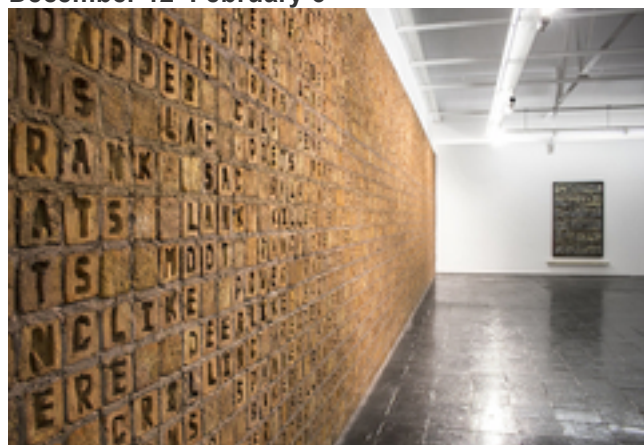


Willem Boshoff

SMAC ART GALLERY | CAPE TOWN

145 Sir Lowry Road, The Palms

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View of “Willem Boshoff: Reap the Whirlwind,” 2015–16.

A burnt-orange brick wall is the centerpiece of Willem Boshoff’s “Reap the Whirlwind,” an at times exegetical display of fourteen new assemblage works and sculptures that riff on this sixty-four-year-old artist’s career-long obsession with words as textural forms and linguistic ciphers. Measuring nearly fifty feet long by ten feet high, *Word Woes*, 2015, spans the entire length of one gallery wall and is composed of a grid of handmade bricks produced by rural artisans using Richmond clay and the services of a blindfolded donkey whose orbits powered their primitive mixing drum—a technique described in the South African playwright Athol Fugard’s 2005 short story “Johnnie Goliath.” Boshoff’s work is a tutorial in equivalences: Letters embossed on individual bricks spell out 290 English words that are also readable in Afrikaans but mean something completely different in that language. The work’s title further extends this wordplay, as it can be translated back into English as “become angry.”

This mood is not new to Boshoff’s work, with traces of rage and dissent evident in his early concrete poems from 1978 to ’80. Similar in tone to his controversial 2015 text work *Racist in South Africa*—listing various things that disgust him about his homeland, shown at the 2015 Venice Biennale—the piece *Home to Roost*, 2015, is an assemblage of compasses and calipers mounted on a ground of iron sheets reclaimed from a disused chicken coop. The title, which is spelled out in sand in an accompanying vitrine, references Ward Churchill’s post-9/11 tract, *On the Justice of Roosting Chickens* (2003)—offering further reflections on the artist’s enduring anti-imperialist position and the dominance of words as both animating idea and formal subject of his meticulously crafted pieces.

— Sean O’Toole

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