

# TRACEY ROSE

Shooting  
Down  
Babylon

Press kit

23.02.—  
11.08.2024

**KUNST  
MUSEUM  
BERN**

With the support of:



Stiftung Gegenwart  
Dr. h.c. Hansjörg Wyss





**The Kunstmuseum Bern is presenting the most extensive retrospective so far of the work of Tracey Rose. The South African artist has been a radical voice in international art since the mid-1990s. Her works are centred on the power of performance and the body as a place of resistance, healing and discourse.**

With about a hundred works, the Kunstmuseum Bern is showing the most extensive retrospective so far of the work of the South African performance and multimedia artist Tracey Rose (b. 1974). In her works she engages with themes such as post-colonialism, gender, sexuality, racism and Apartheid. At their centre are the power of performance art and the body, which Tracey Rose sees as a place of protest, rage, resistance and discourse, but also of healing. The artist realises her sensational performative practice in various media such as video, sculpture, photography, installation and drawing, in particular casting light and critically commenting on central experiences in the transition to a post-colonial world.

Her thematic focus, however, extends far beyond the reality of South Africa, and refers generally to experiences of racist, political or sexist discrimination. Her most recent works centre on the question of the healing of traumatic experiences, whether personal or communal in nature.

The exhibition in the Kunstmuseum Bern follows Rose's artistic development from her early interest in questions of identity to the aesthetics of violence and an interest in healing processes and rituals. It shows works from the years between 1990 and 2021, including the work *T.K.O. (Technical Knock-Out)* (2000) from the collection of the Kunstmuseum Bern, in which the artist has been represented since 2001.

'The exhibition avoids a chronological or thematic reading in favour of an arrangement as an open landscape, in which the individual elements communicate with one another synchronically and diagonally. At the same time, the fundamental themes in Tracey Rose's work, such as protest, satire, anti-monuments, utopia and a preoccupation with spirituality, recur.' Kathleen Bühler, curator of the exhibition

### **Rethinking the world**

Tracey Rose laments, denounces, distorts and attacks. She reinterprets accepted patterns of thought and traditions, she questions repeatedly asserted cultural, sexual or ethical identities and thus opens up a space for discussions. Her works produce cracks in the surface, and the artist goes so far as to rethink even mythical and religious origin narratives in an absurd, anarchic and carnivalesque way.

One example of this is the group of works *Lucie's Fur*, in which the artist sketches a different version of the Creation history. She shows us Adam and Eve as a queer couple, or the expulsion from Paradise as a slightly disoriented ride by a hybrid figure through a Canary-Island Garden of Eden. With this daring and amusing new emphasis, Rose opens the Pandora's box of questions: what would happen if things had happened according to her form of representation, and we had developed our cultural theories and histories of civilisation on that basis?

### **Mandela Balls**

Ten new works have been commissioned for the present exhibition; they are part of the continuing *Mandela Balls* series. In 1994, Nelson Mandela, freed after years of imprisonment, was the first South African President to be democratically elected. Rose's work accompanies the political and social systemic change to a 'Rainbow Nation' and proves to be revolutionary even today in the sense of an analytic vision, an attitude of resistance and a voice of protest. Basing her work on the poem *A Dream Deferred* by Langston Hughes, the artist builds a total of 95 monuments to the freedom fighter – one for each year of his life. With these fragile and sometimes comical objects she explores the legacy left by his hopeful beginning.

### **Shooting Down Babylon**

The title of the exhibition, *Shooting Down Babylon*, is taken from the installation of the same name, made in 2016 as a reaction to Donald Trump's election victory. For this work, Rose subjected herself to cleansing rituals which she filmed and reproduced in a physically insistent video sculpture. As a prelude to the exhibition, this work clearly demonstrates the extent to which Tracey Rose's work is rooted in the physical, in rage and in the search for spirituality.

### **café révolution**

Beyond the exhibition, the Kunstmuseum Bern seeks to reflect on issues of discrimination and to learn more about it along with its visitors. The Bern collective café révolution will introduce new ways of looking and background experiences in the context of different events in the accompanying programme.

**Opening**

The opening of the exhibition will take place on

**Thursday, 22 February 2024, from 6 pm.**

Admission to the exhibition is free on this evening.

**Curators**

Koyo Kouoh, Tandazani Dhlakama, in collaboration with Kathleen Bühler

**Assistant Curator**

Nina Liechti

**With the support of**

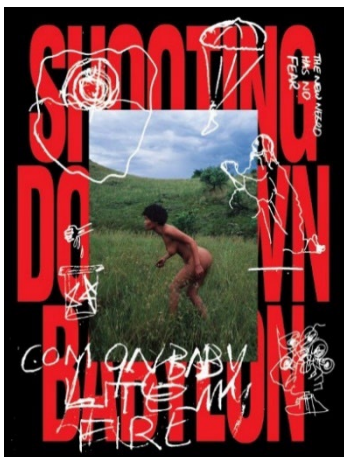
Kanton Bern, Burgergemeinde Bern, Stiftung GegenwART. Dr. h.c. Hansjörg Wyss

**Cooperation**

The exhibition has been organised by Zeitz MOCAA (Cape Town, South Africa).

**Digital Guide**

There is a freely accessible digital guide to the exhibition. It can be accessed from Wednesday, 21 February 2024 via the QR code below.

**Catalogue****Tracey Rose. Shooting Down Babylon**

Published by Koyo Kouoh and The Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (Zeitz MOCAA)

468 pages, 28,5 x 3,5 x 21,5 cm

Publication in English

ISBN 978-0-6397-0732-7, CHF 95

## Statement

Shortly before the opening of the exhibition "Tracey Rose. Shooting Down Babylon", it became known through media research that the artist Tracey Rose had signed an open letter „A Letter against Apartheid“ in 2021. This open letter was signed by several thousand people from the world of art and culture and published by the art platform e-flux, among others. ([againstapartheid.com](https://againstapartheid.com))

This „Letter against Apartheid“ has been met with criticism. Jonathan Kreutner, Secretary General of the Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities, criticized the letter: „The petition, that the artist is supporting is indeed very strong. This is not an attitude, but blindness and pure political framing,“ he says. In this sense, apartheid is also used as a fighting term. „The artist's support for this action makes it clear that she obviously represents radical and not constructive positions.“

The Kunstmuseum Bern stands for an open, polyphonic discourse with art and a dialogue of values with society. Tracey Rose is an important contemporary artist whose work of the last thirty years addresses discrimination, racism, and sexism in an expressive manner.

Tracey Rose has Jewish and Muslim roots. She condemns the cruel attacks by Hamas on Israel and the severe retaliatory measures by the Israeli government, which also affect the unarmed civilian population in Palestine. She condemns all forms of Islamophobia, racism and anti-Semitism and has spoken out clearly in favour of a ceasefire between Israel and Palestine. „I believe in the right of the state of Israel and the state of Palestine to exist.“

As a museum, we stand firmly against all forms of discrimination. Our institution is committed to equality, inclusivity, and respect for the dignity of every individual. We condemn all forms of terrorism, racism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, discrimination, sexism and misanthropy.

As a Swiss public museum, the Kunstmuseum Bern / Paul Klee Centre sees itself as a platform for an open and polyphonic discourse of works of art and a dialogue of values with society. The guiding principle is the endeavour to address pressing contemporary issues from the resources of our collections and in a curatorial framework to a broad public. We take up social discourses and create a space for the discussion of controversial positions.

In a world facing multiple and far-reaching crises, our democratic coexistence is being put to the test. It is a time when the strength of human connections, the depth of friendships and the endurance of alliances are being challenged more than ever. These challenges remind us how closely our destinies are intertwined and how important it is to work together to maintain dialogue, stability, peace and solidarity.

Berne, 20.2.2024

## Press images

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01

Tracey Rose  
*Lovemefuckme*, 2001  
Lambda print  
119 x 119 cm  
Courtesy of the artist



02

Tracey Rose  
*The Prelude: La Marcha de la Aparición*, 2003  
Pigment inks on cotton rag paper  
73 x 49 cm  
Courtesy of the artist



03

Tracey Rose  
*Die Wit Man*, 2015  
Video, colour, sound  
42:40  
Courtesy of the artist



04

Tracey Rose  
*San Pedro V "The Hope I hope" The Wall*, 2005  
Giclée print  
84,91 x 63,46 cm  
Courtesy of the artist

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**05**  
Tracey Rose  
*Lucie's Fur Version 1:1:1 -  
The Messenger, 2003*  
Lambda print  
80 x 60 cm  
Courtesy of the artist



**06**  
Tracey Rose  
*The Kiss, 2001*  
Black & White Lambda print  
124,5 x 127 cm  
Courtesy of the artist



**07**  
Tracey Rose  
*Lala, 2013*  
Mixed mediums on paper  
228 x 150 cm  
Courtesy of the artist



**08**  
Tracey Rose, in collaboration  
with L1  
*Portrait for a Young Black  
Man, 2013*  
Mixed mediums on paper  
240 x 210 cm (whole work),  
59 x 42cm (single pages)  
Courtesy of the artist

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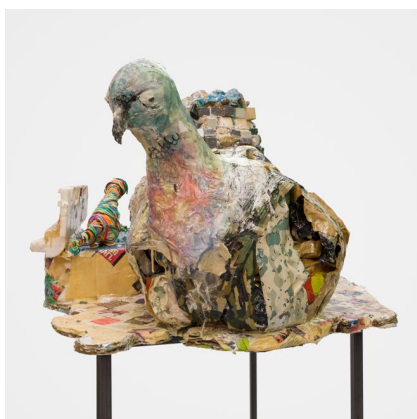
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09  
Tracey Rose  
*A Dream Deferred (Mandela Balls), 13/95 IMBOKODO: Kathy's Rainbow, 2021*  
Mixed media  
85 x 90 x 120 cm  
Courtesy of the artist



10  
Tracey Rose  
*A Dream Deferred (Mandela Balls), 14/95 EXCALIBUR: Seven 7CROWN Audie's\$ Bootitjie Bootitjie Tomorrow, 2021*  
Mixed media  
126 x 73 x 80 cm  
Courtesy of the artist



11  
Tracey Rose  
*A Dream Deferred (Mandela Balls), 16/95 MATTHEW 9:14 For the Boys of Bird Island, 2021*  
Mixed media  
75 x 115,5 x 55cm  
Courtesy of the artist



12  
Tracey Rose  
Courtesy Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa



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13  
Tracey Rose  
Courtesy Zeitz Museum of  
Contemporary Art Africa

## **Social Media Assets**

### **Text proposal:**

Tracey Rose (\*1974) has been a radical voice in international art since the mid-1990s. The @kunstmuseumbern is showing the most comprehensive retrospective to date of the South African performance and media artist, who engages in her works with themes such as post-colonialism, gender and racism, and whose artistic practice is centered on the power of performance and the body as a place of resistance and discourse.

Tracey Rose. Shooting Down Babylon

23.2.-11.8.2024

More info via [kunstmuseumbern.ch/TraceyRoseEN](https://kunstmuseumbern.ch/TraceyRoseEN)

Curators: Koyo Kouoh and Tandazani Dhlakama in collaboration with Kathleen Bühler

The exhibition was organised by Zeitz MOCAA (Cape Town, South Africa)

#KunstmuseumBern #TraceyRose @TraceyRoseStudio @zeitzmocaa  
@kathleenbuhler @madamekoyo @tandazani

**Please refer to the Kunstmuseum Bern's social media channels in your posts and stories by tagging us in the text:**

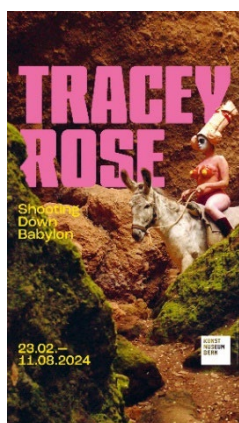
**@kunstmuseumbern**

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14  
[Post, 1080 x 1080 px]



15  
[Instagram & Facebook Story, 1080 x 1920 px]



16  
Tracey Rose  
*Lovemefuckme*, 2001  
Lambda print  
119 x 119 cm  
Courtesy of the artist



17  
Tracey Rose  
*The Kiss*, 2001  
Black & White Lambda print  
124,5 x 127 cm  
Courtesy of the artist

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18  
Tracey Rose, in collaboration with  
L1  
*Portrait for a Young Black Man*,  
2013  
Mixed mediums on paper  
240 x 210 cm (whole work), 59 x  
42cm (einzelne Seiten)  
Courtesy of the artist



19  
Tracey Rose  
*A Dream Deferred (Mandela Balls)*,  
*13/95 IMBOKODO: Kathy's  
Rainbow*, 2021  
Mixed media  
85 x 90 x 120 cm  
Courtesy of the artist