

On view until 22 September 2026 in room 205 of the Collection

## GUERNICA CONVERSES WITH DUMELI FENI'S AFRICAN GUERNICA



Dumile Feni, *African Guernica*, 1967. Charcoal and pencil on paper, 218 × 226 cm. National Heritage and Cultural Studies Centre, University of Fort Hare. © Estate Dumile Feni and Dumile Feni Family Trust

- The show is framed inside *History Does Not Repeat Itself, but it Does Rhyme*, a new series of interventions in the Museo Reina Sofía Collections which involves juxtaposing an equivalent of *Guernica* from another time or geopolitical sphere, an endeavour contextualised through academic work rooted in art history as an interpretive framework.
- Curated by **Tamar Garb**, a professor of Art History at University College London, Picasso's emblematic work is juxtaposed with *African Guernica*, a work by artist **Dumile Feni** (Worcester, South Africa, 1942 – New York, 1991), who was a key figure in African modernity.

The **Museo Reina Sofía** sets in motion a programme of exhibitions which, entitled ***History Doesn't Repeat Itself, but it Does Rhyme***, seeks to initiate a dialogue with Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* (1937) and other major works which reveal parallels in their modes of representation or thematic concerns, despite hailing from different historical and cultural contexts. The series title refers to a phrase which, although traditionally attributed to the writer Mark Twain, is apocryphal and never actually appears in work by the American author.

In this opening show, curated by Tamar Garb, Picasso's emblematic work is juxtaposed with ***African Guernica***, a work by artist **Dumile Feni** (Worcester, South Africa, 1942 – New York, 1991), who was a key figure in African modernity. Alongside Feni's monumental drawing are **five other works** by this artist which arrive from major South African institutions, including the **University of Fort Hare**, the **Norval Foundation** and the **Wits Art Museum**, in addition to private collections. Furthermore, they are displayed with four of Picasso's preparatory drawings from *Guernica*, works which are part of the Museo Reina Sofía Collections.

**The Museo Reina Sofía would like to express its appreciation to all lending institutions, particularly the University of Fort Hare, South Africa, for making this loan possible. It would also like to thank the National Heritage and Cultural Studies Centre (NAHECS), South Africa, for its collaboration and support in this project.**

As Museo Reina Sofía director, **Manuel Segade**, explained: "*African Guernica* represents a significant time in the crisis of modernity, the time of Apartheid in South Africa, one of the limits of the modern project". Meanwhile, the show's curator, **Tamar Garb**, was keen to stress how Dumile Feni "is a modern artist who used drawing materials on an almost unprecedented scale worldwide at that time". "If we observe drawing practices globally in the 1960s, very few artists worked on such an epic, monumental scale as Dumile in that period", she added.

### **Inaugural Conversation and concert**

On 24 March, coinciding with the opening of the exhibition, an Inaugural Conversation will take place in the Nouvel Building's Auditorium 400, conducted by lecturer and curator Tamar Garb and introduced by Museo Reina Sofía director Manuel Segade. In the conversation, Garb will address the possibilities of analysis and reflection set forth by the exhibition held in the Museo around Dumile Feni's piece *African Guernica* (1967).

The encounter will conclude with the first ever performance of the music piece *Inkomo iwile*, which translates into English from Zulu as *The Cow Has Fallen*, comprising nine songs the South African artist Philip Miller has composed for the concert, in collaboration with Tshegofatso Moeng, and which seeks to create a parallel dialogue between traditional South African sounds and the classical repertoire of string, voice and wind instruments. Therefore, a broad ensemble of performers from both South Africa and Spain will congregate to perform the piece live, with the generous support of the South African organisation Spier Arts Trust.

In addition, held on 25 March in Auditorium 200, the encounter **Thinking with Dumile Feni's African Guernica** will see curator Tamar Garb join a panel of experts from different disciplines, from art to social anthropology, African studies to the history of violence, to reflect collectively on the points of convergence in Picasso's work and the South African artist's drawing.

Participants on the panel include **Siyabonga Njica**, a professor at the University of Cambridge, **Thozama April**, senior curator at the National Heritage and Cultural Studies Centre (NAHECS) from the University of Fort Hare, and **Elvira Dyangani**, director of the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA).

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[Press material](#)



**For further information**

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