

Grada Kilomba

Biography

Grada Kilomba (b. 1968, Lisbon, Portugal) is an interdisciplinary artist and writer living in Berlin – with roots in São Tomé e Príncipe, Angola, and Portugal. Her work draws on the repressed history of colonialism and its legacy on memory, trauma, gender, and the conceptualisation of knowledge and narrative: ‘who can speak?’ ‘what can we speak about?’ and ‘what happens when we speak?’ Are three constant and fragile questions in Kilomba’s body of work on decolonisation.

She is best known for her subversive writing and her unconventional use of artistic practices, in which she ‘gives body, voice and image to her own writings’, and brings texts into performance – using a variety of formats from video installations, to staged readings, to performances, text collage, and sound installations. In her work, Kilomba intentionally creates a hybrid space between the academic and artistic languages, and storytelling is central to her decolonising practices, then she ‘decolonises it by subverting content, undoing standard practices – and inventing new methods and places of expression’. Her work has been described to have the powerful beauty of touching ‘the colonial wound’ with a surgical precision and simultaneously of creating an inspiring and refreshing poetry of formats, ‘bringing a new, experimental and compelling voice to contemporary art and discourse’ (ARTEBrasileiros 2016).

Her work has been presented at renowned venues and events, such as Documenta 14 in Kassel 2017, 32. Bienal de São Paulo 2016, Rauma Biennial Balticum 2016, Art Basel 2016, Transmediale, Secession Museum in Vienna, Bozar Museum in Brussels, Maritime Museum in London, SAVVY Contemporary in Berlin, Cape Town Art Fair 2017, Wits Theatre in Johannesburg, Theatre Müncher Kammerspiel in Munich, Maxim Gorki Theatre in Berlin, among others.

In 2017-2018, she presented two major solo exhibitions in her home country of Portugal for the first time – *The Most Beautiful Language* (curated by Gabi Ngcobo) at Avenida da Índia Gallery, at the Municipal Galleries of Lisbon and *Secrets to Tell*, MAAT – Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology, Lisbon.

Kilomba studied Clinical Psychology and Psychoanalysis at the ‘ISPA – Instituto Superior de Psicologia Aplicada’ in Lisbon. There, she worked in the psychiatry department with war survivors from Angola and Mozambique. Strongly influenced by the work of Frantz Fanon, Kilomba started writing, and developing projects on memory and trauma, extending her concerns to form, language, performance, and the staging of post-colonial narratives. Recognised for her academic excellence, she received a Ph.D. fellowship from the German Heinrich Böll Foundation, and moved to Berlin, where she attained a Doctorate in Philosophy (summa cum laude) from the Freie Universität Berlin 2008.

Since 2004, she has been lecturing at several international universities, and last, was a Full Professor at the Humboldt Universität Berlin, department of Gender Studies (2012 – 2013), where her series on *Performing Knowledge* became particularly known, as well as, her works *Bodies Without Shame* and *Tongues Without Shame*.

She is the author of *Plantation Memories* (2008), a compilation of episodes of everyday racism written in the form of short psychoanalytical stories; and the co-editor of *Mythen, Subjekt, Masken* (2005), an interdisciplinary anthology on critical whiteness studies. In 2010, as part of her *Performing Knowledge* series, Kilomba started bringing theoretical and political texts into stage, exploring the visualisation of ‘silenced voices’ and ‘uncomfortable knowledge’, with a fixed ensemble of actors, and presented her work at various international theatre venues. More recently, she extended her work into visual arts and installation, and started experimenting with film, video, and sound, introducing another performative element to her writings.

Since 2015, she was invited by the Maxim Gorki Theatre, in Berlin, to develop the artist talk series ‘Kosmos²’, a political intervention in the contemporary arts in collaboration with refugee artists.

Kilomba performs and exhibits her artworks internationally and is represented by Goodman Gallery in South Africa.

Solo Exhibitions

2018 *Speaking the Unspeakable*, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa (upcoming)

2017-2018 *The Most Beautiful Language*, Avenida da Índia Gallery, at the Municipal Galleries of Lisbon, Portugal

2017-2018 *Secrets to Tell*, MAAT – Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology, Lisbon, Portugal

Group Exhibitions

2018 *Frameworks*, International Film Festival Rotterdam, Rotterdam, the Netherlands

2017 *Live Uncertainty: An Exhibition After the 32nd Bienal de São Paulo*, Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art, Porto, Portugal

2017 *Incerteza Viva - Live Uncertainty*, selected artist to represent the 32. Bienal de São Paulo, at the Palace of Arts, Belo Horizonte, Brazil

2017 *South-South: Let Me Begin Again*, Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

2016 *O futuro será uma réplica - The future will be a replica*, Consul of Portugal in São Paulo, Brazil

2016 *Incerteza Viva - Live Uncertainty*, 32. Bienal de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil

2016 *Vulnerability*, Rauma Biennial Balticum, Rauma, Finland

2016 *Knowledge Unbounded*, Department of Arts and Aesthetics Exhibition, University of Stockholm, Stockholm, Sweden

2016 *Banquete Antropofágico - Anthropophagic Banquet*, Department of Contemporary Arts Exhibition, University of Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Teaching, Lectureships and Workshop

2017 Academy of Arts Berlin, Berlin, Germany

2017 Transmediale, House of the World Cultures, Berlin, Germany

2017 Art Fair Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa

2017 Maxim Gorki Theatre, Berlin, Germany

2016 AfroTranscendente, São Paulo, Brazil

2016 Goethe Institut Salvador da Bahia, Bahia, Brazil

2016 Berlin University of Arts - UdK, Berlin, Germany

2016 Art Basel, Basel, Switzerland

2016 Mousonturm House of Arts, Frankfurt, Germany

2016 University of Accra, Accra, Ghana

2016 Goethe Institut São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil

2016 Maxim Gorki Theatre, Berlin, Germany

2015 Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, Vienna, Austria

2015 Theatre Ballhaus Naunynstrasse, Berlin, Germany

2015 University of Linköping, Linköping, Sweden

2015 Free University Berlin, Berlin, Germany

2015 University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Holland

2015 University of Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany

2015 Maxim Gorki Theatre, Berlin, Germany

Awards and Merits

2016 Artist-in-Residence, Vila Sul, at the Goethe Institut Salvador da Bahia, Brazil

2016 Artist-in-Residence, Revolting Mass/Massa Revoltante, at the Goethe Institut São Paulo, Brazil

2015 Named a "Woman of Excellence" by the Sonne Magazine, Berlin, Germany

2011 Awarded as one of "The Most Inspirational Black Women in Europe" by the BWIE, Vienna, Austria

Academic Record and Residencies

1998 Degree on Clinical Psychology and Psychoanalysis, Instituto Superior de Psicologia Aplicada, Lisbon, Portugal

2008 Ph.D., Doctorate on Philosophy, Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany

Publications

2008 *Plantation Memories. Episodes of Everyday Racism* (5th Edition), Münster: Unrast Verlag

2005 *Mythen, Subjekt, Masken* (3rd Edition), Münster: Unrast Verlag (co-editor)

Performances

2017 Documenta 14, Kassel, Germany

2017 SAVVY Contemporary, Berlin, Germany

2017 Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

2016 Teatro Vila Velha, Salvador da Bahia, Brazil

2016 32. Bienal de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil
2016 Wits Theatre, Johannesburg, South Africa
2016 Theatre Münchner Kammerspiel, Munich, Germany
2016 Goethe Institut Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain
2016 TheaterTreffen, Haus der Berliner Festspiele, Berlin, Germany
2016 Secession Museum Vienna, Vienna, Austria
2016 University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria
2016 University of Accra, Accra, Ghana
2016 Mostra Internacional de Teatro em São Paulo
2016 Bozar Museum for Contemporary Arts, Brussels, Belgium
2016 SOAS University of London, London, UK

2015 Theatre Münchner Kammerspiel, Munich, Germany
2015 Antwerpen Museum, Antwerpen, Belgium
2015 Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, Vienna, Austria
2015 Theatre Maxim Gorki Theatre, Berlin, Germany
2015 International Arts Center José Guimarães, Guimarães, Portugal
2015 Theatre Ballhaus Naunynstrass, Berlin, Germany
2015 Oslo House of Literature, Oslo, Norway