

Issued by: Art Source South Africa
For: Paul Emmanuel
Date: 11 June 2015
Angle: Paul Emmanuel's *Remnants* exhibition opens at Freedom Park 25 June 2015

Paul Emmanuel's *Remnants* - an installation of remnants of the silk banners from his Lost Men France 2014 anti-memorial, placed adjacent to Thiepval Memorial in the Somme region, N. France

The *Lost Men* project is a series of site-specific, temporary, outdoor installations – anti-monuments engaging concepts of memory and memorialisation. The artworks are non-partisan and make no political statements. Each installation of this ongoing project relates to a specific historical battle site and is unique in its imagery, structure and format while maintaining conceptual consistency. The artworks are installed for a defined period and re-evaluate events in South African history considered from a contemporary context.

The Lost Men Grahamstown was installed on Monument Hill in 2004. The second in the series was *The Lost Men Mozambique* installed in 2007 on the Catembe Ferry Jetty in Maputo.

The Lost Men France (2014) was the 3rd installation of the series. It was launched on 1 July 2014 adjacent to the Thiepval Memorial - the largest Franco-British World War One memorial in the world; near where thousands of South African servicemen died alongside their Allied comrades. The 1st of July 2014 was a significant date for the British Commonwealth, France and especially the town of Thiepval. It was the day that commemorated the commencement of the Battle of the Somme in 1916; one of the most significant battles of the Great War. Remembrance services were held at the Memorial to remember and commemorate the thousands of lives lost.

Emmanuel's installation was the only international art project selected by the Mission du Centenaire de la Première Guerre Mondiale - the organisers of the WW1 Centenary. This was a huge accolade for the artist.

These anti-monuments do not glorify war but engage attitudes around masculinity and portray a marked male body as something fragile and vulnerable.

In France the 2014 installation in particular points to the exclusion of black South African servicemen, from memorials such as Thiepval Memorial, whereas the names of white South African servicemen who died in the Battle of Delville Wood, are inscribed on the walls of this memorial.

In 2014 Emmanuel's five silk banners hung along 300 metres of road bore the names of French, German, South African and Allied servicemen who fell in the

terrible battles on the Western Front. Their names were photographed after being pressed into the artist's body (his 'canvas'), without reference to rank, nationality or ethnicity. By including black South African servicemen's names, *The Lost Men France* (2014) questioned their exclusion from the walls of Thiepval Memorial.

Paul Emmanuel states he is "...as many are, affected by these terrible historic battles. We become defined by ideologies that can confine and define our world view.

Freedom Park is a relevant heritage venue to host *Remnants*. Its website states that it is "a venue where the history and inequalities of the past can be reflected upon". It goes further to state, "The museum also "encourages reflection on our past to improve our present and build our future as a united nation". Emmanuel's exhibition aligns to Freedom Park's vision.

Remnants will also showcase several photographic artworks from the artist's previous *Lost Men* anti-memorials. In addition there will be an installation comprising of the remains of the silk banners that stood exposed to the elements on the Somme in France in 2014 for three months. These banners have never been exhibited in South Africa before. A short film on the artist's production process to create the artworks for his installation will also be on view.

Emmanuel's *Remnants* is presented by Freedom Park in association with Institut Français Afrique du Sud and Art Source South Africa.

Opening: Thursday 25 June 2015 at 18h30

Closing: Friday 31 July 2015

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