

## Omar Badsha's Cordoned Heart marks the JBF 2018 opening

The official opening of the 10<sup>th</sup> annual Jozi Book Fair (JBF) was characterised by lively and serious discussion between those who came to the event. It will be correct to say that the exhibition by curator Omar Badsha was the highlight of the day which already had many great events in the form of workshops on creative writing, theatre and poetry to mention a few. Omar Badsha is a documentary photographer and an historian, as well as doing art.

Badsha's touching exhibition during the official opening of the JBF 2018 not only put into stark relief both the inequalities of South African society during the apartheid era, as well as varied forms of work which poor and marginalised people have had to do in order to get by; but it also documents their stories and exposes detail that may not ordinarily make the cut into mainstream news. During discussions inevitable comparisons of effectiveness between mainstream media and social media platforms like Twitter arose.

The curator said that there is a wave of people using media to organise and tell their stories and drew from the #FeesMustFall campaign the example. Another obvious example being the Arab Spring. This he said was made possible by the technological means now available to even working people. This ability to expose 'other' news and content has eventually led to the emergence of varied news sources, especially on platforms such as social media. To this effect, a contributor from the floor confessed that he does not watch any news outlets and that he relied on Facebook to know what is happening in the world around him.

One debate was around the politics of 'narrative' control. Badsha said that at some point they became frustrated with mainstream media tendency to filter out parts of what happened,



which can change the story. That led them to start doing photograph documentary, focused on the lives of working class people. Thus the photographs exhibited last evening depicted working class people doing informal work, their children playing in dusty streets and neglected play-parks, enduring long queues in order to obtain medical care and so on.

Questions about what methods should be used to harvest news using technological means available to more and more people are still outstanding. The photographer-historian said that at times they had debates as to when an article should be uploaded. Because social media can be so quick, one may have to wait and observe before breaking stories.

In closing, the session explored the many advantages of photography documentary. It has contributed immensely to the struggle to proliferate ideas in society, however with it also an apparent increase 'fake news'. One questions which remains stubbornly relevant is whether the publication of 'actual books' and galleries remains bigger than the social media and vlogging that the world is fascinated about today? Is there any real shift?

Is publication on books and galleries (specifically) bigger than the social media, vlogging that the world is fascinated about today? Is there any shift?

By Siyabonga Mviko

## Tjieng Tjang Tjerries: The Fisherman by Jolyn Phillips

Tjieng Tjang Tjerries author Jolyn Phillips was born in Blompark, Gransbaai. Her book Tjieng Tjang Tjerries was published in 2016. Her debut collection of Afrikaans poetry is called Radbraak.

Phillips was joined by learners from Metropolitan College, she explained why she wrote the book. She said that the book is based on a true story but is fiction since she changed events in the story. She explained how his uncle used to go with her to different places, including the harbor to drink but as she was sitting there playing alone she would listen to his uncle and his friends conversations that's when she developed the stories in her book.



When her book was published she wanted people to know her culture and language on how they played a good role in her book. She also included some of Afrikaans words in her book for people to know that the language is there. When people see the title Fisherman they thought of men because in most cases people who fish are men, but she noted that in her area anyone fishes, even women.

"The reason also I wrote this book is to change peoples minds because most of time when they think of Cape Town they think of gangster world", she said. She continued by saying that as people we are losing our home languages because we want to sound like the next person.

She developed her writings during her times at the universities where she joined a writing group. Pupils were happy to hear that they could also become authors. She played a game exercise and asked them what the game means to them. Most said the game shows how hard and challenging life is and that it is difficult to win someone's trust.

She concluded saying "I am the care giver in the house because my mother she blind and my father he is also sick, but at the moment I am working on a book that my mother can read".

*Dorothy Mabelebele*

## JBF Book Launches and Authors overview

This year mark the 10<sup>th</sup> annual Jozi Book Fair that will take place at Mary Fitzgerald Square, Newtown from 30-31 August to 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2018 under the theme Literature and Working People. The JBF has Authors 39 and 14 Book Launches.

Jozi Book Fair works with different schools in the townships and Inner City Of Johannesburg amongst the school learners that they work with they have produced 10 JBF Authors who will be launching their book called Batjha Kaofela 3 Love is in the Air, the book launch and conversation will be moderated by JBF Patrons Winners of 2018 JBF Short Story Competition. Hakeem Anderson-Lesolang will be discussing a book called 200 Truths about Love by Pelmo Books, the book looks into a world dead set on making certain young black women & men remain on a back foot where self-love & critical thinking is concerned.

BC Reader (Jacana) with Janet Smith, Paballo Thekiso, Rabbie Serumula & Masego Panyane (Jacana) will be looking into the history, culture, philosophy and meaning of Black Consciousness through the voices, art, religion, music, writings,

politics and the dreams of those who developed it. Gauteng Community Healthcare Workers will be having the conversation about their lives and struggle through the book they wrote called *Our Lives, Our Communities*. CHWs are black working class women who experience lots of challenges daily in helping the communities. This book was written by 16 women who work as CHWs to send their message out there and for people to hear about their daily struggle that they are facing at home and work while the Department of Health does not want to recognise them as their employees.

Hidden Voices book launch will be led by Worker leaders and writers such as Alfred Qabula & Jabu Ndlovu with Nise Malange, Ari Sitas and SWOP. A 35 years old Athena Farrokhzad Iranian-Swedish poet, playwright, translator and literary critic will be launching a book called *Vitsvit* (*White Blight*). Her work includes reflections on racism, war and migration. Also there will be a conversation about the book, *As You Like It*, that focuses on social justice and sexuality, amongst others and draws on writers from Africa (Jacana) with Tshepiso Mabula, Sarah Lubala, Welcome Lishivha & Efemia Chela.



Other book launches that will be happening at the JBF Event, *The Journey Of Life: Short stories* with Farayi Matondo & Oscar Banda, *Courage Wins* by Hertha Nekwaya hosted by Donata A Poem, *Her Story: Daughters of Modjadji-Khaloza* Books, *The Space Between Us* by Kyle Allan, *Waking Up, Cracking the Crisis Code, From Trauma to Triumph:* by Dr. J.S du Toit and *Free yourself:* Anne Mokolo with Bricks Mokolo - *Biography of Anne Mokolo*.

JBF Patron Keorapetse William Kgositsile was a South African poet and political activist known as Bra Willie passed away on 3 January 2018

in Johannesburg. Kgositsile had a programme with JBF called #Pass on the Word where he was training young people on becoming poets. This Poetry Competition is a tribute to a beloved patron, Bra Willie. Every year the JBF intends to host an open mic competition & to publish the best work. In 2016, Bra Willie hosted poetry workshops with youth as part of the JBF's theme: Youth Rising. Out of this the JBF produced the series of books for youth.

*Dorothy Mabelebele*

## Theatre and Film at the Fair

Art has a defining role in the history of struggle worldwide and the South African struggle is not unique in this regard. Film and theatre are major parts of this. The Jozi Book Fair annually features these two forms of activist creative art and this year it features the works of the late Gibson Kente (*It's Too Late*); Ntuthuko Qwabe (*Leaving Out Mark*); Nom'Ay Matola (*The Things We Harbour*); Ntombozuko 'Twiggy' Matiwana (*The Bicycle Man*); Siona O'Connell (*Uitgesmyt*) and Mapula Sibanda (*Street Somashishini*).



The 'Father of Black Theatre' Gibson Kente's *It's Too Late* focuses on the death of a girl named Ntanana who is disabled. She dies at the hands of brutal police force and apartheid bureaucracy. This musical play was at first banned before being unbanned. At the 2018 Jozi Book Fair it will be directed Searatoa van Driel.

*Leaving our Mark* is about a young man who clashes with his father who is a religious policeman. The film discovers that even after the apartheid regime has fallen, police brutality

and unemployment are still abound. The film premiered in June 2016.

Ntombozuko's *The Bicycle Man* has been critically acclaimed, winning the European Union prize for Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific at the 25th Pan-African Film and Television Festival in Burkina Faso, as well as the Silver Stallion. The film itself tells the story of a township gardener whose life is interrupted by breast-cancer diagnosis.

*The Things We Harbour* is literary activism, telling the story of a mother who suffers the terrible memories of an abusive husband. This causes her to try to take her own life and those of her sons, but somehow they survive. This is an issue we see daily, abusive men pushing their partners to the extreme.

Farmworkers are the subject of *Uitgesmyt*, a film produced and directed by Siona O'Connell. *Uitgesmyt* looks at farm evictions in apartheid-era Elandskloof, while *Street Somashishini* shows the difficulties faced by street vendors who are shown harassed by corrupt police officers, loan sharks. An interesting part is the role played by skyrocketing university fees in making life much more difficult, showing why #FeesMustFall cannot be reduced to being a campus problem, but a social one.

## The Worker Poets of Sweden

The Sweden Workers Union was a labour organisation established in 1899 and in 1919. This union had strong worker rights to protect the employees, Anti-discrimination laws which forbid unfair treatment on basis of age and gender. The Swedish government also introduced a Swedish model which created a relationship between unions and employees. The employment law guide covered working hours, rest and breaks. Still, this law could not protect the middle working class. Because when you join a union your employer could easily dismiss you from work.

The worker-poets from Sweden then started their own organisation to help those workers who were ignored and too scared to raise their voices. They say they needed to get another platform for workers, they no longer joined unions but spoke for themselves. They gathered

and shared their feelings as workers – how they wake up early in the morning working long hours, being put under pressure, but not getting enough money to provide for their families. The worker-writers organisation then started to write poetry to express themselves to their employers. The more they wrote their poetry other workers also started to write and it to build solidarity between the workers.



The worker-writers organisation made other workers to raise their voices on how unions and employers underestimated them whenever they go on strike they write their poetry so that employers can really understand their struggles. "Sweden was a very poor country, people have a picture that the country is equal we have many inequalities" said one of the poets. Workers in Sweden are insured for residential benefits, if you work in Sweden you are insured for employment based benefit. The fact that you are employed does not mean that you have an automatic right to residential and employment based benefit. To receive it you have to comply with conditions.

By Thokozile Mntambo

*JBf creates readers & writers in all languages & promotes affordable publishing and books*

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