

COFA 1 : DR J THOM

Description:

Two creative outputs commissioned by Iwalewahaus, The Centre for African Studies at the University of Bayreuth, Germany and published in: 'Art of Wagnis: Christoph Schlingensief's crossing of Wagner and Africa', pp128-131, edited by Lehmann, F., Vierke, U. & Siegert, N. 2017.

1. Title: Aluta Continua (Victory etc.)

Medium: Site-specific intervention in mixed media commissioned by Iwalewahaus, The Centre for African Studies at the University of Bayreuth, Germany

Date: 2017

Dimensions: Variable

Annotation:

Full annotation provided in accompanying pdf.



This artistic intervention is based upon a creative re-reading of the political slogan ‘A luta continua, vitória é certa’ (The struggle continues, victory is certain). Historically this political slogan is associated with Mozambique’s armed struggle for independence from Portugal from the early 1960s until 1975. To be specific, the slogan is considered the political rallying cry of Samora Machel, the erstwhile leader of the Frente de Libertação de Moçambique or Frelimo.

During the recent student protests against the rising costs of tertiary education in South Africa this slogan was often appropriated by students and their various supporters, appearing in social media on handmade posters in shorthand form simply as “A luta continua”. In this particular form, the slogan does not make explicit the possibility of victory, leaving instead the rather dispiriting possibility of a never-ending struggle. However, I think it may well be argued that the obverse is also true – that contemporary South African students are deeply aware of just how naive any hope for singular and total victory appears today.

By replacing the second part of the slogan “é certa” with the term “etc.” (et cetera) I wish to playfully shift the meaning of the original slogan into a somewhat humorous even self-critical statement that encapsulates elements of all the aforementioned (the history of the slogan, its appropriation and conditional re-deployment in the present post-revolutionary moment). Today victory is no longer certain and nor is it understood as being the sole outcome of any revolutionary, anti-colonial struggle: instead it is joined by a host of other possible outcomes and post-colonial narratives, some of which have become all too familiar.

2. Title: The Crossing (performed by Barbara Bayer)



Medium: Site-specific performative intervention commissioned by Iwalewahaus, The Centre for African Studies at the University of Bayreuth, Germany

Date: 2017

Dimensions: Variable

Annotation:

Full annotation provided in accompanying pdf.

Children do not as rule die in operas. And, in the oeuvre of Wagner, myth and high drama always trumps the banal realities of everyday life, social-economic politics and suffering. Of course, it is too delicious a prospect to engage with this aspect of Wagner's operatic legacy in Bayreuth, to ignore. All the more so when one is conceptualising a performance artwork for an academic conference with the provocative title Art of Wagnis – Christoph Schlingensief's *Crossing of Wagner and Africa*.

Two things are clear from the start: I wanted to work with the operatic form, or to be more specific with the live performance of song; and secondly, the idea of a "crossing" should somehow be central to the artwork itself. For me the term crossing is understood both in a territorial sense (as in crossing over the boundary that separates one distinct region or territory from another) and, perhaps more darkly, also as a metaphor for death (to cross over from the realm of the living to that of the dead). In life these otherwise discrete meanings of the term often overlap. For example throughout the ages human-kind has been in awe of individuals that are willing to brave the unknown by travelling to distant lands and foreign places. Such long journeys are commonly beset by all kinds of perils – from losing your luggage to losing your life. All the more so, when you are not simply a modern day tourist or an explorer seeking the thrill of experience for its own sake, but a destitute refugee seeking a brighter future elsewhere, far away.

For more information please see relevant pages of the book publication attached (Pdf attached as COFA01 Thom):

Publication details:

Thom, J. 2017. 'A luta continua (Victory etc.) 2015' IN: Art of Wagnis: Christoph Schlingensief's crossing of Wagner and Africa, pp128-131, edited by Lehmann, F., Vierke, U. & Siegert, N. 2017. Verlag Fur Moderne Kunst: Taschenbuch (ISBN-10: 3903131482 & ISBN-13: 978-3903131484)