



Richard Mudariki

THE POLITICS OF LIFE

johans borman

FINE ART

FRONT COVER
Illusion of Freedom

BACK COVER
Tsotsi

OPPOSITE
The Merchant



Richard Mudariki
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FNB Joburg Art Fair

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johans borman
FINE ART

IN COLLABORATION WITH MARC STANES

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Richard Mudariki

THE POLITICS OF LIFE

Richard Mudariki was born, raised and educated in Zimbabwe. His formative years were spent in an African country where society and politics are strongly intertwined; where cultural homogenization and socio-economic issues are often exaggerated and magnified. As a result of living in a society where cultural, social and economic issues are continuously politicized, Mudariki has focussed on and created an awareness of this reality through his work.

Mudariki's interest in 'the politics of life' has resulted in his approach of questioning it, observing change and never accepting the status quo at face value. The artist's paintings seek to provoke public opinion and stimulate debate on social injustices and issues such as corporate greed, neo colonialism, censorship, human rights, rape and gender stereotyping *inter alia*. Art historian Lloyd Pollack comments on this in his foreword to Mudariki's first solo exhibition, 'My reality', in 2012: *Although such subject matter smacks of shrill, soap-box preachiness, the mise-en-scene proves so visually arresting that any specific political message becomes subsumed in a spectacular Breughelesque pageant of infamy and transgression. This transcends any chronological and geographic particularity, and becomes a timeless and universal statement conveyed with such gripping imaginative assurance that the resultant image entirely transcends the artist's activist goals.*

Mudariki views life as a game; obtrusive checkerboard patterns cover the walls and floors of the walled spaces in his paintings, turning them into three dimensional chess boards. Pollack writes: *Checkerboards are also associated with other games of skill and chance, such as checkers and draughts, which also involve combat, the capture of pieces and the conquest of territory. These allusions suggest that the paintings represent contests, and they identify life as conflict and strife. Mudariki's references to dice and card games intimate that the inhabitants of his world are not in control of their destinies, and that they are the playthings of sinister and malign forces.*

Both the checkerboard upon which the action of virtually all the paintings is set, and the walls cordoning off space, and denying one any glimpse of what lies beyond, imply captivity and confinement, and operate as metaphors for a people denied freedom of choice, and room in which to manoeuvre. All these walls, barriers and boundaries imply no exit, and distill a hallucinatory quality indicative of dementia and delusion.

Mudariki's isometric boxes function exactly like a stage with the fourth wall removed, and the artist's décor exudes an overt theatricality, and conjures up a chimerical world that is both grotesque and macabre. The bizarre architecture, freakish hybrid beings and flamboyant costumes are scenographic fantasies.

They remind us of the medieval visions of Brueghel and Bosch both of whom rejected the real world in order to construct an infernal amusement park, a Disneyland of the afterlife in the words of W.S. Gibson.

This approach is particularly well illustrated by the artist in 'Illusion of Freedom', in which two monsters emerge from the background, looking to prey on the girl. A Nigerian flag hangs over a locked gate; a reference to the abduction of girls in Nigeria by a militia group. Symbolism and allegory render various meanings to these paintings. They present abstract ideas, meanings and messages in visual form through symbolic figures, actions or representations. Visual elements such as coins, dice, paper aeroplanes, gold bars, animals (goats, cockerel, baboon, sharks, dogs...) and animal-headed beings, all have a particular and profound meaning.

Lloyd Pollack observes that Mudariki's paintings create a surreal atmosphere: *His introduction of logical inconsistencies into his handling of light, space, perspective and scale sabotage illusionist goals, and underscore the identity of his paintings as representations of reality, rather than reality itself. There is no narrative; no temptation for the viewer to loose himself in the unfolding action, and involve himself with the characters and their predicament, for that action is always arrested, and left hanging in the air.*

Pollack summarises Mudariki's work eloquently: *The static character of the scenario and absence of any resolution or catharsis, eliminates action and suspense. It enables the viewer to remain completely detached from what he/she witnesses, and invites an analytic rather than an emotional response, encouraging us to consider the political and social implications of the image just as we do in a Brechtian production.*

Johans Borman

July 2014

Cape Town

Mashonisas, a Zulu word meaning to 'sink', is the name given to the legitimate face of loan sharks, who lend pay-day money to the low income earners who find that they fall short before the end of the month. They are considered to be amongst the most ruthless exploiters of the poorest and most vulnerable of wage earners.

Loan Shark

2014

Acrylic on canvas

88 x 74 cm

Signed and dated bottom right



The illusion of freedom will continue as long as it's profitable to continue the illusion. At the point where the illusion becomes too expensive to maintain, they will just take down the scenery, they will pull back the curtains, they will move the tables and chairs out of the way and you will see the brick wall at the back of the theatre
~ Frank Zappa

Illusion of Freedom

2014

Oil on canvas

150,5 x 150,5 cm

Signed and dated bottom left



This artwork comments on the social construct around man and masculinity: According to society, a typical male is physically strong, aggressive, independent, objective, dominant, and likes maths and science; he is active, competitive, logical, worldly, skilled in business, direct, and knows the ways of the world; he is someone whose feelings are not easily hurt; he is adventurous, makes decisions easily, never cries, acts as a leader, and is self-confident, ambitious, able to separate feelings from ideas, and is not dependent on nor conceited about his appearance.

The Construction of Man

2014

Acrylic on canvas

82,5 x 56,5 cm

Signed and dated bottom left



This piece is inspired by the 1982 song, *New Church*, by pop group Lords of the New Church. The New Church is a movement whose views, doctrine and morals stand in sharp contrast to the normal conventions of the old Church. It is all inclusive; politicians, merchants, thieves, actors and the immoral are all part of the New Church.

New Church

Songwriters
BRIAN JAMES, STEVE BATOR

*When the heroes have all died away,
Priests and politicians have all lied away now.
Actors after all were only acting.
Church killed knowledge. Took the world a slave.*

*Chorus:
New Church
Join the New Church
Be a Lord of the New Church
Lords of the New Church Now – now*

*Ya gotta walk it, man, just like ya talk it.
Wear the uniform of your gang.
Purpose in life's just for living.
Dream merchants fantasy surreal so real.*

*(Chorus)
Divide and conquer – that's their game.
Beneath their haircut and clothes we're really
all the same.*

The New Church

2014
Oil on canvas (triptych)
89 x 73,5 cm (3)
Signed and dated bottom right

*They threaten our lives with nuclear war.
Gonna crucify us just once more.
Join the New Church
Be a Lord of the New Church hey.*

*(Chorus)
Truth can't be found on the television.
Throw away youth ya gotta take a stand.
Music is your only weapon.
Spanners in the works go start your gang...*

*(Chorus)
You know we're The New Church
Lords of the New Church*





I have always seen the process of negotiation as a means of reaching an agreement, in which both sides must be prepared to compromise on their demands. Perhaps one side does better than the other – gains an advantage – but in successful negotiations both sides must feel they are gaining something. This painting is an interpretation of a bitter labour dispute, and the scene is of a negotiation process between workers and employers regarding salaries. The workers, seated on one side of the table, demand a salary increase, while there is an on-going strike. In the confrontation, they lay down their cards and will not budge on their offer. In the past, many strikes and negotiation processes have taken place in South Africa over various labour issues; the more prevalent ones in the mining industry in which workers earn poor wages whilst mine CEOs are awarded huge salaries and bonuses.

Negotiations

2014

Acrylic on canvas

82,5 x 56,5 cm

Signed and dated bottom right



For centuries, Western imperialists with an appetite for the continent's resources have been a permanent feature in African history. China's footprint has been growing rapidly in most African countries during the past few decades: Is China a new colonial power? It seems that China is in Africa by invitation, and it is Africa's choice to engage with them. They are being invited because many African countries have serious infrastructure needs that China is able to assist with. However, there are some rogue Chinese investors who are allowed to get away with non-compliance with regard to socio-economic and environmental practices and laws. China is doing what is best for China. What is stopping Africa from doing what is best for Africa?

The Merchant

2014

Acrylic on canvas

73,5 x 89 cm

Signed and dated bottom left



Creating equality in the workforce by advantaging the previously underprivileged, and disadvantaging the previously privileged, is what BEE is/was aimed at. It has, however, created scenarios in which some employers have to consider the race and social background of any potential applicant rather than making decisions based purely on qualifications and experience. Thus, it is frequently seen as a system in which one's race is often the determining factor in finding employment in certain job types and industries.

Black Economic Empowerment (BEE)

2014

Acrylic on canvas

88,5 x 73,5 cm

Signed and dated bottom left



This work is about the Nkandla debacle.

Under the Magnifying Glass

2014

Acrylic on canvas

75 x 95 cm

Signed and dated bottom left



There has been a rising interest in contemporary African art in recent years. Some have suggested that contemporary African art blends the past with the present, and artists have expanded their approach to incorporate modern and contemporary inventions and technologies. It speaks to the viewer of the present, while at the same time evoking a rich cultural past. However, are all contemporary works from the continent truly African art?

Connoisseurs of Contemporary African Art

2014

Acrylic on canvas

73,5 x 89 cm

Signed and dated bottom left



A good haircut has the potential to transform your face; it can bring your best features to centre stage, and send less fortunate ones into the wings. It can even reveal assets never noticed before. I recently had my hair cut by a local barber who did an amazing job, seemingly transforming the way I look, just like an artist would create a different reality.

Getting a Cut

2014

Acrylic on canvas

82,5 x 56,5 cm

Signed and dated bottom left



A young black gangster; urban, stylish and flashy.

Tsotsi

2014

Oil on canvas

30 x 21,5 cm

Signed, dated and titled verso



Richard Mudariki

Solo Exhibitions

2014

Aug *The Politics of Life*, FNB Joburg Art Fair, Johans Borman Fine Art. Catalogue available online at <http://www.johansborman.co.za/exhibitions/>

Mar *Open Agenda*, Johans Borman Fine Art, Cape Town. Catalogue available online at <http://www.johansborman.co.za/exhibitions/>

2012

Jun *My Reality*, Johans Borman Fine Art, Cape Town. Catalogue available online at <http://www.johansborman.co.za/exhibitions/>

Group Exhibitions

2014

May *Still*, Johans Borman Fine Art, Cape Town. Catalogue available online at <http://www.johansborman.co.za/exhibitions/>

2013

Aug SPI National Portrait Exhibition, Rust en Vrede Gallery, Durbanville, Cape Town

Feb *Perceptual Vigilance*, Association for Visual Arts Gallery in partnership with Spier, Cape Town

2011

Jan *Hope and Despair*, National Gallery of Zimbabwe, Harare

Oct Rendezvous Art Focus Painting, (Travelling Exhibition) North West University Gallery, Potchefstroom

Oct *Persona*, Johans Borman Fine Art, Cape Town. Catalogue available online at <http://www.johansborman.co.za/exhibitions/>

Aug *At Night we Dream, at day we see*, AVA, Cape Town

Jul *Colour Africa*, Ort der Ausstellung: Amalienstraße 81, Gebäude im Hof, Munich, Germany

Jun *Contrasts*, Gallery Delta, Harare

May *Under the Magnifying Glass*, Junction Art Gallery, Johannesburg

May *Art Zimbabwe Today*, Gallery Delta, Harare

Apr *ZIMAGES Contemporary*, Zimbabwe German Society, Harare

Feb Group Artists Exhibition, Junction Art Gallery, Johannesburg

Jan Emerging Artists Exhibition, Gallery Delta, Harare

2010

Oct Amani Arts Festival, Khayelitsha, Cape Town

Sept *FACET, Zimbabwe Now*, sponsored by the Germany Embassy, Gallery Delta, Harare

Aug *Mother Earth*, Gallery Delta, Harare

Jul *reflections.co.zw*, National Gallery of Zimbabwe, Mutare

Jul Drawings and Graphics, Gallery Delta, Harare

Jul *Insight – Fund Raising Exhibition*, Gallery Delta, Harare

Jun *Live and Direct 2010*, National Gallery of Zimbabwe, Harare

May *Past and Present: 35 Years*, Gallery Delta, Harare

Apr *Roots – an art Exhibition* in collaboration between Dendera Gallery and Gallery Delta, Gallery Delta, Harare

Feb Young Artist Exhibition, Gallery Delta, Harare

2009

Dec *FACT 2009*, Cottco Art Exhibition, sponsored by the Cotton Company of Zimbabwe, National Gallery of Zimbabwe

Dec Summer Exhibition, Gallery Delta, Harare

Nov *Walls: Competition and Exhibition*. Sponsored by the Germany Embassy, Gallery Delta

Oct Unity Exhibition. Sponsored by the European Commission, Gallery Delta, Harare

Jun *Ani-mal*, Group Exhibition, Veo Gallery, Cape Town

2008

Dec Post Election Selection, sponsored by the

Embassy of Spain, Gallery Delta, Harare

Dec Miniature Group Exhibition 2008, Veo Gallery, Cape Town

Nov Salon 91 Art Exhibition, Salon 91, Cape Town

Oct *Enriching Women*, an exhibition for the International Women’s Film Festival, Gallery Delta, Harare

Oct *Let’s Get Together*: a group exhibition and competition sponsored by the French Embassy, Gallery Delta, Harare

Aug Africa University Annual Festival of Art and Culture: a group exhibition of paintings and graphics, National Gallery of Zimbabwe, Mutare

Aug Drawings and Graphics Exhibition, Gallery Delta, Harare

Jun Onai Exhibition, Three Man Group Exhibition, National Gallery of Zimbabwe, Mutare

Feb The Young Artists Exhibition, Gallery Delta, Harare

2007

Dec The Summer Exhibition, Gallery Delta, Harare

Sep The Young Painters Artist’s Exhibition, Gallery Delta, Harare

Aug Drawings and Graphics: An Overview, Gallery Delta, Harare

Jul *The Sixth Sense*, an exhibition of paintings and graphics, National Gallery of Zimbabwe, Mutare

Apr *Peace through Unity and Diversity*, an exhibition and competition sponsored by the European Commission, Gallery Delta, Harare

Feb The Young Artist Exhibition, Gallery Delta, Harare

2006

Dec The Summer Exhibition, Gallery Delta, Harare

Dec Verandah Gallery Portfolio Exhibition, Verandah Gallery, Emerald Hill, Harare

Aug Manicaland Visual Arts and Craft Association (MANISA) Annual Exhibition, National Gallery of Zimbabwe, Mutare

Sep *Rembrandt: An African Response*, an exhibition and art competition sponsored by the Embassy of

Netherlands, Gallery Delta, Harare

Jul *Our Thoughts*, Three Man Exhibition, National Gallery of Zimbabwe, Mutare

Mar *Don Quixote: An African Perspective*, an exhibition sponsored by the Embassy of Spain, Gallery Delta, Harare

2005

Sep *African Contemporary Art*, Gallery Delta, Harare

Jan Young Artist Exhibition, Gallery Delta, Harare

2003

May *IKONS – An Exhibition of Greek, Serbian and Russian Icons for the Greek Cultural Week*, Gallery Delta, Harare

Jan The Twenty Seventh Annual Young Artist Exhibition, Gallery Delta, Harare

2002

Apr *Explorations II* (Student Work), Gallery Delta, Harare

2001

Feb The Pritt Annual National Schools Exhibition, National Gallery of Zimbabwe, Harare, 2001

Collections

Museum Of Modern Art: Equatorial Guinea

The Bruce Campbell Smith Collection

Art Fairs

2014 *The Politics of Life*, FNB Joburg Art Fair, Johans Borman Fine Art. Catalogue available online at <http://www.johansborman.co.za/exhibitions/>

Cape Town Art Fair, Johans Borman Fine Art. Catalogue available online at <http://www.johansborman.co.za/exhibitions/>

2013 *1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair*, Somerset House, London

2013 *In the Shadow of the Rainbow*, Johans Borman Fine Art, FNB Joburg Art Fair 2013. Catalogue available online at <http://www.johansborman.co.za/exhibitions/>

2012 Museum of Modern Art: Equatorial Guinea exhibition at the FNB Jo'burg Art Fair 2012

Auctions

2014 Bonhams *Africa Now* auction, Bond Street, London

2013 *Art Room African Art Auction: Contemporary and Modern Art and its Diaspora*, Online Live Bidding ('Coup d'état' sold above estimate)

Awards and Recognition

2013 Finalist in the *Sanlam Private Investments National Portrait Award* competition

2010 Award for Painting, 'Artists in the Stream', the Young Artist Exhibition, sponsored by HIVOS Foundation, Gallery Delta, Harare

2010 Third Prize (Painting) from the Embassy of Germany and Gallery Delta Foundation, Gallery Delta, Harare

2009 Special Mention Award from the European Commission in Zimbabwe and Gallery Delta Foundation, Gallery Delta, Harare

2006 Fourth Consolation Prize for *Don Quixote: An African Perspective* – art exhibition and competition sponsored by the Embassy of Spain, Gallery Delta Foundation, Harare

2004 Best Visual Artist (Painting), The German Inter Afrika Art Competition, sponsored by the Embassies of Germany and Switzerland, Zimbabwe German Society, Harare

2003 Award of Merit (for Drawing) for an art exhibition and competition for the Greek Cultural Week sponsored by the Embassy of Greece and the Hellenics Community in Zimbabwe, Hellenic School, Harare

Publications

Johans Borman, 2014. *Still*, Exhibition Catalogue, Cape Town, South Africa

Johans Borman, 2013. *In the Shadow of the Rainbow*, Exhibition Catalogue, Cape Town, South Africa

Johans Borman, 2011. *Persona*, Exhibition Catalogue, Cape Town, South Africa

Richard Mudariki, 2011. *Contents, Contexts and Creators – An introduction to the contemporary visual arts of Zimbabwe*. Unpublished paper presented at the African Arts Institute, Cape Town, South Africa

Rendezvous Art Project, Focus Painting 2011 – 2012

Residencies

2010 Resident artist, Good Hope art Studios, Cape Town, South Africa

Workshops

2014 The Greatmore Studios Long Walk Project, Greatmore Studios, Woodstock, Cape Town

2008 National Mining Museum Exhibition Design Workshop, facilitated by the British Council and the National Mining Museum of Wales, Harare

2001 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) HIV/AIDS Art Workshop: ‘Men Make A Difference’, National Gallery Of Zimbabwe, Harare

Voluntary Work

2011 Board Member, Association for Visual Arts (AVA), Cape Town, South Africa

2005 Mural Artist – Paintings and Decorations for the Greek Cultural Week, Hellenic School, Borrowdale, Harare

2006 Khami World Heritage Site International Youth Volunteer Restoration Camp, supported by the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (NMMZ), Association CHAM, UNESCO, French Embassy, Bulawayo

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