thus reminding us that little has changed'.[14]

Though the act of making visible traditionally unnoticed or forgotten structures (like a ruin of a farmhouse, an old fence, or the remains of lavatories) points towards and visualizes former colonial apartheid segregation politics and land ownership conflicts, the images do more. They deliberately play with our structures of seeing our and other's surroundings. Looking at the photographs we feel that something else than what we see is at stake in the place displayed. We see its memory not only as remnants of the past still present, but also as evolving in the present and still constituting it. Okwui Enwezor writes about Goldblatt's work: 'While his photographic vision always apprehends a constantly shifting, evolving landscape, it nevertheless seeks to remind the viewer that even when constructed in the present tense, the landscape has memory'.[15] The same is true for the work of Sekgala who describes his work as 'the culmination of the exploration of memory, place and interrelated self-imagining. (...) With subtlety and sensitivity I consider how people develop place related identities out of so notorious a past and the complex ways in which people develop nostalgia for histories that could be considered illegitimate.'[16]

Such a history is called upon in the whole *Homeland* series – the title recalling the apartheid regime's 'bantustan' (later homeland) policy, one of the milestones of an institutionalised racist segregation in South Africa, dividing Black South Africans into ten partly invented population groups and allocating land to each of them. Sekgala negotiates the presence and memory of the notion of home-land in his photographs by depicting, in a similar manner to Goldblatt, structures that live on, reused and transformed, and whose former function might seem absurd or out of place, leaving the viewer with a strange feeling of absence despite an

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[14] Corrigall, Mary. (2010). Haunted by the Past. *The Sunday Independent*, 17 October 2010, 3.
[15] Enwezor, Indeterminate Structure, 33.
[16] Sekgala, Thabiso. (2013). Thabiso Sekgala. Künstlerhaus Bethanien, online: http://www.bethanien.de/en/artists/thabiso-sekgala/ [last accessed 15 April 2013].

Fig. 5. Thabiso Sekgala, *Homeland 7*, 2011. Colour photograph. Courtesy of the artist.

overt visible presence or a feeling of the presence of something that is not visible in the field of view, but nevertheless there.

Homeland 7 (Fig. 5) shows an open farm or other property gate. We don't know where it leads and whether it is still in use. Did someone just get out or in or is the gate just open all the time, as it no longer serves as boundary? Who was it supposed to keep in and out? Again, the image communicates with its viewers, asking of them to think beyond and prior to the gate that shows itself in the image. The figure of the gate is and has been a complicate one in South Africa, coupled with the still paradox discourses of safety and compartmentalization. Symbolizing the difficult question of land ownership and the on-going land reform process, the gate has been a witness to many changes in South African politics, reminding also of an on-going legacy of colonial apartheid policies. Centrally set in scene in Sekgala's photograph, the gate builds a boundary between that which is to come and that which was – we don't know whether we look from a position inside or outside of a property, whether we are looking back to where we just came from or are just about to enter another place. We also don't know whether this gate still has any function to fulfil.

The Market Photo Workshop calls Sekgala's *Homeland* 'a series of monuments- to life, to time, to the lives that are lived there. It is a monument to individual memories and collective singularities.' In its capacity to clip and store an other moment in the past, the photograph becomes a memorial.[17] Juxtaposing the different memories in and of a place, it can bring forth moments where memory reflects on itself. Goldblatt likewise has said repeatedly about photography that it monumentalizes things as we go along. His idea behind a motif has always been to photograph something before it disappears. Both Goldblatt and Sekgala are occupied with the simultaneous presence and absence of pasts, abandoned places, or unused objects.

Goldblatt often revisits the sites of his photographs, as in the 'Frankfort lavatories' series where he photographed the planned Frankfort resettlement camp in 1983, 1990 and 2006. With the fall of apartheid he increasingly added information on little posts to his photographs; short, revealing background stories behind the image that could not all be told before, in a similarly non-sensationalist tone as the visual language of his photos: 'The irreducible minimum remained', he states about the lavatories.

Okwui Enwezor writes that Goldblatt's photos are 'analytical (…) examinations of colonial and apartheid spatial practices'[18], views of the building and unbuilding of structures. Goldblatt captures the surfeit, the ubiquity of colonial and apartheid monuments. His work casts light on the overseen sites of everyday post/apartheid entanglements of places, ideologies, land, people, and objects that matter to them. Joseph Gergel of the New Museum in New York that featured the two images (Figs. 6 and 7) in the exhibition *Intersections Intersected* in 2009 writes: 'Unlike the tradition of many documentary photographers who capture the "decisive moment," Goldblatt's interest lies in the routine existence of a particular time in

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[17] See Sturken, Marita. (1999). The Image as Memorial. Personal Photographs in Cultural Memory. In: Hirsch, Marianne. *The Familial Gaze*. Hanover: University Press of New England, 178-195.
[18] Enwezor, Indeterminate Structure, 30.

Fig. 6. David Goldblatt, *Lavatory seats on the veld: the remains of the Frankfort Resettlement Camp.* Ciskei. 9 July 1990. Black and white photograph. Courtesy of the artist and Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg.

history.'[19] A similar observation of 'routine existence' and sheer timeless, eventless continuity, is made by Enwezor when he writes that 'Goldblatt's images tend to veer towards the eventless, a feeling that sometimes may suggest a state of inertia, as if the landscape and things and people in it are suddenly fixed and immobilised. The reason for this is the fundamental avoidance of incident.'[20] The unsensationalist in Goldblatt's work rather points towards a silent continuity and weaving of temporalities than a stillness. It is a welcomed addition to the memorialisation policy of much organized heritage work that almost solely seems

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[19] Gergel, Joseph. (2009). The Photography of David Goldblatt, *Intersections Intersected. The Photography of David Goldblatt.* An exhibition at The New Museum, New York, 11 July – 15 October 2009. online: http://www.gclass.org/lessons/the-photography-of-david-goldblatt [last accessed 15 July 2013].
[20] Enwezor, Indeterminate Structure, 32.

Fig. 7. David Goldblatt, *Remains of long-drop lavatories.* Frankfort, Eastern Cape. 22 February 2006. Colour photograph. Courtesy of the artist and Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg.

to be focused on incidents ('The Gugulethu Seven'; 'June 16, 1976'), and pars-pro-toto-representations (freedom fighter statues, Hector Pieterson Museum). Goldblatt has since been fascinated with people's ways of memorialising events or places and documented most national and local monuments and memorials in South Africa. Set in the typical light of his pictures, the monuments sometimes take on an ironic agency, like his 'Monument to the Horse' (2005). Without ridiculing or denunciating the single monument, he carefully puts a sense of their surrounding and life into the image.

Looking at photographs realizes and visualizes a past absence in the present. Here we are back with both Bennett's and Mbembe's thoughts of the artwork – and the photograph in its snapshot version – in a time of entanglement and the ways it can sustain subtle sensation.

Talking absences

All photographs discussed here leave us time with things and structures we would normally overlook or ignore. They leave us time with the other, the past and the absent, and recognize, as Bennett writes, that the past 'is figured as the environing world' that shapes the actors present.[21] What is the reference in the image, then, that makes viewers pause? It is an apparent emptiness, the feeling of a memory with a missing monument, or the gesture monumentalizing the mundane, forgotten or overlooked. The question following this observation is how and when memorial space can build up or maintain the dynamic needed for sustaining interest and involvement in another's pasts. Looking back at the tourist snapshots, their play with absences is not necessarily an intended absence as in Goldblatt's or Sekgala's works. It is nevertheless a 'talking' absence in retrospective, especially when read together with the other images whose sphere of influence – art – is more clearly marked as outreaching medium. At the same time do tourist snapshots increasingly circulate in a range of different media and become as available to different publics as a photograph in an exhibition. The tourist photograph can retrospectively lead to interesting reflections on part of the tourist photographer – and its wider audience -, consisting in a confrontation with the realization of why one takes which snapshot and why this goes often unquestioned. This points towards the fact that there are exceptions, breaks, or interruptions of a foreseeable photographic behaviour on tour that even surprise the photographer herself. A confrontation with unpicturesque sights and remainders, discarded or 'empty places' can motivate the vacationer to break with her predominantly contemplative passivity of consuming readily provided sights like memorials. Looking again at the snapshots as oversights makes the whole field of view suddenly disclose itself differently. It thereby comes close to the work that Goldblatt's photographs ask of their viewers: an orientation, a movement in space, a curiosity for the mundane and invisible, a readiness to accept the importance of the latent in a place and a situation. It is a move away from long conserved ready-made stories of 'the South African Other' and enables encounters prior to the touristic lens of otherness, again, motivated through absences like the absence of a photographic view or landmark.

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[21] Bennett, *Empathic Vision*, 74.

The article argued for a productive quality of absences – voids and *oversights* – in the visuality of cultural memory work. Photographs, both artists' works and amateur snapshots, can give a presence to absences. We can decipher absences when they are marked or set in scene in any way, for example accompanied by a sign or plaque stating 'here was once ...' or '... used to live/ take place here'. Just as we sometimes do not remember or even notice the monumental, double-marked, we are attracted by what is not there because it piques our curiosity and asks us to use our imagination – both in encountering actual sites and in the encounter with images. But what is it that is kept present in absences? It might be that what got lost, or something that reminds of a traumatic incident no one wants to be reminded of and that lacks recognition, but at the same time it can take the form of an irreducible remainder that some object, person, or incident has left and that does not readily reveal itself to its visitor and therefore remains overseen but overlooked. To follow what is not recognized, or what is discarded, *othered*, makes us perceive some of the work that memory is confronted with.

I tried to show how photographs as circulating actants can actively set an absence into scene. Through the attention it gathers, a photograph can make her viewers aware that it casts light on only a certain part of the whole *scape*. When it comes to memory work and especially the recognition of an Other and others' memories, a break in usual routines, and especially the act of taking time, of pausing, is of productive importance to give memory a space, relating to it and keeping it alive. When the body doesn't know where to look, the imagination is activated to fill the visible voids.

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