

# Decolonial Spectatorship and Performances of Contemporary Dance in South Africa: Mamela Nyamza's Choreographies of Embodied Politics of Race and Gender in Place

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## RÉSUMÉS

### ENGLISHFRANÇAIS

Les luttes pour obtenir des espaces de danse, des places dans les festivals, et la reconnaissance des danseurs ont depuis longtemps sous-tendu la danse contemporaine en Afrique. C'est d'autant plus le cas en Afrique du Sud en période postapartheid et sous l'état de la pandémie, quand les structures gouvernementales refusent de donner la priorité aux arts de la scène, et aux praticiens de la danse indépendante en particulier — et ce malgré le rôle unique qu'ils jouent dans l'espace public depuis les fondements de l'ANC, avec des performances qui incarnent un militantisme politique, autour des questions de race, de genre, et de lieu. Prenant comme exemple Mamela Nyamza, l'article qui suit s'intéresse aux divers lieux de sa culture militante : dans et sur le corps ; en rapport avec la violence présente dans les relations genrées ou racialisées ; lors de performances de contre-danse dans des lieux publics et avec le corps noir [féminin] sur scène. Il trace le palimpseste de sa pratique chorégraphique décoloniale où elle accumule des strates de questions personnelles et socio-politiques en expressions artistiques distinctes et exercices intellectuels pour ses publics. Traduite en positionnements corporels décentrés avec des vocabulaires dansés, sa signature conceptuelle se compose de mots, de tissus et d'habits, d'objets du quotidien, et d'espaces qui se meuvent, se plient et circulent entre genres de danses, paradigmes langagiers, et échanges relationnels. Son œuvre agit contre la violence et les plaies que l'injustice perpétue en défiant les représentations des femmes, les relations humaines et les positionnements de race et de genre en place, historiquement, dans l'Afrique du Sud postapartheid et à venir.

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### Mots-clés :

Apartheid, politique du corps, danse contemporaine, pratique chorégraphique, Mamela Nyamza, Afrique du Sud, publics

### Keywords:

apartheid, body politics, contemporary dance, choreographic practice, decolonial praxis, Mamela Nyamza, South Africa, spectatorship

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## PLAN

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## TEXTE INTÉGRAL

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- 1 Although the arts and culture industry contributed R63 billion or 1.5% to the South African GDP (ac (...))

1 I start out, dislodged yet indoors, without proximity yet sitting with dematerialised connectivity, thinking about loss, livelihood in place, and contributive generativity in activist artistry. The 2020-21 covid-19 pandemic has infected and severely affected the existence of artists across the world and no less so in South Africa where artists and performers and all those persons enabling contemporary creative practices have been up against particular neglect since the early 2010s, choked by a moral epidemic borne largely by the corruption virus. During lockdown, one of the many failures of the state has been the sidelining and loss of income for artists. At the time of writing, some 21 artists who are a part of #Iam4thearts have held an extended sit-in since March 3, 2021 at the National Arts Council (NAC) in Newtown, Johannesburg whilst others have organised similarly in Kimberley (Northern Cape), in Bloemfontein at the Performing Arts Centre of the Free State. They demonstrate because "the NAC told the arts and culture sector that it would have to renege on contracts with about 600 approved applicants because there wasn't even money for the 1,215 processed applicants" (Mafolo), even though the Council was tasked with disbursing the 300 million Rand Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme (PESP) to the sector<sup>1</sup>. This compounding of threats to life — those of health and economic survival — has fanned the flames that burnish injustices and reignited the calls to action that the #FeesMustFall of October 2015-16 and #RhodesMustFall of March 2015-2016 incited in South Africa. They were echoed across the African diasporas before and since the murder of George Floyd by a white policeman that triggered worldwide protests and the reexamination of racism, policing, and systemic violent inequities along with the Black Lives Matter movement which has sought to intervene against gender-based violence and homophobia and to affirm black and brown peoples' humanity, contributions to world cultures, and resilient resistance in the face of deadly oppression.

- 2 Eight administrators and two moderators, including Nyamza, oversee [Iam4theArts.org.za](http://Iam4theArts.org.za).

2 The NAC 60-day sit-in is one of the urgent staged protests to arise from the formation of [Iam4thearts.org.za](http://Iam4thearts.org.za) protest movement on January 20, 2020 by South African opera and jazz doyenne Sibongile Mngoma. As a virtual platform, it allows its members to share information, organise, ensure equal access to funding for all artists and together bring about class actions to bear upon corrupt and incompetent administrators in the creative industries sector<sup>2</sup>. Mngoma leads the current action to hold government accountable to all the artists unable to sustain themselves because of the covid pandemic and the concomitant lockdowns leaving few spaces to work and disabling creations, rehearsals and performances. The development of such a lobby platform follows on the heels of the confounding consternation with which many met Mamela Nyamza's dismissal from her position as Deputy Artistic Director of the South African State Theatre (SAST) on November 25, 2019, the news of which spread on social media and appeared in the national press, and which she battled with the arms she musters best, crossing swords literally and intertextually with performative genres and verbal and corporeal vocabularies, switching positionalities from the deeply violated to putting the boardroom *en garde* in her digital *Pest Control* at the 2020 virtual National Arts Festival (vNAF) out of Makhanda, to which I shall return.

- 3 Even though Cyril Ramaphosa, a director and shareholder in Lonmin Mines, was acquitted of blame, th [\(...\)](#)
- 4 Mike van Graan is a founding member of STAND (Sustaining Theatre And Dance Foundation), launched on [\(...\)](#)
- 5 'Lifeload' is the etymological root of "livelihood", altered from the 1610s *livelode* signifying: me [\(...\)](#)

3 Inadequate support and mistreatment of those in the arts and culture sector and the dearth of administrative transparency do not originate with the term of the current minister of Sports, Culture and the Arts, Nathi Mthethwa, according to arts researcher Gwen Ansell. They are "long-standing, political, systemic and societal" and date back to before liberation when the African National Congress (ANC) neglected to form a department of arts and culture until 1997 even though such artists as Bra Willie (Keorapetse) Kgositsile (1938-2018), Jonas Gwangwa (1937-2021) and Miriam Makeba (1932-2008) were so deeply involved in the struggle. Furthermore, rarely have the appointed ministers had any experience let alone an affinity with the arts (Mafolo). Just as the first postapartheid arts and culture minister, Ben Ngubane, was a medical doctor and an Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) politician, the current minister of Sports, Culture and the Arts, Mthethwa, was first appointed by Jacob Zuma in 2014, after having been Police Minister when the Marikana platinum mines massacre was committed on August 16, 2012. He was re-appointed by President Cyril Ramaphosa in 2019 when the Arts and Culture Department was disastrously merged with Sport<sup>3</sup>. "[T]hat he was allocated to the arts portfolio shows how little government generally cares about the

sector,” said playwright Mike van Graan (Mafolo)<sup>4</sup>. With calls for his removal going unheeded by Jacob Zuma first and now by Cyril Ramaphosa, together with the DSAC’s stealthy pandemic necropolitics of the artists’ life-load<sup>5</sup>, artists at the sit-ins together with the supportive arts communities are more determined than ever to be fairly recognised at their just worth.

- <sup>6</sup> At a panel discussion at the University of Cape Town during the Institute for Creative Arts’ Live A (...)

<sup>4</sup>Demands for visibility and to open up the arts for all, for recognition as Black (women) performers of contemporary genres in main-stream South African performance spaces, for accessibility to positions in institutions to decolonise and pluralise the performing arts, and in the academy, to move from being objects of research and constitutive of curricula to being subjects-at-work in teaching and creating, and actively taking part in the conversation<sup>6</sup>, have long informed Mamela Nyamza’s activist work. As chore-activist (Katrak 2021, 17), claiming respect and recognition for Black (women) artists and for South African contemporary dance is central to Mamela Nyamza’s life-at-dance. Ahead of and alongside the South African (and world-wide) movements for decolonisation and calls for renewed activism such as #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall, she has translated the critical cries for cultural and political reform and justice into performances and public stands that rejoin Njabulo Ndebele’s “post-protest” era writing (“Redefining relevance” 70-71), as can be read in her Facebook post on September 30, 2016 for *DE-APART-HATE*’s premiere, a piece (she) billed as “Public Art — Hosted by Mamela Nyamza — in celebration of her 40<sup>th</sup> birthday”:

As artists, we need a discourse that goes beyond “decolonization”, a discourse that moves towards humanity, ubuntu, without being blinded by race and class, a discourse that I call a DE-APARTHEID PROCESS. [...] It] is thus the most potent weapon to make the oppressor [...] understand that s/he is just human and not superior over other human beings, and to make the marginalized [...] understand that s/he is just human, and not inferior.

This requires an honest dialogue [...] on issues of social, economic and educational systems in South Africa; [...] that starts with the struggles of South Africa as a nation without dwelling on narrow particularities of race and ideology. Critics might lambast [...] it] as a discourse that suffers from a romanticization of the oppressed and marginalized. But, the De-Apart-Hate Process is a true discourse for genuine and effective introspection before re-action.

Currently, [...] Art in South Africa is besotted with patronage instead of possibilities for all; artists in South Africa cannot even agree among themselves how best to challenge our Government to provide artists of all fields, with equitable resources.

**Figure a. Mamela Nyamza’s #Im4theArts creative intervention performance outside the Department of Arts and Culture in Pretoria, South Africa (17 February 2020) in protest of abusive and negligent practices within the arts industry. Standing with her, Dr Akhona Ndzuta & Gaza (surname unknown)**



Photo © katty vandenbergh, #Im4theArts media activist © #Im4theArts creative intervention performance

## Standing... still.ed?

5 On February 17, 2020, less than a month after the creation of [Iam4thearts.org.za](http://Iam4thearts.org.za), Mamela Nyamza participated in a creative intervention announced on Facebook in shades of orange and red and white lettering against a black background, as “street-level peaceful activism”, limited to “15 people at a time because #artistslivesmatter”. Standing, as if immobilised, in solidarity with other #Im4theArts and #artistslivesmatter protesters outside the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC) in Pretoria, she wore a shift-like golden-toned dress as well as recognizable elements of her costume — the bronze necklace and bracelets and the golden ringed head-dress — from *Black Privilege*, a work she premiered at the 2018 Grahamstown National Arts Festival (July 6-8), before taking it to Germany to the Ruhrtriennale (Aug. 22-25, 2018), to Berlin’s Hau Hebbel Am Ufer (June 25-26, 2019) and in 2020, to Bern (Switzerland, Feb. 9), Brussels (Belgium, March 6-7) and Barcelona (Spain, Dec. 17). Balancing the two-tray golden scale and holding the spear that make up her props and define facets of her character’s positionalities as signifiers of justice and war in *Black Privilege*, Nyamza stands in for a statuesque clear-sighted Lady Justice with a fierce eye-lock, treading on a pink tutu underfoot on what serves as a dais, recalling the #RhodesMustFall movement, and calling, as she indicates on her @deaparthate Facebook page, for “Justice for Artists”.

6 As dancer, choreographer and human-rights activist, Mamela Nyamza has stood (out) on the South African and international scene since the late 2000s-early 2010s. Her body of work reflects the quotidian of her personal biography as a Black African lesbian mother together with what South Africa continues to (need to) grapple with: its colonial past, its diversity, its deeply held (in place) racial, economic and social segregational divides, the gendered and policed violence and the fears that keep long-standing victims and survivors together with their perpetrators in a lockhold.

7 Born and raised in the township of Gugulethu, on the outskirts of Cape Town, Nyamza sees clearly and expresses often the shame — personal and collective as amaXhosa — that is occasioned by the current state of affairs of the nation whose progressive constitution holds such promise enfolded within its Chapters and its Bill of Rights. Her work weaves itself in the discussions around body-race recognition politics in South African contemporary performance as choreographed by her generation

of women dancers who, like Nelisiwe Xaba, born and raised in Soweto, have been at-dance since the early 2000s, and those coming to the stage a decade later such as Dada Masilo who likewise explore decolonial paradigmatic performance and movement formations in syntagmatic postcolonial space-time epistemologies.

- **7** See various dance festivals for *Afrique-monde* dance, including in 2021, the *Biennale de la danse* an [\(...\)](#)

**8**Moving and flexing across dance(d) and performative esthetics, language translations, relational and experiential exchanges, and in correlation with and opposition to *Afrique-monde* dance<sup>7</sup>, Mamela Nyamza's works challenge historical representations and race and gender positionalities, in particular those of Black South African women in place, from before and within postapartheid South Africa. They resist easy answers, tackle the cultural strengths of tradition, point out the differences that effect identity and human relations and exert pressures to breach the systemic injustices that plague the troubled, unequal nation of South Africa.

**9**Mamela Nyamza's choreographic practice takes in the various locations of her culture of activism: in and on the body, in relation to perpetrated violence in gender and race relations, and in displays of counter-dance in public places and with black [women's] bodies in staged spaces that seek to legitimize contemporary dance as a recognized, South-African funded decolonial theatrical genre. Her "mastery of the power and politics of performance" (Sichel, "Testifying") situates her as a formidable artist-activist, whose creative acts are life-forming.

- **8** I borrow the adjective archipelagic from Edouard Glissant's *Traité du Tout-Monde* where his Poetics [\(...\)](#)
- **9** Catherine MacGillivray "calls [Hélène] Cixous's textual practice [... after] Paul Claudel, an act o [\(...\)](#)

**10**Her dance-performances layer personal and socio-political critical issues into distinctive artistic expressions as engaged advocacies of dance for the recognition of the human person. Embodying archipelagic<sup>8</sup> corporealities of moving and stilled vocabularies, the works layer, borrow and derive from diverse forms, and carry her conceptual signature use of words, cloth and clothes, everyday objects, times, and spaces. They import and translate (historical) ideologies as palimpsests of *connaissance*<sup>9</sup> and acknowledge them as delinquent or ill-fashioned, as Nyamza declares in 2016:

My work is about unsteadiness and anxiety. It's about shifting, shuffling, re-adjusting discomforts as well as personal and collective battles against intolerant systems. My work embodies not only defiance but dismantling and detonating all those institutional myths and fallacies that keep people apart. (van Straaten 2016)

**11**Her work connects to contemporary lives, to their disjointedness and fragmentedness, and evokes the divisions — of race, nationality, culture, gender, religion, economics — that keep people apart and the struggles that tear up and forget traditions. Breaking with conventional expectations, Nyamza's performance practice explores memory by opening up to the nuances and complexities of everyday life and society in urban, township and rural South Africa. Expansive in their intimate reach, each of her pieces is a critical space to transgress boundaries and taboos and works to unsettle hegemonies, the status quo and lack of access with the body serving as a vehicle to recount human stories that are lived out with all the violence and inequities that still constitute the quotidian of women, of lesbians, of Blacks in postapartheid South Africa.

- **10** From 1969 when antiapartheid leader Steve Biko became president of the South African Students' Orga [\(...\)](#)

**12**As choreographer-dancer, trained in South Africa, the US, and Europe, with continental ties, Mamela Nyamza uses counterpoints as political outing: they practice and extend "social perception through appropriateness of form" (Ndebele 71). Reflecting the absolute singularity of embodied performativity, her counterpoint positionalities reinform Steve Biko's writings on black consciousness which he entitled *I write what I like* and signed "Frank Talk"<sup>10</sup>. Utilising what Achille Mbembe terms "interruptions" as ethical and political gestures "to expose the logic of "colonial phallocracy" and "racial supremacy" (Mbembe), Nyamza's intersectional interruptions for social perception might be envisioned as '*dancetaments*' in a choreo-graphic transformation of Hélène Cixous' *textaments* in which she dances frankly what she (dis)likes.

- **11** *19Born76Rebels* is the title of a piece conceptualised and designed by Mamela Nyamza and performed w ([...](#))
- **12** Siphon Mpongo, one of the artists participating in the sit-in at the NAC, documents this in his visu ([...](#))

13 However as a body-at-dance who practices what Catherine MacGillivray calls “an edge pursuit: a pursuit of the edge, practiced on the edge” (xxi) of the woman and dancer-at-life in a society a quarter of a century after apartheid, she is scantily recognised as artist in South Africa. Nyamza has often said that she works abroad in order to live in South Africa. Indeed, the international recognition does not make up for contemporary performance artists’, and especially Black women practitioners’ invisibility in South Africa. While cognisant that she enjoys better visibility because her sold-out successes and collaborations in Europe, in the Americas, in South East Asia legitimise her artistry, she, like her artist-peers of the *19born76rebels* generation<sup>11</sup> and the ensuing post-1994 born-frees, comes up against marginalisation and exclusionary practices that limit her access and that of so many South African artists to funding and major theatres and artistic platforms within the multicultural nation, plagued by the “aftereffects of racial segregation” and the scourge of the social and gendered inequalities borne of “capitalist economic ideologies”<sup>12</sup>. In 2011, she won the prestigious Standard Bank Young Artist Award, in 2016 the IMBOKODO award in Dance, and in 2018 she was the first dance artist to be named Artist of the Year by the National Arts Festival of South Africa, a recognition that may have meant the most to Mamela Nyamza:

I am truly humbled and honoured to get this award from the National Arts Festival. Without doubt, this festival remains one of the platforms in South Africa that continues to strive along with artists, enabling them to reach their fullest potential and beyond. (Berry)

- **13** *Hatched*, Cole explains, “depicts metamorphosis and positive self actualisation, portraying Nyamza ` ([...](#))

14 Indeed it was in 1985 as an 8-year-old student at the Gugulethu Zama dance school that she first performed before a national audience at NAF, and some thirty years later in 2018, when she performed on the occasion of the award in her signature piece *Hatched*, an autobiography of resistance, que(e)rying dance cultures, their identities, traditions and transformations, and a reflection on her choices in a heteronormative society about her life as a mother and artist, and the changes in her life after the birth of her son.<sup>13</sup> It is a piece that has also changed over time from *Hatch* to *Hatched* at first, and as her son — Amkele Mandla — has grown from the 8 year-old in the 2008 version into the 18 year-old who performed with his mother at the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown (June 28-30, 2018). Nyamza, like her peers, especially the women in the arts, continues to struggle for financial stability and the necessary (moral) support that institutional (funding) recognition affords women artists-at-life and at-dance, and more especially she yearns to feel she belongs in her own country.

15 Mamela Nyamza is outspoken about the place of South African black contemporary dance in South African theatre spaces and festivals. Even though Nyamza has been recognised with a number of awards, she has long struggled to make a mark with her social justice art in a system that privileges white artists and plays to (white) audiences’ preferences for blockbusters and folkloric indigenous and black dance and music traditions. She acts upon her criticism and has been active on the Advisory Panel of Dance for the National Arts Council since 2015 where she wishes to affect government policy on the importance of the arts and ensure that art, and especially dance, are developed and sustained as part of the broader creative industry, and not just as entertainment. She envisions making the performance art sector a genre of art that conveys body politics on all social issues, that reflects and is accessible to the most densely populated and the most rural and remote parts of the country.

## [Decolonising the body-at-dance: who’s looking at whom?](#)

Et surtout mon corps aussi bien que mon âme gardez-vous de vous croiser les bras en l’attitude stérile du spectateur, car la vie n’est pas un spectacle, car une mer de douleurs n’est pas un proscenium, car un homme qui crie n’est pas un ours qui danse... (Aimé Césaire, *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal* 16)

And above all, my body as well as my soul beware of assuming the sterile attitude of a spectator, for life is not a spectacle, a sea of miseries is not a proscenium, a man screaming is not a dancing bear...  
(*Cahier*, Arnold & Eshleman, trans. 17)

16 *Black Privilege* registers the implicit imbalance of Aimé Césaire's forewarnings in its very references to passing judgement — on South African women, misjudged, rejected, unsung and (fallen) heroines of the struggles for independence — and its focus on the structural double standard underlying Black women's lack of recognition implied in the ironically mordant oxymoron of the piece's title with its play on white privilege. First advertised most starkly with a red interdictory circle splitting in two the black lettering spelling out Black Privilege on a white background, the piece has since generally been announced with a photograph of Nyamza's gold-painted nude body sitting as if on a pedestal, upright atop a tall golden platform ladder, boldly bejewelled with anklets, a hipkini of bronze coins, bracelets, earrings, necklace and a golden crown echoing the Ndebele neck rings.

**Figure b. Mamela Nyamza, *Black Privilege***



Photo Chris de Beer-Procter & Mamela Nyamza © *Black Privilege*

17 In this work, Mamela Nyamza focuses her attention on the hypocritical structure of blind justice — unbiased judgement — undergirding our societies. Performing the imbalance of social justice, with its ritualistic summoning up of women for their strength and its concomitant holding of these powerful figures to account, in a permanent injustice of standardised value calls and violent prejudgements, *Black Privilege* queries the hierarchies and categories that accord to privilege and its attendant superiority complex. The 55-minute multi-layered yet choreographically stripped-down piece performs celebratory awe and homage in- and out of step with the insinuations of its counterpart: the gatekeeping practices of institutions and audiences. In slow-stretched-out minimalist motion, the gold body as art and on show incorporates defiantly the looking and the spectacularity by returning the oppressive racist gaze that exoticises and objectifies the Black woman's exploited body. Both spectacle and exhibition, the performance rehearses expectations of the totemic African body daring the audience to appreciate the artist's stilled virtuosity.

- **14** eGoli is the Sotho name for the city of Johannesburg, South Africa.
- **15** The amaXhosa anti-apartheid singer, songwriter, dancer and activist, Brenda Nokuzola Fassie (1964-2 ([...](#)))

18In silence, Nyamza emerges queen-like, immobile, almost nude and adorned in eGoli<sup>14</sup> gold, sitting regally high as her mobile pedestal is wheeled exquisitely slowly, along what might be a royal route or the red carpet, in utter silence, by a male figure (Sello Pesa, dramaturge, choreographer and artistic director of Ntsoana Contemporary Dance Theatre) dressed in a red magisterial or academic robe, over a black shirt and trousers with, across his shoulders, a traditional yellow blanket with black markings folded to remind one of the PhD hood. Looking down upon the seated audience on three sides of the (black box) space, she extends her neck to nod like a golden swan, until the Magister eventually stops, unhooks the red rope and removes the stanchions that had prevented their entry center stage onto a life-sized black and white chessboard. The slow-moving procession continues to circle within the enclosed space and she subtly shifts her weight and gaze, claiming the space on her own terms. One shoulder rises and falls wilfully before the other repeats the movement, and the Kwaito rhythm of “Memeza”, the call-to-action song of another queen, Brenda Fassie<sup>15</sup>, then breaks the silence and starts to reverberate through Nyamza’s body to have her belly dance. Fingers drum the beat on the bars of the pedestal before the toes take over and in turn relinquish their rhythms back to the long neck of what may be a swan’s last song, one last Nyamza-like wink. Rising, she embodies both Lady Justice and a legendary historical fighter’s success when her guardian-magister brings her the scales of justice and a warrior’s spear. She looks far off into the distance, above the spectators — her cheering supporters? — before finally losing her nerve and shaking (like a leaf of gold) and having the scales clatter. She continues to shake, necessitating that she crouch down, get onto all fours and then lie horizontally as if being tortured when the long black cord of a vibrating mat under her is plugged in. No longer in control, subjected to involuntary and perpetual motion, to the precariousness of acclaim (enacted explicitly by the Magister’s removal of her crown), of success, of life itself as but a breath away from (figurative) death, she labours swimming against the tide first in wide breaststrokes and then desperately paddling to remain afloat before sitting slumped over exhausted. Then as if fallen from grace, she lowers herself down the front of the pedestal, stopping first midway to remove the signs that designated her position. There she tosses off her bracelets, before proceeding to the base of the pedestal, where she sits to take off her anklets before lying down on her back. Abruptly, breaking up the near silence of her descent, a sound score of GPS instructions offers a repeated string of instructions with slight variations that make no sense on the theatre’s stage floor:

Keep right. At the roundabout, take the 2<sup>nd</sup> exit. Continue straight. Police reported ahead. Keep left. In 800m, turn right. Accident reported ahead. Keep left. In 400m turn right. Continue straight. In 500m take 3<sup>rd</sup> exit. Exit left. In 400m take the 5<sup>th</sup> exit. In 800m turn left. Speed trap reported ahead. Keep right. At roundabout, take the 2<sup>nd</sup> exit. (etc.)

19Situated at the spectators’ feet, below their gaze, Nyamza slithers over the chessboard, spine undulating and writhing snake-like over the chessboard, square by square first on her back, then on her side before rolling onto her front and grasping two legs of the pedestal, indicating her demise. Pawn rather than queen, more snake than ladder, she ends in the dark dragging the pedestal, back and forth covering very little ground. Reduced to no-body, she is denied a curtain call when the Magister-turned-guardian signals to the audience members that they’ve seen enough, and are to stand and leave, without applauding nor being given the occasion to pass judgement with their applause.

- 16 Nyamza has indicated during talkbacks that the inspiration for her initial stance is Winnie Madikiz ([...](#))

20Interrupting the ceremonial of performance by refusing to rise to westernised audience expectations, *Black Privilege* inhabits the verticality of such acclaimed heroines as Winnie Madikizela Mandela (or Brenda Fassie) and the embodied abject rejection with which depreciative (mis)judgement floors these same women<sup>16</sup>. Throughout the spectacle, audience and performers are alternatively bathed in light (horizontally in gold or blue on stage and vertically by ceiling white lights for the audience) and darkness. Such a decentering of the fourth wall, and the on-going turning of roles and expectations that condition attendance at a theatrical show on their proverbial heads switches the spotlight from the heroine as object to be admired to the artist as human, as woman-at-work.

21With that dare, Nyamza throws the gauntlet down. She challenges audiences to rethink the unthinking normative role they play as consumers in supporting certain privileges. Acknowledging that although the mise-en-scène of her body is hers now to determine, she shines light on the very attribution of rewards, to indicate how playing to these privileges places constraints on artists and positions — placing and holding — Black artists specially to play to (sure-value) entertainment.

Nyamza draws in the analogous lines that bind Black women's struggles for recognition with the double standards that underlie their success and deconstructs (theatrical) conventions by refusing the (unthinking acceptance of) rules of engagement that maintain patriarchal privileges in place whether it be when heroines of the struggle — tortured, imprisoned, banned — are tossed aside, or when bodies-at-performance are slaves to the arts grants boards' conventions. *Black Privilege* makes manifest what the creative purposeful spectacularisation of the Black woman's body entails in terms of its production, exploitation and consumption. Ghosting the triple bill inherent in performance (Demerson 152) that *Black privilege* manifests, is the creative act of spectacularisation that makes public the Black woman's double labour to be seen and recognised as agent so as not to be reduced to a servant, automated and invisibilised (black) body. Breaking down expectations about a dancing body, about producing a heroine-based storied performance, Nyamza pursues the edge in an introspective process with the audience that layers her counter-dance with an explicit disturbance of the codes of unexamined privilege.

## Decolonising the *Lieux de mémoire*<sup>17</sup>

- **17** Although the notion of *lieux de mémoire* is one that Pierre Nora developed between 1984 and 1992 to [\(...\)](#)
- **18** Robyn Denny paints, draws, curates, captures in light, colour and darkness with her videography and [\(...\)](#)

<sup>22</sup>The premiere of *Black Privilege* traveled dialogically with a *tableau vivant* happening on opening night of the exhibition of *Eastcoast Gold* (May 31-June 21, 2018) that enlivened and stultified at once the subject-matter of the paintings of the white South African visual artist Robyn Denny<sup>18</sup> with an insinuating commentary of deep resonance and visceral reaction before the gallery-going public present in the Bergman Contemporary gallery in Sandton, Johannesburg. In this collaborative work of shared performative art and dance, Nyamza's live exposure intersects with the materiality of His/tory, the liminalities of geography and the disruptions of cultures that Denny's paintings recover in her research process of mapping translation. With the constitutive metonymies and synecdoches of gold and indigo that stand (in) for the remnants of the African continent histories, her works uncover the spectacular metaphor of the cost of colonial artistic production, to draw in the rich traces of the local histories and the toll of the colonial project on the sources of its enactment.

- **19** Previously Denny and Nyamza had collaborated over 2 ½ years on *Hatched 2015*, beginning with a body [\(...\)](#)
- **20** The *shweshwe*, also known as the "German print", is one of the traditional starched indigo cotton au [\(...\)](#)
- **21** Her choreographic work and performance for *Le Vol du Boli* at the Théâtre du Châtelet that ran for t [\(...\)](#)

<sup>23</sup>*Eastcoast Gold* pursues the decolonial narrative and representational practices that underscored Denny's 2017 exhibition *INDIGO Passage to Healing*, and Nyamza's inter- and intra-relational performance *Battered Passage* at the AKAA (Also Known As Africa) art fair held at the Parisian Carreau du Temple (Nov. 10-12, 2017)<sup>19</sup>. Its large-scale canvases draw in the woven commercial trade histories of fabric and indigo and their cost in human lives, of women enslaved, exploited and erased in the profit margins and ideological cultural productions of fashion and empires. Dressed in a haute couture styled top and skirt created by costume designer Shiba Sopotela cut in *bazin* or *shweshwe* cloth<sup>20</sup>, Nyamza smeared her face and then filled her mouth with a liquid indigo that she spat out like bile in a symbolic act of purging and healing, as she wandered among the visitors carrying a paper AK47, in a reverse-gesture of self-defense that reinserts black women in the pigment's colonial historical record<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>24</sup>At the *Eastcoast Gold* Gallery exhibition, Nyamza's intervention in costume creates in the art gallery — once and still largely, a whites-only space — a place for contestation and confrontation when she turns the look back on the gazer, re-appropriating with her positioned and embodied gaze the gold and glamour that the gallery and the paintings manifest. Topless, gilded, wearing the golden ringed crown of *Black Privilege* and the long layered painted skirt with train which she wore for *Battered passage*, made of heavily starched cloth, she sits in parody, odalisque-like, then stands sipping rosé wine against the gallery's white wall, facing Denny's paintings — which include a series of four protagonists: the golden sphinx, the King Muse I of Mali, the Cinnamon Peeler's wife and the Cape Malaysian woman — in a silent yet deafening performative discontinuity with the works,

querying out loud : “how many black people are here tonight? It’s 2018”; “I’m not an object. Why am I being looked at?”

- 22 The toyi-toyi in South Africa is a danced form of protest, that is present in different more or less [\(...\)](#)

25 In tandem with *Black Privilege*, the happening of *Eastcoast Gold* as Sign challenges the conventions of shows, whether they be of the theatre or the gallery, and queries who the applause vindicates: the performer or the spectator/viewer? the signified or the signifier? Displacing the colonising gaze and dismantling the rules of the I/eye game, Nyamza plays the Black privilege card to the hilt, performing symbolically the Black shero and toying with the theatrics of the golden statuette of the theatre awards. With her sitting, standing or swishing as though she may be toyi-toying<sup>22</sup> among the paintings and the gallery attendees, or on stage in *Black Privilege*, both adulated and fallen, her performativity shifts in its interrogation of the insufficiently interrogated institutionalised privileges that separate out histories and people in such cultural milieux of stymied memory.

## Decolonizing the (Theatre) House

26 Denouncing white privilege is not new to Nyamza. An occurrence that may have scaffolded to become the final rung that led to the creation of *Black Privilege*, was occasioned by the 52nd Fleur du Cap Theatre Awards at the Artscape Theatre Centre in Cape Town on March 19<sup>th</sup> 2017 when whites dominated the nominees’ pool. Protesting such predominance and the lack of transformation within the theatre industry, Mamela Nyamza showed up together with actresses Chuma Sopotela (one of the artists that participated in the 60-day sit-in), Buhlebezwe Siwani and Zikhona Jacobs, carrying signs that read “70 nominees 52 white nominees”, “#whiteexcellence” and “#nominatelikeits1965” (van Graan). The “four ladies” as the press disparagingly labelled them — simultaneously rendering them anonymous — went on at Nyamza’s instigation to produce and perform *Rock to the Core* during the time that she was developing *Black Privilege*.

27 *Rock to the Core*, a lexical wink and sleight of verb modes to *We shall rock you*, the musical in which Nyamza performed in 2006, is about standing up to white privilege and access to golden statuettes and shaking up-wards the status of the black artist in South Africa. Tactical, it requires crossing frontiers of understanding, translating cultural differences embedded in realms of proverbial language at the core of isiXhosa quotidian idioms, issues that permeate *Phuma-Langa* (2017) whose title criticizes monolingual whites’ inability to pronounce such regional names as Mpumalanga even as the piece highlights the lost respect for the values of traditional cultural modes of living. In *Rock to the core*, it is the permutations and symbolic connotations of the word “rock” in English and “igusha” in isiXhosa that structure the protest piece. With “igusha” meaning sheep, and in colloquial language referring to a vagina, and “idlagusha” (a sheep eater) having replaced the apartheid-era word “umlungu” signifying whites, repetitions play out and on different layers of meaning. A wolf hides under a sheepskin and comes up to the *igusha* (sheep) who wonder how messy things might get before they can no longer remain quiet. As the refrain from the Black Sash’s resistance song made clear, “You strike a woman, you strike a rock”, these *igusha*/vaginas are not letting the white wolf/*idlagusha* eat them alive. These Black women artists don’t mince their words: they won’t be messed with and won’t go quietly for their performances are rock solid. In solidarity, they protest and twist play into ritual, and tradition into *connaissance*, a co-birth of insider, privileged, trans-cultural knowledge.

- 23 Dance Umbrella was co-founded by journalists Marilyn Poole and Adrienne Sichel in 1989 with funder [\(...\)](#)

28 The lack of recognition and visibility of black performers that *Rock to the Core* lambasts runs deep in the veins of the arts industry and in such premiere venues as the Artscape. Evidence of such systematic and systemic discrimination materialised again at the Artscape Theatre Centre when it hosted the Cape Town edition of the 2019 Dance Umbrella Africa (DUA) festival, which had run successfully March 31-April 7, in Pretoria, at the South African State Theatre (SAST). With “Figure-ing the State of Dance in Africa” as its theme, Mamela Nyamza had realised her dream to stem the demise of Dance Umbrella<sup>23</sup> by giving it an official State home and taking it on as a legacy project for the generations to come at a time when so many dance platforms in South Africa are disappearing (Moncho-Maripane 2019). And yet on July 31, 2019, in the main entrance and foyers of the Artscape’s three performance spaces, the event is strikingly absent from the posters and images announcing the theatre’s seasonal offerings, exhibiting a lack of regard for the emerging dancers

and their respective dance forms, reminiscent of the discriminatory bias of the Fleur du Cap Theatre Awards some two years earlier at this venue, Cape Town's main performing arts centre.

29Frustrated to see a festival presented by a black woman curator promoting young black artists reshaping contemporary South African dance dismissed and unrecognised on what she might consider her home turf, Nyamza extemporises her sense of betrayal in what should have been her opening statement of welcome and thanks as curator of the Festival and assistant director of SAST situated in South Africa's other capital city:

I'm not a foreigner here. This is home. I'm sorry if you're here to hear me talk, you're gonna hear me talk cuz I don't have the opportunity to seize the megaphone here. I don't know if there's anyone from the board or council here. Please fix it. We are artists, we want to see change, we want to see transformation... Thank you Artscape for not promoting Dance Umbrella but we will go forward and move forward. (cited in Demerson 257)

30Although Mamela Nyamza made clear that her forthrightness in delivering such an address does not befit her official position, the SAST used this speech to justify scheduling a disciplinary hearing on October 18<sup>th</sup> and their decision to dismiss her on November 25<sup>th</sup> 2019, stating that her "remarks were untrue" (Dr. Sibongiseni Mkhize, CEO of SAST)(The Herald) and that "it is important that the statements are factual and not emotional" (SAST's "Statement on Ms. Mamela Nyamza")(South Africa State Theatre).

## Out of the (black) Box: the Personal is Political

31Where in *Black Privilege* Nyamza's near nudity puts into play the black woman's body, in *Pest Control*, her two full body suits — one white, the other black — lay bare her subjectivity. *Pest Control* is the performative stage response to her firing and to the dismissal of black women's artistic creativity by abusive backroom power games. *Pest Control* coalesced ahead of the coronavirus as a performance piece incorporating the violence of her termination at the SAST, against which Nyamza was still fighting at its premiere's streamed release. It is a critique of the state-sponsored censorship, and its physical and psychological toll on an artist such as her.

32When the NAF realised that the 2020 edition would have to pivot to virtual mode, and transformed itself most remarkably, to host early in the pandemic's calendar of shifts of performances to online modes between June 25 and July 5 a fully fledged Virtual National Arts Festival (vNAF), Mamela Nyamza re-imagined and re-processed *Pest Control* to translate it to a digital medium. Such a format meant different challenges for the choreographer and dancer, working in the new medium of video for the first time, both in conceiving of the work in relation to the individualised local and simultaneous global viewership across the globe as against the proximity to a limited audience that a live performance determines, and in a form that she performs in and of which she is a spectator of the fully edited and realised 35-minute film. The permanency of the digital version with no geographical constraints set for viewing by vNAF's streaming platform reached a globalised audience far beyond the habitus of the theatrical space. Making "*Pest Control* as a document, art film" and "archive of protest" (Cohen) available to whomever might be interested, anywhere, transports the performing body of politics into digital space, ricocheting and echoing #BlackLivesMatter across the globe, during the plague of covid-19. This game-change which allows Nyamza to set and retain complete control of the work's form affords her a new way to share her experience by offering it as a mentoring tool for the younger generations of performers wanting to learn from her work.

33The title resonates on a number of levels, in what in June 2020 were the beginning months of the pandemic when the coronavirus was a pest — invisible — that needed to be controlled, eradicated through sanitary disinfecting measures. Returning for the first time after having been the first choreographer-dancer to be NAF's Featured Artist in 2018, Nyamza presents a *Pest Control* that has little to do with the pandemic's health hazard as such, except in as much as Nyamza's wordplay and politically astute temporal considerations of her titles are part and parcel of the layers that constitute her individual works. Rather, *Pest Control* upbraids the double standards at work in state institutions and (re)plays out loud her own dismissal less than a year into her tenure as Deputy Artistic Director of SAST. The title is an ironic play on words as she appears in combat gear, fully masked, looking as if she might be off to disinfect all the surfaces in a hospital, a clear reminder of the space-like suits worn by those who fought to contain and eradicate ebola in 2014-2016 in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia. *Pest Control* is the voice which rails against the pests who prey on artists, women, the vulnerable. It is a cry, which denounces the loss of freedom stemming from controlling the pandemic,

and marks in the other liberticides that are occurring, in its name, under its auspices and ongoing under the cover of state institutions' patronage and status as the platform Iam4thearts highlights. A reflection on the miscarriages of justice that undermine Black women artists' life-stories, the protest performance art film is dedicated to the many women, exploited and abused by "couch casting" during hiring and muted by their dismissal, suspension or rape by the same "male sex pests" who feel threatened by their effectiveness and performance in the boardrooms and on the job (Cohen). Participating as a digital media creative and activist, Katty Vandenberghe videographed *Pest Control* over ten days, during lockdown level 3, in parking lots and nature spaces around Pretoria, before moving to the Market Theatre in Johannesburg for the last two days.

34As the combatant walks towards the camera, along a red earthy road, the costume reveals itself to be a fencer's all white protective uniform with its accompanying head gear, the dark grey wire-meshed mask. She holds a megaphone (referencing her speech at the Artscape and the title of her intervention at the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Vavasati International Women's Festival in 2019: "Inequality: Seizing the Megaphone!"; and calling to mind the megaphones of *Phuma-Langa*) as if it were a gun, then between her legs, at her crotch like a giant phallus or large labia turned labialogos, before the camera zooms in on the mask, and the set changes to a fenced-in space, a dark foreboding boardroom with a large table and chairs in the centre, and a gallery space against the back wall from which to look down on the proceedings.

**Figure c. The outdoor scene with the megaphone is projected inside larger than life, across the entire back wall of the boardroom with the fencer lunging on the gallery ledge**



Photo Wilhelm Disbergen © *Pest control*

- 24 Joseph Bologne, the Chevalier de Saint-George (1739-1799) was born and raised in Guadeloupe by Anne ([...](#))

35The table is distinctly not round and Mamela Nyamza plays to her strengths as disciplined choreographer and dancer fully in control of her artistic acumen, moving with the ease of a dancer, the rhythm of a composer, and the agility of a swordsman *sans pareil* much like her eighteenth-century cultural ancestor, the chevalier de Saint-George<sup>24</sup>. She layers the exposition of the systemic injustice visually, physically, verbally, switching styles and modes of performance, and figures of speech with the spoken word. No longer carrying the spear of *Black Privilege*, Nyamza adds fencing to her repertoire. Utilising the blade as one more tool in her arsenal in order to affirm her position and contest her firing is a tour de force. She lunges and parries to her own voice-over of verbal ripostes drawn from the speech that led to her dismissal, registering all over again the shock, hurt and anger at there being no publicity, asking who the target of this intentional neglect was, and that the young artists from the newly reinstated *Dance Umbrella Africa* festival be recognised and honoured for their talent and achievement as (the only) payment for their performances.

36The soundtrack of *Pest Control* is replete with the spoken word in Nyamza's voice. It layers different languages and registers: recorded passages from her speech; series of expletives repeated to register women being screwed over and over again; direct imperatives in English; and culturally determined onomatopoeic exclamations of lament in isiXhosa that carry the thrust of her outrage and the wound of her dismissal. The work is "informed [she states] by my personal experiences; my country's topical issues and by global phenomena" (Cohen) and in particular the gender-based violence and abuse — emotional, physical, psychological, mental — women face.

37When the camera cuts back to the red pathway, a close up shows, in one of Nyamza's signature shock effects, the fencer's white uniform stained red at the crotch. Such a taboo visual cue, evoking the scene in *De-apart-hate* with the revelation of a Bible lodged at the crotch (see description later in this article), realises the generative wound born of women's losses as Nyamza exposes:

We are left bleeding. It is a miscarriage of justice. We give birth but we are side-lined. We lose kids, but we are still side-lined. We tend to be the care-givers, the nurturers. We pursue purity, love life but we are the most exploited, abused [...] I miscarried a new baby — there — at that [SAST] institution. Losing a child is very painful. (Cohen)

38Her embodied vocabularies tell the gendered nature of the wrongs, and the layering on the screen rehearses contributively women's adversities. Along with the visual switches back and forth between the sharp colour contrasts of the outdoors and the murkiness of the interior scenes, the two and three dimensioned spaces — the filmed and the staged — are juxtaposed with the larger than-life projection of Nyamza outdoors supra-imposed above the foreboding boardroom and behind the gallery along which she fences, or dressed in a black leather body suit, she circles the room, and the table. She is never still, pacing up and down the path, running around and around on the boardroom's table while the sound of police sirens chases after her black figure, caged in by the administration's space, pursued as if she were a criminal. The monologue, like a fencer's *mise en garde*, recounts the manner in which she was terminated, and the repeated procedural errors committed by the SAST's management. Very much alone in this one-sided duel, for outspokenness isolates when others kowtow to advance, it is a call to action, to get off the fence. *In fine*, the camera pulls away from the figure silently circling out on the deserted road, running in place in her white fencer's outfit, torn and soiled, to squarely frame her unmasked face. With the megaphone up against her mouth appearing like giant lips, she repeats without blinking: "fix it, fix it, fix it" for over two minutes.

39*Pest Control's* premiere streamed online on the day her case against SAST was to be heard in court. As forthrightly as *Black Privilege* exposes the inequities of privileged access in 2018 when Nyamza was the first dancer ever to be the featured artist at the National Arts Festival, *Pest Control* demonstrates how deserved the recognition remains. The Featured Artist Award at NAF is described as follows:

The award celebrates the work of a South African artist who has consistently exhibited ground-breaking work and exceptional talent, helping to shape the arts narrative of the country. The Featured Artist is showcased at the Festival through previous and new works forming a snapshot of their career in action. (2018 NAF programme)

40What struck Mamelu Nyamza to the core at the Artscape was the invisibility of the event when what matters most to her is the establishment of supportive spaces of performance in which to nurture new emerging talents, and that offer the safeguards that enable the art of dance to foment.

41As she stated in a 2011 interview:

Art has developed me and opened a totally different book for me to explore the impossible which is now possible [...]. Giving back to the community is helping those that come from where I come from, and showing them that this art is so healing, and it can heal a lot of them that are born out of issues just like myself. (SouthAfrica Reporter)

42Her determination to give back sutures her wounds, whether she is involved in community outreach and dance training projects, teaching ballet in the township of Mamelodi (east of Tshwane); volunteering at the Thembaletu Day School for the Disabled, in Gugulethu, or when early in her choreographic practice, she returned to her alma mater, the Zama Dance School in Gugulethu which she considered taking over from her first ballet teacher, Arlene Westergaard, and inspired the

children with two works that she cast on them: *Some of Us Can Change* (2006) and *The Classroom* (2007). Her advocacy employs dance as upliftment, youth empowerment and therapy as in her project coordinatorship at the University of Stellenbosch for "Project Move 1524", which uses dance movement therapy to educate on issues relating to HIV/Aids, domestic violence and drug abuse; as a member of the advisory panel on dance to the South African National Arts Council (NAC) from 2016 to 2019; and during the ruptured times of covid lockdowns especially, for the public recognition of the unique space and critical roles the arts and artists hold to interrogate the present systems, to act as mouthpieces for the marginalised, down-trodden or sickly and in disrupting and constructing socio-cultural imaginaries that are profoundly affecting as creative forces, as parts of the creative ecology that contributes to the creative economy (Maqoma).

## Pluralities of race: Boers, amaNdebele and amaXhosa

43At the 2018 NAF (28 June-8 July) Nyamza selected four pieces that highlighted aspects of her 10 years of choreographic work and succinctly traced in the palimpsest that her practice has generated. *Hatched*, her signature autobiographical work about her life choices in a heteronormative society and *Black Privilege*, served as bookends of her near-solo works, while her 2009 *i-dolls* which looks at early adulthood and queries the roles of clothes in shaping image and behaviour and *Phuma-Langa*, the linguistic and cultural piece that instantiates her amaXhosa spirit of the transgenerational and the collaborative, illustrated her creative choreographic process with the Cape Dance Company and the Forgotten Angle Theatre Collaborative respectively.

- 25 Jay Pather has fostered a number of provocative festivals dedicated to live art across South Africa (...)

44Nyamza's work is challenging to watch and to understand. It is provocative as it intermingles lexica, genres and intertextualities, and crosses between spaces to interrogate presumptions, habits and unchanging or abandoned cultural mores. Her stylistically figurative sense of rhetoric uses synecdoche and metonymy to deconstruct and decolonise stereotypes and the structures of hegemonies and over-steps the metaphor of dance's turn for accumulations of the partitive and stringently timed repetition. Her human geographies rejoin the core concerns of Jay Pather's work<sup>25</sup> as she seeks new cartographies of dance, that both decentre and recentre the urban and rural sites of performances, that transgress boundaries of dance genres and (dance) bodies on stage, and address audiences in formally white-only types of venues, in spaces not usually harbouring performance or ones inhospitable to blacks and coloureds during apartheid.

- 26 Nyamza earned a one-year scholarship in 1998 to the Alvin Ailey Dance School in New York.

45In an early edition of *Infecting the City* in February 2008, Nyamza's intervention with three other performers, in and around the fountain at Adderley Street Circle, seems to transpose to the Mother City the journey down by the river that constitutes a key part of African-American dancer-choreographer Alvin Ailey's 1960 *Revelations*<sup>26</sup>. Dressed in a short white corset and a yellow and fiery red skirt over a petticoat of ostrich feathers, she circles the basin brandishing her white parasol edged in red, crossing others, some going about their business together, another alone carrying a tin bucket of water, before wading into the fountain's basin, perhaps as a baptismal or a cleansing gesture and moving onwards, pushing through the knee-high water. In the agitation of the busy roundabout by the train and taxi stations, passers-by are taken in, as is the intent of Pather's *Infecting the City*. Nyamza's pace like that of the other three black performers is deliberate. She supports the watercarrier taking on her body weight lengthwise and helps wring and shake out the wet cloth, a fabric both intimate and that registers in its cotton threads the web of social encounters. Here as in all her works, the timing is exquisitely difficult to predict. She allows time to pass, quotidian things to happen, an unease to take hold, situating and entangling, as Sarah Nuttall would argue, the (colonial) past at the Cape in the now and here, at the foot of Table Mountain.

**Figure d. Mamela Nyamza, *Infecting the City*, Adderley Street Fountain, Cape Town, Feb. 2008**



Photo Sarah Davies Cordova © Mamela Nyamza, Adderley Street Fountain, *Infecting the City*, Cape Town, Feb. 2008

46 Just as Nyamza envisions making of performance art a decolonial genre to convey the body politics that affect issues of place and situatedness in densely populated, historically fraught urban settings, she addresses apartheid's co-optation of agrarian economies, and its erasure of local (historically grounded) knowledge and socio-cultural practices in the rural spaces of South Africa. With a

dramaturgy that often includes analogic, homophonic, and homonymic constructions, as well as interlingual passages, her process takes apartheid's remains apart and makes manifest the nefarious effects malapropisms — lexical, cultural and territorial — have on culturally diverse subjectivities. Her 2017 work with the Forgotten Angle Theatre Collaborative (FATC) at the Ebhudlweni Arts Centre in Emakhazeni, in rural Mpumalanga, is part of her vision, one that is in step with PJ Sabbangha's to interrogate contemporary personal, social and environmental issues, to develop a sustainable creative industry that is much more than just entertainment, one that decentres and complexifies the narrative away from the rural/urban divide to nurture talent across the nation.

- 27 My reading of *Phuma-Langa* draws extensively from Moirads' posts and Bridget Van Oerle & Sneziwe Dub ([...](#))

47Her residency culminated in *Phuma-Langa*, a piece first performed purposefully during South Africa's Heritage month for the community at the Ebhudlweni Arts Centre (6-7 September) and then at the Drama for Life Creative Research Hub's Emakhaya Theatre in Braamfontein (14-16 September). *Phuma-Langa* is a multi-layered exploration of the erosion and rapt of South African cultures in modern times under the divisive British and Boer wars, colonial imperatives and apartheid regimes, through the lens of one such history and culture, that of the amaNdebele which appear quite foreign to the amaXhosa that Nyamza is, and in contradistinction to the Boers' own identity quest. It is the mispronunciation of the province's name Mpumalanga (as "Maphumalanga") by monolingual English and other European language speakers that the title of the piece derides with its wordplay which translates to "the rise of the sun" or "sunrise" to interrogate whether the hope that the sun brings to the morning exists. Looking at today's lack of tolerance and acceptance of diversity, it is a call for the revival of languages, arts and cultures all over South Africa which, Nyamza feels resides deeply within her embodied practice, can revive intergenerational respect and understanding, and initiate a contributive, generative transformation and reconciliation through a reconstruction of the nation's soul<sup>27</sup>.

- 28 A similar sense haunts Nyamza when she introduced traditional dances into the choreography of *Le Vo* ([...](#))

48As the audience settles in, the performers break with the fourth wall as they unceremoniously costume up in full view. They pull on bright armbands, black bathing caps, swimming rings and pool piping over their tops and shorts, as well as mismatched striped socks and white canvas shoes, seemingly signifying swimming costumes and yet referencing synecdochally the social and traditional art of markers and the decorative function of colourful geometric symmetries and ring patterns of the amaNdebele, which the artist Esther Mahlangu has made known the world over. These shapes — graphic and painted — are cultural markers of life-events such as a birth, death, wedding or initiation that are both traditional and contemporary, understood within the communities and misused and misinterpreted when appropriated for commercial entertainment or decorative usage. This plastic transference together with the informality of the dancers' opening moment asks the audience to consider how hegemonic historical assumptions are reductively blinding when the deadly serious insider joke of *Sunrise* is on them for it queries what undergirds artifacts when what remains are stripped threads that barely hold (a culture) together<sup>28</sup>.

49*Phuma-Langa's* layering includes Louis Pepler aka Bok van Blerk's 2006 controversial and divisive song *de la Rey*. Its eponymous title references Koos de la Rey (1847-1914), a general in the second Anglo-Boer war (1895-1902) during which the amaNdebele were recruited by both the British and the Boers. The lyrics lionise Koos de la Rey who after having opposed the war, later played a heroic role in defeating the British at Magersfontein. They speak of the "khakis" who razed the Boers' homesteads, and their concentration camps where some twenty-eight thousand Afrikaners and twenty thousand Black African women and children died. The song is set in the trenches that de la Rey dug out, and the refrain calls out: "De la Rey, De la Rey, sal jy die Boere kom lei?" ("de la Rey, de la Rey, will you come lead the Boers/Afrikaners?"). Whereas the song served "the emergence of young Afrikaners who are finding a new voice, [... as it calls] upon an old hero in the quest for the emergence and recognition of a new identity", and is about "roots, history, identity, belonging, ideology and culture" (Lotter), Nyamza re-situates it on the bodies of the amaNdebele. She re-sets it as a war dance, on a battle field where the costumes' cultural tropes fall about the dancers' bodies, like dismembered parts, each time their names are mispronounced over the soundtrack and their identity attribute is so mauled. As a dancetament, it is subtle yet insidious in its iterativity.

50Nyamza collaborated with Thulani Lord 'Lathish' Mgidi and the FATC dancers Aphane Moputhi, Nicholas Shawn Lorin Sookool, Thulani Nomfundo Hlongwa and Francesca Matthys to conceptualise

a contemporary Ndebele cultural form of embodied movement, visual strength and orality that would constitute its theatrical staged performability. Maintaining the vitality of amaNdebele culture with the importation of visual and embodied vocabularies of artistic lineage and traditional performance into the theatre space operates another turn in Nyamza's contestatory repertoire.

51Eschewing music to start with, the six dancers move about the stage area, feeling their way as if blind, with sticks that are their plastic toy rifles tipped with chalk, marking their individual uncertain pathways with the impermanence of chalked markings. When they move into drill mode, the isiNdebele movement lexicon is stretched to befit the performance setting with a technicity that refuses to betray the internal dynamics of the dance's cultural role. Re-membering the divisive patterns of historical erasure, the dancers balance their rifles on their head like the heavy bundles of branches that the women in the rural areas often transport. As the images of the battlefield become more strident and the name mis-calling more damaging to their identity, the dancers lose parts of their isiNdebele cultural armour and the control of their moves as they twist and contort before huddling in shared agony.

Figure e. After the battle, *Phuma-Langa*



Christo Doherty © *Phuma-Langa*

52Straddling territorialities — with the Boer song's lyrics, the Ndebele rhythmically shaped movement and patterned visual motifs, apartheid's trampling of South Africa's socio-cultural plurality — and historical times, *Phuma-Langa* takes the form of an embodied conceptual storytelling. Palimpsest-like, the piece layers the youth of today's directionlessness on the backs of their elders who fought the bloody nineteenth-century Anglo-Boer land-grab wars and the twentieth-century white supremacist disenfranchising power usurpation. In the final scene's heap of past and present history, fractured identities lie littered across the stage spotlighting the current state of social and identity politics. Refusing to light the parameters of postapartheid racially stereotyped entertainment, *Phuma-Langa* twists towards its implicit imperative summoning the sun to rise and nurture a contemporary Mpumalanga with its own distinctive and intersectional artistry.

## In (the) *lieu* of a conclusion: “Public Art — Hosted by Mamela Nyamza”

53As with *Phuma-Langa*, the time and place of the theatrical performance of *De-Apart-Hate* starts as the audience makes its way in and looks to be seated. Rather than piecing items of identity together with visual cues, *De-Apart-Hate*'s opening moments transport its audience members to the congregants' seats in a South African Anglican church with a surround aural ambiance of well-known hymns. The work, which premiered at the 2016 National Arts Festival Cape Town Fringe Festival (Oct. 8) at the City Hall and was created during Nyamza's residency at the University of Maryland, looks at domination (patriarchal and religious), prejudice and homophobia (Katrak 2020, 173). As Adrienne Sichel points out, after the show at the small Wits University Amphitheatre, during the second-to-last Johannesburg Dance Umbrella in 2017, the piece “interrogates [...] Western religion, in an African context [...] inventively tackl[ing...] gender politics head on” through the prism of marriage as a Western structure of power and colonization — that of Christianity and gender politics (“Testifying”):

True to this choreographer's love for [...] co-opting, and then theatrically transforming space, the viewers were greeted at the door by performer Aphiwe Livi singing a hymn. Hint: we were about to become a congregation. A formally dressed-for-African-church, turbaned, Nyamza followed [...], as a young woman planted in the auditorium beat out the African rhythms on a red leather pillow.

54Historically this context and setting has huge resonance for a Gugulethu dancer who as a little girl had her first [dance] training with Zama Dance's [...] Arlene Westergaard and [...] CAPAB Ballet star John Simons in a Moravian church in her neighbourhood. (“Testifying”)

55Although not overtly about apartheid or race, the subversive duet for a woman and a man initially performed by Nyamza and her cousin Mihlali Gwatyu, and subsequently with Aphiwe Livi, resonates nevertheless with the copyrighted deconstruction of the lexeme “apartheid” in the piece's almost homophonic porte-manteau title: ©*De-Apart-Hate*. With the concept trademarked, Nyamza means to dance what she dis/likes and trounce apartheid with her denunciation in plain language of its very foundations in division and hatred.

56Dressed for Sunday church, Nyamza and her male partner take their time to make their way down the aisle stepping to the music until they reach the empty stage save for a multi-coloured public park bench which evokes on the one hand the three flags (the old South African flag, the new rainbow-nation flag and the LGBTQI flag) as potent signifier of post-1994 narratives and on the other, the separate amenities labelled apartheid benches which the two characters incarnate with their black and white outfits and as two Blacks sitting on it. As the hymnal music fades, they take their place on the bench, whose precarity is immediately evident. Like a seesaw, it wobbles from side to side and the performers, perched uncomfortably, wait in silence, creating a space of expectancy. Suddenly their ill-at-ease and unsettled pause breaks and they each spin off before returning to their unstable seat. Gradually the alternating stasis and bolted moves build to create a palpable unease, one which echoes the fraught South African political climate.

- 29 In the New International Version of the Bible, Ephesians 5:6 reads: “Let no one deceive you with em (...)

57Roughly pushed off the bench, Nyamza falls to her knees and stabilises on all fours before the male performer climbs onto her back, standing as if ascertaining his (physical) power over her and maintaining her in a pious and sexually subservient position. As he balances on her back, like a preacher he shouts out charismatically: “Ephesians 6, v. 5”, a biblical verse about God's punishment if one were to disobey his word. The scene builds, the intensity of their voices manifest in their bodies, until Nyamza collapses and the preacher loses his foothold. Standing, they then switch to calling out “Deuteronomy 32, v. 8” which sets out the boundaries God put in place to separate people. As the repetition's rhythm builds, they bring in “Leviticus 18, v. 22” that interdicts homosexual relations<sup>29</sup>. In their repetition, the phrases become unrecognisable, and lose their significance with Nyamza's punctuating hallelujahs and tellingly disassociated syllables in amens pronounced as “Ah Men!”, emptying them further still of meaning.

**Figure f. Balancing on the single polyvalent prop, the unstable multi-coloured public bench that stands in for Mandela's rainbow-nation and gay pride and substitutes for the designated benches of apartheid**



Photo John Hogg/DanceUmbrella © *De-apart-hate*

58The trope of repetition that layers *De-Apart-Hate* with series of rhythmic, embodied and verbal syntagms does not stop there; it runs through the piece, dismantling held beliefs and institutionalized fallacies as the accretions rise and fall. The preaching continues provoking responses from the audience turned congregation before Nyamza uses the bench to reverse the situation. Standing it on its end as a separator as her partner lies across the floor as if seized by the spirit, she then lowers it over him imprisoning and silencing him. Facing the audience defiantly, she raises her tightly fitting black dress, sits on the edge of the bench and spreads her thighs in a deep plié. Reaching between her legs, she pulls a Bible out, and opening it over her vagina, licking her index finger to turn its pages edged in lip-like pink, she recites the dates that mark the white settlers' colonisation and religious conversion of South Africa before quickening the pace, simulating masturbation as she repeats "Leviticus 18, v. 22". Paging through, she adds wickedly: "doesn't end, eh?" before finally closing her knees, snapping the Book closed, keeping it tightly between her thighs as she lowers her dress (Cole 95-97).

59As *De-Apart-Hate* opened in song, so it finishes. But rather than remaining in church, the final song *Asiphelelanga* — often heard in the villages and at soccer matches and re-mixed by amaXhosa afrosoul artist Vusi Nova — whose repetitious refrain chants: "we are not complete, no no, we are not complete", moves the contestation out into the public arena. In ending, Nyamza grinds her hips as the Bible seems to press in on her penis-like and outlined through her dress. She inches her way along the upturned bench, "all the while mouthing the song's words and doing sexualised contortions that eventually reveal [...] the pink trim of the Bible [... that] drops on the floor", after which she clambers over to the front of the stage and lowers herself into full splits over the open book (Cole 98-99). There, legs apart, daringly with her discursive labia, she moves to sign her embodied praxis that she calls "DE-APARTHEID PROCESS" on the book's pages.

60The "De-Apart-Hate Process is a true discourse for genuine and effective introspection before re-action", the chore-activist writes for the premiere of the piece, a week after her 40<sup>th</sup> birthday. Like the plurivalent multicoloured public bench, Nyamza's splits sit on the edge, with her archipelagic lip movements radically outing the intolerant religious and homophobic underpinnings of colonialism's

and apartheid's holds on the present. Transfiguring Njabulo Ndebele's "post-protest writing" into interruption and interference, her praxis disorders spectators' perceptions of the place and form of performance and disrupts normative role expectations. Her performances of the experienced, of recollected pasts and present confluences, pulled from embodied archives, birth knowledge intimacies. As Black dancer-at-life, Mamela Nyamza dances as she likes what she dislikes in transgressive artful dancetaments wherein the body-at-dance is political public art.

61\*\*\*\*\*

62Dance's breath creates life lines, with and without covid, in times of dread and in places where in South Africa the betrayals by the liberation leaders perpetuate apartheid's devastatingly unjust inheritance. In a place of systematised segregation where congregation and community were long legislated against, where the movement of bodies were pass-controlled, covid lockdowns and social distancing reinforce iteratively the unresolved injustice of the volatility of space, of access to space, to safe space, to affordable space.

63In South Africa, where the platforms supporting dance have all but disappeared over the last fifteen years, the covid pandemic has foregrounded how insecure the right of access to public places remains. Its diseased waves have relayed how vital life-support is to dance practitioners whose practice, located in and on the body, carries the struggle to articulate explorations of human freedoms, cultural encounters and race and gender relationships with intimate choreographic disruptions to time and space that strain to decolonise spectatorship with the gift of generative artistic activism.

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## NOTES

**1** Although the arts and culture industry contributed R63 billion or 1.5% to the South African GDP (according to a 2018 South African Cultural Observatory report), “[w]ith the hard lockdown, the arts and culture sector, like many other industries, was decimated by the prohibition of public gathering [...]. The lack of income during the pandemic and the inadequate support from the department came as the last straw for many artists. These factors have pushed many [...] to protest against the ineptitude of various arts agencies” (Mafolo).

**2** Eight administrators and two moderators, including Nyamza, oversee Iam4theArts.org.za.

**3** Even though Cyril Ramaphosa, a director and shareholder in Lonmin Mines, was acquitted of blame, there still lacks clarity about one of the worst massacres since the end of apartheid, when the South African police shot down 100 or more striking miners, killing 34, following violence that had erupted 6 days earlier on August 10, causing the death of 10 of the striking miners and two policemen over the course of the week.

**4** Mike van Graan is a founding member of STAND (Sustaining Theatre And Dance Foundation), launched on September 1, 2020, and which was set up, as its chair, Gregory Maqoma, writes, “to serve the whole value chain within the dance and theatre ecosystems [...](education, creation, production, distribution, consumption, archiving)” in response to the South African government’s continued neglect and lack of vision [...] for a creative stimulus plan for the creative economy [to keep] the arts fraternity alive” during and as a result of covid (*Daily Maverick* 168).

**5** ‘Lifeload’ is the etymological root of “livelihood”, altered from the 1610s *livelode* signifying: means of keeping alive from the Old English (c.1300) *liflad* or course of life.

**6** At a panel discussion at the University of Cape Town during the Institute for Creative Arts’ Live Art Festival (Pinto 2017b), Mamela Nyamza admonished academia for not having direct conversations with artists whose work figures prominently in curricula.

**7** See various dance festivals for *Afrique-monde* dance, including in 2021, the *Biennale de la danse* and Massidi Adiatou’s interpretation in the opening défilé that took place at the Grand Théâtre de Fourvière, in Lyon, France.

**8** I borrow the adjective archipelagic from Edouard Glissant’s *Traité du Tout-Monde* where his Poetics of Relation is about drawing from sources, being unsettled, and having to do with encounters, interferences, shocks and the harmonies and disharmonies of cultures of rooted and Relational identities.

**9** Catherine MacGillivray “calls [Hélène] Cixous’s textual practice [... after] Paul Claudel, an act of *co-naissance*” (xxi) and writes of such *connaissance* as a co-birth with/in knowledge as a way of coming to writing.

**10** From 1969 when antiapartheid leader Steve Biko became president of the South African Students’ Organization, to 1972, when he was prohibited from publishing, he contributed regularly with the pseudonym “Frank Talk” to their Bulletin, in a column entitled *I write what I like*.

**11** *19Born76Rebels* is the title of a piece conceptualised and designed by Mamela Nyamza and performed with Faniswa Yisa, first at the 2012 Avignon Festival, France, then at the 2014 NAF in Grahamstown, and in the 2014 Live Art Festival in Cape Town. It references June 16, 1976 when armed police fired tear gas and live ammunition on young students (mobilized by the South African Students Movement's Action Committee) who were marching peacefully in Soweto in protest against the government's education policies based on the 1953 Bantu Education Act. The revolt that ensued spread across the country and garnered the world's attention. 1976 is also the year of Nyamza's birth (22 Sept.) and as such she belongs to the generation that came of age in 1994.

**12** Siphon Mpongo, one of the artists participating in the sit-in at the NAC, documents this in his visual essay "The 'Born-Free' Generation" which is set "against a backdrop of the 2015 student mobilizations" in *Anthropology Now* (Dec. 2016) with photographs drawn from his contributions to *TWENTY JOURNEY. Three photographers on a journey to explore South Africa twenty years into democracy* (2015).

**13** *Hatched*, Cole explains, "depicts metamorphosis and positive self actualisation, portraying Nyamza 'hatching' as a new mother who continues to perform, as a lesbian who has recently announced and embraced what is still in South Africa a non-conforming and often violently persecuted sexuality, and as a dancer who is deconstructing ballet's problematic embodied pedigree. [...] *Hatched* is as much about personal transformation as it is about personal refusal — a refusal of domestic servitude; a refusal of expected gender roles and relationships; a refusal to [...] cater to expectations" in terms of the dancing body's technique and easy gratification (80-81, 94).

**14** eGoli is the Sotho name for the city of Johannesburg, South Africa.

**15** The amaXhosa anti-apartheid singer, songwriter, dancer and activist, Brenda Nokuzola Fassie (1964-2004) was born in Langa, a township close to Gugulethu, near Cape Town and was affectionately called Ma Brrr. The queen of Afropop's 4:25 minute long song "Memeza (shout)" from her 1997 eponymous award-winning album constitutes the only music in *Black Privilege's* sound score.

**16** Nyamza has indicated during talkbacks that the inspiration for her initial stance is Winnie Madikizela-Mandela whose struggle to defend her husband and to support the fight for freedom landed her in court where she stood before the whole nation dressed as an amaMpondo South African woman. That court appearance during which she was the centre of attention contrasts with later ones when she was abandoned by the ANC and left to (de)defend (for) herself when charged in the case of the Mandela United Football Club's disappeared young men and after the divorce proceedings with Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela. The outpouring of grief upon her death on April 2, Easter Monday in 2018, demonstrates how loved she is by South Africans, and Pascale Lamche's 2017 film, *Winnie*, asks how and why history erases women who have wielded political power.

**17** Although the notion of *lieux de mémoire* is one that Pierre Nora developed between 1984 and 1992 to think about the (white) French imaginary of the nation-state's socio-cultural and political History, the phrase has been picked out and apart in a number of postcolonial socio-cultural studies about other world cultures and societies where History is laden with silences about unspeakable traumatic events and erased purposefully by the (white) master narrative. I use it here to indicate the spaces of the body and of material cultural history such as the trade routes where the remains of the exploitative commerce have left human tracks from which memories surface, some more certain or precise than others depending on the nature of their survival.

**18** Robyn Denny paints, draws, curates, captures in light, colour and darkness with her videography and narrative filmmaking, movement and stillness in collaborative artistic explorations of humanity's haunted histories and points of contact.

**19** Previously Denny and Nyamza had collaborated over 2 ½ years on *Hatched 2015*, beginning with a body of inked works that Denny produced of Nyamza in her first signature piece that started out as *Hatch* and became *Hatched*. They continued with Denny video graphing Nyamza performing in studio her 2008 *Hatched*. The evocative kinetic works were fused to form the gallery show, a spaced (out) performance, repeatable in time and place, with or without the dancing body in presence, on two sets of three panels: stilled in painted tableaux and a 3-screen installation that projected video-filmed passages of *Hatched* enhanced by Ebrahim Hajee. In 2016, the layered co-directed artists' palimpsest was live with Nyamza at Gallery MOMO, Cape Town, with an original score by Jeremy de Tolly and ululating and

drumming by Kesivan Naidoo, and later 2016 in Madrid's Slowtrack (Marta Moriarty) Gallery, after having been selected in the same year as a video piece at LOOP in Barcelona.

**20** The *shweshwe*, also known as the "German print", is one of the traditional starched indigo cotton austral textiles first made in Central Europe then in Manchester, UK, and now made by Da Gama Textiles in South Africa. Similarly, the *bazin* and Dutch wax cotton cloths are stiffly starched and regularly dyed in indigo. Originally woven in the UK, then later in Holland, then dyed in Mali and Senegal principally or in another circuit, developed by the Dutch Vlisco Empire with its outlets in Ghana. These cloths' production histories participate in the commercial trade routes that ploughed the north/south Atlantic Ocean and the east-west Indian Ocean.

**21** Her choreographic work and performance for *Le Vol du Boli* at the Théâtre du Châtelet that ran for three days in October 2020 rejoins this decolonial (re)writing of history with its accounts of loss and theft, and the concomitant interruption and erasure of indigenous practice (Gambade).

**22** The *toyi-toyi* in South Africa is a danced form of protest, that is present in different more or less military forms across the African continent since the 1960s. Nyamza's *toyi toyi* here is of her own choreography.

**23** Dance Umbrella was co-founded by journalists Marilyn Poole and Adrienne Sichel in 1989 with funder Philip Stein as a democratic platform for all South African dancers and dance forms. Georgina Thomson's Dance Forum took it over in 1998 until 2018. Funding, which was assured first by a couple of insurance companies and then First National Bank (1994-2010), became less dependable and eventually this led to Thomson's decision to no longer organise the yearly event (Sichel 154, 283). See Demerson for this history and Mamela Nyamza's curatorship of what she renamed Dance Umbrella Africa together with a full account of her dismissal from her appointment at the South African State Theatre and her response (237-44, 253-61).

**24** Joseph Bologne, the Chevalier de Saint-George (1739-1799) was born and raised in Guadeloupe by Anne known as Nanon, his enslaved mother deported from Senegal, and George de Bologne Saint-George, his father, a white French plantation owner who recognised him and took him to Paris to be educated. Fencer-swordsman *extraordinaire* with a European reputation and brilliant conductor, composer and violinist, he directed some of the finest orchestras, including the Concert des Amateurs and l'Olympique. However, in 1776, in what is the first official case of racism in France, three divas of the Opéra, singers Sophie Arnould and Rosalie Levasseur and the dancer Marie-Madeleine Guimard, who would not subject themselves to the orders of a "mulatto", refused to sing and dance were the chevalier de Saint-George appointed director of the Académie royale de musique (now the Opéra de Paris) by Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette.

**25** Jay Pather has fostered a number of provocative festivals dedicated to live art across South Africa, including Infecting the City (primarily in Cape Town and re-titled "UNInfecting the City" for its 2021 iteration) or the Live Art Festival. The latter is public, collaborative and progressive, showcasing a range of performative artworks from different countries that are set to disrupt spaces across Cape Town and to push traditional boundaries of interdisciplinary and performance art (Pinto 2017a). See also Katrak (2021) for Pather's emphasis on space in his choreographic collaborations and curatorial work.

**26** Nyamza earned a one-year scholarship in 1998 to the Alvin Ailey Dance School in New York.

**27** My reading of *Phuma-Langa* draws extensively from Moirads' posts and Bridget Van Oerle & Sneziwe Dube's media release "Innovative FATC Dance Brings Unity" for the 14-16 September 2017 performances in Johannesburg.

**28** A similar sense haunts Nyamza when she introduced traditional dances into the choreography of *Le Vol du Boli* and understood that the theft that the musical opera was staging would be redoubled if she chose to dishonour the elders by expecting uninitiated dancers to perform her traditional dance in her place.

**29** In the New International Version of the Bible, Ephesians 5:6 reads: "Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient"; Deuteronomy 32:8 says: "When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided all mankind, he set up boundaries for the people according to the number of sons in Israel"; and Leviticus 18:22: "Do not have sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman; that is detestable."

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## TABLE DES ILLUSTRATIONS

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Titre **Figure a. Mamela Nyamza's #Im4theArts creative intervention performance outside the Department of Arts and Culture in Pretoria, South Africa (17 February 2020) in protest of abusive and negligent practices within the arts industry. Standing with her, Dr Akhona Ndzuta & Gaza (surname unknown)**

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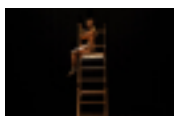
Crédits Photo © katty vandenbergh, #Im4theArts media activist  
© #Im4theArts creative intervention performance

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URL <http://journals.openedition.org/erea/docannexe/image/13109/img-1.jpg>

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Titre **Figure b. Mamela Nyamza, *Black Privilege***

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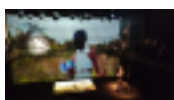
Crédits Photo Chris de Beer-Procter & Mamela Nyamza © *Black Privilege*

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URL <http://journals.openedition.org/erea/docannexe/image/13109/img-2.jpg>

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Fichier image/jpeg, 1,5M



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Titre **Figure c. The outdoor scene with the megaphone is projected inside larger than life, across the entire back wall of the boardroom with the fencer lunging on the gallery ledge**

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Crédits Photo Wilhelm Disbergen © *Pest control*

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URL <http://journals.openedition.org/erea/docannexe/image/13109/img-3.jpg>

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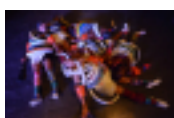
**Titre** Figure d. Mamela Nyamza, *Infecting the City*, Adderley Street Fountain, Cape Town, Feb. 2008

**Légende** Photo Sarah Davies Cordova © Mamela Nyamza, Adderley Street Fountain, *Infecting the City*, Cape Town, Feb. 2008

**URL** <http://journals.openedition.org/erea/docannexe/image/13109/img-4.jpg>

Fichier image/jpeg, 2,2M

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**Titre** Figure e. After the battle, *Phuma-Langa*

**Crédits** Christo Doherty © *Phuma-Langa*

**URL** <http://journals.openedition.org/erea/docannexe/image/13109/img-5.jpg>

Fichier image/jpeg, 1,5M

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**Titre** Figure f. Balancing on the single polyvalent prop, the unstable multi-coloured public bench that stands in for Mandela's rainbow-nation and gay pride and substitutes for the designated benches of apartheid

**Crédits** Photo John Hogg/DanceUmbrella © *De-apart-hate*

**URL** <http://journals.openedition.org/erea/docannexe/image/13109/img-6.jpg>

Fichier image/jpeg, 1,4M

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## POUR CITER CET ARTICLE

### Référence électronique

Sarah DAVIES CORDOVA, « Decolonial Spectatorship and Performances of Contemporary Dance in South Africa :

Mamela Nyamza's Choreographies of Embodied Politics of Race and Gender in Place », *E-rea* [En ligne], 19.1 | 2021, mis en ligne le 14 décembre 2021, consulté le 26 février 2023. URL :

<http://journals.openedition.org/erea/13109> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/erea.13109>

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AUTEUR

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Sarah Davies Cordova is Professor of French and Francophone Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (USA) and Research Associate in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Johannesburg (RSA). Her current research focuses on African and African diasporic literature and dance. Chair of the Editorial Board of the Society of Dance History Scholars (2012-2015), she was Series Editor of *Studies in Dance History* (University of Wisconsin Press) and coordinated the annual *Conversations across the Field of Dance Studies*. *Mère à Mère*, her translation of amaXhosa author Sindiwe Magona's novel *Mother to Mother* was published by Mémoire d'encrier in 2019.

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