

Press release
September 2021

Exhibition *History's Footnote* connects stories of resilience and protest

On display from 2 October until 28 November 2021 at Marres in Maastricht, the Netherlands

In *History's Footnote: on Love and Freedom* 11 international artists unravel traumas of racial, gender, sexual, and cultural injustices. This group exhibition by the South-African curator Khanyisile Mbongwa connects the stories of film makers, visual artists, singers and poets about decolonization, lost language, collective protest and forgotten history. A central theme in the exhibition is the quest for love and freedom to which history serves as a footnote.

History's Footnote

'Without freedom, no love is possible,' says Khanyisile Mbongwa, 'and without love there is no freedom.' The decolonization and abolition of slavery introduced new systems which lack freedom. In these systems, the expression of culture and language are prohibited and collective identities are threatened. *History's Footnote* gives space to these forgotten stories and offers sight to the emancipation and awareness necessary for the creation of a better future.

Khanyisile Mbongwa

Mbongwa is a Cape Town based independent curator, and sociologist. Her interdisciplinary approach and performative practices unpack complexities such as the socio-political, economic, racial and gender-queer nuances of the everyday. Mbongwa uses creativity to instigate spaces for emancipatory practices, joy and play. In the past, she has worked with Norval Foundation as Adjunct Curator for performative practices, Cape Town Carnival as curatorial and social development advisor and was the Chief Curator of the Stellenbosch Triennale 2020.

Cure and Care

Khanyisile Mbongwa's practice as a curator is fundamentally based on two principles: cure and care. Cure, in the sense that there is a 'woundedness' that a lot of people are dealing with and which needs to heal in order to celebrate joy, love, and beauty. In terms of care, she strives for a situation in which cultural institutions take better care of artists and their practices. As curator of *History's Footnote*, she invited artists who show that through their work, curing happens.

Forbidden language

The sound installation *Unisilent Y* by artist Janaú (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1983) is dedicated to the lost language of the Tupi-Guarani people in Brazil. The Portuguese settlers forbade the indigenous people to speak their own language. This language contains all kinds of words and sounds that directly refer to the environment and way of life of the Tupi-Guarani. With the loss of it, they also lost the opportunity to express their culture and traditions. Janaú brings to life the vowel sound of the letter Y of the Tupi-Guarani language with indigenous rituals and a landscape of sound.

Exploitation

Eric Magassa's (Göteborg, Sweden, 1972) work moves like a spirit through the hallways of Marres. His site-specific media-installation *Footwork* juxtaposes painting, collage, and photography thus creating visual echoes from the past, present, and future. Eric Magassa was predominantly inspired by the 1980s; a period of rapidly growing global capitalism, political upheaval, significant wealth discrepancy and global mass media. It was also the decennium of African famine and the end of the Cold War, marked by the fall of the Berlin Wall. *Footwork* shows traces of his Swedish, French, and Senegalese roots, and explores how West African art has been copied and exploited in various ways for artistic and commercial purposes.

Lost memories

In the sculptures *Building Mountains* by **Lungiswa Gqunta** (Port Elizabeth, South Africa, 1990) remembering and the loss of memories are central. What can mountains tell us about the past? They are mainly seen as places of tourism and the extraction of resources. But in ancestral traditions they are sacred places, silent beacons in the landscape that hear, see and feel everything. They oversee the moments of black revolt, the quest for healing and resistance. With the falling of rocks, they bring us messages from past generations about oppressed traditions and culture.

Justice and Healing

With her virtual reality experience *Kalunga*, **Géraldine Tobe** (Kinshasa, Congo, 1992) literally invites the public to view the world differently. Visitors take a seat on a large wooden chair ornamented with a skull and engraved with references to colonial horrors and injustice. They put on VR glasses and experience fragments from the life of a black enslaved boy who has been hanged. *Kalunga* is a virtual landscape made of film, photography and Tobe's signature smoke paintings. It addresses the themes of justice and healing. The installation asks the viewer a fundamental question: did death give this boy the much-desired freedom?

Artists

Participating artists of *History's Footnote* are **Felipe Castelblanco** (Bogotá, Colombia, 1985), **Nicholas Galanin** (Sitka, Alaska, Verenigde Staten, 1979), **Lungiswa Gqunta** (Port Elizabeth, Zuid-Afrika, 1990), **Noncedo Gxekwa** (Ladysmith, Zuid-Afrika, 1981), **Hymn_self** (Zuid-Afrika, 1984), **Janaú** (Rio de Janeiro, Brazilië, 1983), **Euridice Zaituna Kala** (1987, Maputo, Mozambique), **Kemang Wa Lehulere** (Kaapstad, Zuid-Afrika, 1984), **Eric Magassa** (Göteborg, Sweden, 1972), **Nástio Mosquito** (Angola) and **Geraldine Tobe** (Kinshasa, Congo, 1992).

More information and tickets

Read more about *History's Footnote* and book your ticket at www.marres.org.

Note for editors

For more information, images, and interview requests with artists and curators, please contact Renée Schmeetz, communications manager: renee.schmeetz@marres.org, 06 120 349 75.