

# Post-Apartheid Nostalgia and the Sadomasochistic Pleasures of Archival Art

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## ABSTRACT

The burgeoning genre of archival art practice in post-apartheid South Africa has catalysed the evocation of nostalgia in abundance. The archive has been at the centre of numerous exhibitions in contemporary art. This paper explores the meaning of an emerging nostalgic turn in post-apartheid South Africa. The discussion considers the pleasure afforded by the sentimentality underpinning nostalgia and attends to the manner in which nostalgia coheres with the creative and aesthetic techniques of archival art. Scopophilia and the covert function of the sadomasochistic gaze are outlined. It is suggested that such acts of retrieval and repetition generally override ethical considerations, in part because they unfold from the realm of the unconscious. The paper draws on psychoanalysis by way of Frantz Fanon.

## KEYWORDS

Archival art, post-apartheid, nostalgia, Rainbowism, the phobogenic object, the camera and the scene