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TO BE KING Christine Dixie







Installation

This installation forms part of a critical reflection on the museum as a space. The different components are designed to communicate ideas which are associated with the display of a 'masterpiece' in a museum.

Stop-frame animation/video

- Duration: 15minutes, 45 seconds

An interweaving of stop-frame animation using a monotype printing process and live-footage.

- Dimension: 2 300 x 2 700 – back projection.

The scale of the projection is similar to the scale of the original painting.

- Dimension with frame: 2 600 x 3 000

The frame is made of wood and has been designed to imitate the frame of Las Meninas in the Prado, Madrid.

- Sound

The soundscape that accompanies the work is an original composition and recording – it is an interweaving of synthesizer and voice. Played with stereo soundtrack from behind the projection.

Black Infanta

- Dimension: 55 x 60 x 1 740
- Materials: Urethane resin, fabric and wood
- Placement

The sculpture, faces the projection and is placed approximately 4m from the projection.

The Guard

- A 'museum' guard, dressed in a uniform with To Be King insignia.

DVD Edition: 5



Narrative Description

To be King is informed by the essay 'Las Meninas' which Michel Foucault published in 1966 as the first chapter to his book *The Order of Things*. Foucault in his description of the painting by Velázquez suggests (amongst other things) that it is through language, the taxonomy of the day, that things are ordered. This order, particular yet tenuous, is dependent on who is in control of the gaze, who is 'king'.

To be King situates itself as a destabilizing narrative in which the king is 'dethroned'. Positioning characters and spaces from the periphery in the place from which the dominant gaze originates points to the possibility of a different order of things and highlights the fragility of the established and dominant order.

The sculptural component, *the Black Infanta* embodies everything the Spanish King, Philip IV is not. Her pose imitates that of the seventeenth century portrait paintings of royal children. She is placed on an enlarged headrest, an object associated with sleeping, dreaming and the unconscious and holds instead of a sceptre, orb or sword, a stick made of Port Jackson willow.

The Black Infanta's placement in front of the 'painting' places her in the role reserved for the king for whom *Las Meninas* was originally made and who also stands outside the frame of the painting. Completing the circuit of gazes is the museum guard whose role is witness to the viewer looking at the 'painting'. In addition she functions as an ironic indicator of status, an embodiment of the value placed by the cultural centre on a 'masterpiece'.



Biography

Christine Dixie's work is predominantly focussed on two interlinked concerns, the visual strategies deployed in frontier landscape representation and the narratives used in constructing images of gender. Her work is intent on drawing the viewer into a mesmeric yet disquieting space. A deceptively calm surface is disrupted by an undercurrent, a counter-narrative that threatens to disrupt a tenuous vision of logic and stability.

Dixie has had several solo exhibitions including *FrontTears*, 1997, *track*, 2000, *Hide*, 2002 and *Corporeal Prospects* (The Standard Bank Gallery), 2007. The installation *The Binding*, 2010, which examines the relationship between sacrifice and male identity, was acquired by the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art. Her work is included in the international exhibitions, *Heaven, Hell and Purgatory – The Divine Comedy from the Perspective of Contemporary African Artists* (curator Simon Njumi); *Earth Matters: Land as Material and Metaphor in the Arts of Africa* (curator Dr. Karen Milbourne) and *Conversations: African and American Artworks in Dialogue*.

To Be King, her most recent installation, was launched at the National Arts Festival, 2014. The video component is due to be exhibited in Vienna in May 2015 as part of the Weiner Festwochen exhibition *U/Tropia* (curator Brent Meistre) and will be included in the travelling exhibition *Eastern Europe/South Africa Exhibition: Between Democracies 1989 – 2014: Memory and Commemoration* (curator Dr. Karen von Veh) Johannesburg, September 2015.



Production Credits

To Be King was created in collaboration with Mark Wilby.

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Video Editor
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Costume Design
Vocal Composition
Voice
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Recording Studio Assistant

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