

Na Ku Randza

CENTER FOR HISTORICAL REENACTMENTS

About: South Africa; inner-city Johannesburg; Gito Baloi; public performance;
site of trauma; graffiti memorial; pink elephant; xenophobia; declaiming love.



On 4 April 2004, the Mozambique-born musician Gito Baloi was shot and killed at the corner of Kerk and Nugget streets in central Johannesburg. He was returning home from a performance in Pretoria. Shortly after his death, the statement "GITO BALOI NA KU RANDZA" (Gito Baloi I love you) was spray-painted onto a wall near where he was murdered. The graffiti, which referenced his 1997 album *Na Ku Randza*, has since been covered over. During the über(W)unden: Art in Troubled Times conference, the Center for Historical Reenactments (CHR), a Johannesburg-based artist collective, curated a series of multi-venue public performances, which included the creation of a new mural commemorating Baloi's life. While graffiti artist Breeze Yoko created his mural, flowers were distributed to passers-by. Yoko's large mural appears on the same corner as the former liquor retailer, Jumbo Liquor Store, famous for its large pink elephant sculpture, which makes a cameo appearance in Ivan Vladislavić's novel, *The Restless Supermarket* (2001). CHR's *Na Ku Randza* project – which also included a T-shirt print workshop hosted by the Keleketla! Library, a performance by artist Kemang Wa Lehulere and free distribution of differently coloured boards and plastics to residents of neighbouring tower blocks, many of whose windows are broken – seized on the imaginative potential of the elephant. Nicknamed "Jumbo", the elephant is a bearer of memory, a model for love and visual cipher representing a space in which mutual recognition might be imagined alongside violent encounters. Baloi's immigrant status is relevant to the formulation of this collaborative project. An accomplished bassist, Baloi gained a reputation in South Africa in the 1980s when he toured the country with the Mozambican group Pongola. The site where he was murdered is also well known as a busy departure point for buses destined for Zambia, Malawi and the Democratic Republic of Congo. This busy inner-city area was also the site of xenophobic attacks in 2008, especially at the corner of Kerk and End streets, opposite the Lusaka-bound bus depot where CHR strategically situated projects aimed at refreshing political sensibilities.





above Breeze Yoko at work on mural commemorating Gito Baloi, corner Kerk and Nugget streets, Johannesburg, 2011. previous spread Flowers were distributed to members of the public during the creation of the mural.







left, top Artist Kemang Wa Lehulere readying for his performance.
left, bottom The Keleketla! Library, an independent library and media arts project founded in 2008, hosted a screenprinting workshop at the corner of Kerk and End streets.
middle "Jumbo", the famed pink elephant and retail symbol of the Jumbo Liquor Hyperstore.
right Residents from tower blocks in Doornfontein were invited to take the coloured panels and cover broken windows.
previous spread Intervention at corner of Kerk and End streets, Doornfontein.
All photographs are from the live event, which coincided with the über(W)unden: Art in Troubled Times conference, Johannesburg, 2011.

