

Re-imagining the role of female players in the making, restoring and preservation of the *uhadi*.

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My discovery of the Xhosa *uhadi* - musical bow is from a curatorial perspective. I have established that the idea of knowing who the maker is of the *uhadi* has been overlooked, particularly by major South African heritage institutions, the museums, which store and collect the instrument as just a musical bow or under the ethnic group. This article questions the claim by Kirby (1934) that musical bows are usually made by men because it appears hypothetical. While, later Plaatjies (2017) makes a counter claim that men have had minor contribution to the making of the instrument but women are the makers. He is an *uhadi* maker and player taught by his grandmother. Plaatjies claim appears to be pragmatic. To substantiate, I first display historical background that is the identity and the making of the *uhadi* bow. I also include evidence presented through interviews identifying three women who are the actual maker of the *uhadi* to acknowledge them as the creators, restorers and preservers of the instrument.

Keywords: Preserve, Restore, female uhadi player, uhadi bow, bow maker.

Lindelwa Pepu is currently a Visual Arts Lecturer at the University of Zululand, South Africa. She has the interest to advocate for artists, being (the-voice-of-the-voiceless), particularly revealing the artist as not only the creative but a professional. My research is usually based around curatorial practice and Art history.

Online paper presentation

Background and Motivation

- This study is initiated by a curatorial perspective that led to discovering that musical bows are mislabelled and decontextualized in Museum Africa.
- The idea of knowing who the maker of the musical bow, particularly the *uhadi* bow is overlooked and this is the main concern of this study.
- Who is the maker of the *uhadi* bow, is it men or women?

Argument and Question

- My argument is based on the claim made by Kirby (1934) that men are the makers of the *uhadi* bow.
- I question the claim with a counterclaim by Plaatjies (2017) that men have made minor contributions to the making but are not the makers.

Aims

- I aim to clearly display who is the actual *uhadi* maker.
- To display the impact and contributions made by the maker within their communities.

Methodology

- This is a qualitative study.
- Data is collected through interviews.

Results and Findings

- There is no supporting evidence or research related to Kirby's claim.
- Indeed, women are the makers, preservers and revivers of the *uhadi* bow.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- Women are not given enough recognition on their contribution on preserving South African heritage.
- Women should be acknowledged especially in museums as well as their community engagements.