



VISUALISING THE REALM OF A RAIN-QUEEN: THE PRODUCTION AND CIRCULATION OF EILEEN AND JACK KRIGE'S LOBEDU FIELDWORK PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE 1930S

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1. Interest in visual anthropology and history was given impetus in the 1980s by the work, among others, of Paul Jenkins and Christraud Geary on the 'Photographs in the Basel Mission Archive', *African Arts*, 18 (1985), 56-63, and in the early 1990s by the essays in the volume edited by Elizabeth Edwards, *Anthropology and Photography 1860-1920* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992). More recent writing on the topic includes Christopher Morton and Elizabeth Edwards, eds., *Photography, Anthropology and History: Expanding the Frame* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2009).
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Figure 1 a. Installation view
'Dithugula tša Malefokane':
Seeing Other People's Stories,
Telling Tall Tales, Michaelis Gallery,
University of Cape Town, 2012.

Introduction

Over the past two decades it has become axiomatic to acknowledge the complex, ambiguous nature of photographic images.¹ The seeming realism of photographs, with its expectation that photographic images constitute objective visual documents, has been questioned and replaced by the recognition that photographs are never unmediated but composed and made meaningful at different times and in different contexts through multiple acts of interpretation. As Elizabeth Edwards points out, 'meanings are not necessarily in the photographs themselves, but in their suggestive appearances within different contexts, as people and things decontextualized within them are transposed within the culture of viewing' (Edwards 2001, 8). Photographs, like other artefacts, have life histories and change in significance as they move through time and space, as well as changing conceptual contexts. In the case of photographs taken in the course of ethnographic fieldwork, they are grounded, literally and metaphorically, by the experience of the photographer-ethnographer in the field. At one level, ethnographic field photographs can be seen as constituting a visual record of the subjects of study framed by the lens of the photographer and an implicit assertion of the presence of the ethnographer in the field; at another, they represent personal inter-subjective encounters that reside in the realm of experience, evocation or memory. In addition, as time passes, the images may take on historical and cultural significance for the people who were photographed in the

