

# LEBOHANG KGANYE

*Tell Tale, 2018, Photo, Installation. / Shadows of Re-Memory, 2021, Film.*



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The work is mainly inspired by Athol Fugard's plays *Train Driver* and he writes, "For Pumla Lolwana and her three children—Lindani, Andile and Sesanda—who died on the railway tracks between Philippi and Nyanga on The Cape Flats on Friday, December 8th, 2000."



*Shadows of Re-Memory*, 2021

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In 2018, Lebohang Kganye spent weeks walking along the gravel roads of the small town of Nieu Bethesda in the Karoo of the Eastern Cape where Athol Fugard found inspiration for his play "The Road to Mecca" which was inspired by Helen Martin's Owl House. During this time, the artist interviewed the villagers such as Shawn Graaff. Shawn, a young American woman who lives between Cape Town and Nieu Bethesda, works on the restoration and conservation of the Owl House and the cement sculptures created by Helen Martins and Koos Malgas. She introduced Kganye to many of the villagers, including a beekeeper who makes cosmetic prod-

ucts in her backyard from beeswax and a violin string maker using horse tails to make the strings. She drove to a livestock auction where the farmers bid for sheep and met a "tannie" in her tea garden who translated Athol Fugard's plays from English to Afrikaans.

Through the construction of miniature theatre sets with silhouette cutouts of the characters in the diorama, I stage the stories the villagers narrated to me in relation to Athol Fugard's play *Road to Mecca* and a chapter from Lauren Beukes' book *Maverick* about Helen Martins. *Tell Tale* confronts the conflicting stories which are told in multiple ways, even by the same person – a combination of memory and fantasy. The work does not attest to being a documentation of a people but presents their personal narratives, which they share over a cup of tea, homemade ginger ale or the locally brewed beer. These prized possessions hearken back to a particular time but are also vehicles to a fantasy that allows for a momentary space to 'perform' ideals of community. Fictive narratives depend on oral histories, genealogist Kimberley Powell states "Oral histories are stories told by living people about the past. Generally, these are stories of their own life and the lives of the people around them. Often an oral history includes details and stories that exist nowhere other than in the individual's mind."

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*You couldn't stop the train in time*, 2018  
Inkjet print on cotton rag paper, 64 x 90 cm  
Edition of 5 + 2AP

## *You couldn't stop the train in time*, 2018 (Scene 1)

References a scene in *The Train Driver* by Athol Fugard, which is set in Port Elizabeth about a woman who threw herself and her three children in front of a moving train to escape poverty.

"For Pumla Lolwana and her three children Lindani, Andile and Sesanda—who died on the railway tracks between Philippi and Nyanja on The Cape Flats on Friday, December 8th, 2000."



*The nameless ones in the graves*, 2018  
Inkjet print on cotton rag paper, 64 x 90 cm  
Edition of 5 + 2AP

## *The nameless ones in the graves*, 2018 (Scene 2)

References a scene in *The Train Driver* by Athol Fugard, which is set in Port Elizabeth.

Simon (Andile) Hanabe, an African man who is a gravedigger, and Roelf (Rudolf) Visage, a white train driver who was driving the train that hit the woman and her children, are looking for her grave set in Nieu Bethesda, in the Karoo, Eastern Cape.

The scene references a paragraph in the book: "Plenty of ghosts out there I hear them at night when the dogs are digging I hear them. They don't like the dogs. So I go out and throw stones. It is like the wind, is very sad. The dogs wake them up and they are not happy. I sing to them. I sing like my mother sing to me when I was a little boy and she carry me on her back. Thula Mama Thula. Then they go back to sleep. And all is quiet again."

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*Helen's father grazing his goats*, 2018  
Inkjet print on cotton rag paper, 64 x 90 cm  
Edition of 5 + 2AP

## *Helen's father grazing his goats*, 2018 (Scene 3)

References a scene in *Maverick* by Lauren Beukes of a character Helen Martins, which Athol Fugard writes about in his play *Road to Mecca*, set in Nieu Bethesda, in the Karoo, Eastern Cape.

Helen's father, "Piet was caught in the act of grazing his goats on another farmer's lucerne while they were at church. He refused to go to before the magistrate and had to be carted to court in a wheelbarrow."



*Farmer selling Sneeuberg potatoes*, 2018  
Inkjet print on cotton rag paper, 64 x 90 cm  
Edition of 5 + 2AP

## *Johannes Hattingh struck by the bolts from above*, 2018 (Scene 4)

References a scene in *Maverick* by Lauren Beukes of a character Helen Martins, which Athol Fugard writes about in his play *The Road to Mecca*, set in Nieu Bethesda, in the Karoo, Eastern Cape.

"Helen had found a measure of happiness, albeit tainted by secrecy. In 1939, Johannes Hattingh and his family moved to the village. He and Helen became close friends and then, in spite of his wife, much more. They were both peculiar in their own ways... For his part Johannes had been struck by lightning—twice—and it had turned him a little strange. He was a tall man and obviously an easy target for the bolts from above that hit him seven years apart: first when he was working on the roof, the second while walking in the veld. While Johannes miraculously survived both occasions, he didn't come away unscathed."



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*Johannes Hattingh struck by the bolts from above*, 2018  
Inkjet print on cotton rag paper, 64 x 90 cm  
Edition of 5 + 2AP

## ***Farmer selling Sneeuberg potatoes*, 2018 (Scene 5)**

References *The Road to Mecca* by playwright Athol Fugard, set in Nieu Bethesda, in the Karoo, Eastern Cape.

“We had a farmer from the Gamtoos Valley up here last week trying to sell potatoes to us. He had his lorry parked in front of the Post Office. I didn’t have the heart to tell him he’d wasted his time driving all this distance and that nobody comes to Sneeuberg to sell potatoes”



*Never light a candle carelessly*, 2018  
Inkjet print on cotton rag paper, 64 x 90 cm  
Edition of 5 + 2AP

## ***Never light a candle carelessly*, 2018 (Scene 6)**

References *The Road to Mecca* by playwright Athol Fugard, set in Nieu Bethesda, in the Karoo, Eastern Cape.

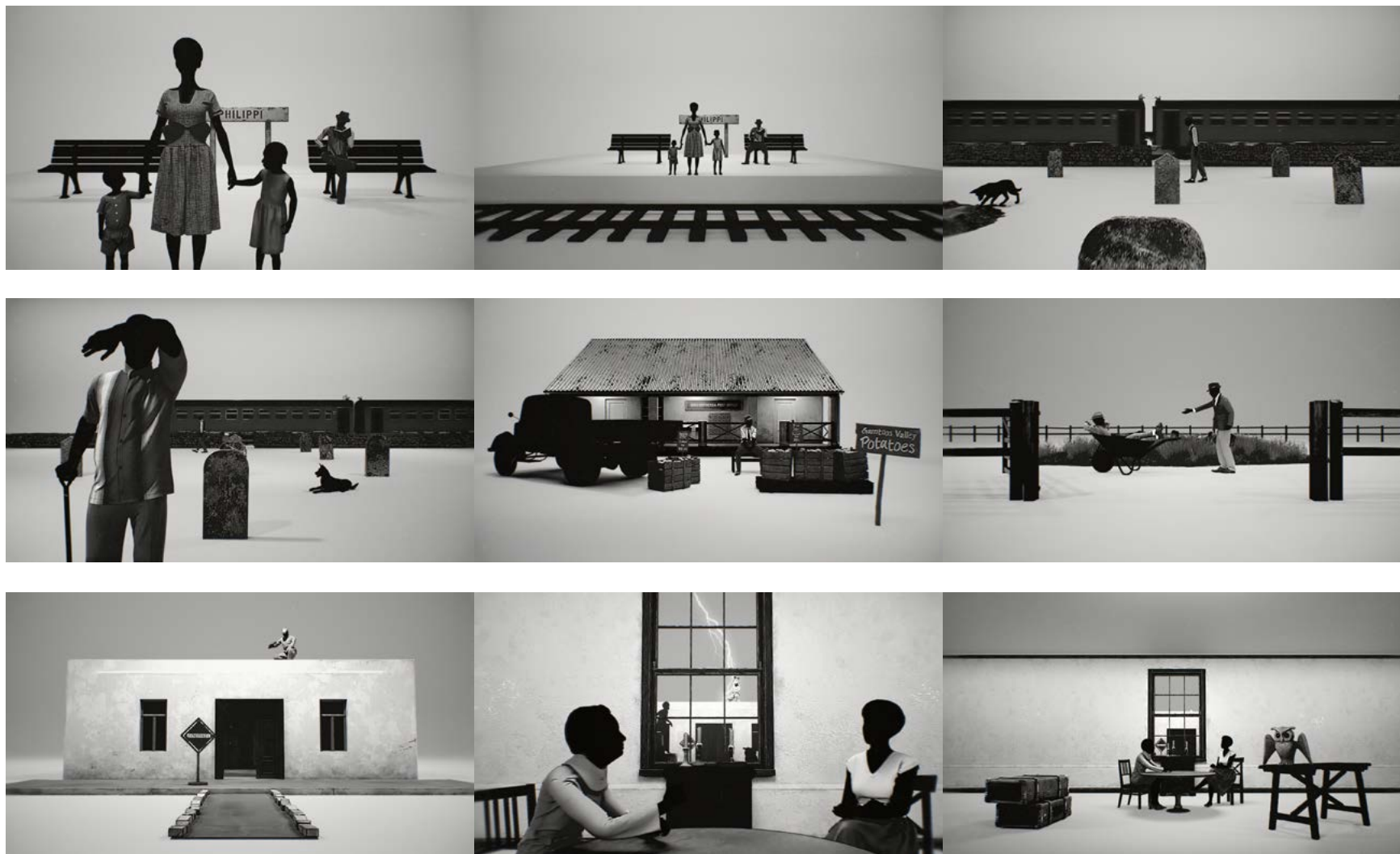
“In Miss Helen’s last years of her life, there had been one very significant friendship with a young woman and social worker, from Cape Town”

H: “You lit a candle for me before you left... Such a sad little light, with its little tears of wax running down the side. That little candle did all the crying in here that night.”

M: “There is more light in you than in all the candles put together.”

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*Shadows of Re-Memory*, Animated Film, 2021  
2 min 32 sec,  
Edition of 5 + 2AP