

Interview with Sue Williamson, Guest Curator Sommerakademie 2013

This year's theme will be „You are HERE. Here is wherever I lay my head“. Where is your personal HERE and where do you lay your head?

I am writing this in my apartment in Cape Town, The glass doors are open to the balcony, and if I turn my head slightly I can gaze up at the wooded slopes of the back of Table Mountain, a majestic view which changes with the movement of the sun and the shifting clouds every hour of the day. It is a base to which I always return from my travels, and where I am always happy.

Cape Town is a gorgeous city, but in the apartheid years, it was also the scene of widespread racial injustice and violence. That dark and shocking history, the events of that time, and the effect that it had on the people who had to endure it, became the focus of much of my own early work.

Today, as so many contemporary artists do, I travel frequently, either to install my work at exhibitions or to make new work. Particularly if it is to make new work, when I get to my destination, whether it is Havana or Harare or Alexandria or Naples, I try to be there not as a tourist or an outsider, but as one who attempts to begin to understand that new community. It is important to arrive at each new HERE without preconceptions and with all the senses open.

What does this theme mean to you and what do you intend to discuss by choosing it?

The phrase You are HERE clearly refers to those moments when one finds oneself consulting a street map in a strange town to find out where precisely one is, so it is a metaphor for the nomadic lifestyle of the contemporary cultural worker. But it also refers to a kind of personal reflection on one's own lived experience: You are HERE and all the influences in your life up to now have made you what you are today, and can be brought to bear on whatever you wish to write or make or perform next.

What I wish to explore with the 2013 fellows of the Paul Klee Sommerakademie is how to synthesise this personal experience with a new set of circumstances, and how to listen to one's inner voice to make work which is truly authentic and unique.



Ein Ausbildungsengagement
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Would you like to recommend a text (book) to read as an entrance into the subject of global - local?

I myself have just ordered „Antinomies of Art and Culture: Modernity, Postmodernity, Contemporaneity“, edited by Terry Smith, Okwui Enwezor and Nancy Condee, and am looking forward to reading that. It comes highly recommended.

You have been a Nominator right from the beginning of the Sommerakademie and visited the city of Berne every year. Do you have favorite places to visit?

My favourite thing to do in Berne is to leap into the Aare and to be swept downstream in those gloriously glacier green waters. So invigorating.