Create Africa South & Phansi Museum

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Mission

Create Africa South (CAS) strives to encourage community engagement through creative acts of self-expression produced by everyday South Africans and present them to the broader public. Their Amazwi Abesifazane (“Voices of Women”) project, founded in 2000, continues to provide narrative and cloth production workshops for marginalized women within their communities. The workshops encourage women to build relationships and affinity with each other through sharing stories, craft production skills, and enrichment activities that happen over the course of five days. In the last ten years, CAS has sponsored over 2,500 women to produce "memory cloths" that complement and challenge South Africa's recorded accounts of Apartheid and the transition to democracy.

The Phansi Museum acquires, preserves, and displays collections of South African art, crafts, and artifacts with an understanding of the vitality of traditional and ethnic cultures that continue today. Their extensive holdings include clothing, beadwork, and household items, as well as an extensive photographic collection of cultural events they have not yet found space or occasion to exhibit. At base, both of these organizations seek to encourage the understanding and appreciation of the cultural contributions everyday South Africans produce for society.

Opportunities

From inception, CAS and Phansi have operated with scarce resources to fund the staff and projects that fulfill their basic mission (whether they are cloth production workshops or exhibition events). Outside of the daily struggle to secure funding for basic operations, the two organizations envision an online database project that will address two of their identified crucial needs to ensure their "futurity": (1) to share their collections of art and cultural items in a public digital form, and (2) to create an online site that can function as an important international marketing and fundraising text. While Durban is the third most populous city in South Africa, it remains "off the map" as a global city and its intellectual and cultural contributions are often glossed over by researchers and tourists alike. CAS and Phansi museum moved into the same physical building in March 2009, joining the strength of their collections, but they remain offline and only available for physical viewing in spatially and temporally limited amounts (a selected gallery of CAS cloths can be found here: http://www.cas.org.za/gallery/gallery.asp). The two organizations genuinely want to share their collections with the world, but need to gauge
international interest in their collections and create an archival database that would be used for
educational purposes that meets those interests and international research standards.

Projects
Primary Project Objectives:
1) Design a website for CAS and Phansi's collaboration intended for an international, English-speaking audience. This site should include the design of a "virtual" exhibition gallery space for text and image objects that can be easily updated by CAS and Phansi staff who describe themselves as program "end-users."

2) Design a searchable database structure for the website that can accommodate the different physical items found in the CAS and Phansi collections and their future inclusion (about 8,000 discrete entries and growing).

3) Advise and problem-solve with CAS and Phansi about importing or entering data from their two databases (one in a modified version of Access and the other in Filemaker Pro) and develop future data entry protocol for CAS and Phansi staff in Durban to follow for new items added.