

PACE

Pan-African Creative Exchange

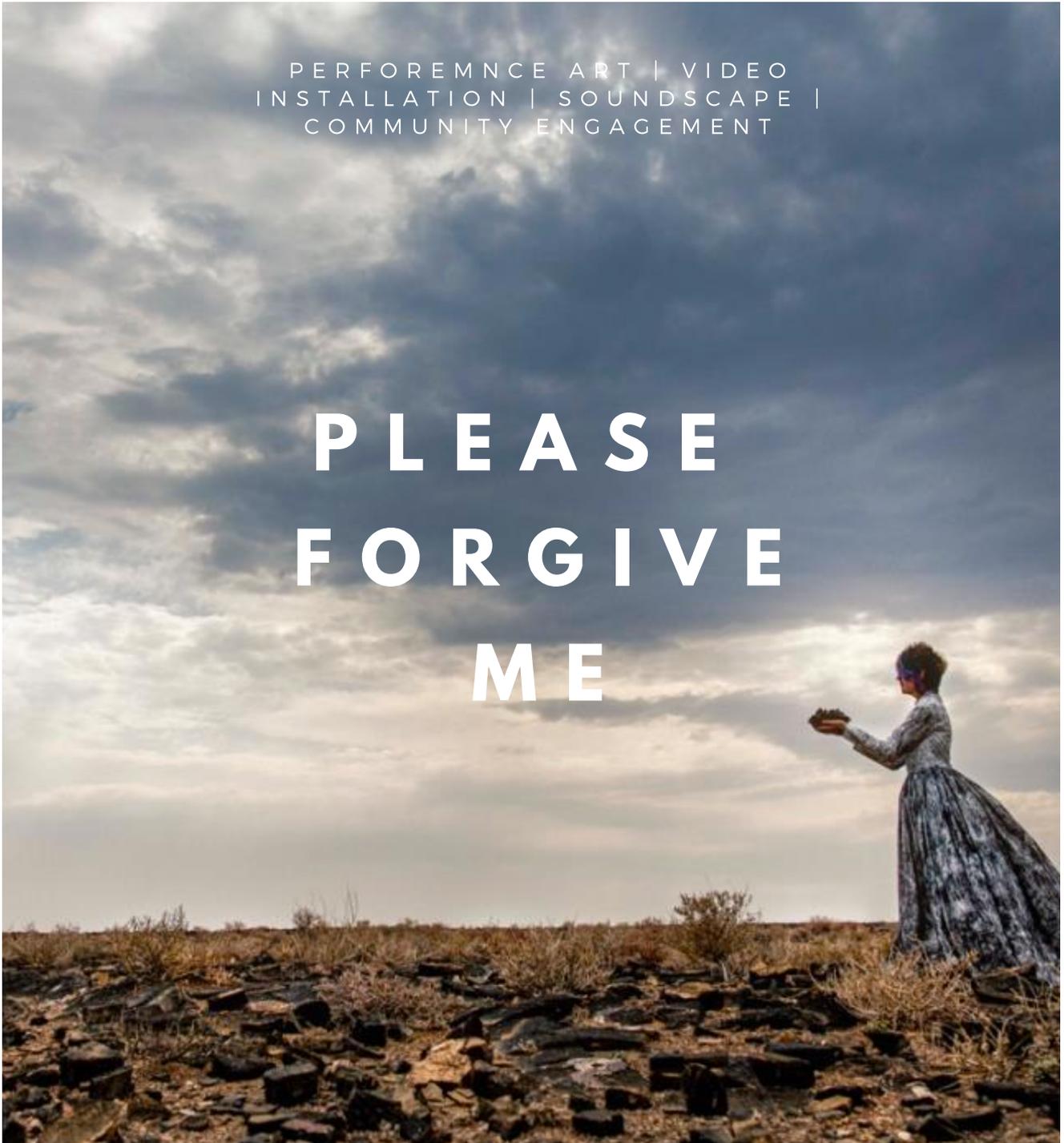
An Interdisciplinary (Performing) Arts Provocation



PACE ENTANGLED 2020 - PITCH

PERFORMNCE ART | VIDEO
INSTALLATION | SOUNDSCAPE |
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

PLEASE
FORGIVE
ME



AN ARTISTIC COLLABORATION BETWEEN
VISUAL ARTIST SONYA RADEMEYER &
COMPOSER FRANCO PRINSLOO



A PLEA FOR FORGIVENESS FOR TRAUMA INHERITED INTER- GENERATIONALLY

ABOUT

Please forgive me

"Please forgive me" is a collaboration between visual artist Sonya Rademeyer (South Africa) and musician/composer Franco Prinsloo (South Africa). The work speaks to politics of land viewed through the lens of early colonization. Moving from a particular white perspective the video piece is a plea for forgiveness for the trauma inherited inter-generationally. Although geographically placed within the region of Southern Africa it also speaks to the greater trauma of colonization across the African continent.

Our idea is to place the work within the geographical region of South Africa, but to pan it out cross-culturally and inter-generationally.

Although South Africa gained independence from colonial British rule in 1910 the country only transitioned from apartheid in 1994, and it is important that we remain engaged about the meaning of transformation and re-dress collectively. Arguably a greater evil than colonization, South Africa remains greatly divided economically, socially, and geographically as a direct consequence of colonialism and Apartheid. Inter-generational trauma remains, so evidently captured through the painful narrative in "These Are the Things that Sit with Us" a book recording the memories of inter-generational pain but also revealing the 'everyday experiences that shapes the lives of ordinary South Africans during this country's brutal and painful past.' [1]

Questioning ways in which our inherited whiteness may have contributed to this inter-generational trauma still sitting deeply within our traumatized societal fabric, we explore ways to open up conversations through the video piece. Acknowledging the risk of re-traumatization, creating opportunities to engage and converse along these lines remain crucial. Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela's research indicates that even twenty plus years after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: " ... justice and reconciliation is not merely an event or a legal process but an on-going journey that requires people to talk publicly about the effects of colonialism and apartheid, and the need to listen to one another's stories."

We strongly believe that the arts hold the capacity to enter this transformative space through creative exploration and interaction which we map through our pitch.

As please forgive me speaks to politics of land and land restitution, we feel that further investigation and exploration of the work needs to take place within a rural environment where it can then be performed.

We have identified Modern Art Projects South Africa (MAPSA) as the site for further development. MAPSA is located in the town of Richmond which is situated in the inland plateau of the Northern Cape region. Geographically, it is an arid region with a small population of just over 5000 people. Founded in 2005 by art patron Harrie Siertsema and artist / curator Abrie Fourie, one of MAPSA's distinct goals is disintegrating 'high' and 'low' culture by making art more accessible. Their unique ethical approach to art and artmaking is evident:[2]



MAPSA pro-actively engages with the challenges posed by the socio-economic conditions facing contemporary visual culture in a post-apartheid South Africa. It aims to contribute to positive change and the development of art and its discourses in South Africa, whilst remaining critically engaged with international contemporary art practices.

MAPSA describes their movement as symbolic of the new 'empathetic economy'. [3] According to the World Economic Forum 'empathicalism' is an economic system that 'uses money and other resources as tools only in the interest of developing a human-centered society' where shared prosperity is promoted and extreme inequality is suppressed.[4] Echoing these very sentiments, we feel that the MAPSA environment has the potential to be the holding-space for further exploration of please forgive me with the local community of Richmond. Being at the heart of MAPSA's work, the village has seen the fruition of key community projects that include bookbinding workshops as well as the Local Informal Clay Brick Making Collaboration.

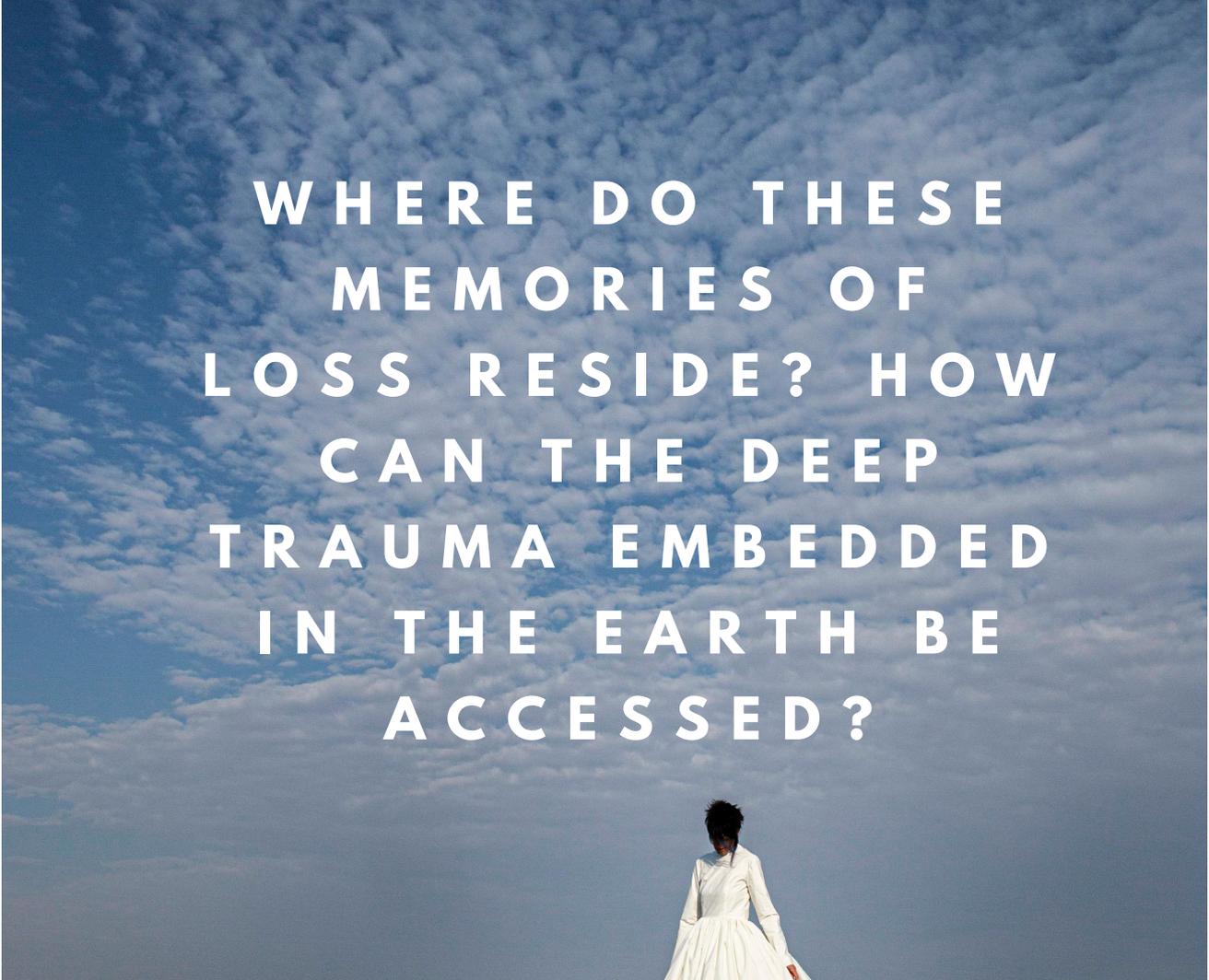
MAPSA also partners with the Fine Arts Department of the University of the Free State with the annual Land Art Project as well as the bi-annual OPENLab which is an explorative, inter-disciplinary performance-based arts laboratory linked to the PIAD/PACE program which Rademeyer is an alumni of (2018).

In 2019 MAPSA hosted the First Nations Colloquium which included:

'...first hand accounts of enforced diaspora of the !Xun people from Botswana to South Africa and continued non-recognition of the Khoi San People and Language as the original First Nations of South Africa, from initiatives through community workshops with printing to a session inviting the local community here in Richmond to share their stories, dance and song.'[5]

Hosting a First Nations Colloquium indicates to us that MAPSA's approach is not only one of inclusion but also reflects the necessary presence required to hold the space sensitively as would be required for please forgive me.





WHERE DO THESE
MEMORIES OF
LOSS RESIDE? HOW
CAN THE DEEP
TRAUMA EMBEDDED
IN THE EARTH BE
ACCESSED?

OUR PITCH

Funding for a residency

We are pitching for funding to be able to host a two to three week residency at MAPSA as early as November / December of 2020 where we would be working with and alongside the local community of Richmond. We are envisaging two pillars to this residency: firstly, a musical component to it in the form of a musical / choral exploration through the expertise of musician / composer Franco Prinsloo, and, secondly, an arts exploration with visual artist Sonya Rademeyer doing explorations into the relationship between sound and clay. Both aspects will contribute to a new imagined experience and performance of please forgive me through interaction and collaboration with the local community of Richmond.

As please forgive me speaks to issues of colonialism and land issues it is imperative

that deep listening needs to happen when contemplating the memories of loss of land. This requires an openness in allowing to be informed by the land itself. It means taking cues from the landscape and questioning: where do these memories of loss reside? How can the deep trauma embedded in the earth be accessed? What honouring of forgiveness needs to be performed to connect to its meaning, dimensions, process or character? What is the colour, motion, sound, form, odour and shape of these memories? Directly linked to this, we honour the original keepers of the land and pay our respects to the ancestors connected to the land. We also deeply acknowledge the learning to be had from the keepers of indigenous knowledge. As outsiders to the region, we are open to, and would want to listen and learn from the embedded indigenous wisdom of this place.

TO TRANSPORT FROM THE EVERYDAY INTO A NEW AND IMAGINED REALITY



Participants of the project will examine the connection to land and voice through workshops hosted by both Franco Prinsloo and Sonya Rademeyer. Initially creating opportunities for the local community to open up to exploration together and re-imagining the land to what it may normally present itself to memory, short interventions will be performed to dislodge every day or 'common' memory. This may take the form and shape of moving through the landscape blindfolded to heighten sensory awareness, or enhancing olfactory awareness through tactile gestures in the veld and imagining unconventional, unusual new uses to what is discovered through smell. Such explorations are important to transport from the everyday into a new and imagined reality where information is gained from the landscape itself.

With local community, new voices and interpretations will be unearthed through Prinsloo's music-workshopping that will take place over a two week period. The sonic landscape, therefore, will be an entirely newly created one with sounds and interpretations unique to the Richmond environment. So, too, Rademeyer will explore the tactile aspects of clay and how the earth can contribute to speaking its voice through sound creation. She will partner with two clay experts: firstly Mr Trevor Snyders who is the local clay brickmaker in Richmond, and, secondly, Macassar-based Mr Johan de Meyer who creates clay drums and flutes as a means to connect with youth.[6]

With this expertise at hand small sound sculptures will be created with the local community which, through the playing of the created pieces, will contribute to the creation of a new sound-scape.

EXHIBITIONS

Pitch for inclusion in exhibitions and gallery performances

The residency will culminate in a performance of please forgive me performed live in the natural and open environment of Richmond. The sound sculptures will form part of a site-specific performance piece which will include participatory local residents. The capturing of this performance will initially be exhibited in the local MAPSA gallery, and is to be followed by showing the work at a larger gallery in Cape Town/Johannesburg/Pretoria/Durba/Bloemfontein/Kimberley.

We would like to invite funders that might want to partner with us to connect with us in order to have a conversation around developing please forgive me to its full potential.

We are envisaging the work re-created and re-imagined in Richmond to show to a larger audience space in the urban environment of a city-scape, as we find it important to open up discussions around forgiveness from our stated position.

Showcasing the work to larger, urban audiences creates realistic opportunities for talks, conversations and media coverage to augment the space of interaction. Other than social media, there is little, if any opportunity that we are aware of, to break open this silence for cross-cultural engagement. We therefore would welcome offers to exhibit in a group exhibition in centres such as Javett Art Centre, Norval Foundation Art Museum, Zeitz MOCCA, Oliewenhuis Art Museum, William Humphreys Art Museum, KZNSA

For more information on the proposed project kindly visit:

<https://www.sonya-rademeyer.com/resonance>



REFERENCES & NOTES

[1]

These Are the Things that Sit with Us: Voices from Bonteheuwel, Langa and Worcster edited by Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela (Stellenbosch University), Friederike Bubenzer (Institute for Justice and Reconciliation) and Marietjie Oelofsen (Stellenbosch University).

[2]

<http://map-southafrica.org/about/a/> last visited 22.08.2020

[3]

<https://www.sa-venues.com/things-to-do/northerncape/modern-art-project/>
last visited 22.08.2020

[4]

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/08/empathy-can-create-a-new-economic-system/>
last visited 22.08.2020

[5]

<https://www.facebook.com/map0027/>
last visited 22.08.2020

[6]

Johan de Meyer is the initiator of Proudly Macassar Pottery, a social enterprise based in the town of Macassar in the Western Cape. Founded in 2010, Proudly Macassar Pottery uses the production of clay drums and flutes as a means to connect with youths from the surrounding community. A clear aim of Proudly Macassar Pottery is to use pottery as a vehicle to build long lasting friendships with young people in the community, inviting them to our weekly life skills sessions, where we hope to find common ground and ways out of the cycle of drug abuse and violence.



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CREDITS

Video stills: Kleoniki Vanos
Photographer: Bronwyn Trupp



ARTIST STATEMENT

Visual Artist: Sonya Rademeyer

Please forgive me (2019) enacts the state of experience of post-traumatic memory of the politics of land. Using the specific geographical landscape of the remote Tankwa Karoo* to embed a series of short performances, the work is placed within the social history of early colonization when the first European settlers took land from those to whom it belonged to, namely the hunter-gatherer San (Bushmen) and the pastoral Khoekhoe.

Moving from an inside place and a personal position, the work links present to past memories through a series of performance pieces. Initially departing from my own genealogy, I deconstruct the documentation of my ancestral heritage from the form of a book to that of a paper-mache bowl, later used as an offering of forgiveness to the land. This considered act is a deliberate attempt at stepping out of an inherited history and is a contribute of thought towards the regardless acceptance of inherited Colonial thinking around the historical taking of land.

The various short performance pieces are stitched together in a way that reflect how sense memories – memories that are outside of memory and therefore remain unspeakable – are retained in a fragmented way. Not offering a clear narrative which can be processed in common memory, generally allowing language to translate meaning, the viewer is left to interpret the sensations of the visuals themselves thereby creating an encounter in the present. Using the present within the Tankwa landscape I create rubbings off certain rock surfaces that evoke strong references to hieroglyphics, an ancient pictorial language that points towards complexity and decoding. For me, these rock rubbings are the mark-makings of collective memory pertaining to land, and, although perhaps separated by ethnic groupings, race and time we collectively share these trans-generational memories.

By wearing the mark-making of collective memories as a dress adorning my own body I question what is written in the body: how does the body remember? How does the body – as loci – remember the mapping, processing and translation of the trauma of memory over time? Does it become part of our very fabric? Do our brains get re-wired? Does it change our very DNA? And, how can we alter this patterned (inherited) way of thinking if we do not actively step out of it, as the newly-formed bowl testifies to. Grappling with these and other issues, the Oryx becomes the symbol of this struggle. Linking the inside (local) to the outside (global) space, the entangled Oryx in the fence comes to represent political struggles at large. Fences, belonging in the Tankwa or to Trump's at the Mexican border do not differ in their directed purpose of separation and division.

Re-enacting the role of the Oryx becoming entangled and dying a slow and painful death through the medium of performance, I attempt to create an understanding of how vulnerability is required in order to make sense of violent history. And, in facing and unpacking our own contributions to violence, we might be able open an enquiry into empathy and ultimately forgiveness. The final performance testifies to how the fatigue of empathy finally changes the holding space, opening artistic enquiry into how resistance continues to alter cultural history. And, although the title points toward a personal plea for forgiveness, it is ultimately a call for global tolerance.

* Tankwa Karoo is a vast and desolate geographical area within the interior of South Africa.

· Historically documented as 21 April 1751 on arrival of the Schakenbosch ship from Rotterdam (The Netherlands).



ARTIST STATEMENT

Composer: Franco Prinsloo

My collaborative journey with visual artist Sonya Rademeyer started after she commented on a 2017 Facebook post. The video post was a live performance of my composition "Song of the Broken String" which premiered at the International Viola Congress in Rotterdam (The Netherlands) for solo viola and looping station in 2017. The composition of this work is based on a poem by Dia!kwain's (David Hoesar), sourced from the infamous Lucy Lloyd !xam notebooks which documents the last of the now extinct /Xam language. This chance meeting with Rademeyer inevitably led to our inaugural collaboration where she created a sonic sketch based on my composition of !nanni's poem "Prayer to the Young Moon" similarly sourced from the Lucy Lloyd !kun notebooks. Inspired by inter-artistic interplay shaped through sound and image, multiple collaborative works have evolved since then including "Music for Isolated Musicians" where I composed a short solo work for each day of the 21 initial days of lockdown in South Africa, due to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic.

For the soundtrack to Sonya Rademeyer's video piece "Please Forgive me" I honour this initial musical juncture by using both "Song of the Broken String" and "Prayer to the Young Moon" as starting points for a new work. This newly-born work reflects the thematic complexity and interconnectedness of Rademeyer's work and is achieved by stretching recordings of the two pieces to an unrecognisable extreme. Subsequently, the works become evocative, elongated lamentations that are meditative and slow thereby reflective of the thematic subtext portrayed. This spectral smoothing of the sound creates a wave of sound forming the basis of "Please Forgive me". Additionally, an ensemble of female voices echoes choral "sigh"-motives in the high tessitura, resonating the images of entanglement and lamentation presented in the video work.

The process of sound making was one of collaboration. Prinsloo guided three vocalists (Marilize Hattingh, Elissa Lessing and Liesemari de Wet) in a process of deep listening and reflection. Each singer contributed by intuitive vocal reaction to the video material, voicing their unique interpretation and emotive response. The title of the work was deconstructed to its core vowels, vocalising only "eeh" 'ôh' sounds together with a closed vowel on 'mm'. This vocal mantra (eeh, ôh, eeh, m, eeh) became the vehicle in which each singer expressed their voice. Furthermore the group as a whole also vocalised together, giving the performer possibilities to react to Rademeyer's imagery as well as to their fellow sound creators.

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