Uncontained?
The constraints of ahistoricism in the ‘opening’ of the Community Arts Project archive at the Centre for Humanities Research

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CONTEXTS AND INTENTIONS

The Community Arts Project (CAP) played a significant role in South African art history. One in an intermittent series of arts centres that have been instrumental in the provision of art education and training to (mostly) black artists, it was part of a post 1976 generation of politically responsive arts organisations that, with few notable exceptions, no longer exist.1 Within the Western Cape, it holds an undisputed position as having been the most influential of these structures, its legacy evident in the curriculum vitae of many artists, as well as teachers, academics, arts administrators and politicians. Through a detailed critique of Uncontained: Opening the Community Arts Project archive, a project of the Centre for Humanities Research (CHR) at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), I highlight some of the challenges faced in representing the histories of complex structures such as CAP, and hope to demonstrate the need for open, critical engagement as a necessary ingredient in the development of the archives of community organisations.

I am one of very many people whose lives CAP profoundly affected. Having moved to Cape Town to study Fine Arts at the University of Cape Town (UCT) around the time of the Project’s infancy in the late 1970s, I only was remotely aware of its existence until the latter half of the 1980s, when I returned to the city after several nomadic years as a young white male fleeing military conscription. Through my participation in nonracial youth and cultural organisations, several opportunities enabled me to interact, often critically, with the politically ‘nonaligned’ CAP of the period. My status as ambivalent outsider changed in the 1990s, when I spent the better part of the decade working alongside others to reposition the Project within the new socio-political environment. During these years, I conducted and commissioned research into the organisation’s history and worked on a retrospective exhibition, ‘Water in a Dry Place,’ at the South African National Gallery (SANG) in 1999. In

1 Notable exceptions include the Fuba School of Dramatic and Visual Arts and the Afrika Cultural Centre, both in Johannesburg.
recent years, I have been spearheading research by the Africa South Art Initiative (ASAI) in developing online archives of community arts organisations, including CAP. It is thus difficult to respond to public events concerning the Project without drawing on my experience and knowledge of it.

CAP played many roles and served many interests. Among its principal functions, it served as a membership organisation, art centre, art school and resource for community organisations. It followed an evolutionary path that was often nonlinear, even haphazard. By the late 1980s, attempts to reconcile sometimes conflicting tendencies saw it restructured as a series of semiautonomous ‘projects,’ namely Children’s Art, Media, Theatre and Visual Arts and Crafts. Media was later constituted as an independent trust, Media Works, but subsequently rejoined the mother body to form the Arts and Media Access Centre (AMAC), which closed in 2008. Despite the split and re-amalgamation in form, CAP retained its original name in the popular imagination, often inclusive of the Media Project/Media Works trajectory, and it is in this inclusive sense that I use it here. It should be noted that both the Visual Arts and Media entities produced ‘collections’ of work which are housed today at UWC. These are shared between the CHR, which holds the visual arts collection, and the Mayibuye Centre, which has the media collection. The former includes a vast number of prints, mostly linocuts, and it is these graphic works that are foregrounded in both ‘Uncontained,’ the exhibition and \textit{Uncontained,} the book.

The use of identical titles and sub-titles for the exhibition and book imply their interwoven objectives. Both outputs are intended to ‘reactivate’ the archive. Emile Maurice, curator and co-editor, explains that the title of the CHR’s project:

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literally refers to the unpacking of the works from the cardboard boxes in which they arrived at UWC…
It also refers to the opening to the public of a collection of artworks that has largely lain dormant in the storerooms of CAP and AMAC, and the re-activation of the archive from its neglect by mainstream cultural history.
\end{quote}

If ‘reactivation’ implies once having possessed currency, it is certainly a capital that was never hegemonic. Through this critique, I express concern that the narratives generated by \textit{Uncontained} (particularly but not exclusively through the book), introduce reductive perspectives of CAP that may well enter mainstream South African art history (if not necessarily ‘cultural history’), and that this will be at the expense of more accurate and complicated accounts of the organisation, its constituencies and the art associated with it. Unlike earlier seminal studies of community arts centres, such as Elza Miles on Polly Street and Hobbs and Rankin on Rorkes Drift, which are firmly art historical, \textit{Uncontained} is ‘particularly interested in what these texts and images tell us about living in apartheid’s aftermath.’ This emphasis on interrogating a past moment for its value in making sense of

\begin{itemize}
\item This project is titled People’s Culture and is hosted on www.asai.co.za.
\item In 1994, these ‘projects,’ with the exception of Media, were reorganised as a single Education department. Children’s art (understood here to include what were once termed ‘teenager’s classes’ historically were a very dynamic part of CAP that was responsible for the early training of Billy Mandindi, Vuyisane Mgijima, Xolile Mtakatya, Ricky Dlaloyi and many others) was discontinued after an intense strategic planning workshop in 1996, following further pressures to focus the work of the Community Arts Project.
\item The exhibition debuted at Art.b Gallery in Belville, Cape Town, with a revised version following at the Iziko South African National Gallery (SANG).
\item \textit{Uncontained: Opening the Community Arts Project archive}, Eds. Heidi Grunebaum and Emile Maurice, Centre for Humanities Research, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, 2012, p 14.
\item Ibid. p 31.
\end{itemize}
the post-apartheid present represents a significant departure from more traditional approaches to historical subjects and is consistent with the CHR’s positioning of itself as critical, innovative and relevant.

As an academic unit founded by progressive historians, the location of CAP’s artworks at the CHR, within a university that has no visual arts department, hints at the ambivalent relationship between art collection and visual archive that this body of images presents. There is fertile ground for productive intellectual engagement from a wide range of interests, and it is perhaps not surprising that Uncontained’s aims are ambitious, even contradictory. A close reading of the project’s aims helps to identify a number of pulls, some of which appear to have been pursued more rigorously than others and some barely at all. The value of the collection for pursuing the intellectual interests of the CHR is enunciated in the introduction:

The book explores the inherited significance of the CAP artworks largely by examining their place in the present. In addition, the works are considered in relation to a set of questions posed by the CHR. How do the works in the collection provide a prism through which we name, enumerate and understand the complex afterlives of apartheid’s power that both limn the horizons of our political imaginations, and shape our understanding of social, spatial and economic considerations? What life-worlds are conjured and social worlds re-imagined, in the artworks despite and because of the conditions of their making [first emphasis theirs, second mine]? How do these provide us with an aesthetic and political grammar with which to speak about the human condition in our present time and locations?8

These intentions indicate that, from the perspective of its initiators, the success of Uncontained depends primarily on the production of new knowledge about the post-apartheid present. However, it is important to recognise acknowledgments of the importance of the original context for the production of the artworks. It is this tension between historical detail and abstract theorising that perhaps presents the greatest challenge to the success of Uncontained as a project.

Underpinning the emphasis on the present, is an assumption that substantive work has been done on the art of CAP, particularly that which was produced during the apartheid era. New ways of interpreting are called for:

If the artworks of the CAP collection have been confined to a restricted field of historical understandings and cultural namings, we felt it both intellectually necessary, and politically urgent, to address the preceding questions unconstrained by the narrowed discursive spaces to which the political, aesthetic and interpretative possibilities of the works have generally been consigned. For the works have persistently been interpreted symptomatically as manifestations of the political unfolding of the 1980s and early 1990s.9

There is little doubt that the work of CAP has been located invariably within the contexts of racial oppression and resistance. Arguably, any failure to do so would be a distortion of the historical record. But this framing should not deny the production of less overtly political themes at CAP during the apartheid years or overlook the intersection between personal histories of individual artists and the themes evident in their works. Indeed, one may well have expected to see more evidence of a critique of the ‘personal’ or ‘private’ in Uncontained, as well as an elaboration of how the CHR’s interest in the artworks breaks from the privileging of political frameworks.

The claim that the works have been subjected to a restrictive discourse is tellingly

8 Ibid. p 23. Also, see pp 14-15.
9 Ibid. p 23.
followed with the recognition that ‘such a task would lack intellectual and ethical integrity if we do not place CAP and the artists whose works appear in this book and in the exhibition at the heart of our enquiry.’ There may be ways in which the organisation and the artists associated with it could be centred in a project concerned with interpreting the present, but such a bold endeavour surely must demonstrate respect for the particularities of the original context. The contribution of biography in such an exercise appears to be self-evident and is amply acknowledged in statements outlining the aims of Uncontained. Setting the stage for the fair expectation that the ‘archive’ will be rigorously deconstructed, Grunebaum, Lalu and Taylor note:

The first publication of an extensive collection of images [from CAP]... allows for several lines of enquiry: into the conditions of collection, the context of conservation, and the value of the body of images for mobilising scholarly work that is historical, biographical and political, as well as aesthetic.

The wide-ranging propositions articulated by the CHR justifiably call for a plurality of approaches. Thirty-one writers from a range of disciplines and institutions were:

invited to engage their own intellectual, aesthetic and social concerns through a conversation with the artworks, and to tease out the narrative complexities and philosophical commentaries activated by the prints... Our purpose was to create an open-ended engagement with the artworks and the questions that they raise.

In privileging ‘open-ended engagement,’ key methodological questions emerge. What if contributors do not address the number of propositions articulated as objectives of the project? Does this approach require additional, remedial interventions to address gaps as they appear or does it allow for a postmodern mismatch between intentions and results that do not require editorial comment? To what extent is Uncontained an ‘aesthetic’ project that allows more subjectivity than a customary ‘scholarly’ work?

### UNPACKING THE OPEN-END

Two contrasting approaches are enabled by the CHR’s formulation of an open-ended engagement. One anchors the discussion in specific images, with the visual text maintaining a central place. The other presents a subjective response that takes on a life very much of its own, only tangentially connected to specific artworks. Kurt Campbell provides a good example of the first position. Through a focused reading of a book cover illustration by Billy Mandindi, the contributor takes care to not only consider the visual effect but also its literary source. Grunebaum also grounds her text in the image, finding appropriate words (‘accumulated debt’) to refer to the seamless transition from colonialism to apartheid that is the theme of Mandindi’s Cape of Storms. Similarly, Patricia Hayes does not lose sight of her subject, Mandindi’s Homage to John Muafangejo. With the notable exception of Lionel

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10 Ibid., my emphasis.
11 Ibid. p 25.
12 Ibid. p 31.
13 Ibid. pp 86-87.
14 Ibid. pp 64-67.
15 Ibid. pp 68-71.
Davis, who discusses his own work,\textsuperscript{16} Hayes’ discussion of this work by Mandindi is the only text to introduce biographical content. Moreover, it is the only piece that makes references to works by a featured artist that are not part of the collection at the CHR. These observations highlight the limited interest in the makers of the prints that feature in \textit{Uncontained}.

Jane Taylor’s contribution provides another example of critical work that privileges the image, making it central to the text.\textsuperscript{17} In her close reading of a monoprint by Lulama Nzala, she considers how meaning is produced through the intersections between the artist’s intentions, the technical process (monoprint) and its (sometimes unintended) visual consequences and the act of interpretation by the viewer. Through this approach, the author effectively introduces a methodology for substantive engagement with visual texts. However, it can be noted that this approach takes one element for granted: familiarity with the broader context. Knowing something of Nzala – the extent to which she was/not a typical student and how she fits into the CAP of the late 1990s – does not significantly alter Taylor’s reading. Nonetheless, there are cases where the absence of such information undermines the value of specific texts, as will become increasingly clear through the course of this critique.

CHR Director Premesh Lalu provides something of a bridge between the writers who anchor their texts in specific images and those for whom subjective responses cloud discernible traces back to particular visual material. He takes Robert Siwangaza’s \textit{Unemployment} (1987) and repositions the unseen face of the solitary figure as an invitation to rethink notions of work. Here, one gets an inkling of how the CHR hopes to produce new perspectives about the present through engaging artworks from the past.\textsuperscript{18} Addressing the ambiguity of black rural life in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa, Ben Cousins provides another bridge through his analysis of images of rural home. Using his images, he visualises the mixed responses many black South Africans have to the idea of a rural home.\textsuperscript{19}

Certainly the above mentioned texts are not the only contributions that refer to particular artworks. However, they provide marked contrasts when placed next to many pieces in \textit{Uncontained} that use images as a stimulus for a set of responses that retain only tenuous links to the visual material. This tendency is most evident in the creative prose of Mbongiseni Buthulezi,\textsuperscript{20} Michael Wentworth\textsuperscript{21} and Rustum Kozain,\textsuperscript{22} as well as in the poetry of Suren Pillay.\textsuperscript{23} It is further evident in, to borrow Maurice’s term, ‘thought-pieces’\textsuperscript{24} that reflect on trade unionism, domestic workers, imprisonment, biblical sources and other themes that appear as content in specific images. Several of these responses make only oblique references to the works.

The loose use of ‘source’ is consistent with the CHR’s ‘open-ended’ approach, but it is strikingly at odds with Grunebaum, Lalu and Taylor’s stated commitment to centre CAP and the artists represented in its collection. It would seem that some balance would be essential to managing the range of approaches. Indeed, there is an affirmation of the value of the works in witnessing a wide range of intellectuals respond to a body of work outside of its originary

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid. pp 172-175.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid. pp 162-165.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid. pp 104-107.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid. pp 176-185.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid. pp 82-85.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid. pp 114-117, 158-161.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid. pp 166-169.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid. pp 60-63, 198-201.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid. p 15.
frameworks. However, it is not clear whether the visual texts produce new knowledge within those respective fields, or simply serve a superfluous, illustrative purpose. There is something alarming about the fact that, contrary to declared intentions, Uncontained says very little about CAP and almost nothing about the artists themselves. Even less is said about the conditions giving rise to the production of the works, other than through reiterations of the broad apartheid meta-narrative. Surprisingly, there is nothing substantial on the collection itself, how it was assembled, its idiosyncrasies and silences. In short, there is little that can claim to be ‘biographical.’

All these silences could be dismissed as irrelevant if CAP had indeed been the tireless object of research, if the images had, as is claimed, been subjected to a restrictive discourse. It is true that many South African artworks from the 1980s, and to a lesser extent the 1970s and early 1990s, have been subjected to an uncritical application of the notion of resistance art, and this framing has introduced an orthodoxy into the country’s art history. But the discourse about artwork produced at CAP has been restrictive in a more fundamental sense, in that very little has been written about specific works or the collection. By prioritising images reflecting the ’turbulent 1980s,’ to what extent does Uncontained not replay the tendency to simply situate artworks from CAP as illustrative of the struggle against apartheid, which Grunebaum, Lalu and Taylor claim Uncontained moves beyond?

MANY CAPS

Citing seminal research by Jacqueline Nolte (2011), Grunebaum, Lalu and Taylor note that at times ‘CAP was… a complicated, fraught and contested space.’ These are not light words. The organisation was almost perpetually in flux, its aims constantly under critical review, its programmes never static. This dynamism was reflective of the immense political and financial pressures on the Project which produced a highly charged environment that few could endure. A lack of stability is evident in the incessant and often rapid turnover of personnel (notably staff, but also trustees and students). Many insiders were bruised badly, even scarred by their participation. Few retained active links after leaving the organisation and consequently, not many people can offer much insight beyond the time of their own participation Given a culture of internal contestation and constant changes, generalising about CAP is a difficult proposition, prone to the production of reductive accounts at odds with a


26 When works from artists associated with CAP have been included (i.e. works by David Hlongwane and Billy Mandindi in David Bunn and Jane Taylor’s From South Africa: New Writing, Photographs and Art (1987), Gavin Younge’s Art of the South African Townships (1988), Sue Williamson’s Resistance Art in South Africa (1989) and John Peffer’s Art and the End of Apartheid (2009)), they have been featured primarily for their illustrative value. As a contrast, see the discussion of Mandindi in Revisions: Expanding the Narrative of South African Art, Ed Hayden Proud, South African History Online and UNISA Press, 2006, p 258. Also see Philippa Hobbs and Elizabeth Rankin, Printmaking in a Transforming South Africa, David Philip, Cape Town and Johannesburg, 1997. Hobbs and Rankin prioritise technical and aesthetic concerns in their discussion of work produced by CAP students (de Leeuw, Hlati, Tom Sefako, Bam, Somana, Sikó), as well as works produced by associated artists, mostly former students (Mkonto, Mgijima, Soha, Voyiya, Davis).

27 Uncontained: Opening the Community Arts Project archive, Eds. Heidi Grunebaum and Emile Maurice, Centre for Humanities Research, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, 2012, p 14.

28 Ibid. p 24.

29 Changes in personnel were less dramatic with the Media Project.
Thami Kiti Untitled (Still Life). Linocut, c. 1995. Coll: University of the Western Cape. (Photo courtesy UWC)
complex historical record.

Extant, accessible documentation contributes to the relative visibility of certain periods, discourses, personalities and artworks over others. For instance, the early years at the original site in Mowbray left little of a tangible legacy in terms of artwork, and the late years have attracted little research. In contrast, the late 1980s, prioritised by *Uncontained*, represents a visible point for CAP. Fuelled by a peak in anti-apartheid funding the Project had the financial means to employ over thirty full-time staff members and was restructured to accommodate competing visions within the organisation. Former director, Mike van Graan, describes the CAP of this time as:

> a service organisation designing and printing T-shirts, banners and posters; a training organisation to produce a cadre of visual artists, theatre makers and designers equipped with skills to use for effective communication within and by their communities; or as a space that celebrated and provided access to counter-hegemonic art practices reflecting different values, worldviews, ideas and aspirations to those that one would encounter in the publicly-funded theatres, galleries and museums of the time.\(^{30}\)

Compare van Graan’s formulation with Maurice’s emphasis on the organisation as ‘a home for artists:’

> [whose] particular mission... was to provide accommodation, facilities and training in the arts for artists and learners who were marginalised under apartheid, and to develop the cultural voice of Cape Town’s oppressed communities.\(^{31}\)

The two descriptions barely overlap, not least because the latter recounts an earlier incarnation of the Project. These two descriptions graphically demonstrate that multiple CAPs exist in the popular imaginary; the organisation’s name signifies multivalently to its heterogenous audience.\(^{32}\)

Taking the Project’s full history into account, it is important to recognise that space was not always linked to ‘counter-hegemonic art practice,’ as in van Graan’s account. Apart from the fact that not all art produced at the centre or in activities associated with it can be claimed as radical, as a physical centre CAP was not used only for arts training and production. At times, activities included yoga and karate; it was a place for organisations to meet and for people to party. There were periods when the organisation struggled as much with its identity as a ‘community centre’ as it did with being an ‘art centre’ and with what was meant by the very idea of ‘community arts.’ These debates introduced questions of location and identity, ongoing discussions seldom, if ever, resolved. Through much of its history, notably from the mid-1980s until the early 1990s the Project, particularly the mother body at its second home on the periphery of District Six, grappled with the distance between its physical location, the communities in which many of its constituents lived and the multiple sites, mostly in townships, where it was extremely active in running workshops. It also is crucial to grasp that as a ‘space,’ CAP was more than a physical home. At times it functioned informally as a network, an organisation that implicitly ‘represented’ the interests of a broad constituency, broadly black and/or left. Much of this ‘organic,’ open-ended CAP was shut out in the imperious, generously funded organisation of the late 1980s but continued to reassert itself

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\(^{30}\) Ibid. p 76.

\(^{31}\) Ibid. p 13.

\(^{32}\) See Ibid. p 25. Grunebaum, Lalu and Taylor note that ‘the very name ‘CAP’ as a mnemonic or memory prompt, elicits all manner of recollections... the collection also calls up personal anecdote.’ It is not simply a matter of recollection but also one of interpretation and of contestation.
intermittently thereafter, notably during the period of Zayd Minty’s leadership.

DECONSTRUCTING ‘THE CAP ARTIST’

Coming to grips with the existence of a plurality of CAPs is fundamental in deconstructing notions of the ‘CAP artist’ or ‘cultural worker’ that are applied liberally throughout *Uncontained*. The ‘CAP artist’ is a much more complicated and heterogeneous entity than the one presented in this text and this discordance is critical, for it does not only provide the ‘historical’ premise for the writers’ open-ended approaches but also frames the exhibition. Acknowledging the plurality of CAPs, I examine ideas of ‘CAP artist’ and ‘cultural worker,’ troubling some of the seeming certainties exerted in *Uncontained*. Do these terms have the po

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Gaby Cheminais *Towards a People’s Culture Festival*. Off-set litho poster. 1986. (Source: History of Art slide collection, University of Cape Town)
tential to capture a homogeneity or perhaps a solidarity among artists associated with CAP? Or does the uncritical use of such terms, at the expense of any substantive consideration of individual authorship, introduce reductive readings that bear little relation to the messy historical record?

One of Uncontained’s foundational narratives is that the prints in the CHR collection represent the labour of ‘cultural workers.’ This radical redefinition of the artist rests on the historical role of the Project in broad-based resistance. Claiming this space requires an affirmation of its pivotal role in the struggle. According to Maurice:

CAP artists played a prominent role in shaping the notion of ‘culture as resistance’ to apartheid and promoting the idea of ‘people’s culture’. In 1982 CAP participated in the historic Botswana Arts Festival in Gaborone, which resulted in CAP artists re-inventing themselves as ‘cultural workers’.

At a glance, this statement is broadly plausible, but read more closely it highlights a number of operative assumptions. A far more complex picture emerges if the causal chain between Gaborone and the organisation’s adoption of the notion of cultural worker is teased out. Consider Maurice’s first use of the term ‘CAP artists.’ It is well known that in the western Cape, the Project played a central role in garnering participation in the Botswana Arts Festival. Moreover, CAP brought a mime play to Gaborone, extending its involvement beyond attendance. Possibly all and probably most of the western Cape delegates considered themselves part of the Project; during this period, CAP signified as a community organisation to which many ‘belonged.’ Similarly, it is well known that the Project played an important part in coordinating the subsequently banned Towards a People’s Culture Festival in 1986. During these years, CAP was de facto a centre or organisational ‘home’ for many individuals, networks and organisations. However, as noted above, it lost this mantle as it increasingly bureaucratised itself.

The important point here is that the ‘CAP artist’ who went to Botswana was a heterogeneous entity, emblematic of the inclusivity of the Project at that time.

While Maurice posits a direct link between Gaborone and the adoption of the notion of cultural worker at CAP, it may come as some surprise to find that this idea was first introduced in the Project’s newsletters as late as 1986 and significantly, in a discussion of working class culture, as represented by the trade unions, notably the Congress of South Africa Trade Unions (COSATU). In other words, it was not yet applied to the organisation itself. In fact, in 1986, CAP’s full-time visual arts students exhibited at the South African Association of Arts, the University of Stellenbosch Art Gallery and the Touch Gallery, attached to SANG. These were not only Fine Arts institutions, but as state-funded bodies,
they were imbricated deeply in the cultural politics of the time. In other words, while much of the students’ art displayed a growing militancy, degrees of conservatism were simultaneously evident in the Project. It is only late in 1987 that CAP (notably its leadership, not its ‘artists’) redefined itself as an organisation training ‘cultural workers,’ and this shift was first publicly communicated through its newsletter in 1988. As late as 1987, the visual art students were discussing the meaning of art and its relationship to politics.\(^{38}\) And according to Lucy Alexander, then active in the visual arts education programme, students still were deliberating about ‘what it meant to be an artist in Africa, an African artist’ in 1988,\(^ {39}\) although I would suggest that the date of the event she describes is even later, probably 1990.\(^ {40}\) Alexander’s account refers to the first and only group of full-time visual arts students who were recruited explicitly for training as ‘cultural workers.’ Clearly, the notions of ‘artist’ and ‘cultural worker’ were seldom mutually exclusive, and the latter did not depose the former as a dramatic consequence of Gaborone. Rather, ‘cultural worker’ should be understood as a critical discourse concerning the relationship between art and politics; its usage does not necessarily exclude the production of art.\(^{41}\)

Returning to the term ‘CAP artists,’ we now can see that at the time of the purported ‘reinvention’ of ‘cultural workers,’ so-called ‘CAP artists’ were an almost entirely different constellation of individuals. In contrast to the contingent who went to Gaborone – a mixed bag of members, associates, staff and students,\(^ {41}\) representing a wide range of arts disciplines – by the time the Project began training ‘cultural workers,’ this term would apply to a much more restrictive constituency, primarily full-time visual and performing students and some staff, mostly consisting of teachers. Moreover, one should not lose sight of the fact that most full-time students, a comparatively small number, signed up to become artists, not activists, and only a tiny percentage of part-time students were devoted to the radical discourses of the time. The latter constituency was especially diverse, and many would not have self-identified as artists,\(^ {42}\) let alone ‘cultural workers.’ Indeed, it is not only the idea of ‘cultural worker’ that requires careful attention, but also generic notions of ‘CAP artists’\(^ {43}\) and ‘artists at CAP,’\(^ {44}\) terms liberally applied throughout Uncontained. These signifiers demand critical differentiation if they are to have any value, a point I elaborate on later.

It is particularly important to highlight that while Maurice’s narrative foregrounds the importance of the Botswana Arts Festival, it fails to acknowledge the one direct outcome of Gaborone – the establishment of a poster workshop at CAP. The creation of this unit was sig-

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38 Ibid.
39 Uncontained: Opening the Community Arts Project archive, Eds. Heidi Grunebaum and Emile Maurice, Centre for Humanities Research, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, 2012, p 41.
40 Alexander correctly refers to three full-time courses, and locates the incident she describes as being with the last class. This course began in 1990 and ended in 1991. Her recollection of students being from far-flung locations corresponds with the fact that the class was the only visual arts course that recruited students from across the country. The student from Windhoek that she refers to was Augustinus Madi, whose Strange Culture (1991) appears in Uncontained. See Ibid. p 184.
41 Throughout this review I use the term ‘students,’ mindful that this term implies a formality that did not always exist. The line between workshops, classes and courses was often a matter of perception, especially in early years. ‘Teachers’ and ‘students’ were sometimes interchangeable, and people who understood themselves to be participating in workshops may have difficulty in accepting designation as ‘students.’
42 It is a remarkable fact that the CAP collection contains many evocative prints that were produced by part-time students that never went on to practice as artists. CAP was a refuge, one of few open doors to many without qualifications and income.
43 Uncontained: Opening the Community Arts Project archive, Eds. Heidi Grunebaum and Emile Maurice, Centre for Humanities Research, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, 2012, pp 13, 54, 90, 126.
44 Ibid. p 206.
Clive Helfet *Gaberone: The Killing Continues*. Silkscreen print, 1985 (Source: Jon Berndt From Weapon to Ornament)
significant, because it introduced a more directly engaged practice than hitherto associated with the Project and ultimately, would lead to a split in the organisation. The divisions were to some extent formalised through the relocation of the silkscreen project to Community House in 1989. This physical move also corresponded with the renaming of the department as ‘CAP Media Project,’ signalling a withdrawal from the idea of ‘culture.’ Therefore, it is ironic that the most vivid expression of the influence of Botswana is not only marginalised in the curator’s narrative, but also that the vanguard went on to reject the notion of ‘cultural worker,’ with the idea of ‘media worker’ gaining ascendancy. Understanding why the Poster Workshop/Media Project receives little attention in the CHR’s publication and exhibition series will become clearer when discussing the idea of printmaking that underpins *Uncontained*.

Maurice contrasts his formulation of the 1980s with an equally reductive interpretation of a post-apartheid CAP, claiming that ‘After the elections of 1994, CAP transformed from a training organisation, and home for artists, into a more formally constituted education NGO for unemployed adults and youth.’ Later, his text appears to contradict this shift from ‘training’ stating, ‘As with CAP, AMAC’s goal was to empower people from marginalised communities through training in the arts and media.’ Did the Project do away with ‘training’ or not? The difficulty here is one with which all serious commentators have to grapple. In certain respects changes are apparent, but so too is evidence of continuities. For instance, multiple roles notwithstanding, by the mid 1980s, CAP increasingly was looking like an ‘art school.’ This emphasis can be seen in the introduction of full time training courses for visual artists, followed by full time courses in the performing arts, along with increasing efforts to structure the organisation. By 1989, under van Graan’s leadership, the Project had redefined itself, moving away from ‘cultural organisation’ and towards ‘education and training institution.’

Certainly, there were further changes in the 1990s that reflected new challenges. For the first time, courses offered basic training aimed at unemployed adults with minimal art experience. CAP promised meaningful certification and income generating skills. Childcare workers became the latest and final incarnation of the ‘train the trainer’ trope that ran through successive (re)definitions of art teachers, cultural workers, facilitators and art educators. But these developments were as much a response to a changing environment as they were informed by the institutional memory of the Project, especially its grounding in the discourses of adult education, which began with van Graan and Andrew Steyn, and continued with Alexander. The legacy of the late 1980s redefinition of CAP as an educational project strongly influenced the ‘new’ decisions taken in the 1990s. Art continued to be vulnerable to perceptions of elitism, and to secure funding the organisation had to define its links to ‘development,’ which it attempted to do by consolidating its identity as an educational

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46 Ibid.
47 Concurrent with this shift came the shedding of much of the ‘baggage’ of the 1980s and arguably, it was this shedding of its historical role as the de facto cultural home for cultural workers in the western Cape that led to the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF) affiliated Cultural Workers Congress, which CAP, or at least its leadership, decided to distance itself from, ostensibly because of CAP’s ‘non-alignment.’ Ironically, CWC’s records have become confused with those of CAP in the CAP archives at UCT.
48 It is no accident that Shirley Walters of the Centre for Adult and Continuing Education (CACE) at UWC was chairperson of the board of trustees. One can also note that CAP gave one staff member, Andrew Steyn, paid leave on ‘sabbatical,’ highlighting how the CAP of the late 1980s was positioning itself as a quasi-academic institution.
project. Through a commitment to become, in the language of the day, ‘learner centred,’ staff and trustees made key strategic decisions. ‘Learners,’ as students were then known, asked for skills to earn income, along with certification that provided mobility. The new education and training policies offered the possibilities of moving, in the words of one Open Day theme, ‘From the Margins to the Centre.’ This journey was not a smooth one and with many anticipated improvements in national education failing to meet expectations, the project delivered uneven results. But it is important to note that the notion of ‘CAP artist’ underwent several formulations during the 1990s and 2000’s.

I have concentrated on identifying the ‘CAP artist’ as a student within a dynamic learning environment, because the collection comprises mainly work produced by young people who attended classes run by the Project. However, the idea that the organisation provided a uni-directional, top-down service must be problematised. Arguably, some of the prime beneficiaries were, in fact, staff members. Consisting mostly of university-trained artists, but also including CAP-trained teachers and artists, the staff did not reap economic or opportunistic advantages, but rather enjoyed a space to practice in a more egalitarian or radical framework than offered by other art institutions. They too were ‘learners.’ Recognising this dynamic is not to deny structural power relations between student and teacher or those of race, class and gender that were at play. But this, at times, permeable distinction between students and staff is necessary to explore when unpacking notions of the ‘CAP artist.’ For instance, Uncontained includes work by two white, university-Fine Arts-educated, male staff members, Andrew Steyn and Jon Berndt, each aligned to an opposing ‘leftist’ ideology, with no differentiation considered worth noting. Does their collapsing into the generic notion of ‘CAP artist’ represent a unstated celebration of the democratic nature of CAP? What are the implications of their inclusion?

One should further note that many former students went on to practice as artists. Here the effects of identifying Billy Mandindi, Sophie Peters, David Hlongwane, Solomon Siko, Ricky Dyaloyi, Vuyuisane Mgijima, Xolile Mtakatya and Lionel Davis, to mention only some of the more prominent artists featured in Uncontained, as ‘CAP artists’ is problematic. Would anyone describe Jane Alexander (who, incidentally attended woodcarving workshops at CAP) as a ‘Wits artist’? After all, she did produce her best-known work, The Butcher Boys (1985/6) as a student at the University of Witwatersrand. Would the term ‘UCT artist’ ever be used? If so, would it be applied to University of Cape Town staff? Is the notion of ‘CAP artist’ meaningless? Or would there be some redeeming value in using it to refer to those students who produced memorable art at CAP but never pursued or sustained professional careers as artists? Students, such as Henry de Leeuw, Tshidi Sefako, Mario Pissarra, Uncontained?

49 The use of CAP students as teachers began in earnest in 1987, when a third ‘teacher training’ year was added to the first full-time visual arts course. Sophie Peters, Tshidi Sefako, David Hlongwane, Vuyile Voiyiwa were among the former full-time students later employed part-time as teachers for the child art programme. Lungile Bam was the only former full-time student to be later employed full-time as an art educator (he taught adults in the mid 1990s), and Sipho Hlati taught part-time in the 1990s. Thembinkosi Goniwe and Tony Mhayi were former part-time students, later employed to teach part-time. Lionel Davis, who was a member, student, teacher, coordinator and trustee, is perhaps the person who played the widest number of roles in CAP. Goniwe and Voiyiwa also served as trustees. Perhaps, more than any others, some of the former students who later taught and/ or played other roles may be comfortable with the designation ‘CAP artist,’ but some would probably not, not least those who subsequently studied Fine Arts at university (e.g. Davis, Voiyiwa, Goniwe, Mhayi).

50 Other practicing artists featured in the CAP collection include Willie Bester, Thami Kiti and Thembinkosi Goniwe. Tyrone Appollis, Ismael Thyssen, Isaac Makeleni, Sipho Hlati and Tony Mhayi are among those who attended workshops or classes at CAP but are not featured in the collection. Hamilton Budaza, a long-serving resident artist and teacher, also is not represented in the collection.
Mashabalala Mkonto, Desiree Kok, Andile Mafu, Shepherd Xego, Aaron Mfihlo, Thabo Magobiyane and Bernard Tshireng, created some of the most striking images in the collection but largely are unknown as artists outside of CAP-related circles. How much thought has gone into the use of the term ‘CAP artists’? What, if any, underlying assumptions does the term signify?

If the above discussion may appear as an elaborate troubling of self-evident categories, a close reading of Uncontained demonstrates how, in the absence of detailed interrogations of contexts, generic understandings of the organisation introduce significant misrepresentations of particular works. For instance, in what appears to be a conflation of the work of the Media Project and the mother body, Andries Oliphant characterises the (linocut) posters he discusses as ‘the work of unknown artists, the posters are also manifestations of the collectivist strategies adopted by anti-apartheid artists of the 1980s based at community arts centres.’ In all probability, these single-authored prints were produced by the first full-time visual art students as an exercise in colour printing and illustration or design, as opposed to being produced for mass distribution. If their authorship is unknown, it is not because of ideological reasons. Rather, it is because in commissioning a response to these pre-selected works, little consequence was attached to the implications of individual authorship.

**ENGAGING TEMPORALITIES**

Discussing contextual misrepresentations of prints, Oliphant underlines his point asserting, ‘[works must] be viewed in their specific historical moment.’ The question of historical moment is particularly pertinent for Uncontained, given the declared interest in linking the past to the present. Surprisingly, there appears to be little awareness that CAP survived almost as long in the post-apartheid era as it did under apartheid. There is only a single, brief acknowledgment that the works discussed were produced in very different times. In comparing two pieces, Mbuyiselo Tompson’s Summer Morning at Site B (1993) and Luyanda Cwane’s untitled (2001), Sipokazi Sambumbu cites Eben Lochner’s research, recognising that Cwane produced his image ‘when CAP’s focus was less on artists’ free expression and more on market demands.’ Unfortunately, this observation is not explored. After all, Tompson’s artwork was produced during the transitional phase between the unbanning of

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51 Uncontained: Opening the Community Arts Project archive, Eds. Heidi Grunebaum and Emile Maurice, Centre for Humanities Research, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, 2012, p 47.
53 Uncontained: Opening the Community Arts Project archive, Eds. Heidi Grunebaum and Emile Maurice, Centre for Humanities Research, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, 2012, pp 47-48. The importance of understanding the broader context is underlined in Oliphant’s claim that a poster demanding ‘non-racial sport’ has its origins in the Freedom Charter. The South African Council of Sport (SACOS) led the campaign for non-racial sport. Very active in the Cape, SACOS would have been mortified to be described as a ‘Charterist’ organisation.
55 Ibid. p 212. The question of ‘free expression’ is a complex one that deserves fuller investigation, not least because it signifies a particular understanding of ‘freedom.’
organisations and the first democratic elections, and it is emblematic of this liminal space. His township scene has one foot rooted in the established genre of images of poverty and another foot in a visionary mode with elements of fantasy, suggesting a new reality. Within the context of the Project’s history, *Summer Morning at Site B* is one of the last notable images produced in evening classes (terminated in 1993), a site that was less ideologically subscribed than the (by then suspended) full-time courses and therefore, arguably more amenable to ‘self-expression.’ In contrast, the ‘market demands,’ to which Sambumbu refers, are evident in Cwane’s piece, which, literal content aside, can be read as a textbook example of perspectival composition. In positioning the organisation as a future provider of accredited training, courses from the mid 1990s began to spell out specific learning outcomes, along with assessment criteria. Thus, while perspective was sometimes taught in the earlier years, less technical, more ‘expressive’ concerns would have tempered such instruction. By the time Cwane produced his print, the teaching of perspective as a portable, transferable skill, germane to a range of applied contexts (i.e. the ‘market’), required knowledge of its ‘correct’ practice to be evident in the student’s art.

This exploration of Tompson’s and Cwane’s respective artworks is a subtle representation of the changes that occurred from the 1990s onwards, highlighting the lack of interest in the ‘late’ CAP in *Uncontained*. Indeed, the book overwhelmingly associates the organisation with the apartheid or struggle era, notably the 1980s. This bias is both boldly declared and implicit in the stated intent to go beyond the restrictive discourse of the 1980s and early 1990s, since this implies that these years frame the work in the collection. Not only is the post-apartheid period a footnote, but so too are the 1970s and the early 1980s. Consequently, the CHR’s project opens a very narrow window on the life of CAP, although its title implies an open vista.

Desiree Lewis’ text proves useful in discussing the consequences of failing to contextualise specific artworks, in this instance, within a post-apartheid CAP. In considering a spectrum of images representing women at work, the author characterises the organisation as a ‘collective committed to art as “a weapon of struggle.”’ While this description is representative of one of several competing CAP visions within a particular historical timeframe (i.e. the latter half of the 1980s), it has little resonance for the images produced between 1993 and 2002. Nationally, there was a dramatic change in cultural discourse, partially a consequence of the tumultuous socio-political change that followed the end of the Cold War. By 1990, the notion of ‘culture as a weapon of struggle’ was making a rapid exit from public discourse, quickly transforming into an object of ridicule, along with ‘cultural boycott,’ ‘cultural desk’ and ‘cultural worker.’ None of the post 1990s artists that Lewis discusses, namely, Sizakele Mdzeke, Mthunzi or Lulama Nzala, would have been encouraged to question their role as artists in bringing about social change. Certainly, not in the same ways that David Hlongwane, Ricky Dyaloyi, Solomon Siko and Lungile Bam would have engaged with such questions. Indeed, new frames are needed to engage meaningfully with art.

56 Ibid. p 14.
57 Ibid. p 23.
58 Ibid. p 153.
59 Lewis discusses works by young, part-time student Ricky Dyaloyi (1988), full-time students, Solomon Siko and Lungile Bam (1989), and a work by David Hlongwane, erroneously dated 1990. The latter was reproduced in *CAP News* in 1986, suggesting that it was from his days as a full-time student in 1985 or 1986.
60 Lewis discusses two works by Sizakele Mdzeke (1993), along with later works by Mthunzi (1997) and Lulama Nzala (2002). Nzala was one of few black women who attended visual arts classes at CAP.
produced at CAP from 1990. If some continuities can be seen to be present in these images of women working, then these need to be explored in terms of the legacies of the past, rather than as expressions of an ideological constant.

Similarly, Hayes’ contribution seems to overlook the distinction between the post-apartheid ‘apolitical’ CAP (very much AMAC, in this instance) and the politically engaged, but ‘non-aligned’ Project. The former produced Fabian Abels’ portraits of Beyoncé (2004) and Nicole Kidman (undated, but presumably around the same time), while the latter hosted Xolile Mtakatya’s iconised Miriam Makeba (1988), Robert Siwangaza’s Mother Theresa (1988), Ngaba Menziwa’s Marcus Garvey (1989) and an unknown artist’s unconvincing likeness of Carl Marx (sic) (undated, presumably late 1980s). Hayes suggests, ‘Perhaps they should be seen as a series of possibilities between political, social, spiritual and (hetero)sexual desire whose jostlings were often discouraged as a species of false consciousness.’ In formulating a single, provocative proposition and applying it to such a wide range of subjects, the author flattens the depth of field. Would anyone at the ‘late’ CAP (AMAC) have critiqued Abels’ prints in ideological terms? Or would it have been critiqued on technical and aesthetic grounds? And with the earlier works from the 1980s, representing as they do a breadth of ideological strands within the broad liberation struggle, is it likely that this range of iconic portraits would have been dismissed as ‘false consciousness’?

In contrast to the overwhelming emphasis on the 1980s, a few texts do introduce post-apartheid perspectives. Notably, these tend to speak to failures in the democratic project: Lucy Alexander’s comments on the ‘absence of access to creative arts training in the new South Africa,’ van Graan’s remark that ‘our artists have largely become silent in the ongoing struggles of ordinary people’ and Saliem Patel’s reflection on the current state of trade unions and how images in the collection not only capture the past idealism but also ‘inspire [him] to reflect on how to revive and reinvent the labour movement.’ Arguably, these observations are not given enough space to explore the relationship between the past and present, a significant limitation in Uncontained’s overall format and methodological framework.

Apart from pursuing comparative ‘before and after’ approaches, another productive way to engage with the interface between apartheid and post-apartheid eras would be to consider works from the transition period that followed the unbanning of organisations (1990) but preceded the first democratic elections (1994). These years produced, among other things, the three abstract pieces that Raël Jero Salley discusses in his contribution. More precisely, members of community organisations mandated for ‘cultural worker training’ produced these works: an unidentified, undated linocut print by Beth Mayekiso from 1990 and linocuts from Nigel Martin and Eulla Nomtembiso ‘Mashabala’ Mkonto, both from 1990. While these three images include varying degrees of representational details, their generally abstract qualities

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61 Ibid. p 130.
62 Ibid p 131. Hayes identifies Mtakatya’s portrait of ‘Mother Africa’ as ‘probably based on a photograph of the young Winnie Mandela in circulation in the 1980s.’ The work is a portrait of Miriam Makeba based on the cover of her album ‘Sangoma,’ originally released in 1988. Its almost concurrent translation by Mtakatya highlights the existence of a cadre of politically and culturally connected youth at CAP.
63 Ibid. p 131.
64 These questions raise another: were there really no portraits produced in the 1980s of non-political celebrities? Or did these not make it into the collection?
65 Ibid. p 40.
66 Ibid. p 79.
67 Ibid. p 53.
make them quite unusual prints within the CAP collection. Produced in the same year, while all three artists were members of the final full-time course, it is fair to surmise that all three prints were produced in response to the same brief, probably set by Mario Sickle, their main teacher. However, their timing after the provocative and influential intervention of Albie Sachs’ infamous ‘banning’ of the term ‘culture as a weapon of the struggle,’ speaks to both the pressure and desire to explore ‘new’ visual idioms, including abstraction, which generally had been viewed with suspicion by many politically concerned artists in the recent past. It is perhaps revealing that there is a productive tension between representational and non-representational modes that is particularly visible in Mayekiso’s and Mkonto’s artworks.

In this section, I have provided some examples of how certain works offer a means to explore the tensions between producers and apartheid and post-apartheid periods, particularly in the interface between a changing institutional context and public discourse. In doing so, I have highlighted that Uncontained’s contributors all too often fail to come to grips with the nature of change evident in these works. As a whole, the project does little to engage substantively with the artworks, overlooking crucial and productive optics with which to revisit the past in our ongoing struggle to make sense of the present.

**THE LIMITS OR NOT OF THE ‘CAP COLLECTION’**

If CAP and the works in its collection are subjected to generalisations that are often ahistorical, Uncontained also demonstrates scant self-reflexivity about the limits of the collection in representing the scope of the Project. When Maurice points out that Uncontained draws mostly from the 1980s, one may assume that this emphasis represents a deliberate choice. But this decision is circumscribed by the fact that the collection contains almost no examples from the 1970s and very little until the mid 1980s. Even then, it is only by the late 1980s that a more deliberate attempt to assemble a collection is made, notably within an emerging ‘history of CAP’ project initiated by Lucy Alexander. If the collection includes over 4,000 works, as claimed at exhibition openings, then it is very likely that a large number of those works were produced post 1990s.

Several key issues influenced the process of building a collection. In the face of overwhelming societal and organisational challenges, the very idea of collecting was for many a non-priority, even antithetical to practice, more the terrain of conservative Fine Arts institutions and markets. For those who recognised the need for a collection, there was no budget to conserve work or to employ a curator. Policies on collecting were sometimes in place, but probably not until the mid or late 1980s. Moreover, such procedures were frequently seen as a contribution towards the payment of nominal fees. In practice, collecting depended on the vision and commitment of various individuals at different points in time.

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68 A notable exception is a complex design by Colleen Theunissen, one of few women represented in the collection of prints from the 1980s, which is featured in the exhibition (ISANG) but not in the book.


70 See John Peffer, Art and the End of Apartheid, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis and London, 2009. Thorough an account of the Thupelo Project, Peffer offers insight into negative responses within the left to abstraction.

71 Manfred Zylla has told me that he recalls going through piles of work with Jacqueline Nolte sometime during the 1980s, selecting pieces to be kept by CAP. He also recalls that few of these were linocuts. Personal communication, October 2012.)
Fluctuating interest in assembling a collection introduced significant biases and silences. There were periods when work was selected systematically and carefully and times when it was not. Some silences are a consequence of artists’ deliberate decision to exclude her/his artworks. If there are no pieces by Sipho Hlati and Zolile Kwinana and few by their peers, such as Solomon Siko and Lungile Bam, it is because full-time students removed work from the collection in protest against the cancellation of a planned education tour.\textsuperscript{72}

Importantly, for the purposes of Uncontained, there is a practical reason why prints are well represented. It was far easier for the institution to claim for its collection an image produced as one in an edition than a unique work.\textsuperscript{73} Also, ceramics were produced at the Project but few are in the collection. Some may have broken, but it is more likely that having potential functionality, ceramics were taken home. Moreover, as especially labour intensive artworks, they were less likely to be absorbed into the collection. Unique works in other media are represented in the collection. However, it is possible that a number of these were left by students who did not have space to store them or, as in the abundant examples of life drawing exercises, they may not have been as valued as ‘finished’ works.

If a number of works were assimilated consciously into the collection, there are others that were absorbed by default. Some of these were produced at CAP – for instance, in the last years of AMAC whole bodies of work appear to have been stored along with pieces carefully selected for the collection.\textsuperscript{74} People historically associated with CAP submitted or delivered artwork to be exhibited, sold, picked up or transported elsewhere. Left unclaimed, these contributions were assimilated into the collection.\textsuperscript{75} In addition, the collection includes works that were consciously assimilated but not produced by students or staff. These range from pieces donated to the organisation\textsuperscript{76} to works, notably prints, given to CAP by practicing artists (with their own historical relationships with the organisation) in lieu of payment for use of facilities There are several examples of this last category in Uncontained, such as artworks by Patrick and Sydney Holo, Xolani Somana and Mawande Mthini, all notably associated with the history of the aforementioned Nyanga Art Centre. The importance of

\textsuperscript{72} See Community Arts Project. ‘Minutes of a meeting of the Trustees,’ 06 December 1989, Unpublished document, CAP archives, Special Collections, UCT Libraries. This incident is well known. A special meeting was called with the trustees where the only item on the agenda reads ‘demands for an educational tour.’ Henry de Leeuw appears to have been the only student not present at the meeting, and this may explain why he is the only one from this class who is well represented in the collection.

\textsuperscript{73} Whole editions of prints also found their way into the collection, as prints left to dry were not always collected, or one can surmise safely, even ‘lost’ due to the often overused facilities. The argument for the privileging of multiple images does not apply to photography, where students had to purchase their own paper. Photography was also more pronounced at CAP during the early years, i.e. the years that are largely not represented in the collection.

\textsuperscript{74} I base this observation on having assisted Lucy Alexander in trying to restore some order in the storeroom at the Institute for Democracy in Africa (IDASA), where work had been moved temporarily from AMAC. It was clear that work taken down from display, possibly from end of year exhibitions, was being stored without the benefit of being edited for the collection.

\textsuperscript{75} The most striking example of this is Sophie Peters. The two landscapes featured in Uncontained were all produced several years after she completed training at CAP. These prints were produced by the artist at Hard Ground Printmakers Workshop and probably ended up in the collection after not being collected when the shop closed. The same applies to illustrations she produced for a children’s story, Mafia and the Aeroplane (1994), several of which were featured in the exhibition at SANG, and one of which appears unidentified in the book. See Uncontained: Opening the Community Arts Project archive, Eds. Heidi Grunebaum and Emile Maurice, Centre for Humanities Research, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, 2012, p 159. The collection also includes works by Thami Kiti that were left in the shop.

\textsuperscript{76} A notable example is the work by Peter Clarke that is reproduced in Gavin Younge’s Art of the South African Townships, Thames and Hudson, London, 1988, pp 78-79.
these observations is that, like any archive, the CAP collection deserves to be interrogated for its biases and silences. Without addressing the manifold ways in which it has taken shape, one risks assuming that the artworks are representative of the full history of the Project, that the collection was curated or assembled in a systematic way and that the proportional dominance of prints in the collection corresponds with actual practice of the organisation. Furthermore, it is misleading to assume that all works in the collection were produced at the centre – the majority undoubtedly were, but a generous number of exceptions suggests that ‘works belonging to or in the possession of CAP’ may be a more accurate description.

Contextualising the collection with even a broad-brush makes it difficult to accept some of Uncontained’s overt and implicit generalisations. Several writers appear to assume uncritically that the works they have been asked to converse with are representative of CAP. For instance, Mark Espin refers to ‘[t]he works about Cape Town produced by artists at CAP’ and Sambumbu refers to ‘[t]he CAP artworks under the theme “township scenes.”’ I am left wondering whether either was shown Aaron Mfihlo’s Mnandi Beach (1987), a remarkable, idealised image of a fun-filled beach between the sprawling township of Khayelitsha and the seaside suburb Muizenberg, produced while the country was burning. Mnandi’s image presents a marvellous contrast to the cold, impersonal view of the city he pro-

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75 Uncontained: Opening the Community Arts Project archive, Eds. Heidi Grunebaum and Emile Maurice, Centre for Humanities Research, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, 2012, p 206.
76 Ibid. p 210.
77 Mnandi literally means ‘nice,’ ‘tasty,’ ‘beautiful’ in isiXhosa and isiZulu.
Paul Hendricks *What Can We Do?* Linocut, 1988. Coll: Community Arts Project, University of the Western Cape (Source: History of Art slide collection, University of Cape Town)

-duced around the same time, featured in *Uncontained*. Moreover, for a chapter titled ‘Lines across the city,’ it is strange that images of travelling by train have been overlooked. One of the most intense works in the collection is Paul Hendricks’ desolate, implicitly violent picturing of commuters, which highlights two choices: the gangs or armed resistance. Wanini Hill, on the other hand, captures the routine of the artist on his way from township to the city centre to sell his prints at St Georges Mall. The collection offers much more insight into how inhabitants view the city than what is made available through *Uncontained’s* significantly more limited selection.

The constraints of pre-selected examples are also evident in Valmont Layne’s text. Discussing visual genres of musical representations, the author correctly notes the absence of these optics within the Project, before boldly declaring, ‘The bulk of the CAP images about music… introduce a township universe.’ Presumably, the two images Layne discusses supports this claim. Sydney Holo authored the second image and one of the Holo brothers, Sydney or Patrick, almost certainly created the first image. However, when I think of prints by CAP students that incorporate music, I think of Robert Siwanga’s guitarist engulfed by

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80 Ibid. p 207.
81 This practice was not possible before the early 1990s and can be seen as a sign of efforts to reclaim the city centre by citizens on its periphery. Tragically, Hill was fatally stabbed in St Georges Mall by fellow artist Xolani Somana, apparently after a dispute over pavement space.
82 Ibid. p 202.
flames,\textsuperscript{83} or Vuyile Voiyiya’s anthem-like communion between music, nature and politics in \textit{The Sun will Rise} (1986).\textsuperscript{84} I think of the deep drum/headdress in Henry de Leeuw’s \textit{Artist in Isolation} (1988) and ancestral call of Bonghinkosi Sakhile’s \textit{Let it Horn be Heard} (sic).\textsuperscript{85} Neither of these prints presents a ‘township universe.’ The Siwangaza and Voiyiya stand in stark contrast to each other – one, an image of dystopian hell, the other, a vision of utopian paradise – but both use the idea of music to transcend the everyday. In contrast, de Leeuw and Sakhile link music to African culture and identity.

Generalisations and misrepresentations do not apply only to themes but also to media. Indeed, the very idea of printmaking that is operative in \textit{Uncontained} requires unpacking. The multiple, printed image has long commanded attention as a contested site for debates about the social function of art, and took on a unique character within the Project.

\textbf{ON PRINTMAKING AT CAP}

In listing the range of media produced at the Community Arts Project, Maurice distinguishes prints and posters without comment.\textsuperscript{86} This distinction is commonly made in discussing CAP,

\textsuperscript{83} Image not included in \textit{Uncontained}.
\textsuperscript{84} Excluded from the book but featured in the exhibition at SANG.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid. pp 119, 200.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid. p 12.
but it is a problematic one. Technically, the ‘posters’ are silkscreen prints, and a project that apparently foregrounds CAP’s ‘prints’ or ‘print collection’ should have something to say about the ‘posters.’  There is certainly an overlap in much of the iconography and even techniques that appear as ‘prints’ or ‘posters.’ It is true that some of the stalwarts of the Poster Workshop/Media Project, notably Jon Berndt and Patricia de Villiers, are on record as insisting that the silkscreen posters must be viewed as media and not as art, but that is only one view and one that cannot disentangle ‘art’ from notions of it as elitist and tied to the gallery network. Another view of art, embedded in the very concept of ‘community arts’ always has defined its practice as public, as participatory and as empowering. Certainly, there were common points of departure for art and media that were not severed entirely. De Villiers herself refers to ‘[t]he pre-industrial arts and crafts leanings of the CAP Media Project,’ highlighting the potential for rich conversation between posters and prints.

Arguably, it is simply a matter of one’s own critical frameworks whether the posters constitute art or not. For the CHR, a multi-disciplinary project concerned with notions of ‘archive,’ it is fair to deduce that this question is not a critical one for Uncontained. Indeed, three linocut images are claimed as ‘posters’ in Oliphant’s contribution, as discussed earlier. Surely then, it would be fair to expect that at the very least, silkscreen posters should have been acknowledged as ‘prints’ and a case for their exclusion made.

It must be emphasised that the severity of this silence is less a technical or formal concern, but a critical conceptual oversight. The ‘reinvention’ of the artist as ‘cultural worker’ was most dramatically evident in the formation of the Poster Workshop at CAP, as noted above. Excluding this workshop’s print production effectively means taking a discourse largely associated with one group, but not exclusively, and crediting the generally more conservative wing for their radical practice.

The visibility of linocuts in the art of black South Africans has been routinely mythologised over the past few decades and requires historical grounding. Linocuts are not ‘inherently’ suitable for black or community art practice, and their visibility and popularity in the 1980s at the Project is not simply ‘ubiquitous.’ More could have been made of the fact that the only 1970s work in Uncontained is a linocut by Mpathi Gocini (1979). Trained at the art centre at Rorkes Drift, famous for its linocuts, he was the Project’s first artist in residence.

Gocini was succeeded as resident artists by Bongani Tshange, also a recent Rorkes Drift graduate. Subsequently, Lionel Davis, an active CAP member, went to study at Rorkes Drift. Davis was followed by Velile Soha, who was associated with the Nyanga Art Centre, which has its own entangled history with the Project. One also should consider the influence of Cecil Skotnes, who taught at CAP in the early 1980s. His technique of carving and painting


\[89\] Ibid. p 58.

\[90\] See Inheriting the Flame: New writing on community arts in South Africa, Ed Graham Falken, Arts and Media Access Centre, Cape Town, 2004, p 93. Martin Stevens, trained at Chapel Street but employed by the Media Project comments, ‘People can’t, couldn’t reconcile within the organisation that [art and media] complement [each other].’

\[91\] Uncontained: Opening the Community Arts Project archive, Eds. Heidi Grunebaum and Emile Maurice, Centre for Humanities Research, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, 2012, p 25.

\[92\] Ibid. p 88.

wood panels developed out of his earlier practice printing woodblocks. Hamilton Budaza, resident artist in the mid 1980s, was another influential figure who favoured linocuts as a medium. Specific, intersecting and overlapping trajectories established linocut as a medium of ‘choice’ not only in the organisation but more broadly in the region.

Silkscreen posters aside, linocut was the dominant printmaking medium at CAP, but it is incorrect to infer, as Agbo George Emeka does, that use of lino demonstrated a printmaker’s preferences. 93 Apart from lino, or occasionally woodcut, 94 those wanting to learn printmaking did not have much choice. Etching and drypoint 95 were offered erratically, notably by

93 Ibid. p 88.
94 For instructions on making woodcuts, see Community Arts Project, CAP News, August 1987, CAP archives, Special Collections, UCT Libraries.
95 The Luthando Lupuwana prints exhibited at SANG were drypoint, not etching. Manfred Zylla pointed out to me at the opening of Uncontained at SANG that the Luthando Lupuwana prints exhibited at SANG were drypoint, not etching.
Manfred Zylla and Penny van Sittert in the 1980s. Lithography was not an option, and with the possible exception of child art classes, monoprints appear to have not been taken seriously as a medium until Sipho Hlati taught at CAP in the late 1990s.

ON NOT KNOWING AND NOT LOOKING: CONVERSATIONS WITH LIMITS

Earlier, I raised questions about the consequences of the open-ended engagements that Uncontained aims to stimulate. In particular, I questioned whether the success of this methodology required the curator and editors to carry a particular responsibility, to provide writers with sufficiently accurate and detailed information concerning the works they were asked to respond to. This section homes in on a number of examples where the absence of such information, I believe, introduces significant flaws into Uncontained. These instances of ‘not knowing’ are compounded by the extent to which a number of writers must be challenged regarding the integrity of their visual engagement with their prints.

A lack of familiarity with the conventions of printmaking is expressed in commentary by Cheryl Ann Michaels on a ‘series’ of self-portraits by Henry de Leeuw. In printmaking terms, four of these five images are ‘proof states’ or ‘working proofs,’ basically test prints that are made at various stages within the production of a single work. Apparently, unfamiliar with this convention, Michaels asks, ‘Do we read the black background of the first portrait as empty, as symbolising the violent curtailing of possibilities for the people portrayed?’ Michaels is not the only one to speculate on the formal qualities of a work without the benefit of contextual information. In comparing two prints by Sophie Peters, Julia Martin notes differences in design that she attributes to their respective conceptualisations in colour and black and white. In actual fact, the colour print (Hamlet) is compositionally a replica of an earlier black and white version, down to the smallest detail. Earlier I noted, Jane Taylor’s productive exploration of the spaces between intention, expression and interpretation. With Michaels and Martin, one has to ask what value speculative interpretations bring to knowledge production when an understanding of the basic context is absent.

Several other writers are tasked with conversations without the benefit of proper introductions. A self-portrait by Jeremy Acton, a white architect resident in the local community who found solace at the Project when his house was repossessed, makes an appearance in an essay entitled ‘Black biography.’ Martin expresses intrigue in a blue quasi non-representational monoprint of a mountain range produced by ‘someone who signs her name simply as Jasmine’ without knowing that it is not only the work that is atypical in CAP’s collection, but that its producer was a (white) guest house owner from Tamboerskloof, a wealthy suburb at the foot of Table Mountain, who befriended ‘Mashabalala’ Mkonto and

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96 Ibid. p 94.
97 Ibid. p 190.
98 Ibid. pp 90-91. Similarly, one can offer a pedestrian response to a speculative interpretation for the [unidentified] portrait that Agbo George Emeka discusses: it was produced by Mbuyiselo Deyi, a young part-time student from Nyanga East who later went on to study design at the Technikon (later Cape Peninsula University of Technology). The lines in the print suggest an above average drawing ability, probably nurtured in drawing classes. However, the lack of diversity in his cutting suggests that he was inexperienced with linocutting, because the letters printed in reverse represent a common mistake made by beginners who have yet to come to terms with the nature of the print.
99 Ibid. p 101.
100 Ibid. p 192.
Sophie Peters and spent some time at CAP in 1998. If the point about the lack of differentiation of the ‘CAP artist’ has not been made, here we see two of the more extreme consequences of homogenisation.

Being improperly introduced may lead to some embarrassing moments in a conversation, but since the ‘unrestrained’ brief\(^{101}\) did not task one to be more fully prepared as for an interview or interrogation, the person who introduced you surely must take much of the responsibility. But what when you are tasked with a conversation and fail to listen? Or in this instance, what do we say of those who do not look carefully?

Andries Oliphant’s contribution serves as an example of not looking closely. He comments on the use of ‘the symbolic colours of yellow, green, black and red’ in the three ‘posters’ he discusses.\(^{102}\) However, none of the images combine these four colours, the second is printed in red, yellow and blue, with purple a consequence of the overprinting of red and blue, and the third is printed in yellow and brown. All three images retain the white of the paper as an additional colour.\(^{103}\) With the exception of the first example that is in the politically charged colours black, green, and yellow, everything suggests that basic colour theory (the overlaying of colours to create new ones) is of more concern than the use of ‘symbolic’ colours.

Wendy Woodward’s text compounds the problems of not looking with not reading. In discussing a series of colour linocuts produced on the theme of ‘animal rights,’ she comments

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\(^{101}\) Ibid. p 31.
\(^{102}\) Ibid. p 46.
\(^{103}\) Ibid. pp 46-48.
that only one image, by the then sixty-three-year-old Zwelinjani Mzimkhulu, ‘represents potential cruelty,’ despite the didactic qualities of the series which are spelt out in the titles. For this series Hlati’s students produced sets of two images with one representing appropriate human behaviour towards animals (‘do’), the other representing abuse (‘don’t’). Apart from Mzimkhulu’s image of a driver with a ‘raised stick or whip in his hand,’ cruelty is visually evident in Nombulelo Ntsali’s image of a tightly tethered, underfed horse with no shade or water and Mpho Mvulana’s depiction of bony dog scavenging in a bin. If images are worth including, surely they are worth closer scrutiny?

There are further difficulties in accepting Desiree Lewis’ view that Solomon Siko’s image of women washing in buckets near a single tap or Lungile Bam’s representation of a similar theme (no tap this time, aptly titled The way it is) represent visions of ‘pastoral sanctity.’ I would agree with her that these works allude to the stoicism of poor black women, but they do so by highlighting peri-urban hardship. There is nothing to suggest timeless and romanticised iconicity as ‘mother Africa’ as she claims. As with Oliphant’s text, one has to question whether artworks are really being used to produce new knowledge, or harnessed as addendums to independently pre-formulated arguments.

The curator provides a further example where the image does not correspond with his reading. Influenced by the date of the work, along with the visual rendition of a fighter plane and signs of a victim sprawled on the ground, Maurice interprets Clive Benjamin’s The Raid as a representation of cross border raids into neighbouring states. There is something very odd about the building that holds the centre ground – it looks suspiciously like a modest Cape Dutch dwelling, suggesting that a more complicated reading is required. Again, one has to ask whether the particularities of artworks are being engaged with, or whether they are being (unconvincingly in this case) marshalled as illustrations for stories waiting to be told.

De Leeuw’s Artist in Isolation is central to Maurice’s narrative of the reinvention of the CAP artist as cultural worker, and his discussion of it foregrounds the methodological weakness of Uncontained. Maurice displays no knowledge of its context, despite being one of very few artworks from CAP to have been ‘activated’ by ‘mainstream’ art history. His reading of it is also extraordinarily selective, discounting many prominent features that call for an alternative interpretation. Taking the title as emblematic of the alienation symptomatic of the individualistic artist, Maurice uses it to illustrate his account of how ‘De Leeuw, along with many other artists who associated themselves with the liberation movement, adopted the

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104 Ibid, pp 138-39. Mzimkhulu’s presence in a class comprising of mostly young Xhosa males highlights how even within the dominant demographic, critical differentiation is necessary in unpacking generic assumptions about artists at CAP.

105 Ibid. p 138.

106 Ibid. p 151.

107 Ibid. p 72.

108 In terms of technique and composition (i.e. aesthetics), Benjamin is not a particularly interesting artist. As a result, one can only conclude that it is the overtly literal, ‘political’ content of his work that sees him well represented in Uncontained, although this example highlights how his technical limitations introduce questions of intention. Similar observations (but from the post-apartheid period) can be made about the inclusion of Fabian Abels’ celebrity portraits, where literal, and in this instance novelty, content suffices to merit inclusion.

109 See Philippa Hobbs and Elizabeth Rankin, Printmaking in a Transforming South Africa, David Philip, Cape Town and Johannesburg, 1997. Titled Artists in Isolation by Hobbs and Rankin, the singularity or plurality introduces subtle distinctions in interpretation.

110 Ibid. This image was also featured as the colour cover to an edition of Akal, produced by the Congress of South African Writers.
Henry de Leeuw *Artists in Isolation*. Linocut, 44.4 x 27.2 cm. Coll: Community Arts Project, University of the Western Cape (Source: History of Art slide collection, University of Cape Town)
term “cultural worker.” Privileging dominant struggle iconography, he notes that the artist is ‘literally isolated from the world by strands of barbed wire.’ There is no acknowledgment that this work was one of a series of individually composed images produced as a collective project by the students in de Leeuw’s class. The barbed-wire to which Maurice refers serves as a unifying motif that runs across the ‘separate’ images, making them ‘one.’ Given the theme as articulated in the title, the conception of this piece as part of a group effort is relevant, since it demonstrates an intent to balance individual creativity with collective action.

Selective vision, a qualified form of ‘not looking,’ comes in through Maurice’s failure to acknowledge the prominence of African tropes in the image, notably the drum, figurine, spear and shield (and arguably, the repetitive geometry, as well as the physiognomy). These introduce a reading very different to the one that the author provides. What de Leeuw appears to be reflecting on is the somewhat ahistorical view, common at the time, that the position of the artist in ‘traditional’ African societies was one in which art forms were interdependent and art inseparable from community culture. What is interesting here, given the title, is the observation that the single most ‘African’ image in the series was produced by the only student in the class who, in the classificatory systems of apartheid (which have been retained ‘post-apartheid’), was denied the identity of being African. This example underscores, once again, that ‘CAP artists’ were often complex individuals who are done little justice by being homogenised to fit tidy narratives.

AN OPEN ENDING?

Uncontained is a welcome initiative by the CHR to open up discussion on and access to the collection of artworks it acquired from CAP. While the account of the collection as historically inaccessible requires some qualification, there is little doubt that in recent years, including the four it spent at UWC before being ‘opened,’ it has been near impossible for external researchers or curators to access it. As an opening up, Uncontained represents a work in progress that will necessitate further

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111 Uncontained: Opening the Community Arts Project archive, Eds. Heidi Grunebaum and Emile Maurice, Centre for Humanities Research, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, 2012, p 120.
112 Ibid. p 118.
113 See Philippa Hobbs and Elizabeth Rankin, Printmaking in a Transforming South Africa, David Philip, Cape Town and Johannesburg, 1997, pp 46-47, 152. The Centre for African Studies collection at the University of Cape Town has the complete series, comprising of six pieces.
114 Ibid. p 46. According to Hobbs and Rankin the barbed wire was drawn across all blocks by Mario Sickle, a full-time visual arts educator at CAP, prior to students composing their own scenes.
115 Uncontained: Opening the Community Arts Project archive, Eds. Heidi Grunebaum and Emile Maurice, Centre for Humanities Research, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, 2012, pp 22-23.
116 Ibid. Grunebaum, Lalu and Taylor comment, ‘The CAP art collection… has long been packed away in the shadows of the storerooms at both CAP and AMAC.’ It is worth pointing out that, notwithstanding the absence of a curator, works from the CAP collection have made several public outings prior to Uncontained. By the mid-1990s, better resourced institutions, such as SANG, were able to access and select works from the collection. Emile Maurice, then education officer at the national gallery, had free rein and drew from the collection for Picturing our world (1993), curated for the Standard Bank National Arts Festival. Ray Meylan also had full access when he curated South Africa in black and white for the British Council in 1993 and SANG in 1994. And in 1999, Joseph Gaylard, curated Water in a Dry Place, a retrospective of CAP, at SANG. In addition to these examples, artwork from the CAP collection formed the backbone of numerous undocumented exhibitions that were assembled for public events, particularly in the mid-to-late 1980s, but also in the 1990s.
initiatives in order to realise the potential of the CAP collection as an intellectual resource. Principal to this success will be a greater attention to historical detail – this critique has highlighted a surplus of questionable assumptions, reductive generalisations and factual inaccuracies that all highlight the need for more substantive research, more especially into the full history of the Project and the producers of the artwork. Greater attention too, needs to be paid to looking closely in order to demonstrate convincingly that ‘the work of visual interpretation and its discursive effects [is taken seriously]’ as claimed by Grunebaum, Lalu and Taylor.\(^{117}\)

In addition, a greater reflexivity about the limits of and silences within the collection is necessary, along with a disentangling of the collection from the idea of the CAP archive. While the art collection can certainly be viewed as an archive, it constitutes only a part, albeit a very significant part, of a much broader ‘CAP archive,’ one that is a fragmented and decentralised resource. It is in part physical, with a significant section of this split in two – the artworks at UWC and a wide-range of documentation in UCT Libraries’ Special Collections. Outside of these institutional archives, there are private collections with items not in the holdings of UCT or UWC. Additionally, ASAI is producing a virtual archive online, to which I have already alluded. Apart from all these sites, there are intangible archives – the unrecorded memories of a great many people whose lives were affected by the Project.

It also has to be said that Uncontained demonstrates the marks of institutional ownership. Most contributors are affiliated to UWC. This dominance is perhaps both inevitable and necessary – their participation hopefully demonstrates a widening and a deepening of ownership of the CAP collection at UWC, which will be critical to ensure further institutional support for the future of the collection. But for the intellectual project to succeed a much bolder ‘opening up’ will be necessary. If Uncontained is to have a sequel, its success would require a greater engagement with material outside of the CHR’s own collections, such as the documents at UCT that are invaluable historical sources. Listing CAP newsletters at the back of the book represents an acknowledgment that important material is held elsewhere, but it would be a more plausible exercise if contributors and editors had consulted these publications.\(^{118}\) In addition, a greater willingness and commitment to invite participation from more ‘insiders’ (i.e. persons historically involved with the Project), will be critical to address much that is not in the physical archive. Involving former members, staff, students, trustees and others closely associated with CAP will assist in identifying and dating works,\(^{119}\) shedding light on the producers and the context of production and, not least, offering interpretations from below.

As an idea Uncontained offers infinite possibilities. Hopefully this potential will be realised.

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\(^{117}\) Ibid. p 31.

\(^{118}\) The importance of the newsletter in providing insights into the period is evident in the discussion in this review about the ‘CAP artist’ and also in dating works. Apart from the Hlongwane noted above, CAP News (August-October 1987) would have assisted in dating the Xolani Somana. See Ibid. p 181.

\(^{119}\) For example, Ricky Dyaloyi has confirmed that the unidentified print is by Vuyisane Mgijima. Most of the undated prints could be assigned approximate dates with a little research. See Ibid. p 214.