

**Translated review by Renate Rivedal**  
Bergens Tidende

**Can we be reminded of brutal injustices and still forgive and live on?**

This exhibition gives us a little drop of hope.

In the video work *The Bell Project*, artist Hiwa K. shows, via two films, just how you can turn death into life. In one, we meet a group of workers in Kurdistan/North Iraq that, under horrific working conditions, gather together metal from American bombs and grenades.

In the other film, we are in Italy where the molten metal ends up. The deadly weapons have arisen like a phoenix, but now as beautiful church bells, the crackling sound of weaponry has been converted into tolling bells.

**Authoritarian regimes and brutal domination**

In the exhibition *Living, Forgiving, Remembering* we encounter 12 artists that each in their own way depict the horrors of war, the heavy handedness of authoritarian regimes, and the brutal dominance of the weapon industry.

At the same time, the artists are mostly occupied with seeing whether it is possible to forgive, continue living, and unite after having experienced injustice.

At a distance, the figures of women by Buhlebezwe Siwani can look like older copper sculptures that are oxidising. Close up, you see that the sculptures, of Siwani's own body, are covered in solidified green soap.

The soap gives a beautiful green render down the bodies of the two figures. One of the women has a beautiful beaded belt round her the waist, under which is rotting ballerina skirt that recalls Edgar Degas's elegant dancers.

The green soap reminds me of the women in my family—grandma and mum—good memories of clean smells, soft hands, and clothes washed by hand.

In the work Siwani uses soap as a reference to the patriarchal culture in which black women's bodies are on the one hand fetishised and on the other depicted as 'unclean'.

In a way it is her own body we see covered in soap in a purification ritual in which she washes herself clean of trauma, from smears and crude comments, from structural racism, and from hundreds of years of oppression.

### **A parody of adult war**

Beside this on the wall hung a number of Kalashnikovs made of Lego bricks, a parody of adult war; wounds of a childhood that has disappeared in bombing raids.

Croatian Lana Mesić recalls her own upbringing, where she sat in a bomb shelter and built weapons with her Lego bricks.

20 years after war, contradictions and nationalistic feelings still simmer away in former Yugoslavia. But in her other work, Mesić has visited another region of the world where one after another has managed to balance wrongs and justice.

### **Beautiful and infinitely sad**

Twenty years after the genocide in Rwanda, in which between 800,000 and 1 million people were killed in a period of 100 days, people are once again living side by side.

The work *Anatomy of Forgiveness* from 2014 is both beautiful and infinitely sad. The photographs are brightly coloured, with monochrome backgrounds. In the images we see two or three people standing facing each other, holding hands or holding each other.

Others look right at each other. The images symbolise the moment when survivors forgive attackers. It is powerful to see the tired and resigned faces that evidence so many terrible and macabre memories.

They have seen everything and lost everything, yet in the photographs we encounter forgiveness—a forgiveness of impossibility—of the very worst.

### **A personal diary**

A number of ink drawings, watercolours, and pencil drawings in different formats cover one wall in the exhibition. Artist Dinh Q. Lê has elegantly gathered together these fragile sheets for a number of years.

The images are by Vietnamese war artists that documented the almost 20-year-long Vietnam War. We encounter life at the front, but not like in those brutal photographs that reached the outside world in the '60s and '70s.

We encounter a young soldier that does not know if he will survive tomorrow, and a loose ink drawing of a hopeful and dedicated nurse with red lips.

For the war artists themselves these images were not just straight documentation of the war, but personal diaries. It must have felt important for the artists that they were able to get down the facial expressions of all these people. To show that they

were just that: individuals; a sister, a son, or a friend. Through their expressions they are a part of history.

The artworks are followed by a short documentary about the aging war artists. In parts of the film, the interviewees host animated versions of themselves, as they were when younger—a detail that could easily be overlooked but that works wonderfully for this story.

### **Will carry this with me forever**

Even if there is nothing beautiful in war, these Vietnamese war artists found, nevertheless, small sparks of something good and beautiful.

I will always carry with me their documentation of faces and bodies of the many young innocent Vietnamese women and men.

Whilst the Norwegian Easter is upon us, with runny eggs for breakfast, corona restrictions, Easter crime series, and games, the bloody demonstrations in Myanmar roll over television screens.

When I see images of women and men routinely risking their own lives just by taking to the streets, I feel that the experiences from Kunsthall 3.14 still reverberate in my body.

A trip to 3.14's latest exhibition is a trip into another reality than the one most of us are luckily enough to be a part of. But people in Chile, Vietnam, Rwanda, or in Venezuela and Myanmar were and continue to be our fellow humans.

### **The sound of melting bombs**

*Living, Forgiving, Remembering* shows the power of contemporary art when it comes to both story-telling and societal debate.

It is infinitely complex, yet I have rarely been to an exhibition that is so varied artistically, materially, and temporally, but that still seamlessly functions collectively as an exhibition.