



Rory Emmett, video still, from *Colour Man* (courtesy of the artist)

#SitDitAf (Switch it off)

Aardklop Arts Festival, Potchefstroom, South Africa (4 - 8 October 2016)

Group Exhibition – Various Artists – Curated by Heidi Erdmann

My thoughts immediately centered on protest on receiving an invitation to curate an exhibition for an arts festival in Potchefstroom. This is a university town and in 2015 university campuses country wide experienced mass protests followed by, in some cases, violence and destruction. Lectures and examinations were cancelled or postponed. South Africa's Apartheid history is well recorded in a vast inventory of Resistance Art. There is no doubt that emerging talents of today will in due course produce work that will comment on these recent protests; adding their voices to a genre which forms an important chapter in South African art history.

The title of this exhibition *#Sit Dit Af* is taken from a song written by Johannes Kerkerrel for his band, *Die Gereformeerde Blues Band*. It's linkage in this context is with the Voëlvry movement of 1989. This protest, presented in the form of music concerts across the country, was led by alternative Afrikaans musicians against the then Apartheid government. Kerkerrel was one of the main participants within this movement; he was also a former student at the university where this exhibition will be hosted. The title also explicitly references the recent censorship imposed by the South African National Broadcaster; particularly its ban on showing any footage of violent service delivery protests.

Three main threads of Protest, Identity and Landscape are explored through the work of eleven artists. Tim Hopwood's photographs, taken at a Voëlvry concert in Port Elizabeth in 1989 are central in the Protest section. Well-known anti- Apartheid artist Manfred Zylla, with signature pieces from the mid-1980's, is shown alongside Dathini Mzayiya, whose powerful paintings reference the Marikana Massacre of 2012. Bert Pauw's two sculptures *Deadlock* and *Hermetically Sealed* bridges the Protest section and connects with the Identity section.

Central in this section is a recent video work by the internationally renowned street photographer, Lindeka Qampi titled, *Inside My Heart*. The issue of race is explored through the work of recent fine arts graduate Rory Emmett, in a video work entitled, *Colour Man*. A series of self portraits, *A Warrior is Born* by current student, Aaron Samuel Mulenga concludes this section.

Niklas Zimmer's series of photographs, *We All Fall Down* leads from the Identity section into the Landscape section. Zimmer writes: "each image references a process of working through some of the questions arising in view of existential, humanitarian and environmental disaster; in particular questions around what futures we as individuals, nationals, global citizens can hope to meaningfully imagine and work towards". Agnes Heinz continues this existential exploration through her series of landscape paintings. Author and painter Debbie Loots draws inspiration for her abstract paintings from the realities in and around the home space. Carla Erasmus' two landscape photographs, taken with a film camera using expired film stock book-ends the Landscape section. These softly out of focus photographs offer views on landscape photography as a genre, but in the context of this exhibition acts as the surface/foundation, albeit fragile, onto which we built our lives.



Rory Emmett, video still from *Colour Man*, (courtesy of the artist).

Heidi Erdmann is a curator and founder of Erdmann Contemporary & The Photographers Gallery ZA, in Cape Town, South Africa. She is also the Exhibitions Programmer at the Chavonnes Battery Museum at the V & A Waterfront in Cape Town.

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