Empathy and an aesthetics of the post apartheid

This presentation turns to the work of South African artist Nandipha Mntambo, specifically her collection, The Encounter, in order to think through the entangled relationships between the discourses of empathy, hysteria, aesthetics and psychoanalysis, the undisclosed backdrop of which is colonialism. The paper then narrows its focus to attend to the predicament of forging a post-apartheid condition out of a colonial inheritance. Indeed, it is precisely the colonial history of empathy - a concept so often used to mark a break with colonial relations, in South Africa and elsewhere - that Mntambo’s work allows us to encounter and, perhaps, work through, work on, rework.