

Reaching Sideways, Writing Our Ways

The Orientation of the Arts of Africa Discourse

Ruth Simbao in dialogue with William B. Mika, Eytayo Tolulope Ijasakin, Romualdo Tchibozo, Masimba Hwati, Kristin NG-Yang, Patrick Mudekereza, Aidah Nulubowa, Genevieve Hwacintve, Lee-Ray Jason, Eman Abdou, Rehema Chachage, Amanda Tumusiime, Suzana Sousa, and Patsai Muchemwa

How can I dialogue if I always project ignorance onto others and never perceive my own? How can I dialogue if I regard myself as a case apart from others—more “us” in whom I cannot recognize other “Us”? How can I dialogue if I consider myself a member of the in-group of prize men, the owners of truth and knowledge, for whom all non-members are “these people” or “the great unwhashed”? How can I dialogue if I start from the premise that running the world is the task of an elite ...? How can I dialogue if I am closed to—and even offended by—the contribution of others? How can I dialogue if I am afraid of being displaced, the mere possibility causing me torment and weakness? ... At the point of encounter, there are neither utter ignorances nor perfect sages; there are only people who are attempting, together, to learn more than they now know (Frutse 2005:90).

IALOGUE AND ORIENTATION

I prefer to listen closely to those voices which seem to be speaking from a distance and are met with indifference (Rehema Chachage 2015:4).

Ruth Simbao: In Rehema Chachage’s video installation, *Baso Babu Rishi Undago* (2010), sculptural objects representing old-fashioned transistor radios are mounted on the wall, side by side (Fig. 1). Embedded in each radio is a small video screen, which reveals a figure who stands in one place while the vertical line of the radio tuner crosses her body in search of the desired frequency (Figs. 2–3). A man’s voice wafts in and out as it is periodically interrupted by unsolicited noise, revealing the

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