

PUBLIC PROGRAM

4 of March 2023, 5pm

Performance by Hwati Masimba in collaboration with Yaw Tembe

14 of April 2023, 6pm

Performance by Rita GT

GALERIA AVENIDA DA ÍNDIA

04.03–14.05.2023

Black Skin, White Masks: The Black Body in Presence

artistic direction of the project by Nuno Silas
curated by Nuno Silas and Titos Pelembe

Buhlebezwe Siwani
Hwati Masimba
Rita GT
Valete

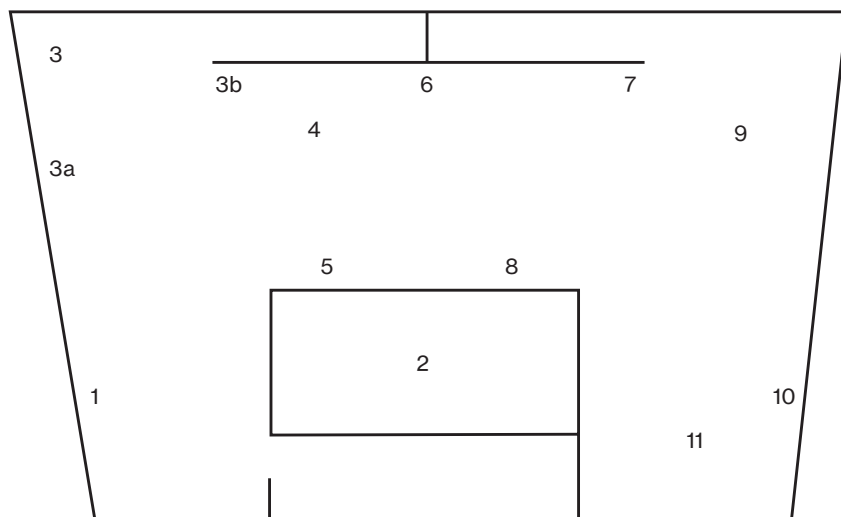
GALERIAS MUNICIPAIS – GALERIA AVENIDA DA ÍNDIA
Avenida da Índia 170, 1300-299 Lisboa

Open everyday 10h-13h and 14h-18h
Free entrance

Guided tours by appointment
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1 BUHLEBEZWE SIWANI <i>Inkanyamba</i> , 2021 Soap, pigment and resin on canvas, 140 × 350 cm Courtesy of the artist and Galeria Madragoa, Lisbon	6 RITA GT <i>Na Casa do Soba</i> , 2017 Color photograph on paper, 76 × 101 cm (each) Courtesy of the artist
2 BUHLEBEZWE SIWANI <i>Eziko</i> , 2018 Digital 4K video, 6'27" Courtesy the artist and Galeria Madragoa, Lisbon	7 BUHLEBEZWE SIWANI <i>Bageze ngobisi 8</i> , 2022 Inkjet print on baryta paper, 150 × 225 cm Courtesy of the artist and Galeria Madragoa, Lisbon
3 VALETE <i>Rua do poço dos Negros</i> , 2020 Vinyl print, video, 3'44" Courtesy of the artist	8 BUHLEBEZWE SIWANI <i>Zanenkosi</i> , 2022 Soap, styrofoam, 89,2 × 89,7 × 63,8 cm Courtesy of the artist and Galeria Madragoa, Lisbon
3a Rua do Poço dos Negros e Travessa dos Poiais, 1908-05 PT/AMLSB/CMLSBAH/PCSP/003/ FAN/000860 Courtesy of Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa	9 RITA GT <i>Oyinbo</i> , 2017 Wood, flannel, video, 3'10", 300 × 350 × 270 cm Cortesia da artista
3b Rua do Poço dos Negros, 1908-05 PT/AMLSB/CMLSBAH/PCSP/003/ FAN/002139 Courtesy of Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa	10 HWATI MASIMBA <i>Urban Totems 7</i> , 2017 Vinyl, 230 x 300 cm Cortesia do artista
4 BUHLEBEZWE SIWANI <i>Zanobungwele</i> , 2022 Soap, styrofoam, 160,5 × 53,1 × 47,1 cm Courtesy of the artist and Galeria Madragoa, Lisbon	11 HWATI MASIMBA <i>Kufufunyuka</i> , 2022 Printing on canvas, variable dimensions Courtesy the artist
5 BUHLEBEZWE SIWANI <i>Inkanyamba</i> , 2021 Soap, pigment and resin on canvas, 140 × 350 cm Courtesy of the artist and Galeria Madragoa, Lisbon	



'Black Skin, White Masks: The Black Body in Presence' is a performative exhibition that takes Frantz Fanon's book *Black Skin, White Masks* as its point of reference. The exhibition includes multidisciplinary works of music, sound, video, installation, photography and performance by artists established in Portugal and abroad. Buhlebezwe Siwani, Hwati Masimba, Rita GT and Valete explore themes centred on issues of identity, gender, violence, spirituality, and everyday racism and social issues, where the body is the producer of meaning(s). Committed to contemporary thought and decolonial discourse, the exhibition is composed of various artistic projects and presents subjective ideas and experiences. It presents some works performed previously and recreated here for the exhibition space.

One of the challenges for the curators of this exhibition was to rethink the curatorship of performance art as a decolonial, experimental exercise of freedom. The 21st century has been characterised by an urgent debate on racism in various domains of Portuguese society and societies abroad, including former colonies. In this sense, the works developed by the artists presented refer to black identity movements and 'black performance art', while attuned to broader manifestations of contemporary art. The body, flows of energy and intensity, exorcism, the invisible, the intangible, sound, traces, shamanic conditions, and actions expressing the concept of 'Ubuntu' are all recurring themes that return in the form of echoes, sculpture or sound... more than concepts they are materials worked on by the artists over several years.

Valete's hip-hop music is linked to other popular music and intervention artists, such as the Mozambican rapper Azagaia among others.

On 19 November 2020, the musician released a single entitled 'Rua do poço dos Negros' at a time particularly marked by the global outbreak of the Covid 19 pandemic, a threat to human existence, but also to the capitalist system. The music exposes the asymmetries of power and the domination of an economic, social and cultural order that has been exacerbating socio-spatial inequalities already existing in capitalist and individualist societies.

Valete's work represents a voice of resistance and a reclamation of minority rights. His work 'A Rua do Poço dos Negros', on display, proclaims: 'I am Black like Jesus (...). Tell me, how many George Floyds have we had in Portugal? Our people are still on the cross (...).' The musician metaphorically explores various expressions that embody his lyrics, exposing daily scenarios that constitute the dilemma of contemporary societies still based on a legacy of colonial hegemony.

In this exhibition, the issue of representation and the questioning of the symbolism of the colonial power of western societies, among other issues, is expressed through an artistic process whereby the body is presented as a disseminator of these energies. In the same temporal space, the visual artist and performer Rita GT explores the female figure of Portuguese origin that recurrently appears framed in the foreground of the photographic images that make up the series 'Na Casa do Soba' (2017), examining the condition of women and the Caucasian body in an African context, questioning its place of privilege and power.

The performance 'Ayinbo' is an attempt to heal and repair her own history. In this video-performance filmed in Makoko, Nigeria, the artist visited the Egun, Ilaje, Ijaw and Yoruba communities who reside in constructions of wood and other low-cost materials built on stilts along the shores of the lagoon. The installation seeks to recreate the architectural environment of the informal settlements that characterise these communities. The megaphones featured in the work of Rita GT symbolise the need to amplify the silenced voices and break the silence through the healing power of African medicinal plants. In this way, in the performance, the 'white' body also makes room for the discussion of colonial crime. South African artist Buhlebezwe Siwani explores themes of fragility and African feminism.

The power of the body is evoked by the soap sculpture which also addresses issues such as fertilisation and purification. Starting from the female body, Siwani exposes her experiences in the South African context, questioning patriarchal authoritarianism and forms linked to spirituality, African ritualism and the history of Apartheid, still present in contemporary society.

In turn, in his installations, Zimbabwean artist Hwati Masimba

incorporates performance, sound, storytelling, digital printing and musical objects. Masimba's artistic work and research explores systems of ancestral and indigenous knowledge and how these are still present in our daily lives. The project 'Kufufunyuka' is part of a series of works activated by the artist in recent years that address human relationships and the complexity of struggle, as well as the artist's personal and cultural experiences linked to a broader universal context. The utensils include instruments for fighting and music, including typical African adornments and alluding to the bravery of the character represented. The set of portraits called 'Urban Totems' explores the mediatization of contemporary life and the consumerism accelerated by digital platforms that function as reserved worlds of a new public space, both vast and limited.

This exhibition also aims to examine documentation and the various socio-political and economic transformations that cut across global artistic practices, focusing especially on the context of the invited artists, revolutionary movements, and processes of black affirmation, including relations of interdependence established over time with other disciplines such as literature, film and theatre. The chronological delimitation of 1935 marks the inauguration of the discourse of Negritude, a moment of criticism against colonialism and racism in France and African countries, in a reclaiming of African identity, history and cultures. This exhibition positions moments from the history of early-21st-century performance art and other manifestations within a rich arc of a curatorial framework of performance art practices and their ecology.

The exhibition also opens space for discussion around the practical and theoretical problems of curating performance art, exploring questions of space, time and archives bond the body, sculpture and their spatial choreography. Meanwhile, performance is afforded a central position as a foundational force that announces the emergence of a new perspective of life in favour of equity and global justice, starting from the trauma linked to cultural miscegenation and (in)visibility, to the systematic silencing of black bodies and agents in various social domains, taking the struggle for affirmation and freedom waged in the 1960s as a landmark.