



Lerato Shadi

Maru a Pula Is a Song of Happiness

13 September 2020 – 7 February 2021

Maschinenhaus M1

In her work, Lerato Shadi questions Western notions of history and reveals mechanisms of structural exclusion and oppression. She uses her body as a medium to make the overlooked, forgotten, or repressed visible—often in lengthy, physically demanding performances. The solo exhibition *Maru a Pula Is a Song of Happiness* at the KINDL – Centre for Contemporary Art presents videos and installations as well as a new series of textile works that deal with the relationship between panel painting and performativity.

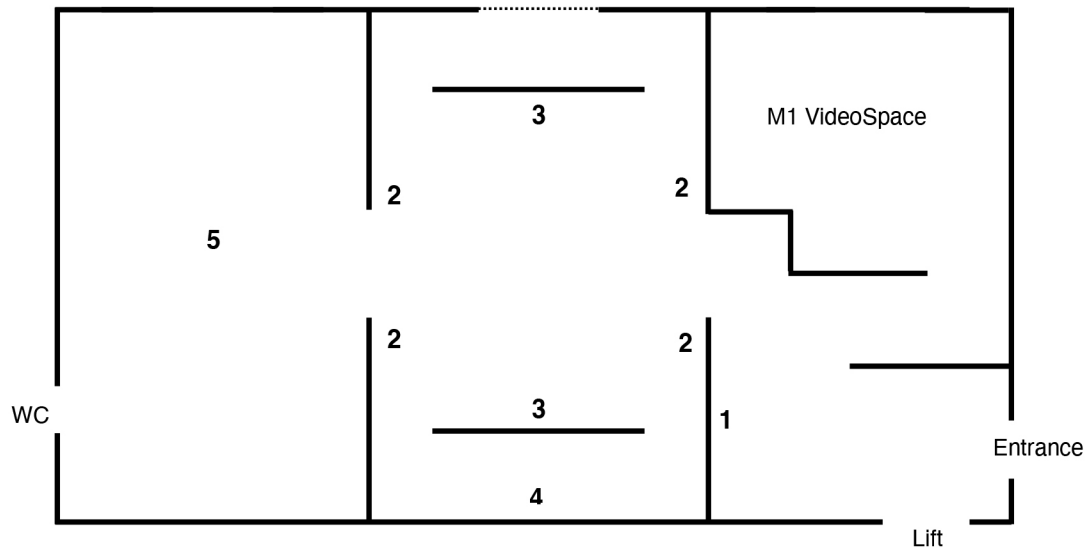
Shadi's work *I Know What a Closed Fist Means* (2020) shows four different variations of raised fists, each with the thumb in a different position. The raised, clenched fist originated as a symbol of various social movements in the 19th century. It can stand for solidarity, resistance, or anger and can even be associated with opposing political movements. Shadi's depictions of thumbs allow numerous interpretations and decodings. However, the title of the work deliberately contradicts this openness and indicates that personal knowledge and subjective experience determine these readings.

In the video work *Selogilwe* (2010) the artist knits a tube out of red yarn, which grows longer and longer. The approximately seven-hour performance ends when physical exhaustion makes it impossible for her to continue. Shadi's multi-hour, sometimes even multi-day performances always involve the aspect of the use and "occupation" of a place. Thus, knitting as a traditionally feminine cultural technique becomes an act of resistance.

A series of completely new textile works, which will be shown for the first time in the exhibition at the KINDL, is the result of an exhausting production process preceded by several days of fasting. With her in some cases large-scale, red crocheted squares sewn on raw linen and mounted on canvas, she refers, among other things, to the traditional panel painting.

The exhibition title refers to the song "Maru a Pula" (roughly "rainclouds"), which the South African jazz and pop singer Letta Mbulu released in 1976 in exile in the United States, where she found refuge from the apartheid regime in South Africa. By quoting the first line of the song, "Maru a pula is a song of happiness", Lerato Shadi refers to various perceptions of the same phenomenon in different cultures: rainclouds as harbingers of bad weather or as the basis of rich harvests.

In the titles of her works and exhibitions, Shadi often uses elements from her first language, Setswana, one of the eleven official languages of the Republic of South Africa, which is spoken by around ten percent of the population. Although she allows information about their meaning to be provided, the artist does not specify a direct translation. She thus questions the unconditional adoption of a colonial language such as English and the worldview it entails.



Exhibited works

1 *Selogilwe*, 2010

HD video, colour, no sound, 7:03:56 hours

4 *Re Maotwana Gonyela*, 2018

HD video, colour, sound, 11:15 min.

2 *I Know What a Closed Fist Means*, 2020

Large-scale photographic print on wooden panel, four parts, dimensions variable

5 *Series #1–4*, 2020

Virgin wool on raw linen, dimensions variable

3 *Ngono le Nna*, 2020

Neon light installation, two parts,
165 x 60 cm, 150 x 150 cm

The exhibition is curated by Kathrin Becker.

The exhibition is taking place as part of Berlin Art Week (9 – 13 September 2020).

Lerato Shadi (born in Mahikeng, South Africa) lives in Berlin. Her work has been shown internationally, most recently at the Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris (from December 2020), the 14th Curitiba Biennial in Brasil and at SAVVY Contemporary, Berlin (both 2019), Kunsthal KAdE Amersfoort and the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa in Cape Town (both 2018) as well as in the programme *The Parliament of Bodies* at the documenta 14 in Kassel (2017).
www.leratoshadi.art, Instagram: @studio.leratoshadi

Related event

Wednesday, 18 November 2020, 7 pm

Lerato Shadi in conversation with Dr. Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung

(Founder and artistic director, SAVVY Contemporary, Berlin)

Language: English / Free admission / Venue: Maschinenhaus M0

KINDL – Centre for Contemporary Art

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