

Adheema Davis (Barland Studio, Durban)

Adheema Davis is a Durban-based professional architect at Barland Studio administering city-based Industrial projects; with previous lecturing experience, and co-founder of and – an independent reflexive workspace between contemporary thought and praxis – concurrently working toward PhD research in Public Culture, Heritage, and Decoloniality. Her Masters research entitled 'The Specificity of Dignity: Reconceptualising Women's Spatial Boundaries' confirmed her commitment to socio-spatial justice. As a Mandela Washington Fellow, she completed a certificate in Civic Leadership at Drexel University, Philadelphia in 2018, and exercised this in work towards Transformation in the SAIA-KZN Region, in which she currently serves as the Vice-President.

the politics of [de]cartography: asymmetrical intimacies across central Durban

*When the group areas act is abolished,
my mother aches to go back
to the street she was removed from
and it is we, grown attached
to the scar we call home, who say, no,
we don't want to live in a white area,
this time ceding it ourselves.*
– The History of Intimacy, Gabeba Baderoon

A delicate reveal of the intergenerational contrast between her mother's nostalgia for home, and Baderoon's own novel mechanisms – be they conscious or otherwise – of protecting herself from the trauma of Apartheid-colonialism. These asymmetrical intimacies are formed by the clutching to a sense of self while living in a landscape layered with spaces not made *by* you, spaces not made *for* you, and worse still, spaces made only by the violent erasure *of* you.

Forced removal, the 'unambiguous process of bleaching' as described by Jeppie and Soudien (1990:144), was an expunging of blackness that has scarred our South African 'post'-Apartheid-colonialist landscapes. These scars remain in district six, south end, and durban's own Block AK. Once home to thriving multi-racial communities now pockets of displacement, expanses of land untouched, but when you look closely...the foundations of verandas that held the laughter of families watching children playing out on the street, walls between the kitchens of women who made their homes their sacred spaces, and street light posts that marked this place as home appear – ghosts of resistance, ghosts of black heritage in the city.

Over this, the monuments and markings of apartheid-colonialism stand firm, reducing the tangible notion of heritage to a singular, bleached narrative; subsequently erasing the intangible memories of blackness from both our city and our consciousness (Rosenberg, 2020: 25), and entangling present socio-spatial engagements.

The politics of [de]cartography will seek to interrogate, and re-inscribe the socio-cultural layers both present and forcefully removed of central durban, and in particular, of Block AK; unpacking the long overdue dialogue of decolonising architectural heritage. Exploring a reinstatement of heritage both tangible and intangible, and reimagining a public architecture that fosters belonging, asking simply, *whose heritage?*

