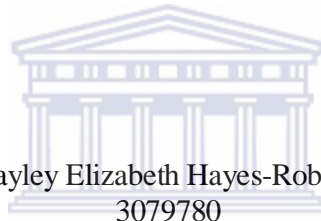


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From family business to public museum: The transformation of the  
Sacks Futeran buildings into the Homecoming Centre of the  
District Six Museum.

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A mini-thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree M.A. in History  
(with specialisation in Museum and Heritage Studies) University of the Western Cape.

Supervisor: Professor Ciraj Rassool

## Declaration

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I, Hayley E. Hayes-Roberts, hereby declare that this thesis 'From family business to public museum: The transformation of Sacks Futeran buildings into the Homecoming Centre of the District Six Museum' is my own work and that it has not been submitted elsewhere in any form or part, and that I have followed all ethical guidelines and academic principles as expressed by the University of the Western Cape and the District Six Museum.

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Hayley Hayes-Roberts, 23rd November 2012, Cape Town



## Acknowledgements

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I am eternally grateful for the supportive role my partner Michael and children, Angelo and Isis, my bother Robbie Mackay-Davidson and my mother Eve Davidson played in the research and writing of this thesis and to my wonderful friends who patiently listened to narratives of the past.

I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my grandparents Babs and Basil Phillips and my aunt and uncle Joy and Charlie Phillips.

## Abstract

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Through a grant from the Atlantic Philanthropies Foundation the District Six Museum Foundation Trust purchased the Sacks Futeran buildings in 2002 with a view to creating new spaces of engagement that worked with exhibitions, issues of social justice and District Six returnees. The Futeran family, as a gesture of philanthropic donation, sold the building below market value thus enabling the museum to take ownership. This related directly to civic public giving that the work of the District Six Museum entails and was consistent with an understanding of community museums. Acquiring, transforming and museumising the set of five interconnected Sacks Futeran buildings to create the District Six Homecoming Centre has influenced and extended the notion of civic public giving in the museum work of the District Six Museum in relation to District Six returnees and the public. The examination of a history in and through buildings and more specifically the transformation in use, design, purpose and naming in this complex of buildings associated with a family business, E. Sacks Futeran & Co., is the purpose of this research. The oral histories of Martin and Gordon Futeran reveal the origins of their family wholesale clothing and fabric business established in 1906 by their great grandfather Elias Sacks and by extension the Jewish histories of District Six. The apartheid denial of 'home' within the Cape Town city bowl, resulting in forced removals of the inhabitants of District Six and the formation of the District Six Museum as a transactive community museum model on the heritage landscape of post-apartheid South Africa is examined. With reference to architectural materiality, the set of buildings as transitional space is 'mapped' as it has become the Homecoming Centre of the District Six Museum. Rennie Scurr Adendorff Architects blended older histories of the site with architectural aesthetic and technical expertise, and the Museum's visions, philosophies and concepts were an integral part of the redevelopment. Over a number of years the Sacks Futeran buildings were restored and internally reconfigured and have been developed to dovetail with existing methodologies supporting the broader land restitution process. Through its spaces, a museum community is being nurtured by means of activism, notions of citizenship transforming District Six, the city and community museum practice in the process. The Fugard Theatre is an integral part of the Homecoming Centre and these buildings are experienced as a multi-functional cultural landmark within the District Six Cultural Heritage Precinct. By harnessing memory and materiality this study is relevant as a means of constituting historical urban fabric and a sensitivity of reconstructing a sense of place.

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## Abbreviations

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BELCOM:	The Built Environment and Landscape Committee
HH-R:	Hayley Hayes-Roberts
NGO:	Non-governmental organisation
NLSA:	National Library of South Africa
SAHRA:	South African Heritage Resources Agency
SPAB:	Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings
UCT:	University of Cape Town
UWC:	University of the Western Cape





Figure 1 Sandblasted District Six Museum logo on the District Six Homecoming Centre entrance, Buitenkant Street, October 2012. Photographer Hayley Hayes-Roberts. 2011.

In the crisis of life,  
when we are overwhelmed by joy or sorrow  
we see surroundings with sharpened senses, and they  
remain forever afterwards, indelibly part of our experience.

*Eugénie Grandet* by Honoré de Balzac

Architecture immortalizes and glorifies something. Hence  
there can be no architecture where there is nothing to glorify.  
Remember the expression one gets from good architecture,  
that it expresses a thought. It makes one want to respond  
with a gesture.

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951)

## Introduction

### **From family business to public museum: The transformation of the Sacks Futeran buildings into the Homecoming Centre of the District Six Museum.**

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The purpose of this research is to study history in and through a set of five interconnected buildings known as the Sacks Futeran buildings. The wholesale fabric and clothing business of E. Sacks Futeran and Co. (Pty) Ltd. was situated on the corner of Buitenkant and Caledon Streets and extending into Harrington Street, on the periphery of District Six, Cape Town.<sup>1</sup> More specifically the study is concerned with the transformation in use, design, purpose and naming in the complex of buildings bought in 2002 by the District Six Museum Foundation Trust. The general understanding is that the acquisition of the buildings was made possible by a substantial reduction of the selling price by the Futeran family and a generous grant from the Atlantic Philanthropies Foundation. Therefore, Atlantic Philanthropies issued the grant “in keeping with the ‘Giving while Living’ philosophy” of founder Charles “Chuck” Feeney, who believes “in making large investments to solve urgent social problems”.<sup>2</sup> This speaks to the general situation in South Africa where NGO’s and foundations work towards “making improvements in the lives of people who need change the most”.<sup>3</sup> The District Six Museum purchased the Sacks Futeran buildings, collectively naming them the Homecoming Centre with a view to creating new spaces of engagement that worked with exhibitions, issues of social justice, and District Six returnees.<sup>4</sup> As noted by Rassool, “the interconnected complex of five buildings was intended as a space

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<sup>1</sup> Futeran, G, Interviewed by Thulani Nxumalo on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2003, District Six Museum archive, p.12.

<sup>2</sup> The Atlantic Philanthropies, [www.atlanticphilanthropies.org](http://www.atlanticphilanthropies.org), accessed 06.10.2011.

<sup>3</sup> The Atlantic Philanthropies, [www.atlanticphilanthropies.org](http://www.atlanticphilanthropies.org), accessed 06.10.2011.

<sup>4</sup> District Six Museum, Annual Reports 2001-2011, District Six Museum archive.

which would support the broader land restitution process and become ‘a centre for community life’, a ‘homecoming centre’. Its spaces create potential for interaction that feature “the role of a workshop arena for the museum’s memory methodology work to reimagine the city whilst understanding the traditions and historical processes that shaped it”.<sup>5</sup>

The acquisition of the Sacks Futeran buildings has influenced and extended the notion of civic public giving in the museum work of the District Six Museum in relation to District Six returnees and the public and constitutes an understanding of community museums.<sup>6</sup> The purchase of the Sacks Futeran complex of five buildings marked a new phase in the life of the District Six Museum and the buildings. My argument is that there is an absence of histories in and through buildings within District Six and the city. These buildings were associated with a Jewish family business established in 1906. By imagining and reimagining, these buildings serve as spaces where past and present intersect in various ways and relates to the ‘unearthing’ of memory and materiality, as a means of constituting and evaluating historical urban and social fabric.

The first chapter relates to District Six and the formation of the District Six Museum and how its methodologies, grounded in memories of collective social displacement, have been represented. It will also examine how the area known as District Six has been reconstructed through individual and collective memory, oral histories, biographies, autobiographies, literature, exhibitions, maps, performance, urban studies and visual representations. I have argued that there is an absence of histories in and through the remaining buildings on the periphery that were once part of the urban fabric and “material reminders” of District Six

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<sup>5</sup> Rassool, C, Slade, V, ‘Fields of Play’: the District Six Museum and the history of football in Cape Town, *Soccer and Society*, Vol. 13, Issue 2, 2012, p. 200.

<sup>6</sup> Futeran, G, Interviewed by Thulani Nxumalo on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2003, District Six Museum archive. p.12.

and the city.<sup>7</sup>

Chapter Two examines my research process that involved constructing and documenting an archive of ‘things forgotten’, including family photographs, found in the new museum buildings of the District Six Museum: the Homecoming Center. The buildings located near District Six reveal the partial histories of Jewish immigrants from Lithuania, who founded a large wholesale business specializing in fabric and clothing. Jewish histories of District Six are traced with reference to commercial enterprises and centering on the socio-economic and cultural role the Sacks Futeran business played in dressing the District through the various wares they sold. I argue that this specific set of buildings and their narratives represent a significant contribution in shaping histories of District Six and the city.

The aim of Chapter Three is to expand a body of knowledge by arguing that the Sacks Futeran buildings significantly activate histories. This is achieved by an architectural study of the buildings through time. Architecture, as a discipline and a practice functions to inform us of different historical styles, forms and functions of buildings. A transformation took place, structurally and culturally which impacts on how a particular layered past is constructed, understood, integrated, and reflected by connecting space, architecture and social milieu. This chapter traces the origins, architecture, evolution and transformation, the ‘life’, of a set of five interconnected buildings that belonged to E. Sacks Futeran & Co. (Pty) Ltd, known colloquially as Sacks Futeran. The District Six Museum has entered into architectural discourse by promoting an open debate on various District Six landmarks and through the purchase and restoration of the Sacks Futeran buildings, Furthermore how histories in and through

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<sup>7</sup> No matter where we are, we are here, Hands On District Six’, Brochure, District Six Museum archive, undated.



buildings act in constituting an archive and a sense of place and can contribute, compliment and shift official knowledge of the built environment in the city to one that addresses absences is noted.

Chapter Four refers to how the buildings serve museum staff, ex-residents and the public in particular ways as the Homecoming Centre. The Museum has grown significantly in 18 years building a legacy in the city that promotes public culture through its memory and heritage work and since inception the Homecoming Centre has sought to extend the cultural footprint of the District Six Museum. This has been achieved through a range of notable interactions that have raised the profile of the Museum. The processes of museumising the District Six Homecoming Centre are identified and examined in this chapter in relation to its collections, methodologies, visions and multifunctional interconnected spaces. As ‘a centre for community life’ and a public museum the Homecoming Centre both supports the broader land restitution process and continues to works with unjust legacies through various initiatives.

Therefore this thesis traces the founding of a Jewish family business in Cape Town within a set of interconnected buildings and culminates in the acquisition, transformation and museumising of the Sacks Futeran buildings into the Homecoming Centre of the District Six Museum. It shows the life of a set of buildings through different phases of its use in relation to District Six as lived environment and District Six as landscape of memory.

## Chapter One

### District Six and the District Six Museum

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Whatever the outcome of ongoing political contestations over city governance, the conceptual framing and representation of the city's history or histories will play a significant, perhaps decisive role in shaping the city that is imagined and realized in the future.<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter I will relate how the District Six Museum was formed and how its methodologies, grounded in memories of collective social displacement, have been interpreted and represented. I will also examine how the area known as District Six has been reconstructed through individual and collective memories, oral histories, literature, exhibitions, maps, performance, urban studies and visual representations. I argue that there is an absence of histories in and through the remaining buildings on the periphery that were once part of the urban fabric and “material reminders” of District Six and the city.<sup>2</sup>

This thesis is concerned with tracing the origins, evolution and transformation the - ‘life’- of a set of five interconnected buildings that belonged to E. Sacks Futeran & Co. (Pty) Ltd (hereafter Sacks Futeran) that were purchased by the District Six Museum in 2002. My argument is that histories of the immediate area can be enhanced and complimented by histories in and through this set of buildings. These buildings serve the museum staff, ex-residents and the public in particular ways as the Homecoming Centre. The buildings have enormous transformative potential, primarily as a dedicated “centre for community life” and

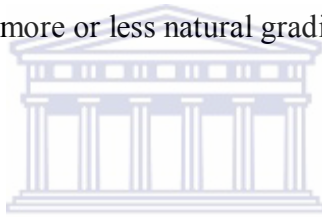
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<sup>1</sup> Field, S, Swanson, F, Introduction, *Imagining the City: Memories and Cultures in Cape Town*, Sean Field, Renate Meyer and Felicity Swanson eds., (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2007), p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> ‘No matter where we are, we are here, Hands On District Six’, Brochure, undated.

functions to “support the broader land restitution process”.<sup>3</sup>

As one enters the city along Nelson Mandela Boulevard, the view towards the slopes of Devil’s Peak is of an open expanse of land dotted with the buildings of churches, mosques, schools, a sprawling educational campus and a couple of rows of terraced housing. Trees line a dual carriageway cutting through the centre of the space and large boulders lie inert. Lone palm trees appear intermittently, truncated lengths of road appear then disappear and everywhere grass grows tall. Pristine white flat roofed buildings cluster around a historic mosque and a building project is underway. One might assume that this is an urban park of some sort, but closer inspection reveals emerging weathered building rubble, flattened protruding ridges punctuating the more or less natural gradient of the area culminating in Table Bay.



Viewed perhaps as parcel of prime land located between residential districts and the urban edge of the city, it is bordered by freeways mirroring the silhouette of Table Mountain. The area is known as District Six or Zonnebloem and is a constant reminder of apartheid’s great urban project. District Six has become a powerful symbol in the urban landscape of Cape Town and post-apartheid South Africa. Its buildings were torn down in the 1960s and with them extended histories of settlement, roots and occupation of an urbanised cosmopolitan populace. How does one rebuild a sense of time, place and community when all but a few landmarks remain? Visitors to Cape Town are directed via tourist guidebooks to the District Six Museum, perhaps as an orientation to a very specific notion of the apartheid experience and community. The District Six Museum, located near the site of District Six presents the visitor with representations of a lost state of humanity and challenges us to remember a traumatic past.

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<sup>3</sup> The history the Sacks Futera Building Project is to be found in ‘Fields of Play: Football memories and forced removals in Cape Town’. Brochure, (District Six Museum: Cape Town, 2010.).

It invites us to communicate, engage, debate and seeks to inspire transformative action by drawing on the histories of forced removals thereby mediating and facilitating closure and continuity. Therefore in seeking to understand the origins of the District Six Museum let us return to the site.

Named District Six in 1867, the sixth district of Cape Town used to be called “Kanaladorp” by its residents. Here a working-class community, a mix of people, from the descendents of freed slaves to Eastern European Jews, Africans and immigrants coexisted. The city environs were divided into numbered districts and represented a site of authority, discipline and exclusion dating back to the Dutch period of settlement at the Cape.<sup>4</sup> Dutch and later British colonial expansion preferenced settler society with the disenfranchisement of all ‘others’, relegating them to the margins. In 1901, enforced segregation commenced when “Meetings held by Africans on the Parade and on the mountainside to protest against forced removal” were broken up by the police who enforced the removals. Many of the “Africans deported lost all their possessions” and at “Uitvlugt they were kept under guard”.<sup>5</sup> Residents had been expelled under the guise of disease and insanitary conditions which indicates an urbanising elite’s preoccupations with “space”, notions of empire and scientifically derived theories of race.<sup>6</sup> According to Vivian Bickford-Smith

District Six became overcrowded with deficient housing and lack of facilities; woefully neglected by the Cape Town Municipality...it was largely because of the latter that District Six could become stereotyped by most white bourgeois Capetonians as a slum. This stereotype was of course used by the Nationalist Government as a justification for the removal of the District’s people and the destruction of its buildings.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Hall, M, *Archaeology and the Modern World: Colonial Transcripts in South Africa and Chesapeake*, (London: Routledge, 2000), p.67.

<sup>5</sup> Bickford-Smith, V, van Heyningen, E, Worden, N, (eds), *Cape Town in the twentieth century: an Illustrated Social History*, (Cape Town: David Philip, 1999), p. 21.

<sup>6</sup> Lefebvre, H, *The Production of Space*, (UK: Blackwell, 1991).

<sup>7</sup> Bickford-Smith, V, *The Origins and Early History of District Six to 1910, The Struggle for District Six: Past and Present*. Jeppie, S and Soudien, C, (eds), (Cape Town: Buchu Books, 1990).

In line with ‘slum’ clearance, masking racial and political agendas, the Group Areas Act (Act no. 41) of 1950 was implemented during the 1960s. District Six was proclaimed a ‘White Group Area’ in 1966, and its “disqualified” residents numbering 66000 were forcibly removed over a period of thirty years to hastily constructed sub-economic housing on the Cape Flats. Their homes and businesses were bulldozed and residents suffered severe personal and collective trauma during this daunting period of inhumane and unjust treatment. In areas far from the city, the Cape Flats became a series of separate spaces configured by race, policed and separated by physical barriers.<sup>8</sup> Thousands of people were put under further emotional and financial strain, travelling great distances to their former places of work, leisure, worship and school. Apartheid legislation and resultant social engineering ensured that “only the memories of District Six remain”.<sup>9</sup>



Molotch drawing on Lefebvre states that

A sort of master distinction is between those who produce space for *domination* versus those who produce space as an *appropriation* to serve human need. In domination space is put to some *abstract* purpose ... abstract space .... The apparatus of official city planning represents the mobilization of expertise on behalf of such abstract space, one that “pulverizes” the body, the spirit, the social urge.

Like any tool of abstraction, space for domination “is inherently violent ... this can be to facilitate state power or, more pervasively, the reproduction of capital”.<sup>10</sup> Therefore the forced removals from District Six, first in 1901 and then in the 1960’s, represent a space of alternating domination and appropriation.<sup>11</sup>

Thus between 1968 and 1981, bulldozers worked hard to raze the buildings and streets of

<sup>8</sup> Two Rivers Project: forced removals in the southern suburbs of Cape Town, various research documents, District Six Museum.

<sup>9</sup> ‘District Six Museum Foundation’, brochure. Undated

<sup>10</sup> Molotch, H, The space of Lefebvre, *Theory and Society*, vol. 22, no. 6, (New York: Springer, Dec., 1993), p. 889.

<sup>11</sup> Molotch, H, The space of Lefebvre, *Theory and Society*, vol. 22, no. 6, (New York: Springer, Dec., 1993), p. 889.

District Six. A different network of roads was constructed and named and the land lay fallow, expectant of the next ‘move’ by city planners. Ex-resident Noor Ebrahim’s disorientated homing pigeons returned to the District after his family’s forced relocation to Athlone in 1975.<sup>12</sup> By the mid 1980s, the City of Cape Town in partnership with British Petroleum proposed to proceed with the development of District Six, yet this was met with fierce resistance.<sup>13</sup> As Lefebvre notes,

a space is thus neither merely a medium nor a list of ingredients, but an interlinkage of geographic form, built environment, symbolic meanings, and routines of life ... ways of being and physical landscapes are of a piece, albeit one filled with tensions and competing versions of what a space would be, People fight not only over a piece of turf, but about the sort of reality that it constitutes.”<sup>14</sup>

### **The origins and establishment of the District Six Museum**

In 1987 The Hands Off- District Six Campaign (HODS) was mobilized. Drawing on political figures and organizations that had once been an active part of District Six there was a resurgence of political will. It came about through the concerned efforts of numerous individuals and organizations, who, according to Layne, argued that,

If we cannot live on this land, we salt this earth. It should not be there for anyone else to live on until apartheid is abolished and the people of District Six can decide what to do with the land.<sup>15</sup>

In 1990, historian Bill Nasson asked the question, “Why does a history of District Six need to be an oral one?”<sup>16</sup> In the absence of material culture, memories, visual, aural and sensorial stimuli provide a conduit with which to explore the lost neighborhood. Erasure of the social

<sup>12</sup> Ebrahim N, *Noor's Story: My Life in District Six*, (Cape Town: District Six Museum, 2001), p. 8.

<sup>13</sup> ‘Ten Years of the District Six Museum, working document’, District Six Museum archive, 2004

<sup>14</sup> Molotch, H, The space of Lefebvre, *Theory and Society*, vol. 22, no. 6, (New York: Springer, Dec., 1993), p. 888.

<sup>15</sup> Layne, V, The District Six Museum: An Ordinary People’s Place, *The Public Historian*, (February 2008), vol. 30, no. 1, p. 56.

<sup>16</sup> Nasson, B, Oral History and the Reconstruction of District Six, *The Struggle for District Six: Past and Present*, (Cape Town: Buchu, 1990), pp.44-66.

fabric of District Six transferred tangible sites of homes, work places, streets and shops into the realm of intangibility, experienced as memory and dreams restimulated by emotions. Thus the empty spaces began to be revisualised and remembered by ex-residents as South Africa edged its eventful path towards democracy, which was achieved in 1994. Loss, separation, happiness, fear, pain, longing, desire and hope acquire unusual power by their incorporation into oral history projects, exhibitions and land restitution claims. As Deacon et al note,

not all intangible heritage is old, rural or indigenous to a particular area or to a specific, ethnically defined community ... we need to remember and value diffuse and modern heritage forms like the oral histories of people who suffered under apartheid or other forms of colonialism”.<sup>17</sup>

Therefore with a renewed sense of community and urgency, The District Six Museum Foundation was established in 1989 and launched as a museum in 1994 to “keep alive the memories of District Six and displaced people everywhere”.<sup>18</sup> A struggle for human rights and acknowledgement of a way of life remembered were at the forefront to establishing a District Six place of remembrance. A “museum” model was adopted after much debate and deliberation.<sup>19</sup> A significant method of articulating the histories of the district was through interviewing and recording the narratives of ex-residents. History practices were in a transformative phase during the 1980s and focused on gathering social ‘histories from below’, that of the common experience of workers, women, children, individuals and communities marginalized by colonialism and apartheid. According to Chrischené Julius

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<sup>17</sup> Deacon, H, Dondolo, L, Mrubata, M, Prosalendis, S, *The Subtle Power of Intangible Heritage: Legal and financial instruments for safeguarding intangible heritage*. (Cape Town: HSRC Publishers, 2004), p.1.

<sup>18</sup> ‘Friends of the District Six Museum’, Membership form, 2011.

<sup>19</sup> Ciraj Rassool and Peggy Delpont refer to the term ‘museum’ as an ambivalent problematic concept when applied as an institutional identity in the memorialisation of District Six.

“oral histories and testimonies were key features” and strategies of the Museum.<sup>20</sup> Between 1995 and 1996 the South African National Gallery held an exhibition *District Six: Image and Representation*, and as Prosalendis notes,

The exhibition is not just about the images of District Six; it also reflects collective and collaborative processes within the museum community between a struggling new initiative and the weight of an established institution.<sup>21</sup>

*The District Six Public Sculpture Project* was launched in 1997 on the landscape of District Six, reclaiming the site through collaborative creative processes and garnering wide artistic and public support.

Returning to Lefebvre who states that

The productive forces have since (Marx) taken another great leap – from the production of things in space to the production of space. Revolutionary activity ought, among other things; to follow this *qualitative* leap...to its ultimate consequences . . . We need *conscious* production of space to fulfill revolutionary programs of any sort.<sup>22</sup>

I would argue that the District Six Museum facilitates a “conscious production of space” as it engages with multiple memories and meanings of the District providing an institutional framework that furthers the processes of democracy via land restitution, social justice and educational redress. With reference to the silences and gaps in history, this is a pertinent argument when reflecting on colonization and apartheid. Traumatic memories are a lingering legacy and museums such as the District Six Museum utilize the intangibility of memory to make healing possible in the hearts and minds of the dispossessed people of District Six and elsewhere. Intangible elements such as memories and storied lives act as a conduit to

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<sup>20</sup> Julius, C, *Oral history in the exhibitionary strategy of the District Six Museum*, Cape Town, MA dissertation, (UWC: 2007), p. 10.

<sup>21</sup> Prosalendis, S, *District Six: Image and Representation*, South African National Gallery 28.10.1995 – 25.02.1996, (Cape Town, District Six Museum, 1995), p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> Molotch, H, The space of Lefebvre, *Theory and Society*, vol. 22, no. 6, (New York: Springer, Dec., 1993), p. 892.



understanding and constructing a sense of place, and it is important to understand community museum's as a model that actively supports intangible heritage, as postulated by Laura-Jane Smith and the Burra Charter.<sup>23</sup>

### **Museum methodologies: voices, fragments and memory**

Early campaigning gave way to an exhibition entitled "Streets: Retracing District Six" that was based on an 'archaeology of memory' in which one of the central elements were the original blue and white enamel street signs rescued from the District. The exhibition opened in 1999 and was launched in the renovated Methodist Church building in Buitenkant Street that is still utilized as the Museum's main site of engagement.<sup>24</sup> This led to the creation of "an imaginative tool" - the District Six floor map on which former residents could "write themselves back into the centre of the city, to claim their history and their space. People marked bus stops, places where somebody sold peanuts, their old schools, and their homes".<sup>25</sup> The Floor Map has gained a powerful iconographical presence in the Museum's narrative today and in many ways it has become a memorial to the remembrance of absence.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> District Six: A National Heritage Site, Draft of Conservation Management Plan prepared for SAHRA Council, July 2006, (Cape Town: District Six Foundation, 2006), p. 46.

<sup>24</sup> Layne, V, Smith, T, 'Moving on up, District Six Museum Newsletter', Vol. 3, No. 1, August 1998. p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> Layne, V, 'The District Six Museum: An Ordinary People's Place', *The Public Historian*, Vol. 30, No. 1, (February 2008), p. 59.

<sup>26</sup> 'District Six Museum Digging Deeper Exhibition, Part 1: Floor Map, Draft Conservation Recommendation Plan and Discussion Document', August 2006.



Figure 2 Recreating District Six as a hand painted floor map. Archival Phtograph. District Six Museum archive.



Figure 3 Visitor viewing the 1960's map inside the District Six Museum. Archival photograph. District Six Museum Archive.

The map enabled and supported ex-residents to reinterpret space after loss, displacement and separation and re-enter their own histories. As a community museum, The District Six Museum commemorates and reconstructs a sense of community that District Six represented. It does so on its own terms and “uses storytelling as a way of recovering the memory of forced removals”<sup>27</sup>. Ex-residents act as guides in the museum; therefore a living link exists between site, museum and personal memories of the District. Thus the Museum not only displays visual elements such as the familiar seven steps of Hanover Street in the logo of the Museum. – ex-residents and education officers Joe Schaffers, Linda Fortune and Noor Ebrahim also narrate their memories of the District from their perspective. Surrounded by photographs of family, friends, streets signs, music, homes and sites they narrate their stories to groups of visitors, tourists and school children. In this manner places are revisited and each narrator identifies issues that engage with current themes, thereby acting as agents of social transformation.

<sup>27</sup> ‘District Six Museum’, Brochure. 2010.



Figure 4 Noor Ebrahim and museum visitors standing on the District Six map, Archival photograph, undated, District Six Museum archive.

By continuously relating their life stories reinforces the Museum’s didactic role in shaping knowledge set within a diverse cultural context. It is a safe space to build courage, forgiveness and partnerships and to make meaning of contemporary lives. Walls, floors and fabric have become surfaces saturated with prose, texture and meaning providing an opportunity to share experiences. Piece by piece former residents continuously ‘build’ on the past as fragments turn up in the museum. Continuous memory making is “integrated into the museum space and is witness to the “ongoing interrogation of remembrance”, a celebration of *gees* (spirit), “rather than being a place of fixed memory”, according to Peggy Delport.<sup>28</sup>

A combination of talents, networking, commemorative events and reunions allow ex-residents, artists, curators, museum staff, interns, scholars, musicians, trustees, poets and volunteers to sustain the work of the Museum. As Jos Thorne notes,

The Museum’s emphasis on the interpretive and expressive processes of aesthetic production, whether visual, spatial or aural, was developed through a principle of developing exhibitions through collaborations with artists, writers performers.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Delport, P ““No matter where we are, we are here.” Beginnings; the fresco wall of the District Six Museum’. *City. Site. Museum. Reviewing memory practices at the District Six Museum*. Bonita Bennett, Chrischené Julius and Crain Soudien (eds), (Cape Town: District Six Museum, 2008), p.136

<sup>29</sup> Thorne, J, *Designing Histories, Kronos: Southern African Histories*, no. 34, (Bellville: University of the Western Cape),

Exhibits include a map of District Six, the name cloths, exhibitions such as *Digging Deeper*, a large interior mural *No matter where we are, we are here*, cherished photographs and oral histories reflect in a sensitive but practical curatorial method, the design approach.<sup>30</sup> Within the museum, exhibits were designed to relate to the viewer on a human scale and were made by hand so that the texture of materials relates to the human touch such as *Nomvuyo's Room and Rod's Room*.<sup>31</sup> The writer's floor created in the Memorial Hall of the museum brought together the writing of more than forty Cape Town writers. A floor mosaic utilizes the inscribed tiles and the writing reflects "diverse responses to the memory and meanings of District Six in Cape Town life".<sup>32</sup> Chrischené Julius notes how orality is woven into the exhibition strategy of the museum adding textual and visual expression to the interpretation of historical experience that "move beyond conventional documentary based history towards viewing historical evidence as a visual, oral and ultimately aesthetic form".<sup>33</sup>



Figure 5 Enlarged hand tinted archival photograph. *Digging Deeper* exhibition panel. District Six Museum. Photograph HH-R.

The Museum is imbedded with a range of mediums central to the broad exhibition narrative and the museum's core methodology and include photography, maps, art installations,

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November 2008, p. 139.

<sup>30</sup> Bennett, B, Julius, C and Soudien, C (eds), *City-Site-Museum. Reviewing memory practices at the District Six Museum*, (Cape Town: The District Six Museum, 2008), p. 68.

<sup>31</sup> Thorne, J, *Designing Histories. Kronos South African Histories*, No.34, November 2008, p. 149.

<sup>32</sup> Delpont, P, Preface, *Words in the House of Sound: The Writer's floor of the District Six Museum*, (Cape Town: District Six Museum, 2000), p. 4.

<sup>33</sup> Julius, C, "Oral history in the exhibitionary strategy of the District Six Museum", MA dissertation, (Cape Town: UWC, 2007).

enlarged hand tinted photographs of the Districts buildings, timelines, printed portraits, objects, mosaics, newspaper clippings, signs, embroidered and painted banners set against the architectural splendor of the Methodist church interior. A vibrant imaginative intimate memorial space has been created and is juxtaposed with elements drawn from apartheid's laws and policies that side by side narrate the experience of forced removals. These include displays of pass books, re-zoning, racial classification, aerial photographs and so forth.

The Museum has acquired a collection over time through donations by the large community of ex-residents of District Six and others that provides an intimate view of life in the area.

The Collections, Research and Documentation department is comprised of a photographic collection, audio-visual collection, resource centre and artworks. The department therefore manages a unique collection in the form of street signs and architectural vignettes, artifacts, photographic images, books, dissertations, theses and audio-visual recordings. As a repository of 'living memory' the work of the museum "draws on the idea of an archive as a living organism, fuelled by stories and experiences that are facilitated by the District Six ex-resident community and the Museum".<sup>34</sup>

After eleven years in existence the District Six Museum hosted the "Hands On District Six: Landscapes of Postcolonial Memorialisation Conference" in 2005. It was marked by key debates on memorialisation, human rights and heritage practice and publically articulated through a banner and slogan, "Hands on District Six: Taking Action: Re-Building Community" that was carried in a street procession.<sup>35</sup> To cover the costs of hosting the conference and the publication of a book *Reflections on the Conference, Hands on District Six, Landscapes of post-colonial memorialisation*, funding was acquired from the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller

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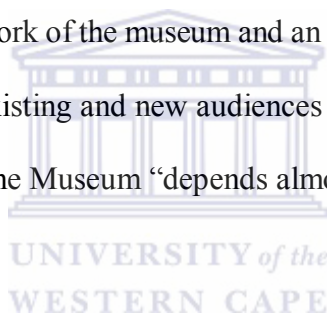
<sup>34</sup> District Six Museum, [www.districtsixmuseum.org.za](http://www.districtsixmuseum.org.za). accessed 26.09.2012.

<sup>35</sup> Smith, T, Wishes and Dreams, *Reflections on the Conference: Hands on District Six: landscapes of post-colonial memorialisation, Cape Town, 25-28 May 2005*, (Cape Town: District Six Museum, 2007), p.41.

Foundation and the British Council. The conference proved to be a mobilizing catalyst, as Bonita Bennett notes,

One of the key projects undertaken by the District Six Museum in the wake of the 2005 Conference, was the practical work related to the declaration of District Six as a National Heritage Site.<sup>36</sup>

District Six was proposed as a national heritage site on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2006. In order to reconnect with community The *Seven Steps membership Club* was launched in 2008 and according to Bonita Bennett “is open to past residents of District Six as well as residents from other areas of forced removal” and “intends to serve as a forum where members can connect with one another, share ideas” and “participate in Museum programming”.<sup>37</sup> Funding is a crucial aspect that supports the ongoing work of the museum and an initiative; Friends of the Museum was launched in 2011 to target existing and new audiences encouraging dialogue and a spirit of patronage. It emphasizes that the Museum “depends almost entirely on philanthropy for its existence”.<sup>38</sup>



The museum’s unique methodologies constantly evolve and encompass active and concerned engagements with issues of human rights, local, national and international communities and artistic collaboration. Multiple modalities employed include vigils, marches, debates, memory walks, workshops, tours, conferences and travelling exhibitions that work with unjust legacies and memory. The existence and practices of the District Six museum provide an empowering transactive signpost on South Africa’s democratizing landscape, as postulated by Ciraj Rassool,

The District Six Museum has emerged as one of the pre-

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<sup>36</sup> Bennett, B, District Six as a National Heritage Site, *Reflections on the Conference: Hands on District Six: landscapes of post-colonial memorialisation, Cape Town, 25-28 May 2005*, (Cape Town: District Six Museum, 2007), p.60.

<sup>37</sup> ‘The Seven Steps Club’, District Six Museum, Annual Report 2009/10, p. 27.

<sup>38</sup> ‘Friends of the District Six Museum Brochure’, 2011.

eminent examples of new museums whose memory methodologies are based on participation, annunciation and inscription, and as a model of memory work based upon the idea of ‘transactions’ of knowledge.<sup>39</sup>

### **Beyond boundaries: the reconstruction of District Six**

District Six and the District Six Museum have been the subject of numerous books, debates, exhibitions, conferences, memorialisation practices, academic papers, theses, architectural and urban studies. The redevelopment of District Six is followed closely in both print and online media. Bill Nasson, Crain Soudien, Ciraj Rassool, Valmont Layne, Christiaan Beyers, and others have reconstructed District Six popular, public and land claim histories through extensive scholarly and academic research. Others have played a role in the museum as founders, trustees and staff, jointly mediating and managing the balance between activism, professional cultural practice and commercial activities. Writing has also been a medium to challenge the apartheid claims laid against the people of the district as residents of an undesirable slum. Ex-residents such as Noor Ebrahim, Linda Fortune and Naz Gool-Ebrahim have produced their own accounts of life in the District following the autobiographical tradition of writing their life histories. According to an ex-resident of District Six, Naz Gool-Ebrahim,

Before apartheid was introduced in 1948, ethnic and cultural differences were unimportant in the District. Although there were numerous, complex problems confronting everyone in the community ... preoccupation with skin tones wasn't part of our upbringing, training or system. The District could have been a model for any village community anywhere in the world.<sup>40</sup>

At her home in Manley Villa, Rochester Road, Gool-Ebrahim, combined her radical political activism with her roles as devoted wife and mother to six children and “covered the walls of

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<sup>39</sup> Rassool, C, Slade, V, ‘‘Fields of Play’’: the District Six Museum and the history of football in Cape Town’, *Soccer and Society*, Vol. 13, Issue 2, 2012), pp. 188-206.

<sup>40</sup> Gool-Ebrahim, N, *The Truth is on the Walls*, co-Authors Ruth Brenneis, D and Wingate-Pearse, S, (Cape Town: David Philip, 2011).

her home with political slogans in protest of their eviction”.<sup>41</sup> She worked tirelessly to oppose the evil of racial segregation.<sup>42</sup> Writing has allowed a range of meanings to emerge and this expressive genre is actively promoted within the museum. A writing workshop on memory and narrative was held at the District Six Museum during 2000 to foster story telling. Piecing together the Past was a joint adult education project between the Museum and the Department of Extra Mural Studies, UCT and indicates the Museums commitment to lifelong learning.<sup>43</sup> Richard Rive, another ex-resident and writer reflects on his intrinsic motivation and states,

I want to help restore a sense of history to people,  
people who have long been buffeted by hostile laws  
and made exiles from the homes of their choice,  
because of eviction under the group areas act.<sup>44</sup>

Another view of the District has been reconstructed, through a biography of gangster Joe Silver by Charles van Onselen. He has dealt with the 1900-05 period highlighting Jewish immigrant commercial activities with specific reference to Silvers nefarious underworld networks and trade in women as brothel keeper and pimp.<sup>45</sup> An exhibition the ‘Jews of District Six’, opened at the South African Jewish Museum in November 2012 and reconstructs Jewish immigrant life within the District. It acknowledges Jewish culture as a significant contribution to the area and the exhibition is a celebration of identity, roots and belonging.

Ex-residents have contributed to the reconstruction of the district through oral histories,

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<sup>41</sup> ‘Writing on the wall in District 6’, Weekend Argus, August 12 2011, p. 15.

<sup>42</sup> Gool-Ebrahim, N, *The Truth is on the Walls*, co-Authors Ruth Brenneis, D and Wingate-Pearse, S, (Cape Town: David Philip, 2011).

<sup>43</sup> ‘Piecing together the past: a writing workshop, Adult Education Programme 2000’, District Six Museum Archive.

<sup>44</sup> *Words in the House of Sound, The Writer’s Floor of the District Six Museum*, (Cape Town: District Six Museum: 2000). p.12.

<sup>45</sup> Van Onselen, C, *The Fox and the Flies: The world of Joseph Silver Racketeer and psychopath*, (Jonathan Cape: London: 2007), p. 241.



personal photographs and artifacts. The apartheid denial of ‘home’ within the city bowl and the formation of the District Six Museum as ‘keeper’ of memories informs curatorial directions. As Serena Nanda notes, “It is through the exhibit of neighborhood artifacts and the intense involvement of ex- residents that the museum achieves an intimate sense of the neighborhood that is no more”.<sup>46</sup> Newspaper clippings relating to District Six and forced removals and obituaries of well personalities, activists, musicians who are associated with the District are selected daily from the *Cape Times*, the *Argus* and community newspapers. They are meticulously cut out and filed for future reference in the Museum’s resource centre.



Figure 6 District Six mural by artist and muralist Mak1one. Photographer HH-R.

Mak1one, a muralist and artist pays homage to District Six in a mural painted on Substation 13 at the corners of Constitution and Canterbury Streets. Thus processes of inscription and creative expression emerge on buildings in the vicinity of the District Six Museum reflect imaginative personal responses. Murals or street art renew decayed parts of the city outside the conventional space of the gallery and museum. A building is reinterpreted as personalized canvas thereby interrupting the cityscape.

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<sup>46</sup> Nanda, S, “South African museums and the creation of a new national identity”, *American Anthropologist*, (June 2004), vol. 106, Issue 2, p. 384.

The weekly Huis Kombuis craft workshops stimulate memories around food that are translated into expressive beautiful embroidered pieces reflecting unique cuisine and food rituals. The liberating role of art, music and creative processes allow ex-residents and workshop participants to reassess and self-reflect on their histories in alternative ways.



Figure 7 Mr Peterson, an ex-resident of District Six and fellow musicians on the vacant District Six site.<sup>47</sup>

Photographer Jansje Wissema was drawn to the area documenting the unique character of the streets, buildings and spirit of its residents. A Dutch architect, Gerrit Korteweg, photographed the District in 1968 as part of the redevelopment team tasked “with conducting an architectural survey for the redevelopment of District Six”. Years later he visited the District Six Museum realizing the full consequence of his actions and refers to this episode as “a burden on my soul” and donated 42 colour slides to the Collections Department of the Museum shortly thereafter.<sup>48</sup> Photographs of District Six by Jan Greshoff reflect the fragility of urban existence and a tangible reference point: serving as a palimpsest where the past and present reconfigure.

<sup>47</sup> ‘District 6, Golden Arrow Moment Magazine’, [www.goldenarrow.net](http://www.goldenarrow.net), accessed 22.10.2012.

<sup>48</sup> ‘Facing the Ghosts of the Past, Hands On District Six: The District Six Museum Newsletter’, Vol. 6, No. 2, (Cape Town: District Six Museum, July/August, 2004), p.1.

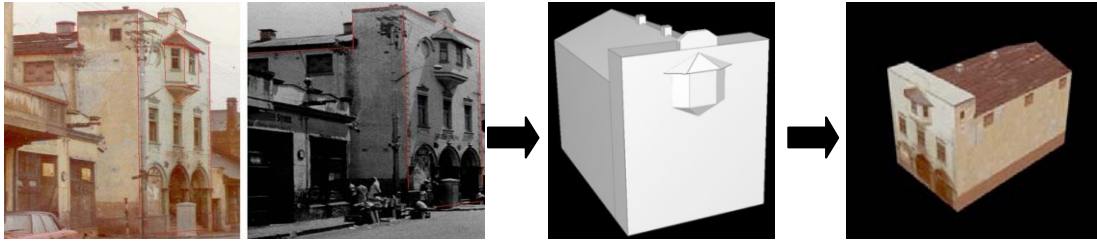


Figure 8 digital reconstructions of destroyed District Six buildings from uncalibrated and/or damaged archival photographs. Christopher de Kadt, James Grain and Patrick Marais: UCT.

In a reconstruction of the architectural heritage of District Six, Christopher de Kadt, James Gain and Patrick Marais from UCT have utilized a framework that is a “combination of semi-automatic camera calibration, model-based architecture-specific photogrammetry, and texture synthesis to reconstruct the geometry and texture of a building so that it can be incorporated into a heritage-based virtual environment, such as a museum display”.<sup>49</sup>

Mapping the built environment through urbanism studies, maps, photographs and more recently virtual reality technology, whether by officially appointed state bodies, photographers or architectural students has created a system of knowledge about the District. By recreating a map of the District and placing it on the floor of the Museum, has drawn upon the suppressive apartheid configurations of surveillance, space, place and race. This constitutes an understanding that maps and photographs allowed areas, streets and individuals to be singled out. According to Andre Duminy, “In South Africa, mapping has been part and parcel of the story of conquest and colonization.”<sup>50</sup> Therefore the map created by the museum subverts this notion and reconfigures space as conscious and “progressive space that engage citizens with a dialogue about the idea of the nation” as postulated by Karen Till.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup> de Kadt, C, Gain, J, Marais, P, Revisiting District Six: A Case Study of Digital Heritage Reconstruction from Archival Photographs, Afrigraph '09, Proceedings of the 6<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Computer Graphics, Virtual Reality, Visualization and Interaction in Africa, ( New York: ACM, 2009), p. 13.

<sup>50</sup> Duminy, A, *Mapping South Africa, A Historical Survey of South African Maps and Charts*, (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2011), p. 5.

<sup>51</sup> *Reflections on the Conference: Hands on District Six, landscapes of post-colonial memorialisation, Cape Town, 25-28 May 2005.* (Cape Town: District Six Museum), p. 40.

An important aspect of the museums work was the documentation of ex-residents testimonies for a District Six collective land restitution claim. The District Six Beneficiary Trust facilitates ex-residents acquiring new homes in the District and marks a stage in “the land restitution process”. It can be seen as a platform “working to expand citizenship by engendering a new ‘rights community’ consisting of those who qualify and are empowered to claim the rights and entitlements set out in the Restitution Act” as examined by Christiaan Beyers.<sup>52</sup>

Although reconstruction of the District Six is a process of re-imagining it has produced an archive construed of diverse and marginalized voices previously excluded from dominant accounts of South African history.



Figure 9 Linda Fortune, an ex-resident of District Six gazes at the Moravian Hill Chapel, 2002. District Six Museum archive.

District Six has been reconstructed in particular ways as indicated and my argument relates to an absence of histories in and through buildings. What begins to emerge is that certain structures maintain continuity, albeit with noticeable adaptations and additions, while others are reduced to rubble. Therefore buildings act as tangible touchstones and present us with the opportunity to investigate their histories. “Buildings are artifacts in themselves, created at

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<sup>52</sup> Beyers, C, “Land Restitution’s Rights Communities’: The District Six Case, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, (Taylor & Francis, June, 2007), vol. 33, no. 2. p. 267.

considerable expense and reflecting intellectual and material context of the society in which they were founded” as noted by Sophie Forgan.<sup>53</sup>

### **The built environment: post apartheid museums and memorialisation in Cape Town**

Buildings are bound by place and their histories inform constructions of heritage. The post-apartheid period has seen the emergence of site museums that frame and contain narratives that reflect turning points in historical consciousness. The Iziko Slave Lodge, (1998) through its exhibitions explores and reflects on Cape Town’s long history of slavery. The Robben Island Museum, (1999), a world heritage site, seeks to portray the island as a symbol of hardship and political freedom centered on Nelson Mandela’s legacy. The Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum (2000) incorporating Hostel 33 is a sensitively curated and preserved migrant labour hostel building housing the storied lives of those who lived within a system of migrant labour. Community House (2012), a provincial heritage site, places emphasis on the building which

serves as a site of memory and living heritage that acknowledges and propagates the role of the labour movement and the struggles of working class communities for a united, non-racial and democratic South Africa and continues to house NGOs and trade unions, the tenants have raised funds to develop a labour and community history museum precinct centered around the Trade Union Library (TUL) and its archive.<sup>54</sup>

Particular histories of buildings have therefore shifted authorship enabling critique and contestations over how and by whom history and heritage are constructed. This trend towards the incorporation of buildings is partially due to contestations over the failure of academic history to include other voices. Heritage constructions unbundle conformist and authoritarian histories and archives by including diverse material forms and is indicative of a paradigm shift from popular history to public histories.

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<sup>53</sup> Forgan, S, Building the Museum: Knowledge, Conflict, and the Power of Place, *Isis*, Vol. 96, No. 4 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press: December 2005), p. 574.

<sup>54</sup> Community House, [www.archivalplatform.com](http://www.archivalplatform.com), 25.10.2012.

As buildings have been utilized in various landscapes and settings they have provided heritage practitioners with narratives that contribute to critical historical interpretation. Their absence is a lost opportunity according to Shamil Jeppie,

The destruction of District Six was about far more than the reduction of buildings to rubble and dust. These structures were homes and dwellings, carrying intimate layered histories often stretching back into the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Individual houses or blocks also represented whole ethnic or class subcultures, as well as the depths of family experience and personal memory. If bulldozed walls could speak...<sup>55</sup>

Photographs of buildings are exhibited in the District Six Museum as part of the *Digging Deeper* exhibition. Street maps provide a context and photographs are treated as windows through which a section of the street is visible. They serve as a conduit to understanding spatial and social relationships while indexing multiple layers of meaning.

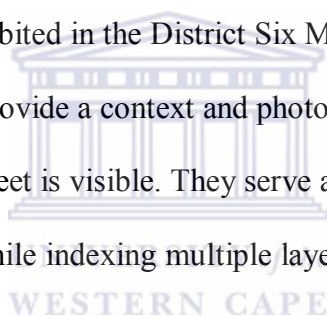


Figure 10 Fleet of delivery vehicles outside the Crescent Restaurant, Photographer unknown. Digging Deeper exhibition panel, District Six Museum. Photographer HHR



Figure 11 Standard Building, Hanover Street, Photographer Jan Greshoff. Digging Deeper exhibition panel. District Six Museum. Photographer HHR.

Yet photographs of District Six create a two dimensional archive while existing buildings

<sup>55</sup> Judin, H, Vladislavić, I, eds. *Blank\_\_ : Architecture, Apartheid and After*, (Rotterdam: NIA, 1999), p. 11.

construct a tangible relationship with the past that a printed image cannot achieve. If we are to understand the area in a different light, constructing the histories in and through buildings is crucial. Zayd Minty, an advocate of urban heritage rejuvenation described the Sacks Futeran set of buildings as an “engine house” in the East City precinct. By focusing on “the hidden histories of Cape Town” such as stories of colonialism, slavery, indigenous people, political struggles against apartheid and discrimination found within the East city precinct. He declares that buildings which have tales to tell include The Grand Parade, The Castle, The Granary, The Slave Lodge, The Drill Hall, The City Hall, The Grootte Kerk and Church Square.<sup>56</sup>

### **The District Six Museum and the Sacks Futeran complex of buildings**

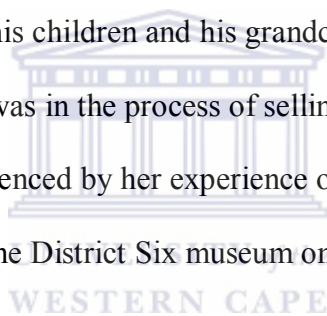
A building is a physical ‘object’ that has a degree of solid continuity. As a heritage practitioner I am interested in the ways in which narratives of space of particular buildings develop and how buildings are host to multiple histories. Thus it becomes possible to understand something of what they symbolize for us today. The permanence of older buildings and their presence in the urban landscape are associated with architectural and social histories of Cape Town. District Six is a historical precinct and the remaining buildings on the site and in the vicinity have a role to play in contributing to the heritage and narratives of the area. I argue that there is an absence of histories in and through the remaining buildings on the periphery that were once part of the urban fabric and “material reminders” of District Six and the city.<sup>57</sup> Is the very survival of a building testament to its importance as a social and psychological touchstone? I think that is the question that most interests me about the Sacks Futeran Buildings and are the rationale behind this study. The buildings consist of a set of five interconnected buildings that belonged to E. Sacks Futeran & Co. (Pty) Ltd, known colloquially as Sacks Futeran. The buildings are situated on the corner of

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<sup>56</sup> Minty, Z, ‘Sacks Futeran: An “engine house” in the East City precinct, Hands On District Six: The District Six Museum Newsletter’, Vol. 6, No. 4, December 2004.

<sup>57</sup> ‘No matter where we are, we are here, Hands On District Six’, Brochure, undated.

Buitenkant and Caledon Streets extending into Harrington Street, Cape Town and were an important aspect in the lives of many individuals in the immediate area. These buildings were associated with a family business founded by Jewish immigrants and were occupied by the Sacks family and three generations of the Futeran family, owners of a wholesale business and the buildings for over ninety years. Linda Fortune, an ex-resident of District Six, and heritage tour guide developed a tour that took visitors into the Sacks Futeran buildings where she “got to know the staff”.<sup>58</sup> During the course of 2001-2 she frequently visited Sacks Futeran with a tour group and requested “Mr. Futeran to take us on a journey through the building” and “he would take us up the stairs and down the stairs” and there were “dark dusty cobwebs all over the place”.<sup>59</sup> Through these encounters Linda Fortune became familiar with Mr. Martin Futeran’s family photographs of his children and his grandchildren “out on his desk for the public to see”.<sup>60</sup> As the business was in the process of selling off all stock with the view to closing down, Linda, deeply influenced by her experience of the buildings, stated that “this place is going to become part of the District Six museum one day”.<sup>61</sup>



Due to existing space constraints at the Buitenkant Methodist Church building where the District Six Museum is located the Museum approached Mr. Martin Futeran and leased a portion of the Sacks Futeran buildings. The business was still operating and after a period of co-occupation by the Futeran's, the District Six Beneficiary Trust and the District Six Museum, the District Six Museum Foundation Trust bought the building in 2002.<sup>62</sup> The buildings changed hands for R 2 7000000.00 and the business did not relocate and ceased

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<sup>58</sup> Fortune, L, Interviewed by Hayley Hayes-Roberts, 24<sup>th</sup> April 2012.

<sup>59</sup> Fortune, L, Interviewed by Hayley Hayes-Roberts, 24<sup>th</sup> April 2012.

<sup>60</sup> Fortune, L, Interviewed by Hayley Hayes-Roberts, 24<sup>th</sup> April 2012.

<sup>61</sup> Fortune, L, Interviewed by Hayley Hayes-Roberts, 24<sup>th</sup> April 2012.

<sup>62</sup> Agreement of lease between The trustees for the time being of the District Six Museum Foundation (No. T2939/94) (the Lessor) and Martin Futeran (the Lessee), June 2002, District Six Museum archive.



trading in 2007.<sup>63</sup> Gordon Futeran reflects on this change of ownership,

I think both Martin and I were very happy that some of the history of Cape Town... would be preserved and although we didn't have ownership we could watch the development of it and it went into hands that want to link themselves to the past, to the good times, to people who lived in the area and they would be giving back to those people.<sup>64</sup>

After an extensive period of restoration and transformation the buildings now house the District Six Museums Homecoming Centre and the Fugard Theatre.



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<sup>63</sup> 'Sacks Futeran Building Project, Fields of Play: Football memories and Forced Removals in Cape Town', Brochure, 2010, District Six Museum archive.

<sup>64</sup> Futeran, G, Interviewed by Thulani Nxumalo on 1<sup>st</sup> April.2003, District Six Museum sound archive.

The map in conjunction with photographs of the buildings and the site plan serve to orientate the reader.

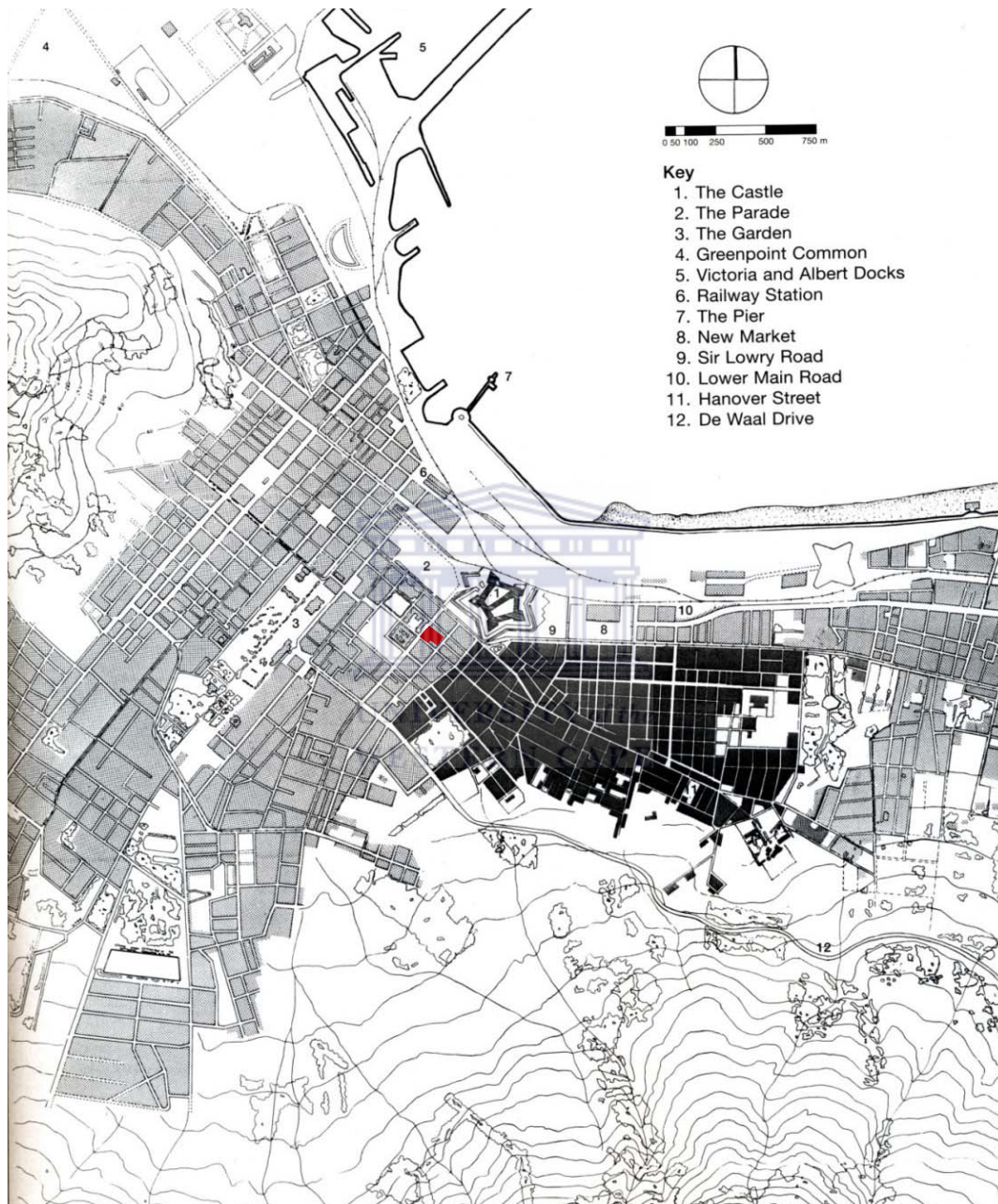


Figure 12 Map drawn from 1926 aerial photographs (Department of Land Surveys and Mapping).<sup>65</sup>

 Indicates the position of the set of five interconnected Sacks Futeran buildings within Cape Town.

<sup>65</sup> Pistorius, P, editor, *Texture and Memory: The Urbanism of District Six. The sustainable urban and housing development research unit.* (Cape Town: Cape Technikon, 2002), p.39.





Figure 17 The District Six Beneficiary and Redevelopment Trust signage. 2009. District Six Museum archive.

The purchase of the buildings was made possible through a generous grant from the Atlantic Philanthropies Foundation and a substantial reduction in the selling price by Martin Futeran who “kindly provided the Museum with the opportunity to acquire the buildings”.<sup>66</sup> This gesture of philanthropic goodwill dovetails with the principle of civic engagement that the District Six Museum promotes. Furthermore it serves in understanding the role of a community museum within the city. This speaks to the general situation in South Africa where NGOs and foundations often work towards “making improvements in the lives of people who need change the most”.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> The Sacks Futeran Building Project is mentioned in ‘Fields of Play: Football memories and Forced Removals in Cape Town’, Brochure, 2010. District Six Museum archive.

<sup>67</sup> The Atlantic Philanthropies, [www.atlanticphilanthropies.org](http://www.atlanticphilanthropies.org), accessed 06.10.2011.

## Chapter Two

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It struck me that our history is contained in the homes we live in, that we are shaped by the ability of these simple structures to resist being defiled. There in the heart of Salaam's house the scene had been set for the inevitable drama of our lives.

Achmat Dangor <sup>1</sup>

In chapter One I explored the makings of the District Six Museum, its methodologies and how District Six has been reconstructed through autobiography, oral histories, tourist narratives, photographs, memory and craft workshops, literature, urban studies, architecture, land restitution and virtual reality. However after reviewing the varied imaginary and real manifestations in reconstructing the district an exclusion of an in-depth study of buildings which are pertinent to District Six lives has been noted. In this chapter I argue that a specific set of buildings and their narratives have a valuable cultural contribution in shaping histories of District Six and the city.

### **Histories in and through the Sacks Futeran buildings**

The visual vocabulary of a building includes exterior elements that assist in understanding its historical underpinnings and “values”. On the façade of the District Six Homecoming Centre, original horizontally plastered lettering reads: E. Sacks Futeran & Co. (Pty) Ltd and the word Merchants below that. E. Sacks refers to the founder, Mr. Eliyahu (Elias) Sacks, as gleaned from an 1897 naturalisation certificate found in a “dingy and dust-ridden” corner of the building. He was naturalized according to Martin Futeran by “Lord Rosenmount, during

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<sup>1</sup> Achmat Dangor, *Kafka's Curse* cited in Jeppie, S, *Interiors, District Six*, c.1950, Judin, H, Vladislavić, *blank\_*: *Architecture, Apartheid and After*, (Rotterdam: NIA, 1999).

the British occupation”.<sup>2</sup> The business was established in 1906, as a general wholesaler, by his great grandfather, Elias Sacks, who had immigrated from Rietavas, Lithuania, his sons Isaac and Sam, and his son-in-law Shmuel Futeran, after splitting from M. Bloch & Co.”<sup>3</sup>



Figure 18 Archival photograph identified as Mr. Eliahu (Elias) Sacks. undated. District Six Museum archive. HH-R.

In 1910 an impressive two storey warehouse building was commissioned to house the new wholesale business on the corner of Buitenkant and Caledon Streets, Cape Town.<sup>4</sup> The Caledon Square Congregational Church in a Victorian Gothic style had previously stood on this site but had been demolished.<sup>5</sup> “Records indicate that the church was sold in 1907 because “the locality began to deteriorate”.<sup>6</sup> A structural remnant of the church was a Sunday school also in the Victorian Gothic style. This was retained, and utilized as an extended storage warehouse. The site was strategically situated near the harbour as most goods were imported from abroad. Built at considerable cost due to its size and height at the time, the

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<sup>2</sup> Futeran, M, Interviewed by Valmont Layne, 1<sup>st</sup> August 2001, District Six Museum sound archive.

<sup>3</sup> Chait, I, ‘Ye Olde Worlde’, *Cape Jewish Chronicle*. Photocopied article, undated. c1990.

<sup>4</sup> Original title deed unavailable due to digitization project at the Western Cape Deeds Office.

<sup>5</sup> See ‘Jewish arrival in South Africa’, South African Jewish Museum brochure, (Cape Town: South African Jewish Museum, 2001), p. 5.

main Sacks Futeran warehouse building nurtured the entrepreneurial business venture.<sup>7</sup> Upon viewing the interior and exterior one can ascertain that the building was designed as a voluminous warehouse space with wholesale trade the objective. From the buildings they sold dress material, men's, women's and children's clothing, importing cotton material from Manchester, England.<sup>8</sup>



Figure 19 Sacks Futeran warehouse building. Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Archival photograph. District Six Museum Archive.

Mr. Owen Futeran, son of Gordon Futeran recalls “seeing the Deed of Dissolution” between Sacks and Futeran “somewhere in the building...but that was many years ago.”<sup>9</sup> Messrs Sacks and Futeran parted ways leaving the Futerans in the business. With reference to E. Sacks Futeran & Co. I assume Company would refer to silent, local or international partners,

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<sup>6</sup> The Sacks Futeran Building Project is mentioned in, ‘Fields of Play: Football memories and Forced Removals in Cape Town’, Brochure, 2010. District Six Museum archive.

<sup>7</sup> Original title deed was unavailable at the Cape Town Deeds Office due to digitisation process.

<sup>8</sup> Futeran, M, Interviewed by Valmont Layne, 1<sup>st</sup> August 2001, District Six Museum archive.

<sup>9</sup> Futeran, O, interviewed by Hayley Hayes-Roberts, 15<sup>th</sup> June 2012.

investors or shareholders perhaps that were not involved in the day to day running of the business but were remunerated annually with a share of the profits.

An archival photograph reveals that Mr Sacks or a relative may have been in partnership in another business: Fig Bros and Sacks – General Merchants coinciding with or after his Futeran partnership. The location of the other business appears to be in or near District Six.



Figure 20 Fig Bros and Sacks General Merchants. Undated Archival photograph. District Six Museum archive.

### **An archive of things forgotten: silences, spaces and dust**

I developed a Sacks Futeran archive in 2011 which is loosely constructed of photographs and business paraphernalia left behind by brothers Gordon and Martin Futeran when they vacated the premises. These date back to the earliest occupation of the building, such as a large framed photographic studio portrait of a bearded man that was later identified as Elias Sacks by Mr Gordon Futeran.<sup>10</sup> I had, at that point, already transcribed the oral histories of Martin and Gordon Futeran and was inspired by the buildings I was working in. Therefore it felt like I had uncovered a narrative of a Jewish family business that could be told through things forgotten and the dynamics of the sensitively renovated spaces of the buildings on the periphery of District Six. This, I argue, is a similar methodology central to Jerry White's

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<sup>10</sup> I photographed the portrait that was emailed to Owen Futeran and via email it was identified as Elias Sacks by his father Gordon Futeran who now resides in Israel.



reconstruction of histories of the Rothschild Buildings, in the East End of London and compliments oral, visual and documentary histories of the area.<sup>11</sup>

Here it is relevant to reference the Lower East Side Tenement Museum in New York and the Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum in Lwandle near Cape Town. Both are site museums, depicting storied lives in cramped conditions of the previous occupants in and through the buildings. Objects, textures and narratives unlock the experience of everyday lives in the actual buildings in which those lives were lived and connect people with marginalised histories. In the Tenement Museum “The stories of the Lower East Side immigrants and migrants, long overlooked and once in danger of being forgotten, are now widely recognized as vital chapters in American history”.<sup>12</sup> This is pertinent to the contextualisation of South African histories, as seen at Lwandle, a community museum and by extension the District Six Museum as it memorialises District Six in the post-apartheid era. The Sacks Futeran archive of things forgotten generated interest in the District Six Museum, who view it as a glimpse into histories of the area that resonate with the narratives of District Six. An extension of this thesis would be the design of permanent exhibitionary hot spots within the Sacks Futeran buildings, thus evoking a semblance, narratives and atmosphere of a site museum.

Thus things forgotten are powerfully effective as an archive to achieve universal and personal histories. Sean Field, notes that “for several years it has been seemingly ‘inappropriate’ for progressive or radical historians, memory and heritage professionals to do family history research”.<sup>13</sup> Yet the rituals and relationships of family, and extended family, form the underpinnings of society and intergenerational shifts in socioeconomic status and other factors allow us to understand the inner and outer spheres of structure and influence that

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<sup>11</sup> White, J, *Rothschild Buildings Life in an East End tenement block 1887-1920*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980).

<sup>12</sup> Lower East side Tenement Museum, ‘A Tenement Story: The History of 87 Orchard Street and the Lower East Side Tenement Museum’, Booklet, (New York: The Lower East Side Tenement Museum, 1999), p. 18.

surround kinship roles and with immigrant families even more so. These buildings of commerce and trade have revealed a sliver of public life, centred on a business. According to Roy Wagner “It is because work and productivity are central to our system of values that we base our credit system on them. “Money” or “wealth” is therefore the symbol of work, of the production of things and services according to the techniques that are the preserved heritage of our historical development” and notes” As money represents the public standard of exchange ... productivity is public, the family can be said to be peripheral and private. The opposition between money and love dramatizes the sharp separation drawn in our culture between “business” and “home life”.<sup>14</sup>



Figure 21 Martin and Gordon Futeran's transcribed oral histories, photographs and a large red bible.2011.<sup>15</sup>

This notion is sharply evident in the building where I discovered family photographs in and out of frames and albums, negatives, old office equipment, bulky adding machines, receipt books, ledgers, brown battered cardboard suitcases, advertising signage, hand painted signage, wooden packing crates, classical records, school books, a large red bible c1890s, fiction and non-fiction books, Zionist literature, postcards, hotel receipts, textile swatches,

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<sup>13</sup> Field, S, “Remembering family: Should we be doing family histories?”, October 27, 2010, [www.archivalplatform.org/blog/entry/remembering\\_family1/](http://www.archivalplatform.org/blog/entry/remembering_family1/), accessed 09.07.2011.

<sup>14</sup> Wagner, R, *The Invention of Culture*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

<sup>15</sup> This New Testament bible dates back to the 1890s and Owen Futeran believes it was discovered by Elias Sacks or one of his sons or Shmuel Futeran when they took ownership of the Caledon Square Congregational Church. Sunday school building around 1907. District Six Museum archive.

pantyhose, paintings, prints, correspondence, horse racing journals, UCT examination papers, old cheque books, basket trolleys with wheels, travelers journals, wooden tables, wooden paneling with window insets, old heavy black telephones, textile swatch cards and various paraphernalia.



Figure 22 Four images of Sacks Futeran business paraphernalia stored in the archive situated in the Homecoming Centre of the District Six Museum. District Six Museum archive. HH-R.

### **Generations of Jewish shopkeepers: Elias, Isaac and Sam Sacks, Shmuel, Max, Martin, and Gordon Futeran.**

As wholesale merchants, Sacks Futeran purchased in bulk and resold in smaller bulk quantities which included,

Dress materials, Manchester piece goods, furnishings, quilts, men's and boys' outfitting, hosiery, underwear, haberdashery, ladies coats and gowns, children's outfitting, infants wear, hardware, crockery and fancy goods.<sup>16</sup>

Being importers of fabric, they were in a position to increase profits as manufactures, as they could supply themselves at cost. They operated the Safura Shirt Factory where men's and boys' shirts were produced, located at St James Walk, in their Harrington Street building. Large wooden crates found in the building are stamped Made in U.S.A. and a New York Studio photographic portrait of Max Futeran, father of Martin and Gordon (the last proprietors) suggest imports and dealings with American suppliers. In the formative years of the business, according to Martin Futeran, "my father and Grandfather used to spend alternate six months in London which back in the 1930's was the main Manchester cotton

centre and where South African's did most of their importing from...you could buy muslin for tuppence a metre".<sup>17</sup>



Figure 23 Max Futeran. New York Studio Portrait. Archival photograph. Undated. District Six Museum archive.



Figure 24 Group portrait on rooftop. Max Futeran is seated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> row, 2<sup>nd</sup> to the right. Archival photograph. Undated.<sup>18</sup> District Six Museum archive.

Printed cotton textiles became a widely traded commodity “in the early postwar years as British cotton fashion and furnishing fabric was ‘sold’ throughout the world by exhibitions and promotions generally”.<sup>19</sup> Centered in Manchester,

Cotton textile technology defined the British Industrial Revolution. To contemporaries and historians, the invention of spinning machines, the development of the factory system, and the social consequences of the transformed cotton industry marked the beginning of a new age...new technology reduces the price of existing goods and introduces new ones and, even if we believe that technology affected society primarily by profoundly altering work and social structure, change occurred, because new ways of doing things were cheaper, yielded products of higher value, and increased profits.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> E. Sacks Futeran & Co. (Pty) Ltd & Safura business card. undated. District Six Museum archive.

<sup>17</sup> Futeran, M, Interviewed by Valmont Layne, 1<sup>st</sup> August 2001, District Six Museum archive. p.1.

<sup>18</sup> This photograph appears to have been taken on the flat roof of the main Sacks Futeran warehouse building constructed in 1910. Kloof Neck is visible in the background and the Old Mutual building (1939) in the city assists in locating this image.

<sup>19</sup> Storey, J, *The Thames and Hudson Manual of Dyes and Fabrics*, (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1978), p. 14

<sup>20</sup> Knick Harley, C, Cotton textile prices and the Industrial Revolution, *The Economic History Review*, vol. 51, Issue 1, (Feb., 1998), p. 49.

It allowed for profitable importation from Britain and the core business of the Futeran's, was structured around the redistribution of printed and unprinted fabric and to a lesser degree on the sale and manufacture of finished goods.<sup>21</sup> Upon arrival in Cape Town on Union Castle ships the Docks Shipping Company was responsible for clearing the goods through customs and goods could be delivered timously which proved to be a competitive advantage.<sup>22</sup>



Figure 25 Sacks Futeran building Interior. Archival photograph. Undated. District Six Museum archive

Therefore the buildings under study are associated with a family business founded by Jewish immigrants from Lithuania between the city and District Six, “an area of approximately one and a half square kilometers was originally a mixed community of freed slaves, immigrants, labourers, merchants and artisans. Later it included a different kind of mix—artists, politicians, businessmen, musicians, writers teachers, sheikhs, priests, gangsters, sportsmen, housewives and always lots of children. Sixty to seventy thousand people lived together in great harmony until disaster struck”.<sup>23</sup>

### **The Jewish Quarter of District Six: shops and homes as embodiment of community**

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<sup>21</sup> Concluded due to the oral histories, business turnover/volume, things forgotten as archive and location of their buildings.

<sup>22</sup> Futeran, G, Interviewed by Thulani Nxumalo, 1<sup>st</sup> April 2003, District Six Museum sound archive.

<sup>23</sup> Ebrahim, N, *Noor's Story: My Life in District Six*, (Cape Town: District Six Museum, 1999), p.8.

“Many Jewish immigrants settled in the cosmopolitan area of District Six, Cape Town”.<sup>24</sup> Most of them settled in “Harrington Street at the turn of the century” and was known as the “Jewish quarter” of District Six.<sup>25</sup> A combination of factors influenced a Jewish exodus to European colonial frontiers. Many Jews had suffered under restrictive laws in Tsarist Russia and were forced to live within the Pale of Settlement.<sup>26</sup> Jews were forbidden to own rural land hence they were forced to relocate to towns where they constructed solid wooden dwellings. The rural economy was based on livestock, flax and wood and small trading enterprises developed within villages and shtetls (towns).<sup>27</sup>

These shtetls became the embodiment of Jewish culture and community in Eastern Europe and housed vast numbers of Jewish families, mainly pursuing religious scholarship and traditional occupations. Pogroms restricted opportunities for economic and secular educational advancement and severely thwarted the ideals of young men faced with up to 10 to 25 years compulsory conscripted military service in the Russian army.<sup>28</sup> Heads of households were often forced to become travelling salesmen, plying their trade between towns, constantly facing the possibility of anti-semitic intolerance.<sup>29</sup> Letters from emigrant Jews who lived in South Africa and elsewhere provided hope for a more promising future. The pull of new horizons and opportunities and the push of “suffocating restriction” created a situation in which many decided to leave Eastern Europe.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> ‘The first Jewish congregation 1841, South African Jewish Museum catalogue’, (Cape Town: South African Jewish Museum, 2001), p.7.

<sup>25</sup> Mendelsohn, R, Shain, M, *The Jews of South Africa an illustrated history*, (Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers: 2008), p 76-79.

<sup>26</sup> Kaplan, M, *From Shtetl to Steelmaking: The Story of Three Immigrant Families and a Family Business*, (Cape Town: Struik, 1979), p.18.

<sup>27</sup> Kaplan, M, *From Shtetl to Steelmaking*, (Cape Town: Struik, 1979), p.12-17.

<sup>28</sup> Kaplan, M, *From Shtetl to Steelmaking*, (Cape Town: Struik, 1979), p.13.

<sup>29</sup> Kaplan, M, *From Shtetl to Steelmaking*, (Cape Town: Struik, 1979), p.18.

<sup>30</sup> Kaplan, M, *From Shtetl to Steelmaking*, (Cape Town: Struik, 1979), p.13.



Figure 26 Framed charcoal drawing of Eastern European shtetl, undated. District Six Museum HH-R. archive.



Figure 27 Framed oil painting, undated. District Six Museum archive. HH-R.

Immigrant men “often began their working lives as *smouse* (pedlars), travelling to the country districts”, remembered by their distinct Yiddish accents: “Vant to puy a vaatch?”.<sup>31</sup> This “enabled them to set up their own stores”.<sup>32</sup> The small shops of the shtetls were translocated to the shores of southern Africa and the urban spaces of District Six. Many immigrant families found lodging within the area and Jewish business, social, religious and cultural networks flourished aimed at supporting fellow immigrants from Eastern Europe. Acculturation and to a lesser degree assimilation was achieved through naturalisation and secular schooling for boys and girls with an emphasis on learning English.<sup>33</sup> Jewish tradition “revolves around family, food and faith” and “their lives were interwoven with the lives of the communities they served”.<sup>34</sup>

Facing cultural and economic obstacles and the pursuit of religious observance was challenging. The Sabbath could not be kept as most of their customers were poor working class people paid weekly; on a Friday therefore their main shopping day was Friday and

<sup>31</sup> Mendelsohn, R, Shain, M, *The Jews of South Africa an illustrated history*, (Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers: 2008), p.40.

<sup>32</sup> South African Jewish museum, “New Roots”, “Dorps and Towns”, [www.sajewishmuseum.co.za/immigrant\\_jewish\\_life/newroots](http://www.sajewishmuseum.co.za/immigrant_jewish_life/newroots). accessed 20.07.2011.

<sup>33</sup> Kaplan, M, *From Shtetl to Steelmaking*, (Cape Town: Struik, 1979), p.18.

<sup>34</sup> South African Jewish museum, “New Roots”, “Dorps and Towns”, [www.sajewishmuseum.co.za/immigrant\\_jewish\\_life/newroots](http://www.sajewishmuseum.co.za/immigrant_jewish_life/newroots). accessed 20.07.2011.

Saturday. Nevertheless Jewish businesses flourished within the District and included drapers, clothing and shoe shops, photography studios, music shops such as Polliack's established in 1905, barbershops, boarding houses, bioscopes, brothels, gambling dens, book sellers, Yiddish theatre, hoteliers, hardware stores, cafe's and others types of businesses.<sup>35</sup>



Figure 28 South African Co-operative Bootmakers Union.



Figure 29 Pollacks Music Store, Hanover Street. District Six Museum archive.



Figure 30 Mr. Berelowitz in the doorway of his drapery store in Hanover Street, Jewish shops within District Six. Archival photographs. *The Jews of South Africa*.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Mendelsohn, R, Shain, M, *The Jews of South Africa an illustrated history*, (Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers: 2008).

<sup>36</sup> Mendelsohn, R, Shain, M, *The Jews of South Africa an illustrated history*, (Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers: 2008).



One such individual, Mr. Moshe Beikinstadt immigrated to Cape Town from Lithuania in 1903 to escape conscription and founded Beikinstadt booksellers at 38 Canterbury Street, District Six. A Judaica cultural landmark for decades, it thrived for three generations before closure in 2009. Charlie's Bakery now occupies this building, constructed in 1898. Elisheva Hirschman-Green, in her study on the Jews of District Six 1880-1920, notes that, "the memory of the symbiotic relationship of the Litvaks with others in the dynamic District Six community at the turn of the century is gradually being eradicated from remembrance" and notes that "The *helpmekaar* (help one another) culture that existed in District Six "enabled these working class individuals to join into a community".<sup>37</sup>

The *helpmekaar* culture that developed in District Six between its multi-cultural and cosmopolitan residents is well illustrated by fish hawker Jackie Oaker b.1916,

Then with the snoek, it work the same way as the stock fish too, stock fish you used to sell with the heads at that time. Fresh out of the boat, with the heads on. Now our coloured people don't buy yet stockfish, Jews buys it. I go up to Maynard Street. We also got an area of Jews in our area – Harrington Street – all Jewish area; Canterbury Street – Jewish area. I sell my stockfish there and at a later stage I know the people to like vis (fish) Frikadelle and things like that – I come to Roger Street and Aspeling Street – where the Moslem people is, Stone Street area – they buy now the rest.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Hirshman-Green, Elisheva M. 'Other' in a Community of 'Others': *The Jews of District Six, Cape Town 1880-1920*, Senior Honors Thesis, (Dartmouth College: May 2004). p. 83-85.

<sup>38</sup> Oaker, J, oral history, District Six Museum sound archive.

Jewish food became part of the culture's contribution to the community at large, "highlighting a link with the past, a celebration of roots, and a symbol of continuity...part of immigrant culture that survived long after their European roots had been destroyed".<sup>39</sup>

### **Dressing the District and the country**

Oral histories reveal that the Sacks and Futeran families built their business success through relationships developed in District Six, Cape Town and through traveller salesmen. It functioned "as a space where young couples from the District invested in their trousseau and where textiles and other wares were purchased".<sup>40</sup> They supplied many local shops and small traders in the area, extending credit and arranging terms with suppliers and buyers alike.

We helped many many small businesses, we gave them extensive credit and people came in here and they said "Mr Futeran or Mr Sacks...we want to start a business we have no money we have small livelihood what can we do?", so he replied "well come along and take ten or twenty pounds worth of goods and you will pay me when you've sold the goods" and through that many businesses in the country started up and people were very successful.<sup>41</sup>



Figure 31 Metal and wooden Sacks Futeran hanging interior advertisement signage. District Six Museum archive. HH-R.

<sup>39</sup> See 'Dorps and Towns'. South African Jewish Museum. [www.sajewishmuseum.com](http://www.sajewishmuseum.com), accessed 20.07.2011.

<sup>40</sup> District Six Museum, Annual Report 2009/10, p. 23.

<sup>41</sup> Futeran, M, Interviewed by Valmont Layne, 1<sup>st</sup> August 2001, District Six Museum archive.



Figure 32 Ground floor interior view of the Sacks Futran fabric department. Archival photograph. Undated. District Six Museum archive.





Figure 33 Smartly dressed children on a District Six stoep. Photographer Cloete Breytenbach. *The spirit of District Six*. 1970.



Figure 34 Tailoring suit fabric in District Six. Photographer Cloete Breytenbach. *The spirit of District Six*. 1970.

Mr Solly Kushlink became a traveller salesman for the Sacks Futeran after the closure of the Parow Bargain House, a retail venture that had been liquidated. An archival photograph depicts Mr Solly Kushlink standing next a 1920s fully enclosed commercial travellers van with Sacks Futeran company signage. The tail end of the vehicle is stuck in a ditch and smartly dressed Solly Kushlink appears unfazed by this mishap in the Orange Free State somewhere.<sup>42</sup> These Sacks Futeran on the road salesmen ventured far and wide into South West Africa and South Africa to present samples, collect orders and call on shopkeepers. Up to twelve travellers departed for a few weeks in the early days. Later on they had a different routine and departed on a Monday and returned on a Friday, to be at home on the weekend.

<sup>42</sup> Kaplan, M, *From Shtetl to Steelmaking: The Story of Three Immigrant Families and a Family Business*, (Cape Town: Struik, 1979), p.61.

They stayed in hotels along their designated routes calling on shopkeepers in most small towns and outposts. Shopkeepers were offered samples of clothing and textiles that were transported in brown suitcases. Orders were taken and bulk goods delivered, probably on the next trip, one to two weeks later. A few travellers books were found in the 1903 Sacks Futeran warehouse building and one marked 'Heiman' records entries dated 1986. They reveal the customers and towns called on and include: Olifantshoek, Reitz, Ficksburg, Mariental, Grunau, Keetmanshoop, Bethaniem, Koes, Gochas, Arano's Maltahöhe, Osh, Tsumeb, Opuwu, Omdangwu, Otjinene, Oshakati, Rundu, Grootfontein, Otiwarongo, Omaruru, Kaharijien, Windhoek, Gobabis, Rehoboth, Omitara, Okakarara, Winburg, Petrus Steyn, Modderivier Opwag, Kakemas, Pofadder, Karasburg, Walvisbay, Upington, Garies, Bitterfontein Aggeneys, Askham, Citrusdal, Springbok, Nieuwoudtville, Brandvlei, Kamieskroon, Komagas, van Rhynsdorp, Klaver, Lamberstbaai, Vredendal, Graafwater, Clanwilliam, Lutzville, Stillbaai, Hartenbos, George, Harkerville, Plettenberg bay, Knysna, Stellenbosch, Strand, Stormsrivier, Stormvlei, Heidelberg, Jongensfontein, Mosselbaai, Oudthoorn to name but a few. The last entry is dated 17 May 2007.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> E. Sacks Futeran & Co (Pty) Ltd accounting books and travelers journals.



Figure 35 A Sacks Futeran agents van, Archival photograph. Undated. District Six Museum archive.

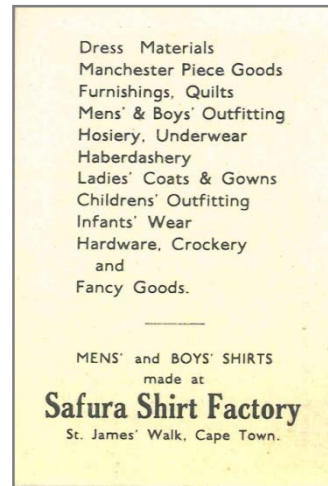


Figure 36 Sacks Futeran/Safura business card. District Six Museum archive.

Martin Futeran’s oral history reveals an incident in which his nephew Owen Futeran, an estate agent, meets a new client and is told a story of how the client's father had been assisted in times of hardship by Max Futeran, enabling him to start a small retail establishment and indicates an ethos of patronage.<sup>44</sup> Martin Futeran remembered that people from District Six worked as employees at Sacks Futeran. He was sent by his father Max to work in one of their customers shops in Hanover Street over the Christmas period two years in a row. He gained valuable working experience at A. Levy and Company under the watchful eye of “gunman Levy because he used to keep a gun in his back pocket”. Here most customers paid via a lay bye system. Therefore during the year clothing, shoes and other goods were paid for incrementally, weekly or monthly and at Christmas or Eid, the suit or selected items were paid off and retrieved in time for the festivities.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Futeran, G, Interviewed by Thulani Nxumalo on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2003, District Six Museum archive.

<sup>45</sup> Futeran, M, Interviewed by Valmont Layne, 1<sup>st</sup> August 2001, District Six Museum archive.



Figure 37 Gordon Futeran, Archival photograph. Undated. District Six Museum archive.



Figure 38 E. Sacks Futeran & Co. business card. District Six Museum archive.

Martin Futeran also “spent two years at University” and “then came into the business” where his “elder brother Gordon” was already established. “He was four years older than I was” and “in those days it was the natural thing to do you mostly followed in your father’s footsteps” as “business was pretty good for many years”.<sup>46</sup> Martin and his brother Gordon Futeran, inherited the business when their father Max died suddenly at the age of 58 and notes, “my brother and I assumed the roles”.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Futeran, M, Interviewed by Valmont Layne, 1<sup>st</sup> August 2001, District Six Museum archive.

<sup>47</sup> Futeran, M, Interviewed by Valmont Layne, 1<sup>st</sup> August 2001, District Six Museum archive.



Figure 39 Sacks Futeran Interior signage. District Six Museum archive. HH-R.



Figure 40 District Six street style. Photographer Cloete Breytenbach. *The spirit of District Six*. 1970.



Figure 41 Interior hand painted Sacks Futeran cardboard signs. District Six Museum archive. HH-R.

The oral history of Linda Fortune recalls that only people who had a special card could buy from Sacks Futeran and “the general public could not buy from Sacks Futeran so I was never familiar with the actual shop” when she lived in District Six as a child. It was established as a wholesale business but it changed into a retail business due to competition from big retail stores and decentralization of shops from the city into suburban malls. According to Owen Futeran after the forced removals at District Six “the business never recovered”. It then sold to the general public and I shopped there on a number of occasions in the 1980’s when I was a student in the area. Linda encountered the long standing business when it’s life cycle was almost complete and notes “they also sold lovely kitchenware... glassware beautiful things



that you don't actually see today" and "so if you wanted a special gift you could pop in there" and then "slowly but surely they were saying they were selling out the stock".<sup>48</sup>



Figure 42 Women walking home from the shops District Six. Photographer Cloete Breytenbach. *The spirit of District Six*. 1970.



Figure 43 Posing on a District Six stoep in new clothing. Photographer Cloete Breytenbach. *The spirit of District Six*. 1970.

I only ever purchased fabric there but shopping at Sacks Futeran was no ordinary experience. It was always closed between 1-2pm, during lunchtime. One entered through two large wooden doors located off the pavement into a cavernous space, lit in places and filled with a sea of tables covered with rolls of fabric. Sounds far away were audible as creaks, sighs and faint distorted muffled noises. Natural light barely featured in the building and it felt like a world apart. Dark wood ran throughout the flooring and paneling and an antiquated black lift set within a cage was located near the far wall. The old lift in the center of the main warehouse building was used by customers only while staff members had to traverse the two wooden staircases to the different departments situated on the ground, first and second floors.

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<sup>48</sup> Fortune, L, Interviewed by Hayley Hayes-Roberts, 24<sup>th</sup> April 2012.

A dark wooden staircase wound its way around the lift up to the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floor departments. A buying card had to be procured from an employee on the ground floor next to the kitchenware department. If you were interested in purchasing fabric then you could only use that card in the fabric department and if you wanted to purchase other items you would have to retrace your steps to procure another buying card. The salesperson then recorded your purchases on the card and then you would return downstairs to the cashier, sans card, where tallied figures on a handwritten receipt produced in a duplicate book would reveal the total cost of your purchases. Behind the scenes, in another department, the purchased goods were then assembled from the various departments and after payment, the final stage in the process was to collect your purchases in despatch where they had been placed on a wooden shelf and beautifully wrapped in medium weight brown paper and twine.

Salespersons, the majority women, were dressed in green housecoats and the “most notable” of the general employees “was the late Louis Lipschitz, who stood in virtually the same spot, behind the fabric counter for about 67 years” according to Irma Chait.<sup>49</sup> He “joined the firm in 1926” according to Gordon Futeran.<sup>50</sup> Prices were very good and although this was not Stuttafords or Garlicks with enticing shop window displays, soft music, carpeted floors and uniformed doormen, one walked away having had a unique shopping experience steeped in another time. A certain rigor and sense of thrift pervaded the interior space as everything appeared old, but still functioning and I seem to recall a ticky box (pre-paid public phone) in the building.

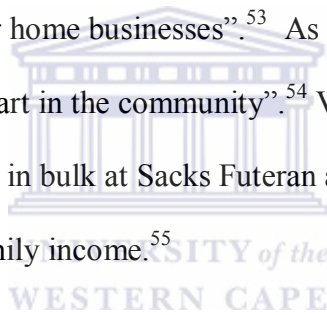


Figure 44 Interior Sacks Futeran advertising signage. District Six Museum archive. HH-R.

<sup>49</sup> ‘Chait, I, Ye Olde Worlde’, *Cape Jewish Chronicle*. Photocopied article, undated. c1990.

<sup>50</sup> Futeran, G, Interviewed by Thulani Nxumalo, 1<sup>st</sup> April 2003, District Six Museum sound archive. p.16.

Linda Fortune enquired of Mr. Martin Futeran, “why don’t you ever sweep the stairs or do away with the spider webs” and he replied that the spiderwebs were “very much part of our luck”.<sup>51</sup> Noor Ebrahim remembers that people in the District, before plasters were available, used to run down to Sacks Futeran and collect cobwebs when they cut themselves. The webs would be wrapped or placed over the cut and would staunch bleeding effectively and hygienically.<sup>52</sup> Small tailor shops and home based sewing businesses within District Six produced the annual minstrel costumes of parti-coloured satins in bright colours purchased at Sacks Futeran. Gordon Futeran recall that “we supplied thousands of meters of the satins” and “we tried to give them a good price” and “they made their costumes up from it” and “lots of people set up small factories we used to supply them with materials also at discounted prices so they could build up their home businesses”.<sup>53</sup> As one of the Districts shopkeepers he notes that “we tried to play a part in the community”.<sup>54</sup> Victoreen Gomas recalls how, as a child, she used to buy small items in bulk at Sacks Futeran and then sell them door to door in District Six to supplement the family income.<sup>55</sup>



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<sup>51</sup> Fortune, L, transcribed oral history. Interviewed by Hayley Hayes-Roberts. 24.04.2012.

<sup>52</sup> Noor Ebrahim, Conversation in the District Six Museum. 12<sup>th</sup> March 2012.

<sup>53</sup> Futeran, G, Interviewed by Thulani Nxumalo, 1<sup>st</sup> April 2003, District Six Museum sound archive.

<sup>54</sup> Futeran, G, Interviewed by Thulani Nxumalo, 1<sup>st</sup> April 2003, District Six Museum sound archive.

<sup>55</sup> Gomas, V, conversation at the District Six Museum, May 2011.



Figure 45 Annual minstrel parade. Hanover Street, District Six. Photographer Cloete Breytenbach. *The spirit of District Six*. 1970.



Figure 46 Sacks Futeran sequined and satin fabric swatch cards. District Six Museum archive. HH-R.

Sacks Futeran influenced the clothing and dress style of the district. Most the goods purchased were transported into smaller shops and homes transforming interiors and clothing the body. Fabrics purchased were reconfigured into dresses, curtains and minstrel outfits through skilled seamstresses and tailors of the District. Tablecloths and kitchenware took on a social domestic form integrating into people's lives.<sup>56</sup> With the Group Areas Act of 1950, separation on racial grounds became official apartheid policy and District Six was proclaimed a white zoned area on the 11<sup>th</sup> February 1966. The Sacks Futeran buildings were not within the boundaries of District Six earmarked for destruction as determined by the Apartheid government. Hanover Street and to a lesser degree Caledon Street were the main thoroughfares into the city and

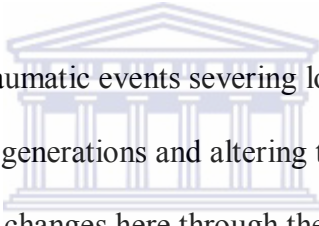
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<sup>56</sup> I was given a mohair blanket that was bought at Sacks Futeran in 1940 for my mother-in-law to take to boarding school.

utilized by some District Six residents to access places of work and shops. The Sacks Futeran wholesale shop being a socio-economic and cultural site interaction and transaction.

A conversation is vividly recalled in the oral history of Gordon Futeran that took place within the Sacks Futeran building. A man entered the building and informed him of the proposed rezoning of District Six and commented that “we’re planning the whole area from Pretoria”. Gordon replied ‘but you don’t even know Cape Town’.<sup>57</sup> On the 16<sup>th</sup> January 1969 *The Cape Argus* reported that “District Six’s non-White shopkeepers and traders are going to be hard hit hard by the replanning of the area – from which they must in time move – with the twin problem of the disposal of their businesses and the purchase of new property elsewhere.”<sup>58</sup>

Gordon Futeran remembers the traumatic events severing long standing relationships with businesses that had been there for generations and altering the course of the business forever.



We had big changes here through the system of apartheid... Hanover Street where we had probably about 50 or 60 shopkeepers that were dealing with us was wiped out people were moved out we had amongst our customers you could call them friends. We supplied hundreds of them with goods... we were very sorry to lose the connection with them<sup>59</sup>

The Futeran's had to give up a garage, located in District Six, with petrol pumps and a service station for the 15 or 20 vehicles that they ran. According to Owen Futeran, relationships forged over decades were terminated and business declined, after the forced removals and destruction of District Six.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Futeran, G, Interviewed by Thulani Nxumalo, 1<sup>st</sup> April 2003, District Six Museum sound archive.

<sup>58</sup> ‘Sell up now or wait? District Six shops face a dilemma’, *Cape Argus*, 16 January 1969.

<sup>59</sup> Futeran, Gordon, Interviewed by Thulani Nxumalo, 1<sup>st</sup> April 2003, District Six Museum archive.

<sup>60</sup> Futeran, O, interview. 15<sup>th</sup> June 2012.

As noted, prior to the 1960's District Six was densely populated with people and the built environment represented an extension of a lifestyle and economy fully engaged with the city itself. As a business, E. Sacks Futeran & Co. (Pty) Ltd was an important aspect in the lives of many individuals within the District, the city, the towns and outposts of the country.

Thus memories and goods of a patriarchal family business that epitomize the division between home life and business have come to light and permeate intimate spaces of home and body.<sup>61</sup> An archive constructed of things forgotten and the buildings themselves constitute dynamic spaces of engagement and a prism with which to narrate histories.



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<sup>61</sup> Wagner, R, *The Invention of Culture*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 23.

## Chapter Three

### Architecture of buildings: The Sacks Futeran building project

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...these old buildings do not belong to us only;  
they belong to our forefathers and they will belong  
to our descendents unless we play them false.  
They are not in any sense our property to do as we  
like with them. We are only the trustees for those  
that come after us.

William Morris (1889)

In previous chapters I have related how the District Six Museum was formed and how its methodologies, grounded in memories of collective social displacement, have been interpreted and represented. I have also related how the area known as District Six has been reconstructed through individual and collective memory, oral histories, biographies, autobiographies, literature, exhibitions, maps, performance, urban studies and visual representations. I have argued that there is an absence of histories as understood through the biographies of buildings on the periphery that were once part of the urban fabric and “material reminders” of District Six and the city.<sup>1</sup> My research process involved constructing an archive of things forgotten, including family photographs, found in the new museum buildings of the District Six Museum: the Homecoming Centre. The buildings located near District Six revealed the partial histories of Jewish immigrants from Lithuania, who founded a large soft goods wholesale business specializing in fabric and clothing. I now turn my attention to tracing the origins, evolution, architecture and transformation, the ‘life’, of a set of five interconnected buildings that belonged to E. Sacks Futeran & Co. (Pty) Ltd, known colloquially as Sacks Futeran. As noted a transformation took place, structurally and

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<sup>1</sup> ‘No matter where we are, we are here, Hands On District Six’, Brochure, undated.

culturally, which has impacted on how a particular layered past can be constructed, integrated, and represented into the street, the city, and its inhabitants and visitors.

An attempt has been undertaken through the production of a brochure by the District Six Museum to open debate on various landmarks in the area including the Buitenkant Street Methodist Church, “home” of the museum, Bloemhof flats, Vernon Terrace, Beinkinstadt booksellers, the Presbyterian Church, Peninsula Maternity Hospital, Vernon Terrace, Shakesby Lewis Hostel, the City Mission Church and the museum invites the public and ex-residents to contribute their stories and memories.<sup>2</sup> Such narratives of buildings can contribute compliment and shift official knowledge of the built environment in the city to one that addresses absences. As noted by Karen Till,

Places of memory are created by individuals and social groups to give shape to felt absences, fears and desires that haunt contemporary society.<sup>3</sup>

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### **Architecture of buildings**

An existing body of knowledge of the built environment of Cape Town has been constructed through architectural practice, surveys, panoramic photographs, well known drawings, by experts including qualified architects, architectural historians and social historians.<sup>4</sup> Drawing on two previous major colonial surveys by “Snow of the mid-1860s” and “Thom’s of the mid -1890s”, and other visual sources recording the development of the city, this accumulation has “been much compared for familiarization and understanding of past development” according to John Rennie.<sup>5</sup> City and building

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<sup>2</sup> ‘No matter where we are, we are here, Hands On District Six’, Brochure, undated, District Six Museum archive.

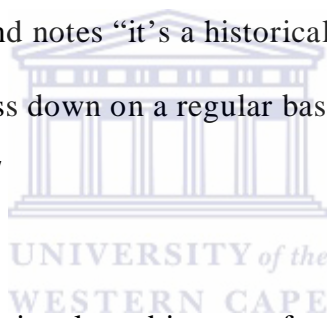
<sup>3</sup> Till, K, E, *The New Berlin: Memory Politics Place*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Rennie, J, *The Buildings of Central Cape Town 1978*, Volume Two: Catalogue, (Cape Town: Cape Provincial Institute of Architects, 1978), p. 9.

<sup>5</sup> Rennie, J, *The Buildings of Central Cape Town 1978*, Volume Two: Catalogue, (Cape Town: Cape Provincial Institute of Architects, 1978), p. 9.



surveys emerged as a specific genre as South African “surveys ... each portraying not only a concern about the continuing erosion and discarding of many of the country’s older buildings of character but also an appreciation of the variety and quality of the architecture generally present”. Therefore histories in and through buildings, as I am proposing, can be understood partly within an architectural framework. As symbols of stability, buildings inform us of craft skills, labour demographics, style, building techniques, materials, technology, capital flows and by chronological and comparative study, the urbanism of an area and its social interconnectivity.<sup>6</sup> According to Martin Futeran architecture students were brought to study the Victorian Gothic architecture of the old Sunday school of the Congregational Church that forms part of the Sacks Futeran complex of buildings and notes “it’s a historical piece .... the professor at University used to bring his class down on a regular basis to show them the place and to this day it’s still very popular”.<sup>7</sup>



According to John Rennie the rationale and impetus for the 1978 survey of buildings in Cape Town was an “all inclusive look at every building in order to build up a complete reference bank ... an urgent stock-taking” mutually agreed upon by the City Council and the Cape Provincial Institute of Architects. The five interconnected buildings owned by Sacks Futeran were surveyed. Yet where and how did the appreciation and concern for “city fabric old and new” originate?<sup>8</sup> It can be traced back to the founding of a society in Victorian England. The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) was founded in England in 1877 by William Morris, Philip Webb and J. J. Stevenson and other Pre Raphaelites, “to oppose what they saw as the insensitive

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<sup>6</sup> Pistorius, P, editor, *Texture and Memory: The Urbanism of District Six*. (Cape Town: Cape Technikon, 2002). p.7.

<sup>7</sup> Futeran, M, Interviewed by Valmont Layne, 1<sup>st</sup> August 2001, District Six Museum Sound archive.

<sup>8</sup> Rennie, J, *The Buildings of Central Cape Town 1978*, Volume Two: Catalogue, (Cape Town: Cape Provincial Institute of Architects, 1978), p. 9.

renovation of ancient buildings” (Medieval) then occurring in Victorian England. Instead, Morris proposed in the society’s manifesto that “ancient buildings should be protected, not restored, so that their entire history would be preserved as cultural heritage”.<sup>9</sup> Today the society, which is a charity, continues to uphold these original tenets with the help of volunteers and members to save “historic and listed buildings “from decay, demolition and destruction”.<sup>10</sup> Sites of industry, such as mills and factories are also deemed worthy of narrating a recent industrial past.

The invention of photography created a genre of documenting and visually representing buildings as monuments to progress and empire. Buildings feature heavily in most official photographic archives, as context, setting or focal point.<sup>11</sup> Photography was either employed for honorific or repressive purposes. Sites of new urban and vernacular buildings were photographed for aesthetic, official and commercial purposes and on celebratory occasions. The most romantic researcher of buildings, John Ruskin, a contemporary of William Morris, noted that: “Among all the mechanical poison that this terrible 19<sup>th</sup> century has poured upon men, it has given us at any rate *one* antidote, the Daguerreotype”.<sup>12</sup> This thesis draws on archival photographs from Special Collections at the South African Library in Cape Town and the District Museum archive.

Our understanding of the architectural legacy of District Six is represented through in Clarence Coulson, Jan Grehoff, Jansje Wissema, George Hallett and Cloete Breytenbach’s

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<sup>9</sup> William Morris was particularly concerned about the practice, which he described as “forgery”, of attempting to restore buildings to an idealised state from the distant past, which often involved the removal of elements added in their later development and which Morris saw as adding to their interest as documents of the past.

<sup>10</sup> The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. [www.SPAB.org.uk](http://www.SPAB.org.uk), accessed 10.10.2012.

<sup>11</sup> Here I am referring to the historical photographic collection of the Western Cape Archives and Records Service.

<sup>12</sup> Brand, S, *How Buildings Learn: What happens after they’re built*. (New York: Penguin, 1994), p. 212.

and those photographs of District Six taken by ex-residents. They depict degraded and well worn buildings of different styles and periods that simultaneously frame resident's lives and reflect a great number of adaptive uses as noted by Lucien Le Grange.<sup>13</sup> The Hanover Building came to represent "one of the most celebrated landmarks", the metaphysical core of District Six, where five roads intersected.<sup>14</sup> Hanover Street was the living vibrant thread running into the heart of the city where many shops supplying the district were situated. Yet these are only singular elements in the historic growth of the area. The District Six Museums utilizes photographs of landmark buildings, homes, streets and shops of the district within its exhibitions as a framework on which to build ex-residents memories and narratives of forced removals from District Six.

In post apartheid South Africa, SAHRA is guided and informed by the National Heritage Council Act of 1999 that places an emphasis on public participation in heritage management, with heritage conceptualised as part of a broader process of socio-economic development.<sup>15</sup> The Act has formalized a transition that has been under way for some time: the switch to a predominantly architectural notion of heritage focused on the built environment.<sup>16</sup> Therefore,

Successive conceptions of heritage in South Africa had thus seen it pass from the domain of archaeologists and prehistorians to the domain of Afrikaans folk historians, and thence to the domain of architects and town planners.<sup>17</sup>

As a post-apartheid urban community museum the District Six Museum has involved itself in architectural heritage discourse in two ways. Firstly, by issuing the statement that "We are

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<sup>13</sup> Le Grange, L, *The Urbanism of District Six, The Last Days of District Six*, photographs by Jan Greshoff, (Cape Town: The District Six Museum, 1996), p 7-15.

<sup>14</sup> Pistorius, P, editor, *Texture and Memory: The Urbanism of District Six*. (Cape Town: Cape Technikon, 2002).

<sup>15</sup> South African Heritage Resources Agency, *Heritage surveying interviewing and mapping kit*, Mapping South Africa's Heritage, (Cape Town: SAHRA, 2006).

<sup>16</sup> Shepherd, N, Robins, S, *New South African Keywords*, (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2008), p. 116.

<sup>17</sup> Shepherd, N, Robins, S, *New South African Keywords*, (Ohio: Ohio University press, 2008), p.121.

witnessing exciting changes in our city. New buildings are being built, old ones renovated, others are being demolished”.<sup>18</sup> It seeks to engage with the remaining built environment on the periphery of District Six and relates to Bill Nasson’s argument that there is a scarcity of sources to draw upon in the reconstruction and re-imagining of District Six.<sup>19</sup> Secondly, the District Six Museum Foundation Trust bought a set of buildings that contain existing histories relevant to District Six and the city. It has also entered the discourse by connecting sustainable development with cultural heritage through the sensitive redevelopment of the buildings, as postulated by Kate Clark.<sup>20</sup> It has sought to work with these historic buildings in a manner that enhances the streetscape while identifying with the human element and notion of the inclusive city.

According to Stewart Brand, “The old church is torn down, lovely as it is, because the parishioners have gone and no other use can be found for it. The old factory, the plainest of buildings, keeps being revived”.<sup>21</sup> By relating this to the buildings under study is to realize that specific types of architecture are more adaptable than others, ensuring longevity. As buildings adopt new institutional personas the meanings of space alter and can be read as reflecting constant and dynamic shifts within society.

### **Buildings as archive**

According to James Nafziger et al,

Architecture, which provides compelling examples of cultural change, is itself constantly threatened by change. The wheels of progress often become the treads of bulldozers. A historic

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<sup>18</sup> ‘No matter where we are, we are here, Hands On District Six’, Brochure, undated. District Six Museum archive.

<sup>19</sup> Nasson, B, Oral History and the Reconstruction of District Six, *The Struggle for District Past and Present*, eds. Shamil Jeppie and Crain Soudien, (Cape Town: Buchu Books, 1990). p. 47.

<sup>20</sup> Clark, K, Only Connect-Sustainable Development and Cultural Heritage, *The Heritage Reader*, Graham Fairclough, Rodney Harrison, John Schofield, John H. Jameson, Jr., (New York: Routledge, 2007), p.85.

<sup>21</sup> Brand, S, *How Buildings Learn: What happens after they’re built*. (New York: Penguin, 1994), p. 2.

building is razed, another raised in its place. No other facet of cultural heritage reflects the expression “here today, gone tomorrow” more clearly than architecture.<sup>22</sup>

There is now more than ever before a consciousness that historic structures need protection specifically in the urban setting where transnational capital in a globalizing economy rapidly seeks new investment opportunities.<sup>23</sup> Heritage Western Cape, a provincial heritage resources authority, was formed in 2003 and incorporates BELCOM: The Built Environment and Landscape Committee which is “responsible for considering permit applications for alterations and demolitions of buildings older than 60 years”.<sup>24</sup> It also assesses activities occurring in and affecting formally declared Provincial Heritage Sites, heritage areas, public monuments and memorials. Legislation therefore seeks to protect and address the redevelopment of buildings that have been identified as contributing to cultural value.

The purchase of the Sacks Futeran complex of five buildings in 2002 marked a new phase in the life of the District Six Museum and the buildings. Rennie Scurr Adendorff architects were appointed to undertake the re-development of the Sacks Futeran buildings. Their research culminated in blending older histories of the site with aesthetic and technical expertise while the Museum’s visions, philosophies and concepts were an integral part of the redevelopment.<sup>25</sup> Over a number of years the Sacks Futeran buildings were internally reconfigured, restored and renamed The District Six Homecoming Centre and came to incorporate the Fugard Theatre, new exhibition spaces, offices, archival storerooms and studios. The set of upgraded buildings form part of a Cultural Heritage Precinct in the East

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<sup>22</sup> Nafziger, J, A, R, Paterson, R, K, Renteln, A, D, *Cultural Law, International, Comparative and Indigenous*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010)

<sup>23</sup> Brand, S, *How Buildings Learn: What happens after they’re built*. (New York: Penguin, 1994). p. 5.

<sup>24</sup> BELCOM, Heritage Western Cape, [www.westerncape.gov.za](http://www.westerncape.gov.za). accessed 03.10.2012.

<sup>25</sup> Renni and Scurr Architects cc, Sacks Futeran, Buitenkant St, Cape Town: Conservation and usage report of the District Six Museum, Interim report 01: March 2002, District Museum Archive.

City, a new urban cultural development within Cape Town.<sup>26</sup>

Before alterations or changes could commence extensive research was embarked upon by the architects. Architects have specialist knowledge of the built environment and work with creating permanent structures in various forms, from domestic houses to commercial and institutional structures or refurbishing existing structures as a way of updating, preserving or conserving. When oral sources are transcribed and incorporated into exhibitions shifts in meaning occur. In a similar manner, when spatial reality is reduced to a representation an interpretation takes place.

Architects manipulate space and new meanings form when real measurements are reduced altering proportional scale. They work with macro and micro elements and terminology changes: place becomes site, building becomes structure, church becomes landmark, shop becomes commercial space and so forth. These new terms and the space are reconstituted as a flat drawing, an axonometric drawing, map in two dimensional form or a model depicting a three dimensional representation. These are projections of streets, junctures, spaces, topography, plane, features and measurements that are compacted and reduced. What is created is an aerial, elevation or axonometric view of things.<sup>27</sup> The average architectural drawing of two dimensional form that depicts three dimensional buildings and landscapes can be difficult to decipher. Therefore they are presented before any physical changes can commence.

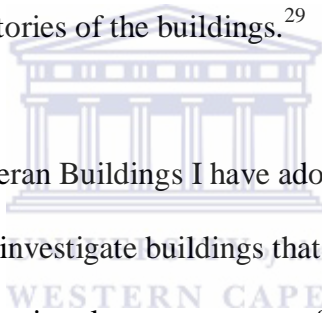
According to Cecil Hewett “The language used by dead architects that is most readily comprehended is that of three-dimensional form, of enclosed spaces within structures,

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<sup>26</sup> District Six Museum, Annual Report 2009/10, p. 23.

<sup>27</sup> Rennie, Scurr, Adendorff Architects, Visual timeline: 1832-2011, Homecoming Centre. Historic Building Development, 2012, District Six Museum archive.

involving aesthetics; this communicates because it is a sphere of critical activity that has not become obsolete”.<sup>28</sup> Rennie Scurr Adendorff Architects specialise in the conservation and restoration of historic buildings and precincts. Thus they worked within the constraints and complexities of their discipline. As architects they translated the existing spaces and were influenced by textures, older and current building methods and materials that had to be integrated at the site. Considerable variables such as client needs, budget, condition of existing structure or site, regulations, safety features, practicality and aesthetic choices amongst other aspects were reviewed and developed. Therefore a series of consultations, steps and processes were involved in reshaping the Sacks Futeran buildings. An architectural timeline was created utilizing archival photographs and computer generated line drawings that in part reflect the tangible histories of the buildings.<sup>29</sup>



In order to interpret the Sacks Futeran Buildings I have adopted, to a certain degree, the model Stewart Brand proposes to investigate buildings that “speak mainly to theory – to moving architecture toward operational strategy, away from stylistic interpretation and toward immersion in the previously ignored effects and use of time”.<sup>30</sup> By investigating the site, skin, structure, services, space plan and stuff an in-depth analysis can be achieved. Stewart Brand cites a Pueblo Indian architectural historian Rina Swentzel who describes her culture and village as a “Flow, continual flow, continual change, a continual transformation” and therefore buildings, to a certain degree, mirror the “flow” of communities and society.<sup>31</sup>

One of the interpretive methods Louise Green and Noëleen Murray have utilized at the

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<sup>28</sup> Hewett, C, Understanding standing buildings, *World Archaeology*, Vol. 9, No. 2, Architecture and Archaeology (Taylor & Francis: Oct 1977), Accessed 01/06/2011. p. 174.

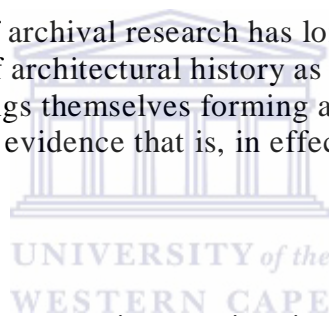
<sup>29</sup> Rennie, Scurr, Adendorff Architects, Visual timeline: 1832-2011, Homecoming Centre. Historic Building Development, 2012, District Six Museum archive.

<sup>30</sup> Brand, S, *How Buildings Learn: What happens after they're built*. (New York: Penguin, 1994), p. 212

<sup>31</sup> Brand, S, *How Buildings Learn: What happens after they're built*. (New York: Penguin, 1994), p. 3.

Prestwich Street Ossuary was by examining the building material, among other factors. They suggest that “The building material itself is invested with symbolic value” as “The use of stone excavated from the site of the Waterfront invests this modern structure with authentic value and makes an apparently material connection with the past. They cite Baudrillard who states that “Rather as a church does not become a genuinely sacred place until a few bones or relics have been enshrined in it, so this architect cannot feel at home until the infinitesimal yet sublime presence within his brand new walls of an old stone that bears witness to past generations”.<sup>32</sup> By reflecting on this reference to the fabric of a building opens up the building to be read in different ways from its physical make up that in itself conveys meaning, innuendo, subtle hints and clues. As noted by Dana Arnold and Andrew Ballantyne,

The use of archival research has long been strength of architectural history as a discipline, the buildings themselves forming an important part of the evidence that is, in effect, part of that archive.<sup>33</sup>



Architectural aspects relating to necessary interventions include an element of curatorship on the part of the architects who choose to expose and retain particular material ‘remains’. Thus the Sacks Futera buildings are treated as an archive. This is relevant to both a sensitivity of constructing a sense of place in practical and aesthetic terms as it is to understanding that “Evidently architecture, like language, is not something other than, in addition to, or foreign from thought but itself the vehicle of thought” according to Robert Murgerauer.<sup>34</sup> Stewart Brand argues that ‘Buildings tell stories, if they’re allowed to - if their past is flaunted rather than concealed’.<sup>35</sup> In order to investigate the Sacks Futera buildings, the method

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<sup>32</sup> Green, L, Murray N, Notes for a Guide to the Ossuary, *African Studies*, 68, 3, December 2009. (Routledge Taylor & Francis), p. 382.

<sup>33</sup> Arnold, D and Ballantyne, A, *Architecture as Experience: Radical change in spatial practice*. (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 1.

<sup>34</sup> Murgerauer, R, Traditional Approaches: Wittgenstein’s and Jung’s Lives, Work and Houses, *Interpreting Environment: Tradition, Deconstruction, Hermeneutics*, (USA: University of Texas Press, 1995), p. 11.

<sup>35</sup> Brand, S, *How Buildings Learn: What happens after they’re built*. (New York: Penguin, 1994), p.4.



I will employ is firstly to ‘read’ the archival images I located, then integrate John Rennie’s 1978 survey and Mike Scurr's timeline followed by the District Six Museum archival images of the building project.



Figure 47 The Caledon Square Congregational Church, Buitenkant Street, drawing, c.1857, NLSA.

The drawing clearly depicts the site and two of the buildings under study in Buitenkant Street. The small one story warehouse in a flat roofed Dutch warehouse style is clearly a place of commerce with doors open to the street and passing trade. Two hawkers are visible in the foreground. The newly constructed Congregational Church is of the Victorian Gothic style in dressed stone with a steeply pitched roof. This anglicized architectural style reveals a great deal of craftsmanship. One large window punctuates the prominent triangular configuration of the façade and vertical tracery separates glass panes either by wood or stone, is visible. This style of window treatment was revived during the Arts and Craft period in England. Rusticated stone surrounds the window and frames the entrance. A wrought iron railing separates the church from Buitenkant and Caledon Street. The ornate steeple section was never constructed or was constructed and removed between the time of this drawing and later photographs. Perhaps this drawing was created by the architect or assistant prior to the church’s construction and lack of funds permitted construction of the steeple. A smoking chimney and activity at the Granary building to the left of the warehouse marks this area as a site of manufacture, industry and trade. The Britannica Hotel situated on the corner adjacent

to the church could indicate a mobile population in need of convenient and perhaps less expensive lodging within the city. The top profile of the Presbyterian Church built in 1848 is visible behind the roof of the church.



Figure 48 Early 1880s. View from Caledon Square showing the Granary, three storey warehouse and c.1859 church. NLSA.<sup>36</sup>

The Caledon Square Congregational Church clearly has unplastered external walls and according to Tom Porter, some Victorian architects “fell under the spell of John Ruskin, who had spurned a skin-deep decoration in preference to the integrity of self-coloured materials”.<sup>37</sup> Therefore buildings materials that utilized natural inherent colour such as stone, red brick, wood and so forth were preferred to offset the symbolic color of the church windows. To the left of the church the Dutch style warehouse building has undergone a transformation from a two storey to three storey structure.<sup>38</sup> It has been extended vertically to include another level and more ornate plaster detail is visible, paneling the façade and imitating brickwork at the buildings corners. A parapet façade has been erected on the roof incorporating four banded plaster columns. The windows have been replaced with new wooden vertical ones that contribute to an illusion of height. The street level doorway still appears as a central feature and a wall has been constructed to seal off an alley. It is visible on Millard panorama c 1884 as 3 storey (a haunch on the lane

<sup>36</sup> Rennie, Scurr, Adendorff Architects, Homecoming Centre. Historic Building Development, 2011.

<sup>37</sup> Porter, T, *Architectural Color*, (London: The Architectual Press Ltd., 1982), p. 10.

<sup>38</sup> 13 Buitenkant Street - Erf 4946: 3 storey 3 bay warehouse inspected in March 1978.

wall indicates the previous 3 storey height).<sup>39</sup> Thom's survey c 1895 indicates the building as "Flour Mill" and shows a yard "pond" at the rear on Harrington Street.<sup>40</sup> John Rennie's 1978 survey documents the building constituting of

Ground floor: eighteen-panel lane door and 3 barred ground floor timber windows, plaster trimmings, and cornice (through over lane door). First and second floors : 3 bay, steel windows, plaster quoins and trimmings, fine cornice with paired brackets, parapet divided into bays, curving recesses, plaster "ESTd 1903". Lean-to roof drains to lane side adjacent the old granary.<sup>41</sup>

There is a substantial increase in social activity in this image. Groups of people populate and congregate in the foreground possibly walking and hawking and this could be linked to changing economies of the area.

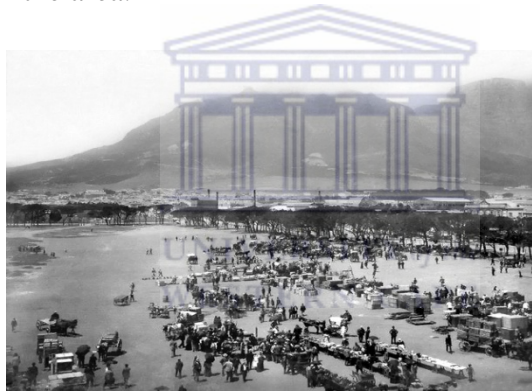


Figure 49 Elevated view of trading at the Parade, c.1890. Archival photograph. NLSA.

In close proximity to the two warehouse buildings and the Congregational Church was the Grand Parade, a busy centre of informal trading and hawking and where many immigrants created or found employment. As noted by Richard Mendelsohn and Milton Shain, "Jewish traders on the Parade attracted hostile comment at the turn of the century, an era of

<sup>39</sup> Refer to Cape Archives photographs E 8101 and E 8103 which show arched façade openings and a back yard high brick chimney stack.

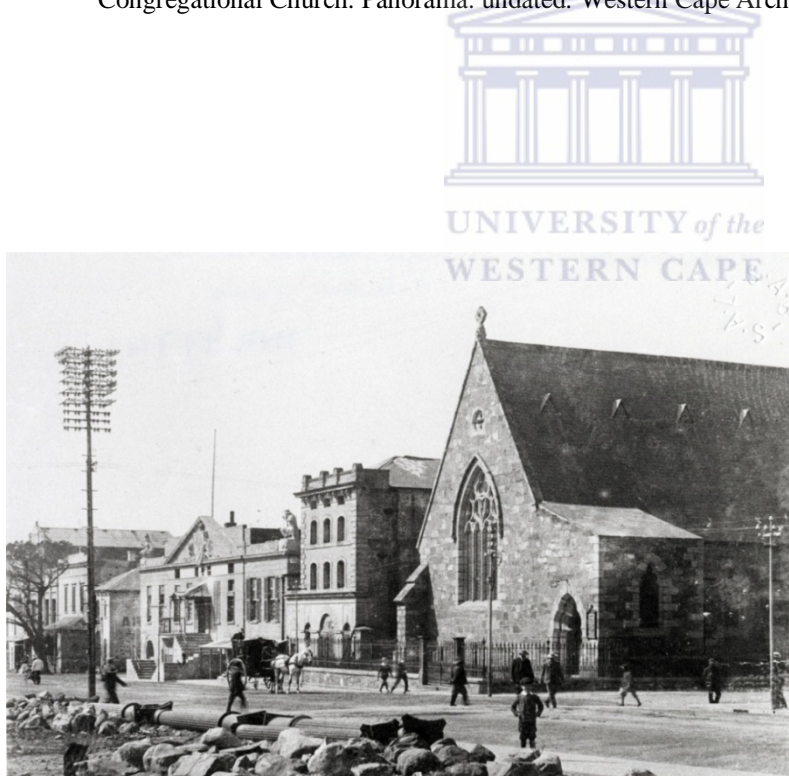
<sup>40</sup> Now occupied by 14, 16 Harrington Street, part of the Sacks Futeran set of buildings.

<sup>41</sup> Rennie, J, *The Buildings of Central Cape Town 1978, Volume Two: Catalogue*, (Cape Town: Cape Provincial Institute of Architects, 1978), p. 337.

heightened anti-alienism”.<sup>42</sup> The roof of the Caledon Square Congregational Church is visible above the tree line and is therefore situated in the city and surrounding city suburbs. In close proximity to the buildings under study were The Presbyterian Church, Harrington Street (1848 – demolished during forced removals at District Six), the Central Methodist Mission church (1883) and the Nederduitse Gereformeede Kerk (1892) in Buitenkant Street.



Figure 50 An elevated view of the three story warehouse and the Caledon Square Congregational Church. Panorama, undated. Western Cape Archives.



<p style="text-align: center;"><b>CALEDON SQUARE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>TO-MORROW</b> (SUNDAY).</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Preacher: Rev. <b>JAMES LE PLA.</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">SERVICES: MORNING, 10.30. Subject: "The Great Imperative." EVENING, 6.30.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>SPECIAL SERVICE.</b> Subject or Address 'The Crisis in South Africa.' Special Music by Choir.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Collections at both Services in Aid of the Hospital's.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SOCIAL HOUR after the Evening Service. 159</p>
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Figure 51 Buitenkant Street with view of the Caledon Square Congregational Church Building c.1859 the c.1903 Warehouse and the Granary building c.1816. undated. Western Cape Archvies.

Cape Argus newspaper.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Mendelsohn, R, Shain, M, *The Jews of South Africa an illustrated history*, (Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2008), p. 62.

<sup>43</sup> Morris, M, *Paging through history, 150 years with the Cape Argus, 1857-2007*, (Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2007), p. 67.



Figure 52 Congregational Church Sunday school building annexed to the main church building c 1890, archival photograph c.1900, Western Cape Archives.<sup>44</sup>

A structural addition to the church was a Sunday school built in 1890 in the Victorian Gothic style to blend with the existing church building. Construction is of rough dressed shale walling, sandstone window trimming, string courses and copings. It is not visible on Pocock panorama c. 1884, but on a panorama c 1898.<sup>45</sup> The Drill Hall was constructed diagonally opposite the Dutch style warehouse building in 1889.

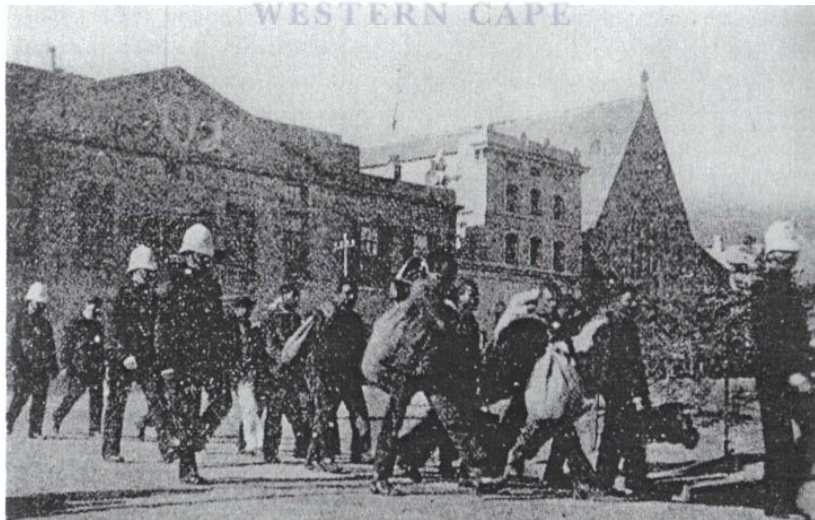
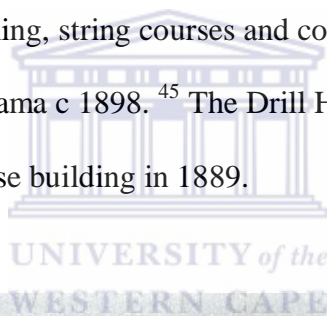


Figure 53 Forced removals from District Six 1901 with the c.1903 three storey warehouse and Caledon Square Congregational Church building in the background. Archival photograph. NLSA.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Rennie, Scurr, Adendorff Architects, Homecoming Centre. Historic Building Development, 2011, District Six Museum archive.

<sup>45</sup> Rennie, J, *The Buildings of Central Cape Town 1978, Volume Two: Catalogue*, (Cape Town: Cape Provincial Institute of Architects, 1978), p. 338.

<sup>46</sup> Bickford-Smith, V, van Heyningen, E, Worden, N, *Cape Town in the twentieth century, an illustrated social history*, (Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 1999), p. 21.

This image reflects the changing political climate of the city and environs. It depicts a colonial police force escorting individuals, and their possessions, not deemed racially worthy of living in the city away from their homes in District Six. They are walking in the direction of Caledon Square having just crossed Buitenkant Street. The buildings are sharply etched in the background. The Caledon Square Congregational church was demolished in 1907 and the site changed ownership.<sup>47</sup> Records indicate that the church was sold in 1907 because “the locality began to deteriorate”.<sup>48</sup> The changing nature of the city incorporating a more residential profile had begun to transform into a space more aligned with commercial activity and its dependent labour force. The more affluent moved to the southern suburbs or to areas such as Oranjezicht.<sup>49</sup> A. G. Howard noted at the turn of the century,

If street architecture progressed slowly during the first two decades structurally the city was undergoing a series of rapid transformations – only temporarily slowing down by intermittent periods of economic depression. One by one the old residential houses that had once been a features of Adderley Street were converted to business premises or demolished to make way for new buildings...one after another city firms displayed their affluence by erecting extensive new buildings of great architectural value and sometimes as many as five or six storey’s high – irrefutable evidence of the competition for trade and the increase in the value of land in the city centre.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Title deed relating to change in ownership was not available due to digitisation project at the Cape Town deeds office.

<sup>48</sup> The Sacks Futeran Building Project is referred to in ‘Fields of Play: Football memories and Forced Removals in Cape Town’, Brochure, 2010.

<sup>49</sup> Futeran, M, Interviewed by Valmont Layne, 1<sup>st</sup> August 2001, District Six Museum Sound archive.

<sup>50</sup> Knox, C, *Victorian Life at the Cape 1870-1900*, (Cape Town: Fernwood Press, 1992), p. 22.



Figure 54 The three storey c.1903 building and the c.1910 E. Sacks Futeran warehouse building in the background. Archival photograph. undated. NLSA.

Where the Caledon Square Congregational Church once stood, a new structure has been erected. The architectural style of the new three storey warehouse built in 1910 is a nondescript white cube punctuated by window openings and a flat roof. The site has been optimized to achieve the maximum advantage visible in the architectural style and height of the new warehouse. It has been built to fuse onto the 1903 three storey warehouse, although recessed window and floor heights do not correspond. On the façade, a tall parapet is visible decorated with two ornamental finials.<sup>51</sup> A parapet is a low wall constructed along the edge of any structure where there is a sudden drop such as a roof top. It could function as a safety feature and a support for decoration. The parapet feature is not included in the architect's timeline. Signage and ornamental detail is not apparent in this image which suggests a modernizing utilitarian influence in construction and decoration. The invention of buildings materials such as steel and reinforced concrete impacted on construction methods.<sup>52</sup> This led to the erection of load bearing columns with increased span and internal space that heightened interior ceilings. This allowed more natural light to penetrate into the interior spaces. The new warehouse building has cast iron interior columns and beams incorporating

<sup>51</sup> *Dictionary of architecture*, (London: Brockhampton Press, 1995), p. 148

<sup>52</sup> Yeomans, D, *Construction Since 1900: Materials*, (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd, 1997), p.81.

wooden floors, ceilings, and staircases.<sup>53</sup> According to David Yeomans “Steel structures in Britain developed from the form of construction that had been used in nineteenth-century mills and warehouses, of an internal frame of iron or steel supporting the floors within load-bearing masonry external walls, the form used for mills and warehouses”.<sup>54</sup>

It is visible on Millard panorama c 1859 and also the Budricks panorama c1900.<sup>55</sup> This building is documented in John Rennie's 1978 survey and is indicated as a

4 bay plastered street fronts and end full height plasters.  
Ground floor: banded shallow plaster rustications, arched and barred timber casements and main doors.  
First and second floors: plain plaster (projecting floor level string courses), steel windows on Buitenkant, timber (probably original narrow openings) on Caledon, plaster cornice, parapet and deep eaves. Interior includes matchboard ceilings and open steel structural stanchions, also rear party wall.



Figure 55 E. Sacks Futeran & Co warehouse building. Early photograph of the c.1910 Sacks Futeran corner building. undated. District Six Museum Archive.

This image of the building indicates that the roof has been altered. It has evolved into a

<sup>53</sup> At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century wrought iron and steel replaced cast iron beams.

<sup>54</sup> Yeomans, D, *Construction Since 1900: Materials*, (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd, 1997), p. 81.

<sup>55</sup> Rennie, J, *The Buildings of Central Cape Town 1978, Volume Two: Catalogue*, (Cape Town: Cape Provincial Institute of Architects, 1978), p. 338.



‘statement’ that reflects the owner’s clarity and purpose. The parapet has been replaced with an angled roof and gutters are visible. Raised and plastered horizontal company signage reads E. Sacks Futeran & Co. and below Merchants and vertical signage reads ESF & C. The lettering is painted in a darker colour than the walls for emphasis and is therefore a prominent feature of the façade. The church railings have been retained on Buitenkant Street. The main entrance to the building appears to be a set of doors on the right hand. People are situated in the foreground suggesting social and economic interaction. A supply of electricity allowed the building to be fitted with an OTIS lift that doubled as both a passenger and a goods lift. As noted by the architects “From the position of the railings it can be seen that the Church was set back from the present line of the building. The first and second floor windows onto Buitenkant were later widened and changed to steel”.<sup>56</sup> Most importantly this new warehouse building represents a network of human relationships, new roots and cultural and familial affiliations. According to Paddy Hartdegen “Coastal towns around South Africa were experiencing an unprecedented building boom” at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>57</sup> In 1901 the Master Builders Association, Cape Town and District was formed and trade unions representing the building trades and workers were founded shortly thereafter. The Cape Town City Hall was constructed 1905 in the Italian Renaissance style utilizing limestone imported from Bath in England.

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<sup>56</sup> Rennie, Scurr, Adendorff Architects, Homecoming Centre. Historic Building Development, 2011.

<sup>57</sup> Hartdegen, P, *Our Building Heritage: An Illustrated History*, (Johannesburg: Ryll’s Publishing Company, 1988), p. 101.



Figure 56 Two warehouse buildings: no.14 & 16 Harrington Street - Part of E. Sacks Futeran & Co. during renovations. District Six Museum archive.

A pair of three storey, three bay warehouses were also owned by E. Sacks Futeran & Co in Harrington Street and were constructed at different times. The warehouse on the left displays Art Deco style plaster elements. According to John Rennie's survey "Number 16 displays on the "ground floor: plaster rustication and quoins, six-panel double door and first and second floors: plain 3 bay, various plain timber windows (part blanked off), c.1940 stepped plaster parapet".<sup>58</sup> This building appears to show on Thom's survey c 1895. The right hand warehouse (No. 14) is similar, but with large openings, industrial steel windows, concrete ground floor entrance hood, similar stepping parapet This site marked "Pond" on Thom's c.1895 survey.<sup>59</sup>

Although the buildings exhibit significant variations four of the five interconnected buildings owned by E. Sacks Futeran & Co. Pty (Ltd) shared the same external paint colour thereby visually linking them to each other. Tom Porter notes that "the colour of a city is an aspect of

<sup>58</sup> Rennie, J, *The Buildings of Central Cape Town 1978, Volume Two: Catalogue*, (Cape Town: Cape Provincial Institute of Architects, 1978), p, 340.

<sup>59</sup> Rennie, J, *The Buildings of Central Cape Town 1978, Volume Two: Catalogue*, (Cape Town: Cape Provincial Institute of Architects, 1978), p. 339.

its history”<sup>60</sup>



Figure 57 Anti-pass march, 21<sup>st</sup> March, Buitenkant Street, 1960. Photographer unknown.



Figure 58 Sacks Futeran buildings, Buitenkant Street 1960s. NLSA.

Philip Kgosana, held aloft by supporters in Buitenkant Street, during a march of 30,000.00 people from Langa and Nyanga to Caledon Square police station to protest against racial discrimination and the enforced carrying of pass books. Owen Futeran recounted how his father Gordon Futeran and Uncle Martin Futeran witnessed the leader Philip Kgosana being taken into custody.<sup>61</sup> This image represents how marches redefine cultural space. The streets and spaces of the city become the visible context of how people confronted and acted on the suppressive practices of apartheid and present us with the notion of buildings as witness. The Sacks Futeran buildings are part of the urban fabric of Cape Town and reflect historical and cultural mobilities in the city.

### **The Sacks Futeran building project**

After the acquisition of the buildings by the District Six Museum Foundation Trust and planned refurbishment, the transformation of the Sacks Futeran buildings took place over a number of years. An architectural timeline visually plots developments and interventions.

<sup>60</sup> Porter, T, *Architectural Color*, (London: The Architectural Press Ltd, 1982), p. 37.

<sup>61</sup> Futeran, O, Interviewed by Hayley Hayes-Roberts, 15<sup>th</sup> June 2012.

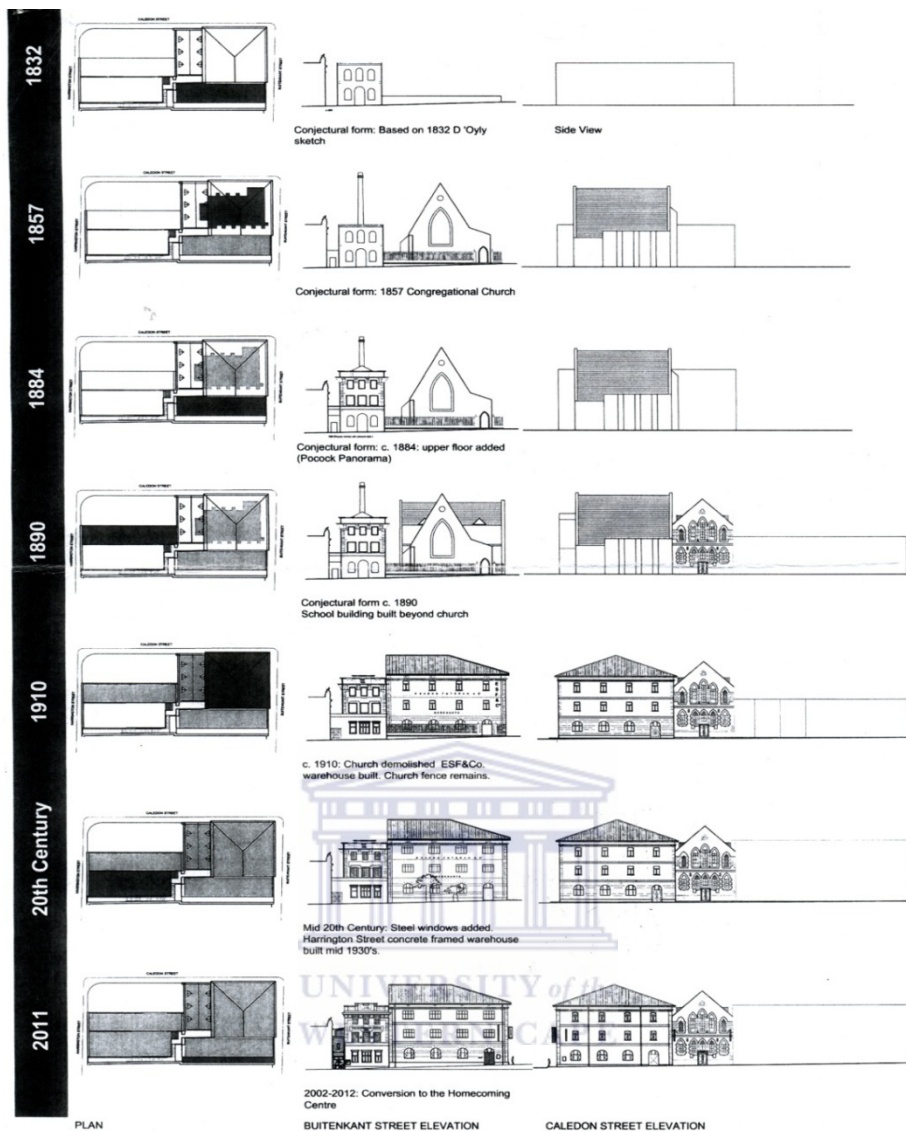


Figure 59 Rennie Scurr Adendorff architectural timeline. District Six Museum archive.

Therefore architecture, as a discipline and a practice functions to inform us of different historical styles, forms, functions and that buildings also represent accumulative wealth and power. According to Bonita Bennett,

The potential unlocked by this space has taken the museum into new terrain which includes a major renovation and restoration project. The plans involve expanding it as a centre for the Museum's programmes which have long outgrown the current building, and as a community centre to

support the ongoing work relating to the return of former residents to the District.<sup>62</sup>

There was a period of co-habitation of the buildings between the Sacks Futeran business and the District Six Museum. Restoration and refurbishment commenced as architects Rennie Scurr Adendorff, project managers: ACG architects and development planners, and builders R & N, as well as engineers labourers, painters, plasters, plumbers, electricians, and carpenters descended on the building. According to As Noor Khan, the R&N Master Builders building supervisor who was responsible for overseeing work in the Fugard “It was an interesting but challenging job. We worked 24-hour shifts during the final month to complete the theatre within six months. At times, there were more than 100 people on site.”



Figure 60 Creating new theatre spaces and installing new ceilings and openings between the two Buitenkant Street warehouse buildings. District Six Museum archive.

Phases were staggered over a five year period due to funding constraints and “a further grant was obtained from the National Lotteries Fund to support the renovations and development of the building”.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Sacks Futeran Building Project, [www.districtsix.co.za/docs/sacks-futeran.pdf](http://www.districtsix.co.za/docs/sacks-futeran.pdf). accessed April 2011.

<sup>63</sup> ‘Sacks Futeran Building Project, Fields of Play: Football memories and Forced Removals in Cape Town’, Brochure, 2010. District Six Museum archive.



Figure 61 Two views of exterior restoration work on the Church building façade and the alley requiring scaffolding. District Six Museum archive.

Each of the five buildings owned by Sacks Futeran were interconnected and presented a rabbit warren and a real challenge as levels differed from one building to another. According to Mike Scurr one of the most crucial interventions was the creation of a courtyard space where the buildings interconnect. Space was utilized according to the needs of the Sacks Futeran business and doorways were knocked through where required. Entrances and exits had to be redesigned to maximize flow in the buildings and where possible, care was taken to preserve the integrity of original fixtures, colours, textures, plaster and ‘skin’ revealing use and layers. Large heavy steel fire doors are located between the 1903 warehouse, the 1910 warehouse, the church buildings and the Harrington Street warehouses. These were retained for their aesthetic appeal as the building was completely refurbished in line with safety regulations.



Figure 62 Fire damaged floor and roofing timbers uncovered during restoration of the 1903 Sacks Futeran warehouse building. District Six Museum archive.

The wooden floors and ceilings were replaced where necessary and restored utilizing eco-friendly products and portions of different walls within and without the buildings have been left exposed to reveal the remains of older structures, building methods and materials. The buildings have been remodeled to include disabled features such as ramps and rails. According to Stewart Brand, warehouses have “unusual flexibility” and this versatility enabled the architects and the museum to tailor the spaces in line with their current needs and future requirements.<sup>64</sup>

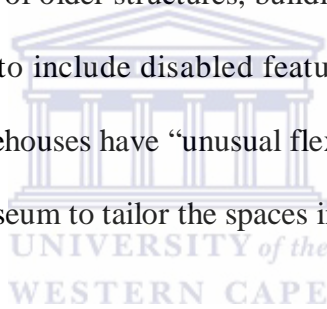


Figure 63 Constructing interior frames for new wall of archival storeroom in c1903 warehouse building. District Six Museum archive.

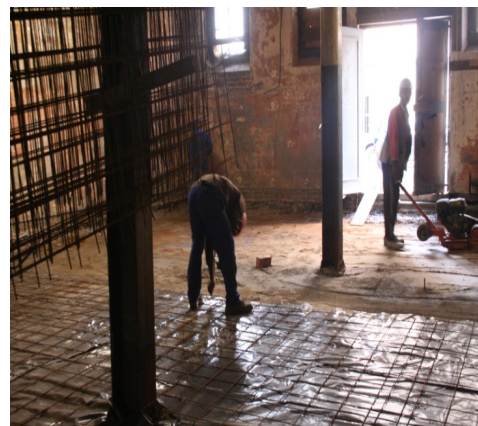


Figure 64 Preparation for new floor in the Fugard theatre foyer. District Six Museum archive.

<sup>64</sup> Brand, S, *How Buildings Learn: What happens after they're built*, (New York: Penguin, 1994).



Figure 65 Restoration of the ground floor of the c1910 warehouse building in preparation for the installation of Fields of Play exhibition. District Six Museum archive.

What were previously shopping departments, office, despatch, and holding areas have become offices, studios, archival storerooms, exhibition spaces and include two theatre venues. Eric Abraham “underwrote the multi-million rand project” to renovate and transform the two Sacks Futeran warehouses and church building into the new 270-seat Fugard Theatre, a rehearsal studio, foyer space, dressing rooms and full staff facilities.<sup>65</sup> The Fugard “is a National Heritage Site,” according to Shaun Adendorff, who designed the new theatre and “that made it necessary to preserve as much as we could. The nice thing though, is that it adds to the character of the premises and, rather than make the project difficult, enhances the look and feel of the place.”<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> The Fugard Theatre, [www.thefugard.com](http://www.thefugard.com).accessed 20.10.2012.

<sup>66</sup> The Fugard Theatre, [www.thefugard.com](http://www.thefugard.com), accesses 20.10.2012.





Figure 66 Two exterior views of the new internal shared courtyard space between the three buildings of the Fugard Theatre and the two buildings of the District Six Homecoming centre. HH-R.

Between 2009 and 2012 the Sacks Futeran set of buildings were extensively refurbished and transformed internally and externally and have become the Homecoming centre of the District Six Museum. According to Bonita Bennett,

On a positive note, 2008, also saw great strides being made in the building project which is likely to extend for at least another three years. The renovation of the ground floor section of the Sacks Futeran warehouse was completed, and the long-anticipated football exhibition – ‘Fields of Play: football memories and forced removals in Cape Town’ – had its grand opening.<sup>67</sup>

In 2011, Rennie Scurr Adendorff Architects received a Bronze Loerie Award for the Fugard Theatre. One of the judges commented that “In the Fugard there is link from our past into our democratic future”. The Loeries are South African creative awards acknowledging excellence in “the design, visual, spatial and communication arts”<sup>68</sup>

<sup>67</sup> District Six Museum, Annual Report 2008/9, p. 7.

<sup>68</sup> Futeran, O, interviewed by Hayley Hayes-Roberts, 15<sup>th</sup> June 2012.

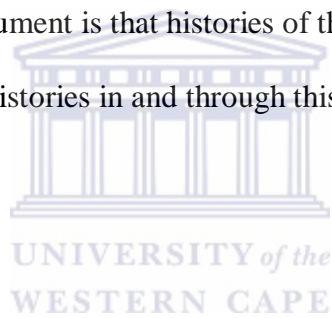


Figure 67 Otis lift shaft: Second floor Homecoming Centre. HH-R.



Figure 68 Enclosed lift shaft with safety fencing and wooden staircase. Homecoming Centre. HH-R.

I have attempted to interpret and narrate histories through brick and mortar and to plot various interventions and aspects that have relevance to understanding the architecture of Sacks Futeran buildings. My argument is that histories of the immediate area can be enhanced and complimented by histories in and through this set of buildings



## Chapter Four

### Museumising the District Six Museum's Homecoming Centre

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The Museum represents a living memorial and is more than just a static display. Through this space we have created an arena, which enables us to reaffirm our identity, celebrate our heritage and confront the complexities of our history.

Vincent Kolbe, Ex-resident and former Museum trustee<sup>1</sup>

In previous chapters I sought to construct a body of knowledge that supports my argument in which the Sacks Futeran buildings significantly act in constituting an archive, a sense of place and allow alternative histories to be produced. The buildings were utilised as a family business and since inception as the Homecoming Centre have sought to extend the cultural footprint of the District Six Museum. This has been achieved through a range of notable interactions that have raised the profile of the Museum. Acquiring this set of museum buildings leads to the question: What does the Homecoming Centre allow the District Six Museum to achieve? The processes of museumising the District Six Homecoming Centre will be examined in this chapter in relation to its collections, methodologies, modalities, visions and multifunctional interconnected spaces.

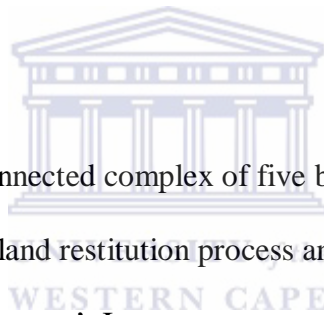
#### **Reconfiguring space**

According to District Six Museum director Bonita Bennett, in 2002 a series of consultative meetings were held to reconceptualise the interior functionality of the buildings in line with the museum's mission and objectives. There was a strong and commonly-held desire for the idea of a "homecoming centre", which could support returning families who had been

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<sup>1</sup> Kolbe, V, 'Exhibitions at the District Six Museum', Brochure. Undated, District Six Museum archive.

displaced from the city. The concept was further developed to include archival space, seminar, conference and workshop space, income-generating sections, such as an extended museum shop and tea room, and of course space for exhibitions and displays. Each of the five buildings were envisaged as potentially extending the museum's methodological practices. Where spaces and transactive museum practice could intersect in new ways. Over a number of years, after an extensive building project the collection of Sacks Futeran buildings were restored and renamed The Homecoming Centre of the District Six Museum. The Fugard Theatre now occupies the old church building and the two Harrington Street warehouse buildings while the District Six Museum occupies the c1903 and c1910 Buitenkant Street warehouse buildings where new exhibition spaces, offices, archival storerooms, studio and workshop spaces have been created.



As noted by Rassool, “the interconnected complex of five buildings was intended as a space which would support the broader land restitution process and become ‘a centre for community life’, a ‘homecoming centre’. Its spaces create potential for interaction that feature “the role of a workshop arena for the museum’s memory methodology work to reimagine the city whilst understanding the traditions and historical processes that shaped it”.<sup>2</sup>

A theatre in the old Victorian Gothic church building was identified as a “multi-functional performance space that invokes the social spirit of the bioscopes and community halls of District Six”.<sup>3</sup> According to Bonita Bennett, in August 2003 a long-term strategic plan was launched

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<sup>2</sup> Rassool, C, Slade, V, ‘Fields of Play’: the District Six Museum and the history of football in Cape Town’, *Soccer and Society*, Vol. 13, Issue 2, 2012, p 4.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Hands On District Six, The District Six Museum Newsletter’, August 2003. District Six Museum archive.

to signal the shift from a memorial project of land and cultural restitution, to an emerging site museum. This *Hands On District Six* event introduced plans for the establishment of the Sacks Futeran Complex as a cultural homecoming centre for the new District Six, the intention to develop a Memorial Park, and plans to work towards the development of a cultural Heritage Precinct on the broader District Six site.<sup>4</sup>



Figure 69 The rehearsal studio in the Fugard, 2002 . Photographer Jeffrey Abrahams. District Six Museum archive.

The reconfigured interior spaces of the Homecoming Centre allowed the Museum to relocate staff away from the Methodist Church Building where a dire shortage of space had developed. A short walk along Buitenkant Street links the two museum buildings. This relocation has resulted in the two locales functioning in different ways and represents a growth spurt in the ‘life’ of the District Museum. The director, administrative staff, exhibitions, education and financial departments moved into offices on the second floor of the c1910 warehouse building where a new boardroom had been created. Large ground and first floor spaces were allocated for exhibitions and events as they are extremely flexible and can be accessed through various entrances and dressed to suit the occasion. “The Fugard Theatre as it exists today, the youth Digital Arts Clubhouse, the new exhibition gallery space

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<sup>4</sup> District Six: A National Heritage Site: Draft of Conservation Management Plan prepared for SAHRA Council, July 2006, (Cape Town: The District Six Museum), District Six Museum archive, p. 2.

– these all form part of the broader Homecoming Centre community complex”.<sup>5</sup>

Stewart Brand treats buildings as places that ‘learn’ during their lives wrought by forceful transitions and notes that “between the dazzle of a new building and its eventual corpse, when it is either demolished or petrified for posterity as a museum”.<sup>6</sup> I agree with the notion that buildings “learn” but would argue that that the Homecoming Centre, as it has been adapted, acts as an entry point which engages with dynamic existing and future heritage constructions. Most importantly the buildings have allowed the museum to extend its programme of civic public giving as a way of redressing past social injustices through education, exhibitions, workshops, and cultural events. The buildings have been adapted for current needs in line with international trends in sustainable architectural practice. In fact the buildings aid and lend themselves to adaptability due to their voluminous interior spaces which have been customized by the Museum. That aside the buildings embody and symbolize new engagements that work simultaneously with notions of return and renewal towards the fulfillment of a regenerated society.

### **The formation of a triad of memorialisation sites**

According to Karen Till “places of memory are created by individuals and social groups to give a shape to the felt absences, fears and desires that haunt contemporary society”<sup>7</sup> The old Methodist church building was the museums first container of memories and sought to engage with “felt absences” and is the museum’s main site of engagement where ex-residents narratives are represented. The Homecoming Centre buildings act in a different way – they are based around the notion of a hub – a space where very different events, exhibitions and so

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<sup>5</sup> Bennett, B, *The Sacks Futeran Complex*, ‘Creative Cape Town Annual 2011’, (Cape Town: Bell-Roberts, 2010), p. 20.

<sup>6</sup> Brand, S, *How Buildings Learn: What happens after they’re built*, (New York: Penguin, 1994), p.11.

<sup>7</sup> Till, K, *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), p. 9.

forth occur in rapid succession. Therefore they are two diverse spaces of engagement linked to each other though a shared agenda although they are managed with a different set of criteria. The Homecoming Centre buildings are aligned to play a role in a regeneration process linked to inner city improvement, site memorialisation and a museum community.



Figure 70 The Homecoming Centre of the District Six Museum incorporating the Fugard Theatre. District Museum archive.



Figure 71 Buitenkant Street view of the renovated Homecoming Centre. HH-R.

The original museum site at the Buitenkant Methodist church allows visitors to understand forced removals and a restorative project through the narratives of a ‘community’. Therefore the buildings that fall under the management of the Museum have become multi functional and

versatile cultural landmarks.<sup>8</sup>

The District Six Museum has been in existence for Museum 18 years “building a legacy in the city that promotes public culture through its memory and heritage work and it has had a major impact on heritage tourism awareness”<sup>9</sup>. A sense of place coupled with activism and campaigning has influenced and informed how the District Six Museum works within spaces



Figure 72 The District Six Museum. District Six Museum archive.



Figure 73 District Six Museum interior. District Six Museum archive.

The District Six Museum and by extension its buildings are associated with a historic event. The lingering legacy of forced removals is central to the museum's unique remedial approach to heritage practice which is to reconcile people and landscape. “Although the Museum was initially started as a community space for ex-residents to gather, it has now become a space that tells the story of District Six to both local and foreign visitors to Cape Town” and simultaneously stands as an agent of social justice and a metaphor for the birth of

<sup>8</sup> ‘District Six Museum Annual Report 2009/10’, p. 23.

<sup>9</sup> Bennett, B, ‘The Sacks Futeran Complex, ‘Creative Cape Town Annual 2011’, (Cape Town: Bell-Roberts, 2010), p. 18.



a democratic nation.<sup>10</sup> The museum “also becomes a vehicle for a collective process of interpretation, through which new elements of debate and consensus are created”.<sup>11</sup> The pursuit of a stabilized bounded identity strengthens a sense of identity and a willingness to follow active processes make meaning of contemporary lives in the face of uncertainty and sustains itself by active participation with the community and connects with localized issues that it prioritizes.

The museum has developed several partnerships with other dispossessed communities, both in South Africa and globally. It is a founder member of the International Coalition of Historical Site Museums of Conscience. “This work is situated within an emerging African and transnational framework of *sites of conscience* –places of memory committed to using their histories to foster civic dialogue and promote democratic and humanitarian values – a framework that the District Six Museum has been instrumental in shaping”.<sup>12</sup> Thus the Museum is experienced by local, national and International visitors as a “site of conscience and consciousness”.<sup>13</sup> The District Six Museum hosted the Russell Tribunal on Palestine in November 2011 in the Homecoming Centre. “The discussion was based on whether Israel’s practices against the Palestine people are in breach of the prohibition on apartheid under International Law- A small pro-Israeli crowd picketed outside the District Six Museum waving placards reading “Guilty of ignoring African victims of human-abuses”.<sup>14</sup> Therefore the District Six site, The District Six Museum and more recently the Homecoming Centre form a triad of sites that intermingle and are entangled.

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<sup>10</sup> ‘District Six Museum’, brochure. 2010.

<sup>11</sup> Camarena, C, Morales, T ‘Community museums and global connection: the Union of Community Museums of Oaxaca’ in Ivan Karp, Corinne A Kratz, Lynn Szwaja and Tomás Ybarra-Frausto with Gustavo Buntinx, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Ciraj Rassool (eds), *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 327

<sup>12</sup> ‘District Six: A National Heritage Site: Draft of Conservation Management Plan prepared for SAHRA Council, July 2006’. (Cape Town: The District Six Museum), p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> ‘District Six Museum Annual Report 2010/11’, p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> ‘Donation amounts to apartheid’, *Cape Times*, Tuesday, November 8, 2011.

## The development of a museum community

The Museum has produced a legacy that has seen the development of museum community that moves beyond representing a community. Participation in the Museums brand of heritage is not a neutral activity or a passive acceptance of heritage. Exclusionary and discriminating patterns are confronted, debated and represented through equitable frameworks influencing citizenship and knowledge formation and “all these expressions and perceptions are valid, and all recognize the significance of heritage and the contribution it makes to the quality of life” as noted by John Schofield.<sup>15</sup> Therefore the museum practices of the District Six Museum have instilled a perception of value towards heritage construction in those who are touched by it. As noted by Christiaan Beyers and Andrea Witcomb “Heritage has become a right”.<sup>16</sup>

Not only the Homecoming Centre but all the District Six Museum buildings and sites of engagement contribute as sites of dispute and reconciliation that shift notions of museumising from staid forms to inclusive participation. Identities are fostered as “the past became a source of community identity, affirming a sense of new heritage practices in South Africa that reflect an active retrieval by national and community museums, through “telling the hidden stories of the apartheid era”<sup>17</sup>. The concept of a “heritagescape” as postulated by Mary-Catherine E. Garden, “grasps with the idea of a heritage site as a landscape” which is an existing Museum approach in working with District Six.<sup>18</sup> The triads of sites interrelate as narratives of complex and unique interactive social spaces each with a specific quality and atmosphere and frame heritage construction through “interpreting history through historic

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<sup>15</sup> Schofield, J, Heritage Management, Theory and Practice, *The Heritage Reader*, Graham Fairclough, Rodney Harrison, John Schofield, John H. Jameson, eds., Jr., ( New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 20.

<sup>16</sup> Witcomb, A, The past in the present: Towards a politics of care at the National Trust of Australia (WA), *Heritage and Identity*, (London: Routledge, 2009), p.174.

<sup>17</sup> Layne, V, ‘The District Six Museum: An ordinary People’s Place’, *The Public Historian*, (February 2008), vol. 30, no.1, p. 52.

<sup>18</sup>Garden, Mary-Catherine E. The Heritagescape: Looking at heritage Sites, *Heritage Studies Methods and Approaches*, Marie Louise Stig Sørensen and John Carman (eds). (New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 274.

sites''<sup>19</sup>



Figure 74 The site of a proposed Horstley Street Memorial Park, District Six. District Museum archive.



Figure 75 Hands on District Six logo on a District Six Museum board on the site of District Six. District Six Museum archive.

In 'landmark ceremony' on District Six on 26 November 2000, that was presided over by President Thabo Mbeki, the final stage of the District Six land was handed back to claimants who had been tenants in District Six at the time of the removal...with estimates of between 8,000 and 10,000 people set to move back to the city'.<sup>20</sup>

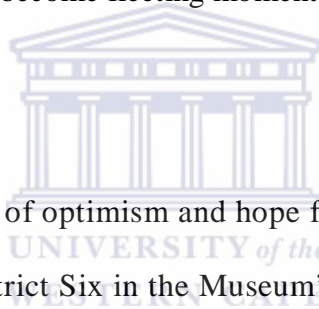
On 11<sup>th</sup> February 2004, two former District Six families were the first to receive keys to their new homes at 6 and 8 Chapel Street respectively. Ex-residents Mr. Dan Ndzabela and Mr. Ebrahim Murat and their families form part of the first group of 24

<sup>19</sup> District Six Archive: District Six: A National Heritage Site: Draft of Conservation Management Plan prepared for SAHRA Council, July 2006 (Cape Town: The District Six Museum), p. 7.

<sup>20</sup> Rassool., C, Memory and Politics of History in the District Six Museum. *Desire Lines, Space, memory and Identity in the Post-apartheid City*, N Murray, N Shepherd, M Hall (eds), (London: Routledge Architect Series, 2007), p.125.

former residents selected to return after an absence of nearly forty years. Their struggle to return has been both a personal and political journey marking the spirit and dignity of the dispossessed, and their quest to be reunited with the land they lost.<sup>21</sup>

According to Anna Bohlin the idea of homecoming is an opportunity to reconnect with a valuable shared past and notes that in ‘rebuilding’ Protea Village, a site of forced removals in the Southern Suburbs of Cape Town differing idioms of return exist.<sup>22</sup> As Karen Till notes “When individuals “go back home” they go to a place because they feel a need to visit a familiar past. One visits a childhood home or school or returns to a well-known neighborhood in a city; these places become thresholds through which an individual may experience intense memories that become fleeting moments of returning, re-experiencing, remembering”.<sup>23</sup>



The museum has been a symbol of optimism and hope for many. I have often encountered ex-residents of District Six in the Museum’s coffee shop who have come to town to shop. They visit the museum to chat and socialize with staff members and old friends or family before returning home via bus, taxi or train. This indicates the cohesive nature of the museum’s spaces and indicates that ties to the city are strong and strengthened by the dream, for some, of returning to the District, perhaps to existing places of worship or schools in the vicinity. Therefore the museum also encompasses notions of pilgrimage and nostalgia that “mediate and construct social memory and identity by localizing personal emotions and defining social relations to the past” as noted by Karen Till.<sup>24</sup>

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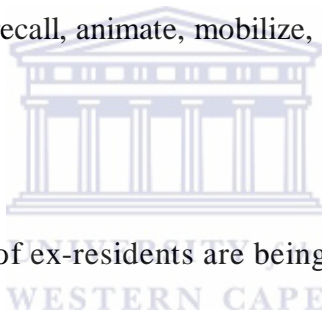
<sup>21</sup> ‘The Return brochure’, District Six Museum 2004,

<sup>22</sup> Bohlin, A, Idioms of Return: Homecoming and Heritage in the Rebuilding of Protea Village, Cape Town, *African Studies*, 70, 2, August 2011, p. 290.

<sup>23</sup> Till, K, *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), p. 14.

<sup>24</sup> Till, K, *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), p. 9.

Home often refers to a our place of birth, and childhood therefore a defined place, with neighbors, streets, sounds and smells that are familiar and speak to notions of belonging. We carry home with us in our minds and hearts and it transcends the physical. How does one return to “salted earth”? Social and personal memories are bound up in place and landscape, the physical sites of our childhood are especially strong, and our formative years are evocative fragments. Places of work, schools and spaces represent rites of passage and social interaction. Stoeps, corner cafes, streets, houses and buildings, busy and quiet times, and focal points from the past became a source of community identity, affirming a sense of belonging. As noted by Nadia Seremetakis “Public and personal memory invest various locales of a city with sensory capacities and powers to revoke, recall, animate, mobilize, calm, impress, order and rationalize.”<sup>25</sup>



The actualities of homecoming of ex-residents are being met by the District Six Museum through a supportive framework in anticipation of returnees playing an active role in rebuilding community. A memorial park is one of the projects that is high on the museums agenda. People have returned and many more will be returning as District Six is rebuilt. The buildings and streets are different, the atmosphere has changed, memories will surface as they return to District Six and the welcoming spaces of the District Six Museum and the Homecoming Centre will assist in re-entering and adjusting to city life.

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<sup>25</sup> Seremetakis, N, *The Other Side of Silence: Disaster and the Petrified Bodies of History, ReMembering the body: Body and Movement in the 20<sup>th</sup>*, (New York: Hatjie Cantz, 2000).

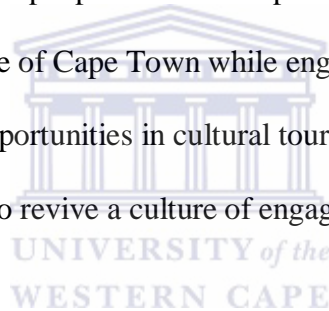


Figure 76 Site Model, detail of site plan and elevation of row houses, Chapel Street, District Six.

The plan shows a design of two-storey housing for claimants, one house on each level.<sup>26</sup>

District Six is being reinscribed and constructed through architectural practice, the museumising practices of the District Six Museum and by returning ex-residents.

Memorialisation projects will allow people to re-enter spaces within the District and to re-claim the urban and social heritage of Cape Town while engaging with the legacy of apartheid on the cape flats. It will create opportunities in cultural tourism, help re-establish traditional crafts, and provide opportunities to revive a culture of engagement with the area”<sup>27</sup>



<sup>26</sup> ‘A sneak peek inside the new District Six’. *Cape Times* 13<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>27</sup> ‘Ten Years of the District Six Museum’, Working document, 2004, District Six museum archive.

## Museumising the Homecoming Centre



Figure 77 Two views of the Homecoming Centre's alley.

These two images reflect methods employed in museumising the buildings and spaces of Homecoming Centre. Panels of original stone and brick have been left unplastered in the alley to reveal the Dutch warehouse foundations that have been extended with a course of fired brick. By purposefully revealing the layers presents the building as an exhibit thereby creating knowledge as to its buildings materials and historical formation. Throughout the multiple spaces of the five interconnected buildings the sensitive renovation has seen the retention of visible layers of its usage through exposure of walls and weathering as old layers become an industrial vintage aesthetic element integrated into the spaces.

By 2008, the renovation of the ground floor section of the Sacks Futeran warehouse was completed, and the long-anticipated football exhibition – ‘Fields of Play: football memories and forced removals in Cape Town’ – had its grand opening”.<sup>28</sup> The exhibition inadvertently

<sup>28</sup> ‘District Six Museum Annual Report 2008/9’, p. 7.

linked local soccer histories to the 2010 Fifa world cup soccer event, and the youthful ‘Red card to racism’ exhibition explores and juxtaposes fair play with human rights utilizing soccer as a metaphor.<sup>29</sup> The innovative, challenging and highly relevant work of the Museum was acknowledged in 2003 through the Prince Claus award.<sup>30</sup> The Sports memory Project was responsible for the 1996, exhibition ‘Displaying the Game’.



Figure 78 ‘Fields of Play’ exhibition opening in the Homecoming Centre, 2008. District Six Museum archive.

In 2005, in partnership with the Provincial Department of Economic Development and Tourism, the Cape Flats Tourism Feasibility Study was launched. This evolved into two new exhibitions in 2008- ‘Fields of play: football memories and forced removals in Cape Town’ and ‘Offside: Kick Ignorance Out! Football Unites! Racism Divides!’ in the newly renovated Sacks Futuran building in Buitenkant Street, Cape Town. The exhibition was opened before the FIFA soccer world cup 2012. The ‘Fields of Play’ exhibition was opened in Basel and was funded by The Carl Schlettwein Foundation as was the publication of the Fields of Play catalogue.

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<sup>29</sup> Rassool, C, Slade, V, ‘Fields of Play’: the District Six Museum and the history of football in Cape Town, *Soccer and Society*, Vol. 13, Issue 2, (Taylor & Francis online, 2012), p. 202.

<sup>30</sup> Winner of the Price Claus Award 2003, ‘Hands On District Six: The District Six Museum Newsletter’, Vol. 5 No. 2, December 2003, p. 1.





Figure 79 Fields of Play exhibition pamphlet. District Six Museum archive.

The District Six museum won a Western Cape Arts and Culture Award for Museum Project of the year 2011. According to selection committee, “the over-arching theme...

“Reconnecting with the Community”... has been extremely successful” and notes that “the museum is reaching out to more than just their immediate community”. The Fields of Play exhibition and other museum exhibitions were highly regarded and “is in line with the guidelines regarding outreach, participation by all visitors, education on all levels, social responsibility and effective use of available resources, etc”.<sup>31</sup>

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Figure 80 ‘The Human Abused’ exhibition by Gunter Uecker, Homecoming Centre 2011. District Six Museum archive.

<sup>31</sup> Western Cape Arts, Culture, Museum, Language, Heritage, Libraries & Archives awards ceremony 2010/2011, [http://www.westerncape.gov.za/other/2011/2/categories\\_nominees\\_and\\_winners.pdf](http://www.westerncape.gov.za/other/2011/2/categories_nominees_and_winners.pdf).



Figure 81 Hands On District Six Mural, Homecoming Centre. HH-R.



Figure 82 Proposed Peter Clark artwork for Homecoming Centre alley gate. HH-R.

The Homecoming Centre's aesthetics have emerged from a revalidation of the creative collaborative methodologies that the Museum produces in conjunction with artists. A large circular mural visually references the museum and the site of District Six and reads "Hands on District Six". It stimulates contestations and debates associated with reparations and acts as a supportive mnemonic device to District Six returnees and ex-residents. Situated adjacent to the mural is the Fugard Theatre Its diminutive "fine Victorian Gothic façade", is further enhanced when juxtaposed dramatically with the more utilitarian structure of the Homecoming Centre.<sup>32</sup> Once part of the Sacks Futeran business, this space is now host to a range of actors, singers, admin staff, cleaners, make-up artists, hairdressers, wardrobe specialists, security guards, barmen, stage managers, baristas, sound and lighting technicians,

<sup>32</sup> Rennie, J, *The Buildings of Central Cape Town 1978, Volume Two: Catalogue*. (Cape Town: Cape Provincial Institute of Architects, 1978), p. 338.

celebrities, musicians, set designers, directors, script writers, and people attending various shows. It is a tangible tribute to Athol Fugard, “South Africa’s most famous playwright and recent Tony Lifetime achievement Award recipient...the theatre bears his stamp of approval and draws on his own history of campaigning for change through theatre”.<sup>33</sup> According to Shaun Adendorff “It is a National Heritage Site” and “that made it necessary to preserve as much as we could. The nice thing though, is that it adds to the character of the premises and, rather than make the project difficult, enhances the look and feel of the place”.<sup>34</sup> Therefore this beautifully renovated space, within and without, is animated by a constant flux of oral interactions and transactions that reflect and narrate South Africa’s past in particular ways.



Figure 83 Kat and the Kings as a District Six Fundraising event. Pamphlet. District Six Museum archive.

The popular Kat and the Kings musical written by Taliep Peterson and David Kramer opened in May 2011 in the Fugard Theatre reuniting its story with the district itself. Theatre performances coupled with the adjacent museum activities have enabled both to emerge as cultural urban landmarks in the city and indicate the benefits and potential for re-using buildings.

<sup>33</sup> Bennett, B, ‘The Sacks Futeran Complex’, *Creative Cape Town Annual 2011*, (Cape Town: Bell-Roberts, 2010), p. 21.

<sup>34</sup> Haw, P, ‘New life for two warehouses and a church hall’, [www.wordpress.com](http://www.wordpress.com). Accessed 24.05.2012.



Figure 84 Fugard Theatre exterior. HH-R



Figure 85 Fugard Theatre dressing room. HH-R.



Figure 86 Interior and exterior views of the renovated Harrington Street warehouses. HH-R.

The Homecoming Centre allows the Museum to function “as an independent space where forgotten understandings of the past are resuscitated, where different interpretations of that past are facilitated through its collections, exhibitions and education programmes.”<sup>35</sup> The Young Ambassadors programme: a unique heritage education programme affords young people an opportunity to participate in the museums activities and was initiated as a pilot project with

<sup>35</sup> ‘Friends of the District Six Museum’ Brochure, 2011.

funding from the South African National Lotteries Distribution Trust Fund.<sup>36</sup> Therefore the Buildings act as a forum space where open debate is promoted and fostered

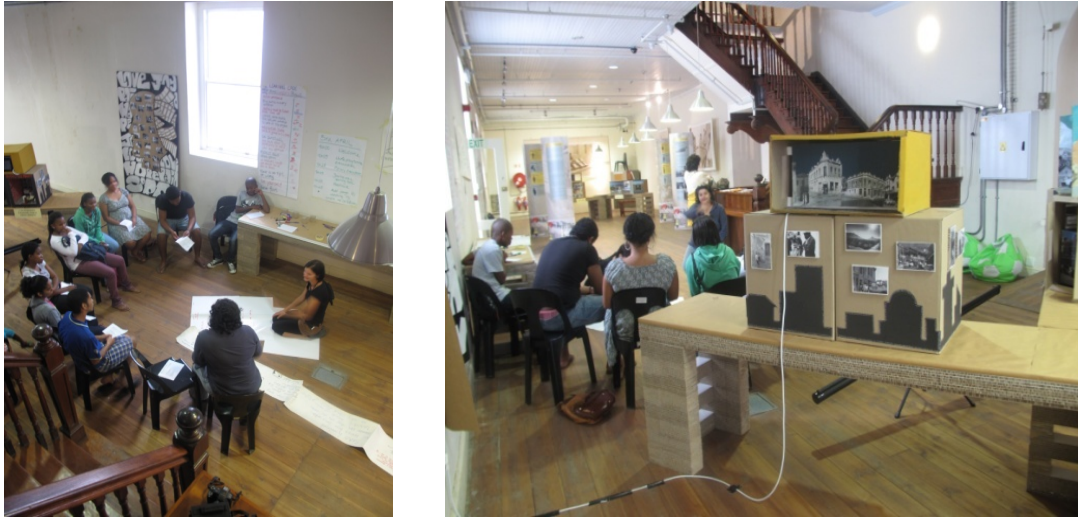


Figure 87 Young curators workshop and Whispers of the Past exhibition in the Homecoming Centre. 2012. HH-R.

A new exhibition Die Tafel commemorative gatherings with ex-residents, craft memory workshops: Huis Kombuis, book launches, poetry readings, AGM's, workshops with youth such as Conheroes: A multi-media celebration of our Uncherished Heroes – multi-media translations of 13 Oral histories by 7 youths from 5 schools against the backdrop of the struggle for a constitutional democracy

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<sup>36</sup> Sanger, M, 'D6M Heritage and Human Rights Ambassador Programme' Hands On District Six: The District Six Museum Newsletter, Vol. 6, No. 4, (Cape Town: District Six Museum, Dec.2004), p.2.



Figure 88 The Homecoming Tafel experience. Homecoming Centre. 2012.

The spaces of the Homecoming Centre imaginatively and symbolically engage with the returning ex-residents. The table is representative of dialogue centered around encounters with friends and family and inspires future developments within the space itself. As noted on the wall text, “The Homecoming Tafel is the central gathering space from which the meaning of return to District Six will be explored in creative ways”

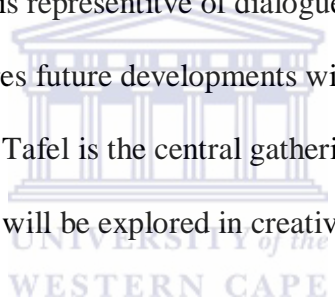
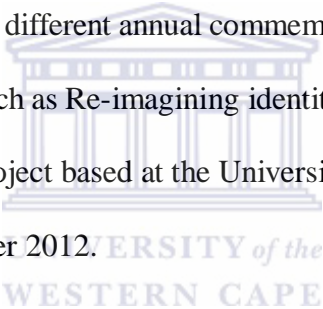


Figure 89 District Six Museum Reminiscence Theatre Festival programme brochure 2012 and Matinee Snack dance and Heritage Day pamphlets. District Six Museum archive.

The District Six Museum has transcended the term “museum” and is diversifying by encouraging events, intersections, collaborations and interventions beyond its walls. Recent developments such as the upcoming Reminiscence Theatre Festival 2012 programme indicate this broadening shift towards working with unjust legacies such as “slavery, colonialism, segregation, apartheid” and issues of “gentrification and urban renewal” thus re-envisioning Cape Town.<sup>37</sup> Cape Town as a site of “Neoliberalism and inequality”, as suggested by McDonald, provides a model with which to address the question of marginality.<sup>38</sup> The museum has extended annual heritage day events into a programme that promotes cultural events during heritage month in September. Therefore the Homecoming centre has become the preferred venue to host different annual commemorative events, Public Education Programmes and cultural events such as Re-imagining identity, a photo and performance workshop, with the ARTPEace Project based at the University of Hamburg, Germany, held during heritage month in September 2012.



Museum staff, interns, trustees, ex-District Six residents, workshop participants, educators, school pupils, volunteers, a radio station, activists, poets, musicians, tourists, artists, delegates among others, attending a variety of exhibitions, events and functions contribute to the ongoing work of the museum from these premises. Therefore the Homecoming Centre is an enabling space where performance aids in the formation and maintenance of relationships identity space. The museums activities dovetail with an urban renewal programme, the “Cultural Heritage Precinct” that has been conceptualised by the District Six Museum and gentrification that grapples with veneers and layers of meaning in the urban

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<sup>37</sup> ‘Reminiscence Theatre Festival 2012, Call for Creatives programme’, November 2012. District Six Museum.

<sup>38</sup> McDonald, D, A, *World City Syndrome: Neoliberalism and inequality in Cape Town*, (New York: Taylor & Francis Group), 2008.

fabric of Cape Town.<sup>39</sup>



Figure 90 View from the Homecoming Centre of the Free Palestine March held on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2012. HH-R.

Frequent marches up Buitenkant Street past the Homecoming Centre to the Houses of Parliament reflect how space in the city is continuously reconfigured and claimed to suit political agendas.

Therefore the Homecoming Centre acts as a site of return, a positive remaking of society by the District Six Museum community. A process of reclaiming both the original site of District Six as restitution and a reminder of the dispossession and trauma of forced removals during apartheid is continued through the spaces of the Homecoming Centre.<sup>40</sup> The museum and its triad of sites are experienced as a site of knowledge contestation, "experiential dialogue", and a tourist destination within the politics of Cape Town's regenerating urban

<sup>39</sup> Deutsche, R, Gendel Ryan, C, *The Fine Art of Gentrification*, *October*, Vol. 31, Winter 1984, p.91.

<sup>40</sup> Delpont, P, 'No matter where we are, we are here.' Beginnings; the fresco wall of the District Six Museum, *City. Site. Museum. Reviewing memory practices at the District Six Museum*. Bonita Bennett, Chrischené Julius and Crain Soutine (eds), ( Cape Town: District Six Museum, 2008) p. 134.



landscape.<sup>41</sup>

The Homecoming Centre is taking on more culturally diverse character as the city itself is transforming through the introduction of pedestrianised locales, trees, public art, sculpture and annual street parades and festivals. The Sacks Futeran narratives documented in this thesis will to be incorporated into the spaces of the Homecoming Centre through exhibitionary hot spots to narrative the experiences of an immigrant minority coinciding with the birth of a nation.



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<sup>41</sup> Sachs, A, District Six Museum: An Experiential Dialogue, *The 2003 Prince Claus Awards*, (The Netherlands: Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development, 2003), p. 43.

## Conclusion

### **The Homecoming Centre as legacy and resource.**

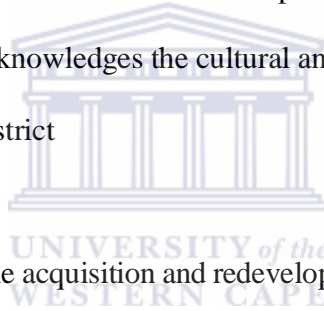
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Buildings represent landmarks and present us with a “material reminder”, a sensory imprint and reveal the associations people forge with place over time. The acquisition and transformation of the Sacks Futeran buildings into the District Six Homecoming Centre has influenced and extended the notion of civic public giving in the museum work of the District Six Museum in relation to District Six returnees and the public. Rennie Scurr Adendorff Architects turned a rabbit warren of five disjointed buildings into a functional unit knitting together the very different buildings coherently. Within and without the buildings offer extensive improved facilities and are sustainable and valuable resources that require management, marketing and maintenance. They allow the museum to foster partnerships locally, nationally and internationally through projects, and host events, workshops and exhibitions in the generous spaces of the buildings. The District Six Museum Foundation Trust as landlord fosters relationships with management, staff, performers and patrons of the Fugard Theatre. Although I have treated the buildings as an archive the spaces transcend that description. Within the spaces of the Homecoming Centre a legacy has been passed on to the Museum and continues to unfold wrought by the Museum community and broader transformative societal changes.

Therefore this study is relevant to reconstructing a sense of place from memory and oral histories, in practical and aesthetic terms as it is to an engagement with the past that seeks to interrogate the production of architectural and archival knowledge. The renovation of the buildings led by key members of the District Six Museum is representative of egalitarian spaces that support knowledge production in South Africa. A museum community has developed during the 18 years of the District

Six Museums existence out of a continuous engagement with the people and multiple meanings of space and place.

As noted the business of E. Sacks Futeran & Co. had been an important aspect of the lives of many individuals in the immediate area. The owners of Sacks Futeran and the staff forged deep connections with the people of District Six and surrounding areas. The Jewish quarter of District Six is no longer, buildings have been demolished or made way for new businesses, yet histories remain. They are to be found in photographs, oral histories, buildings, accounts, names on buildings, immigration records, maps and architecture. Running concurrent to this thesis was research for an exhibition the Jews of District Six which opened at the Cape Town Jewish Museum in November 2012 and acknowledges the cultural and economic role of immigrant Jews who made their home within the district



This thesis has sought to establish the acquisition and redevelopment of the Sacks Futeran buildings as a defining moment in the history of the District Six museum and the buildings, and expands existing literature relating to immigrant minorities within the setting of District Six and the city. It hoped to challenge preconceived concepts, bias, and stereotypes of the District Six museum as the place of “coloured” or popular memories. As noted by Shepherd and Robins, “For many South Africans...the basic struggle remains the same: the struggle against material want, the struggle for human dignity, the struggle for wrongs of the past to be recognized, the struggle for repatriations and for representation” yet” at the same time, the ground on which these struggles are fought now seems more complex and ambiguous, and offers fewer signposts and fixed points”.<sup>1</sup> I argue that the existence and practices of the District Six museum provide an empowering transactive

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<sup>1</sup> Nick Shepherd and Steven Robins, ‘Introduction: New South African Keywords’, *New South African keywords*, (Ohio University Press), 2008, p.11.

signpost, on South Africa's democratizing landscape, as postulated by Rassool, "The District Six Museum has emerged as one of the pre-eminent examples of new museums whose memory methodologies are based on participation, annunciation and inscription, and as a model of memory work based upon the idea of 'transactions' of knowledge".<sup>2</sup> This study shows the resilience of a set of buildings as they are put to work in the service of trade, and later in the service of culture and memory in relation to the troubled pasts of District Six and Cape Town.



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<sup>2</sup> Rassool, C, Slade, V, 'Fields of Play': the District Six Museum and the history of football in Cape Town, *Soccer and Society*, Vol. 13, Issue 2, 2012, p. 200.

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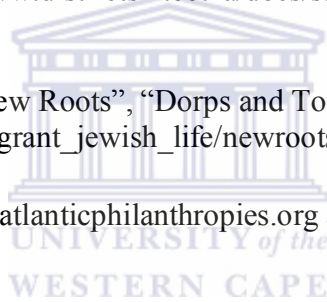
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