

Musa Moor (artlover, 56) 2023. Magazine cut-outs on Japanese calligraphic paper (24 x 33 cm)

Collage as calligraphy written in my interpretation of *Ditema tsa Dinoko*, a constructed writing system for Bantu languages. It reads ‘Musa Moor’ — a transcultlural gender-ambiguous name given to me by two fellow artists in South Africa, as the result of a dialogue-based workshop *Verbal Acts (name-giving trilogue)*



Verbal Act (name giving trilogue)
2019
workshop + mixed-media installation (calligraphy, video on a smart phone, notebook, coin, fabric, plants, etc.)
discussion: ca. 60 min
as a part of the project *After-Ripening & Corruption: Verbal Acts & Graphic Movements* at the Bag Factory, Johannesburg

Playing with the phonological affinity with the local languages, I experimented in verbal acts via several 'essays' that are liberated from the literal and logical. *Verbal Act (name giving trilogue)* is one of them, where I invited two South Africans to a workshop, asking to give me a new name through discussion.

GIVEN BACKGROUNDS

Many cultures have rituals around giving name, and various ways to name the babies - inheriting from the ancestors, taking from an aspired person, reflecting the wish of the parents, following the numerology, etc.

I came to search for a new name after experiencing the audience reading my works biased by my name that indicates my gender and origin, and also from my interest to be relieved from what I might owe from my ancestors and from the wish of my parents.

CHOOSING PARENTS TO GET LOCAL NAME

Bantu languages* and my mother tongue Japanese are phonologically similar, and I met many people in South Africa whose names sound like Japanese. Finding common grounds with the worldview and traditions of the Bantu ethnic group, I became curious what my name can be in the local context.

*a family of languages spoken by the majority of South Africans

I asked two of my friends to be my naming 'parents' – Sandile Radebe and Diana Hyslop, fellow artists in whose personality and practice I could see mine in a respective manner.

TRILOGUE WITH THREE WORLDVIEWS

On 18 October 2019, the fiftieth day after my arrival to South Africa, the trilogue took place in my studio. I placed three chairs forming a triangle, and a camera on a tripod to document the talk. I initiated the talk by telling why I want to have another name and why I chose them, and asked them to come up with my new name in the local context through discussion.

We discussed referring to our respective experiences and cultures: Sandile grew up in a traditional Zulu family, and he manifested his view through storytelling backed with lived experiences and theories; Diana showed her inclination to esoteric philosophies, such as numerology and fatalism; and I referred to various cultures I have lived in last two decades. There was a rich path with deviations to exchange our experiences and perspectives on life and world.

MUSA MOOR - GENDER & NATIONALITY FREE

We reached to the new name 'Musa Moor'. 'Musa' is a Zulu translation of my Japanese official name that means graceful, an Arabic name corresponding to Moses, and homonym of the Latin name of banana plant. 'Moor' refers to the black-ness, for me wearing black clothes. Pronouncing the names together, the liaison creates the sound resembling to 'amour', love in French.

Referring to Japanese tradition, I wrote the name in black ink on paper. At the presentation, it formed a sort of altar, with a phone showing the video of the trilogue and other related objects.

The name also brought me a new question - what sort of works are expected from a person called 'Musa Moor'.



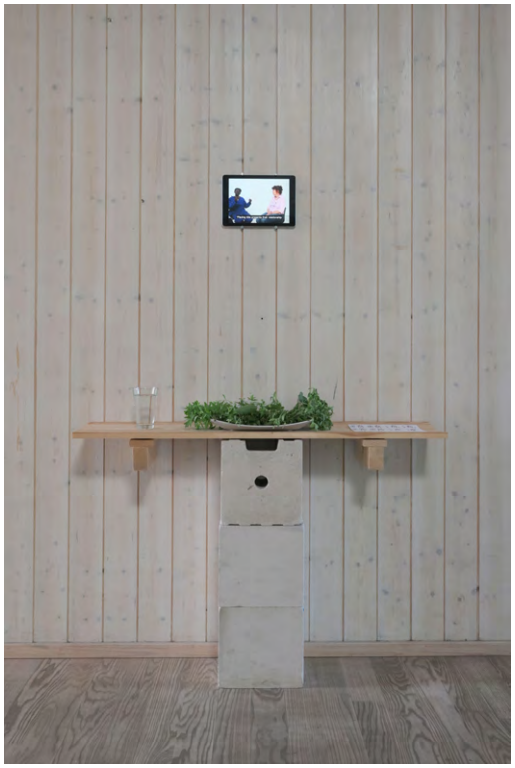
(left page) a still from the video capturing the discussion with Sandile and Diana (right page, from top to bottom) my studio, a scene of the discussion; an installation view with a calligraphy presenting the name 'Musa Moor' and a video of the dialogue, along with the objects related to the work (bananas, plants, fabric, coin, drawer); installation detail with a smartphone showing the video of discussion, and notebook that traces my practice and thoughts in Johannesburg













Verbal Acts workshop documentation edited for *Who is Rupert?*
https://youtu.be/E_FnBvQ7BMw

Who is Rupert? (translation of *Name-Giving Trilogue* for birthday)
2022
mixed media project (installation, monumental intervention, score)
video: 5 min
as a part of the project *After-Ripening & Corruption : Strategic Corruption* at Rupert, Vilnius, Lithuania (for its 10th anniversary event)

It is an evolution of Verbal Acts (name-giving trilogue), a workshop and an installation realised in South Africa in 2019, and the translation reflected the context of residency at Rupert in Lithuania, in 2022.

The idea of the name-giving workshop stems from the incongruity I feel with my official name, and the bias in how my art practice is read with the identity the name suggests. I featured two artists whom I chose as my naming parents in South Africa, and three of us sat together to come up with a new name for me through discussion, sharing the naming traditions from respective backgrounds, and stories and thoughts related to name/naming. The dialogue lasted about an hour, and its documentation was presented as an installation together with an altar to celebrate and announce the new name decided through the dialogue.

In Lithuania, I was at a residency called Rupert. Who is Rupert? For the 10th anniversary event of this institution baring a human name, I decided to translate the project of naming in South Africa and interweave the elements from the local context.

VOICE-OVER - HOW PEOPLE WANT STORIES TO BE TOLD
After the fall of the Soviet Union, Lithuania developed a peculiar culture of voice-over. Importing many non-Russian speaking TV programs and films, they dubbed with single voice, rapidly and monotonously interpreting captions, narrations and the lines spoken by all actors. It made me wonder how this culture effects the way people tell stories, and even more, how people want stories to be told.

I reflected my inquiry into the editing process of the audio-visual documentation of the name-giving workshop, by living up to the conditions given (mute and very short), and involving the feedbacks from three Rupert staffs who are Lithuanian: We had two sessions, and I reflected each reviews to make a final version. What it reduced or removed were emotions, ambience, and breathes between words.

NAMES, AND WHAT THEY TELL
In the video, I featured a naming anecdote I heard about a post-Soviet baby who 'chose' his name: the parents prepared several Kinder Surprise's* holding a different name inside, and the baby went for one, and that became his name.

*Kinder Surprise is a egg shaped chocolate covering a capsule that contains a toy. It is a popular West-European product, which was not avaiable in Lithuania during the Soviet rule

A Lithuanian person asked me if it is true that Japanese and Chinese decide the baby's name according to how it sounds when you toss a coin into a container, like ting tong. I tossed a coin into a glass, and then filled it with water to place it as an offering on the altar.

OVERWRITING IDENTITY
Rupert locates in a notable wooden architecture along with several offices of start-ups and creative agencies. By each office door stands a set of metal letters presenting the tenant name, nailed into the wooden wall. Before Rupert moved to its current office, there were several companies who occupied the space, therefore the metal letters sit with the background of many holes that remember the names of former tenants. I made a subtle intervention tracing these holes to reflect on the overwriting of the names given to a single identical space, and place another layer onto it as if to suggest a new meaning.



(left page) stills from the video with the subtitiles and an installation view at Rupert (right page, top) detail of the intervention to place a pin each hole to trace where metal letter elements sat. each constellation with blue thread signify an object that I rememeber from the experiences in Lithuania (right page, bottom) an intervention view by the door of Rupert office

