

CCA Speaker Series #18

Bonita Bennett

*Blowing in the wind: a reflection on the
District Six Public Sculpture project*

Thursday, 3 September 2015, 4.30 pm

Anatomy Lecture Theatre
Centre for Curating the Archive
Level 3, Old Medical School
Hiddingh Campus
31 – 37 Orange Street
Cape Town

The intentions and impact of the District Six Public Sculpture Festival of 1997, viewed within its time, were far-reaching. Intentionally constructed to eventually be dismembered by the elements – the ruthless southeaster, the unpredictable rain and the fluctuating temperatures and relative humidity - it made an impact on the land which was provocative, evocative, a protest and at the same time an assertion of the site's significance. In its multiple parts, it also stood as a herald of a hopeful future.

In her talk, Bonita Bennett will reflect on why she views this open-air exhibition to have been both ground breaking and under-celebrated. Bennett will reflect on how its products and processes connected it symbolically and strongly to the devastation of the community that occupied the land before their displacement, and how it served to signal something of the 'things to come' in terms of restitution as well as its challenges.

Bonita Bennett was appointed director of the District Six Museum in June 2008. She had previously worked as the museum's collections manager and research coordinator, having a particular research interest in narrative and memory. Bennett trained as a high school teacher and completed her BA at the University of Cape Town in 1982, followed by a Higher Diploma in Education in 1984. After many years of teaching at schools in impoverished areas of Cape Town, she went back to UCT to complete her MPhil in Applied Sociolinguistics. Her dissertation focused on narratives of trauma of people who had been forcibly removed from various areas in the Western Cape, her region of birth and residence.

Bonita Bennett's passion for her work stems from her background as a human rights activist, her training as an educator and her commitment to education in the broadest sense of the word, together with the fact that her family was also resident in the area before the Group Areas Act forced them to move.

For further information, kindly contact Nancy Dantas at 021 480 7151 or nancy.dantas@uct.ac.za

