

Madani's unrelentingly gruesome seven-minute animation *Mr. Time*, 2018, then took on jubilant hues in the elaborate flower carpet, *The Offering (Tapete de Flores, after KunstHalle Sankt Gallen)*, 2016–19, part of Jill Magid's larger bid to liberate the archives of the architect Luis Barragán. It figured all too literally in Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook's caustic video *The Class*, 2005, which shows the artist calmly delivering a lecture on death to six partially covered corpses laid out on morgue trays. (After silence greets her triumphant conclusion that art can render death but "a feather in the wind," she drolly surmises that her audience must just be tired after the long talk.)

The object that most succinctly captured the general thrust of the exhibition, however, was not an artist's work, but rather a contribution from the biennial's commissioner, Alisa Prudnikova, who had the factory produce a stoplight with three bulbs all emitting an unwavering green. Without red, the eternal emerald glow was soothing, but ultimately pointless.

—Kate Sutton

## JOHANNESBURG

### David Koloane

STANDARD BANK GALLERY/WITS ART MUSEUM

The passing of artist and writer David Koloane at eighty-one not long after the opening of the first iteration of this traveling retrospective at Cape Town's Iziko South African National Gallery reignited the questions he posed almost two decades prior: "What defines a South African expression? What paradigms would typify the expression? And what criterion to employ in a society virtually divided into distinct and separate worlds?" Though these queries were asked twenty years ago, their urgency remains, unsettling any cavalier mention of a "South African art." These demands, easily taken for granted today thanks to the world's current insatiable appetite for African contemporary art, appertain not only to national culture but also to the nation itself.

Koloane was born in 1938 in Johannesburg's Alexandra township, and worked various jobs before turning to art in the mid-1970s under the mentorship of the abstract artist, activist, and educator Bill Ainslie. Subsequently, Koloane taught at various schools, initiated artist-led workshops such as the Thupelo workshop, and in 1991 cofounded the Fordsburg Artists' Studios (also known as the Bag Factory Artists' Studios). Fostering proficiency in the arts, Koloane contended, required "revolutionary solutions" at an infrastructural level, meaning that "education, housing, health and employment opportunities are primary preconditions for a healthy and subsequently creative society."

Koloane's experimental art explores the dynamic, disorderly, and troubled histories of Johannesburg—its chaotic streets, high-rise buildings, slums, and townships; its music, violence, congestion, vendors, and stray dogs—with a chromatic and expressive intensity that typifies the modernism of his generation. These cityscapes depict spatial and psychic derangements as vestiges of colonization. Yet Koloane wasn't just enraged by the racist system, he was equally incensed by the stereotypical ways in which black artists' work was framed. This led to a pigeonholing and romanticization of township-themed works and foreclosed the creative reach of black artists. Through Koloane's abstract works, particularly in the politically tumultuous 1980s, he disrupted this naturalization in ways that cultivated a certain hesitation as to whether or not such work could be positioned within the formulaic notion of struggle art as primarily figurative.

This retrospective, which was organized by Thembinkosi Goniwe, zeroes in on Koloane's attempt to resist any curtailment of whatever



David Koloane, *Under The Bridge II*, 2008, acrylic on canvas, 63 × 63".

kind. At the show's second iteration, mounted at Johannesburg's Standard Bank Gallery, we encountered a display that comprehensively tracked Koloane's range, but rather than adhering to the typical script for a retrospective, whereby the work unfolds chronologically or centers on the artist's biographical idiosyncrasies, the curatorial procedure took the form of a semithematic and comparative display of works produced in different periods, inviting the viewer to engage with the oeuvre's diversity. The show included paintings, two video animations, prints, and sketches as well as books to which the artist had contributed texts. More importantly, the exhibition prioritized Koloane's intellectual labor.

Meanwhile, at the Wits Art Museum, a second Koloane show ran concurrently with the Standard Bank Gallery retrospective. Titled "David Koloane: Chronicles of a Resilient Visionary" and also organized by Goniwe, this exhibition brings us face-to-face with David Koloane the man. The presentation includes personal photographs, diaries, unpublished notes, miscellaneous objects, painting materials, and videos conveying posthumous eulogies from fellow artists and comrades, including former president Thabo Mbeki, as well as wall texts conveying the artist's own thoughts. Also included are reflections from, among others, Nadine Gordimer, Salah M. Hassan, and Olu Oguibe. Meanwhile, a display of Koloane's paintings, drawings, and prints alongside selections from WAM's permanent collection of African art, underlines the resonance of his visual motifs. With this multifaceted approach, Goniwe succeeds in revealing Koloane the person through and beyond his work.

—Athi Mongezeleli Joja

## MUMBAI

### Nalini Malani

GOETHE-INSTITUT/MAX MUELLER BHAVAN

Nalini Malani's animated Instagram posts are peopled with frenetic figures conjured up on her iPad. More than fifty of these, part of the series "Notebooks," 2018–, were catapulted from the intimacy of a handheld device onto eleven large projections in the gallery space at the