

CROSSING Interview with Ziyanda ZeeMaster Majozi, Cape Town

What comes in mind when you hear the expression crossing the threshold?

Okay to me it's like crossing boundaries. I guess in a way that's how I understand it, like there is a separation of things and it's bringing those things together or crossing from one side to the other.

Is your art connected to the phenomenon of borders or does something specific happened in your life according to this?

In a way I kind of experienced that when I had to travel to Amsterdam and in that's the only time it kind of occurred to me that there is a difference, like between the two worlds that I come from and the world that I was in. And that's why I created some work that kind of question how this whole thing happened like colonisation happened. Yeah it kind of occurred to me, like at that point, so I created some works that question that aspect.

And this phenomenon of crossing the threshold can also be something which is not related to borders of countries but can also be something within yourself. So it's something like these boundaries you have in your own education or in your own thinking?

There is this indeed, 'cause now that you mention it for a long time now I kind of feel that I am not free enough to express or to, how can I put it? Because education as you mentioned it, - its a kind of big deal that an artist has like accreditation. Like you have to have like some kind of a degree in art or something in order for people to take you seriously and all that. So for me now that is actually one of the things I am struggling with because I have not really - yes I have studied art here and there - but because I did not go to the Universities or the art schools that are taken seriously, so it's kind of a problem in a way

In a social connection do you think it's possible to overcome the borders between people and groups in society? Or is it necessary that you have this threshold or borders between groups of white and black? I don't know - I was very surprised about all these colour issues. Because I thoughts it's something from the past, but it is not.

(Both lough)

I dont think its necessary but because we live in the world that's kind of a big deal to be black or be white and we always, you know, we regard ourselves as what we have been told that we are. So it should not be important, I mean color, I don't have a problem with white people. At least someone has a problem with, but the thing is we are dealing with a lot of this racism kind of thing, you know all that color issues. And it's something that we can't really ignore at some point. So yeah it's a bit tricky.

And if you see it as a kind of challenge of crossing a very deep and painful border? Do you have an idea how to cross this threshold?

(Loughs) At this point in time not really, because it's just too much of that happening now. Especially in our country, instead of things getting better they are actually getting worse when it comes to race and color and it's a lot. It's a lot to deal with, it's kind of stressful in a way because being an artist it's: we are very...we are at a disadvantage as black artists in South Africa, so it's

something we can't ignore. And I am not sure how getting over that. You know, it's there and you don't really know who's creating the situation so yeah.

That's maybe the most important thing that you don't have an creator for this., you can not ask "Why is it for?"

"Why is it like this?" Yeah so, yeah it's kind of tricky to deal with it.

And what I experience here is connected to fear, a feeling of fear sometimes because you don't trust or you are hurted. What is your connection or your experience with this phenomenon of fear? Do you think it's good for something to have fear? Where is it coming from?

I think in my experience fear comes from how we were brought up and the kind of things we were thought to be fearful of. I mean - it hasn't really helped in a way because you always feel like you are not good enough because you have - like that was what I was talking about as you are not educated enough - so obviously that creates a fear of stepping out and not really being brave enough to do something. But at the same time there are things you need to fear because for instance when you are a spiritual person like you have things that you need to be fearful of, like your ancestors. How you deal with them, not necessarily fear, but you just being respectful towards them. There is a lot of fear that we were brought up with and the fear of not being good enough.

Yeah, maybe it's in every human issue - but in every society there is something special about it? I also know this fear very well, yes. Do you think there is a correlation between fear and not feeling connected to others or to the nature or to the world?

Okay that's a weird question, because I also don't know the difference sometimes, like I am this kind of person who is afraid. I am not really sure if it is being afraid or... but I rather keep to myself more than anything. I have issues connecting with people, - and it becomes a problem sometimes, because you have to connect with people in order to explore and open your mind and all that. And I think there is a connection somehow because I think this fear it's a fear that creates that thing of being afraid to connect with people. So yeah I think there is a connection there.

Was there any experience in your life that opens you to your very own art practice?

I go normally with the feeling that happens that moment when I am creating. But specifically the kind of work that I did, the little paintings that I did, it's I was doing them for my mother 'cause when I work like that, the person that comes to my mind is my mother. She is always been that kind of: believed in what I am doing and she is the reason I carried on doing art. Otherwise I would have given up a long time ago and found a job somewhere and so yeah, she is my main inspiration on everything that I do that has to do with art.

Wonderful. Actually it's wonderful, yes. Is there any special precondition or preparation for doing your art? Do you have a special ritual you are repeating? Or a special mood?

I burn incense. And sometimes when I feel like I can't create than I kneel down and I pray and yeah and I believe that if I do that thing should be okay so...

So the art practice is something spiritual for you? A kind of service or is connected to a believe in God or in a spiritual way of being?

Yeah of being. First of all I believe that talent comes from God. How I relate to God is what the whole world is, the God that the whole world is ... my God that I pray to is Qamata , which is the God of our ancestors so in a way...

Is it a male or a female God?

(Laughs) I really don't know. I don't want...

It does not matter?

It doesn't matter. It could be any...it could be anyone. Yeah it could be anyone.

It's more than male or female?

Yeah it's that. And what I pray to, it makes me feel more stronger in a way and more resilient. And how I create or put this stones together it happens on its own. I let it happen, I don't really go with rules and all that, which is something which happens. So every piece is kind of special in a way.

And do you know a kind of feeling in yourself that you feel akind of a wound or gap in yourself? That you have a kind of border between. You and the others? I have sometimes the feeling that there is a gap and I really want to get over or to heal this wound. And for me this feeling is may be the reason why I do art. Do you know this feeling?

I believe I do. I believe I do. Yeah it's more or less the same feeling of being, of not being connected enough with other people. And there are times, we just have these moments, I just want to be by myself or just hide from the world. And if I don't talk to anyone its, that's how I feel. I run away from people. I am a very bad person.

(Both lough)

I don't think so.

I run away from people, like I don't know, I do not have a lot of friends. I kind of let my spirit decide if the person I want, if I want these people to be part of my life. If my spirit does not agree I become this weird person because I run.

Like escape?

Yeah escape. And just don't want to be found or don't want to be in that space with those people. So yeah I become sort of, not really an island but its, yeah I decide a lot on the people that I, I don't know...I became aware of my happiness it became more important. I have to be okay inside, and if people or somebody does not bring me peace, than I make sure that I don't bring that person close to me. So other people don't understand and maybe I look like a person who is rude, but I don't do it like in a rude way. It just happens that I distance myself from...

I think it's healthy for you. And when you are in this mood or this situation and you start working, are you feeling better?

I feel a lot better. I feel a lot better. Most of the time when I am in that mood, yeah I am okay when I put music in my ears or listening to my favorit music than I am fine and that's my peace. And I don't want to stop. I can go on all night without any feeling but this feeling that I am in.

Do you think that art can help to create strategies for a healthy and sustainable life, - that art can help in a society to make life better?

Definitely. But in my experience it's something that I'm also still trying to be part of or sort of be the person or one of the people who create that change because from where I am staying it's kind of a need that kids get experience in art at a young age but there is really none of that. And I tried to give them drawing classes, just nothing formal, and I have seen the sparkle in their eyes. It does not really have to be that they are good at it but it's something you should just enjoy. And it keeps them away from a lot of things and yeah 'because I believe art and sport are the main that can really change society. But we don't really have that in our community. We don't have enough of that and make sure that at least we do something. To say if you are few people or kids, you know get them involved. I really truly believe that art can make a difference in the communities, so yeah.

And do you have a own threshold or border that you would like to overwin the most? To get over?

Yeah. I guess maybe communicate more with other people, because I believe I sort of missed out on a lot of things maybe even opportunities because I don't speak much. And that's something I need to at least work or try to get over with, because yeah it might help at some point or make a difference in my life and in my art.

Thank you very much.