

Hostels, Homes, Museums

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About this Publication:

During the apartheid years in South Africa, hostels and compounds were built to house migrant labourers. One such hostel compound was Lwandle, some 40 kilometres outside Cape Town. Literally translated from isiXhosa as 'the sea', Lwandle was built in sight of the Atlantic Ocean. Conceptualised as a temporary labour camp, it was laid out by town planners and engineers in the form of diagonal, parallel blocks of barracks around a central open space. The lives of the labourers who lived there were regulated and policed through apartheid legislation around population influx control, the pass system and the policy of Coloured Labour Preference.

In the 1990s, as part of the post-apartheid 'Hostels to Homes' scheme, such hostels were reconfigured and refurbished into homes for family accommodation. A steering committee in Lwandle decided to preserve one dormitory, block 6, hostel 33, as a museum. Officially opened in May 2000, the primary purpose of the Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum was to serve as a reminder of the system of migrant labour, single-sex hostels and the control of workers through that infamous identity document - the pass book.

This book explores the museum's makings, the creation of histories through the oral and the visual and the rehabilitation of structures for the museum, ending with the celebration - and discomfort - of the museum's tenth birthday in 2010. Richly illustrated throughout, the book includes two full colour visual essays by photographers Paul Grendon and Thulani Nxumalo, taken while working with the museum on projects of restoration and collection.

Contents Include:

Preface - Come to Lwandle
Chapter One - Dislocation: Making a museum at the seaside
Chapter Two- Rehabilitation: Restoring a migrant labour hostel
Photographic Essay - Dormitory Accommodation by Paul Grendon

Chapter Five - Retelling: From oral histories to textual pasts

Photographic Essay - On the Beach by Thulani Nxumalo

Postscript and conclusion - The End

Of Interest and Benefit to:

General readers and scholars interested in post-apartheid history, museums, tourism, migrancy, restoration architecture, community development, urban studies and design, public culture and space.