

Simnikiwe Buhlungu

suggestures among us (Interlude)

02.06.—29.07

Bookmarking a larger project that explores ways in which we come to know, ***suggestures among us (Interlude)*** exists as a moment compiled by ‘suggestures’,¹ wherein inconspicuous encounters, looped socio-historical tangents, hazy familiarities, and shallow depths ultimately ask “what’s happening in a pause that we may have missed before?”.

Through textual and sonic presences, prompts, and questions, this exhibition has situated itself somewhere three-quarters of the way down of Buhlungu’s practice recently. The framework of “interludes”—or “interluding”—exists as time and space for thought and quietude (not so much sonic quietude, but a sensorial tranquillity), while also indicating that happenings present in the exhibition have occurred before, and subsequently intend to trail onwards. Reappearing from previous moments are pre-existing material elements, contextual concerns, and forms such as the Khuaya stands, the materiality of reel-to-reel tape, the ubiquity of the puddle, and Post-It notes. Drawings that lament the loss of a wallet that map ways of how it could’ve been relocated have tethered their way into this exhibition, too; titled *Theory Sketches (wallet) I* and *Theory Sketches (wallet) II*, they were made alongside the 2020 film, *On The Minds Of Many*.²

¹ Suggesture (n) and (v): potential and/or hypothetical gestures in which we come to know. A portmanteau of ‘suggestion’ and ‘gesture’, the word proposes participation at the invitation of a happening, not only to access parts of it that have been hidden as a mechanism of sharing but one that proposes innumerable circumstances that shape how we understand knowledges productions.

² Filmed in 2020, *On The Minds of Many* is the first instalment in the project titled *Points of Cognisance* (working title), wherein the realisation of a lost wallet shapes the protagonist’s anxiety-inducing journey of not only accepting it is gone, but seeking the counsel outside of his frame of reference in order to locate its whereabouts. Additional chapters in this project include research on Honey Bees and their orientation flights, a Khuaya, a Library (TBA) and the ubiquity of Puddles as attempted critical theory. Some tangential micro-chapters include the history of *Imvo Zabtsundu*, a historically Black newspaper established in 1884 in South Africa, electronic synthesis via theremins and many other nodes.

A time-stretching visual anthem, the banner *Don't I Know You From Somewhere?* attempts to reckon with familiarities—people, sites, histories—while also leaving space for one to err, sidle into slippages and chronological mishaps. This work is thought as “remembering with texture”, as articulated in Jacob Dlamini’s 2009 memoir *Native Nostalgia*—especially in context of how one embraces nostalgia even in times of socio-political and historical upheaval—and it is textually asked in this work. Similarly, the Post-It note titled *Ah, Konje*, adheres as a useful *remembering of remembering*—albeit with something else to say.³

As an attempt to sample a paused moment, reel-to-reel tape looping conjures a history situated in a completely different yet ubiquitous context, with this work being the cousin of the sonority echoed in Buhlungu’s debut exhibition *dissonated underings [hic!], after-happenings and khuayarings (sithi “ahhhh!”)* at Kunsthalle Bern (CH), in October 2022. Departing from historical echoes, the tape loop (*Same-ing the same Sames*) samples a moment of playing on D.D.T. Jabavu’s⁴ Sames piano in his home in Middledrift, South Africa, in October 2021. Jabavu, a South African scholar, writer and educator—amongst other titles—is a significant generational key here; the tape loop samples the artist playing this piano, upon the encouragement of Makhulu Victoria Jabavu—his last born daughter, now in her eighties, who lives in and minds the historic house, which she also grew up in. The piano is said to have been bought over by Jabavu from his travels in the UK circa the 1920s -1930s, which is one but many indications to his appreciation and affinity to spiritual and choral music from the 19th and 20th centuries in South Africa—and beyond. The sonority of the piano mechanises the sharing and storing of the movements and everyday mundanities of this family located within a broader socio-historical lineage within the country. A centuries-old chronological echo, Makhulu Victoria’s narrative sharing and invitation to engage with the piano – which itself ‘interluded’ a conversation of considerable personal depth – situates suggestures sonically in this exhibition.

³ “The South got something to say!”, exclaimed André 3000.

Outkast receiving ‘Best New Rap Group’ award at the 1995 Source Awards. While referring to the recognition of Southern Rap music from USA (specifically Atlanta) at a time where the East and West of the country were more dominant contributors to the genre, the sentiment of South—referring to both a social and geopolitical location of the “Global South” and a space where infinite depths and breadths of conversation, cultural work, socio-economic and life is happening—indicates that *more is to be said*, which is a resonant sentiment for this exhibition, although subtly.

⁴ J.T. Jabavu is D.D.T. Jabavu’s father. D.D.T. Jabavu is Noni Jabavu’s father. Noni Jabavu is Makhulu Victoria Jabavu’s sister.

Makhosazana Xaba and Athambile Masola have researched and written extensively on the oeuvre of the South African writer and journalist Noni Jabavu and have contextualised her family’s legacy.

Embracing this exhibition as a support system for this interlude are the *Khuaya modular stands*⁵. They are thought as invitations to sing, sit, sit still, sit and play a beat with your hands, listen, read, to be rearranged, to be borrowed and as a calling for a communal activity which is yet to happen. Having debuted as part of the first Khuaya⁶ installation, they return to facilitate this moment of pausing.

Passing by for a visit (again!) is a puddle⁷, whose rather preoccupied interlocution and considerable depth in the exhibition will be explored in an expanded moment of reading on the 4th of June, alongside artist Negiste Yesside Johnson, titled ***Our Friends Are Deeper Than We Thought (A Conver-something)***.

⁵ These wooden structures' modular backbone allows them to be used in any configuration for bespoke happenings. Seating for film screenings, choral rises for singing, tables, display cabinets for your auntie's glassware and certificates/photographs, tables for serving food, percussion (when you feel like stomping your feet – who doesn't feel like that sometimes?), to look over the wall of your house for whatever reason, to amplify the height of speakers/sound systems, for educational workshops, to rehearse speeches, as recreational play areas for children/youth, as a library (if turned over they can be used as shelves), to play hide and seek with your nibblings, for council meetings (elders and everyone else; all levels of seriousness), for photoshoots, for moderated contemporary art talks where the speakers have a notebook, pen and a glass of water, for outdoor events, for rest, to be upholstered, to be recycled, to be turned over and used as reverb chambers (literal ones, for sound recording purposes). The list is endless.

⁶ A Khuaya (descendant of 'choir'; pronounced 'khu-ah-yah') is a gathering, whereby sound, song and singing are a welcome outcome. The Khuaya is also one of the aforementioned chapters in the *Points of Cognisance* (working title) project.

⁷ We give thanks, you deep body of water. <3

Simnikiwe Buhlungu (1995) is an artist from Johannesburg, South Africa.

Interested in knowledge production[s] — how it is produced, by whom and how it is disseminated — Buhlungu locates socio-historical and everyday phenomena by navigating these questions and their inexhaustible potential answers. Through this, she maps points of cognisance which situate various layers of awareness as syncopated and reverberated ecologies.

Lately, she has been listening to trees rustling, thinking about apiaries and scanned publication contributions to Simunye Resource Works, a publishing house that is forever yet-to-exist.

Recent contributions include *The Milk of Dreams*, the 59th Venice Biennale (Venice, Italy); *A Lasting Truth Is Change*, Van Abbe Museum (Eindhoven, The Netherlands), *Intimacy in the Apocalyptic Phase* residency at Dar Yusef Nasri Jacir for Art and Research (Bethlehem, Palestine) and the debut solo exhibition, **dissonated underings [hic!], after-happenings and khuayarings (sithi “ahhhh!”)*, Kunsthalle Bern (Bern, Switzerland).

Negiste Yesside Johnson (b. Lagos, Nigeria) works from a frame of auto-ethnographic enquiry, specifically related to undocumented citizenship. Through the ongoing exchange between dematerialised research and material research translated by sculpture, film, sound, text and installation, Johnson examines financial/social precarity, class inequity and mental precarity, that occurs in the shift of socio-political geo-context. Discussing how such are not analogous with the occident but in fact spearheaded by single issue politics and harmful extractivist logics of accumulation.

Negiste Yesside Johnson currently lives and works in Amsterdam, Netherlands, whilst serving her five year re-entry ban from South Africa due to being undocumented within its borders from the age of seven. She has earned a Master degree in Fine Art from the Sandberg Institute, Amsterdam (2021). Johnson was recently awarded the Buning Brongers Prize (2022) and the Mondriaan Fonds Artist Start development (2023).