CCAC interview with Adrian Kohler on 30/05/2025, In person interview - Transcript (English)

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Interviewer name (and acronym): Bahlakoana Lesemane (**BL**)

Interviewee name (and acronym): Adrian Kohler (**AK**)

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START OF INTERVIEW

BL: This is a CCAC artist interview conducted by Bahlakoana Lesemane with artist and puppeteer Adrian Kohler at his residence in Kalk Bay on 30 May 2025. The focus of this interview is the conservation of the puppet *Dogs of War*, with particular attention to various aspects of the artwork, its conservation project, and its overall history. The interview will also explore, to some extent, the broader tradition of puppeteering.

We will proceed directly with the interview. Having been on-site since Tuesday, we will begin with the questions without further introductions.

As a co-founder and artistic director, what were the foundational ideas and driving forces behind establishing Handspring Puppet Company, and how did those early aspirations evolve?

AK: We began in 1981 with four friends from Michaelis School of Art. Basil Jones and I had been living in Botswana for some time, but we always dreamt of starting a professional puppet company, and we met with Jill Joubert and Jon Weinberg to discuss this. We corresponded with each other, us in Gaborone and them in Cape Town, about how we would structure our company. It took a year of negotiating. In January of 1981, we bought a truck, found a studio in downtown Cape Town, pooled our savings, and booked our first show. For five years, we toured around the schools of Southern Africa, Swaziland, Lesotho, Botswana, and Namibia, with children's shows, but we always dreamt of performing for an adult audience with more serious productions.

And so, in 1985, we made our first show for adults. It was unheard of then to perform for adults with puppets in South Africa, and we thought it would either be a disaster or we might escape with our skin intact. In fact, it became a big hit at the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown. We performed it at the Baxter Theatre, at the Wits University Downstairs Theatre, and finally took it to an international puppet festival in France.

The play itself was called Episodes of an Easter Rising, about two white women on a remote farm in eastern Mpumalanga. A policeman arrives to say he is looking for a wounded activist. The women respond by saying, “Yes, if we see him, we will let you know.” But actually, when he leaves, they go into the house where they are looking after this man. So they have joined the struggle, perhaps because they have been exiled from the town, because they love each other, so they understand oppression.

This production opened doors for us. It had not been an embarrassment; rather, in a way, a triumph, because it became the channel through which we moved out of children's theatre into the theatre world of Johannesburg. The Market Theatre became our main home from then on.

William Kentridge, with whom we worked for 10 years on six different productions, and during that time, we gained an international audience. If you make a play in South Africa and get a chance to perform it overseas, it extends your marketplace.

Eventually, those relationships led to us building the show War Horse with the Royal National Theatre in London, which became an international success. It has been seen by over 8 million people.

Beyond performing in that arena, we have also had an outreach side to our work. We have worked with communities, first in Botswana, then in the theatre-for-development situation in South Africa. Finally, we pledged a seven-year commitment to a small community in the township of Barrydale in the Little Karoo, where annually there is a parade and production performed by a wonderful community arts project called Net Vir Pret.

This festival is still ongoing, but we are no longer involved.

Our most recent productions have been an adaptation of John Coetzee's Life & Times of Michael K, and our large little girl called Little Amal. She is a refugee from Syria who has walked through Europe, through America, and through Mexico to highlight the plight of children who have had to abandon their homes due to conflict or climate change. So that's a brief summary of what we have done for the last 44 years.

BL: Well, I'm a good deal younger than 44 myself, but thank you. Let's move on to the second question.

In your own words, how would you define a puppet?

AK: Well, a puppet is an inanimate object, in a sense, a dead object. The puppeteer gives life to this object, using the movement built into the puppet by the puppet maker. The power of the puppet emerges when an audience observes it struggling to live. So the work of the puppet, if you like, is to live.

In a sense, it flatters the audience. It says, "You do not have to struggle to live, but I do because I'm dead." And it is this struggle which the audience can recognize as something that, in a way, we all struggle with, making our lives meaningful. The puppet has this built in as its existential need. The puppet struggles to live, and the actor, because they remain alive, struggles to die on the stage.

BL: Wow! I've never looked at it that way. Something to think about… Okay:

Could you provide a brief history of *Dogs of War*, including its conceptualisation and creation?

AK: Sure, it was the third production we were embarking on with Kentridge c. 1997, we wanted to do a version of Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot with puppets, because we wanted to create a piece about waiting: waiting for restitution, waiting in the Southern African context. But the people who guard Samuel Beckett's work would not agree to having it done with puppets.

So we started to look around: where are people waiting? South Africa had already got its constitution by then, but there were still people waiting for restitution for the crimes of the previous regime. And then, of course, the Truth Commission began. We realized, well, here is a situation where stories waiting to be told are right on our doorstep and in the news every day. Every week on TV there was a summary, and it continued for a whole year.

So we took an absurdist European play called *Ubu Roi*, which is about a crazy man who gains political power and becomes king through all sorts of evil deeds. And he has a wife who supports him, kills, and

maims everybody on his journey to the top. Okay, so he's an absurd character. We took that character and his wife and made him a member of the Special Branch in South Africa, who has heard that there's a commission coming to get him for all the work he did for the old regime.

At night, he goes out with his dogs, the "Dogs of War". You see, his wife thinks he's going out to have affairs with other women, but in fact, he's going out to kill the people he needs to kill. And the dogs are his "Dogs of War". In Greek myths, there is a three-headed dog called Cerberus who stands at the gates to the underworld, preventing anyone from escaping. Initially, we were going to have three whole dogs, but it became technically difficult because many legs and tails would need to be manipulated, so we made just the heads on long necks, each manipulated by a puppeteer and all attached to the suitcase that Ubu was carrying.

Now the suitcase, you may know the story of the suitcase already, but in the play, it is his archive. Whenever he gets documents, videotapes, and recordings, he stuffs them into the suitcase, which is also the 'body' of the dogs.

BL: Hmm! So, what about the making? I think I read somewhere that you had come up with a version of the dog, but it wasn't vicious enough?

AK: Oh yes, the first dog was quite abstract; it was too small, the body was about 40 centimeters long. Its head was made out of saws. It had quite vicious-looking teeth. In principle, they could be dangerous, but from a distance, they were too small. We needed something more spectacular. Finally, much bigger heads were made. Each had a puppeteer to move it, who was trained by a singing teacher to sing like a barbershop quartet. We sang the "Dogs of War" song; they became like a choir.

BL: It's only recently, I think last month, that I realized these dogs are of different breeds, three kinds of different breeds. Was there any influence on that choice?

AK: One is a pit bull. Another is a combination of a Doberman and a pit bull. The one with a thin snout is like a Rottweiler. So they're all vicious dogs, used by the military or by the police to control crime

BL: Oh, cool!

Did you play a direct role in the donation of *Dogs of War* to the Constitutional Court Art Collection (CCAC)? Why was this work chosen for donation over the other pieces—*The Vulture on its Perch* and *Niles; the Crocodile Handbag*?

AK: I think Judge Albie Sachs had seen the play, but we had a neighbor in Kensington, Johannesburg. Her name was Pritika Singh, and she did our accounting. She was an auditor and had worked in the Constitutional Court with Albie, and she said to him, "You know the *Dogs of War* from *Ubu and the Truth Commission*, don't you think they belong in the Constitutional Court building? The body of the Cerberus puppet is made from Sidney Kentridge's briefcase given to him by Bram Fischer." We agreed with her! And so they started the process. They asked us whether we were happy. We were very honored, actually, that the Constitutional Court wanted one of our puppets. We think it was because of the historical connection to the suitcase that it seemed like an appropriate acquisition.

BL: Absolutely. Over time, its significance has only grown, particularly when considered in relation to the play's message and the TRC itself. It has become an integral part of the Constitutional Court's narrative.

Please discuss *The Vulture on its Perch* and *Niles; The Crocodile Handbag*; their current condition, where they are located, and how they came to be in those locations?

AK: Okay, *The Crocodile Handbag* is here with us, and so is *The Vulture*. Somewhere in storage, it came back after the last performance of *Ubu and the Truth Commission*, which I'm not sure, but it could have been as much as 10 years ago. The last performance was in Johannesburg at the Market Theatre.

The Crocodile also incorporated a bag, another historical bag, like Sidney Kentridge's briefcase in *Dogs of War*. The handbag, as the body of the crocodile, had been the kit bag of Basil Jones's late father. Basil, a founder of Handspring and my partner, had used it as part of his father's kit in the Second World War in North Africa.

So both of these items of luggage were precious to their owners. William said to Basil, "If you donate that bag to the show, I will donate my father's suitcase."

That's how they were brought into the show. And, of course, they've been cut and transformed to be very much part of the puppets. In that sense, they can no longer be put back into being just luggage. But we are very happy that they still have some kind of significance in their own right.

The Vulture was a bit like a chained baboon. It was the first time we ever tried to have an automatic puppet controlled remotely by a machine. The vulture stood on top of its stand, and occasionally, when switched on by the person in the control room of the theatre, the machine started turning, and the vulture burst into life. It squawked like a vulture, and the sense of its rude comments was visible on the projection screen above. It used to interrupt Ubu's train of thought with these random comments. Its movement was quite jerky as it tilted forward or flapped its wings while making this noise. There was a loudspeaker built into the stand, which you could see as part of the stand.

BL: So this vulture was Ubu's pet?

AK: It was his pet, but it was also a bit out of control.

BL: I wanted to understand that ...

How do you interpret *Dogs of War* in the context of South Africa's collective memory? What are the implications of history being shaped through personal memory in the formation of a broader collective memory?

AK: Well, I suppose the 'equipment' of a policeman is very often a violent, highly trained dog. Who knows? I mean, they're not just used in South Africa, it's global. Dog training facilities exist where

dogs are handled by people who really know how to use a dog. A dog is a great weapon with very powerful jaws!

And so, if it bites and is taught to hang on, you can't shake it off. It's an extension of the violent intention of the controller. And so it has become a symbol, a visual representation of repressive force in regimes anywhere in the world. But in the South African context, of course, it seemed to epitomize the 'state violence' in those years when the struggle against apartheid was increasing in intensity, particularly in the 1980s. Violent dogs were very much part of that image.

BL: Wow, there's really no need to go to the second part. I feel the first part already captures it, and it's really up to each person's imagination to explore it further. Now:

To what extent do you believe theatre and puppetry serve as effective alternatives to conventional historical narratives?

AK: Ja, we believe that the puppet is an essential part of theatre. We know that the puppet has a certain power that a live actor doesn't have. I explained earlier that it has a way of touching an audience that is different from a live actor. When you watch a live actor who is very good, you see both the character they have invented for you to watch, but underneath, you also see the real person playing that character, the actor themself.

Whereas the puppet is only one thing: it is only the character. It does have puppeteers around it, but they are not performing for the audience. They are only working with the puppets. The audience focuses on the puppet itself.

I remember seeing this happen with a puppet of the historical figure Charlotte Maxeke. The puppet was made by the Ukwanda Puppet and Design Collective here in Cape Town and had been part of a production on the life of Charlotte Maxeke, the first black South African woman to gain a science degree in America in 1903, who came back and started the ANC Women's League.

The puppet was an almost life-size version of Charlotte, and on one occasion, it was brought to an event at the Zeitz MOCAA Museum. The University of the Western Cape was holding a function at the art gallery. People were standing with glasses of wine, listening to formal speeches about fundraising.

Then into the room walked the Charlotte Maxeke puppet, and it spoke some of Charlotte's actual words. In this context, a social gathering, not a theatre, I had this uncanny feeling that, in some strange way, it was Charlotte in the room. There were three puppeteers working her, plainly visible, but the historical figure, almost 100 years after she had existed, was also there. She came into the room and spoke to us, and because she was not an actor but a representation of the actual person, my brain welcomed the actual Charlotte.

BL: Yeah? So, it's like when an actor tries to embody someone, I imagine it doesn't have quite the same effect as when a puppet enters the space. And I wonder, how was the resemblance? Did it capture Charlotte's presence in a way that made the audience feel her as a historical figure rather than just a performance?

AK: It was a wood carving, and it was sculpted by a very good wood sculptor, but of course also an abstraction, not an exact copy of her, and she was dressed in clothes that were similar to what she would have worn in her time. She was both there and, at the same time, a metaphor. As a member of the audience, you are left with this uncanny feeling that the ground you are standing on is not stable, because your mind is playing tricks. Charlotte is in the room, in some way.

BL: And it is not the same as when she is played by some other … That is understandable.

AK: I remember just feeling like I got a shiver!

BL: I understand, so you think that allows different historical narratives to come forward?

AK: Yeah, it does that. It also talks about the human condition in a different way to the way actors can. Do we occupy the same spaces as actors? Because the dark theatre space where the audience are watching is generally the place where we play. But puppets work outdoors as well. You know the Amal puppet, who is twice life size. She walks in the street, and people know it's a puppet. They can see the person inside who is walking on stilts, with two other people outside working her hands.

I'll just tell you a story.

She had arrived in the UK from Turkey and was preparing to walk into a big crowd. In the 'backstage' holding area, some police were watching the preparations: two policemen and one policewoman keeping the public out. All the bits of the puppet were lying around, ready. The central puppeteer was sitting in a high chair, being strapped into the stilts.

The policewoman was watching the process with interest. The whole body of the puppet was put over the head of the puppeteer, with Amal's big head now way above him, and all the straps were clipped into place. The electronic eyes were switched on and the skirt was attached. Everything was ready. The puppet stood up. Then this huge little girl walked over and put her hands on the shoulders of the policewoman. She looked up at Amal's face and burst into tears.

We all thought, 'What happened?' She saw that it was put together from nothing; it was assembled in front of her. There was no illusion. But it got up and walked over. Maybe she was looking at the face of this little girl who's huge, and she was thinking about little girls, about refugees, about whatever story she associated with it, and it had this emotional effect on her. Outdoors, no theatre lights. Was it the large scale? Was it the good manipulation?

BL: Well, okay, that's quite good, I do get what you're saying. Like, sometimes it is a feeling of words; you need to be a person who's very good with words to be able to describe the feeling.

Okay, now I want to ask about influences.

You've in the past cited influences such as Japanese Bunraku and the Bamana puppeteers of Mali. In what ways might the history of puppetry outside the Western canon experience misrepresentation or marginalisation, drawing parallels to the challenges faced by African art in mainstream art history?

AK: That's a very broad question. You know, the puppet is not used by a lot of people. A lot of people think of puppets as the "P" word, we call it, you know, because they think of it as something just for children. So I think the more people who discover the power of the puppet, the more they feel the need to use it, the more uses they will find to represent the marginalised and the need for restorative justice. So it's really up to us, and those who feel intrigued by it, to take it and run.

You know, the very first political play that we did opened doors for us in a way that children's theatre has not been able to, because audiences found that these little puppets, they were small, you know, had a strange influence over the audience.

A strange thing happened when we were performing, walking next to the puppets. We were four times their size. Some feedback we received was that our relatively gigantic size in relation to the puppets was seen to have meaning. To them, it seemed that these two old women, and that activist, and that policeman were somehow being controlled by these tall people dressed in black, pulling their strings. The puppeteers represented fate, destiny, control, you know… all of the forces that surround a human being in this world. So various interpretations were being made about the ingredients of the method of performance that we were not aware of in the beginning.

BL: That's really interesting. I've never thought of it like that before. I've always wondered… if you can see someone controlling the puppet, doesn't that break the illusion? But what you've just explained shows that the audience can choose to see the puppeteer as a metaphor or a symbol, and in doing so, they can interpret the performance in their own way using the elements the production provides.

AK: When we first started, we used to hide ourselves completely. We worked with microphones strapped to our heads, and we were behind the curtains, and the audience only saw what went on above us, what was meant to be visible to them. But our microphones wore out. They started crackling. After five years, we decided to take the curtains away, reveal the puppeteers, and use our voices unmiked. When we played at schools with that system, the teachers said, "Oh, you've ruined it now for the kids, you've taken away all the magic."

So we asked the kids which system they preferred…the one where you couldn't see us, or the system where you could see us and the puppets. And they immediately responded: "The new system! It's much better!" When we asked why, they replied, "We can see two shows: the puppets and the work of the puppeteers." So the kids gave us a much more interesting answer than the teachers.

BL: I think that was a good answer. Wow! Okay, there's a lot of stuff for me to think about…

The Handspring Puppet Company engages in projects in urban townships and rural areas, using puppetry to educate, empower youth, and foster community through performances and parades. Could you speak to specific projects or initiatives that exemplify this work?

AK: In our work with community groups, some of which have been successful, the Barrydale ones have been the most successful because we spent a long time there, and our engagement was regular, so some level of trust with that community developed over time. As we did more and more community work, we came to feel that ideas serving some kind of propaganda message are not good for keeping participants' interest. Like, "Okay, we're talking about AIDS again, and we know all about it, it's just boring." Such subjects can be part of a story but should never be the main focus.

It becomes patronising; we call it 'instrumentalised' theatre. At some stage, the audience will realise that they are being used, that they have to agree with some message someone is trying to drive home. A more interesting approach is to work with a subject, or a story that somehow contains the subject you wish to convey, but is told in a human way, with imperfections in the lives of the lead characters, or written like a real story with no "product being sold" at the end.

We have found that the spin-offs from these works are not necessarily the play itself. It's the confidence gained by the people performing and learning within the show. They're learning by writing. Sometimes a script doesn't work, sometimes it works well. They're learning about confidence in performance, about responsibility, turning up for rehearsals, a whole lot of aspects of making a piece of theatre that involve important social skills. If those are part of the by-product of the experience, it usually has a more lasting effect on the community than putting out a more blatant propaganda message.

BL: Okay, so also the audience shapes the industry in that regard.

AK: The audience is always clever. You know, they are always going to smell a rat. If there's a rat.

BL: Wow … Well!

What are your thoughts on the current state of puppetry and theatre in South Africa, especially when viewed through an 'urban vs. rural' lens?

Young people are realising that it's something that is possible to do if you work hard. Quite a number have joined an international organisation called UNIMA, which is Union Internationale de la Marionnette. It's a UNESCO-affiliated body, with its headquarters in France and several branches in South Africa and the rest of Africa.

Just recently, in November 2023, we had the first all-Africa UNIMA conference in Cape Town, in Woodstock, at the UWC Iyatsiba Lab, where Ukwanda is based. It was something I never thought would happen, but we had puppeteers from Kenya, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Tanzania, Morocco, Lagos… suddenly, we got a picture of lots of people working in various ways, including quite a lot of good television work in Kenya.

There are branches across the continent. Mali, of course, has a long and strong tradition and brought a big production that played in Cape Town. So on the continent of Africa, there are centres where things are moving. In South Africa, it's strongest in Cape Town, but Johannesburg and Durban are also active. There's a UNIMA branch in Khayelitsha, and this year, for the first time, at the Baxter Zabalaza Festival, the annual festival's 15th year, I became a mentor to a group from Khayelitsha working with puppets and a group of very enthusiastic young performers. They were good to watch. Funding, of course, is limited; national arts funding is very hard to come by, particularly for a marginalised art form.

BL: Okay, Is that quite an achievement?

AK: Yes. I mean, they are still at a development stage. Earning a living is not easy. You have to achieve a level of excellence. I mean, myself… I'm a second-generation puppeteer. My mother was a

puppeteer, so I learned from a very early age. I know that this has given me, and our company, access to the world of theatre that is not easy to achieve. But if you work hard, produce plays that grab attention, and work with writers who are writing interestingly, there's no reason why you can't.

BL: You will get somewhere eventually. So these writers, these puppeteers, do you have directors?

AK: Not enough. We've worked with many directors who were using puppets for the first time. Sometimes they come because it's fashionable, you know, all of a sudden, after *War Horse*, puppets started appearing in productions where they weren't needed.

BL: I see… so it sounds like there's a real learning curve for directors as well, not just the puppeteers.

With regard to the recent conservation efforts on *Dogs of War*, how does restoration intersect with your artistic practice? How do you approach materiality from a conservation standpoint, and what significance does this process hold for you?

AK: This is a very important question in the context of the Constitutional Court. *The Dogs of War* and *The Crocodile and Vulture* are connected to the ongoing struggle to tell the truth in South Africa, so perhaps they have historical importance. But what happens to puppets in conservation? What is the life of a puppet after the show closes?

It's a dangerous life, because puppets are three-dimensional objects that require storage. In any institution, storage is limited.

There are various puppet museums in the world. The biggest ones are in Germany and the United States, and then there are smaller ones in various places, all of them have the same problem. They have so many puppets in their collections that they cannot display them. The storerooms are full, and the display space is limited.

We have hundreds of puppets from our own work that we are trying to find a home for, but we probably won't. You probably end up selling the beautiful ones, and the rest will end up in some junk pile, which has often been the fate of the puppet industry. Sometimes, you find in a garage somewhere a box, and inside the box lies a dusty, tangled history of a body of work.

Because *The Dogs of War* has been adopted by the Constitutional Court, it has been guaranteed preservation status. It is to be kept as a piece of art. It has crossed over into this comfortable zone where somebody will be looking after it as long as the collection exists.

BL: I like the way you responded to this question, it makes me realise something I'd never really imagined. I know there are museums dedicated to puppets, but I've never seen a brochure for a puppet exhibition. So perhaps these people are just collecting, or maybe they're not putting enough effort into creating exhibitions?

AK: There are two thoughts. Traditionally in Mali, or in Mozambique where the Makonde mask performances happen, masks and puppets are built every year. We visited the house of Yaya Coulibaly, who is the seventh-generation head of his family troupe of puppeteers. It's an ancient

family tradition. He lives in a four-storey house in Bamako, Mali, and when we visited for the first time, it was very hot and the shutters of the windows were closed to keep things cool.

As we walked through the house, Yaya opened the shutters, and light flooded in. We saw that the rooms were full of puppets, with almost no space for people. Each floor was the same. On the very top floor, where he builds his puppets and rehearses his work, it's an open space. The bottom floor is where the food is cooked, and people sleep wherever they can find space in the house.

I visited twice, about a year apart. On our first visit, we were keen to buy one of his puppets for our collection, but we didn't want to disrupt his collection, so we found two heads where the faces had been eaten by termites, thinking he would never use these again. The following year I went back. I'd seen a couple of other puppets I would have preferred to buy, but I thought I couldn't take them because he was going to be using them. But on my return, these too had been eaten by termites.

Yaya has some very old puppets in his collection which are now extremely valuable and irreplaceable. These he preserves, but the new ones can be relatively easily remade if needed. Perhaps the termites are a solution to a storage problem. Maybe this is a tradition all puppeteers should adopt when there is no space.

I have heard that in the Makonde mask tradition in Mozambique, when a mask is worn out through years of use, it is placed in the forest where it will be eaten by insects, and a new one is made to replace it. Unfortunately, at the moment, due to political unrest, the masked performances are not taking place in south-western Mozambique.

The stored puppet presents us with a problem. Its intended place in the world is as part of a performance in front of an audience. It's built to move, and when it becomes a static object, it's sculptural but not quite a sculpture. I have tried to make *The Dogs of War* a bit more sculptural with the way the heads are positioned, and it also has the added historical significance of its suitcase.

BL: Let me move on to the next question…

In your view, what does the Constitutional Court Art Collection (CCAC) mean today, and what significance does having your work featured in the CCAC hold for you, particularly in the context of the 30th anniversary of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission?

AK: *Ubu and the Truth Commission* was the most unified theatre production that we did with Kentridge, in the sense that all the elements; the actors, the puppets, the video, the staging, the stage design, somehow gelled as a complete theatre. As a production, it was strong, and its content was hugely powerful, using verbatim texts spoken by people who had testified to the Commission.

Whenever we took it out of South Africa, people said, you know, it's a play that speaks to our country too. It records a tragic moment in our history in a theatrical way, using the accessibility of theatre. When we first performed it at the Market Theatre, all three of the theatre's performance spaces had a TRC-related play running at the same time, such was the interest from writers, playmakers, and audiences in the significance of the TRC.

One of the plays was actually performed by people who'd been on death row. They were performing their own words. Sometimes, as actors now and not witnesses, they forgot the words they had

originally used. So the dilemma at the time was: who should be permitted to use, say, the very painful words that a grandmother gave to the Commission about her grandson who was killed, and how she said, "I went to the mortuary," to identify him. Whose history is that? Is it the country's history, or her history? Our choice was to use a puppet to speak her words, in the same way that Charlotte Maxeke's words were said by a puppet, not performed by an actor.

These are all big questions. But if it cannot be retold, it will be forgotten.

This particular production was very significant as a piece of theatre. I was part of it, so I mustn't say that too loudly, but the response it received has put it in a certain position. The text of *Ubu and the Truth Commission* was published and became a setwork in schools. So the fact that our puppet is housed in the Constitutional Court is, of course, an enormous honour; for us to have made a show that somehow tapped into the ongoing history of this iconic building, and for our dogs to stand quite close to the work of Dumile Feni.

BL: Well, I see. Let me think… this is going to be a long one, also arising from my interest in anthropology and the art–artefact dichotomy:

Puppets, just like most cultural artefacts, lose contextual value while within gallery settings, particularly when they were originally intended for performance or interaction. In light of this, do you have any thoughts or recommendations on how *Dogs of War* could be presented or displayed in a way that honours its original purpose and context?

AK: The only possible adjunct could be an interactive video within the building, where visitors could see the dogs perform. There's quite a good recording of the show, from 20 years ago, it was filmed properly. It wasn't just a camera stuffed in the corner of the theatre.

BL: I've seen it on YouTube, but I'm not sure if there's a proper licensed copy available. Part of my mission is also to see if any additional material could be displayed alongside the artwork. I think the video would be very useful. Does anyone hold the rights to it that we would need to contact?

AK: I mean, if it's not for sale, then I think we would need to get a release from the production team. I'm sure they would provide that. I guess it's something we'll continue discussing until we finalise it.

BL: Alright, I think that wraps up our interviews. I just have one final question:

Is there anything additional you would like to share or have recorded as part of this interview?

AK: We must go through the archives of the drawings, designs. There may be something that you are interested in.

BL: Thank you very much, Adrian. This has been an incredible insight into puppetry, *Dogs of War*, and your lifelong work.It would be good for the artwork, particularly online. On our website, we try to include as much information as possible about each piece to make our object biographies more engaging.

AK: Thank you, Bahlakoana. It's been a pleasure to share.

END OF AUDIO RECORDING: 01:06:04

END OF INTERVIEW