



Stories of Rain
Richmond



Stories of Rain

Tracing the legacy of the first nomadic peoples, creating temporary nature art in response to the varied landscapes and the World Heritage Rock Art of South Africa.

GLOBAL NOMADIC ART PROJECT South Africa 2016

In this time of palpable climate change, we find ourselves at the cusp of profound natural and cultural transformation. The dual disciplines of creative imagination and mediated thinking practiced by artists can be extremely valuable in this transition. The Global Nomadic Art Project offers local artists the opportunity to influence contemporary cultural attitudes towards nature and to explore possibilities for understanding in an increasingly fractured paradigm.

The Global Nomadic Art Project is a nature art event traveling the globe between 2014 and 2018. The project was initiated by YATOO, the Korean Nature Art Association. Established in 1981, Yattoo represents one of the earliest nature art movements in the world. Yattoo literally means “to throw into a field”—to offer something to nature. Their art is focused on the human relationship with the natural world. It is not seeking to dominate the landscape but rather attempts to become sensitised to our connection and participation in the cycles of nature and life. The emphasis is on ephemeral work and the conceptual memory that re-mains to influence minds.

The Site_Specific land art collective organized the South African leg of the global event initiated by YATOO the South Korean Nature Art Association. We invited 10 international artists to work alongside more than sixty local artists and the stage was set to discover the wonderfully varied landscapes and the rock art of South Africa through the lens of nature art. The event was made possible by the collective contributions of all participants. The visiting artists traveled along different routes in small groups. At each site, artists would attempt to rid themselves of preconceived ideas and ideologies, enter the landscape with an open mind and reflect the perceptions, feelings and insights inspired by a place (including its inhabitants and materials) in an ephemeral gesture. The experiences of this form of engagement as well as public and community workshops over thirty days were documented in photos, videos and sound recordings—extending the ephemeral impact of those moments never to be repeated again.

As the Global Nomadic Project moves from continent to continent the art documented during *Stories of Rain* represents our unique South African landscape on an international stage. The effect here at home has been a re-evaluation of commercial and spiritual values in South African art practice and an extension of the genre of Nature Art to many new practitioners.

Strijdom van der Merwe and Anni Snyman

Founding members of Site_Specific www.sitespecific.org.za

Harrie and the Gayageum

Stories of Rain @ MAPSA Richmond 12 - 16 September 2016

06:12 Monday morning 12 September 2016: Harrie meets me in the street —smiling broadly as we embrace. He and Hannelie are both beaming with excited anticipation at the imminent classic South African road trip and a few days in their beloved Karoo.

The faces of the visiting artists—Ko, Soon-im and Imke—betray a good dose of bewildered apprehension at being awake at this early jetlagged hour and getting into a vehicle with complete strangers. There is no need to reassure them—they are in very capable hands. There are six people in the luxury minibus that Harrie provided. Ko Seunghyun (Mr Ko to most of us) and Kim Soon-im from Korea, Imke Rust from Germany, Hannelie Coetzee from South Africa, Morné Ramsay, and Harrie himself. Harrie Siertsema—architect, entrepreneur (famous for the chain of ‘Harrie’s Pancakes’ across South Africa), owner of the Art Hotel in Graskop and art patron—founder of Modern Art Projects South Africa and the host at MAPSA Richmond, Northern Cape.

Their itinerary for the day: get out of Jozi before the morning traffic, lunch at the beautiful Liedjiesbos, Bloemfontein, and push through to Richmond by sunset. N1 all the way. Two of the expected participants are not on the bus: Setlamorago Mashilo was held up in Amsterdam, and will join the nomads a day or so later, as will Reney Warrington—author, photographer and Hannelie’s wife.

And here ends my part in this story. I would see some of them briefly five days later—and meet Mash for the first time—when collecting Soon-im and Imke to join me on the next leg of their tour. On the road to the West Coast National Park, Imke and Soon-im tell me the extraordinary story of Harrie and the Gayageum:

On Tuesday morning, while exploring Richmond, Mr Ko comes across some felled poplar trees and is inspired to make a Gayageum (traditional Korean stringed instrument) for Harrie. The workshop at MAPSA has every tool and facility he needs, and even though it normally takes him more than a week to create this lyrical artwork that is both sculpture and instrument, he would attempt to make one in the three days at his disposal. There is a flurry of excited activity all day, with Ricky Meyers and Albert van Heerden, assisting, but by Tuesday evening Soon-im's Korean-English translation makes it clear that there is a big problem: the agricultural co-op in Richmond does not have the right kind of fishing line needed to make a poplar tree sing. Harrie activates his considerable network of friends and acquaintances in the area, but to no avail. I have no idea what the mood was that evening around the fire at MAPSA, but I imagine lots of well-meaning and creative, even brilliant suggestions for alternative twines, some askance looks at cats still using their infamous intestinal linings, but no acceptable solutions arising. Changing the vision seems to be the only way out for Mr Ko by the time everyone goes to bed.

The next morning all the artists are out working as soon as they can, catching the good light of the morning before the heat of the day, so most

of them don't really notice Harrie's absence at breakfast or, if they do, they suppose that he drove to a nearby town (an hour or so away) to search for fishing line. At lunch time, they hear that he had driven to Bloemfontein (370 km = 3 hours and 30 minutes away) and would return that evening. It's only after dinner when Harrie returns—triumphantly depositing in their midst several rolls of fishing line of different diameters, that they hear the full story. Harrie drove to Bloemfontein, boarded an aeroplane to Johannesburg, where a friend (having emptied the capital of all kinds of guts) met him at the airport with all the fishing line he could find, after which Harrie returned on another aeroplane to Bloemfontein, and drove back to Richmond! An endeavour of at least eleven hours of travelling and considerable expense.

Now the question remained—could Mr Ko finish the two-meter-long instrument in the one remaining day? The generosity and commitment demonstrated by his host spurred him on. When I arrived on Friday morning, Mr Ko was proudly balancing, arranging and photographing not one, but two Gayageums in the stylish courtyard of MAPSA Richmond.

The story of Harrie's art of generosity is a heartwarming and extraordinary example of the kind of benevolence demonstrated throughout the Stories of Rain tour. Being on the receiving end of such commitment to art, kindness to artists and belief in the innate value of the art making process itself, was not only confirmation for us as practitioners of a non-commercial genre in modern society, but a transformative experience

for many participating artists. We embarked on the tour thinking that we would offer others the gifts of our work and insights into culture and nature, and found ourselves re-evaluating much of what we thought we knew about human nature and South African culture.

Anni Snyman

Coordinator of Stories of Rain GNAP SA 2016



Co-host Statement:
Global Nomadic Art Project at MAPSA Richmond
Hannelie Coetzee

Stories of Rain

The Korean Nature Arts Association built a house, Yattoo, (meaning, throwing from the field) in the hills of Wongol. When I did a residency there in 2013 the townspeople reminded me of Richmond, where you have a similar demographic of a) youngsters wishing to get out of town and b) age old wisdom being forgotten.

Growing up in a small town myself, this really hit home. The socio-economic structure of such small towns has been dwindling over decades with people arriving or being stuck there for various reasons. I visit these out of the way places because of the raw memory they evoke. Every time I revisit, I realise that arts projects can grant the town some access to contemporary life. Curiosity is stirred when artists come, but when they leave the residents that participated feel left behind again. It barely rains in Richmond, but when it does the whole place lights up. The dryness of it all made sense to invite the Korean artists from their small town to the small town of Richmond for *Stories of Rain*. The artworks and energy that we all brought, still linger. On the 2016 GNAP tour through South Africa, I co-arranged a day stay for five *Stories of Rain* artists.

Public Art as attractor

I use public art to access a community. MAPSA is perfectly situated in Richmond to grant such access for artists. By publicly creating local portraits of cultural and ecological leaders, I attract the natural curiosity of the community. This sparks conversation and an authentic 'in' into the community's dynamics and character. It falls within an emergent theory of change according to Cambodian scholar Meas Nea. One listens first, one builds relationships of trust and understanding over years and allows that which is possible to change, emerge from these interactions.

GNAP NOMAD wall: *Portrait of Julia Blaauw*, 2016

I repaired an old wall, with local elder builders, and painted a portrait of young Julia Blaauw's eyes as a continuation of the Pienaar Street gravures I did during the 2014 Word-based exhibition. At the time, Julia would come by daily and bring more friends and family to view the portrait wall. She was a completely natural community organiser, who activated her own community effortlessly. These young leaders need to be recognised to help build the resilience of such small towns. I remind people that leaders come in all shapes and sizes.

www.hanneliecoetzee.co.za



Site intervention, 2016



Site intervention, 2016

Imke Rust: Artworks created at Richmond

I am interested in the manifesting power of the creative process and am investigating the beliefs, symbolism and myths surrounding rainmaking. From my research I take specific ideas and reinterpret and explore them through my personal creative process. What does it take to create a cloud in strong wind? Does the mythical suggestions that a woman's tears and heartfelt compassion can be the source of rain, hold any truth and if so, why?

While I often start off with a theoretical idea, I intentionally engage with my surroundings and let my actions be guided by it. I look and feel closely to understand the essence and react to the impulses I am getting. How is the rocky landscape connected to rain? Do stones have souls? To me the creative process and insights coming from my actions are more valuable than a 'final outcome' or artwork. Through video, photographic and written documentation I try to capture and share a part of my findings.

www.imkerust.com



Site intervention, 2016



The Seat of Water, 2016, Richmond

Soon-im Kim

I am a visual artist who interprets people and regions I encounter in my life, with my subjective method. I try to express them with natural materials as installation, sculpture, plane figures, performance and site-specific nature art.

At Richmond in South Africa, I encountered a site of water on top of a hill. A site of water is the place where you can see the water mark. Such a site also has small soil particles and tiny buchus (living things). I sat and spent time on the site of water and put the rolling, living rocks on the edge of the water mark to show it clearly. The Line of the water site flows from the sky and down to the lower place, as followed on the video. I sat, touched, lived and flew on the water site to follow the water. And I encountered many life forms on the site at Richmond.

<http://www.kimsoonim.com/275468>



Site intervention, 2016



Site intervention, 2016



The Sound of Hundred Years—Richmond Gayageum Ko Seunghyun

Nature is my mother, my teacher and my friend. Like the saying goes, there is nothing to add or take away from nature. Inside nature, breathing is my prayer and time spent in nature is my religious life. I aspire to adapt to follow nature's providence and flow. The sound of nameless insects, the sound of mountain birds that sing rhythmically and beautifully and the wind that grazes leaves, the sound of water that flows down the mountain valley... I am always moved by mother nature, full of the sound of life.

The Gayageum has a clear and graceful sound, which resembles the sound of nature. It is an instrument that attracts my interest. I usually use various kinds of wood that I find at the site and try an unlimited range of methods to build a Gayageum. Each site has a different type, size, feature and quality of wood which results in a different production method so that each work has a distinct and unique tone.

Like a complete harmony of different creations within nature, the sound of my Gayageum played by an audience will sing peace and love of the world. I also wish to praise God who has created beauty and heals the hurts of our mind.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IXWkpNdqSuo>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_HuQEmnqPjI



Found felled Poplar tree, 2016



Gayageum construction in progress, 2016



Ko Seunghyun testing the Gayageum, 2016

Artist's Statement: Setlamorago Mashilo

Conceptual artist Setlamorago Mashilo is compelled by a sense of social conscience. His artistic practice extends across many roles and his development as an artist is profoundly influenced by African literature and his Sepedi upbringing; exploring historical narratives & mythologies through oratology, printmaking & sculptural installations.

He employs the use of 'dika le diema' (Sepedi proverbs and idioms) and incorporates objects, images, stories and songs inherited from his collective Sepedi upbringing to unpack his own spiritual and psychological connections with these established systems of thought or ideologies—the very same systems created by previous generations to secure our 'being'—and how they still condition our contemporary lives.

Taking the baton from his earlier texts, *Mabu a u tswitswe*, *Bodulo* and *Landlords & Trespassers*, Mashilo's work oscillates around the 'consequence' of dwelling, building and thinking, often [re]interrogating and [re]articulating narratives that resonate individually and collectively about our sense of loss, nostalgia and inherited memories. His work becomes one form of his conversation about the values of our societies; how they are deeply encoded in our language and the objects that are derived from them and, ultimately, how that extrapolates into the communities we grow up in.



Site intervention, 2016



Site intervention, 2016



stories of rain

GLOBAL NOMADIC ART PROJECT

SOUTH AFRICA 2016



hosted by



in partnership with



MODERN ART PROJECTS SOUTH AFRICA



Modern Art Projects South Africa
PO Box 39 Groenkloof 0027 South Africa
62 Loop Street, Richmond, Northern Cape, 7090 South Africa
info@map-southafrica.org

Published in 2017 in South Africa by Modern Art Projects South Africa

All rights reserved.

© 2017 Modern Art Projects South Africa
© text the authors
© images the artists

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without written permission by the publisher.

ISBN 978-0-9946884-4-6

Special thanks to:
Liedjiesbos (Bloemfontein)
The Graskop Hotel (Graskop)



Cullinan - Gauteng



Dullstroom - Mpumalanga



Graskop - Mpumalanga



Pretoria - Gauteng



Richmond - Northern Cape