

Conrad Botes

Born 1969, Ladismith

Graduated from the University of Stellenbosch with MA Fine Arts, 1997

Conrad Botes thinks of his work as a postmortem of the society and culture in which he grew up. As a white Afrikaner who came of age in the late 1970s and 80s, his imagination is embedded with the evils of apartheid, its obsession with power and repression, the violence and anarchy of the times and the moralising role of the Dutch Reformed Church. He makes these overbearing themes his own by using a comic aesthetic and (dark) humour to reflect on the continuing contradictions in our society.

His work as an artist dovetails seamlessly with the comix he produces as Konradski. Together with Anton Kannemeyer (Joe Dog), he founded the magazine *Bitterkomix* in 1992, the title of which encapsulates both the bittersweet sensibility and the biting satire that run throughout his work.

In his melancholic installation, *Pietà*, the artist has taken the archetypal theme of the mother and dying son and made it contemporary. An enormous sinuous wall painting functions as a skeleton for the work, and reverse glass painted roundels are scattered across its surface. The disparate iconography of the roundels disrupts and fragments the customary allegories associated with the religious imagery, and the artist leaves us to create our own narratives and associations between the elements.

Selected solo exhibitions

- 2005 *Conrad Botes*, Absa Gallery, Johannesburg
Notes from Underground, Gallery Momo, Johannesburg
Devil's Bullets, Erdmann Contemporary, Cape Town
- 2004 *Forensic Theatre*, Gallery Momo, Johannesburg
Conrad Botes, Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg
- 2003 *The Big White Sleep*, The Scene Gallery, New York; Galleria L'Ariete, Bologna

Selected group exhibitions

- 2006 *Africa Comics*, Studio Museum, Harlem, New York
Ninth Havana Biennale, Cuba
New Painting, KZNSA Gallery, Durban; Unisa Art Gallery, Pretoria;
Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg
- 2004 *+Positive*, Biennale of Merano, Italy
Africa Screams: The return of evil in African art and cinema, Iwalewa Haus,
Afrikazentrum der Universitat Bayreuth, Germany
- 2002 *Dopo Buzzati: Artisti tra pittura e fumetto*, Galleria d'Arte Moderna Carlo
Rizzarda, Feltre, Italy
Passport to South Africa, Centro Culturale Trevi, Bolzano, Italy
- 2001 *In Fumo*, Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Bergamo, Italy

Courtesy of Michael Stevenson Gallery, Cape Town