

BALTHI DU PLESSIS: CAREER SYNOPSIS

The heritage field is an intricate combination of different sciences, philosophies, disciplines and technologies.

To be successful you need to combine a broad spectrum of knowledge with specific fields of expertise. If you specialise in museology (a subdivision of the larger heritage industry) your expertise is still governed by all basic museum disciplines including: collection, documentation, education, exhibitions, research and conservation.

*The quality **MUSEOLOGIST** today understands these disciplines in depth. He/she specialises in one or more, and adds an understanding of general management principles with the unique South African ethos (including the need to re-interpret SA history) to the basket of his/her skills.*

BALTHI DU PLESSIS HAS EXACTLY THESE SKILLS.

His formal career spans two decades developing from: curator with general responsibilities, cultural/historical researcher, restoration and conservation specialist and exhibition designer to: Manager responsible for Departments of Specialised Public Relations, Education, Funds Generation, Internal Communications, Tourism, Conservation, Exhibitions and Publications. He achieved leadership positions within these disciplines in the South African heritage landscape in the 1990's. The pinnacle of his formal career was as Director of the National Cultural History Museum, at the time the largest museum of its kind in South Africa (with 3.5 million objects of cultural significance).

He created the first specialised Conservation Unit at a national Museum. He managed and put together the first and so far only professional PR & Marketing Department at a museum in South Africa and was the first to utilise a Technical Museum Department to become a major source of income for the institution.

During the course of his formal career, he delivered and published papers (nationally and internationally) on the above disciplines.

He extended his skills by completing various courses including the Special Management Courses facilitated by GENCOR.

HE WAS INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN VARIOUS ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES AND TRAINING COURSES. HE WAS GUEST LECTURER AT: AAA SCHOOL OF ADVERTISING AND VEGA ART SCHOOL AND EXTERNAL EXAMINER FOR PRETORIA TECHNIKON, TECHNIKON RSA, SAMA CONSERVATION COURSE, AND THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA.

HE HAS LECTURED IN THE POST GRADUATE MUSEUM COURSE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA (ON CONSERVATION AND EXHIBITION DESIGN) SINCE 1988. HE ALSO LECTURED IN INTERIOR DESIGN AT THE PRESTIGIOUS OPEN WINDOW ART ACADEMY.

He was external referent for the South African Yearbook.

During his formal heritage career he was known for his creative innovative thinking but without sacrificing the inherent integrity of the museum industry. He left a lasting impression on many major conservation projects such as: O'Niels Cottage, Fort Amiel and various wagon and carriage restorations including the prestigious restoration of the Chetswayo funeral wagon (part of the 100th anniversary of Chetswayo's death) which led to an international publication and a new interpretation of the original information.

He furthermore created new conservation structures, was chairperson of the SAMA Conservation Group when their first Code of Conduct was approved and took part in many publications (some awarded by SAMA for quality). He managed various commercial show exhibitions and was awarded medals (against stiff opposition and with limited museum budgets)

He directed and facilitated exhibitions nationally and internationally for prestigious museums and clients. **HIGHLIGHTS WERE: THE LISBON WORLD SHOW IN PORTUGAL (SHOWING SOUTH AFRICA TO THE WORLD), VARIOUS INTERNATIONAL FINE ARTISTS FROM CHINA, ARGENTINA, INDIA AND ITALY AND THE "AFRICA MEATS AFRICA" EXHIBITION IN COLLABORATION WITH A WELL-KNOWN ANTHROPOLOGICAL MUSEUM OF ROTTERDAM WHICH VIEWED SOME OF THE RAREST AND BEST ANTHROPOLOGICAL OBJECTS EVER SEEN IN THIS COUNTRY.** He also directed and produced a museum for one of the greatest archaeological collections in SA namely the famous **MAPUNGUBWE** gold (including the gold Rhino) in a permanent exhibition at the University of Pretoria.

HE WAS AWARDED FOR HIS CONTRIBUTION TO THE ANGLO BOER WAR CENTENARY AND FOR HIS CONTRIBUTION TO CHINESE CULTURE IN SA.

He was awarded the opportunity to project manage the development of exhibitions and public areas at the new National Cultural Museum in Pretoria (African Window). This could be considered - from a project management point of view - a major achievement.

After achieving most of his goals in the formal sector he took on the challenge of the private sector. He founded Balthi du Plessis & Associates in 2001 with a goal to compete as a heritage consultant in the private sector. This journey started when he and partner Sanet du Plessis (an accomplished graphic artist in her own right) started arguably the first professional museum consultant company (Modern Concepts, cc) in 1988. They completed various projects including major exhibitions for Polokwane Museum and Standard Bank.

During the past ten years he expanded his business to include corporate interior design and production in order to facilitate a larger audience and better control the quality of production. His clients include: **HECTOR PIETERSON MUSEUM, STANDARD BANK, RESERVE BANK, POLOKWANE MUSEUM, VAAL TECHNORAMA, STANDARD BANK ACHIEVES, STANDARD BANK GALLERY, WITS, UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA, MATLOSANA MUNICIPALITY, KLERKSDORP MUSEUM, TSHWANE MUNICIPALITY, LIMPOPO GOVERNMENT, TSONGA KRAAL, DZATA MUSEUM, SANPARKS, HERITAGE CENTRE AT VOORTREKKER MONUMENT, BETHAL MUSEUM, MTN, MINDPILOT, HERITAGE AGENCY, MAPUNGUBWE HOTEL, DIMITRA, USA EMBASSY, JOHANNESBURG CITY MALL AND MANY MORE.**

SOME OF HIS PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS DURING THE LAST FEW YEARS ARE:

- **PICASSO EXHIBITION (CLIENT: STANDARD BANK GALLERY, JOHANNESBURG)**
- **THE DZATA MUSEUM (ON VENDA HERITAGE)**
- **MAPUNGUBWE EXHIBITIONS (CLIENTS: SANPARKS AND THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA)**
- **THE MATLOSANA MUSEUM (RE-INTERPRETED HISTORY)**
- **THE AFRIKANER EXHIBITION AT THE HERITAGE CENTRE IN PRETORIA (RE-INTERPRETATION OF AFRIKANER HISTORY)**
- **THE JEWELLERY MEETS ART EXHIBITION (CLIENTS: SCHWARTZ JEWELLERS AND STANDARD BANK GALLERY).**

During his career he had the opportunity to visit many countries, meet many museologists and heritage experts, see many museum sites and exhibitions and acquire many skills. Today he is an accomplished, strategist, exhibitions designer, conservation consultant, interior designer, and has knowledge and experience on the production of moving images, multi-media, target market positioning, production of two- and three-dimensional displays and many other aspects linked to heritage in general.

Career development

Director: Balthi du Plessis & Associates (2001-)

Manager (Director): National Cultural History Museum (-2001)

Manager (Deputy Director): African Window

Deputy Director NCHM (Exhibitions, Photography, Publications, Marketing, Internal Communication, Public Relations, Tourism and Education): NCHM

Head: Conservation, Restoration, Exhibitions and Publications: NCHM (1988-

Head: Conservation, Restoration and Exhibitions: Transvaal Provincial Museum Services (1986 -1988)

Researcher: Natal Provincial Museum Services (1983- 1986)

Curator: Hartenbos Museum (1981-1982)

Officer: SADF Department for Shows and Exhibitions (1980)

Qualifications

BA (Fine Arts) University of Pretoria (1975-1978)

Post Graduate Diploma in Museum Science (*Cum laude* 1885)

Advanced Strategic Awareness & Planning, Gencor (1987)

Creativity Course, Satori (1992)

Fundraising Principles and Techniques, Cuthbert & Associates (1994)

English for Achievers, LEAD (1994)

Team-building and Conflict Management, SAMDI (1995)

Speech-making and TV Appearance, SAMDI (1995)

Project Management, Northern Flagship Institution (2001)

Countries visited

England, Scotland, The Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, France, Italy, Portugal, Egypt, Hong Kong, China, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Canada (Montreal, Ottawa, Calgary, Vancouver), USA (Boston, Washington, New York, Plymouth, Orlando) and Mexico.