

## **Faustin Linyekula** // BANATABA (Kisangani)

Der Tänzer, Choreograf und Storyteller Faustin Linyekula sagt, dass Gegenstände ihn nie interessiert haben. Dennoch ist es ein Gegenstand, der ihn bewegt, mit seiner Mutter und seinem Onkel die beschwerliche Reise in das Dorf seiner Vorfahren anzutreten – eine Skulptur, gefunden in den Lagerräumen des Metropolitan Museums. In New York scheint sie es nicht wert, ausgestellt zu werden. In den Lengola-Dörfern aus denen sie stammt, stünde sie wohl auf dem Dorfplatz, ungeschützt, doch im Gegenzug für alle Bewohner\*innen zugänglich. Indem er einen lokalen Künstler beauftragt, eine Kopie der Statue anzufertigen, transportiert Linyekula sie symbolisch zurück an ihren Ursprungsort und reflektiert auf das Unrecht des kolonialen Kunstraubes. In der Tanzperformance, die aus dieser Reise entstand, stellen er und der Tänzer Moya Michael sich Fragen zum Zusammenhang von lokaler Kunstgeschichte und kollektiver Identität. Wenn Masken und Statuen die Archive kongolesischer Dörfer sind, wie können ihre Communities in Kontakt zu ihrer geplünderten Vergangenheit bleiben? Was bleibt übrig von den Geschichten, die den Objekten innewohnen, wenn sie ihrem Entstehungsort entrissen werden?

**Faustin Linyekula** lebt und arbeitet in Kisangani, im Nordosten der Demokratischen Republik Kongo, ehemals Zaire, ehemals Belgisch-Kongo, ehemals Kongo-Freistaat. Nach seinem Literatur- und Theaterstudium in Kisangani zog Linyekula nach Nairobi, wo er 1997 Kenias erste zeitgenössische Tanzkompanie mitbegründete. Nach seiner Rückkehr in den Kongo gründete er in Kinshasa 2001 die Studios Kabako, die sowohl Trainingsprogramme für Tanz und Theater anbieten, als auch Recherchen und Produktionsprozesse unterstützen. Seit 2007 befinden sich die Studios in Kisangani und wurden um die Felder Musik, Film und Video erweitert. Zudem arbeiten sie mit den Communities des Lubunga District an Bildungs-, Trinkwasser-, Nachhaltigkeits- und Umweltprojekten. Faustin Linyekulas Theaterarbeiten touren weltweit. 2016 war Faustin Linyekula Associate Artist in Lissabon, 2019 des Holland Festivals Amsterdam. 2018 gewann er das erste Soros Arts Fellowship. In den letzten Monaten brachte er CONGO beim Kunstenfestivaldesarts (bei SPIELART zu sehen am 5. und 6. November) und HISTOIRE(S) DU THÉÂTRE beim Avignon Festival zur Premiere.

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Seit sie 1997 von Südafrika nach Brüssel gezogen ist, ist **Moya Michael** aus dem Performance Art-Ökosystem Belgiens nicht mehr wegzudenken. Sie studierte an der PARTS School for contemporary dance (Brüssel), verbrachte danach fünf Jahre in London und war Gründungsmitglied der Akram Khan Company. 2005 kehrte sie zurück nach Belgien, um mit Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker und ihrem Ensemble Rosas zu arbeiten, wo sie in vielen Eigenproduktionen und Repertoirestücken zu sehen war. Sie tanzte außerdem in Produktionen von Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, Damien Jalet und Mårten Spångberg. In letzter Zeit gab es drei prägende Wendepunkte in ihrer Karriere als Künstlerin: Der erste war, als sie 2013 DARLING mit Igor Shyshko produzierte – eine Reflexion über die persönlichen Linien und Schichten von Identität. Diesem konzeptuellen Faden folgte sie auch in der Zusammenarbeit mit Faustin Linyekula für das Solo THE DIALOG SERIES IV: MOYA und bei ihrer gemeinsamen Reise nach Johannesburg und Kisangani, auf der sie den Geburtsort der/des jeweils anderen kennenlernten. Zur Zeit tourt Moya Michael mit COLOURED SWANS, einer Reihe von kollaborativen Solos über Identität: COLOURED SWANS 1: KHOISWAN, eine Zusammenarbeit mit Tracey Rose, COLOURED SWANS 2: ELDORADO, mit David Hernandez und COLOURED SWANS 3: HARRIET'S REMIX.

Bei SPIELART 2019 ist am 5. und 6.11. Faustin Linyekulas Stück CONGO zu sehen.

**25.10.** 18 - 19 Uhr

**Haus der Kunst, Südgalerie**

# **BANATABA**

## **Faustin Linyekula**

### **Faustin Linyekula über BANATABA:**

"Objects have never really interested me. I've always preferred people and their stories... And yet some objects have the power to get you moving, literally... Invited to do a performance at the Metropolitan Museum in New York and to look through the museum's collections for an object, a sign, something that would connect me to my Congo again – because wherever I go in the world, I always seems to be looking for a piece of Congo that would help me put together the pieces of this huge puzzle that has been pushed around so much by history – I came across this statue, a single arm, wood and pigment, less than a metre high, a beautiful statue to me, but considered minor and kept in the museum's stores. This statue is the only one by the Lengola ethnic group, my mother's tribe... and it was this object, held by one of the world's largest museums, that several weeks later was taking us – my mother, my uncle, my cousin and I on motorbikes and dugouts – tens of thousands of kilometres away to Banataba, the village of my mother's tribe. She hadn't been back since 1975 when I was a year old... So why did I have to go to New York for this journey to Congo to happen, for this research to begin, for these questions to emerge... Is it possible in museums to shift an object's discourse towards what it sets off, what it reveals in the eyes, the body, the head of the person looking at it? I therefore symbolically decided to return this statue to the land to which it belongs, to the communities for which it was designed and should speak... Because traditionally the most beautiful masks, the most beautiful statues were not locked away in the chief's hut for the sole pleasure of the initiated, but instead stood imposingly at the public square in the middle of the village. Children played next to where dogs hung around and pissed, where termites were doing their thing, but sometimes magic happened... Aren't masks and statues the archives of these villages, of these communities, linking the memory of ancestors to the births to come? How can these communities rediscover a link with a plundered past scattered over there? What is left of the stories from there in the museums over here?"

### **Interview William Kentridge & Faustin Linyekula for Holland Festival 2019:**

This year the Holland Festival is working with associate artists for the first time. For this edition they are William Kentridge and Faustin Linyekula. Recent performances by both of them will be presented, alongside work by artists who inspire them. They both work closely with talented artists from their own cities; Kentridge in The Centre for the Less Good Idea in Johannesburg, Linyekula at Studios Kabako in Kisangani. Work from these arts centers can be seen in the Frascanti theatre.

*How did you feel when you were asked to be an associate artist for the Holland Festival?*

William Kentridge (WK): "Amsterdam is an interesting city, and interesting things happen at the Holland Festival. I said yes to be a part of the openness of the festival. Having a longer connection than three days would be very good. I can bring a diverse range of work from South Africa. Not only my work, but also other people's work. It's a great way to show the fantastic things that come out of Johannesburg."

Faustin Linyekula (FL): "The Holland Festival may have presented my work only once, *La Création du mode (1923-2012)* in 2012, but I've been in conversation with programming director Annemieke Keurentjes for many years now. When she asked me to become associate artist, I thought: this is an interesting opportunity to continue our conversation."

*What were these conversations about?*

FL: "Very soon our conversations arrived at the question of context. What is the meaning of my work in Amsterdam? Theatre is nothing but a poetic gesture within a context. We ask the same question in Kisangani: what does it mean to be an artist there? The same goes for the Holland Festival. What does it mean to be a festival in Amsterdam?"

WK: "The work in *The Centre for the Less Good Idea* is made in Johannesburg for people living there. But the hope is that it works in Amsterdam, too. Still, there will be imaginative leaps and mistranslations, and that's fine."

*Do you see this as a way of further helping the artists you mentor at The Centre and Studios Kabako?*

WK: "Yes – but showing their work in Johannesburg is the most important thing, of course. It's ironic that when they do their projects in Europe, South Africans take it more seriously. That's a kind of colonial irony."

FL: "In Africa, legitimacy often comes from outside. I'm probably taken more seriously in Congo, because they know European countries take me seriously. I can be sad about that, but it's better to say: this is reality. How can I use this to my advantage? To change things locally."

*Faustin, you travel around the world showing your work. Yet all of your performances are created in Kisangani. Why?*

FL: "Kisangani was the country's third city in colonial times but the Belgians never built a theatre there. Mobutu, after independence, didn't change that. But fortunately it shifted the question of theatre from building to that of a relationship. In Kisangani we literally work in a backyard and our work is really a part of daily life. That's humbling. And I need that – that constant dialogue between the work, the space, the context and the people around. It helps me clarify the form of my work."

*Faustin, you call yourself a storyteller. Why is a storyteller making dance performances?*

FL: "I'm telling a long story, which is directly related to the history of my country and how confuse that history is. I guess it all started in 1997, when one morning I woke up and heard on the radio that my country had stopped being Republic of Zaire. I had to learn to call myself Congolese. That was really disturbing. I was 23 then. I thought to myself: what has really been going on here? What do I know about this country I live in?"

"When you are interested in the history of Africa, you soon realize that texts and archives can't be your main source of information. Most of the time they don't go back beyond the 19th century, and they are mostly Western archives. So asking the body questions through dance could be a solution. Because in our bodies are genes that connect us to people from a thousand years ago. Dance becomes a place where you can ask the body

questions. It's about calling upon everything at our disposal to make sense of these ruins we live in. Sometimes words can be useful, many times they are just lies."

*William, as a visual artist and theatre maker, what do you think of language?*

WK: "For me that's interesting, art as a way of looking at the ruins of history. As for language: sometimes it brings clarity and rationality, but sometimes the aim of language is solely to obscure a whole world. So recently I've been mostly using language that doesn't have a logical sense: dada, nonsense poetry, many different languages, different translations. That gives the audience alternately moments of clarity and moments of accepting that you are hearing something you simply can't understand."

"Dadaist Tristan Tzara said during the First World War: let's try for once not to be right. He was referring to the sense that all claims of certainty and exactness are always claims of authority. I often find it the case that things are opaque, that are contradictory, find themselves right at the centre of understanding. But then they are violently pushed aside to make room for the one so called true understanding."

FL: "That's exactly the colonial project. Violently reducing the world to one single view. The colonizers said: we are bringing the light to the rest of the world. But theirs is only one perspective of the world. I agree: not everything can be translated, we have to accept that. Like Édouard Glissant said: I am claiming the right of opacity."

*William, considering the current debate about cultural appropriation, was it difficult to tell the specific story of the black porters in *The Head & The Load* as a white man?*

WK: "I've been in the position of being a white artist in South Africa for all my life, so all those paradoxes and complications are there. The idea of cultural appropriation for one thing assumes there is an essence. That there is something pure and untainted that one can go back to, instead of understanding that the world has been made up of fragments that are put together in different ways."

"And understand, artists are hyenas. We see something that interests us, and it becomes part of our world, to be used. We say, here you have different things from different parts of the world. I hope you can connect them. We believe that other people are able to make that imaginative leap. Personally, I think the misunderstandings and mistranslations are of vital importance for art. I am in praise of bastardy."

FL: "I can for example claim what Russians developed. It also means that Russians can claim what Africans developed. The only problem for centuries and up until now, is that of power. When a Westerner takes something from an African, they come with the assumption that they know what it's supposed to be. That's wrong. But when it's about an equal encounter, it's right."

*Is this encounter central to your work?*

FL: "William is right in saying that purity doesn't exist. There are just all these things, and there is friction between all these realities. The work is about proposing a new reality and constantly searching for it."

**Video – Ein kurzes Statement über seine Arbeit an BANATABA:**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HuTbE\\_Ze0w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HuTbE_Ze0w)