

Remember–dismember, 2014. High definition video, stereo soundtrack, 3 min, 45 sec. Looped. Exhibited on a plasma screen with speakers. The video is designed to loop in a cyclical format, to have no “beginning” or “end”.

The following texts were compiled by Prof. Pamela Allara about the video artwork ***Remember-dismember*** exhibited on Paul Emmanuel’s ***Remnants*** exhibition at Boston University, USA in 2016.

Introduction

The failure to recognize or recall events in the past can result in a dismembering of history. Emmanuel performs/addresses this process by donning parts of nine uniforms worn by soldiers, diplomats or businessmen that serve to trace South Africa’s military history from the Union that fought in WWI through the militarized apartheid state of mid-century to today’s neo-liberal capitalist democracy. Spanning South Africa’s history, these suits ask us to confront and question the legitimacy of power structures and their resulting hierarchies.

Working from head to toe, portions of the artist’s exposed body, inscribed with the ‘lost men’ of South Africa’s wars, appear as he robes and disrobes, thereby creating a metaphor for the section of the soldiers’ bodies that could possibly have received a mortal battle wound: head, neck, chest, back, groin, buttocks, thighs and feet. The soles of Emmanuel’s feet, suggesting a corpse on a gurney, relegate these soldiers to history, but the final ‘boot on the ground’ is already being shod for the next conflict.

Garments for remember-dismember



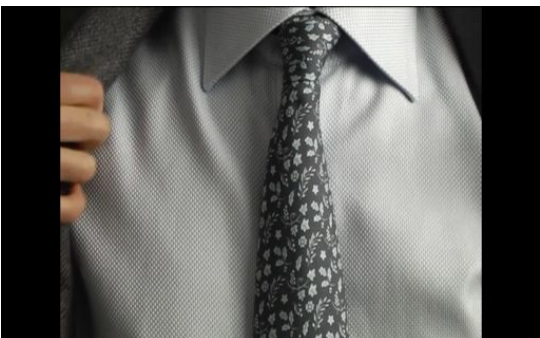
World War II gas mask

The startling image of the WWII gas mask that opens the video is a reminder of the now-prohibited use of poisonous gas in both World Wars. When the artist removes the mask, the names of servicemen from all nations, including South Africa, who fell on the Western Front in WWII are revealed.



Contemporary cotton grey T-shirt.

As Emmanuel dons the grey t-shirt that has been standard issue in the South African military for over 100 years, the names of servicemen from all nations who died in WWI appear on his shaved head, covering his scalp.¹

	WWI British Officer's Dress jacket with regalia. The officer's jacket from Word War I is impeccably tailored down to the last tassel, as befits the wearer's status. The jacket would have been worn by a South African Captain of the Buffalo Volunteer Rifles (originally the Kaffrarian Rifles) of the South African Army. The Buffalo Volunteer Rifles was formed in East London (on the Buffalo River, South Africa) in 1876.
	1940s-1970s South African ambassador's dress ensemble The formal black suit was worn by South African ambassadors from the 1940s to the 1970s when exchanging formal credentials in a 'ceremony of reciprocity' with the host country. Such formalities continued despite the embargoes and divestments protesting the policies of the apartheid regime during these decades. As the artist removes the shirt, names of servicemen from all nations (including South Africa) who fell in the Korean War (1950 – 1953) are revealed on his back.
	Contemporary executive suit, with wool jacket, silk shirt, tie, cufflinks, Rolex wristwatch When the new post-apartheid government was being formed, the US government pressured Mandela and the communist-led African National Congress to provide assurances that the newly democratic government would be based in the free market. The elegant and expensive business suit worn by the artist exemplifies the subsequent rise of crony capitalism among ANC leaders. Despite the rise of the new black bourgeoisie, the ongoing, even widening disparity between rich and poor in South Africa remains based on race. The business suit has represented executive power for over a century. During the Lonmin miners' strike at Marikana in 2012, 34 protesting miners died at the hands of the police. Emmanuel has noted that "...most of the Lonmin Mine board members are still white. There were many European business 'suits' implicated in this conflict..." The names of miners and two South African policemen who were killed in the Marikana Miner's Strike cover Emmanuel's lower abdomen and groin.
	Contemporary South African military regalia. The beige jacket and red and black canvas belt are worn by Majors in South Africa's now-integrated military, which is a source of employment and education for many formerly disenfranchised South Africans. The names of South African servicemen and Central African Republic (CAR) casualties in the South African Military's recent incursion in that country cover the artist's shoulder, buttocks and upper thighs. In what is referred to as the Battle for Bangui (2013) of the ongoing CAR Civil War (2012–), many CAR casualties were not recorded. Hence the word 'Unknown' appears on his shoulder.



Field pants used in 1980's apartheid military with orange, white and blue canvas belt.

The canvas belt with the colors of the Afrikaaner government was worn by the Presidential Guard for ceremonial processions in the 1980s, and bears the official *Ex Unitate Vires* coat of arms from the Union of South Africa in 1910. The belt was worn with khaki pants and brown leather boots. South Africa now has a new coat of arms.



1980's apartheid-era military boots.

After a brief look at the severing of the laces of the 1980s apartheid-era military boots, the names of servicemen from the South African Defence Force (SADF) and Cuban/Angolan forces from the Angolan Bush War (1966 – 1989) appear on the soles of Emmanuel's feet. The names were sourced from two separate memorials in Pretoria: Cuban/Angolan names from Freedom Park Memorial (2004), and SADF names from the Voortrekker Monument (1949) nearby. The current South African government refuses to allow SADF names to be memorialised at Freedom Park.



World War II (1939 – 1945) military boots and socks

A boot and sock from WWII are slipped on and the video loops back to the beginning. And so the era of perpetual war continues.