

Songsmith is a project that has woven in and out of my practice as an artist for over eight years. It has been key in creating this monument. In Songsmith, I embed golden instruments into fractured objects to unveil sound-based stories. A story, or song, can be heard by bringing your hands near to the songsmith. Once a songsmith is embedded into an object, the resulting artwork becomes an archive. These archives hold memory in the form of song.

My work often revolves around themes of memory, fracture, and repair. Songsmith is inspired by the Japanese art of Kintsukoroi - the art of repairing fractured ceramics with gold. The golden repair acknowledges the unique history and value of lived experience marked on an object.

Kintsukoroi, as a philosophy, speaks of the inevitable experiences of grief, trauma, and fracture, but also of healing. In my Songsmith work, the golden repair highlights the beauty of these moments, revealing the complexity of our lived experience.

Typically, I work with objects that have broken naturally. For example, rocks that were fractured by geological events. However, this rock did not have a physical fracture, but rather a metaphorical one; one that connects deeper into the complex history of our country's past.

Aligning with the poem 'Die Beiteitjie,' a local stone mason was tasked to apply the traditional feather and wedge technique to the rock. This technique involves coring holes along a marked split line. The mason then inserts wedges, driving them incrementally deeper with a hammer until the rock gives way and fractures.

However, during our community ceremony, an unexpected fissure appeared. After consideration, we adjusted our approach to work with this fissure instead of the pre-meditated one.

This decision set our project on an entirely new course. Instead of a short fracture line, we had a five-and-a-half meter fracture that transformed the scope of our project, extending the songsmith sculpting by more than several months. The magnitude of this in a sculpting sense is hard to convey, not to mention design and engineering.

Today, one year later, the rock's pieces are bound back together with the golden seam, transforming it into an interactive archive. This seam, our access point, reveals a song captured using ground-penetrating radar—a recording of the ground beneath your very feet. It represents thousands of years of geological history. It takes us back to a time before any of this was here.

Each person who has touched, seen, or interacted with this rock contributes to the layered memory it holds. It bears marks from at least three different iterations; those of an unknown plaque, markings from the 1970s lettering - which were embedded directly into the rock, and, of course, the more recent larger plaque.

Today, this rock stands not as a new monument— but rather as a testament to an ongoing story that is woven with the threads of our collective memories as individuals, and as a nation - reminding us that we are all small yet significant pieces of a much greater story.