

In collaboration with Publitaxis & Publiroda and CP – Comboios de Portugal the exhibition *Something Happened on the Way to Heaven* by Kiluanji Kia Henda also features the work *A Sina de Otelo / Othello's Fate (Act I, II, III and IV)* from 2013, mounted on eighty posters in train carriages serving the line to Sintra.

A bilingual publication featuring an introductory essay by Luigi Fassi and a conversation between Kiluanji Kia Henda and Elvira Dyangani Ose is forthcoming. Design by Hilma Sassa.

Kiluanji Kia Henda

Something Happened on the Way to Heaven

Curated by Luigi Fassi

03.11.2020 – 10.01.2021

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Galerias Municipais are pleased to present *Something Happened on the Way to Heaven*, a major solo exhibition dedicated to Kiluanji Kia Henda (Luanda, Angola, 1979), one of the most relevant artists and activists of African origin on the contemporary art scene.

Something Happened on the Way to Heaven features a series of sculptures and installations created especially by Kiluanji Kia Henda as artist in residency at LUMA Foundation in Arles France, and at MAN Museum in Nuoro Sardinia (with the support of Sardegna Film Commission), and presented alongside earlier photographic works. In the artist's new pieces, the idyllic beauty of Mediterranean landscape is contrasted with the architectural traces of the Cold War and its contemporary history as a place of migration and social injustice between Africa and Europe.

Something Happened on the Way to Heaven is formulated as a two-way observation on the Mediterranean world: a seemingly paradisiacal idyll that reveals the presence of its opposite. Indeed,

Kiluanji Kia Henda's works highlight the contradictory dialectics of a natural splendour endowed with idealized features and an obscure flipside of historic and present threats.

The first dialectic element is, of course, beauty. Represented by Mediterranean nature and the idealization of the sea and coasts, this beauty has become mass merchandise during the era of contemporary tourism. The second element is represented by traces from the Cold War and the disturbing image of the Mediterranean today, no longer perceived as a bridge between different worlds, languages and cultures, but as a mirage of hope for a new life that leads to death for thousands of people who attempt to cross the sea in order to achieve it.

The land between Africa and Europe is thus interpreted in its discordant contrast between the beauties of its coastal landscape and the contemporary drama of the Mediterranean. It has been considered a place of conflict and blockades, the border of a Europe that is shutting itself behind a curtain of increasingly rigid legal and physical barriers. The subject of movement and migration is evoked through zoomorphic images such as the flamingos that have a nomadic lifestyle, with no strict seasonal rules. Here they are symbolizing migration as a free, unpredictable and universal phenomenon.

The artist thus links the Mediterranean and Saharan territories: two unstable and constantly changing regions, bearing witness to recent and future transformations that are affecting both respective continents of Europe and Africa.

Luigi Fassi
Curator

Kiluanji Kia Henda

Kiluanji Kia Henda is an autodidact who grew up in a household of photography enthusiasts. His conceptual work developed while immersing himself into music, avant-garde theater and while collaborating with a collective of emerging artists in Luanda's art scene. Kia Henda participated in several residency programs in Venice, Cape Town, Paris, Amman, Sharjah, New York and Arles.

Kia Henda's selected solo exhibitions include *Something Happen on the Way to Heaven*, at Museo di Arte di Nuoro (2020), *The Isle of Venus* at Museum of Leuven in Leuven (2020), *A City Called Mirage* at the International Studio and Curatorial Program (ISCP) in New York (2017), *In the Days of a Dark Safari* at Galeria Filomena Soares in Lisbon and Goodman Gallery in Cape Town (2017) and *Self-Portrait As A White Man* at Galleria Fonti in Naples (2010).

Kia Henda has participated in group exhibitions at numerous institutions, amongst which Barbican Art Center in London (2020), Migros Museum in Zurich (2020), Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris (2020), Zeitz MOCAA in Cape Town (2019), Tate Modern in London (2019), MAAT in Lisbon (2018), the National Museum of African Art – Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C. (2015) and the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao (2015). His work was shown at the Gwangju Biennale (2018), Bergen Assembly (2013), São Paulo Biennale (2010), Venice Biennale (2007) and the Luanda Triennale (2007).

In 2017, Kia Henda received the Frieze Artist Award. He presented his work *The Fortress* in the Somerset House courtyard (London) in 2019. The artist won Angola's National Culture and Arts Award in 2012. His work can be found in public collections, including Tate Modern (London), the Museum of Modern Art (Warsaw), Centre George Pompidou (Paris), Pérez Art Museum (Miami) and Coleção de Arte Moderna Calouste Gulbenkian (Lisbon).

Luigi Fassi

Luigi Fassi is the Artistic Director of MAN Contemporary Art Museum in Nuoro, Italy.

From 2012 to 2017 he held a position as Visual Art Curator of the Steirischer Herbst Festival in Graz, Austria, where he curated several exhibitions and public art projects by commissioning works by artists such as Lothar Baumgarten, Peter Friedl, Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Rana Hamadeh, Maryam Jafri, and others.

From 2009 to 2012 he was the Director of Ar/ge kunst Kunstverein in Bolzano, Italy.

A Helena Rubinstein Curatorial Fellow at the Whitney Museum ISP (2008-09), from 2010 to 2016, Fassi organized the 'Present Future' section at Artissima, Turin, Italy.

In 2016 he was a fellow of the Artis Research Trip Program in Tel Aviv and curator of the XVI Quadriennale in Rome, Italy.

He is author of extensive essays for Artforum, Flash Art, Mousse Magazine, and Domus, and Camera Austria.