

# Art review – The geopolitical trash

Nadine Botha @City\_Press #Trending 15 February 2015 6:00

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“What is good for the trash is good for poetry,” reads Brazilian artist Rosângela Rennó’s artwork on show at The Poetry In Between: South-South exhibition currently on in Cape Town.

The exhibition is billed as “exploring the connections and disconnections between Africa and Latin-America”, drawing its name from the geopolitical term “Global South”.

The contested term refers to the non-Westernised world and has become preferred to “developing world” or “third world”, but still draws criticism for highlighting the political tensions between the West and the “other”, or “the trash”.

There’s another level of trash in this exhibition: other people’s flotsam.

For instance, works on display by Brazilian artists include a massive bale of hay that apparently houses a golden needle and thread by Cildo Meireles, an installation of found objects by the peripatetic Paulo Nazareth, a fabric sculpture by Sonia Gomes hanging from the rafters, and a flute embedded in a soapstone by Nuno Ramos.

Is there truth in the meme that the Global South is more resourceful in terms of repurposing waste since we always end up with the West’s leftovers, or have we fallen prey to our own clichéd platitudes?

The South African work on display is more specific – or at least more recognisably specific from this viewer’s context.

These include canvases made of correctional services sheeting by Turiya Magadlela, and a lightbox installation of Mikhael Subotzky and Patrick Waterhouse’s seminal Ponte City work. Ariel Reichman’s Tea for the Master, Coffee for the Madam performance that saw him don a domestic worker’s outfit and serving two chairs delivered unexpected poetry when the queue for wine engulfed his set.

And, of course, never shall there be a Goodman group exhibition without a David Goldblatt or William Kentridge – whose 1991 animation, Mine, has revealed a new dimension since the Marikana Massacre. It was Kendell Geers’s 1993 Hanging Piece that defined the show, however.

Set up in the entrance foyer, the work entails red bricks suspended from rope tied to the rafters at various heights.

Although most people tried to skirt around the obstruction, the work is revealed by people weaving their way through it, setting a brick swinging that could hit another over the head.

Although made a good 13 years before the term BRICS was coined in 2006, it seems an entirely prophetic work in its comical enactment of how clunky and problematic any of these geopolitical terms are; and how they can hit you over the head when you're not looking.

As the exhibition promises to be the first of an annual series, one hopes that future iterations might explore these tensions and contradictions.

Since it also bears mentioning that the Goodman's idea of "Africa and Latin-America" in fact refers to "South Africa and Brazil" (with an exception of Kudzanai Chiurai).

**» The show is hanging at the Goodman gallery until February 28**