

Artist statement: *Epitaph for Bank*

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Stuff/Staff group exhibition

UNISA Art Gallery

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In *Epitaph for Bank* the fragmented shards of manufactured objects found at a place called *Bank*, a site of displacement situated near the town Carletonville, have been documented repeatedly. The residents of Bank lost their homes in the 1970's when the houses were demolished due to the danger of sinkholes, caused by the extensive mining activities in the area.

According to Laura Marks, objects "encode both the discursive shifts and the material conditions of displacement [and we can attempt to decode] the displacements, and the social relations, that objects carry with them [by] connecting them to memory" (2000:79 & 81). In their weathered brokenness and stages of decay, the remains at the *Bank* site revealed indexical information of the trauma and memories relating to displacement.

In the fragile floor installation *Re-trieve* the negative spaces of the discarded objects have been recorded by using the actual soil from Bank, as an attempt to regain their tactile presence.

As a drawing on the gallery wall that will eventually be destroyed, *Re-trace* is also a writing on the wall: it predicts the inevitable destruction of the objects left behind at Bank, through decay, in the same way that time changes memory into ever-fading traces of the real event.

The two 'texts' in the *Epitaph for Bank* are testaments of visual loss and the installation serves as a sample commemoration of the trauma experienced by the more than 15 million people world-wide (Oliver-Smith 2009:3) annually affected by displacement due to development projects.

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Sources

Marks, L.U. 2000. *The skin of the film: intercultural cinema, embodiment, and the senses*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Oliver-Smith, A. ed. 2009. *Development and dispossession: the crisis of forced displacement and resettlement*. New Mexico: School for Advanced Research Press.