Processes of Transformation in the Slave Lodge

Discussing Movement and Display in representing heritage
Jan Smuts outside the Slave Lodge
Some History of the Building

- The Slave Lodge was built in 1679
- It is believed that about 9000 people were incarcerated as Slaves, Convicts and Mentally Ill in the building between 1679 and 1809/10
- In 1811 the building was refurbished to house various government offices
- In April 1966 it became the South African Cultural History Museum
The site hosts exhibitions and relevant activities (I can mention some activities during the discussion) to create awareness of human rights and justice- the broad theme we follow and allow to guide us through when leading groups and in our thinking about the Lodge is ‘from HUMAN WRONGS TO HUMAN RIGHTS’

This theme is what guides my colleague Paul Tichmann and I, my ex colleague Fiona Clayton and our education and public programmes unit educators: Nadjwa Damon, Faried Basier and Lindah as they take all the school groups through the space and they have developed lesson plans around the lower spaces especially.

Only 30 % of the 2500 square metres consists of 4 galleries portraying the Cape’s integral role in the Indian Ocean Slave Trade (opened in May 2006)

While the entire exhibition space on the second floor of the Lodge consists of exhibitions that were installed in 1966 when the lodge became the South African Cultural History under Apartheid

In 1998 it was renamed the Slave Lodge now housing exhibitions developed around the themes of Slavery and human rights.
The South African Cultural History Museum

- In April 1966 the site became the South African Cultural History Museum
- A series of permanent exhibitions were installed to reflect predominantly European culture and civilization
- Currently, while the ground floor houses some exhibits on slavery, the first floor still houses exhibits from the SA Cultural History Museum which has remained unchanged since 1966
- In the accompanying slide you get a glimpse of the ‘Silver Room’ unchanged since 1966
Older Exhibitions installed in 1966
Clocks and Culture
The chief objective of the project of transformation according to my former colleague Ms. Fiona Clayton was to ‘create engaging and lively exhibitions’ throughout the entire space of the Slave Lodge with the overall guiding strategies:

- To acknowledge through the use of exhibitions the contributions of the historically oppressed;
- To create partnerships to ensure that exhibitions and programmes reflect the interests of broader society;
- The creation of sustainable onsite programmes for the involvement of the general public;
Inside the Slave Lodge
‘...the languages, religions, cultures, and attitudes of slaves and colonists meshed and changed in a reciprocal cultural exchange...’ (R. Shell, 1994)
A bit on the legacy

All around us every day, we experience the echoes of cultures from Asia and Africa — and the fruits of the labour of the enslaved people. This great contribution of so many men and women, our ancestors, has for too long been blotted out by over-amplified colonial narratives.

(Patric Tariq Mellet, 2005)
More Display with People
Temporary Exhibitions: 24/10/2012
Images of the Slave Lodge
Transformation: The Processes

- On the Iziko website under ‘Museums’ and then the ‘Slave Lodge’ the upstairs exhibitions are not marketed instead the official statement reads: ‘The Upper Level Galleries as well as other spaces in the museums will be renewed in the coming years.’

- Through connecting with people in spaces with transformative energies we are able to transform our thinking and doing as well as theirs