

PROFILE

A visit with author Credo Mutwa

Frans: Phillips

The problem with
talking is where to start.
There is a whole world,

a whole eternity, that one
can talk about. All things
happen in circles, eternally

repeating themselves

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few kilometres outside Mmabatho, one

turns off at what seems to be a small

game reserve, with a notice at the gate
and a man in a hut keeping watch over visitors, creating
the idea that Credo Mutwa has somehow been turned
into a kind of curiosity. But instead of game, after a few
hundred metres we come across strange stones in the
grass, which, as we approach, gradually turn into a stag-
gering collection of statues. Apart from a collection of
creatures reminiscent of beings from outer space, there
is also a colossal statue of a broad-hipped and big breast-
ed woman sitting on a throne, as well as a strange frog-
like creature pois killed by an Induna of some kind.
After another few hundred metres we Come across some
fascinating buildings: what seems like a Bushman-cave
with a stone-wall built in front; a huge kraal surrounded
by a wall. On top of the grass huts there are skulls of
rhino, a variety of antelope and other animals. Still fur-

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ther there is a Ndebele Kraal with a collection of paint-
ed animals in front of one of the huts.

But if Mr Mutwa is supposed to be a curio, he defi- Â®

nitely does not behave like one. He does not dance
around in an effort to entertain tourists, nor does he
make an effort to tell them what they would like to hear.
When at last we reach what we think to be his home, it
seems so deserted that I
am for a moment afraid
that he might have decid-
ed that the appointment
did not suit him after all.
But after a while an attrac-

tive, slender, middle-aged
woman appears from the
Ndebele hut.

â\200\230Mr Mutwa is expect-
ing us?â\200\231 I ask carefully.

â\200\234Yes,â\200\235 she answers, â\200\230but
he is still asleep.â\200\231

We go back to the
sculptures to take some
photographs, and here
the strange combination
of archaic creatures and
African science fiction gives one a feeling of timelessness. When I return to the house, the front door stands open, and through it I can see a painting which I immediately recognise as an illustration of "The strange onesâ\200\231 in his Indaba my Children: a group of people, supposedly Phoenician, who came to Africa north of the Limpopo, in the vicinity of the Zambesi, many centuries before the first Portuguese navigators that Western history records.

The woman takes us to the back of the house, where Mr Mutwa, wearing a heavy rubber apron, is giving instructions to a younger man in what seems to be their workshop. At last he turns his head in my direction.

â\200\230I am prepared to talk,
Maâ\200\231am. The problem with
talking is where to start.
There is a whole world, a
whole eternity, that one
can talk about. All things
happen in circles, eternally repeating themselves ...
In Zulu, we have an expression saying that it is
useless CL

with talking, is that it is useless. I have talked in 1939. I have talked in 1985. I am still talking, but no one is listening ...

â\200\230The problem is, now that the New South Africa is here, everybody seems to be satisfied. But the black man is still not free. He has never been further removed

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my vision of a goddess,â\200\235 he

says proudly. And then,
pointing to the silver figure
with narrow hips and
flat breasts hidden under
a long dress, and a
strange, insect-like face,
she says what they want me to make ...

What would the solution be?

What we need, is a Renaissance. Why has Africa never
had a Renaissance? For a moment I get the impression
that he has forgotten about me, but then he remembers
the real world again. They don't want solutions, Ma'am.
They simply want to destroy us. Even in the previous

homelands the traditional healers are being burnt to death.â\200\231

â\200\230I find the idea of a South African Renaissance very

appealing.â\200\231

He decides to ignore my statement.

â\200\230Tell me, Sir, where does the information in your famous book Indaba my Children come from?â\200\231

â\200\230It is an oral tradition that has been handed down . through the ages.â\200\231

Would you prefer it to be described as history, or as mythology, or do you consider that a stupid question?â\200\231

â\200\230Yes, indeed, Ma'am. It is a stupid question.

i n between history and myth.â\200\231

"This statement suddenly makes me understand exactly how strange the scientific Western mind with its tendency to measure reality against so-called â\200\230objectiveâ\200\231 measures, its obsession with classifying the world into what it perceives to be a logical system, must be to this colossal spirit, and to Africa as a whole. Suddenly I understand his frame of reference, his ancient logic according to which things are related by an underlying magic which makes it possible for a human being to be turned into a monster, and where the boundaries between reality and dream, past and future, and even life and death can be overcome.

"Who were â\200\234The strange onesâ\200\235 in Indaba my Children?â\200\231

â\200\230I donâ\200\231t know Ma'am.

: ancient times been called the centre
ld peo irom all over the world went there.
agic came from central Africa. In all the reli-

gions in the world, there are so many similarities. Deep,
Jon,

wer same. And that is the reason why I
want people to rediscover their own most ancient tradi-

e ad in i came

tions. In that way they will also discover the underlying similarities amongst all races.

â\200\230When Mr Mandela was inaugurated, I was glad. There all the cultures came together, each having its own place. I saw great beauty before my eyes. But now I see that it is not going to work like that. All the cultures are going to disappear, people are losing their souls, there is violence and hunger in my country.â\200\231 3

â\200\230Tonce heard you say on a television programme that there were beings from outer space in Africa some time before the whites came. Are the sculptures that I saw in the veld, examples of such beings?â\200\231

â\200\230Yes, they are. Ev I
â\200\230of beings from outer space.â\200\231
â\200\230A Renaissance would mean to you some way of connecting the present, our present situation, with Africaâ\200\231s most remote past?â\200\231

â\200\230Yes, Maâ\200\231am, that is exactly right.â\200\231

â\200\230How far would you want us to go back into the past

â\200\230Very, very far. But that would never be possible ... T

like the world to go back to the Great Earth
" â\200\224 she who was worshipped when all people on earth were still one nation, all worshipping one and the same goddess. She was not the goddess of the Minoan

Greeks or the blacks or any one single nation, oi iy
hÃ© symbol of th rth. She life and she t l

okkelossieâ\204¢ is a des-

same thing, she is both four and as old as coin

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emselves. Now that the Bushmen have practically been
wiped off the face of the earth, the only remaining people
to honouring the Earth Goddess, are the
Earth Goddess are
still living in one place for some time, they
want to give the earth some time to rest.

Are you aware of the fact that there are at the
moment groups in the Western world who share this belief
in the Earth Goddess with you?

Suddenly he is his old cynical self.

Those poor fools can dream, Ma'am, but the Earth
Goddess can never come back. It would cause the most
bloody war the earth has ever seen. That is the reason
why I hate Christianity. There are too many so-called
believers in male gods who are keeping up capitalism,
some of them even using Christianity to keep their
power while they are actually atheists. They will never
allow the Earth goddess to return. The worshippers of
the Earth Goddess never even used money, they were
only allowed to trade. The capitalists will never allow
that, nor would the communists ...

So you don't think it is a very practical idea.

It is impossible. But as for me, the Earth Goddess is
the only one I shall worship.

On a more practical level: Suppose you had the
power, what would you do to improve the situation of

in South Africa?
to turn this place into a village representing
all the different tribes in South Africa. I wanted

omni

/ that my plans were fulfilled.

After a morning in the presence of this remarkable
man, I leave with the sad impression that he has indeed
been reduced to the status of a failed curio-artist. Failed,
because he is too great to stay within the boundaries that
were set for him. V

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