



Umjondolo

Goethe institute 28/02/2014-10/03/2014
Infecting the city 11/03/2014-12/03/2014

“A haunting performance-installation, Umjondolo (shack) addresses notions of space and belonging, city and citizenship. As a counter-narrative to monolithic representations of history, it challenges depictions of marginalised people and areas as existing outside the context of time and modernity.” Project description

Foreword

“The artist is the sensitive point of his community” – Ezekiel Mphahlele

As the sensitive point of his community, the artist is a cultural vulture whose primary instinct is to recycle the pervasive imaginative dearth - which has its philistine noose around the agency of a people subjected to the routine mechanizations of modernity - into a spectrum of escape and opportunity outside of inherited discourses of artistic apathy and limitation. Art, then, as Picasso observed, serves the purpose of ‘washing the dust of daily life off our souls’.

Consubstantial to the latter; with his current performance piece titled: Umjondolo - Phumulani Ntuli has been able to allegorically mirror crucial experiences which make up his artistic bildungsroman and inflect them onto an installation whose avant garde aesthetics function like interlocutors at the mercy of a polyglot who converses in dialects without nomenclature which, in turn, prod the audience to respond in an eccentric language of their own. These queer trajectories place Umjondolo inside a peculiar vista whose design catapults us into a world of socio-political parallelism and a crucial critique of hegemony in art.

In the essay titled: [Nkateko’s essay], Nkateko Baloyi adroitly evinces how Umjondolo is both an informal anti-thesis of elitist canonization; and also a rebuttal of modernity’s black-listing of sub cultural artistic practices which aren’t *comme il faut* with overarching mainstream artistic discourses. The political pulse of Umjondolo does not only have abstract cognitive hegemonic appeal, but also beats concordantly with decolonial blueprints already begun by a plethora of African artists at the fin de siècle.

To bring it home, Umjondolo evokes the zeitgeist of protesting against the 1913 Native Land Act and the inheritance of a segregationist psychological framework by placing the trope of the constantly moving and changing shack squarely in the centre of modernity and affluence. Personified, Umjondolo is the Jim Comes to Joburg narrative with its own hopes and dreams to perform in the city.

Phumulani Ntuli has been able to capture the imagination in poignant ways which have begged the attention of several mediums of artistic interpretation which all seek to encapsulate the leitmotifs of the artistic vision inscribed in Umjondolo.

Themba Ziphilele Moyake

Introduction

In 2001 I participated in the in the Thupelo workshop hosted by the bag factory art studios. The workshop attracted 21 artists both national and international, emerging and established. I was fortunate to work with prolific arts such as Mama Helen Sibidi and young artists such as Ayanda Mabulu. Ndikhumbule, Ishham Adams to mention as few. We worked together for a period of two weeks in one space; the workshop was followed by presentations, an unfacilitated process. Though we worked individually on our concerned themes and preoccupation, dialogues, exchanges and conversations was inevitable. The workshop was concluded by the exhibition which comprised of the workshop process.

What I learned from the workshop revealed an aspect in my work I did not noticed before, even if I did I choose to ignore it. This later revealed as a project I am developing titled “unjondolo” which I later staged at the Goethe Institute (goetheonmain) and the infecting the city 2014.

I was physically and conceptually challenged by both the environment and the interaction with other artists. I was forced to be present, to be in the moment, to observe myself and my surrounding. The notion of manipulating the space and conversing with the space culminated into a performance intervention in the city. I observed the city, too walks in the park, I

rediscovered the ordinary (Njabulo Ndebele) the traffic lights, the skyscrapers, peripheral fordsburg the oriental plaza.

Fordsburg is in my view a city within the city; its composition formed a dialogue with where I came from. I was partly alienated, disconnected and dislocated. This dislocation was a result the of the implicit and inherent historical misfortunes bestowed upon me in the new South African dispensation. Being born and bred in the township, I felt I carried vintages of a body lacking and constantly reaffirming the cultural and identity crisis and representation in the city.

The lack of representation became my preoccupation; I began asking question of how I responded to space and time. How I engaged with the public space? The project umjondolo which culminated into a strong project for the past three years is part of my relocation in the city both conceptually and physically. It is a form of protest against the very questions of land and identity, it attempts to shed a light on the notion of environment everything and hereditary nothing word spoken by Bessie Head.

Phumulani Ntuli

Essay by Nkateko Baloyi

Title

Essay

Phumlani Ntuli is gifted with an excessive wealth of visual knowledge, which he has drawn exclusively from the penury vaults of black township experiences. His is a quest to redress “racist perceptions, representations, and institutions” which unfortunately still “fix” and “freeze” blackness in a state of purgatorial “nonbeing”. The biggest weapon wielded by any artist is their right to expression, Phumlani’s used this right to interrogate, to subvert and to destabilize the elitist white art establishments that continue to show what Bell Hooks describes as “images of black people that reinforce and reinscribe white supremacy”. It is partly for this reason that Phumlani’s taken on the challenge to search for a visual language, which speaks to the narrative of township/informal settlements; which in the most parts are the epicenter of black social existence.

This is articulated in the art project Umjondolo (shack), a haunting installation piece that provides

a counter narrative to traditionally simplistic representations of informal settlements. Umjondolo was conceptualized partly as a means of contesting a historically biased canon of representation; that dehumanized black subjects living in informal areas by placing them outside the context of time and modernity. Umjondolo is thus a performative intervention that’s in search for new ways of contextualizing visual experiences of township life; by appropriating the shack as a malleable symbol that’s visually susceptible to transformation; allowing for an artistic approach that focuses on the multiple complexities of modern life in shanty towns. This way Umjondolo hopes to open up space for a discursive discourse on counter cultural modes of representation, which should allow for subtler readings of history and identity and at the same time creating an avenue to critique current socioeconomic and political issues.

Roland Barthes puts it best in stating that “To speak is to seek to exercise power”. There is power in the spoken and there is power in the written. One might venture to ask, what this has to do with Umjondolo a visual art project and I might add implicitly that it has everything to do with Umjondolo. For the reason that our initial encounter and experience of the work does not come from the images, the sculptural installation; the video or the performances, our first impression of the work is from the title itself “Umjondolo”: it serves as an entry point to the rest of the exhibition. In using a common township term to title the artwork,

Phmulani reinserts a marginalized township/informal settlement culture into an esteemed pantheon of art.

The titles job is to wet the spectator’s pallet by creating a certain amount of intrigue, that fact that

the title is somewhat obscured makes the spectators want to see the art work even more. The title assumes an oppositional point of resistance, as the work is defined outside the terms of Anglo-Saxon linguistic impositions. In using indigenous African languages to name and title works, we defiantly oppose domination and begin contesting the kind of art that is esteemed by and for white left wing liberal types, who continue to promote an art form that advocates western ideals. For the black artist naming is a courageous declaration of the self. Ngugi concurs in stating that “language carries culture, and culture carries ... the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world”.



Night series I, II, III
2013
Photographic print
220gsm matt paper
56cm×73.5cm.





Under the bridge
2013
Photographic print
220gsm matt paper
56cm×73.5cm

Day series I, II, 2013
Photographic print
220gsm matt paper
56cm×73.5cm





Day series III
Photographic print
220gsm matt paper
56cm×73.5cm



Mixed media
installation
2013
Goetheonmain.





Mixed media
installation
2013
Goetheonmain.



Performance Intervention
Parliament: Cape Town
2014
infecting the city
15m.



Performance Intervention (Sculpture of Artillery Men's memorial artist unknown)
Cape gardens
2014
infecting the city-Cape Town
15m.



Performance Intervention by parliament, 2014, infecting the city-Cape town 15m.





Performance Intervention Parliament: Cape Town 2014 infecting the city 15m.



Umjondolo

The corrugated house
Sits in an open field

The corrugated house
Sits next to the Kraal

In Ou Baas's plaas
Cheek by jowl

The corrugated houses
Sit in the back yard next to a brick house

The corrugated house
Sits next to a steel house

The corrugated house
Sits next to a glass house

The corrugated house
Sits next to an ivory tower

Themba Ziphilele Moyake

Phumulani Ntuli

Ntuli's primarily works in sculpture, but interchange between a variety media including video, drawing, performance, installation and digital printing as part of his process. His work explores socio-political often investigating notions of violence and masculinities.

Ntuli is currently working on his ongoing project titled "um-jondolo" a multi disciplinary performance project staged at the Goethe on main in 2013 and the infecting the city in 2014. Ntuli just completed a Public-Pole sculpture commission by the KKV foundation for a Public-Pole sculpture under the auspices of the Nirox foundation, Ntuli has participated in numerous group exhibitions, the selected exhibitions include Zoo exhibition Nirox projects space, ABSA KKNK 2012-2013, ABSA Latelier 2011-2013, Sasol new signatures 2014. In 2011 Ntuli received an award for the City Festival at the Museum Africa and the African Arts Trust Bursary at the Assemblage Studios in Newtown.

Nkateko Baloyi

Baloyi is a writer and researcher based in Johannesburg, he also practices as a visual artist and works in a range of mediums. Baloyi graduated from the University of Johannesburg with a B-tech degree majoring in painting and has exhibited in numerous group exhibitions in Johannesburg.

Pule Magopa

Magopa is a freelance Graphic designer based in Johannesburg, He specialises in digital art, graffiti, cartoons. Magopa studied at FUBA School and then proceeded to Damelin College. In 2011 Magopa received an award for the SABS design award for his innovation, being a finalist. Magopa is also a deejay and has been involved with a group called *The Sun Xa Experiment*, based in Soweto. The group has been performing in Durban (Jazzy Rainbow and Jameson pub) as well as the Soweto Theatre birthday celebration in 2014.

Monde Nyovane

Monde Nyovane is a Photographer and Layout designer from Johannesburg; he completed a short course at Vega in print design With a background in fine art and journalism training. Nyovane I has gained valuable experience and self-training in newspaper and magazine production working with publications like UJ Observer and Corporate Youth as layout designer, CLU Magazine as a photographer and the more versatile role of Creative Director at I Speak Hiphop Magazine. Nyovane's keen sense of general knowledge and current affairs has enabled him to stay abreast with current social and media trends. Nyovane is currently completing a degree in journalism at the university of Johannesburg and plan to develop his career in television and film production.

Themba Ziphilele Moyake

Themba Ziphilele Moyake is an artist, researcher, writer, teacher and social developmental visionary. Moyake is primarily invested in working with non governmental organisations whose objectives are philanthropic. Academically, Moyake holds an Honours degree in African Literature from the University of the Witwatersrand and is working on his MA dissertation which explores Black Xhosa Intellectual exchanges with Indian intellectual discourse. In 2013 he received an award from First National Bank (FNB) for volunteering his free time to teaching high school students in and around Soweto. He recently (2013) edited work for a prodigious precocious creative writer: Mvelo Sibongakonke Dhlamini which was published in Prufrock Magazine with the title: Meet the Buffoons.

Acknowledgements

When I started seeing the possibilities presented of directing a project, it became very uncertain at the first glance that in order for the project came in to fruition, many hands had to be involved. I would like to extend my gratitude firstly to Busisiwe Ntuli my mother, who through her teachings had taught me resilience, hard work and self determination. Secondary to this I would like to thank Nkateko Baloyi whose critical thinking and creative output has helped me to see beyond the fibers of the canvas and to Pule Magopa whose humor and work approach has made me to be humble at all times.

Many thanks also go to Bogosi Sekhukhuni, Doctor Moyo, Sechaba Meloa and Monde Nyovane. Lastly I would like to thank Goethe Institute and the Goethe-onMain for offering working and exhibition space which played a significant role in realizing the project. Another special thanks to France for his tireless energy during the installation or the works. The National Arts Council for the production of this catalogue and many others who have contributed immensely in this

EXHIBITION GOETHEONMAIN

Photography and video: Monde Nyovane

Photography: Zandi Radebe

Technical support: Doctor Moyo

Technical support: Sechaba Melo

Catering: Mapule Mohalutsi

Performers: Neo Mahlasela, Andile Njila and Thato Ramaisa

INFECTING THE CITY

Performers, Given Mkhondo and Lusindiso Tyhulu

CATALOG

Contributor Phumulani Ntuli:

Contributor Nkateko Baloyi:

Designer: Pule Magopa

Editor: Themba Moyake

Printing: Newtown Print



All rights reserved. No parts of this publication may be
Reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any
Form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying,
recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

All images© Phumulani Ntuli from the series Umjondolo

Exhibition held at GoetheonMain and Infecting the City Public Arts Festival

540 B Mosia street
White City Jabavu
1868
n.phumulani@gmail.com

Text
Nkateko Baloyi
Themba Moyake

Publication design
Pule Magopa

