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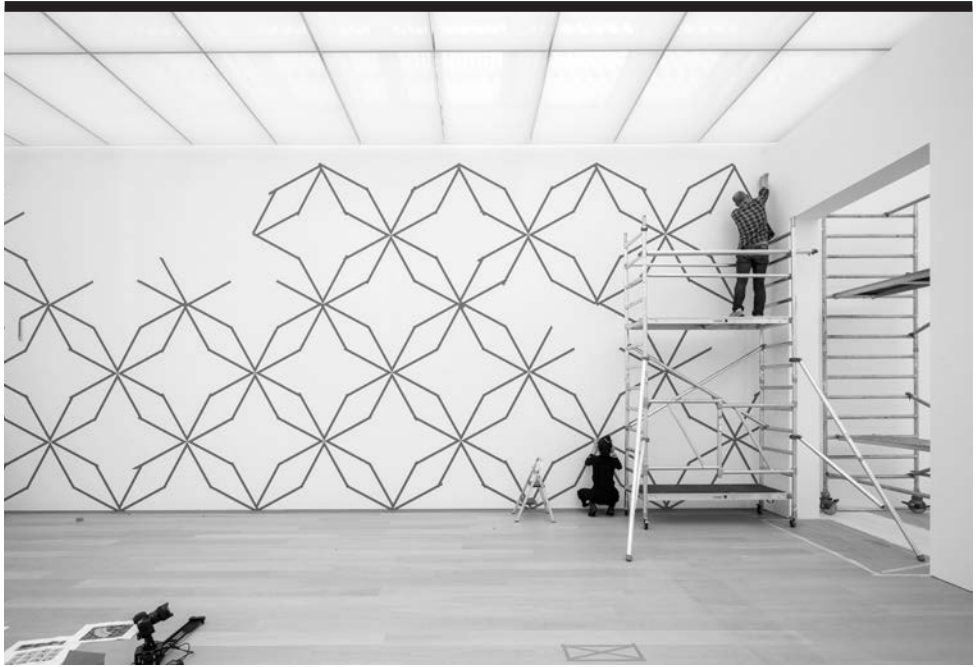


PHOTO: COURTESY OF VOORLINDEN

The wall as window to the imagination: Museum Voorlinden prepares to reopen after Lockdown with Robin Rhode's first solo exhibition in the Netherlands, a retrospective from 2000 to today

Conversations with friends

Our next chapter puts emphasis on process, exchange and dialogue - echoed by this newsletter

First up, as an extension of lateral conversations with our programming, we introduce a new long-term project called *STAGE* and a brief interlude, *Studios*.

STAGE is the latest in a succession of projects intended to give younger, unrepresented artists a platform. Begun with the *Side Gallery* series in 2007, followed in 2015 by *RAMP*,

these compact presentations function as prompts for creative dialogue. The artists in *STAGE* produce from a precipice - no longer students, not yet professional, but fulltime practitioners. The project launches at the end of April with Khanyisile Mawhayi, whose cyanotypes and drawings on canvas look at the constructions of identity.

What's usually kept behind the scenes takes the foreground in May with *Studios*, an online viewing room featuring artists at work in Abuja, Amsterdam, Belo Horizonte,

Cape Town, Harare, Johannesburg, Lille and Los Angeles, brought into proximity through a single URL. Using the image of a house with many doorways, each a portal to an atelier, this viewing room experience highlights what's unique in each artist's process and relationship with *making*.

In Cape Town, the defining strands of Meschac Gaba's practice - commerce and globalisation - come into conversation through twin surveys, *Money, Money, Money* and *Citoyen du Monde*. CONT.->



PHOTO: DANIELE PINHO

For *Studios*, Paulo Nazareth - in Belo Horizonte, Brazil - shows new works focusing on African masks, examining the colonial plunder of ritual objects to highlight contemporary practices of concealment, performance and profiling

cont.→ Each, following a museological approach, features early works now considered canonical to Gaba's oeuvre. These form an incisive precursor to 'my whole body changed into something else', our next group show. Taking place across Cape Town and Johannesburg, the exhibition includes the work of over a dozen artists to form an inquiry into 'commodified dislocation'. Curators Sisipho Ngodwana and Sinazo Chiya talk about the show's 'prompt to dabble with the possibility of the vastness of things' on pages 4-5.

Transnational ties are cemented with *RHE*, the first intervention by Galleries Curate. In discussion with Joost Bosland, Sadie Coles describes the platform as a forum for 'confession, inspiration, questioning, and most of all radical rethinking' (see opposite). Barthélémy Toguo and Mame-Diarra Niang respond

to the fluidity of the theme in a two-person presentation in our Amsterdam space. After this, new paintings made in Cape Town move in for the summer in a show titled *021-2021*.

Stevenson's Lerato Bereng, invited to curate a show for France's Africa2020 Season, looks to Morija, a French missionary outpost in Lesotho, to reflect on the structures of colonialism that continue to reverberate, and asks, what actually makes a country? See page 11.

With the prospect of inoculation opening up the potential for certitude, Robin Rhode, Deborah Poynton and Simphiwe Ndzube prepare for their first institutional solo exhibitions in the Netherlands and USA respectively. Rhode has a survey at Voorlinden, while Poynton shows painting spanning a decade at Drents, a museum with a focus on contemporary realism. Ndzube

exhibits an entirely new body of work, *Oracles of the Pink Universe*, at the Denver Art Museum.

Neo Matloga and Zanele Muholi install exhibitions connected to recent prizes. As the recipient of Stiftung Niedersachsen's Spectrum International Prize for Photography, Muholi presents *Zazise* at the Sprengel Museum in Hannover from June. Matloga has a solo exhibition at the Hermitage Amsterdam later in the year as the recipient of the 10th ABN AMRO Art Award. Matloga, who lives and works between Mamaila and Amsterdam was recognised for his 'vibrant, powerful and spirited work. It is both monumental and intimate and in a singular manner deals with the dilemmas of our age.'

See the Calendar on pages 6-7 for these and other dates - 'written in pencil', of course.

Curatorial generators

Joost Bosland speaks to Sadie Coles about Galleries Curate and growing new collaborative networks

JB: Galleries Curate is a collaboration between 21 galleries around the world. You were there at its genesis: could you describe that moment, and what led you to launch the project?

SC: It started in the very early days of the pandemic, when a group of art dealers on various Art Basel committees started to write to each other to share experiences, resources, advice and questions about how best to negotiate the new reality we were all in. We had a weekly WhatsApp meeting and the collegial connection and pooling of ideas was fruitful and supportive.

JB: At some point you extended invitations to ourselves and a handful of other galleries from countries outside Europe and North America. What prompted this decision?

SC: We were conscious of our bias and made an attempt to correct that.

JB: How did the group settle on *RHE* as the theme for the project?

SC: Chantel Crousel proposed that we should evidence our network with a curatorial project that could showcase artists and connect us all with a unified theme. *RHE*, a project of loose interpretations or examinations of water, is the first of what will hopefully be an expanding ripple.

JB: The project is now almost complete, with the shows and special contributions available on www.galleriescurate.com. That is the public-facing aspect of the project. But there is also the private process, behind the scenes. I have jokingly called our weekly Zoom meetings 'Gallerists Anonymous'. What has it been like to have these regular informal conversations with a group of colleagues?

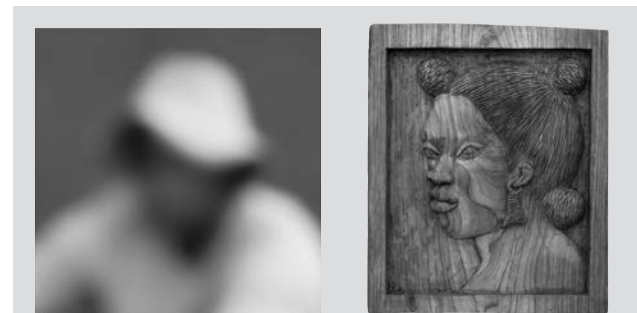
SC: Gallerists Anonymous is right, it has been a forum of confession, inspiration, questioning, and most of all radical rethinking of how our business models might, and could, change for the better. These support groups have been numerous worldwide, local and global, and one of the positive outcomes of the pandemic. I have great hopes that openness to collaboration, sharing of information and active reinvention will remain.

JB: Have there been any unintended outcomes of this process?

SC: The project *Tempest* that we did with Tanya Leighton was a *RHE* cocktail of both our programmes, manifested in an IRL show at Tanya's Berlin gallery (mine was in lockdown) that was soon muffled as Berlin went into lockdown but managed to have a digital presence through the willingness of the artists to make film content to digitally communicate the show. A true product of our times and of this collaboration. And via interaction with your gallery, I discovered Simphiwe Ndzube for a show I'm working on for the fall.

JB: Looking ahead to a year where art fairs and other physical forms of exchange will slowly return, what role do you imagine projects like this can play post-pandemic?

SC: I hope the group will continue to expand as a curatorial generator for true gallery swaps and pop-ups. And that we will still make time for our weekly Zoom when we climb back on that super speedy merry-go-round.



For *Galleries Curate: RHE*, Stevenson presents works from Mame-Diarra Niang's new photographic series, *Léthé* (left), alongside a selection of Barthélémy Toguo's carved wooden portraits of residents of Bllongue, Cameroon (right), in Amsterdam from 27 May to 3 July. Also see p12, 'What we're reading', for texts recommended for *RHE* by Penny Siopis.

Newness in the face of aftermath

Sisipho Ngodwana channels her curiosity into a curated exhibition, 'my whole body changed into something else', joined along the way by Sinazo Chiya. They riff on the show's possibilities

SC: So what is this show about?

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SN: It's looking at ways that humans can exist beyond being labourers or consumers. It's asking where and how we can exist as human beings who are part of a cycle of life forms.

SC: An invitation to the spectrum of subjectivities? An attempt at cataloguing the ways that people can simply be?

SN: Correct.

SC: How does this connect to the idea of trade which was so instrumental to the start of the project?

SN: It began with our not-so-recent history of the commodification of human beings, where people were segregated from their place of birth. When you are removed from your place of origin, from the thing that cements your existence to the earth, you are prone to objectification. This realisation sparked a curiosity around how we can mark these lives and undo that history in our workplaces, psychologies and emotions.

SC: The trauma of being dislocated and commodified?

SN: Exactly. The show is a way of aiding the learning and unlearning of commodified dislocation.

SC: There are a lot of young artists featured – Monilola Olayemi Ilujeju, Precious Okoyomon, Leonard Pongo, Aziz Hazara, Rahima Gambo, Simnikiwe Buhlungu, Farah Al-Qasimi and others. It's as if this generation has a particular drive towards centring their own subjectivities or exploring non-normative ways of thinking. They take an active pleasure in being of this world and actively resist being reduced and compartmentalised. What has been interesting about working with them?

SN: It's been refreshing to see their approach to collaboration, in the sense that artists are making work that involves more than one medium or working with other practitioners across all the arts. Often the work involves recognition of experience rather than objecthood – the work is not tied to existing in a single, physical form.

SC: I think of how there's such a prevalence of sound in the show. Sound, as you've said, has a very particular purity because it's something that you can only *experience*. People are *moved* beyond the thing itself, that can't be touched or seen.

SN: 'Purity' is too ambitious; it's perhaps more 'honest' than 'pure'.

But yes, you can commodify sound, and you can commodify the persona making the sound, but the experience of the person who hears the sound is in a completely different spectrum. Even though there's a looting of music cultures, the person who listens to music – whether they are in New York, Burkina Faso or some village in the Eastern Cape – the truth of their experience can exist outside of that commodification. There's always been a way that people can turn that commodification into something that can give them pleasure, life and affirmation, without necessarily participating in its commercialisation.

SC: Many artists are also working with the archive. They are making new things by peering at the old or repurposing history in an effort to shift the things that seem impossible to discard.

SN: There's the generation that had to endure the history we know, and there's the next generation that had to transition from being the subjects of that history, and after that there's the generation that makes it their mission to understand what happened and what is happening in that moment of reconfiguration.

SC: That makes sense. The people who had to endure are followed by those in transition, and they are



PHOTO: MARLO TODESCHINI

'Asking as many questions as possible': Curators Sinazo Chiya (left) and Sisipho Ngodwana

followed by those who try to make sense of both the endurance and the transition. There are people who try to make newness in the face of aftermath. It is also interesting to see how some of the older practitioners' ideas find articulation in a context like this. It's exciting to weave in works by Steven Cohen, Serge Alain Nitegeka and Portia Zvavahera. Moshekwa Langa, for example, was long willing to locate a sense of self in objects without that being transactional; there's a will to understand self as bigger than the sum of those parts. There's definitely a thing of *newness*, but I think it's also inspiring to see how some of the established fellows have been thinking in this way over many years and mediums.

SN: Absolutely. I don't think there's a generation that didn't feel like

they were part of something that happened before. I think that's the ongoing difficulty – everyone has always been trying to find themselves outside of history.

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SC: What was the initial intent of this show? Because we call it an inquiry rather than an essay.

SN: It's being curious about something we don't know. It's knowing 'there are other worlds (they have not told us about)'. We don't know what exists 'out there', or what is yet to come, so we are asking as many questions as possible so that hopefully we may be better prepared *next time*.

SC: So, a prompt to dabble with the possibility of the vastness of things?

SN: Yes, hence the words borrowed from Sun Ra. It's also been very tiring to speak of violence and subjugation and all those things, especially as a Black person and especially if the violence continues. The big question is 'where the hell are we going?'

SC: It's interesting because the show seems to be asking, 'what are roads?'

SN: That's why it is an inquiry, because we don't know anything. Maybe a comet is coming, maybe we'll have a second big bang and it will start all over again.

SC: That sounds quite beautiful.

'my whole body changed into something else' opens at Stevenson, Cape Town and Johannesburg, on 1 July and runs till 14 August

Calendar Apr-Jul

'Everything is written in pencil these days'
- Simphiwe Ndzube

7 April

Craving for Humanity: The World of Barthélémy Toguo opens at the Musée du quai Branly in Paris. Works by Toguo are hung alongside antiquities from the collection TO 5 DEC

8 April

Jane Alexander's *Verity, Faith and Justice*, a tableau from a site-specific installation at the Singapore Biennale in 2006, goes on view at Stevenson Amsterdam TO 22 MAY



15 April

Zanele Muholi's touring exhibition *Somnyama Ngonyama: Hail, the Dark Lioness* opens at the Cummer Museum in Jacksonville, Florida TO 6 JUN

19 April

Last week to see the first of our two Meschac Gaba surveys, *Money, Money, Money*, at Stevenson Cape Town TO 24 APR

21 April

Mother!, including work by Frida Orupabo, opens at Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Copenhagen TO 29 AUG

24 April

Robin Rhode's first solo exhibition in the Netherlands opens at Voorlinden museum in Wassenaar

27 April

Freedom Day, South Africa



29 April

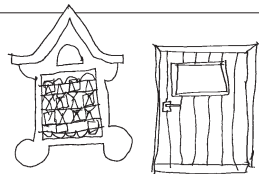
Part two of our Meschac Gaba survey, *Citoyen du Monde*, opens at Stevenson Cape Town. Showing alongside is Khanyisile Mawhayi (above) in the first iteration of a new project series, *STAGE* TO 26 JUN

1 May

Workers' Day

2 May

Frida Orupabo presents a public installation in Toronto as part of the Contact Photography Festival TO 31 MAY



6 May

Stevenson launches *Studios*, an OVR inviting viewers into the work spaces of artists in Abuja, Amsterdam, Belo Horizonte, Cape Town, Harare, Joburg, Lille and Los Angeles TO 22 MAY

6 May

A mural by Odili Donald Odita features in *New Grit: Art & Philly Now* at the Philadelphia Museum of Art TO 22 AUG

10 May

Last week to see Deborah Poynton's exhibition of new paintings, *Proverb*, at Stevenson Johannesburg TO 14 MAY

11 May

For France's Africa season, *The Power of My Hands* showcases the work of women artists - Portia Zvavahera among them - at the Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris TO 11 JUL

17 May

Last week to view Penny Siopis' film *Shadow Shame Again*, commissioned by the Peltz Gallery at Birkbeck, University of London, screening online TO 21 MAY

22 May

A solo exhibition by Wim Botha, his first in our Parktown space, opens at Stevenson Johannesburg TO 25 JUN

27 May

For *Galleries Curate: RHE*, Stevenson pairs Barthélémy Toguo and Mame-Diarra Niang in our Amsterdam space TO 3 JUL

28 May

A solo exhibition by Neo Matloga opens at SMAK, the museum of contemporary art in Ghent TO 28 AUG

29 May

Last weekend to view Dada Khanyisa and Thenjiwe Niki Nkosi's works in *Mixed Company* at the Norval Foundation, Cape Town TO 31 MAY

30 May

Final days of *Zanele Muholi* at Tate Modern, London, a survey spanning the breadth of their career as a visual activist TO 31 MAY

3 June

Zanele Muholi's *Somnyama Ngonyama* series features at the Belfast Photo Festival, themed *Future(s)* TO 30 JUN



13 June

Oracles of the Pink Universe (above), Simphiwe Ndzube's first institutional solo show in the US, featuring new immersive works, opens at the Denver Art Museum, Colorado TO 12 SEPT

16 June

Youth Day, South Africa

17-27 June

Stevenson takes part in Amsterdam Art Week. Contact ams@stevenson.info for details of events

19 June

How to Make a Country, curated by Stevenson's Lerato Bereng with work by Dineo Seshee Bopape, Thenjiwe Niki Nkosi, Zineb Benjelloun and Frida Orupabo among others, opens at FRAC Poitou-Charentes as part of France's Africa Season TO 18 DEC

26 June

Zanele Muholi exhibits at Sprengel Museum Hannover as the winner of Stiftung Niedersachsen's 2021 Spectrum International Prize for Photography TO 10 OCT

1 July

'my whole body changed into something else', a group exhibition curated by Sisipho Ngodwana with Sinazo Chiya, opens across Stevenson's Cape Town and Johannesburg galleries TO 14 AUG

3 July

Neo Matloga takes part in the Watou Arts Festival in Poperinge, Belgium TO 5 SEP

5 July

Les Rencontres d'Arles photography festival returns, with a solo exhibition by Pieter Hugo TO 26 SEP

8 July

021-2021, a group show of new paintings made in Cape Town, opens at Stevenson Amsterdam TO 28 AUG



10 July

Deborah Poynton's survey exhibition *Beyond Belief* (above), drawing on 10 years of painting, opens at the Drents Museum in Assen, the Netherlands TO 28 NOV

17 July

Friendship. Nature. Culture, celebrating 44 years of the Daimler Art Collection, includes works by Pieter Hugo, Viviane Sassen and Guy Tillim TO 27 FEB

Don't miss these ongoing shows

→ Until 9 August

Drives, Jo Ractliffe's first US museum survey, has its run at the Art Institute of Chicago extended

→ Until late August

Frida Orupabo is included in *Infinite Identities: Photography in the Age of Sharing* at Huis Marseille, Amsterdam

→ Until 30 September

Meleko Mokgosi explores the history of Pan-Africanism in *Pan-African Pulp* at the University of Michigan Museum of Art

→ Until 3 October

Dada Khanyisa has work on *Heroes: Principles of African Greatness* at the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Washington, DC

→ Until 28 November

Painting by Portia Zvavahera is included in *Psychic Wounds: On Art & Trauma* at The Warehouse in Dallas, Texas

→ Until 12 December

Robin Rhode is included in *A Fire in My Belly* at the Julia Stoschek Collection in Berlin

→ Until 31 December

Witness: Afro Perspectives from the Jorge M Pérez Collection at El Espacio 23 in Miami includes works by Moshekwa Langa, Simphiwe Ndzube, Frida Orupabo, Penny Siopis, Barthélémy Toguo and Portia Zvavahera. Also see *Allied with Power* at the Pérez Art Museum Miami until 6 Feb 2022



Penny Siopis' Shame: 'A revolutionary feeling'

For Art Basel's OVR: Pioneers, Penny Siopis showed her iconic *Shame* paintings alongside a new film, *Shadow Shame Again*. In an extract from a conversation moderated by Sinazo Chiya, Siopis and art historian Griselda Pollock discuss the film's piercing affect

GP: Every time I watch this film I'm caught in a completely different register. I think that the first time people see it, we notice what's going on, ask how this is put together, wonder how these things relate. We're looking for typical cinematic logics. Then we begin to realise that all these home movies carry levels of what we would call, following Fredric Jameson, a *political unconscious* – things that people making the home movies don't know they are doing. When you put them together, we see why people made films and what those films reveal about the home and the relations of bodies – particularly of girl children and young women – to a system. And the system is marriage, or the family, or the home, or the church ... These should be places of affection and consent; but they are also places of violence. The murder of Tshegofatso Pule is one of these iconic moments

of focusing on, as you call it, the 'other pandemic'. I always think that the double work of artists faced with such horrors is *mourning the victim*, denouncing the crime and thus making us feel the pain. I found that very monumental this time in your film as a durational call to stay with this event. Your film is remembering and giving voice both to one individual who was stabbed and hanged, and the many whom you allow to speak back from their violent deaths. As I also find in your film *Communion*, you give a dead, killed woman a voice. She will speak back – protected by the structure of the film which is not beautifying or aestheticising, but awesomely painful and full of anxiety. At the end of the film, we feel more and more anxiety about the women we see in the film entering into possibly threatening situations... In London recently, the murder of a white woman caused a

great outcry, and then I did some research about the women who are not remembered in a dramatic public way. Nicole Smallman and Bibaa Henry were two Black sisters who were murdered in a park in London in June 2020. There was no vigil and the police did not research their case; the care was not given to them in that way. I'm very interested in who is and is not remembered, how we use certain kinds of events to shock us and then promptly forget that in the time it's taken us to read the report, it has happened again ... I was awed watching your film again in this context and feeling the acoustic pain of the snapping sound, like a whip lash. Particularly, I think, for anybody who has opened her ears to the sound of particular choirs and ways of singing, this is very piercing: evoking the sense that this is what trauma is: a piercing wound.

PS: I think that piercing also comes with the images and the fragmentation; there are lots of fragments of different home movies, detracting from the idea of one overarching story – rather, there are many, many, many stories. I also



'No witness': Stills from *Shadow Shame Again*, commissioned by the Peltz Gallery at Birkbeck, University of London

personally feel pierced by the sound, which comes from two sources: one is the UCT choir singing *Ukuthula*, a prayer for peace, and the other is Mbali Ngube, a student at Nelson Mandela University who posted her singing on Twitter in response to Pule's murder. Both songs are acapella. At the beginning of the film, the snapping sound, which also evokes rain, is actually the choir clapping their hands. So there's only human-made sound, which felt appropriate for the film in that it's about individual experiences collectively put together. Ngube used an app which allows you to make, I think, four different parts of the song and put them together as if you were a group singing. I felt an immense solidarity in that act. For me, the sound is a form of materiality and affect.

GP: And then we have the materiality of the 8mm and 16mm film, which now has the quality of an archaic industrial product. You are retrieving this really important historical memory of pre-1994 South Africa. There's also a relationship between apartheid, the colony, and the present thinking about the idea of the post-colony alongside

the post-traumatic. I think we are in a new era. We are not in the former historical moment, but we are the bearers of its legacy and we are denying history if we do not acknowledge it. Because your films combine that earlier technology with your capacity to use current digital editing and to layer the sound and all the rest, they become a palimpsest of working with traumatic history, and addressing the new domain of what we are doing with decolonising – because it has clearly not been sufficient to bring an end to one of the last great totalitarian regimes. After all this time, this colonial imaginary is still present and has not been psychically or politically worked through yet because it persists at such a deep level and so many levels simultaneously.

PS: Yes, it persists, and I think this idea of working through personal, political and historical trauma is a process, and it also requires action. Even though this is an intimate film, I saw it as contributing to these questions. My mother had a cine camera and she used to film us, her children. So my relationship to these 8mm and 16mm home movies

is also about my own memory, and the relationship between the sense of intimacy and protection of the home and the awareness even then, as a child growing up under apartheid, of the absolute injustice of the world I was living in. All of the footage in this film is from my archive of found material, acquired sight unseen from flea markets and charity shops or given to me. I have the reels transferred to digital, and the material form of the film itself, being celluloid, is recorded, and I use that in my filmmaking. The material body has all the inscriptions that we are talking about – of history and trauma and archive – and so I use the dust spots, the sprocket marks, the leader film, the way the celluloid burns ... In making *Shadow Shame Again* it was a challenge to find pieces of film that I thought would speak to the context in the most complex way, and my solution was to bring together the tiniest fragments. Towards the end, the scene of the wedding has a slightly longer duration. It is the only footage that my mother shot – a friend of hers was getting married. That footage, coupled with the uplifting sound at the end, to me feels very affirming.



Griselda Pollock (Left) and Penny Siopis conversing via Zoom on 25 March 2021

CONT.→ SC: You have previously mentioned that you understand shame as not only a loss of integrity but also a site of empathy and even empowerment; that this speaking, this voicing, this embodiment, this material existence gives something back to the people who may have been silenced by shame.

PS: I've always felt that shame is both an individual and a shared psychological state, and because it is both private and public, it has political urgency. As such, shame offers us an opportunity to reflect on ourselves and our behaviour with others. And I've always been interested in where the site of hurt and exposure can also be the site of change. Marx, quoted by Sartre in his preface to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, said, 'shame is a revolutionary feeling'. And that's the potency of shame – it's toxic but it can also be the grounds for empathy and change.

GP: Yes indeed, that's such a crucial motivation because it's the revolt against the condition in which those who shame us put us, that enables us not to accept that this is the condition we should be put in.

Shame alerts us to this. At the same time, the act of shaming someone else, or projecting your own shame outwards, is the very basis of homophobia, racism, misogyny, anti-Semitism – *they – not I* – are the shameful! As you are suggesting, it's the shift in consciousness that says, in the case of class: 'Workers of the World, Unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains' – in our abasement as being given nothing by the system, we will demand change. We don't know yet what we are going to demand – we are still trying to work out what it is to create a world of safety and security and relationality in which we care for and carry each other's humanity in every moment of our exchanges. [From the beginning of this conversation where we looked at your exhibition *Three Essays on Shame* at the Freud Museum] we've gone from Freud's 1905 exploration of the drama of sexuality and desire and passion, through the historical twists and turns of the 20th century, and now to this beautiful weaving together of that constant call through the attention to shame. The call is to denounce the shameful, and mobilise the determination to resist and to name it. But we

need to make people *feel* it in its doubleness (mourn the victim and denounce the crime) in order for that mobilisation to happen. That's why I think the question of the psychic level that you deal with so often comes back into and becomes the political. What makes us desire this change? Freud asked: 'What do women want [desire]?' and 'What is the nature of desire?' Why do we reach out towards others, which is at the heart of sexuality? How do we make ourselves desire peace, or want humanity to be safe and dignified and secure from the horrors we see around us? That I think is still the question. Intellectually, it's fine, but we have to have this deep recognition of the affective, of affects that pierce us again and again, to make us desire something other than goods and consumption.

Griselda Pollock is a feminist art historian, Professor emerita of Social and Critical Histories of Art at the University of Leeds, and the winner of the 2020 Holberg Prize

The full conversation of which the above is an extract can be viewed at <https://www.stevenson.info/exhibition/5769/multimedia>

Shadow Shame Again is screened online by the Peltz Gallery at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uva9oMfws0>

How to make a country?

Lerato Bereng looks to Morija for answers

Invited to curate a show for France's Africa2020 Season, I was drawn to a project I curated in Lesotho in 2017, *Conversations at Morija #3: What Makes a Country*. This research project looked at Lesotho's independence story, culminating in a set of conversations exploring definitions of independence: what makes a country, literally?

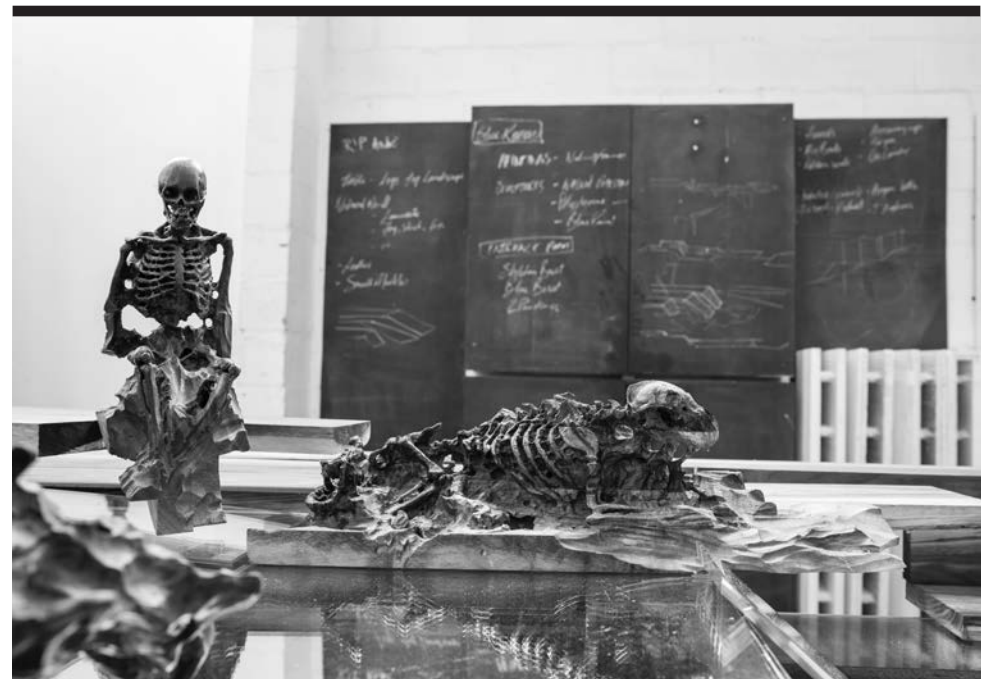
I came across texts detailing 'how to start your own country' and 'how to become a country in four easy steps', which opened up space for taking apart some big

ideas. Reflecting on the structures of colonialism which continue to reverberate, I looked again at Morija, one of the oldest French missionary outposts in the region. I discovered that the first orthographers of the Sesotho language were French, and the printing press where the show's publication will be produced was established by these missionaries.

How to Make a Country, at FRAC Poitou-Charentes, is a curatorial response to the four main ingredients of nation-making: land, ideology, population and language. The show comprises an earth installation by Dineo Seshee Bopape looking at the teachings of Mohlomi, a healer,

traveller and counsel to Lesotho's first king, Moshoeshe I; Thenjiwe Niki Nkosi's *Gymnasium* series exploring the sport's embedded racial ideology as well as ideas of tenderness and humanity in relation to a long year of vulnerability; Zineb Benjelloun's Franco-Arabic comics of scenes from daily life in Casablanca; Frida Orupabo's collages citing fragments of photographs from largely colonial archives; and the *Ba Re Dictionary*, a project looking at the Sesotho language, the malleability and playfulness at its root, and the possibilities of expression inherent in word creation, which forms the core of the exhibition publication.

How to Make a Country runs from 19 juin - 18 décembre / 19 Phuptjane - 18 Tšitoe 2021



In the flow of things: A glimpse into Wim Botha's Kommetjie studio in the run-up to *The River*, his first exhibition at Stevenson's Parktown space in Johannesburg. Reminiscent of the towering skeleton at the heart of his installation at the

Norval Foundation in 2018, yet intimately scaled, these figures, carved or excavated from walnut, contemplate their reflections in a landscape that seems to span time as much as space. The exhibition opens on 22 May and runs to 25 June.

Reading matter

New additions to our shelves



Frida Orupabo *Hours After*.
Published by Stevenson
(cat. 96), 2021. Interview
by Elvira Dyangani Ose



Two Men Arrive in a Village.
The Gould Collection Vol 5, 2021.
Photographs by **Jo Ractliffe**.
Story by **Zadie Smith**



Guy Tillim *Photopaper*
58/59 *Hotel Universo*
61/62 *Second Nature*
64/65 *Dar es Salaam and Abidjan*

From the press

→ Setumo-Thebe Mohlomi on Serge Alain Nitegeka's
Lost and Found at Stevenson Johannesburg

[Serge Alain] Nitegeka asks us to complicate our ways of seeing and thinking about migration in *Lost and Found* – particularly in the way he plays with site and sight.

In the sculpture room, the bundles depicted in the exhibition's paintings all sit on platforms at varying heights from the ground. Only among themselves, they create an initial sense of bathos: now only representations of bundles that people forced into migration might use to contain all they have or can carry just until safety. They look heavy, not shaped to be wieldy and put back together along lines of stitching.

As the viewer gazes at the sculptures at a downward angle, metaphors about about the way migration is viewed. But what creates the artistic moment with a bundle devoid of its context and consequence is to look up and see, in the painting room, the bundle heavy with the meanings poured into it by the person who must carry it.

This play on the viewer's line of sight between the sculptures and paintings shines a light on forced migration. This it does by allowing the viewer, taking each image in turn, to form meaning from experience. Each artform is inextricable from the other, as we are too – regardless of the borders and identities that appear to say otherwise.

'Making meaning and art from forced migration', *New Frame*, 24 February.
<https://www.newframe.com/making-meaning-and-art-from-forced-migration/>

WHAT WE'RE READING

In supplementing the thinking around movement and water occasioned by *Galleries Curate: RHE*, Penny Siopis recommends the essays, 'Exploring the Indian Ocean as a rich archive of history', by Isabel Hofmeyr and Charne Lavery, and 'Provisional Notes on Hydrocolonialism' by Isabel Hofmeyr, both accessible here: <https://galleriescurate.com/texts/>

The first scholarly text examines how submarine life and human histories are entangled. It discusses the surface and deep histories of the Indian Ocean, exploring how this body has been mined and mythologised to propose 'a new way of looking at world history that has been dominated by European accounts'. The second, more directly situated in literary oceanic studies, uses a poem by Kholeka Phutuma as a starting point to play close attention to 'dockside' reading, asking, 'what we might learn by tracing books on their oceanic journey?'