

donna Kukama  
*t r a n s c e n d e n c e*

22 July – 23 September 2023

(Dumela nkgonno Y U 4 Me?)

by Dr. George Mahashe

Hm Hm Hm Hmmm Hmmm x2  
 Hm Hm Hm Hm Hm Hm Hmmmmmmmm Hm Hm Hm Hm Hm Hm Hm Hm  
 Hm x2  
 Hm Hm Hm Hm Hm Hm Hmmmmmmmm  
 Hm Hm Hm Hmmm Hmmm x2  
 Hm Hm Hm Hm Hm Hm Hmmmmmmmm Hm Hm Hm Hm Hm Hm Hm  
 Hm x2  
 Hm Hm Hm Hm Hm Hm Hmmmmmmmm

To write something as if it is said—to re-inscribe, to erase—layering til so much is on the canvas that its legibility is questionable. Written on the canvas, over and over again, until it loses its legibility.

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Hm Hm Hm first encounter with donna's work—directly, not as passive audience during the moment of performance, but rather the time she takes to develop the “script”— that collaborative text written over and over. I watched one morning in sunny Jerusalem when she strung a few black refuse bags to make a solar xxx. We spoke of a snake that would inhale the hot air to levitate and attack its opponent/human upright. I had gravitated to her that morning because I had watched her the night before in a dimly lit bar. She writes and rewrites a story from a Palestinian artist. She wrote and they wrote, scratching out or writing over til the story was common to both of them. This act I had puzzled over before when she wrote by way of erasing, stitching and repeating; pasting and rearranging an alienating colonial text til it gave way to a story and sensibility I could recognise.

(When Orange was born, she would breathe the freshest fires onto foreign lands.)

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Mokoalo—go kgapa boloko

A process of gathering, not just cow dung, but also soil of different types and colours. It's also getting other materials and water and people to help with cooking, humming, singing, humming, eating, playing, writing, drinking of water, festivities in preparation of something that became itself festive. It's also a collective endeavour where people organise to help one house at a time. It's also done to most houses at the same

time—a calligraphy of sorts using the full hand, carpeting thin layers to make a mat but it's also go thea lapa. This is women's work, but not just in the domestic sense, but also in the political—"from the bottom of her belly, she dreamt this blue hue and its cousins of colour into existence"... Dikgomo... — are charged symbols and their boloko is precious for many things. For one, bakgalabwe keep it to entertain Sejapelo, ee! noga ya thaba! Bare wa bona kgomo di kgobagane ka thoko, tseba gore mokgale o etile—o tlile go raloka ka fase ga boloko.

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I'm gettin' so hot, I'm gonna hide your sunscreen!

t r a n s c e n d e n c e takes these practices on, adding colour and other secret ingredients spoken into Mokoalo. Like water. mafoko a! Permeates every aspect of our ways of knowing. Lamenting those yet to be born, or perhaps not born at all. Speaking them, naming them because of her simply thinking them, they are invited into our world in full colour. Recently a podcast from Journey Kwa Ntu recast the popular saying "the beautiful ones are not yet born"—which also laments their loss and sometimes impossibility— posing it as the question "are we our ancestors' wildest dreams". This question, when animated by Wa Kukama's lament, breathes life, or tethers those lost without even being born, inviting them to take their place as our guides. Perhaps they, like her mokoalo, colour the waters of our collective dreams with life. Dreams where we recognise each other before we even see one another. Where sensing each other is enough to receive messages permeating through black voids teaming with untold colour.

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(ngwana-bana-motho-botho-tsadi-badimo-modimo)

Acrylic, oil, rhythm, and charcoal, acrylic, courage, pastel, acrylic, graphite, soft pastel, memories, oil, soft pastel, gin, sweat, revenge, trust, oil stick, liquid chalk, turpentine, amnesia, exhaustion, elbow grease, swishes and half-swishes, repetition of texts—a consistent digestion, of materials that also always include „invisible materials“ and nobody knows why not.

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Not quite footnotes or citations but...

donna Kukama's email salutation, listening to Mdu's song Y U 4 Me? because they are also listening to it, excerpts taken from her text from somewhere, their performance remembered as solar xxx, their paintings, wall drawings and exhibition title (written with spaces between each letter).