Colonial specimen/ neocolonial chic

COMMODIFICATION OF ARCHIVAL PORTRAITS IN SOUTH AFRICAN TEXTILE DESIGN

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Abstract

The greater accessibility of colonial archives in recent decades has not only given easier access to descendants, scholars and arts practitioners, but also to entrepreneurs who repurpose colonial photographs with the explicit aim of producing commodities for mass consumption.

The *Cameo* range of fabrics by South African company Design Team is one such example. The range features portraits of indigenous Southern African women photographed at the turn of the nineteenth century. These photographic portraits reach a wider audience through the publication, *Surviving the lens, photographic studies of South and East African people*, 1870–1920 (Stevenson & Graham-Stewart 2001) and the exhibition of the same title (Stevenson & Graham-Stewart 2001/2002).

In this chapter, I investigate the ways in which the appropriation and commodification of colonial photographic portraits conceal and mythologise history, in the process re-activating older signifiers of racial Otherness. Aimé Césaire's (2000 [1955]) equation "colonisation = thingification" is deployed in examining the commodification of indexical signifiers of racial blackness within a so-called 'colonial style' of interior design.

ABOVE: Figure 1. Photographer unkown, Deco Now, featuring *Natural Terrain* swatches, 2007. | Courtesy *Elle Decoration*

I first encountered the *Cameo* collection of fabrics while flipping through a copy of the South African interior design magazine, *Elle Decoration* (2007). My attention was arrested by the face of a woman, her eyes gazing quietly but intently from amidst a selection of upholstery fabric samples featured in an article entitled 'Natural terrain' (2007:[15]) (Fig. 1). I recognised her face from the cover of *Surviving the lens: photographic studies of South and East African people, 1870–1920* (Stevenson & Graham-Stewart 2001).[1] The photographer, Alfred Duggan-Cronin, who had documented what he assumed to be soon-extinct indigenous lifeways and peoples, called her 'Korana Girl' and scribbled on the back of the photograph, "She is the daughter of the woman (no 53) and a very good specimen of the people" (Stevenson & Graham-Stewart 2001:96).[2]

My knowledge of the image's origins troubled the harmonious composition of colour and texture artfully arranged for the magazine feature. The racism and cold instrumentalism of Duggan-Cronin's descriptions seemed worlds away from the beautiful commodity presented in the magazine, and indeed, this information and history are absent from the glossy page. This absence begs the question: what processes of erasure and discursive re-inscription occur when such colonial representations are reproduced on decorative furnishing and fabrics, and consumed within a context of domestic display?

Part of Design Team's[3] 'Novelty' collection, *Cameo* features a repeated motif of photographic portraits of four indigenous Southern African women taken between the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries. Each historic portrait has been cropped and set in a decorative, oval frame by the designers. The black, brown and sepia motifs are offset against a predominantly light, natural-coloured background (Fig. 3). The ornate frames, references to older technologies of engraving, black and white photography or photogravure, and the women's poses combine to convey an air of romantic old-worldliness. During the first decade of the twenty-first century, this visually seductive collection was featured regularly in South African interior design magazines such as *Elle Decoration*, *House & Leisure*, *Ideas* (Fig. 2), and *Garden and Home*; at South African design fairs such as *Design Indaba;* and on local and international design websites and blogs. Within these contexts, the

ABOVE: Figure 2. Design Team (designers), Christo Lötter (photographer), Handwerk & Dekor, featuring *Cameo*, 2009 | Courtesy *Ideas* magazine and Media24

fabric is shown in the guises of upholstered furniture, wall decorations, home and fashion accessories such as scatter pillows, handbags and even a wedding gown (Photo gallery 2011).[4]

In this chapter, which forms part of an ongoing study, I investigate the ways in which the appropriation and commodification of colonial photographic portraits mythologise and conceal history. In so doing, I track and foreground the shifts in meanings and values that ensue as historical photographic portraits of black women are moved from the semantic space of scholarly publication and art galleries into the spaces of interior design stores, magazines and middle-class homes.

To contextualise my examination of Design Team's *Cameo* range (hereafter *Cameo*), I position it at the intersection of three, late twentieth-century trends: i) the archival turn in visual arts and curating; ii) retro; and iii) the 'colonial style' in interior design. Using Aimé Césaire's (2000 [1955]:44) equation "colonialism = thingification",[5] and unpicking the indexical signifier or racial blackness, I examine ways in which colonial photographic portraits and racial difference are commodified and gentrified for nostalgic, vicarious consumption. It becomes clear that, in their postcolonial afterlives, the portraits of the black women become productive as signifiers of the historical, while at the same time they are emptied of historical specificity; the resultant patina of historicity functions as an apt vehicle for varied, shifting, and even contradictory, readings.

Archival turns

In recent decades, through scholarship, artistic projects and curatorial interventions, colonial archives have been opened to new and diverse viewerships and readings. Galleries, museums, public interventions and information technologies facilitate access to documents and images. The unprecedented ease of access has facilitated and enriched the work and understandings of artists, curators, scholars, members of the public and descendants, and has enabled them to consume and reproduce elements of archives more easily.

As a project of archival retrieval, research and dissemination of historic photographs, the publication *Surviving the lens*, in which all four portraits depicted in *Cameo* are reproduced, can be said to exemplify the 'archival turn' – a term that, according to Cheryl Simon (2002:101), refers to the increase of historical and archival photographs and artefacts, and the approximation of archival forms, in art and photographic practices since the 1990s. Whether the *Cameo* photographic portraits were commissioned by the sitters, taken for artistic or social scientific purposes, or reproduced as postcards or *cartés-des-visité* and bought by tourists and collectors, these portraits originated as commodities. They spoke to owners and viewers of loved ones, exotic Others and racial types, or served as evidence of disappearing lifeways (Godby 2010).

Two of the portraits, 'Korana Girl' and 'Bakgatla' (both first half of the twentieth century) are by Alfred Duggin-Cronin;[6] the third, entitled *Woman with beaded hair* (late nineteenth century), which has the words 'A Zulu Girl, Hair strung with beads' written on the reverse, was taken by JE Middlebrook,[7] and the fourth, *Portrait of a woman* (late twentieth century) that has the words 'Kaffir woman' on the reverse, is by John Gribble[8] (Stevenson & Graham-Stewart 2001:62, 96, 122, 124). Although initially produced within a documentary and scientific paradigm that valued photography for its 'realist mode'[9] (Tagg 1988:99), these images were, from the start, unstable racial signifiers and thus facilitated diverse objectives and readings. The soft lighting, classicising and sentimental poses and atmospheric qualities of the portraits attest to the artistic aspirations of the photographers

(Godby 2010:63), while the captions and notes are evidence of racial classification and ethnographic didacticism.

Critical scholarship of colonial anthropological photography has uncovered and scrutinised photographers' intervention and invention in the documentation of their subjects (see Edwards 1992; Godby 2010; Pinney 2011). In order to record unspoilt and 'authentic' indigenous culture for posterity, photographers such as Duggan-Cronin constructed their idea of purity actively by careful selection of models and sites; removal of signifiers of western modernity (such as enamel basins, coats and watches); and the addition of props that denote tribalism and tradition (such as animal skins, blankets and items of material culture) (see Godby 2010:59–63). These kinds of images presented Africans as belonging to pure ethnic monads, each with discernible material and ceremonial culture, undisturbed by the forces of colonialism. Considerable intervention was required to produce such visions at a time when the Southern African landscape and the lives of indigenous people were transformed radically by industrialisation and legislation that dispossessed Africans of their land. Focusing on Duggan-Cronin's *The Bavenda* of 1928, Michael Godby (2010:76–78) argues that the sheer beauty of the photographs endorses a myth of tribal Africa as harmonious and autonomous, which presented exploitable visual proof to proponents of racial segregation. Blurring the boundaries of art and science, anthropological photographs further granted an air of veracity to century-old tropes of Africa: the noble savage, nubile maiden, stately chief, fierce warrior and sinister witchdoctor.

In *Surviving the lens*, Michael Stevenson and Michael Graham-Stewart (2001:21) situate the photographs within the contexts of the colonial economies of commodity and knowledge production, noting that they reflect the influence of early anthropology and ethnography regarding the representation of black Africans. Stevenson and Graham-Stewart (2001:21, 24) discuss the asymmetrical relationships of power that underscored the production of these images, and explore recent critiques of the idea of the photographic image as record, evidence or truth, positioning them rather as "rhetorical constructs and symbols of white imagination". However, the authors also emphasise the possibility of a multiplicity of contemporary readings, noting that, as works of art with conflicted legacies, the portraits may become, for descendants, evidence of beauty, pride, resistance, dignity, and of lives lived (Stevenson & Graham-Stewart 2001:31, 33).

Stevenson and Graham-Stewart (2001:13) further position the photographs as works of art, and urge public art galleries to reconsider them as more than social and ethnographic records. Through scholarly and curatorial projects such as *Surviving the lens*, colonial photographs-as-objects are made to traverse new epistemic and commercial terrains of academe and art galleries, acquiring new layers of meanings and sets of values. When exhibited in major art galleries, the photographs are invested with a form of scholarship and connoisseurship usually reserved for works of fine or decorative art. Endowed with the status of artworks, they acquire pedigrees as 'authentic', singularised objects of artistic and historical value; desirable commodities whose exchange value is boosted through the semantic spaces of art galleries and exhibition catalogues.

The new sites where archival material are showcased and publicised, in turn, provide rich visual sources for entrepreneurs. Previously the reserve of administrators and scholars, archives are now accessible from smartphones and, with the internet functioning as a "mega-archive" (Foster 2004:4), historical images are only a quick 'click and drag' away from the surfaces of new products. Adorning scatter cushions and handbags, lifted from the interpretative contexts of anthropology, critical scholarship and connoisseurship, the repurposed portraits assume additional layers of meaning and value, some of which I explore in the next section.

'Colonial style' and retro

Cheryl Simon (2002:101) regards the archival turn as a late-stage manifestation of postmodernist appropriation. It coincides with 'retro', defined by Elizabeth Guffey (2006:10–11) as the "half-ironic, half-longing" stylistic evoking of the recent past in visual and popular culture. Retro is not concerned with historical accuracy, and although it may insinuate subversion through its ironic and parodic citations, is not politically motivated (Guffey 2006:11, 14). *Cameo*'s detached and nostalgic evocation of an alluring and romantic past through appropriated and decontextualised imagery can therefore be described as retro.

Connecting retro to nostalgia and examining its deployment in consumer culture, Stephen Brown, Robert Kozinets and John Sherry (2003:19) characterise the late twentieth century by "an astonishing 'nostalgia boom' marked by classic brands or rejuvenation of brands through recourse to nostalgia". The term 'nostalgia', originally referring to a longing to return home, can be seen as "an incurable condition of modernity" (Dlamini 2009:16). Nostalgia plays a significant part in the marketing and consumption of 'colonial style' and, if understood as an outflow of modernity, is akin to primitivism – itself an ambiguous longing for a romanticised preindustrial past. In my discussion to follow, I explore the way in which the colonial is mythologised through commodification with reference to the ideas of Césaire (2000) and bell hooks (1992).

In its appropriation of photographic portraits of black women from colonial archives and adaptation thereof through collage, *Cameo* also conforms to the tenets of the 'colonial style'. The 'colonial style', as it is called in design features, is rooted in the mythologised images of adventurers, explorers and settlers in popular media. Two significant influences on the trend of (re-)creating the look of glamorous settler colonial homes or safari camps are the film *Out of Africa* (Pollack 1985) and Ralph Lauren's *Safari Home* collections of the late twentieth century. Both present opulent, visually seductive visions of upper-class European domestic interiors in imagined colonial settings using design, accessories and props, and have had a lasting effect on interior design enthusiasts who continue to cite these in magazines and blogs. Brown, Kozinets and Sherry (2003:19) argue that retro brands "hark back to a time when the world seemed safer, more comprehensible". For Daniel J Huppatz (2009:24–25), Ralph Lauren's "nostalgic styles [reflect] a yearning for tradition, stability, and history in a rapidly changing society". Entrepreneurs and marketers thus capitalise on the sense of stability offered by signifiers of the past in the face of the ephemeral and uncertain present (see also Lowenthal 2015:41). The discursive construction of the colonial as a simpler, more comfortable era is evident in articles on the colonial style where adjectives such as 'innocent' and 'calm' are used (Sargent 2013:64).

In order to tease apart the ideological underpinnings of myths presented by the visually seductive 'colonial style', I pose the question: *whose* colonial is evoked? Judging from media features, it is the (imagined) luxury of the colonial master's house that is emulated. On glossy pages such as this, the very word 'colonial' and its stylistic props have become designer shorthand for privilege, comfort and luxury. Despite the stylistic foregrounding of the historical, this trend obscures history, rendering signs (especially tropes and stereotypes) natural and neutral as décor elements, thus obfuscating their ideological functioning (Pickering 2001:48). hooks's (1992:25) engagement with "imperialist nostalgia" is instructive here. For her, the term denotes the celebration of "a continuum of 'primitivism'", taking the form, in mass culture, of "re-enacting and re-ritualising in different ways the imperialist, colonising journey as narrative fantasy of power and desire, of seduction by

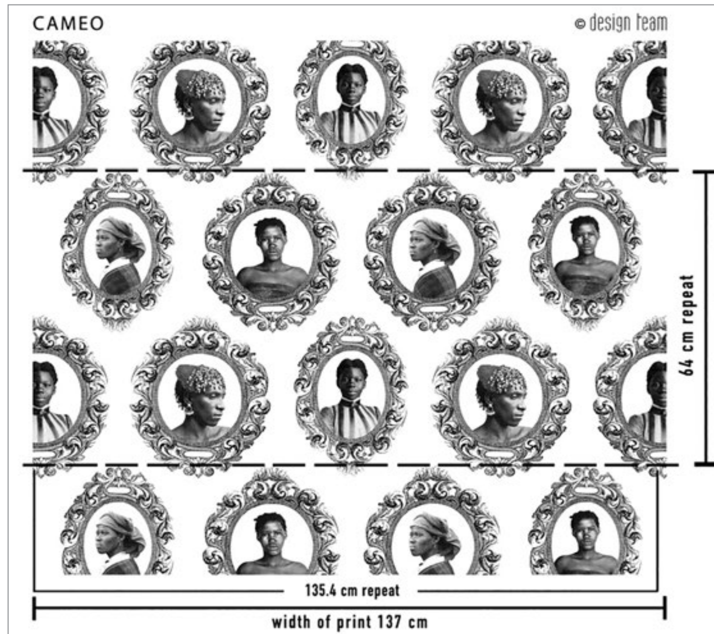
the Other" (hooks 1992:25). One can argue that the 'colonial' of the design world presents 're-enactments and re-ritualisings' of imagined colonial experience and its settings – not that of the colonised, but of the coloniser. The fantasy enacted is that of the master's house, and hidden from view, or silent in white gloves and aprons, are the disenfranchised indigenous populations, the "instruments of production" (Césaire 2000:42) harnessed to create and sustain the luxury and comfort of the ersatz aristocracy.

The 'colonial' is thus conceived as a vague historical period or style, and presents a mythologising abstraction of colonialism, colonial subjects and their lived realities under colonial subjugation. According to Roland Barthes (1991:117), myth is defined by constant games of hide-and-seek between meaning and form, and when dominated by form, the contingency of meaning is left behind: "it empties itself, it becomes impoverished, history evaporates, only the letter remains". Meaning offers form "an instantaneous reserve of history", which can be called upon and dismissed (Barthes 1991:116). In this manner the indisputable image of the subject of an historic image is tamed, "put at a distance, made almost transparent; it recedes a little, it becomes the accomplice of a concept which comes to it fully armed" (Barthes 1991:117).

It is my contention that, to facilitate consumption, the sentimentalising commodities created for this contemporary, neo-colonial style require amnesia and the emptying of history of all but its surfaces. This process facilitates vicarious nostalgia, as utilised by marketers. Unlike 'personal nostalgia', that is, a consumer's longing for the lived past, vicarious nostalgia describes nostalgic feelings "for a period outside of the individual's living memory", thus never directly experienced by the consumer (Merchant & Rose 2013:2619, 2621). The term denotes emotional connection to, and fantasising about, experiences and associations from past eras of which the consumer has no first-hand experience. By consuming goods and brands that evoke vicarious nostalgia, individuals can indulge in an idealised past. Arjun Appadurai (1996:77–78) calls this "armchair nostalgia" or nostalgia without "lived experience or collective historical memory", where merchandisers' images supply the "memory of a loss [...] never suffered", for him exemplified par excellence by "catalogues that exploit the colonial experience for merchandising purposes".

The absence of substance, and consumers revelling in the surface value of simulacra, as theorised by Fredric Jameson (1991) and Ted Polhemus (1996), is constructive for thinking about the appropriation and commodification of colonial images. Jameson (1991:5, 16–18) argues that, through acts of "cannibalisation", producers of culture only have the past to turn to. The present world is mediated by representations and imitations of dead styles of the past from an "imaginary museum of now global culture", dominated by a culture of the image or simulacra· (Jameson 1991:5, 16–17). According to Polhemus (1996:[sp]), contemporary postsubcultural consumers irreverently plunder a global "supermarket of style, where every world and every era you dreamed of ... is on offer like tins of soup on a supermarket shelf".

Have archival representations of colonial subjects, as empty signifiers and photographic chemical traces divorced from the original person and body, become 'tins on a supermarket shelf'? While this question cannot be considered in depth here, I explore the idea that the specific selection of photographic portraits for *Cameo* suggests that a particular 'trace' was desired for this design: the images were chosen because they are historic photographs of black women; they are read according to well-established codes of race and gender, and consequently can be encoded as signifiers of scenic and historical black femininity.



Thingification and the commodification of difference

The above characterisations of postmodern commodification and appropriation as 'cannibalism' and 'plunder' may be linked to Césaire's (2000:32–33) definition of colonialism in terms of globalising capitalism and the consequent 'thingification' or dehumanising of colonised peoples. With regard to his question, "[w]hat, fundamentally, is colonisation?", Césaire (2000:32–33) urges that, "the decisive actors here are the adventurer and the pirate, the wholesale grocer and the ship owner, the gold digger and the merchant, appetite and force".

Césaire's identification of the pirate and adventurer as being among the chief colonial actors resonates with authors Deborah Root (1996) and hooks (1992), who describe the processes of assimilation and consumption of the material culture, intellectual property, and representations and bodies of formerly colonised peoples, as cannibalistic. According to Marcia Crosby (cited in Root 1996:70), appropriation is prompted by presumed differences and inherent cultural authenticities of the Other, and that "difference ... has itself become a saleable commodity". For hooks (1992:21), "ethnicity becomes spice, seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture".

ABOVE: Figure 3. Lise Butler and Amanda Haupt (designers), *Cameo* pattern repeat sheet, 2014 | Courtesy Design Team

Writing in the context of late twentieth-century America, hooks (1997:21) argues that blackness is consumed as a sign of transgression, as a domesticated product offering consumers self-transformation through safe and comfortable encounters with other cultures. Such 'touring through consumption' is possible without relinquishing mainstream positionality or class privilege, or engaging with the people, lives and histories that constitute the resources of those commodities (hooks 1997:21, 23). Within contemporary homes, images of historic black bodies and faces – like 'tribal' sculptures, hand-woven textiles and hunting trophies – may thus serve to spice up an otherwise classic palette with frissons of worldliness and Otherness. Adorned with simulacra of historic black femininity, *Cameo* may present a versatile, yet safe, commodity fetish that promotes whichever noble or romantic version of colonial Africa entrepreneurs and consumers desire.

Yet what about consumers who do have "lived experience or collective historical memory", in the words of Appadurai (1996:78), or those unaffiliated to hooks's (1992:21) 'mainstream white culture'? The deployment of signifiers of blackness, as simulacra and traces, within both colonial discourse and contemporary design, is premised on the need for a multiplicity of sign functions allowing for both comfortable stability and suggestions of the illicit and dangerous. Stuart Hall (1996:6) explains race as one type of floating signifier, subject to constant processes of redefinition and appropriation. The stereotypes created by dynamic and ambivalent colonial discourse, whereby subjects are constructed through the articulation of difference, are, according to Homi Bhabha (1994:94–96), inherently ambiguous, paradoxical modes of representation and application. Owing to the fixity and volatility of the racial signifiers selected for *Cameo*, the fabric can lend both charm and spice to domestic contexts. By the same token, the images can also serve as affirmations of the consumer/owner's political ideals or ancestral relations. The flexibility of the racial signifier and the diverse contexts and modes of domestic consumption may, as anticipated by Stevenson and Graham-Stewart, therefore contribute to its re-inscription as records of resistance, celebration and remembrance.

In locating the fashioned role of black femininity in *Cameo*, it is helpful to consider the semiotic and economic functions, as well as the value of the indexical sign denoting racial blackness through an unpicking of the signifier from its referent. For Alessandro Raengo (2013:13), the "image of blackness" functions as "perfect sign"; an intelligible, trustworthy and transparent visual sign where "the surface bears the self-evident trace of what supposedly lies beneath it". She explains this in terms of the visual ontology of "face value", formulated as the possibility, desire and belief that one may read value (also understood as reference, truth and meaning) on an image's face and its surface. This approach traps the body within the visual field where it becomes both "proof and product of the visuality of race" (Raengo 2013:13). I believe that the fashioning of the four photographic portraits in *Cameo* was informed by, and functions within, the 'face value' entrapment of perceived relationships between signifier and signified, the black body and racial blackness, and archives of accumulated associations of the black body. The re-inscription of meaning by entrepreneurs and consumers is thus facilitated by a decontextualised racial signifier, which although a potential "accomplice" (Barthes 1991:117) to a myriad of even contradictory concepts, remains a palimpsest of prior meanings.

This codified and recontextualised palimpsest assumes exchange value(s) as it can be affixed to commodities that compete within global image economies where Otherness is marketed as commodity. Having accrued currency as being metonymic of Africa in the popular imagination, the image of the black body becomes a lucrative readymade commodity that functions to set apart both entrepreneur and consumer. Signifiers of racial

and ethnic difference enable entrepreneurs – who can copy and paste these onto products from the 'mega-archive' of the internet – to differentiate their products from "culturally 'othered' artefacts and goods" (Huggan 2001:28). For consumers, possession thereof signifies a cultural capital that not only speaks of the owner's style, awareness of current fashions and ability to afford these, but also of an appreciation of the African cultural and historical context, however sincere or superficial. Transformed into decorative motifs adorning costly soft furnishings, the black bodies and faces indicate recognition of (colonial) history, yet both history and difference are carefully contained and gentrified within the antique frame and the parameters of the commodity covered in the fabric.

Conclusion

I acknowledge that my reading of *Cameo* – a critique of the postcolonial marketplace's fixing of racial signifier to referent – might curtail other interpretative possibilities. It is indeed imperative to decolonial projects of emancipation to recognise that colonial photographic portraits produced with the explicit aims of racial categorisation can and should be read for interpretations that differ from the purposes and ideologies of their creation. This is the wish expressed by the editors of *Surviving the lens*, which urges revisiting the photographs as evidence of individuality, resistance, pride and dignity (Stevenson & Graham-Stewart 2001:24). In contemplating the potential repetition of trauma in contemporary artists' appropriation and use of colonial images of African bodies, Colin Richards (1999:185) argues that it is untenable to assume "that the figurative repetition (reproduction) of violence is always and everywhere a structurally entailed ossification of existing power relations".

In their appraisal of nineteenth-century anthropologist Gustav Fritsch's photographic portraits of Southern Africans, taken with the explicit aim of indexing racial types, Andrew Bank (2008) and Lize van Robbroeck (2008) emphasise the excess of signification in Fritsch's portraits. Despite his painstaking, instrumentalist efforts to control, quantify and generalise, his portraits in fact testify to the human individuality and hybridity he encountered in the colony. The same can be said of the photographic portraits selected for *Cameo*: the dignity, self-respect and fortitude expressed in upright postures; the individuality and style communicated in fashionable arrangements of hair or headscarf; a gaze that interrogates and holds the eye of the lens and the viewer. Furthermore, like colonial photographers and sitters, contemporary consumers are aware of the camera's ability to thwart the efforts of the photographer or to serve as an instrument for invention and affectation. In the form of homeware, and therefore more readily available to the middle-class than the original photographs, these images may provide consumers with important reminders of 'lives lived'.

It is, however, important to keep in mind that such alternative readings and potential recognition happen through the consumption of radically decontextualised images of blackness, racial signifiers (whether decoded as Otherness or affirmative expressions) codified and domesticated through and for fashionable commodification. Laying bare the erasure that occurs in the commodification of difference, hooks (1992:31) highlights that this process denies the significance of the Other's history. Furthermore, the transformation of signifiers of black colonial experience into nostalgic, 'colonial style' products produces "experiences of duration, passage, and

loss that rewrite the lived histories of individuals, families, ethnic groups, and classes" (Appadurai 1996:78). It is this obscuring of both history and of the processes of production – demanded by the mythologising of neo-colonial style – that facilitates the elegant subsuming of critical, democratic and counter-hegemonic aims of historians, artists and curators by contemporary hegemonies of a global cannibalistic capitalism.

Clues as to whether the women's faces on the fabric are little more than tins on a supermarket shelf – their value subject to the longevity of a trend – or whether their reproduction and consumption have the potential to unsettle racial stereotypes and historically exploitative relations of production, will most likely be found in individual consumers' relationships with the commodity. Extensive fieldwork may provide rich, undoubtedly multifarious, data about owner-commodity relationships that are, like the meaning and value of the image, characterised by flux and intertwined with socio-economic contexts.

Endnotes

1 The exhibition *Surviving the lens: photographic studies of South and East African people, 1870–1920* showed at the Iziko South African National Gallery in Cape Town (2001) and at the Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg (2002).

2 In 1925, the photograph was reproduced in SS Dorman's *Pygmies and bushmen of the Kalahari* (Dorman 1925; Stevenson & Graham-Stewart 2001:96).

3 Design Team is a Pretoria-based company established in 2002 by Amanda Haupt and Lise Butler. According to its website, the company is "a textile design business focusing on the design, print and conversion of South African inspired textiles" (About us 2011).

4 The production and marketing of the collection was recently halted and *Cameo* is currently only printed to client order (Strey 2016). Exploring the reasons for the halting of *Cameo*'s production – the eventual dwindling of sales, according to Wilna Strey (2016) of Design Team – necessitates a reception study amongst consumers and does not lie within the scope of this chapter or current research project.

5 I would like to thank Anthony Bogues (2014) for suggesting the relevance of Césaire's formulation to this study.

6 Duggan-Cronin immigrated to South Africa from Ireland in 1897. He started working at De Beers Consolidated Mines in Kimberley where he began photographing migrant workers in about 1904. His photographic work focused increasingly on indigenous cultures, dress and customs, and after the First World War, he started travelling to document groups of black people in Southern Africa. Between 1919 and 1939 he travelled some 128 000 kilometres, taking approximately 6 000 photographs. His photographs and collection of indigenous art and objects of material culture are housed in the Duggan-Cronin Gallery, part of the McGregor Museum, in Kimberley, South Africa. He published selections of his work in the eleven-volume *The Bantu tribes of South Africa* (1929–1954).

7 A commercial photographer, Middlebrook had studios in Kimberley from 1888 to 1894, and in Durban from 1898 until approximately 1902 (Stevenson & Graham-Stewart 2001:124).

8 Four generations of the Gribble family worked as commercial photographers in the Western Cape since 1860, with studios in Cape Town and Paarl (Stevenson & Graham-Stewart 2001:62, 92).

9 Photography, for John Tagg (1988:99), operates in the "realist mode", offering a fixity in which the signifier is treated as if identical to a pre-existent signified. Furthermore, Tagg (1988:99) argues, in a manner analogous to commodity production under capitalism, processes of production are obscured, and "the complex codes or use of language by which realism is constituted is not accounted for".

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