Bellagio Center Creative Arts Fellowship  SUE WILLIAMSON
THERE'S SOMETHING

I MUST TELL YOU

SUE WILLIAMSON

began her career in a country devastated by Apartheid. Belonging to the privileged white community she could have, like so many others, closed her eyes and pretended she did not see, did not hear, and did not feel the discriminatory policy of a two-tier country in which the color of your skin determined your life at birth—she didn’t. Sue Williamson is an activist who has dedicated her life to women’s rights as well as human and civil rights issues. Williamson’s intellectual and artistic production grew in response to the struggle against Apartheid and exclusion, with cultural resistance as her armed response.

In the 80s, she produced *A Few South Africans* (1983-7), a series of portraits of women who took a stand against Apartheid. In *For Thirty Years Next to His Heart* (1990) she photographed the pages of a passbook, the only official document allowing Black South Africans to circulate in the city during Apartheid. In the video installation, *Better Lives* (2003) she interviewed African immigrants arriving to South Africa in the late 1990s, seeking a better future in “the new democracy of a rainbow nation.” From the struggles of women, to the lives of African immigrants negotiating xenophobia, Sue Williamson’s work links individual destinies, in an attempt to reveal the dark side of South Africa’s history. With *All Our Mothers* (2013) and the video installation *There’s something I must tell you* (2013) Williamson continues to examine the issues she began exploring thirty years ago. In *There’s something I must tell you*, women talk with their granddaughters about their struggles, failures and hopes. There are few such public testimonies of the women who dedicated their lives to the fight for human dignity and against injustice. Their individual stories are fragments of the rich history of South Africa. This series of dialogues between generations, serves as a record of the many unheard female stories and of the anonymous citizens who sacrificed their personal comforts, and sometimes their lives, in the name of freedom.

At the heart of her work, Williamson continues to ask questions, “After twenty years of democracy, does a young generation of South Africans realize the scale of the humiliation and sacrifice endured by their elders?” “How do we give this young generation a sense of responsibility, so that those who died and went into exile will not just be dry statistics in the future?” It is impossible to quantify human suffering, however, the work of Sue Williamson is both a permanent testimony and a vigilant warning against the temptations of exclusion and hatred, and contempt towards “the other”.

By N’Goné Fall

“I suppose everyone thinks their grandmother is unique. Grandmothers are nurturers. Often when I’m washing my hair, I think of things I’d like to talk to her about… kind of have my last say. Which is kind of funny. Even if she was still living, I probably would have never got to have my last say.” — Luiza Cachalia
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SUE WILLIAMSON began her career in a country devastated by Apartheid. Belonging to the privileged white community she could have, like so many others, closed her eyes and pretended she did not see, did not hear, and did not feel the discriminatory policy of a two-tier country in which the color of your skin determined your life at birth—she didn’t. Sue Williamson is an activist who has dedicated her life to women’s rights as well as human and civil rights issues. Williamson’s intellectual and artistic production grew in response to the struggle against Apartheid and exclusion, with cultural resistance as her armed response.

In the 80s, she produced A Few South Africans (1983-7), a series of portraits of women who took a stand against Apartheid. In See Thirty Years Beat the Dust (1998), she photographed the pages of a passport, the only official document allowing Black South Africans to travel outside their country, the video installation Better Lives (2003) interviewed immigrants arriving to South Africa in the late 90s, seeking a better future in “the new democracy of a rainbow nation.” From the struggles of women, to the lives of African immigrants negotiating xenophobia, Sue Williamson’s work links individual destinies, in an attempt to reveal the dark side of South Africa’s history. With All Our Mothers (2013) and the video installation There’s something I must tell you (2013) Williamson continues to examine the issues she began exploring thirty years ago. In There’s something I must tell you, women talk with their granddaughters about their struggles, failures and hopes. There are few such public testimonies of the women who dedicated their lives to the fight for human dignity and against racism. Their individual stories are fragments of the rich history of South Africa. This series of dialogues between generations, serves as a record of the many unclaimed female stories and of the anonymous citizens who sacrificed their personal comforts, and sometimes their lives, to the name of freedom.

At the heart of her work, Williamson continues to ask questions, “After twenty years of democracy, does a young generation of South Africans realize the scale of the humiliation and social violence of their elders?” “Do you see the young generation as a scale of responsibility, so that those who died and went into exile are not just dry statistics in the future?” It is impossible to quantify human suffering, however, the work of Sue Williamson is both a permanent testimonial and a vigilant warning against the temptations of exclusion and hatred, and contempt towards “the other”.

By N’Goné Fall

“I will be turning eighty on April, 21st. I am looking forward to that because they say when you turn eighty you are very wise. So I am looking to really being a wise person.” — BRIGALIA BAM

“It was a very bitter thing to go through at the age of fifty six to be put into jail and I am not told why I am in jail and there I sat in jail for six months and my eldest daughter was also put into jail with me.” — VESTA SMITH
“As a young, black African woman in the context of today, I do believe I am free. I am free because I have been able to think for myself. I’ve been able to make choices for myself. But freedom also comes at an expense, so unless you’re disciplined you could misuse your freedom.” — NOMPUMELELO KOTANE
“My group of friends are just mixed. The white kids act like black kids and the black kids act like white kids and we understand that if it wasn’t for the people who made us all integrated and free we wouldn’t be that way.” —BUSISIWE KHATIBE

“Those ‘50s, when I was a school girl were very exciting years. We knew that one was part of something much bigger ... one realised that things were bad in the country but one felt very much part of something, even as a child. We didn't feel neglected at all because our parents explained to us why they were getting involved politically.” —ILSE FISCHER
ALL OUR MOTHER

Amina Cachalia / 1984 | 59 x 39 cm | Pigment inks on archival paper | Edition: 6

Annie Silinga / 1983 | 59 x 39 cm | Pigment inks on archival paper | Edition: 6

MOTHER

ALL OUR
It's a bit suspicious if you have too much money.

El bloqueo esta tambien en la mente.

Istanbul is relentless.

It's a bit suspicious if you have too much money.
Who is Johannes?
( Krakow) 2009  |  60 x 306 cm  |  Pigment inks on archival paper  |  Photographer: John Hodgkiss

It's a mistake to ask for advice (Naples) 2012  |  60 x 225 cm  |  Pigment inks on archival paper  |  Photographer: Simona Riccio

Youth facing history (Krakow) 2011  |  60 x 226 cm  |  Pigment inks on archival paper  |  Photographer: Michal Kawecki
I mean, where else are you gonna go?

New York 2011  |  60 x 599 cm  |  Pigment inks on archival paper  |  Photographer: Matthew Septimus

No time to stroll (Hong Kong) 2013  |  80 x 330 cm  |  Pigment inks on archival paper  |  Commissioned by: Savannah College of Art and Design  |  Photographer: Leslie Montgomery
BETTER LIVES

Albert and Isabelle Ngandu 2003 | 144 x 112 cm | Film still | Pigment inks on archival cotton paper | Cinematographer: Michael Buckley

Richard Belalufu 2003 | 144 x 112 cm | Film still | Pigment inks on archival cotton paper | Cinematographer: Michael Buckley
Better Lives
2003
35 mm film transferred to six channel video
Commissioned by Africalia, Brussels
Installation view, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg

FOR THIRTY YEARS NEXT TO HIS HEART
1990
196 x 262 cm
49 colour laser prints, hand-covered frames
Photographer: Andrew Meintjes

Contemporary Magazine
Front Cover
London
September 2006
The Rockefeller Foundation launched the Bellagio Creative Arts Fellowship in 2008, offering an exciting opportunity for visual artists. This high-profile program, selected by a distinguished international panel, hosts visual artists at the Bellagio Center for extended residencies to develop projects inspired by or related to social or global issues.

The Bellagio Creative Arts Fellows program is a selective award that helps advance the work of some of the most innovative, global, contemporary visual artists and raises their visibility in new arts, policy, and academic circles. The Fellows receive a cash award, undertake a two-month residency at the Center, and are provided with a travel award. They also contribute to and benefit from interactions among a stimulating community of scholars, writers, policymakers, and other artists who share dinners and occasional presentations at the Center. The combination of an extended stay, a generous stipend, private work space, and a unique group of fellow residents makes a Creative Arts Fellowship at the Bellagio Center a remarkable, unparalleled opportunity in the global arts community.

http://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/bellagio-center