

Visual Representation, Arts and Culture Committee Background Report for 2017 Rhodes University Transformation Summit.

I. Introduction

In response to a statement sent out by the Equity and Institutional Culture Directorate inviting members of the institution to volunteer to constitute the twelve summit preparation working groups, only two members of the institution volunteered to constitute a group that would facilitate discussions on the institution's visual culture. This was the lowest number of volunteers in a process which resulted in other working themes attracting 11 volunteers and the average number of volunteers per working theme initially being 7.5.

In two meetings of the Visual Representation, Art and Culture Committee, (1st February 2017 & 6th March 2017) members of the institution were suggested who would be invited to constitute the Visual Culture Summit Working Group. When approached however, because of the summit times frames, the individuals suggested felt that they could not assume this responsibility in addition to responsibilities they had already committed to. Other members of staff and students identified as likely to be interested in this transformation theme, because of their areas of work, were approached by the E&IC office. A group of four was formed early in March. After two meetings and one main activity, the group dissolved. The main reason for the group's dissolution, given by the members, is that they could not spare the time needed for the task. One member of the group was a new staff member who felt that he had to focus on settling into his new role and one other member has since resigned from the institution.

Following the dissolution of the group, the Visual Representation Art and Culture Committee opened up one of its scheduled meetings to all Rhodes University stakeholders on the 9th of June with the aim of holding a conversation on the visual culture of the institution and of using the discussion as a basis for formulating a discussion document with recommendations that would be further discussed at the summit. While the meeting did not attract as many stakeholders as was expected, the engagements were robust and productive. A second meeting to continue and conclude the discussion began on the 9th was held on the 14th of June.

In order to build on work that had already been undertaken, the starting point of the discussions was a report prepared by the Visual Representation Arts and Culture Task Team in 2014. The eighteen member task team constituted by Dr Badat and headed by Professor Maylam, consisted of representatives from unions, various divisions and departments of the institution. The report was constructed based on the findings of a survey of student, staff and alumni opinions on particular aspects of the institution's visual culture and on how these should be changed as part of the transformation project, if at all. The survey also sought to establish what these stakeholders thought the basic principles informing the purposeful construction of the institution's visual culture should be. The full report of the task team is attached as an appendix to this report.

The three main questions asked therefore in the two open meetings convened by the Visual Representation Art and Culture Committee on the 9th and 14th June 2017 were;

- a) Which of the recommendations made in 2014 were not adopted and why?

- b) Given the developments in the South African higher education landscape between 2014 and 2017, how current and relevant are the arguments and recommendations made in the 2014 report to the prevailing context?
- c) Are there alternatives to the recommendations made in 2014 which might better serve the goal of the transformation of the institution?

The next section is a report on the key points of discussion and recommendations made in the two meetings. The questions posed will be used to structure the report.

II. Discussion of the 2014 report and updated recommendations.

A. Which of the recommendations made in the 2014 report were adopted and why?

Professor Maylam reported that all the recommendations that were made in the 2014 had been discussed and adopted at Senate and Council. One of the recommendations adopted and implemented was the formation of the Visual Representation Arts and Culture Committee. The majority of recommendations adopted have however not been implemented. This, he reported, can be attributed to a lack of dedicated resources. In order that the recommendations adopted are implemented there is need for a procedure or strategy that would enable the institution to allocate, raise or gain access to resources that are dedicated to the transformation of the institution's visual culture.

B. Given the developments in the South African higher education landscape between 2014 and 2017, how current and relevant are the arguments and recommendations made in the 2014 report to the prevailing context?

From a post-Rhodes Must Fall protests vantage point, the meetings considered arguments and recommendations made in the 2014 report. While in both meetings the discussion shifted back and forth, for ease of exposition, these and suggested changes to the recommendations will be grouped into six categories. These are; 1) recommended principles and goals, 2) recommendations on the overseeing of matters relating to the institution's visual culture, 3) recommendations on the development of and the caring for the institution's visual art and artefacts collection, 4) recommendations on the display and use of the institution's art and artefacts art and artefacts of memorisation, 5) recommendations on the graduation ceremony, university regalia and dress code for the ceremony, and 6) recommendations on the institution's branding and identity symbols. The categories will be looked at in turn...

1. Recommended Principles and Goals.

Attendees of the 9th and 14th June meeting affirmed that they had read the guiding principles and goals for the construction of the institution's visual culture and identity as formulated by the task team in Visual Representation Arts and Culture Task Team 2014 and found the principles and broad objectives to be still relevant to the present context. The guiding principles and goals are reproduced almost verbatim below;

- a) Transformation of the institution's visual culture has to be undertaken as integral to the broader exercise and goal of transforming the identity and culture (behaviours, assumptions, beliefs and structures) of the institution. The visual culture of the institution should there not contribute to the culture of the institution being experienced as alienating and excluding by any of the demographic groups which make up the institution's population.
- b) While a change of institutional artefacts and motifs has the potential to disrupt exclusionary beliefs, assumptions and practices, such change should not be used as a substitute or proxy for broader institutional transformation.
- c) In the process of reassessing its existing visual culture, as defined below, and exploring the possibilities of transforming this culture, Rhodes University will strive to place an emphasis, albeit not exclusively, on visual content that;
 - i) Relates to the core purposes, values and mission statement of the university.
 - ii) Relates to knowledge production in disciplines and fields taught and researched at Rhodes University.
 - iii) Expresses a fundamental commitment to human rights, social justice, basic freedoms, and the dignity of all members of the university community.
 - iv) Relates to South Africa, its history and its culture.
 - v) Reflects and speaks to the university's location in the Eastern Cape and on the African continent.
- d. The university commits itself to engage in a process of 'symbolic decolonisation' by reviewing its existing visual culture in accordance with the above principles. In particular, those elements that are associated with colonialism and/or apartheid, as well as those that are gender-insensitive, should be prioritised for review, as such elements are alienating to sections of the university community. It is recognised that this review may lead to different possible outcomes: preservation on display or in storage, or a reconceptualisation of any particular component, or some other form of revised representation.
- e. Each individual component of visual culture listed below will require specific consideration as to how it should be treated.
 - i. Works of art on public display (paintings, drawings, sculpture, photographs, tapestry).
 - ii. Architectural and building styles.
 - iii. Symbols (such as the university's coat of arms/crest, 'Physical Energy').
 - iv. Communication and marketing material (logos, letterheads, etc.).
 - v. Ceremonies and their associated regalia (such as graduation, inaugural lectures, Founder's Day events).
 - vi. Artefacts (such as items on display in departments).
 - vii. Memorabilia.

(Task Team Report, 2014)

There were no suggestions for the amendment or expansion of the principles and goals.

1. Recommendations on the overseeing of matters relating to the institution's visual culture.

In 2014 the task team recommended that the Aesthetics Committee be replaced by a Visual Representation, Arts and Culture Committee (VRACC) whose membership would be drawn from a broad range of university constituencies and whose main function would be to oversee the implementation of the recommendations made by the task team and to “explore fresh ideas with a view to further transforming this (the institution’s visual) culture.” (2014:2).

The recommendation to establish a Visual Representation Arts and Culture Committee was endorsed. It was noted that the VRACC committee had been formed, however, its levels of functioning were low. It has a small membership and its meetings fail to attract the majority of its members.

A resolution taken at the previous VRACC meeting to recruit more members to the committee **was supported.**

2. Recommendations on the development of and the caring for the institution’s visual art and artefacts collection.

In 2014 the Visual Representation, Arts and Culture task team recommended that:

- a) VRACC should establish a subcommittee that will assume a caretaker role for the university’s art collection. The subcommittee will oversee the cataloguing of the universities art collection and oversee its maintenance.
- b) The VRACC subcommittee should establish a fund which will enable the institution to purchase new works of art. Art works produced by final year Fine Art Department students and by local artists should be prioritised.
- c) An arts acquisition policy should be developed.
- d) The tradition of commissioning painted portraits of Vice Chancellors should be reviewed.

The meeting **endorsed the recommendation** that a VRACC subcommittee be established for the purposes of overseeing the care of the institution’s art. This includes the acquisition of new art. **It also recommended** that the sub-committee should be responsible for drawing up a policy determining all aspects of the institution’s visual culture and not one limited to determining the acquisition of artworks.

The meetings also **endorsed the recommendation** that an art fund, to fund new acquisitions, should be established. One strategy suggested in the 14th June meeting for establishing such a fund was that Alumni, who would be interested in contributing to the transformation of the ideological orientation and to the development of the collection of the institution in alignment with the changing culture of the institution, should be identified from an updated Alumni data base.

In both meetings it was recognised that a committee or a sub-committee cannot undertake the day to day tasks involved in taking care of the university’s art and artefacts collection and in implementing the recommendations that would transform the visual culture of the institution. In both meetings it was agreed that the institution needs a dedicated individual who will perform these operational level tasks. **It was recommended** that the university, through the Communications and Advancement Division, should raise funds to support a permanent curating position.

The recommendation that the commissioning of painted portraits of Vice Chancellors should be reconsidered **was endorsed**. An alternative suggested was that portrait photographs of Vice Chancellors can be commissioned.

3. **Recommendations on the display and use of the institution's art, artefacts including items of memorialisation and commemoration.**

Based on the responses received from the survey conducted, the 2014 task team recommended that:

- a) Art and artefacts that represent and commemorate the university's colonial and apartheid era's be displayed and used in creative ways to encourage and promote reflection on the institution's history and envisioning of its future.
- b) A space is found, by VRACC, where such an exhibition could be housed.
- c) VRACC oversees the curating of the exhibition.
- d) The exhibition in the foyer of the Main Administration Building should be changed.

Specific artefacts of memorialisation and commemoration which were discussed were the photographs of Rhodians killed in war. These include photographs of Rhodians killed in the border war. The photographs were removed from the walls of the Main Administration Building following an expression of unhappiness at what they represented by NEHAWU. The discussion of the photographs by the task team was necessitated by the University having received an offer of funding to have a plaque constructed to commemorate the Rhodians killed in war in place of the photographs. The 2014 task team recommended that;

- e) The offer of funding be accepted
- f) The plaque and some of the photographs form part of the exhibition for which a space should be found.
- g) The institution should also consider commemorating Rhodians who died in the internal Apartheid conflicts. This should include Rhodians who died in the struggle against Apartheid.

In both the 9th and 14th June meetings the recommendation that the collection of art and artefacts that commemorate and represent the institution's colonial and apartheid eras should be used for awareness raising and teaching and learning purposes **was endorsed**. **It was further recommended that**, when the art and artefacts are displayed to encourage reflection, it should not be a single space that is used to house such an exhibition but several spaces across campus. These spaces should be ones that have high volumes of human traffic so that the exhibition is seen and accessed by the majority of the Rhodes University community. Spaces identified as ideal for such an exhibition include the main administration building foyer, the bicycle sculpture path, the senior common room and council chamber. **It was also recommended that** all faculties should devise means of enabling their students to engage with the collection. Outside of the formal curriculum, the orientation programmes for students and staff and other awareness raising programmes, should, through the use of events such as walking tours and workshops and talks, enable students and staff engagement with the collection.

Thus the curator, (see recommendations in II.B.2) would also work with all faculties and relevant divisions, such as the Division of Student Affairs and the Equity and Institutional

Culture Directorate, in facilitating the use of the university's art and artefacts collection as a teaching and an awareness raising resource.

Other than the endorsement and expansion of the recommendation that the existing collection be used as an awareness raising and teaching and learning tool, both meetings **recommended** that exhibitions that were designed as part of the 2015/2016 students protests, should be recognised, integrated into and also used in the design of awareness raising and teaching and learning displays. This, it was felt, will contribute to the construction of the University as a space that promotes the contestation of ideas.

The recommendations that the VRACC oversees the curating of exhibitions for reflecting on the institution's history using existing art and artefacts, and that the exhibition in the foyer of the Main Administration Building should be changed **were endorsed**.

Regarding the offer of funding for the construction of a plaque commemorating Rhodians who died in war, the meeting **recommended that** given the time that has lapsed since the offer was first made (five years) and the change in the internal and external environment of the institution, this matter should not be pursued further.

The photographs form part of the Rhodes University collection and recommendations made regarding the whole collection also apply to them.

4. Recommendations on the graduation ceremony, university regalia and dress code for the ceremony.

The 2014 the Visual Representation, Art and Culture task team did not recommended that changes should be made to the graduation ceremony except that:

- a) Afrikaans and isiXhosa should be added to some parts of the ceremony.
- b) Re-designing the graduation regalia to reflect the institution's situation in the Eastern Cape should be considered.

In the 14th July meeting, after a discussion on how a European medieval ceremony translates into and is entrenched in the South African Higher Education context, and what this means for a post-colonial South Africa, a **recognition** was made that the graduation ceremonies, (in addition to a few institution directed changes such as the University Choir adding isiXhosa songs to their ceremonies' repertoire), have, to some extent, changed organically. The atmosphere in the graduation hall has changed from being muted and formal to being formal and overtly celebratory with a strong indigenous South African and African idiom. The recommendations that the ceremony should, in so far as is possible, be conducted in Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa and that consideration should be given to the redesign of the institution's regalia **were endorsed**. Further, **it was recommended** that the institution should actively research and explore possibilities for the redesign of the regalia. In addition, given that the rules in the graduation handbook regarding the dress code are already being visibly contested, **it was recommended** that the graduation handbook should be updated to reflect the current practices at graduation ceremonies.

5. Recommendations on the institution's brand motifs and artefacts and the use of motifs and artefacts for branding.

In 2014 specific artefacts and representations which are part of the university’s brand and branding practices, were identified for discussions. These are also found, in various manifestations on the university’s marketing and communication material. The artefacts and representations are the university logo, the university’s coat of arms (which incorporate the logo) and the “physical energy” statue which also forms part of the coat of arms.

The Rhodes University Coat of Arms	The Rhodes University Logo
 <p>The coat of arms features a shield with a yellow background and a black inverted triangle at the bottom. The shield is divided into four quadrants: top-left (green with a white lion), top-right (white with a red lion), bottom-left (yellow with a black shell), and bottom-right (black with a white shell). The shield is topped by a crest showing a white horse and a white figure. The shield is flanked by two black wings and a yellow banner at the bottom with the motto 'VIVIS VIRTUS VERITAS'.</p>	 <p>The logo consists of a purple shield with a white border. The shield contains a white lion, a white shell, and a white open book. Below the shield, the text 'RHODES UNIVERSITY' is written in purple, and the motto 'Where leaders learn' is written in a smaller, italicized purple font.</p>

In the attached report, Professor Maylam describes the meanings of the images in the coat of arms and logo in this manner;

In the coat of arms the black and gold are the livery colours of the Graham family. The inverted triangle is characteristic of the Graham coat of arms, as are the escallops (shells), an emblem of pilgrimage. The lion and two thistles were taken from the coat of arms granted to CJ Rhodes. The crest is a representation of Watts’ statue. The open book is a common feature of a university coat of arms. (Visual Representation, Art and Culture Task Team Report, 2014)

The Watts statue referred to in the quotation above is the “physical energy” statue. The statue, Professor Maylam writes “came to be associated closely with Cecil Rhodes’ own ‘energetic’ imperial expansion, and later formed a prominent feature of the Rhodes Memorial in Cape Town. It was, and remains, a powerful symbol of imperialism.” (Ibid). As Professor Maylam further notes, the statue has a “significant visual presence” (Ibid) in the university.

Another debate on the institution’s symbols that took place in the task team’s meetings was that on the use of the symbols. Concern was raised that various departments, divisions and student groups create their own symbols/branding for use in official communication. An example which was discussed in detail is the Rhodent image.

The 2014 task team recommended that;

- a) The coat of arms should be retained while a process of creating new symbols is designed and implemented as determined by the principles outlined above. The new symbols would speak to the development of a new identity and to the adoption of new/different institutional values.
- b) The use of the “physical energy” statue should also be phased out.
- c) All departments and divisions should use the official logo of the institution in official communication.
- d) The Communications and Marketing Division should develop guidelines on the use of the official university logo.
- e) The Communications and Marketing Division should work with the Department of Fine Art and VRACC to ensure that, in the bid to standardise the logo, the logo does not develop a corporate look and feel.

The meaning and function of the coat of arms, the logo and the “physical energy” statue were debated at length in the meeting of the 9th of June. The debate centred around three key questions: i.) Does the institution need a coat of arms? (Are there no other representations of institutional identity that would be more appropriate to a South African university in a post-Apartheid society than a symbol based on the European medieval tradition of heraldry?) ii.) Does the institution need to develop a new coat of arms or can the existing coat of arms be used as a basis for a design incorporating the history/symbols of identity of groups who were historically excluded from the institution? iii.) Can a discussion about a logo or a crest of arms take place outside of a broader discussion on the institution’s identity and purpose? iv.) Should a new logo or symbol of identity be the option decided on, who should be assigned the task of designing the new symbol?

With regard to the first two questions, the meeting resolved that the institution had four options to choose from; to keep the existing coat of arms, to modify the existing coat of arms to incorporate a symbol that speaks of the inclusion of previously excluded groups, to develop a new coat of arms or to develop a new symbol of institutional identity that is not based on the tradition of heraldry.

The meeting did not reach a conclusion that would enable the formulation of a recommendation. It was agreed that this discussion should be taken up at the summit as part of the broader discussion on the institution’s identity. A discussion on identity will include a discussion on the name of the institution. A decision on the name will have bearing on the symbol used to represent/construct the identity of the institution.

With regards to the fourth question it **was recommended** that should the option to design new symbols or to adapt the existing symbols, be adopted, the services of professional should be acquired. It was, however, **also recommended** that members of the institution, including students, should be given the opportunity to submit ideas or designs to be considered by the experts.

The Communications Manager reported that the Communications and Advancement division has developed a policy on the use of the institution’s logo and branding material and on protecting the brand of the institution. It was acknowledged that the discussions that will be

held at the summit will impact on this work. The recommendation that this work should be undertaken with the involvement of the Fine Arts Department and VRACC **was endorsed.**

III. Conclusion

As made evident by the need to constitute a task team to consider and make recommendations that would result in the transformation of the institution's visual culture, the visual cultures of institutions with colonial and apartheid pasts was identified as alienating to Black students and staff before the Rhodes Must Fall movement of 2015. A study undertaken at the University of Cape Town in 1999, reported on how Black students experience objects that naturalise and celebrate colonial conquest and apartheid as alienating and psychologically harmful. At Rhodes University, as reported above, the display of portraits commemorating the fall of Rhodians who fought in border wars was experienced as insensitive by members of NEHAWU.

Revisiting the task team's report post the Rhodes Must Fall protests has resulted, in the main, in the affirmation of principles and guidelines that will contribute to the institution developing an organisational identity and culture that is not experienced as harm.

The key change in the recommendations made by the 2014 task team can be said to be the recommendation that the institution's art and artefact's collection be used for awareness raising and teaching and learning purposes. This imposes on the collection the function of a formal and informal teaching and learning collection.

The recommendation can be seen as an extension of the 2014 task team's recommendation that items in the art collection, that are from the colonial and apartheid eras, be displayed in a dedicated space and juxtaposed with new items that will stand in conversation with them in order to promote reflection on these periods. This is a strategy referred to by Holmes & Loehwing (2014) as multiplicative commemoration and one which was adopted by the South African government in the post-apartheid era in keeping with the object of constructing a rainbow nation and a rainbow identity. It was also adopted by a number of South African Universities, including the Universities of Free State and Cape Town (Schmahmann 2013). The recommendation to use the collection chiefly as a teaching collection might, again, have been informed by a recognition that the multiplicative commemoration approach has not been as successful as it was hoped. Holmes & Loehwing (2014), Barnabas (2016) Mbembe (2015) read the Rhodes Must Fall protests as indicative of the strategy's failure.

While the multiplicative strategy is a national strategy, the recommendation that the collection be chiefly a teaching and learning collection can be seen as informed by the individuals at the meeting drawing from and articulating/constructing the identity of the organisation as an academic institution. In the discussion, this aspect of the institution's identity was explicitly and implicitly stated and used to explicate the objective entailed in the recommendation. Research to establish whether or not other South African institutions of higher learning who have similar collections responded to the imperative to transform the meaning of objects in their collections through rendering them as objects of formal and informal teaching and learning is yet to be undertaken

The other change in the recommendations made 2014 that might be mentioned here is that despite being discussed at length, questions about the appropriateness of the form and content of the university's crest and logo to identify itself and an agreement reached that the form and content was inappropriate for use in the construction of an identity of a transforming institution, there was no firm recommendation made regarding these symbols. This, as was stated, was because there is an expectation that the summit will, as one of its outcomes, define the aspired to identity of the institution.

With most of the recommendations of the 2014 task team endorsed and expanded, it can be concluded that the main impact of the Rhodes Must Fall protests on the work that had been already been undertaken was to demonstrate that the multiplicative commemoration strategy needs revision.

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Appendix

REPORT OF THE VISUAL REPRESENTATION, ARTS AND CULTURE TASK TEAM (2014)

Background and context

In 2010 a task team, chaired by Professor Brenda Schmahmann, was established to consider aspects of the university's visual representation, arts and culture. The specific aspect requiring immediate attention was the possible relocation of the portraits of former vice chancellors, chancellors, and council chairpersons – portraits that had for long been hanging on the walls of the council chamber. As a result of the task team's recommendations these portraits were removed and hung in areas outside the chamber, and replaced inside the room by a tapestry depicting the history of the university, crafted by the Keiskamma Art Project. This tapestry has been much admired, and is held up as an example of how the university's visual culture might be transformed.

The task team temporarily fell into abeyance following the resignation of Professor Schmahmann. In October 2013 an ad hoc sub-committee, chaired by Dr Badat, met with a view to resuscitating the task team. This move was in part prompted by an Old Rhodian's complaint about the removal of photographs of Rhodians killed in war – photographs that until some years ago had hung in the front corridor of the main administration building.

At this October meeting the composition and brief of the task team was agreed upon. Its brief was as follows:

- To formulate general principles and processes to guide the development and transformation of the university's visual culture.
- To make recommendations on specific aspects of this visual culture.

The task team comprised representatives of a number of different university constituencies, and was composed of the following members:

Paul Maylam (chairperson); Sibusiso Mtshali (Equity and Institutional Culture, and secretary of the task team); Noluxolo Nhlapo (Director, Equity and Institutional Culture); Ian L'Ange (Director, Infrastructure, Finance and Operations); Deborah Seddon (GENACT); Ryno van Rooyen (NTEU); Lindokuhle Zungu (SRC); Zakade Vena (NEHAWU); Russell Kaschula (Chairperson, Language Committee); Lebogang Hashatse and Juliana Jangara (Communications and Marketing); Lynette Steenveld and Simon Pamphilon (Journalism and Media Studies); Dominic Thorburn and Maureen de Jager (Fine Art); Patti Henderson (Anthropology); Vashna Jagarnath (History); John McNeill and Hugo Nel (Aesthetics Committee).

The operation of the task team

The task team met on six occasions – on 26 November 2013, 24 March, 9 May, 2 June, 8 August, and 12 November 2014.

A questionnaire was sent out to staff, student bodies and alumni to canvass opinion. There were about 65 responses to this questionnaire. The vast majority of these responses were submitted anonymously, so it has been difficult to ascertain from which quarter they came. It is evident, though, that most probably came from alumni.

The questionnaire invited opinion on certain existing symbols and insignia associated with the university, such as the university crest/coat of arms, and the representations of ‘Physical Energy’, asking whether they should be retained, eliminated or modified. There was also an invitation to comment more generally on the university’s visual culture and the principles that should underlie it, as well as to offer suggestions as to how this culture might be modified, if at all.

The vast majority of respondents (who represented a very small minority of the university community) were largely content with existing symbols and insignia, with some objecting strongly to the idea of any change at all. Among the latter were a few potential or actual donors who indicated that they would cease to donate funds if changes were made. Only a small minority believed the crest/coat of arms and ‘Physical Energy’ to be inappropriate for Rhodes.

These responses posed a problem for the task team, most of whose members believed that such symbols and insignia are inappropriate for Rhodes at this time, and that there is a need to create a more inclusive visual culture as the university community becomes more diverse in its composition.

The most constructive aspect of the feedback from the questionnaire was the largely positive response to the idea that existing, long-standing visual items should remain on display while being juxtaposed with something new, so as to bring together the past and the present. This would be a way of preserving the university’s history and traditions while also transforming its visual culture.

It is not possible to encapsulate in this report all the views expressed by respondents. There was a general concern that in the university’s visual culture respect should be shown for Rhodes’ past and traditions. Some suggested that cosmetic change should not be a priority. But there was an openness to the introduction of new visual matter to be introduced without the old being replaced. Respondents also suggested principles and values that should underlie the university’s visual culture: academic excellence, an emphasis on learning and hard work, respect for diverse cultures and traditions, environmental sensitivity and sustainability, to name a few.

Guiding principles and processes

The Visual Representation, Arts and Culture Task Team has been informed by an understanding that its work is firmly situated in the broader effort to transform a cultural system that has been, and to a large extent, continues to be, exclusionary. The work of the task team has therefore been undertaken as part of a holistic effort to transform Rhodes’ institutional culture. This has required a recognition that a change in the university’s visual culture that is not in tune with other changes – in, for instance, basic assumptions and beliefs, practices and social relations – cannot be seen in itself as transformation. While a change of institutional

artefacts and motifs has the potential to disrupt exclusionary beliefs, assumptions and practices, there is also the danger that such change can be used as a substitute or proxy for broader institutional transformation

In the process of reassessing its existing visual culture, as defined below, and exploring the possibilities of transforming this culture, Rhodes University will strive to place an emphasis, albeit not exclusively, on visual content that

- Relates to the core purposes, values and mission statement of the university.
- Relates to knowledge production in disciplines and fields taught and researched at Rhodes University.
- Expresses a fundamental commitment to human rights, social justice, basic freedoms, and the dignity of all members of the university community.
- Relates to South Africa, its history and its culture.
- Reflects and speaks to the university's location in the Eastern Cape and on the African continent.

The university commits itself to engage in a process of 'symbolic decolonisation' by reviewing its existing visual culture in accordance with the above principles. In particular those elements that are associated with colonialism and/or apartheid, as well as those that are gender-insensitive, should be prioritised for review, as such elements are alienating to sections of the university community. It is recognised that this review may lead to different possible outcomes: preservation on display or in storage, or a reconceptualisation of any particular component, or some other form of revised representation. Each individual component will require specific consideration as to how it should be treated.

This visual culture is deemed to have seven main components:

1. Works of art on public display (paintings, drawings, sculpture, photographs, tapestry).
2. Architectural and building styles.
3. Symbols (such as the university's coat of arms/crest, 'Physical Energy').
4. Communication and marketing material (logos, letterheads, etc).
5. Ceremonies and their associated regalia (such as graduation, inaugural lectures, Founder's Day events).
6. Artefacts (such as items on display in departments).
7. Memorabilia.

Processes and protocols

In order to realise these objectives it is recommended that:

- The present Aesthetics Committee should be disbanded and replaced by a new standing committee of Senate and Council, to be called the Visual Representation, Arts and Culture

Committee (VRACC). Its brief should be expanded to include consideration of all aspects of the university's visual culture, as defined above; and such consideration should be guided by the principles outlined above.

- This consideration should not just amount to a review of the university's existing visual culture, but should also involve an exploration of fresh ideas with a view to further transforming this culture.
- The composition of the VRACC should be such that it includes representatives from a range of university constituencies. (The composition could be similar to that of the Naming Committee, but should also include at least one representative from the Department of Fine Art).

Recommendations regarding specific components of the university's visual culture

1. The university coat of arms/crest

- It is recognised that this has a long history and that many members of the university community have an attachment to it, viewing it as a traditional feature of the institution. For others its symbolic components are considered to be alien, bearing little relation to the university's current mission and ethos. At the same time it can be said that it has also become empty of meaning for a large number of people (one wonders how many members of the university community would be able to explain off-hand what the various components of the coat of arms/crest represent).
- The task team recommends that the coat of arms/crest be retained, but that the VRACC also initiate a process whereby new symbols/insignia are created and placed alongside existing ones. These new symbols/insignia should be designed in accordance with the principles listed above.

2. The symbolic use of the statue, 'Physical Energy'

- This statue was created by the Victorian artist, George Watts. In the late 1890s it came to be associated closely with Cecil Rhodes' own 'energetic' imperial expansion, and later formed a prominent feature of the Rhodes Memorial in Cape Town. It was, and remains, a powerful symbol of imperialism, and it is an image that has a significant visual presence at Rhodes. It appears at the top of the university crest; an outline of the statue features on the purple-and-white Rhodes car stickers; a miniature replica of the statue is given each year to the recipients of the Old Rhodian Award.
- The task team recommends that this image be gradually phased out, as far as possible, from the university's visual culture. This would mean that the miniature replica should, over time, cease to be given as the Old Rhodian Award. It would also entail the gradual removal of the image from Rhodes car stickers. During this process of change the new symbols/insignia should be given increasing visibility.

3. Communication material

- The university logo should as far as possible be standardised for official usage (and it should be noted that the 'rhodent' is a mascot, and not part of any university logo).

- Guidelines for the use of the logo should be drawn up by the Communications and Marketing Division in conjunction with the VRACC.

- The letterheads and fonts used in official university communications should be carefully reviewed by the Communications and Marketing Division, in consultation with the Department of Fine Art and the VRACC, with a view to refining them and ensuring that they do not take on a corporate style.

4. Artworks and artefacts on campus

- It is recommended that:

- a. A sub-committee of the VRACC be established to take responsibility for overseeing the university's collection of artworks. This would entail (i) compiling an inventory of all works in this collection, and (ii) ensuring that the works are properly maintained, secured, and insured, whether on display or in storage. These tasks will require a member of the university to act as custodian of the collection.

- b. An art fund be created for the purchase of artworks for the university collection, and that priority be given to purchasing works by Rhodes students and staff and other local artists. The sub-committee of the VRACC should take responsibility for this. (Some years ago the university used to purchase annually a work deemed to be the best produced by a Rhodes student in that particular year).

- c. A policy determining the acquisition of artworks for the university collection should be drawn up by the sub-committee.

- d. The practice of commissioning painted portraits of vice chancellors, chancellors and chairpersons of council should be subjected to review. Future consideration should be given to the medium in which these persons are portrayed, and to the location of the portraits.

5. The display in the foyer under the main clock tower

- The task team recommends that this display be totally revamped, believing that the existing items on display are rather stale, bear little relation to the university's vision and mission statement, and offer little inspiration. The task of initiating and overseeing this process should be entrusted to the VRACC.

6. A space for reflecting on the university's history

- In a number of responses to the questionnaire sent out by the task team the view was stated that the university's history should not be erased. The task team shares this view. It is not proposing that visual representations of the university's colonial/segregationist past be obliterated. Instead it recommends that a space be created on campus for past and present visual

material to be displayed in creative, reflective ways that show the trajectory of the university's development as well as its vision for the future. Among items that might be displayed in this space could be the marble bust of Cecil Rhodes (which once stood in the main entrance, but is now in storage) and/or the sketch of Rhodes in the foyer. These could be accompanied by explanatory notes. The VRACC should initiate a search for a suitable space, and oversee the creation of displays.

7. Memorialisation and commemoration

- Memorialisation and commemoration at Rhodes take various forms, such as:
 1. The war memorial in front of the Great Hall.
 2. Ceremonies and lectures (such as the DCS Oosthuizen Memorial Lecture).
 3. Photographs (see below).
- Photographs of Rhodians/Old Rhodians killed in war.

A. For many years black-and-white head-and-shoulder photographs of Rhodians/Old Rhodians killed in war hung on the walls of the passage at the front of the main administration building. These were removed some years ago (it is believed, at the behest of NEHAWU, on the grounds that the display included photographs of Rhodians killed in the border war). Some months ago an Old Rhodian wrote to the university expressing her dismay at the removal of the photographs. She has not requested that they again be placed back where they were, but she has offered to donate money for a plaque commemorating those who were killed in the two world wars.

B. The task team recommends that:

- a. This offer be accepted.
- b. The plaque should commemorate Rhodians/Old Rhodians killed in the two world wars.
- c. The plaque be placed in the newly created space (see above).
- d. A small number of the original photographs also be hung in this space.
- e. Consideration also be given to commemorating Rhodians or Old Rhodians killed, or personally afflicted in some way, as participants in external or internal conflicts fought out during the apartheid era. Such commemoration would focus on

both those who took part in the liberation struggle and on white conscripts.

7. University ceremonies

- Responses to the questionnaire revealed a very positive attitude towards Rhodes' graduation ceremonies. This is borne out by the very high, enthusiastic attendance of graduands and their families. The task team does not recommend any significant changes to the graduation ceremony, except for the following minor suggestions:
 - a. Some parts of the graduation programme should be trilingual.
 - b. Future consideration should be given to the possible re-design of some university regalia.

18 November 2014