

Introduction

We are delighted to be able to present you Lerato Shadi's first monograph with this publication. In her work, it is the marginalized that Shadi puts centre stage, negotiating bodies discriminated against in racist, sexist or classist ways, along with the experiences inscribed in them. Employing different media, the artist addresses issues of institutional violence, patriarchal and colonial strategies of exclusion and erasure but also highlights resistant subjective narratives. Focussing on the predominantly Western historiography, she deploys artistic means to make visible the deliberately overlooked and repressed. Central to Shadi's work is the question of perspective: recognizing that we all bring with us our own horizons of experience, deriving from our socialization and biography. Shadi elucidates and affirms that her work relates to her own individual perspective, and draws its power from it. Rather than considering it as a weakness, Shadi sees subjectivity as a great strength, provided that one is aware of it. For the artist, recognizing one's own limited perspective, one's own unknowingness, is the key to an appreciative, diverse coexistence based on mutual understanding.

Including and combining different voices was also a guiding principle in the preparation of this publication. The book is structured in three chapters dealing with fundamental themes and motifs in Shadi's work: body, work and history. Our authors were invited to approach Shadi's work with regard to these aspects and to explicitly bring in their own perspectives. The result is a discerning dialogue between the artist's work and the thoughts of the authors. Serving as a thread through the book are quotes from Shadi's conversations and interviews, offering insight into her sources of inspiration, fields of interest and the creative processes underlying the works.

Often engaging her own body in her artistic practice, Shadi uses it as a means to interrogate political, social and historical inscriptions. In her essay, Natasha Becker reflects on the embodiment of collective traumas of repression and erasure in Shadi's performances, and on strategies of emancipation from systems of dominance. She relates bell hooks' philosophical analysis of love as a practice with Shadi's notion of resistance as loving action. Against the background of South African history and culture, Portia Malatije analyses specific aspects pertaining to the labour, value and commodification of bodies in Shadi's art. She pays particular attention to the arduous acts involved in Shadi's performances, in which she recognizes a critical and radical decolonial potential.

The erasure of knowledge and life through colonial, patriarchal and institutional processes are among the core themes in Shadi's work. Will Fredo (Furtado)'s text traces both continuity of violent oppression and the history of resistance. Fredo illustrates how discourses formulated in the European Enlightenment continue to influence racist logics today, focusing on language as a powerful instrument in this context.

Language has also continually played a decisive role in Lerato Shadi's artistic work. For instance, she generally opts for Setswana to name exhibitions and artworks. Through this choice of language alone, Shadi poses questions of inclusion and exclusion: who is being addressed and who is not? Setswana now is one of the eleven official languages of South Africa and is spoken by almost ten percent of the population. During apartheid, Setswana was among the repressed languages in the country. This aspect of linguistic discrimination is a recurring theme in Shadi's work, which is why translating this publication into Setswana was also of particular concern to us.

We are very pleased that, owing to funding by the Berlin Senate Department for Culture and Europe, this project has been brought to success and would like to express our sincere thanks for the substantial support of this publication. Our special thanks go to our authors, who have engaged with Lerato Shadi's work with great empathy and attention and have articulated valuable, wise thoughts. Our translators have contributed with great sensitivity to achieving the book's trilingual nature. Our thanks also go to Erik Dettwiler for the wonderful design of the book. We thank Chiara Figone and Archive books for their productive collaboration. On a very personal note, I would like to thank Lerato Shadi for her trust, for many inspiring conversations and for her friendship.

Tobias Peper

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