

LITERATURAS e CULTURAS AFRICANAS, IBEROAMERICANAS e CARIBENHAS

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Migrations, power and the human body. Nuno Silas' Joni: Portrait of Mozambican Miners and Families in South Africa Revisited

Abstract

The history of labour migration of Mozambicans to South Africa began in the 1800s; at that time, Mozambique was a Portuguese colony. The article presents a body of artwork by Nuno Silas related to migratory communities to South Africa. It combines past and present historical tensions between migration, power, political instability, and the human body as social history. *Joni* is an experimental art installation that includes sounds and photographs on a large scale. In the project, Nuno Silas examines stories of the everyday life of Mozambican miners under Apartheid and during the Mozambique revolution to post-independence. Escaping from compulsory recruitment for the army carried out by the Mozambican Armed Forces, people left their country searching for a triumph of life in neighbour South Africa. Using family documents and narratives, the installation brings a complex interpretation of the power of documentary photography developed at that time (the 1960s). The piece also includes sound by Fany Pfumo and Francisco Mahecuane, Moda Xicavalo and Makwayela dance - the traditional dance deeply rooted in the south of Mozambique established by the miner worker, which explores the experience of Mozambicans in South Africa.

Keywords: *Joni*; experimental art; migrations; Nuno Silas; Makwayela.

Biographical notes

Noemi Alfieri is a Researcher at CHAM – Centre for the Humanities (CEEC 2021) with the project: "Mapping anti-colonial networks through literature. Transnational connections of African thinkers in the reconfiguration of space and thought (1950s - 70s)". She was a Visiting Fellow at the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence (U. Bayreuth) for the 2022/23 ay. Former Post-Doctoral Research Fellow of the FCT-ID project "AfroLab" (CLEPUL FLUL). Member of the Editorial Board of *Práticas da História*; Associate Member of CREPAL (Sorbonne Nouvelle, France); Member of the research group Áfricas (UERJ-UFRJ, Brazil). Team member of the FCT-funded Projects AFROLAB (UL) and WOMENLIT (CHAM, NOVA FCSH / UAc). She gained her PhD in Portuguese Studies (History of the Book and Textual Criticism) from NOVA FCSH with the dissertation: "(Re)Building Identity through Conflict: An Approach to African

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Literatures written in Portuguese (1961-74)". This dissertation was funded by FCT-IP and received an Honorable Mention for the Mário Soares Prize (2021).

Nuno Silas is an interdisciplinary visual artist and curator; his practice encompasses performance art, performance art curatorship and artistic research. Participated in collaborations and research project at the University of Bayreuth, Germany, the Natural Museum Berlin, and the Humboldt Forum Berlin, as well as in international performances with dancers, visual artists, and musicians. He holds a degree in Fine Arts from the Escola Superior de Artes e Design Esad – Caldas de Rainha in Portugal. In 2018, received a Gulbenkian Foundation scholarship for a master's in African Verbal and Visual Arts, Media, and Curatorial Studies at the University of Bayreuth, and in 2023 a fellowship for Zeitz MOCAA & University of the Western Cape (UWC) Museum Programme, 2024.