

Myburg, J. KUNSLESSE IN MAPUTO in Beeld, Beeld, Johannesburg, June

The Lost Men. This is the project artist Paul Emmanuel has been busy working on for the last few years.

In 2004, the installation was first seen in the winter landscape of the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown. Rows of windswept silk voiles, like flags. Printed on the voiles, fragments of Emmanuel's body. The names of war victims embossed on his body, legs, back of the head.

The feeling emanating from the work is one of vulnerability, wounding, loss.

The Lost Men.

The concept Emmanuel is working with is the research/experience of war and specifically men who lost their lives in conflict. But also aspects of remembrance and visible mourning.

Three years ago, Emmanuel together with Les Cohn, director of Art Source – art project consultants in Johannesburg, began planning to install *The Lost Men* at other sites in the world. The first site was Mozambique because there are so many parallels between South Africa and Mozambique – both have struggled to establish new dispensations and Mozambique was also involved in South Africa's armed struggle before 1994.

With Cohn as project manager, these two scoured Maputo, looking for the right site to install the work. Eventually, Emmanuel encountered the Catembe Ferry Jetty, which extends from the land into the sea, and he realised that this is the place where he would like to install *The Lost Men* or "*Os Homens Perdidos*", as it is said in Portuguese.

This busy pier had all the right qualities, it is the place where thousands of commuters arrive and depart by boat – to and from home; the pier is neither fully part of the land or the sea; it is exposed to the maritime weather conditions as well as a particular quality of light.

And so the seemingly endless preparations began. Permission from the authorities to install the work on the jetty. Permission from state departments, from the police, military and maritime authorities. Permission from the traffic department. All with the help of translators and go-betweens. Preparations took three years to accomplish. And which proceeded with many setbacks.

And when Emmanuel wanted to research the names of fallen Mozambican soldiers, he encountered a major problem: The Mozambican Ministry of Defence informed him that the information is "classified". End of story.

In response to this, the names of Mozambican soldiers which should have appeared on his body, were replaced with "soldado desconhecido", over and over, – unknown soldier. What initially seemed a stumbling block, now added new meaning to the work. It was no longer just *The Lost Men*, but now also unknown Lost Men.

The nine banners were attached to lampposts on the pier in April and began to take on a life of their own. Two of the flags depicted the naked buttocks of the artist. It was these two flags which caused the entire project to hang in the balance. Two police officers took exception to the images and decided to take their objection to directors level. This is when things started to heat up.

"The Mozambique which the tourist visits in his 4x4 for a holiday and the bureaucratic Mozambique are two different worlds" says Cohn diplomatically. "For me it felt like what we understand by democracy is thinly spread. It is not a place where you want to challenge the authorities."

To avoid conflict, two of the banners were removed and the remaining seven banners remained on the jetty for 19 days. Pamphlets written in Portuguese and English were handed out to passers-by to get further insight to the project. When the president of Mozambique, Armando Guebuza, was reported by the local press to have visited the jetty just before the end of the project, he was said to have been "impressed" by *Os Homens Perdidos*.

As an added activity to the project, Emmanuel conducted printmaking workshops at the National School for Visual Arts in Maputo. "There are incredible artists, but the possibility of making art is limited. There just isn't the infrastructure", he says.

But in the process, good relationships were forged, which can lead to greater exchange between South African and Mozambican artists. "What we learnt out of the endeavour is that one can almost never plan enough. Especially if you have to deal with layer upon layer of bureaucracy. On top of that in a language that is not your own. Everything becomes terribly complicated. But everything is possible," says Cohn.

Did they ever think of cancelling the project? "After three years of planning? No. We were disheartened and frustrated but the project had to go on!" On that point, the two agree.

And next, *The Lost Men* goes to Germany. And France. "I have the ideal site for the project in Washington," says Emmanuel.

"The United States is the ideal site for *The Lost Men*."

(Original text in Afrikaans on the following pages)

(Original text)

The Lost Men. Dis die projek waarmee kunstenaar Paul Emmanuel die afgelope paar jaar doenig is.

In 2004 het hy dié installasiewerk op die winterheuwel neffens die Monument in Grahamstad tydens die Nasionale Kunstefees vertoon.

Wapperend in die wind rye lap soos vlae. Op die lap fragmente van Emmanuel se lyf afgedruk. Op sy lyf, bene, agterkop die name van oorlogslagoffers geëmbosseer.

Die gevoel wat die werk wek, is dié van weerloosheid, verwondbaarheid, verlorenheid.

The Lost Men.

Die konsep waarmee Emmanuel werk, is die verkenning van oorlog en spesifiek mans wat hul lewe verloor het in konfliktsituasies. Maar ook aspekte van herinnering en openbare rou.

Drie jaar gelede het Emmanuel saam met Les Cohn, stigter van Art Source, kunsteprojektkonsultante in Johannesburg, begin beplan om *The Lost Men* ook elders in die wêreld te wys. Die eerste tree was Mosambiek juis omdat daar soveel raakvlakke is tussen Suid-Afrika en Mosambiek – albei is deur 'n stryd om 'n nuwe bestel gevestig te kry en Mosambiek was boonop nou betrokke by Suid-Afrika se gewapende stryd voor 1994.

Met Cohn as projekbestuurder het dié twee Maputo platgeloop op soek na die regte plek om die werk vertoon. Uiteindelik het Emmanuel op die Catembe Ferry Jetty afgekom wat uitloop in die see en onmiddellik besef dit is die plek waar hy *The Lost Men* wil vertoon. Of Os homens perdidos soos dit in Portugees sou heet.

Dié besige pier het vir Emmanuel al die regte kwaliteite gehad – dit is die plek vanwaar duisende pendelaars die veerboot van en op pad huis toe haal; die pier is nie deel van die land nie en ook nie deel van die see nie; die pier is uitgelewer aan die weer en wind en les bes is daar 'n besondere ligkwaliteit.

Toe is eindelose onderhandelinge begin. Toestemming van owerhede om die installasiewerk op die pier te mag staanmaak. Toestemming van staatsdepartemente, van polisie-, militêre en maritieme owerhede. Toestemming van die verkeersdepartement. Alles met behulp van tolke en tussengangers. Onderhandelinge wat drie jaar geduur het. En met heelwat hoofbrekens gepaard gegaan het.

En toe Emmanuel name wou verkry van gevalle Mosambiekse krygers, is 'n stokkie daarvoor gestee. Toe het die Mosambiekse departement van verdediging laat weet dat die inligting "geklassifiseerd" is. Punt.

Waar die name van gestorwenes op Emmanuel se lyf ingeprent is toe dit in Grahamstad vertoon is, het hy nou "soldado desconhecido" oor en oor op sy lyf gedruk – "onbekende soldaat". 'n Aanvanklike struikelblok het 'n verdere betekenislaag aan die werk gegee. Dit was nie langer net *The Lost Men* nie, maar nou ook onbekende Lost Men.

Die nege baniere is in April op die pier aan lamppale vasgemaak en het liggies in die wind 'n lewe van hul eie begin aanneem. Twee van die vlae het die naakte rugkant van Emmanuel se lyf verbeeld.

Dié twee vlae wat die hele projek in 'n stadium aan 'n draadjie laat hang het.

Twee polisielede het beswaar gemaak en die saak op direkteursvlak aangegee. Toe begin die poppe dans.

“Die Mosambiek wat die toeris met sy 4x4 verken en as vakansiebestemming behaaglik vind en die Mosambiek van burokrasie is twee wêrelde,” sê Cohn diplomaties. “Vir my het dit gevoel asof dit wat ’n mens onder demokrasie wil verstaan, maar bra dun gesprei is. Dis nie ’n plek waar jy met die owerhede wil bots nie.”

Om konflik te vermy is die twee baniere wat aanstoot gegee het, afgehaal en die projek het met sewe baniere die beplande 19 dae daar gehang.

Deur middel van biljette in Portugees kon pendelaars en besoekers insae kry in die oogmerk van die projek. Toe pres. Armando Guebuza kort voor die einde van die projek die pier besoek het, het hy gesê dat hy “beïndruk” is met Os homens perdidos.