

**A VISUAL RECONTEXTUALISATION OF *LEKGAPHO* PATTERNS
WITHIN BATSWANA CONTEMPORARY ART PRACTICE**

By

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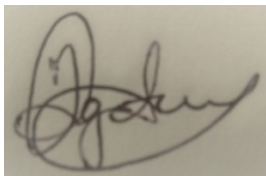
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all Batswana women who practice the art of *lekgapho* and those who laid the foundation many centuries ago. Your work remains an inspiration to many young women who aspire to continue this practice. I say to you, continue the good work of preserving our culture despite all the challenges.

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For this work, I am indebted and grateful to Professor Nombeko Penelope Mpako, my supervisor, who, despite all the challenges I went through, saw the potential in my work. I am grateful for her emotional support and nurturing nature. Her unwavering support erased any form of physical borders that exists between Botswana and South Africa.

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I would like to thank my family for their encouragement and emotional support during trying moments in my studies.

And to all those who supported me on this journey, I'm extremely grateful.
LE KAMOSO BETSHO!

**TITLE: A VISUAL RECONTEXTUALISATION OF *LEKGAPHO*
PATTERNS WITHIN BATSWANA CONTEMPORARY ART
PRACTICE**

ABSTRACT

This study recontextualises Batswana *Lekgapo* wall and floor decorative homestead patterns within the contemporary art practice of Botswana. It tracks their original meaning using a genealogical approach towards archiving this traditional art form, in order to place it in the contemporary artistic realm. The term *lekgapho* is used widely to refer to traditional wall decorations of huts; *lelapa* is a walled courtyard that provides a frontage to one or more houses in a household that serve several purposes, such as a meeting place for family members or a space for external events such as weddings. In Tswana culture, *lekgapho* is a decoration which shows a woman's ability to creatively beautify her homestead, similar to wall decorations in some parts of Africa. Even though *lekgapho* practice is regarded as nearing extinction because of modern architecture, there are still women in Botswana who practise the traditional art form in rural areas. The study is framed through genealogical and cultural reappropriation, archival theory and provenance approaches. It articulates *lekgapho*'s evolution while exploring its symbolic and cultural significance for its practitioners and their communities towards archiving and preserving it as Botswana tradition and a worthy cultural heritage for future generations. Narrative inquiry and desktop research were conducted, and first-hand information was collected through interviews and photographs. A key finding is that the practitioners believe that they are the last surviving artists of this art form in Botswana. This revelation is a call to action to preserve the art form for future generations. The study contributes to knowledge through preservation of *lekgapho* motifs, especially through the Re a Kgapha exhibition where viewers reimaged the designs outside of their original settings. This was achieved through a body of artworks, including paintings, photographs, ceramic tiles and a video installation, inspired by *lekgapho*.

Keywords:

Lekgaphe; Lelapa; Re a Kgaphe; cultural reappropriation; Genealogy; Archival theory; Provenance

**SETLHOGO: GO TSOSOLOSA PONO YA DIPATERONE TSA
LEKGAPHO MO TIRISONG YA BOTAKI JWA
SEGOMPIENO JWA BATSWANA**

TSHOBOKANYO

Thutopatlisiso eno e tsosolosa dipaterone tsa Lekgapho la Batswana tsa magae tsa go kgabisa lebota le fa fatshe mo tiragatsong ya botaki jwa segompieno jwa Botswana. E latedisa bokao jwa tsona jwa ntlha ka go dirisa mokgwa wa tatelano ya losika go ya kwa go bolokeng mofuta ono wa botaki jwa setso, gore o tle o bewa mo lefelong la botaki jwa segompieno. Lereo lekgapho le dirisiwa thata go kaya mekgabiso ya setso ya mabota a matlo a bojang; lelapa ke tikologo ya ntlo e e thekeleditsweng ka lobota e e ka fa pele ga ntlo e le nngwe kgotsa go feta mo lwapeng e e dirang ditiro di le mmalwa, jaaka lefelo la kopano la maloko a lelapa kgotsa lefelo la ditiragalo tsa kwa ntle jaaka manyalo. Mo setsong sa Batswana, lekgapho ke mekgabiso o o bontshang bokgoni jwa mosadi jwa go kgabisa legae la gagwe ka boithamedu, go tshwana le mekgabiso ya mabota mo dikarolong dingwe tsa Aforika. Le fa tiro ya lekgapho e tsewa e le e e gaufi le go nyelela ka ntlha ya boagi jwa segompieno, go santse go na le bomme mo Botswana ba ba dirang tiro ya botaki jwa setso kwa metsemagaeng. Thutopatlisiso e rulagantswe ka go tsosolosa tatelano ya losika le setso, tiori ya akhaefe le mekgwa ya tlholego. E tlhalosa phetogo ya lekgapho fa e ntse e tlhotlhomisa botlhokwa jwa lona jwa sesupo le jwa setso mo bathong ba ba dirang ka lona le mo merafeng ya bona go e boloka le go e somarela jaaka ngwao ya Botswana le boswa jo bo tshwanetseng jwa setso jwa lotso la isago. Go ne ga dirwa dipatlisiso tsa kanegelo le dipatlisiso tsa desekethopo, mme go ne ga kokoanngwa tshedimosetso e e bonweng ka tllhamalalo ka dipotsolotso le dinepe. Phitlhelelo e e botlhokwa ke gore batho ba ba dirang ka lona ba dumela gore ke bona bataki ba bofelo ba ba setseng ba mofuta ono wa botaki mo Botswana. Tshenolo eno ke kgoeletso ya gore go tsewe kgato go somarelela lotso la isago mofuta wa botaki. Thutopatlisiso e na le seabe mo kitsong ka go somarela ditshwantsho tsa lekgapho, bogolosegolo ka pontsho ya Re a Kgapha moo babogedi ba neng ba akanya gape ka mokgabo wa botaki kwa

ntle ga maitshetlego a tsona a ntlha. Se se fitlheletswe ka setlhopha sa ditiro tsa botaki, go akaretsa ditshwantsho tse di takilweng, dinepe, dithaele tsa seramiki le tlhomo ya bidio, tse di tlotlheleditsweng ke lekgapho.

Mafoko a botlhokwa:

Lekgapho; Lelapa; Re a Kgapha; tsosoloso ya setso; Tatelano ya losika; Tiori ya akhaefe; Tlholego

**ISIHLOKO: INGCACISO EBONWAYO YEEPATENI ZELEKGAPHO
KWINDELELA OBENZIWA NGAYO UBUGCISA BALE MIHLA
BABATSWANA**

ISISHWANKATHELO

Olu phando lucacisa umxholo weepateni ze*Lekgapho* yaBatswana zokuhombisa imigangatho neendonga zezindlu zasemakhaya kwindlela yobugcisa yale mihla ekwenziwa ngayo eBotswana. Olu phando lulandela intsingiselo yasekuqaleni yezi pateni lusebenzisa indlela yomlibo yokwenza obu bugcisa bemveli ukuze lukwazi ukufaka ezi pateni zamandulo kubugcisa bale mihla. Eli gama lithi *lekgapho* lisetyenziswa kakhulu xa kuthethwa ngokuhonjiswa kweendonga zamanqugwala; *ilelapa* yiyadi ebiyelwe ngodonga ekukho kuyo indlu enye okanye izindlu eziliqela ezilungiselelwe injongo ethile efana nendawo apho ludibanela khona usapho okanye indawo yemisitho efana nemitshato. Kwinkcubeko yesiTswana *ilekgapho* sisihombiso esibonisa ubuchule bebhinqa bokuhombisa umzi walo ubemhle yaye siyafana nezihombiso zeendonga ezikweminye imimandla eAfrika. Nangona ukwenza *ilekgapho* kuphelelwa ngenxa yobugcisa bale mihla, kodwa asekho amabhinqa akwiilali zaseBotswana abenzayo obu bugcisa bemveli. Olu phando lusebenzisa iindlela zomlibo nezokuvuselela inkcubeko, ithiyori yoovimba kunye neyemvelaphi. Lucacisa iinguqu ze*lekgapho* lo gama luphonononga intsingiselo yayo yomfuziselo neyenkcubeko kwabo bayenzayo nakuluntu ngokubanzi ngenjongo yokuyigcina kuvimba nokuyilondoloza njengemvelaphi nesithethe saseBotswana ukulungiselela izizukulwana ezizayo. Kwenziwe uphando ngamabali nangeintanethi yaye ingcombolo yokuqala iqokelelwe ngokwenza udliwano-ndlebe nangokuthabatha iifoto. Into engundoqo efunyaniswe kolu phando kukuba la magcisa enza ezi zihombiso akholelwa ekubeni angawokugqibela asaphilayo akwaziyo ukwenza ezi zihombiso eBotswana. Oku kuxela ukuba kufuneka kubekho into eyenziwayo ukuze kulondolozwe obu bugcisa ukuze nezizukulwana ezizayo zibubone. Olu phando lufaka igalelo lolwazi ngokulondoloza imifanekiso ye*lekgapho* ngokusebenzisa izinto ezifana nomboniso i*Re a Kgap*ha nalapho ababukeli bafumana ithuba lokuyicinga ngenye indlela le mifanekiso. Lo mboniso

wawubonisa imisebenzi yobugcisa ephenjelelwe yi*lekgapho* equka imizobo, iifoto, iithayili ze*ceramic* kunye nokufakelwa kwevidiyo.

Amagama angundoqo:

Lekgapho; Lelapa; Re a Kgapha; ukuvuselelwa kwenkcubeko; Umlibo; Ithiyori yovimba; Imvelaphi

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This study recontextualises Batswana *lekgapho* wall and floor decorative homestead patterns within the contemporary art practice. It traces their original meaning using a genealogical approach towards to the archiving of this traditional art form, in order to place it in the contemporary artistic realm. Grant and Grant (1995) describe *lekgapho* as a pattern made with wet cow dung usually on the floor of the *lelapa*. The term *lekgapho* is also used widely to refer to traditional wall decorations of huts in Botswana. *Lelapa* is a walled courtyard that provides a frontage to a single house or several houses in a household (Grant & Grant 1995:14). The *lelapa* can serve several purposes, such as a meeting place for family members or a space for external events such as weddings.

In Tswana culture, *lekgapho* is a decoration which shows a woman's ability to creatively beautify her homestead, similar to wall decorations in other parts of Africa. According to Courtney-Clarke (1990) these women usually offer little explanation other than their desire to make their homes attractive. Although *lekgapho* practice is regarded as nearing extinction because of modern architecture, there are still women in Botswana who practice the traditional art form in rural areas. However, as modern architecture continues to replace the traditional huts, *lekgapho* is sadly facing the threat of extinction. In recent years, the Government of Botswana has rekindled interest in *lekgapho* through national competitions as a form of sustaining this traditional art form.

The study is framed through genealogical and cultural reappropriation approaches, archival theory and provenance. It articulates *lekgapho*'s evolution while exploring its symbolic and cultural significance for its practitioners and their communities to archive and preserve it as Botswana tradition and a worthy cultural heritage for future generations. Furthermore, this research largely relied on narrative inquiry as a suitable approach in collecting data since *lekgapho* remains largely undocumented. Coupled with my lived experience of growing up watching my mother practising this traditional art, other women who still practise the art were visited to get first-

hand information through interviews and photographs of their work. The women were interviewed about their art, photographs were taken, and, in some instances, they were asked to demonstrate the process of creating the art. Their stories about their work form part of this research. The study further employed a desktop research method where an examination of online journals, books and other relevant publications was used. Desktop research involves the use of already available sources that include books and online materials. The study interrogated other sources of information from the rest of Africa to understand similar art practices on the continent and their contemporary discourses. Finally, this research is practice-led and seeks to bolster the artist-researcher's efforts towards a body of artworks, mainly paintings, photographs, ceramic tiles and a video installation inspired by *lekgapho*, which culminates in a solo exhibition. [(Click on the link below to access the catalogue) <https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:EU:433bade5-6e18-4ada-94b3-bc6b60393c81>].

This study is presented in five chapters and accompanied by a catalogue that records the exhibition emerging from this research. Chapter One introduces the study, enunciates its contextual background, aims and objectives, and presents the study's significance and limitations. Chapter Two presents the literature review themes and theories supporting this study. Chapter Three first presents the artistic influences and how the selected artists' works have been used to frame both the conceptual and creation processes of the artworks emerging from this research. Chapter Three also articulates the methodology used for the data collection and interpretation processes that informed this research. Chapter Four is a discursive analysis and interpretation of this research's emergent knowledge, focusing on the informants' stories, Botswana National Museum's archives, and the visual narratives presented in this study's exhibition. These are explained in relation to the three main theoretical concepts applied in this research: the genealogical, archival and provenance. Finally, Chapter Five concludes and recommends some solutions and further follow-up studies to consolidate and expand the argument this study espouses.

1.1 THE STUDY'S RATIONALE AND THE RESEARCHER'S ACCOUNT

The tradition of building huts dates back thousands of years, and the available archaeological studies estimate *lekgapho* to date back to 1,500 years (Grant & Grant 1995). There is, however, very little record of this traditional art form from early European travelers. According to Grant and Grant (1995) comments of early European travellers on decorated houses are sparse. This is in reference to the travelers who made notes when encountering Tswana communities. It is a practice that has been perfected to withstand weather conditions such as rain and wind. "There must have been a long tradition of working in clay and of developing techniques for ensuring its durability" (Grant & Grant 1995:46).

There is no dispute that *lekgapho* is fast being eroded by modern architecture. Everywhere in Botswana, modern housing structures are fast replacing the traditional huts as a more durable alternative to mud houses. Grant and Grant (1995) argue that changes have been brought about by numerous factors, such as a cash economy, the decline in availability of thatching grass, and the increasing popularity of cement. Courtney-Clarke (1990) argues that in Nigeria, "social pressure has caused many of its people to scorn the traditional mud houses... considering such housing inferior and reeking of impoverishment".

Thus, the rationale for this study emanates from the insufficient regard given to *lekgapho* as an art form. This has been evidenced by numerous scholars in Botswana and the rest of Africa. Locally, there have been a few publications or research studies on *lekgapho*. The most comprehensive record of this art form is by Grant and Grant (1995). On the continent, there have been several publications of similar traditional art forms. The research relied on the information largely available on the continent to make comparisons and draw insights into the local practice. Available literature, such as that of Courtney-Clarke (1990) and other studies, was used. This available literature was used to draw conclusions on this art form, its influences and practices.

While Denbow and Thebe (2006) discuss *lekgapho*, not as art, but as part of the architectural design of the Tswana homestead, their contribution is valuable. Gron (1995), in the Botswana Notes and Records Edition Vol 27, notes that large-scale two-dimensional art of house and wall decoration is still practised on a wide scale. Gron (1995) refers to these designs as 'temporary' and lays them on the surface with multi-coloured clay mixtures. Gron (1995) further observes that traditional wall paintings have been used by potters at Pelegano Village Industries and Thamaga Pottery in Botswana, who use local clays and decorative wall patterns to produce exciting objects. Furthermore, there have been studies of similar designs, such as that of Margaret Courtney-Clarke on the Ndebele and others in Africa. Matthews (1977), in the article Mural Painting in South Africa, identifies two broad categories of dominant styles of mural painting in South Africa, which fall into two broad categories: those of the Sotho and the Nguni peoples. This study also explores a discursive analysis on contemporary artistic discourse of cultural art associated with identity.

The motivation for the study emanates from my interactions with my mother, who used to decorate her house experiencec at a young age. Memories included preparatory work for decorating family hut. The personal history of her creativity directly affects the research inquiry. This is a first-person based inquiry of how my mother applied the colours and made the patterns by making lines on the wet material with her fingers. *Lekgapho* has therefore remained an influential thread in my paintings because of the memories and inclination towards working with line and monochromatic colours. It can be likened to the works of Western abstract expressionist artists such as Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollock, and many others of that era.

The research unpacks the history of *lekgapho*, particularly tracing the meanings of the patterns, context, and significance, exploring its visual significance for today's practitioners, and how it could be preserved for future generations. There is very little research and documentation on this indigenous art. According to Grant and Grant (1995), this was delayed because of the rigid European ideas as to what constituted art. Thus, the

research intends to bring *lekgapho* to the forefront of artistic creativity as an art form that deserves to be noted amongst the traditional arts of Batswana, especially women folk. In exploring this art form, I interrogate the artistic qualities of this now almost extinct art form. This is to shed light on this art form as it finds its way into spaces that are not within its traditional context.

1.2 THE RESEARCH AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

The main aim of the study is to reignite interest in the almost extinct *lekgapho* as an art form. A review of existing literature has shown that *lekgapho* was overlooked by Western travelers, whose view was that it did not fit the definition of art. Women who still practice this art form have assisted my study to dig deeper into their creative process, as well as their feelings and emotions during the execution of *lekgapho*. These include how they plan their work every year when they renew the designs to answer the question of whether the art form deserves to be classified as art. The study further answers the question of the worthiness of the craft to be archived for future generations.

The study's research objectives are:

- To document the creative processes, planning methods, and cultural contexts of women who continue to practice *lekgapho*;
- To explore the emotional, symbolic, and cultural significance of *lekgapho* for its practitioners and their communities;
- To critically assess whether *lekgapho* meets the criteria to be recognised and classified as a legitimate art form; and
- To evaluate the cultural and artistic value of *lekgapho* as a heritage craft worthy of archiving and preserving for future generations.

It seeks to answer the following research questions:

- How do current practitioners of *lekgapho* conceptualise, plan, and execute their designs?
- What feelings, meanings, and cultural values do women practitioners associate with *lekgapho*?

- In what ways does *lekgapho* reflect artistic principles, cultural narratives, and aesthetic values that justify its classification as an art form?
- What are the potential benefits and challenges of archiving *lekgapho* for cultural preservation and intergenerational transmission?

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study holds cultural, academic, and heritage-preservation value by revitalising *lekgapho* as a valuable cultural form of art. It also contributes to safeguarding a nearly extinct art form, ensuring that the traditions, skills, and meanings attached to it are not lost, while offering a platform for the voices and perspectives of women practitioners whose artistry has historically been overlooked or undervalued. The research provides detailed records, both visual and narrative that can serve as a foundation for archiving *lekgapho* for future generations, contributing to intangible cultural heritage preservation. By integrating fieldwork and aesthetic analysis, the study enriches scholarly understanding of indigenous art forms and extends the scope of art history to include marginalised creative practices.

Highlighting the artistry, creativity, and emotional labour of the women practitioners elevates their status as bearers of culture and can inspire community pride, particularly among younger generations. The study is significant as it places *lekgapho* at par with other art forms in Botswana, the region and the world. The narrative of the women currently undertaking the art form is of significance in that it rekindles an interest in future generations. This is because *lekgapho* played a significant role in women's lives on issues of identity and cleanliness. A woman's worth was, to some extent, measured by her ability to take care of her homestead. This is the first of its kind in Botswana. In a nutshell, the study gives a voice to the art form.

While the study aims to be comprehensive, certain constraints and limitations may affect its scope and generalisability as the research focuses on women who are still practising *lekgapho* in specific communities. Thus, the current study may not capture all variations in technique, meaning, or style that existed

in other regions. This could be mitigated through ethnographic research with artisans from various regions to document variations in technique, meaning, styles. Another limitation is that most of the cultural and historical knowledge about *lekgapho* is transmitted orally, which may be subject to memory gaps, selective recall, or personal bias. To mitigate against this requires a multi-faceted approach combining traditional knowledge systems with modern documentation techniques. Another limitation is that the designs are renewed annually, and the study may not fully capture the evolution of styles and meanings over multiple years. As a mitigation strategy a robust documentation of the designs using multimedia approach is required. Finally, given that *lekgapho* is traditionally ephemeral and site-specific, preserving it for future generations poses challenges, such as that documentation methods (photography, video, or written description) may not fully capture its three-dimensional texture, context, or lived experience.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter presents a literature review of the various topics related to the study's topic. The literature review presents African cultural art forms, including African traditional homestead wall paintings, and the Evolution of Batswana *lekgapho* homestead patterns. Theoretical frameworks articulate Genealogical theory, cultural reappropriation, Archival theory, and the Theory of provenance to frame the argument and significance of the study. Genealogy traces the evolution of the *lekgapho* homestead wall paintings, engravings, and designs, highlighting their significance as one of the Tswana cultural practices revered as an artistic tradition. The objective of archival theory is to identify what needs to be archived in order to be continuously preserved for an unlimited period of time. Thus, this study aims to ensure that *lekgapho* can be preserved for an indefinite period. Cultural reappropriation is applied in this research to reclaim valuable and still-needed cultural practices towards the preservation of cultural heritage. The theory of provenance, on the other hand, examines how knowledge about the origin and history of archives was created and how archives are preserved for future generations, thereby sustaining cultural heritage.

2.1 EVOLUTION OF AFRICAN CULTURAL ART FORMS

African art forms are recognised as some of the oldest artefacts created by humans. Visona et al (2000:472) assert that the oldest known artworks on the continent are artefacts that have been incised and painted on rock surfaces, thus making them among the earliest forms of art ever created by human beings. Bischof (2013:1) supports this perspective by stating that the oldest surviving art forms are rock paintings found in Africa. The earliest known works of art from the African continent were discovered in a rock shelter called Apollo 11, located in the mountains of the southern Namibian desert. These artworks date back to 25 000 BC (Visona et al. 2000:473).

According to Miller (1999:1-3), much of Africa's past was undocumented, including artefacts. These old artefacts were discovered through the use of

“non-historical disciplines” such as oral traditions, linguistics, archaeology, and ethnography (Miller 1999:1-3). These non-historical disciplines have assisted historians in uncovering evidence of African artefacts that inform current and future generations about the continent's history.

African cultural art forms encompass a wide range of media, including sculpture, painting, pottery, basketry, rock art, textiles, masks, personal adornments, and jewellery. Most traditional African artefacts were created for religious or ritualistic, aesthetic, and utilitarian purposes. Masks, for instance, were commonly worn during religious or ritual celebrations in various African communities. Traditional wall paintings served both decorative and religious purposes during different festivities. Other crafts, such as baskets in Botswana, were primarily used for utilitarian purposes, such as storing grains. Today, most baskets produced in Botswana are mainly used for decorative purposes and are exported to other countries or collected by tourists who come into contact with the craft makers. The original practical function of these baskets has been largely replaced by more durable items made from metal and plastic. This has been a common feature associated with Western influence throughout the African continent.

Undoubtedly, the arrival of Westerners has had a profound impact on traditional African ways of life. Nortey et al. (2019:1) argue that colonialism in Africa had multiple effects on the continent's cultural, socio-political, and economic fabric, including African art. African traditional practices, including annual rituals and ceremonies, gave way to Western ideologies (Nortey et al. 2019). This shift resulted in the erosion of African traditional practices, leading many ceremonies to be replaced by Western traditions, particularly religious activities. As a consequence, some artefacts specifically created for these traditional practices have been lost over time.

As Kasfir (2024:41) put it, the majority of African artefacts were made to be used by the same society that produced them. They were created for specific rituals within the society that produced them. Items such as clay pots and baskets were used by the society for cooking or storing within the communities

that created them. Today, such items or artefacts are collected by tourists for aesthetic reasons. The society which produces them seldom puts them to any use and exports them to other societies. Kasfir (2024:41) argues that the advent of a cash economy and new forms of patronage from missionaries, colonial administrators, and, more recently, tourists and the emerging African elite have had a significant influence on the continent's art forms.

Numerous scholars have posited that African art, especially through mediums such as sculpture and masks, has exerted a significant influence on Western modern art. Nortey et al. (2019:2) assert that African art had a profound impact on Western modern art, with European artists such as Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso incorporating the qualities of African sculptures into their naturalistic Western art. For instance, they mention the influence of the Fang Ngil mask from Gabon on Amedeo Modigliani's drawings, sculptures, and paintings of Jeanne Hebuterne (Nortey et al. 2019:2). Tetteh (2013:37) also observed that traditional African art had a powerful influence on European artists such as Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso, who blended the highly stylised treatment of the human figure in African sculptures with their own painting styles.

The rich history of African art continues to have a significant impact on the global art scene. Contemporary African artists, employing modern technologies, draw inspiration from the cultural art forms created thousands of years ago to create new artefacts. Nortey et al. (2019:2) argue that a specific group of contemporary African art practitioners seeks to expand the boundaries of creation and display by drawing inspiration from traditional African art and utilising new technologies.

2.2 AFRICAN TRADITIONAL HOMESTEAD WALL PAINTINGS

The art of mural painting in Africa is believed to be as ancient as the continent itself. According to Asante and Opoku-Asare (2011), mural paintings can be traced back to the San people of southern Africa, who painted murals in caves. Other communities, such as the Sonike of Mali, the Bushongo of Congo, and the Ibo of eastern Nigeria, also have a history of mural painting.

Despite the challenges posed by colonialism and Western architecture, certain African communities still engage in traditional mural painting. This includes countries like Botswana, Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Ghana. For example, in Botswana, the National Arts Festival is held every July to celebrate the arts, where traditional mural painters from across the country are invited to exhibit their work. The designs are captured through photography, showcased at the Botswana National Museum art gallery, and prizes are awarded for exceptional submissions. The government views this competition as a means of safeguarding the tradition of mural painting.

In 1994, the Botswana National Museum established an open-air museum in Gaborone to preserve the heritage of traditional Tswana dwellings (Mwale et al. 2022:101). The museum features life-size replicas of traditional huts from various tribes in Botswana, serving educational purposes and promoting cultural preservation. *Lekgapho* designs, a form of mural painting, were incorporated into the exhibits and regularly restored as part of the museum's preservation efforts.

Similar initiatives to preserve cultural heritage can be found in other countries as well. In Zimbabwe's Matobo district, for instance, an annual celebration of traditional hut paintings, known as My Beautiful Home, takes place to ensure the art form is passed down to future generations. The event focuses on the Ndebele matrilineal tradition of home painting, using natural materials such as ash, clay, and ant-hill soil. The competition recognises the most beautifully decorated homes in the district and has attracted cultural enthusiasts from Zimbabwe and beyond (BBC, 2021).

In South Africa, the Ndebele tribe continues to practise homestead wall decoration as an integral part of their cultural tradition. Esther Mahlangu, a prominent Ndebele artist, has even extended her art to other countries and is internationally recognised for her efforts in preserving Ndebele wall paintings. She also teaches young girls in South Africa the traditional practices of beadwork and painting (Matthew Kanniah, 2018).

In Ghana, the art of mural painting is still practised by women in Sirigu village, located in the Kassena-Nankana District. The use of locally available materials is crucial in preserving the distinctiveness of the Sirigu murals for future generations (Asante and Opoku-Asare 2011:189). Christianity has also played a role in the development of mural art in Ghana, with artists commissioned by churches to decorate religious buildings (Asante & Opoku-Asare 2011:188). Efforts to preserve the culture of mural painting in Sirigu include exhibitions and the promotion of their artwork. In 2001, their paintings were exhibited in a gallery in the Netherlands, allowing the world to appreciate their rich, ancient traditions (Woets 2014:18).

Another study conducted in 2013 found that the Gurunsi people in northern Ghana continue to adorn mud huts with intricate murals (Bischof 2013:1). These mud huts are unique to their culture and feature ancient symbolic patterns, carrying on the African tradition of mural painting (Bischof 2013:6). Thus, the art of mural painting in Africa has a remarkable history and is still practiced by various communities across the continent. In many African countries, various initiatives are underway to preserve this cultural heritage through exhibitions, competitions, and educational programmes.

2.3 EVOLUTION OF BATSWANA *LEKGAPHO* HOMESTEAD PATTERNS

Not much has been written or documented about Botswana crafts in general. Miller (1999) posits that African history was largely undocumented. This lack of documentation has been acknowledged by various scholars, including Denbow and Thebe (2006) and Grant and Grant (1995). Denbow and Thebe (2006:79) specifically found that there is little written about Botswana crafts. This also applies to *lekgapho*, where there have been few documented accounts from both early European travelers and locals. Lewis (2018:28) states that while mural decoration is common and well-documented throughout Africa, there is much less information available about contemporary house decoration in Botswana. In their book, "Decorated Homes in Botswana", Grant and Grant (1995:43-44) found sparse and conflicting comments from European travelers, with no mention at all of mural art in the 19th century.

They also mention other travelers, such as Professor Isaac Schapera, an anthropologist and historian who took photographs in Mochudi in the 1930s (Grant and Grant 1995).

Although there is limited documentation, some scholars believe that the Sotho-Tswana groups may have been the originators of mural art. In 1970, James Walton, as cited by Grant and Grant (1995), proposed that the Sotho-Tswana could have been the first to develop this artistic form. However, Grant and Grant (1995) advise that Walton's assertion should be approached with caution. Additionally, Lewis (2018) points out that a comprehensive investigation of Tswana homes was conducted only recently, in 1984 by Anita and Viera Larsson and in 1995 by the Grants. This highlights the long-standing lack of documentation of *lekgapho* and other crafts in Botswana, potentially resulting in the loss of cultural meanings associated with these crafts. In the advent of colonialism, indigenous communities in Botswana experienced loss of their identity and *lekgapho* is a case in point.

Generally, traditional artefacts in the rest of the continent are made for both aesthetic and utilitarian purposes, and this holds true in Botswana as well, as confirmed by Denbow and Thebe (2006:79). Denbow and Thebe (2006:97) emphasise the aesthetic purposes of women decorating their huts to satisfy their own creative instincts and gain admiration from their local communities. Lewis (2018:33) also agrees that crafts like *lekgapho* are created for aesthetic reasons, such as expressing pride in the home, village, and culture, as well as visually celebrating weddings, births, or village events. A variety of motifs and abstract shapes are used in *lekgapho* designs. Denbow and Thebe (2006:76) note that these motifs range from playing card designs (hearts, spades, clubs, and diamonds) to more traditional motifs like flowers and arcades, as well as more abstract depictions like the *lekgapho* design, which is created by dragging fingers through fresh cow dung.

Grant and Grant (1995) also found similar designs or motifs of playing cards, flowers, animals, birds, and geometric shapes. These designs can be found on both the walls and floors of *lelapa* and inside the huts, and they are created

by women using their hands. Denbow and Thebe (2006:96) explain that the *lekgapho* motif is made by running fingers in wavy lines through wet clay to create a series of grooved parallel lines that meet at right angles along the bisection line. The wavy grooves are known as *ditema*, or ploughed fields. In some instances, colours are used for decoration and are mostly sourced locally by women within the vicinity of their communities. According to Grant and Grant (1995), the oxides provided a wide spectrum of colours, ranging from red-brown to pink-white.

Different Tswana communities in separate locations used what was easily accessible or available to them. What was common and readily available to all these communities was clay and cow dung, as most of these communities reared cattle. Cow dung is primarily used to decorate the floor of the hut and the courtyard, creating patterns by drawing with the fingers. In some instances, it could be used to decorate entrances to the hut. The designs or the motifs vary from one Tswana tribe to the next. They vary from simple straight lines and curves to geometric and non-geometric shapes, as well as representations or depictions of plant parts. Unlike their West African counterparts, no representation of insects or animals has been observed in Botswana. “Nowhere have we found lizards being used for decorative purposes, although they are regularly featured in designs in West Africa” (Grant & Grant 1995:60).

According to Grant and Grant (1995:74), attempts to uncover the symbolic meaning of *Bakgatla* designs through questioning practitioners have been unsuccessful. In their interviews, they found that no one claimed to know the original meaning, suggesting it may have been lost. They argue that this loss is puzzling, as it is unclear why the design would remain unchanged for at least 60 years or more (Grant and Grant 1995).

2.4 GENEALOGICAL THEORY

Genealogy can be defined in various ways depending on which discipline one is dealing with. Identity has been defined by examining certain attributes, such as race, gender, ethnicity, and political and social issues. In the context of this

study, genealogy covers the aspect of communities that are bound together by artistic and cultural traditions. The Oxford dictionary defines genealogy as a line of descent traced continuously from an ancestor, and the study and tracing of lines of descent. Santos and Yan (2010) argue that genealogy offers a sense of “security, durability, stability and continuity” (Basu 2004: 33), allowing individuals to identify themselves.

Mahuika and Kukutai (2021) argue that genealogy is a living contemporary practice in indigenous communities. It is tied to changing political, technological, and cultural phenomena. They emphasise that understanding our genealogy is important for knowing ourselves and showcasing that genealogy to new generations. They further assert that genealogical research is crucial for maintaining unity in the face of colonial invasions, identity, land and language loss, erasure, and disconnection (Mahuika and Kukutai 2021).

In the context of tourism, Santos and Yan (2010: 57) found that the genealogical quest for many travelers starts with the desire to collect specific pieces of information about their ancestors, pieces that come to talk for us and locate us. This study focuses on *lekgapho* as an art form that unifies Batswana women in the face of colonial invasions. The study examines issues of identity as a Motswana man, exploring the concept of self-awareness and sharing one’s knowledge with future generations. One example of the impact of colonialism on indigenous communities is evident in Botswana, where the loss of identity is exemplified by the case of *lekgapho*. With the arrival of modern architecture, Batswana lost touch with their traditional values and identity. By retracing Tswana traditions and properly archiving *lekgapho*, Batswana can reclaim their identity and preserve their cultural values for future generations. Santos and Yan (2010) also stress the importance of genealogy, specifically in the context of tourism. They argue that genealogy offers a sense of security, durability, stability, and continuity, which allows individuals to better understand and identify themselves. By properly archiving *lekgapho*, future generations can access this important piece of information, which connects them to their ancestors. Understanding the genealogy of cultural heritage

offers a sense of stability and continuity in engaging in the traditional practices, such as in the case of *lekgapho* as an important art form.

Identity itself is a complex concept with varied definitions, including qualities, beliefs, personality traits, appearance, and/or expressions that characterise a person or a group. Hattoh-Ahiaduvor (2014) expands on this, defining identity as a process influenced by historical, geographical, socio-cultural, economic, and political factors. These factors include language, class, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, status, sexuality, religion, and education. In the context of colonial invasion, identity takes on a different meaning. For countries like Botswana, cultural changes occurred when colonisers arrived, often casting aside certain traditions as backwards and ungodly. In this context, identity can be seen as the act of knowing oneself in the face of colonial invasions. Traditional wall paintings, such as *lekgapho*, were replaced by modern architecture, which was considered more sustainable, resulting in a loss of cultural identity. However, preserving traditions such as *lekgapho* is vital for maintaining cultural identity and heritage. It brings communities together and allows them to identify themselves as belonging to a particular society. The practice of *lekgapho* is still upheld by a group of women in Molepolole, one of Botswana's rural districts, who view it as a means of cultural preservation and a way to safeguard the identity and pride of their community.

Similar identification activities through art have been observed in various parts of Africa. For example, Asante and Opoku-Asare (2011) note that mural art, with its use of traditional motifs and symbols, contributes to local cultural identity. They specifically mention the indigenous Sirigu women in Ghana, whose murals are a unique expression of the cultural identity of the Kassena-Nankana people. In South Africa, the Ndebele women have also played a crucial role in preserving traditional wall paintings, with Esther Mahlangu being a notable figure in this effort. Mahlangu continues to decorate both private and public spaces with Ndebele designs, ensuring that this art form is not lost and teaching future generations. Thus, in this study, genealogy is employed to trace and understand the emotional, symbolic, and cultural significance of *lekgapho* for its practitioners and their communities, while evaluating this art

form's cultural and artistic value in relation to archiving and preserving it for future generations. Retracing Tswana traditions will reassert traditional values that were enshrined in women's undertaking of *lekgapho* designs.

2.5 CULTURAL REAPPROPRIATION

Cultural reappropriation is a process in which members of a culture reclaim or pay special attention to cultural practices and artefacts that were previously overlooked due to their value and significance not being understood, primarily by outsiders. Reappropriation is crucial for reclaiming power, repairing harm, and rebuilding cultural identity and heritage, including symbols, clothing, and practices that were previously overlooked (Kayandago 2003: 45). It can be a way to rebuild a sense of pride and a stronger connection to a culture that may have been eroded by historical or ongoing oppression. It is a specific act by members of a cultural group to reclaim and preserve, thereby reasserting the original meaning and importance of cultural artefacts and practices within their own community (Okpewho 1977).

Indigenous Peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literatures, designs, sports and traditional games and visual and performing arts. They also have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions (De Lary Healy and Glowczewski 2014:45).

Thus, cultural reappropriation, like the Renaissance, considers a return to the past as a return to initiative (Mungwini 2013:78). According to Marcangeli, Prévost, Géracht and Smith (2016:4), reappropriation is a tool to protect something from becoming extinct. Thus, one of the objectives of this study is to showcase and explore traditional materials and practices, particularly traditional crafts, in a contemporary context, thereby preserving Batswana cultural heritage. Cultural reappropriation is a term that has gained prominence in the 21st century and is a powerful tool for raising awareness about the transformation of art by individual Africans. This research also

argues that practices such as homestead decorations, the subject of this study, which were once overlooked, hold profound historical significance. Early anthropologists, in their ignorance, considered African artefacts and practices as primitive (Marc 2013:17). Most art historians believed that primitive African art was not so much art but an unsuccessful attempt to produce it (Marc 2013:17).

Therefore, cultural reappropriation has the potential to serve as a catalyst for the cultural evolution of African arts, eliminating the generalised stigma of primitiveness associated with African art in the West. While the journey to educate Western people about the African art perspective may be a long one, it is a worthwhile endeavour. This calls for African artists to adapt and repackage their revered cultural artefacts to be acknowledged and appreciated in modern and contemporary contexts, thereby contributing to a more inclusive global art scene (Moses Òkè 2006).

Thus, cultural reappropriation and its relevance to nations that are subjugated or marginalised highlight the importance of reclaiming cultural identity and the power dynamics involved in such processes, which often involve a struggle for control over cultural narratives and representations. For cultural reappropriation to occur and be accepted by a society, it is necessary to overcome such challenges, which will ultimately lead to a positive transformation in thinking.

This raises the question of why certain African art practices are being degraded and eventually abandoned as if they never existed. It is essential to acknowledge that Africa is a tapestry of diverse cultures, each with its unique way of expressing and preserving traditions through traditional African art. Art and crafts, as a popular cultural discipline, play a vital role in both consciously and subconsciously preserving and understanding the importance of reclaiming certain practices and traditions, as well as their benefits to society. Across these diverse cultures, various traditional African art forms, including artefacts, homestead decorations, pottery, poetry, dance, storytelling, and singing, are used to celebrate unique identities and preserve cultural heritage.

However, the focus has often been on identifying art objects by their region of origin or distribution, with inadequate attempts to understand a community's life and thought from the nature and content of its art (Okpewho 1977:301). Finally, it is essential to note that the act of reclaiming traditional African art or utilising it in a new or different way is an ongoing aspect of semantic change, demonstrating that cultural knowledge is continually observed and nurtured (Okpewho 1977). Thus, the act of reappropriation generates empowerment, agency, and perhaps most importantly, a sense of pride, as well as healing and celebratory discourses that transform and redefine the human condition and experience (Henzi 2011).

2.6 ARCHIVAL THEORY

Archival theory, or the science of archives, is the study and theory of building and curating archives, which are identifiable and collectable. This involves identifying, gathering, and recording information about cultural artefacts, including their origin, history, and significance, as well as capturing oral histories and preserving cultural practices and heritage. Eastwood (1994) defines archival arrangement as a process of identifying relationships, not a process of physically ordering and storing documents. Eastwood (1994) further says it is the process of putting the parts of the whole together in a systematic arrangement. It aims to maintain the integrity and accessibility of cultural heritage, promoting understanding and appreciation across time.

Archives must be trustworthy in order to be valuable to society. The archival theoretical framework of Duranti (1994) considers appraisal as integral to the successful archiving of documents. Duranti (1994) defines appraisal as the process of establishing the value of documents and artefacts made or received in the course of the conduct of affairs, qualifying that value, and determining its duration. Duranti (1994) argues that the primary objective of appraisal is to identify the documents to be preserved indefinitely.

Archival theory is crucial to this study, as it ensures that *lekgapho*, as an art form, can be preserved for future generations. Eastwood (1994) identifies characteristics central to archival theory, such as impartiality, authenticity,

naturalness, interrelatedness, and uniqueness. Eastwood (1994:127) further argues that we put our faith in a document or artefact because it holds the promise of faithfulness to fact and act. He argues that if a document or an artefact is corrupted by the taint of later interest, this quality is impaired and therefore loses its impartiality. Duranti (1994:8) asserts that because documents and artefacts are created as a means for, and a by-product of an action, not "in the interest or for the information of posterity", and because they are "free from the suspicion of prejudice in regard to the interests in which we now use them", archival documents and artefacts can thus be deemed impartial and "cannot tell . . . anything but the truth".

On authenticity, he argues that archives are authentic only when they are created with the intention of acting through them in mind and when they are preserved and maintained as faithful witnesses of fact and act by the creator and their legitimate successors (Eastwood 1994:127). To be authentic memorials of past activity, documents must be created, maintained, and kept in custody according to regular procedures that can be attested.

Eastwood (1994:127) argues that the scope of archival theory extends beyond the documents or artefacts to the methods and practices by which they were generated, created and preserved from the moment of creation and throughout their existence. Duranti (1994:9) agrees with Eastwood's (1994) assertion regarding the characteristic of authenticity of documents, from their creation to the way archivists treat them while in custody. He argues that archival documents and artefacts are procedurally authentic for three reasons; they are created credible and reliable, maintained with proper guarantees for further action and for information, and are set aside for preservation, tacitly adjudged worthy of being kept by their creator or legitimate successor as "written memorials of . . . activities in the past" (Duranti 1994:9).

In addition, Eastwood (1994:127-128) posits that the characteristics of naturalness and interrelatedness concern the manner in which documents or artefacts in archives were generated or collected in the course of transactions according to the needs of the matters at hand. Eastwood (1994:128) makes

the point that documents or artefacts are natural, in the sense that they are not collected for some purpose outside the administrative needs that generate them, and are not put together to serve some scheme other than those needs. Similar to Eastwood (1994), Duranti (1994:9) argues that archives are not documents or artefacts collected artificially, but rather they should be collected purely for archival purposes.

Regarding interrelatedness, Eastwood (1994:128) posits that collectables in any given archive must have their relationships established through the course of conducting affairs and according to their needs. Collectables rely on each other for their meaning and in their capacity to serve as evidence of the activity that generated them (Eastwood 1994:128). Duranti (1994:9) sums up that the interrelatedness of archives encompasses both the relationships and the entirety of what is collected for archival purposes.

Finally, each document or artefact has a unique place in the structure of an archive, even though copies may exist in the same archives; however, each one is unique in its own place (Eastwood 1994:128). Thus, these collectables are not the same as others placed next to them. Duranti (1994:9) agrees with this assertion that even if a collectable is an identical copy of another, its relationships with the other within and outside the group to which it belongs are always unique. This characteristic, as explained by both Eastwood (1994) and Duranti (1994), means that the products of this research are unique, even if others have been collected or produced before or after them. Reviewing Tswana traditional practices will reassert traditional values that were enshrined in women's undertaking of *lekgapho* designs towards archiving an important cultural heritage.

2.7 THEORY OF PROVENANCE

The concept of provenance, as defined by the Oxford dictionary, refers to the origin or earliest known history of something, including its existence and origin. The theory of provenance is closely tied to both genealogy and archival theory. Cowan (2018:2) states that provenance plays an important role in understanding records. Cheney et al. (2009: 5) assert that the concept of

“provenance” originates from the art and archiving worlds, where it refers to information about the creation, chain of custody, modifications or influences pertaining to an artefact. They state that provenance in archiving is related to *integrity*, which encompasses the principle that archivists should respect the order or organisation of a collection of documents and/or artefacts that are being archived (Cheney et al. 2009: 5). In the field of archival science, provenance pertains to the origin, custody, and ownership of an item or collection. Cowan (2018: 2) argues that understanding provenance is important because it forms the context of the creation of a record, and if context is misunderstood, obscured, or misrepresented, the understanding of the record itself will be limited, or worse, distorted.

Nesmith (2007) explores the impact of historical knowledge on archival theory in his article titled "The concept of societal provenance and records of nineteenth-century Aboriginal–European relations in Western Canada: implications for archival theory and practice". He acknowledges that Aboriginal people often do not play a significant role in the provenance of government, church, or business records, as they are not the ones directly recording them. He raises concerns that the history of Aboriginal people is recorded through the lens of Western travelers who have no connection to their way of life and history (Nesmith 2007).

Similarly, in Africa, early records were primarily produced by Western travelers seeking to understand African culture. These travelers used their own methods of recording information. However, this does not mean that Africans did not have records of their existence over the years. Scholars have demonstrated that oral traditions and other forms of media, such as rock engravings and paintings, have preserved African history for thousands of years. *Lekgapho*, as an art form, has existed for centuries and has been passed down through generations. Western travelers merely found alternative means, such as writing and photography, to document it. The narrative of *lekgapho* has primarily been presented from the perspective of Western travelers in Botswana, with little involvement from the locals in preserving an untainted historical record.

In conclusion, this chapter presents some of the African cultural art forms that have gained recognition on the global art scene. The influence of these traditional art forms continues to inspire contemporary artists in Africa and worldwide. Therefore, it is crucial to preserve these art forms in order to inspire future generations. The preservation of cultural art forms, particularly traditional wall decorations, is long overdue. Fortunately, we can observe this welcome development occurring in various countries and tribes across the African continent. Cultural enthusiasts recognise the value of such initiatives, as demonstrated by the annual activities in Zimbabwe, Botswana, and the inspiring efforts of Esther Mahlangu in South Africa.

Additionally, this chapter has discussed four important concepts: genealogical theory, cultural reappropriation, archival theory, and provenance theory. Genealogical theory examines the origin and evolution of beliefs and practices, highlighting their significance and meaning. Genealogical theory emphasises the importance of tracing and preserving identity in uniting communities and countering the erosion of African culture resulting from Western influence. Archival theory emphasises the need for trustworthy and professional preservation of records, whether they are documents or artefacts. Cultural reappropriation emphasises the importance of acknowledging and appraising culturally acclaimed norms and values with pride towards reclaiming our heritage and identity. Lastly, the theory of provenance stresses the importance of understanding records from the perspective of their creators to ensure trustworthiness. These theories establish a solid foundation for Africans to take control of preserving their cultural heritage for future generations.

CHAPTER THREE: ARTISTIC INFLUENCE AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter first presents Esther Mahlangu and Ann Gollifer as influential artists, whose works relate to my studio practice in terms of conceptualisation and creation processes of the artworks showcased in the exhibition emerging from this study. The second part presents my creation process in relation to the two artists of influence, and the third, the methodology used for collecting and analysing emergent data. The two artists' works are discussed in accordance with my conceptualisation and creation processes, and elements in their art that are similar to mine are unpacked. The methodology used is narrative inquiry, which focuses on understanding how individuals make sense of their lived experiences through the stories they tell. Its strength in this study lay in co-constructing meaning with participants by probing personal narratives to uncover insights into the current practice and value of *lekgapho* within contemporary Botswana art practice.

3.1 ESTHER MAHLANGU

Esther Mahlangu is a South African artist who lives in Mpumalanga Province. Her work has helped preserve the customs and traditions of the Ndebele tribe, particularly in the decoration of their homesteads. She is recognised for her role in sharing and continuing the tradition. She continues to share her skills with upcoming generations to ensure the preservation of the Ndebele culture for many years to come. She learnt the craft of decorating walls in Ndebele designs from her mother and became an expert at a young age. Her expertise was discovered by Paris researchers documenting traditional art. Since then, she has decorated public spaces both outside and within South Africa with Ndebele wall designs. She was recently awarded an Honorary Doctorate for her outstanding work in preserving Ndebele culture. Mahlangu is an inspiration for this study due to the resilience she has demonstrated in ensuring that her craft remains relevant amid the modern architectural changes around her. She has stayed true to her traditions and has gone further to impart the skills and knowledge to the younger generations. Her work is not only an inspiration to South Africans, but also to the region and the rest of the world.

Her work is a testament to the fact that cultural traditions can be maintained amidst an ever-changing art landscape.

Mahlangu's work is not only confined to the walls of the traditional Ndebele dwellings. It is also found in other commodities, such as plastic food containers and luxury vehicles. It is reappropriated in galleries and museums in South Africa and internationally. This articulation of Mahlangu's work points to the direction that traditional artwork cannot disappear into history just because the canvas in which it was first executed is slowly but surely being erased by modern forms of architecture. With its main point of departure in traditional Ndebele practices of wall paintings and beadwork, her artistry finds expression in the most unlikely places, extending to novel surfaces such as sculptures, ceramics and everyday object *trouvés* (Ntombela 2024). This assertion succinctly highlights the many ways in which such traditional art forms can be preserved and celebrated on various other objects and surfaces. Traditional art forms and designs, as illustrated by the work of Mahlangu, can be preserved in various forms, such as clothing, vehicles, floor tiles, and other modern surfaces.

Mahlangu also inspires and teaches young Ndebele people to paint in the traditional style. In her interview with Matthew Kanniah in the ArtAfrica Magazine in 2018 she said, "The art roots them (young girls) in their Ndebele culture, it is important to plant the seed and to let it grow". She says this is important because in her opinion "there are not many original artists left in my community and that is very sad as nobody will be left to pass on the painting tradition" (Kanniah 2018). Her hope is that one day the girls will follow in her footsteps.

Her approach to art has inspired generations and serves as a reaffirmation of calls for Africa-centred innovations (Ntombela 2024). This inspiration is the one that inspires the artwork I have produced for my exhibition. My artworks are rooted in tradition. They include photographs of the original wall paintings and floor engravings made by the women from the villages I visited during my data collection for this study.



Figure 3.1: Untitled Esther Mahlangu (1991)

The designs are depicted in a series of tiles laid on the floor as an installation piece. This illustrates just one way traditional art could be preserved in similar items. One of my artworks depicts a wall similar to *lelapa*, an adjacent wall to several huts, as an installation in the gallery. This artwork serves as a poignant reminder of a tradition that is disappearing, issuing a clarion call for preservation before all is lost. The fact that artists such as Mahlangu have found it necessary to preserve Ndebele culture should inspire us to ensure that our customs and traditions are also preserved.

Although Mahlangu admits to adding non-traditional colours and new designs to her work, she has stayed true to her tradition. Mahlangu also realised that her work needs to change to suit the new narrative. In an interview with Matthew Kanniah (2018), she realised that the old must change, otherwise it dies, and nobody wants to just look at the old. “The new people I meet

overseas want to see new works and new designs, and that's why I always try to do something new with my work". Her statement is a testament to the fact that art, whether in the form of craft or any other medium, needs to evolve in terms of design and serve the needs of the society within which it purports to operate. Mahlangu is excited that her art has evolved from the tribal tradition of decorating homes. *Lekgaphe*, too, has the opportunity to expand into other media and incorporate designs that depict contemporary culture.

3.2 ANN GOLLIFER

Ann Gollifer was born in 1960 in British Guiana, now Guyana. She currently lives in Botswana as a practising artist. Gollifer is a painter, printmaker, photographer and writer. Her work deals with history and issues of identity and belonging. She is drawn to images that reference forgotten histories, juxtaposed with current trends (Instagram, 2024). Ann Gollifer's work is deeply personal and uses her own personal history and the exploration of her multi-racial and multi-national heritage as subject and medium. Between 1999 and 2000, Gollifer produced a series of paintings titled "Doors", which have remained an inspiration to my work. They were painted on wooden cardboard core doors found in hardware supply stores. The theme of the work was Africa, and according to her statement, the aim was to somehow remove painting from the gallery walls and install it in a way that allowed the works to be experienced like walking through a landscape.

The colour scheme of the paintings and their scale are reminiscent of traditional wall paintings. In one of her exhibitions, Gollifer states that she uses pigments derived from earth colours found in Botswana, which she transforms into something more than just colour – into vessels of history, culture, and identity (Instagram, 2024). These are the same pigments that have been used by women for many years to paint their huts. She may not have been inspired by the African traditional wall paintings, but her colour scheme and the use of flat colours resonate well with *lekgaphe*.

The artist works with colours used by Mochudi women, which include whites, creams, yellows, pinks, reds, browns and blacks. Mochudi is a village in

Botswana, home to Bakgatla-Ba-Kgafela, where women still decorate their homes. Gollifer draws deeply on the rich materialities of nature to explore the relationship between identity and place (info@gunsandrain.com).



Figure 3.2: Doors series, <https://www.anngollifer.org> › 2000-doors Ann Gollifer (2000)

The theme of her Doors series paintings is Africa and was used as inspiration by the Tumbuka Dance Company from Harare, Zimbabwe, and Steve Dyer, a composer and musician in Johannesburg, South Africa, in a piece named Hoch-Koche. They were used as drops in the staged performances that travelled to festival venues in Zimbabwe, Botswana and South Africa.

Gollifer's Doors series shares similarities with the traditional wall paintings found in Botswana and, by extension, throughout Africa. These similarities are not at all surprising for an artist who has travelled and lived in Botswana for many years. She has, in her interviews, confessed to drawing inspiration from *lekgapho*, and she also uses pigments found in Botswana for her paintings. According to an online article published by gunsandrain.com, she learnt the practice of processing these earth pigments into paints by a traditional

Motswana painter and healer from Mochudi, southeast Botswana, Mma Motsei Nkwemabala.

I personally attended the festival and was inspired by the painted series, which formed the backdrop of the dancers and the musicians in Gaborone. The colour scheme of the paintings and their scale are reminiscent of traditional wall paintings. This is not a coincidence for an artist who has lived and travelled within Botswana, especially Mochudi, where she interacted with traditional women who often practised the craft of *Lekgapho*.

3.3 CONCEPTUALISATION AND CREATION PROCESSES OF MY WORK

The artworks showcased in my exhibition “Re a Kgapha” (We decorate our Houses) include photographs representing *lekgapho* designs taken from my fieldwork. These photographs are a true reflection of the scale of the designs the women work with in their craft. Thus, these photographs are the true archives of *lekgapho* designs, serving as a record for future generations to access. They represent these traditional designs as a faithful witness to facts (Eastwood 1994). These photographs are unique and will therefore never be the same as other photographs that came before them (Eastwood 1994). Different frames of photographs were taken, and later a selection was made, where the most representative or appealing images were printed to be ready for the exhibition. The idea was to capture these designs in the most representative form for a faithful archival process.

Several designs of *lekgapho* were also reproduced through paintings and engravings on ceramic tiles, which epitomise the functions of *lekgapho* in a traditional setup, suggesting a way to archive and preserve this traditional craft in support of Botswana cultural heritage. The paintings utilise cow dung and acrylic green paint for consistency and colouring, while the engravings, both on the paintings and ceramic tiles, also incorporate signs and symbols observed from traditional women whose craft is being archived (Figures 3.3 and 4.1).

This representation also suggests that the designs could, in the future, find themselves in modern architectural spaces as tiles laid on the floor or walls, similar to Mahlangu's geometric homestead wall paintings. Several designs of *lekgapho* were selected to represent a variety of designs from different communities. Setswana *lelapa*, or the courtyard, is also represented as a reminder of the cultural role that this courtyard symbolises. It is also a reminder of the role that women played in our society in maintaining cleanliness.



Figure 3.3: Lekgapho painting, cow dung and acrylic paint on canvas Tom Ketlogetswe (2025)

The courtyard is also a symbol of a strong identity associated with women in a given community (Figure 3.4). The exhibition seeks to reclaim our tradition and identity as a society. The construction of the courtyard involved using various materials, including manufactured boards, wood, nails, and modern paint. Appropriate colours were then carefully applied to the design until the desired outcome was achieved, representing the original *lekgapho* colours.



Figure 3.4: Part of the exhibition installation Tom Ketlogetswe (2025)

3.4 METHODOLOGY

This study made use of narrative inquiry and desktop research to collect the data, which informed this research. *Lekgapho* is still highly undocumented and therefore requires a visit to the few contemporary practitioners available across the country to observe and discuss their trade. The narrative inquiry is also suitable for this kind of study, as presented by Antwi and Kquofi (2015:54), which allows a kind of freedom in data collection procedure that is absent in other designs. According to Lima (2023), narrative inquiry puts the focus on storytelling. Lima (2023) further argues that this inquiry stems from the idea that stories are an integral part of human thinking and meaning-making, and furthermore, are critical to the construction of identity and self. In this study, narrative inquiry involved interviews using unstructured questionnaires, focus

group interviews, and various types of observation, ranging from unobtrusive measures to non-participant observation, to full participant observation.

Non-participant observation is a research method where an observer watches without interacting with the subjects. In this method, data was collected through notes and photographs as some participants demonstrated their craft. Photographs of the women making *lekgapho* were taken. Full participant observation can encompass various research approaches, including participating in activities as the researcher, conducting in-depth individual interviews and observations, and administering semi-structured interviews. In this study, only the women from Molepolole village making *lekgapho* were observed.

The study employed unstructured questions, allowing for a free-flowing conversation where follow-up questions and clarifications arose during the interview process. Unstructured interviews lead to further probing and elucidation. Unobtrusive observation is a research method in which a researcher does not interfere with the subject's activity, allowing for the collection of genuine and uncontaminated data. The participants' activity was not interfered with during the collection of data, and this minimised the influence of the research on their behaviour.

As the researcher, I was mindful to avoid overcontrolling the interview or controlling what the participants could say or not say. The participants were free to express their views, even beyond the confines of the question at hand. During the interviews with participants, I endeavoured to make them feel comfortable, so they would not be afraid or feel intimidated. I cultivated an atmosphere of respect towards the participants and *Botho*, a value that is a cornerstone of Setswana and African culture. This was important in my approach to extracting as much information as possible from the participants. Lima (2023) emphasises the participants' right to be part of the meaning construction process, which must be acknowledged and respected. According to Lima (2023), this raises issues of ethics, power, and positionality in social research. Participants were asked to share their stories about the craft,

including the challenges they faced and what the future holds for it. Pictures of the participants and their craft were recorded.

Many of the participants chronicled how they learnt *lekgapho* from their mothers or close relatives as children. They would assist their mothers or relatives in sourcing and ferrying the materials to their homestead, sieving, and helping with the preparation of the mixture, as well as assisting in making decorations alongside the elderly or at their playground as children. Participants acknowledged that they were unaware that what they were engaging in was art. To them, it was a way of life, a tradition that they had to continue as adults.

The respondents were concerned that they might be the last generation to make the traditional decorations as young people are not showing eagerness to continue in their footsteps. They said even though young people admire the decorations; there are only a few who want to participate. The participants believed that there is a lot that the government must do to preserve the culture, lest the nation lose its past and, in the process, become a lost nation. The participants revealed that despite the challenges of resources, they continue the craft because it is what identifies them as Batswana.

Desktop research was conducted using a combination of locally available sources and those found in other parts of Africa. The study relied heavily on the record of Sandy and Elinah Grant (1995), who wrote extensively about the cultures and customs of Batswana, especially the Bakgatla of Mochudi. The Grants published a book titled 'Decorated Homes in Botswana' in 1995, which was the equivalent of a bible to my study because it is the most comprehensive record that exists to date on *lekgapho*. The book covers various issues that were of great assistance to my research. Given that this book was written almost 15 years ago, a great deal has changed in the *lekgapho* activities across the country since then. Today, there are fewer traditional houses compared to when the Grants undertook the journey to document *lekgapho*. Of interest are their recommendations and observations, which indicate that very little has been done to preserve *lekgapho* nationally.

The desktop research also found other interesting documentation, such as that of Denbow and Thebe (2006). Their publication also shed some light, albeit limited, on the *lekgapho* practice, as it encompasses a wide range of cultural practices. Other sources were also considered, but they mainly mentioned *lekgapho* as a peripheral issue. The desktop research also considered other sources regionally and across the African continent to provide insight into the issues that this study raises and how other cultures dealt with issues relating to preserving an art form that is becoming extinct.

3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study was largely a narrative enquiry, meaning that participants were asked to answer questions to inform this study. Ethical considerations were therefore critical, and participants were informed about the importance of confidentiality and anonymity. The purpose of the study was fully articulated to the participants prior to their participation, and their consent was sought before the interviews were conducted. The interviews were conducted once permission had been granted by the interviewee and the participant had appended her signature on the consent form provided. Works photographed were solely used for the purposes of this study and nothing else, and this information also formed part of the consent form (see documents included under Appendices).

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF EMERGENT BOTSWANA HOMESTEAD PAINTINGS AND ENGRAVINGS

This chapter presents a discursive analysis and interpretation of this study's emergent knowledge, focusing on the informants' lived experiences told through their stories, Botswana National Museum's archival procedures, and the visual narratives presented in this study's exhibition, supported by a discourse analysis on homestead wall paintings and floor engravings' preservation strategies towards the sustainability of valuable cultural heritage. These preservation strategies are explained in relation to genealogical, archival and provenance procedures.

4.1 GENEALOGICAL DISCOURSE INTERPRETATION OF LEKGAPHO

The term *lekgapho* is a noun that refers to a pattern made solely with fingers, normally on the floor of the *lelapa* but occasionally on the wall of a house (Grant and Grant 1995:80). It is a name given after the action or process of 'go *kgapha*'. The practitioners concur with Grant and Grant (1995) that *lekgapho* is primarily performed on the floor (Figure 4.1). They add that *lekgapho* uses a mixture of cow dung and soil.



Figure 4.1: Photograph of Lekgapho designTom Ketlogetswe (2025)

According to practitioners, *lekgapho* must be made on a dry and smooth floor. The floor is prepared using wet soil, and then smoothed using a combination of bare hands and a smooth stone, a *thitelo*. First, the soil is processed to remove any impurities, such as stones and wild seeds that might endanger the practitioner's hands. The soil is then made wet to a consistency that allows the women to make it workable or to a workable plasticity. The mixture is then allowed to harden to a certain level before the smoothing stone, called a *thitelo*, is used. Once dry, the surface is ready for application of a viscous layer of cow dung and soil. The cow dung, mixed with a bit of soil, is then applied broadly to the surface, and patterns are created in the mixture using the artist's fingers.

Most of the women interviewed credit their talent to their mothers or close relatives whom they emulated at a very young age. They would, in the process of their relatives making the craft, offer to assist, while others started the craft as part of their playground routine. This offers an insight into the genealogy of *lekgapho*. For centuries, families, especially those of women, have been passing down skills and knowledge to their daughters. The young girl will learn the craft through practical activity. This learning continued until she left her parents' home through marriage, where she would continue to practice the craft.

The practice of passing the knowledge about making *lekgapho* from mothers to daughters dates back centuries. It has survived for many years due to this practice. Only recently, with the rise of modern architecture, has this practice begun to show signs of erosion and inevitable decline. Young girls are no longer interested in the craft because the modern houses where they stay do not require such decorations. Their mothers, who live in urban spaces, no longer practice the craft, and the youth have no one to look up to. Modern houses often utilise materials such as concrete and tiles, which require specialised skills typically acquired through formal training.

Lekgapho creates a particular subjectivity in each community or society. Practitioners of *lekgapho* confirm that they grew up and were born into an

environment that is predetermined, identifying them as a community or society. They grew up surrounded by colourful decorations of *lekgapho* on the floor and wall decorations. They celebrate and identify important activities such as weddings through *lekgapho*. Every day, these activities shaped their identities, as colourful spaces defined their homes. They shaped their reality, sense of belonging, and identity.

Lekgapho's ultimate sustainability is in doubt because of the lack of strategy by those in power. The women lament that those with resources do not do enough to ensure that *lekgapho* does not disappear. They point to projects in their communities where a lack of resources has led to their collapse. One woman pointed to a primary school where a *lekgapho* project, which was funded by the school authorities, has since collapsed.

At the national level, one project has rekindled interest in the art form: the National Arts celebrations, held annually for the past nine years. *Lekgapho* has been identified in this event as part of a preservation strategy by authorities. This is an isolated project with no uptake by stakeholders such as architects and other authorities. No buildings have been built bearing *lekgapho* decorations since independence. Efforts such as those at Kgosi Sechele Museum, where women annually decorate houses for public viewing and appreciation, are merely a spectacle that ends at the museum, with no interest or inspiration to replicate the programme elsewhere.

Participants in the study believe that *lekgapho* is destined to disappear if certain safeguards are not implemented. This belief is based on several reasons, including a lack of interest among the youth, government inaction, and inadequate cultural preservation strategies. They strongly cited the youth as a constituent that could take the art form forward but showed a lack of interest. They believe that anything that uses modern materials to imitate *lekgapho* is not acceptable. The respondents have a strong belief that *lekgapho* must be preserved for future generations because it identifies who we are as a nation. They say a nation without a past is a lost nation.

The women consider themselves as reservoirs of knowledge on *lekgapho* that their communities and the nation could tap into. This knowledge has been developed since childhood when they learnt to make *lekgapho* from their parents. Over time, they have succeeded in creating *lekgapho* designs and competed nationally at the highest level, where their skills and knowledge have been tested. This knowledge has shaped their individualities and status as important members of their respective communities. They are respected and honoured as reservoirs of knowledge that could otherwise be non-existent due to pressures from modernisation. Their communities hold them in high esteem.

Their behaviour and actions are shaped by the knowledge and skills they possess. One woman, when directing me to her place, said that everybody knew her in her neighbourhood as a *lekgapho* creator. This is a testament to her skill and knowledge, which have elevated her status among her neighbours. Another woman said her work is a source of pride for the community, as people come to admire it, taking pictures and selfies as a keepsake. Women in Molepolole take pride in making *lekgapho* at the Kgosi Sechele Museum every year without fail, as it is a call to cultural preservation. Even though creating *lekgapho* is hard work and requires resources, the women find it fulfilling to undertake what they believe is a worthy cause: preserving a culture that is on the brink of disappearing.

Study participants acknowledge that *lekgapho* is an art form that is disappearing. This is largely due to modern architecture. Adding to this problem is the indifference exhibited by the youth, the majority of whom live in houses made of modern materials. Modern architecture has not seen the need to integrate *lekgapho* in its designs. The few architectural designs that incorporate these designs do not inspire confidence that *lekgapho* will rise again to be a dominant factor in our modern architectural landscapes. The preservation of *lekgapho* is once again at the forefront of this study, as it was with Grant and Grant (1995) almost 30 years ago. Nothing has changed, and the decline is inevitable as fewer women see the need to undertake the art form. Grant and Grant (1995:121) succinctly summed it up by saying there

were fewer women practising *lekgapho* compared to five, ten or twenty years ago. Today, that number is even less than what Grant and Grant (1995) discovered more than 30 years ago.

Study participants say *lekgapho* is a highly labour-intensive undertaking, and today's youth scorn such activities. According to participants, the youth reduce themselves to admiring such artistry. Today's youth use soft skills in their daily routine, so labour-intensive chores such as *lekgapho* fall by the wayside. *Lekgapho* is not part of popular culture in Botswana. Western cultures have long dominated our societies, making it difficult for traditional cultures to thrive. The participants in the study believe that insufficient efforts are being made to preserve the art form. They say that national and community projects initiated to preserve the art form are no longer active, and some have ceased to exist. They are calling for initiatives that can excite the young generation to stand up and take charge of preserving their culture because they stand to lose a lot in future.

4.2 ARCHIVAL DISCOURSES ON THE PRESERVATION OF LEKGAPHO ART

Archival theory, or the science of archives, is the study and theory of building and curating archives, which are identifiable and collectable. It involves identifying, gathering, and recording information about cultural artefacts, including their origin, history, and significance, as well as capturing oral histories and preserving cultural practices and heritage. The collection of data on *lekgapho* during the study involved building and curating archives that could be identified and collected. The exercise involved identifying and recording information about *lekgapho*, a cultural artefact. The study attempted to record vital information on the origin, history and significance of *lekgapho*, with the aim of ultimately preserving a cultural practice and heritage that is facing extinction due to modern architecture.

The participants of the study welcomed the intervention as a means of preserving *lekgapho*. They believe that the centuries-old practice will eventually disappear when they are gone because the current generation is

not interested. They acknowledge the fact that *lekgapho* is on its deathbed. There are, however, some efforts to preserve the craft, for example through the museum in Molepolole village. The women showcase their craft to the public and many people who come to admire it at the museum every year, as a way of preserving the centuries-long culture. The museum also archives this activity every year through photographs.

Lekgapho is a traditional decorative art primarily made on the floor of *lelapa* in Botswana. It involves the use of soil and cow dung to adorn the floors and walls of homes (*lelapa*) in Botswana. *Lekgapho* is considered a dying art due to modern architecture, which utilises concrete popularised by the colonisers. *Lekgapho* practice and history are unknown to a wider audience due to limited archival interventions in Botswana.

There have been a few sources that have attempted to archive *lekgapho* over the years. Archival discourses and practices were in the form of books and scholarly articles. One such archive is a publication by Grant and Grant (1995) titled 'Decorated Homes in Botswana', which comprehensively covered the practice of *lekgapho* during that period. Another book is that of Denbow and Thebe (2006), which covers a wide range of cultural activities found in Botswana, and a small portion is dedicated to *lekgapho*. *Lekgapho* is also archived through other scholarly articles at the University of Botswana and in regional museums across the country.

A recent major archival activity occurred over the past 9 years, when the government of Botswana initiated a cultural reawakening through an annual exhibition. This exhibition celebrates various arts activities through exhibitions and performances. This activity appears to have rekindled interest in *lekgapho*, and practitioners singled it out during data collection as a saviour of their practice in recent years. The national exhibition has reached out to most traditional artists, such as practitioners of *lekgapho*, basket makers, and wood carvers, to revive local production after realising that some of these activities were in decline.

In some villages, there have been isolated efforts to preserve and archive *lekgapho* through the construction and decoration of traditional houses in some schools. One such case was described by a practitioner in Kanye, who stated that the project is now idle because the school lacks the necessary resources to continue. This is another form of archiving, a strong reference for the students and community residing near the school.

There are other efforts, such as Motshwarakgole's (2025) project, Ora Loapi, known as 'Flooding the Archives', which seeks to archive marginalised voices through artistic expression. The author argues that traditional historical accounts have predominantly favoured official perspectives and aims to rectify this by expanding the scope of historical documentation, envisioning an archive that encompasses oral histories, digital media, and the ephemeral aspects of daily life. To achieve this, media such as podcasts, social media videos, and exhibitions that capture the lived experiences of ordinary individuals are used.

In her article 'Flooding the Archive in Curatorial Research: Foundations and Emerging Practice in Botswana with Ora Loapi, she argues that it is important to incorporate previously marginalised voices into the national narrative through artistic expression (Motshwarakgole 2025). One can argue that some of the voices that have been marginalised are those of the women who practice *lekgapho*. Practitioners of *Lekgapho* who were interviewed are of the view that they do not have a platform where they can share their stories because their art is deemed as not important.

Motshwarakgole (2025) further argues that colonial archives privileged external accounts, and omitted indigenous narratives. The limited availability in archival records regarding *lekgapho* in Botswana is a case in point where indigenous narratives have been omitted.

Lekgapho can be archived through various media, including exhibitions, photography, digital media, and oral histories. 'Re a Kgapha', a recent exhibition of *lekgapho* by the researcher, is a combination of an exhibition

and a photographic record of artefacts that demonstrates how *lekgapho* can be reappropriated for archival purposes in a gallery space.

The advent of social media has provided unlimited opportunities through which traditional arts such as *lekgapho* can be archived for future generations. Motshwarakgole (2025) argues that digital platforms can enable layered, multimedia flooding of the archive with audio, video, and social media content. She argues that flooding such platforms is not ‘chaos’ but a possibility. There are numerous digital platforms that can be used, such as WhatsApp and Facebook, among others, to archive *lekgapho*. These platforms are widely used by the youth to access information. It is, however, worth noting that digital records are not entirely reliable as future repositories. This conundrum is highlighted by Cele et al. (2024), who note that digital assets are fragile and can be lost, corrupted, or rendered redundant, despite the use of backup and cloud storage. Although digital archiving offers endless opportunities, it is prone to loss and content corruption to suit a certain narrative. This is despite the backup that exists on these platforms.

Photographic records of *lekgapho* are currently available in books at museums across the country and at various ministries in Botswana that deal with culture. Photographs are timeless resources that enable their custodians to manipulate and share them through various social media platforms. Motshwarakgole (2025) argues that oral history can also be archived using mass recordings, podcasts, and multimedia exhibitions. Today’s available electronic gadgets make Motshwarakgole’s flooding strategy easily achievable. Individuals, even those residing in villages, are in possession of smartphones that can record high-quality and high-resolution voices and videos, making Motshwarakgole’s strategy achievable. These recordings can then be made available to the public through social media postings and preserved for future use.

Engaging communities and artists is crucial for celebrating and ensuring the continuation of *lekgapho* as an art form. This milestone has been achieved at the annual national exhibition, which celebrates Botswana’s culture and

heritage. The various events across the country that celebrate culture have also helped communities engage in *lekgapho* as a form of reawakening. These efforts have ensured that *lekgapho* is celebrated and they offer hope for its continuation. Cele et al. (2024:6) argue that celebrations and activities are a sure way to nurture pride, inspire a sense of civic duty, and promote social cohesion.

Traditional cultural expressions, such as *lekgapho*, pose complex intellectual property challenges, requiring a careful balance between protecting community interests and facilitating public access and appreciation. Botswana is a signatory to UNESCO's 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. Botswana's ratification of the 2005 Convention provides a legal framework to support its cultural and creative industries. That means public access and use of *lekgapho* designs is recognised by law. It is essential, therefore, to engage practitioners fully aware of the laws governing their creations. Permissions were sought from the practitioners to document their work and for the photographs to be used in an exhibition.

4.3 THE PROVENANCE OF LEKGAPHO ART AND ARCHIVES

Provenance refers to the origin or earliest known history of something. It includes existence and origin. The origin of *lekgapho* is largely unknown. Grant and Grant (1995) speculate that *lekgapho* must have been a long-standing tradition dating back centuries. There is no precise location of where *lekgapho* could have originated or its date of origin. The participants in the study also could not indicate its origin; it is safe to say that it is a culture they learnt from their mothers or close relatives. It is an old century tradition that has been handed down from generation to generation.

Despite centuries of passing *lekgapho* knowledge to successive generations, *lekgapho* practitioners had, for a very long time, no say in the history of their art. Nesmith (2007) raises concerns that the history of Aboriginal people is recorded through the lens of Western travellers who have no connection to their way of life and history. If there was any recording during the colonial and

post-colonial eras, it was through the lens of Western travellers who had no connection with their stories and history. Maybe this explains why so much was lost in the few recordings made on *lekgapho*.

Grant and Grant (1995) argue that Western travellers' comments about decorated homes in Botswana in the 1800s were 'sparse', 'conflicting' and 'dismissive', as they did not conform to what constituted art as seen through their definition. Most of these travellers never showed interest in engaging the locals about their art. They chose to draw conclusions about an art that they knew very little about, in the process dismissing its qualities and importance.

The tradition of *Lekgapho* as an art form is rooted in centuries of practice by women. Only women have been recorded as practitioners of *lekgapho*. This practice was then passed on to successive generations as a vital cultural tradition. Participants in the study emphasised the importance of the art form and stressed the need to preserve it for future generations. They were worried that once they are gone, the craft would disappear. They believed this would be disastrous for an art form that is the cornerstone of Batswana culture.

Provenance is tied to both archival and genealogy theories. Cowan (2018) states that provenance plays a crucial role in understanding records. If records cannot be traced to their origins and the processes by which they are created, we cannot fully understand them. The stories told by the participants in this study are important as these are recorded voices of women who practice *lekgapho*. They are told through their own voices and form an important record for future use. The record from this study can be traced back to the participants, and as such, it stands a better chance of being understood by those accessing it in the future.

Traditional archives have been shaped by colonial legacies, often failing to document the voices and practices of women and informal economies, such as in the case of *lekgapho*. Motshwarakgole (2025) acknowledges this problem in her project 'Flooding the Archive'. She argues that traditional historical accounts have predominantly favoured official perspectives, neglecting the

stories of women. She further posits that this could be rectified by expanding the scope of historical documentation to encompass oral histories, digital media, and the ephemeral aspects of daily life (Motshwarakgole 2025).

Lekgaphe falls neatly into the aspects that Motshwarakgole (2025) believes should be documented, including oral histories and the ephemeral aspects of daily life. *Lekgaphe*, due to the materials used, is a short-lived art form that is quickly eroded by weather conditions, such as rain, and human activity. Digital archiving and photography must be constantly used to assist in archiving it for future generations. An archive that encompasses oral histories is essential for *lekgaphe* to be able to continue to exist in future centuries.

The archival aspect is a modern response to the decline of the art form and the colonial silences within traditional archives. Current initiatives, including this study, are celebrating *lekgaphe* by documenting it before it disappears completely. The exhibition 'Re a Kgapha' is part of this study that has recorded *lekgaphe* through photography and oral histories. The photographs form an important archive to be used by future generations in the face of declining practice of *lekgaphe*.

Motshwarakgole (2025) views archives as more than a mere repository of the past, but as a space for critical discourse, imaginative exploration, and future-oriented thinking. *Lekgaphe* should be preserved for future dialogues and used as a repository for cultivating critical thinking. These repositories, such as the one in this study, will ensure that future dialogues are founded on records that emanate from trustworthy sources.

Eastwood (1994:127) argues that archives are authentic only when they are created with the need to act through them in mind and when they are preserved and maintained as faithful witnesses of fact and act by the creator and their legitimate successors. This study aims to create a record that future generations will see as a call to action. The study serves as a faithful witness to the facts and will be used by future generations.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter begins with an overview of the study by briefly restating the aims and research questions. It looks at how each research aim was addressed in the study. The chapter then discusses the key findings of the study. The chapter explores the reinterpretation of *lekgapho* in contemporary Batswana art practice. It discusses how *lekgapho* has found its way into contemporary art practice in Botswana. The chapter also delves into how *lekgapho* has contributed to knowledge and cultural heritage. The chapter further examines methodological, logistical, or cultural limitations encountered during fieldwork and it reflects on areas where future research might strengthen or extend these findings. The chapter concludes with recommendations for the preservation of *lekgapho*, as well as suggestions for artists and designers, and proposes possibilities for future research.

5.1 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The study aims to document the creative processes, planning methods, and cultural contexts of women who continue to practice *lekgapho*; to explore the emotional, symbolic, and cultural significance of *lekgapho* for its practitioners and their communities; to critically assess whether *lekgapho* meets the criteria to be recognised and classified as a legitimate art form; and to evaluate the cultural and artistic value of *lekgapho* as a heritage craft worthy of archiving and preserving for future generations.

The study observed and asked the practitioners about their creative processes and planning when undertaking *lekgapho*. During the interviews, emotional, symbolic and cultural significance were explored. The legitimacy of *lekgapho* as an art form was established through interviews, which highlighted its cultural recognition, the originality of the practitioners, the skill of the artists, and the relationship with viewers. The interviews with practitioners also aimed to assess the cultural and artistic value of *lekgapho* as a heritage worthy of archiving and preservation for future generations.

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- How do current practitioners of *lekgapho* conceptualise, plan, and execute their designs?
- What feelings, meanings, and cultural values do women practitioners associate with *lekgapho*?
- In what ways does *lekgapho* reflect artistic principles, cultural narratives, and aesthetic values that justify its classification as an art form?
- What are the potential benefits and challenges of archiving *lekgapho* for cultural preservation and intergenerational transmission?

The study discovered that practitioners of *lekgapho* conceptualise, plan, and execute their designs largely through decades of stored memories of practice and talent. Many practitioners expressed feelings of joy, fulfilment and satisfaction when undertaking *lekgapho* designs. To them, *lekgapho* dates back centuries, when women undertook the craft to beautify their homes and prepare them for important celebrations, such as weddings. The practitioners attach a sense of identity to *lekgapho* as a cultural imperative. *Lekgapho* is what identifies them as a community or society in which they reside.

In the study, *lekgapho* designs are observed to reflect artistic principles, including the creative use of art elements such as line, shape, and texture, in creating a visually successful composition that generates movement, rhythm, balance, and emphasis. *Lekgapho* designs tell stories of identity and beliefs. *Lekgapho* has been passed down through generations, resulting in a shared understanding of its heritage. *Lekgapho* is an aesthetically appealing art form that justifies its status as an art form. The study shows that archiving *lekgapho* has potential benefits in various areas, including architecture, design, fashion, and other fields. The main challenges to preserving *lekgapho* include the adoption of a Western culture and a lack of interest among young Batswana.

5.2 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The creative processes and planning of *lekgapho* by practitioners are mainly through observations and interviews. This is due to many years of practice. It is also because their parents taught them that way. Practitioners do not sketch

their designs or draw them beforehand. Most of the designs are a reflection of a culture that has been passed down through generations. They have created these designs countless times and have memorised them.

The practitioners of *lekgapho* express a deep love for their creations. Their creations bring them joy and pride within their families and communities. The fulfilment of undertaking *lekgapho* is visible in each practitioner's physical expressions. The practitioners identified some of their designs with names such as horseshoe, *dikobi*, *moroto wa makaba* (urine of castrated male cows that were used during ploughing season) and *lekgapho la Sekgatla* (*lekgapho* design attributed to Bakgatla tribe). The practitioners could not attach any meaning to their designs, which suggests that, as Grant and Grant (1995) argued, this meaning may have been lost over the years. The horseshoe is attributed to the marking left by a horse on the ground. The design of urine left by castrated bulls can be attributed to the ploughing season, where bulls were used to till the land, which brought food to the family.

The practitioners of *lekgapho* spoke glowingly about their designs. They said communities appreciate the designs as aesthetically pleasing. The practitioners are not formally schooled in principles of design. However, their designs adhere to principles of design, including rhythm, colour, line, shape, repetition, texture, and movement. *Lekgapho* remains an important element of cultural heritage that Batswana can identify with. The significance of its continued practice cannot be underestimated. The practitioners expressed concern that this heritage will disappear once they are gone. To them, they are the last defence of a culture that is fast fading before our eyes. Without *lekgapho*, the practitioners warn that we will have lost our souls as a nation.

5.3 REINTERPRETATION OF LEKGAPHO IN CONTEMPORARY ART CONTEXTS

Lekgapho is a traditional art of decorating homes with cow dung and mud. Contemporary artists and designers have recently been recontextualising *lekgapho* from its original domestic and functional context to modern artistic expression. This recontextualisation process, however, has been slow and

modest. This reinterpretation means that the traditional art form can be analysed for its aesthetic, symbolic and cultural significance.

Artists such as Ann Gollifer use locally available materials, including soils and pigments, to create paintings on canvas. The late Rantefe Mothebe's paintings and Oodi Weaver's tapestry use patterns from *lekgapho* in their works. During the 50th anniversary celebrations, the government of Botswana engaged artists in Gaborone to decorate public spaces with designs that included *lekgapho* motifs. *Lekgapho* characteristic geometric and organic patterns were transferred to concrete surfaces using modern paints. Other artists translate *lekgapho* patterns and significance into new forms and spaces. Examples are the ceramics and pottery makers at Pelegano and Thamaga potteries. Most of the patterns adopted from *lekgapho* are still visible in their artefacts.

Designers also integrate *lekgapho* patterns into their work as a strong symbol of identity. These patterns are mostly visible and articulated in logos and some architectural designs of buildings. Botswana Post has also, in the past, commemorated the art form with special stamps. These are examples that illustrate the potential *lekgapho* possesses in inspiring contemporary creative works, including modern design and artistic expressions.

The recent exhibition by the researcher, 'Re a Kgapha', was an attempt to recontextualise *lekgapho* into a gallery space. This recontextualisation gave viewers a new perspective on reimagining *lekgapho*, moving it away from its traditional setting to a modern space, which excited them. This elevation recognises the traditional craft as a sophisticated form of visual art. Many viewers said they would never have imagined *lekgapho* in a gallery space. Some said the exhibition highlighted the potential that *lekgapho* may offer to our modern way of life.

5.4 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

This study is a significant contribution to Botswana's cultural heritage and knowledge development. *Lekgaplo* advances women's creative practices in Botswana by empowering them to build their communities and share their skills. This recognition of the role played by women reasserts *lekgaplo*'s cultural value in modern times. It recognises their contributions as designers and architects of their living spaces. These highlight the role of Botswana women as artistic designers who ensured that their homes were clean and hospitable.

The skills and knowledge of creating *lekgaplo* are passed down from older to younger generations of women. This ensures the art form's survival and establishes a strong bond between women through shared practice. This study helps catalogue decorative patterns as cultural symbols that reflect traditional values and insights. Archiving these practices and motifs helps preserve them for future generations and educational purposes.

Lekgaplo is recognised in Botswana as an intangible cultural heritage. This means that it is a nationally recognised art form that authorities are working to preserve. Various organisations also celebrate and preserve this dying art form, which is under threat from modernisation. More artists and designers are turning to traditional practices such as *lekgaplo* for inspiration.

Despite concerns that *lekgaplo* is a dying art form, there has been a renewed interest in documenting and celebrating its practitioners, as seen in annual national art competitions. These preservation efforts are encouraging, and they highlight the important creative contributions of Botswana women. Public exhibitions, such as 'Re a Kgapha' and many other projects acknowledge the creators of *lekgaplo* and give their art the much-needed visibility.

5.5 CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS ENCOUNTERED

Finding *lekgaplo* practitioners was a challenging endeavour. Most practitioners are elderly, and adopting modern technology presents its own challenges. One had to rely on institutions such as government offices, which

in most cases were not very helpful. Their records provided very little assistance in locating *lekgapho* practitioners nationwide. Proper records need to be made available with all the necessary information such as names, telephone numbers, plot numbers, village name and *kgotla*.

The art itself is limited in terms of its life span. It is easily damaged or eroded by weather elements such as rain and human contact. Locating practitioners is therefore limited to a certain time frame every year. The art of *lekgapho* is typically undertaken during the winter period, when the rains have stopped. It is also during this time that the women have completed farming chores and have ample time to decorate their houses. This poses a challenge in locating them within this time frame and finding artworks that can be photographed.

Another challenge was asking the practitioners to do the artworks for observation and recording. Most complained about not having the necessary materials to complete the work at short notice. The soil is sourced from locations far away from where the practitioners reside, which requires transportation.

Culturally, a stranger in one's home is viewed with suspicion. The researcher had to walk into the participants' compound and source information. I had to ask permission through the phone to visit their homes and tread carefully when entering. In most cases, *lekgapho* expertise resides with specific elders in each community, which requires the researcher to gain their trust to access their knowledge. *Lekgapho* has been passed down from one generation to the next.

This might have led to some of the symbolic meanings of the designs being lost over centuries of practice. Most practitioners could not explain the symbolic meanings of their designs, except to say that this was what they were taught by their mothers. This is a concerning issue that requires further research by anthropologists to unearth the symbolic meanings of *lekgapho*.

Documenting a practice such as *lekgapho*, that is often unwritten or unpublished, can be a nightmare. The participants wanted to understand how the data would be used and whether it would be shared with them at a later stage. The practitioners invariably complained about the cost of doing *lekgapho* and yearned for some kind of reward to keep them going. This request made the researcher uneasy as he had no immediate remedy for the participants.

Lekgapho is a traditional heritage whose findings may have high internal validity for a particular community but low external validity for other cultural settings in Africa. Relying on interpretations of *lekgapho* may not fully capture the diversity of meaning within the community, affecting construct validity. The study risks overgeneralization and observer bias if qualitative interviews or observational methods were limited to specific groups or individuals.

5.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study revealed that the traditional art of decorating the floors and walls of homes holds deep cultural significance for Botswana, although it is a dying art form. The research further confirmed that *lekgapho* is traditionally the domain of women. The women are the architects, builders and artistic designers of the family house.

The beautiful designs are a symbol of pride, care, and a connection to tradition that should be preserved for generations to come. The designs are what identify us as Batswana. Without these designs, we are a lost nation without a soul.

Lekgapho is a profound and legitimate form of artistic and cultural expression. It showcases the creativity, aesthetic values, and identity of the Batswana women. *Lekgapho* is steeped in a tradition that has been in existence for generations and is practised by Batswana women who serve as designers of the family home. *Lekgapho* motifs are a visual language with variations of the designs that exist across different regions and ethnic groups in Botswana. The designs reflect unique interpretations of symbolic meanings amongst different

communities. The annual practice of refreshing these decorations is a testament to more than mere aesthetics. They send a strong message of pride and care.

The artistic and cultural legitimacy of *lekgapho* is continuously affirmed through exhibits celebrating the art form, modern stamp designs featuring its motifs, and recognition as an intangible cultural heritage. This demonstrates its enduring relevance and its valued place in Botswana's national identity. It is a powerful reminder that true art stems from a culture's lived experience and its people. It is a testament to the sophistication of indigenous knowledge systems and a vibrant legacy that Botswana proudly preserves and celebrates.

5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CULTURAL PRESERVATION

Lekgapho has proven its enduring relevance and its value in Botswana's identity. Its preservation is therefore necessary for future generations. The Gurunsi people of Ghana, who are known for their decorative houses, made the decision to continue utilising their heritage and preserving their culture for all generations to come (Bischof 2013:6). It is therefore imperative that *lekgapho* patterns, like other decorative elements in the continent, be preserved to maintain the art form.

Community leaders, artists, and families who are knowledgeable in *lekgapho* should be interviewed for preservation purposes. Records of *lekgapho* should be made through community storytelling to further preserve the designs. Writers and storytellers should be encouraged to interpret and represent the patterns in other media, such as art books and digital media, which can preserve the designs in durable formats.

Local museums, national museums, heritage institutions, cultural bodies, and community spaces, such as schools and the *kgotla*, should be encouraged to house and display *lekgapho* archival materials, ensuring accessibility to local communities. Archiving could be done through various media, such as digital media that include photographs and videos. One such initiative is that of Motshwarakgole (2025) on 'Flooding the Archive', where digital media and oral

histories are considered avenues for archiving cultural practices that have been marginalised for a long time. Videos could be used to document the process of their creation and the natural environment in which *lekgapho* exists. 3D modelling can be used to create three-dimensional models that capture the tactile, sculpted quality of clay designs. These digital archives can be made accessible online to increase public access. Collaboration with heritage institutions, museums, and cultural bodies should be encouraged to ensure that *lekgapho* preservation is achieved at local, regional and national levels.

5.8 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS AND DESIGNERS

Lekgapho is a rich and legitimate art form that can provide inspiration for contemporary work. Its inspiration can strengthen cultural identity and preserve heritage for future generations. To provide inspiration for contemporary designers and artists, there should be deliberate programmes to instil the significance of *lekgapho* for genuine appreciation. Artists and designers should have access to digital archives of *lekgapho* through online platforms. Workshops should be sponsored to teach young artists and designers about *lekgapho* history, its techniques, and deep cultural roots. *Lekgapho* should be incorporated into all levels of curricula from primary to tertiary.

For a respectful and ethical integration, modern designers and brands should build partnerships that empower the traditional artists and their communities. They can achieve this through entering into transparent agreements with *lekgapho* artists, ensuring fair compensation and proper recognition. New products, such as textiles, pottery, or home goods that directly benefit the traditional craftspeople can be achieved through programmes that directly connect modern designers with *lekgapho* artisans for paid collaborations.

Lekgapho geometric motifs, earthy colour palettes and textural qualities can be explored by contemporary artists who use paints and digital art. *Lekgapho* designs can be used to beautify modern spaces by commissioning urban artists to create public murals. Like the San artists in Ghanzi, who have

converted their rock painting into canvases, *lekgapho* could inspire abstract expressionism through its rhythmic and finger drawn patterns.

In fashion design, *Lekgapho* patterns can be translated into distinctive fabric prints for clothing and accessories. Product designers can incorporate *lekgapho* designs into home decor through textiles such as cushions, rugs, wallpaper, and ceramics. 'Re a Kgapha' exhibition is a good example of how *lekgapho* designs can be incorporated into ceramic tiles. Architects can create modern buildings that preserve *lekgapho* heritage while addressing contemporary needs. Graphic designers can adapt the designs of *lekgapho* into packaging, illustrations, and many other areas of design. Botswana Post has already led the way by issuing stamps with *lekgapho* designs in the past.

5.9 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

More in-depth, comparative and systematic research is required, comparing *lekgapho* to other indigenous decorative arts locally and regionally. This recommendation is even more urgent than ever before, as there are fewer practitioners of this craft when compared to 1995, when Grant and Grant (1995) undertook a countrywide study. Studies on *lekgapho* have documented it in isolation, without any comparisons to other decorative arts locally and in the region. These studies have provided limited knowledge on possible shared motifs, techniques and cultural influences with other indigenous decorations in the region.

Interdisciplinary studies combining the visual arts, anthropology, and heritage studies are recommended for future research on *lekgapho*. Such studies could explore how visual images and practices relate to human societies, cultural identity, and the preservation of the past. Visual arts provide the necessary framework for analysing *lekgapho* as an art form. They offer insight into *lekgapho* designs, the techniques used, as well as the use of colour, aesthetic principles, and creative processes.

Anthropologists could help to explain the gender dynamics of *lekgapho*, the social significance, and the symbolic meanings associated with the designs.

Furthermore, Anthropologists could bridge the gap between *lekgapho* and lived human experiences and beliefs. Heritage studies have an important role to play in the preservation of *lekgapho* as a form of cultural heritage, by providing tools for documentation, archive development, and engaging with relevant institutions, such as museums, to ensure the practice is recognised and sustained for future generations. Heritage studies could examine the challenges that *lekgapho* faces as a consequence of modernisation and its impact on cultural policies. Heritage studies could also provide valuable insights into strategies for transmitting knowledge to future generations. By combining these fields, a holistic comprehension of *lekgapho* can be realised and a comprehensive understanding and preservation of *lekgapho* can be attained.

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APPENDICES

ETHICAL CERTIFICATE



COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

06 March 2025

Dear Mr Tom Ketlogetswe

NHREC Registration # :
Rec-240816-052
CREC Reference # :
18029558_CRECHS_2025

Decision:
**Ethics Approval from 06 March 2025
to 05 March 2026**

Researcher(s): Name: Mr. T. Ketlogetswe
Contact details: 18029558@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Supervisor(s): Name: Prof. N. M. Mpako
Contact details: penelope.mpako@gmail.com

**Title: A VISUAL RECONTEXTUALISATION OF LEKGAPHO PATTERNS WITHIN
BATSWANA CONTEMPORARY ART PRACTICE**

Degree Purpose: Masters

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Unisa College of Human Science Ethics Committee. Ethics approval is granted for one year.

The **low-risk application** was reviewed by the College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the College Ethics Review Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the



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confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.

5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data require additional ethics clearance.
7. No fieldwork activities may continue after the expiry date (**05 March 2026**). Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

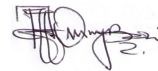
*The reference number **18029558_CREC_CHS_2025** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Yours sincerely,

Signature:



Prof. KB Khan
CHS Research Ethics Committee Chairperson
Email: khankb@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (012) 429 8210



Signature: PP

Prof ZZ Nkosi
Exécutive Dean: CHS
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PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

8th March, 2025.

Title: **A VISUAL RECONTEXTUALISATION OF LEKGAPHO PATTERNS
WITHIN BATSWANA CONTEMPORARY ART PRACTICE**

Dear Prospective Participant

My name is Tom Ketlogetswe and I am doing research with Prof. N. P. Mpako, a professor, in the Department of Art History, Visual Arts and Musicology towards a Master in Visual in Art at the University of South Africa. This research is self-financed since it forms part of the academic requirement to the award of Master in Visual Art. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled **“A VISUAL RECONTEXTUALISATION OF LEKGAPHO PATTERNS
WITHIN BATSWANA CONTEMPORARY ART PRACTICE”**.

The purpose of the study is to reignite interest in the almost extinct lekgapho as an art form. It has been shown in various literature that lekgapho was overlooked by Western travellers, whose view was that it did not fit the definition of art. The study is expected to answer the question on the worthiness of the craft to be archived for future generations. The study is significant as it seeks to place lekgapho at par with other art forms in Botswana, the region, and the world. This study is not the first of its kind in Botswana. What the study seeks to do is to give a voice to the art form.

You have been selected based on the commitment and zeal you have shown towards your artform despite its challenges. I will be honoured to learn from your wealth of experience and practice in the creative art industry to help in the generation and dissemination of knowledge, which has the potential to have a sound and trustworthy archive for new and future generations.

With your prior consent, you would be interviewed on your practice as an artist in Botswana. The interview sessions would be prior arranged at your convenience that is, the time and venue for the conduct of the interview would

be negotiated not to interfere in your busy schedules and private life. The interview sessions would be audio taped. Additionally, practical demonstrations and art works upon your approval would be videotaped or photographed. I would schedule an appointment with you and spend a few days with you during the period of your execution of art work. The interview sessions would centre on your knowledge of lekgapho, your reaction to the extinction of lekgapho, how the artform can be preserved, and practice as an artist.

Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. However, given your depth of knowledge in lekgapho it is my expectation that you would willingly consent to partake in this study to advance the frontiers of knowledge and contribute to the promotion and sustenance of lekgapho heritage.

The findings of this study will be published in journals to be accessed by researchers all over the world. By partaking in this study your practice as an artist will invariably receive worldwide publicity. You will also be afforded the opportunity to reflect on your practice which may enhance creativity and innovations. With the exception of time which must necessarily be expense for the conduct of the interview session and the discomfort for being put under the spotlight, there are no negative consequence for partaking in this study.

All information obtained from you would be very confidential and used only for academic purposes. Your personal identity would be known to only me. Your name would not be recorded anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the information you give me.

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research

Ethics Review and approval if applicable. After five years all hard copies of transcriptions would be shredded and disposed of. Electronic copies saved on my personal computer would be permanently deleted using the eraser app.

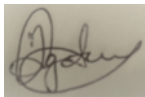
If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Tom Ketlogetswe on +267 75577001 or tomketlogetswe@gmail.com.

Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact Prof N. P. Mpako at: Penelope.mpako@gmail.com.

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Prof N. P. Mpako. Telephone number 012 4296391.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Thank you.

A small, square, light-colored image containing a handwritten signature in dark ink. The signature is cursive and appears to read 'Tom Ketlogetswe'.

Tom Ketlogetswe

THE COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES

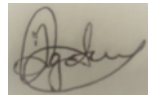
RESEARCHER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Hereby, I (Tom Ketlogetswe), ID number (465410600), in my personal capacity as a researcher, acknowledge that I am aware of and familiar with the stipulations and contents of the

- Unisa Research Policy
- Unisa Ethics Policy
- Unisa IP Policy
- SOPs on ethical clearance risk assessment

And that I shall conform to and abide by these policy requirements

SIGNED:



Date: 10th March, 2025.

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Guide for interviewing lekgapho artists in Botswana

1. Describe your childhood experiences as regards lekgapho?
2. How would you classify lekgapho as an art form?
3. What is your reaction to the extinction of lekgapho as an art form?
4. What measures do you think should be taken at the community and national levels to preserve the art form?
5. Have measures been taken this far enough to ensure that future generations can appreciate lekgapho?
6. How do community members, especially the new generation, view your art?
7. What inspires you to produce your art?
8. Where else do you practice your art apart from your homestead?

Thank you for your time and insight

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the interview session.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname..... (please print)

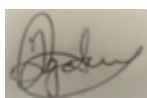
Participant

Signature.....Date.....

Researcher's Name & Surname

TOM KETLOGETSWE

Researcher's signature



Date 10th March, 2023.