

Polymath Sketchbook - Alex Le Guma X Scott Eric Williams

Concept

The Proposed project by Scott Williams is called ‘*Polymath Sketchbook*’ – Alex Le Guma X Scott Eric Williams. The act of engagement with the archive and creation of artworks from it is an attempt to draw emotion from the raw historical data held in accession numbers, hard drives, cloud storage and cabinets of all manner. Zakes Mda , in his speech at the Free State Art Festival 2016, made a statement to that effect when he said that history deals with the facts but historical fiction deals with the emotions around events and dates.

While the work of the creative industries may border on the noble task of remembering the legacies of heroes – it is arrogant for the artist to assume that they may come to grips with the essence and full value of our predecessors’ contributions to our freedoms in short timeframes demanded by modern realities. In a similar vein Roger Field, in his writing on Art and the Man: Alex La Guma's Comics and Paintings, quotes from G. Duby, 'Memories with No Historian', Yale French Studies 59 (Rethinking His-tory)

“Perhaps it is more difficult than most imagine for a historian to speak of memory, for one who practices this profession - and for what deep-seated reasons? - whose essence is the act of juxtaposing debris of often barely recognisable remembrances, which are then clad by the imagination in order to conjoin them, to reconstruct an image, according to schema that arise willy nilly, from oneself; to compose a figure that often stems less from the past than from the historian's dreams

Hence, the representation of the artists engagement with the archive of Alex Le Guma is presented as a sketch. (Sketch representing a quick drawing or a brief general account/ presentation, a short scene or play) The engagement with the Alex Le Guma’s archive reveals his love for use of the media such as analogue video (in personal documentation) , cartooning and the writing of plays for performance on radio – amongst others. Le Guma used these media to serve as tools for spreading the ideas of the liberation movement in South Africa. All of these artistic processes find their start on paper – interpreted by the artist’s use of wheatpaste posters.

Execution of artwork

Polymath Sketchbook will take the form of a combination of performance art and wheatpaste recorded by video. The execution of the performance will consist of the pasting of wheatpaste posters, the removal of portions of the poster and then the addition of other portions. The posters will be pasted onto boards configured in the shapes of comic strip panels. The contents of these posters will draw from the provided archives. The change of images on the boards will construct a rough timeline narrative resembling the reflection on Alex Le Guma’s life.