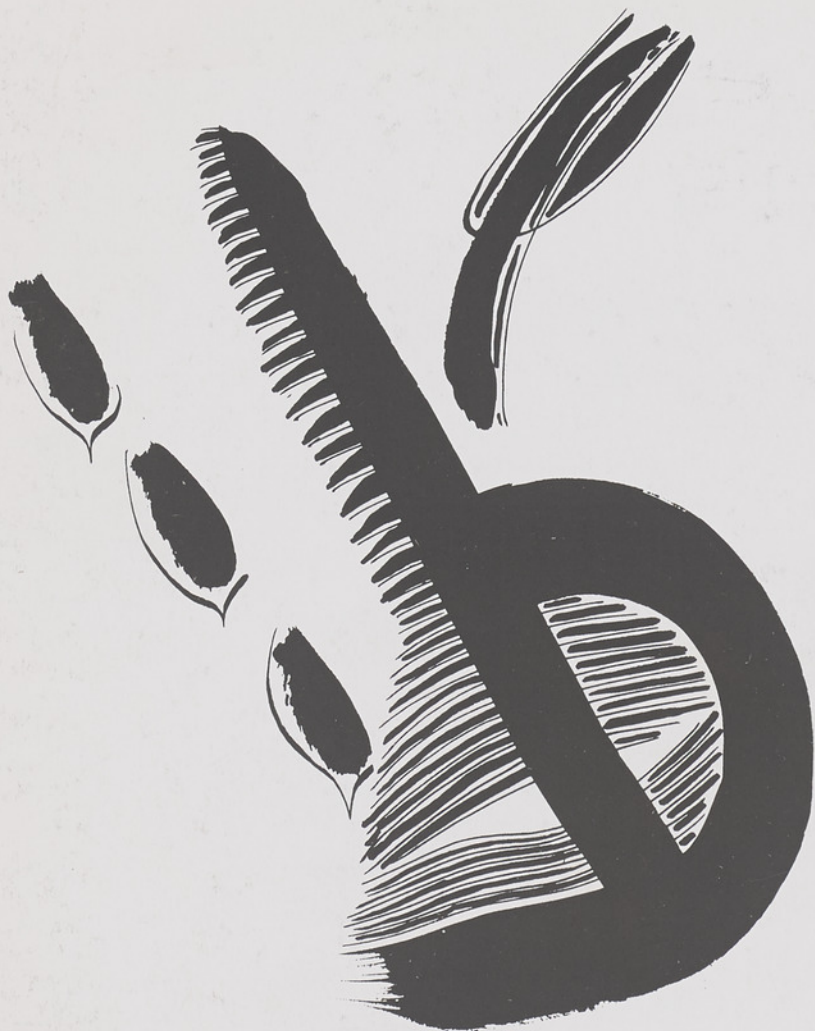


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LCFF 72

*Lefifi Nadi*

*"XEDZEDZE"*

# Lefifi Tladi

ARTIST, POET & MUSICIAN

## “XEDZEDZE”

UNISA ART GALLERY

1995

MAY 18 - JUNE 14



COVER: LEFIFI TLADI  
UNTITLED

INK ON PAPER

SIZE: 37,5cm x 27cm

XEDZEDZE: Meaning - ORGANIZED WHIRLWIND

LEFIFI TLADI 1993

INK ON PAPER

SIZE: 12,5cm x 22,5cm

## ***Arriving from Sweden***

# Lefifi Tladi

The years of exile were not easy, but the dream of returning gave Lefifi the energy to develop his art with intensity. Although he has exhibited in many European cities ... he was working for South Africa. Lefifi participated in many music and poetry readings, spreading the message of freedom, and worked as an art teacher ... his main concern was painting and drawing.

The process of abolishing apartheid was both long and painful. The privilege of experiencing this great historic change in our lifetime is unique. Exile has its special problems and pain; on the one hand the sad longing of those pristine, sunny recollections of things first learned through the love and patience of our kin, our friends, the land itself. This is a solace but sad comfort. On the other hand, a grinding torment of hollow loneliness, an empty well of despair that cannot be artificially filled. It is understandable that pressure and time of circumstance made many succumb ...

Let us observe the journey in time of the pure Carbon Crystal ...  
from the germ of a seed, fed by light and water, to its vegetated maturity,  
smothered by earth and loam ...  
Pressure! ... Time! ...

Through stages of bitumen ... anthracite ...  
to clear carbon crystal ...  
as clear as water and transparent  
receiving and bending light in its spectral splendour ...

The circle completed, adamant ...  
un-imperishable from the painful process of time ...  
Alienation and pressure ...  
Patience waits in the egg, not its bearer.

*H.T. Cropper*

*It is said, that a motto of the ancient birds was, "no day without a line". Lefifi Tladi has unflaggingly lived up to this saying, not with money or prestige as goals, but with the hope and belief in one day returning to the land, the people, the water and air. Now these works can be seen by the eyes for which they were created.*

Harvey T Cropper  
Stockholm  
Sweden  
Artist





LEFIFI TLADI 1993  
INK ON PAPER  
SIZE: 12,5cm x 22,5cm

LEFIFI TLADI was born in 1949 in Lady Selborne, Pretoria. He lived in Ga-Rankuwa before leaving the country in 1976.

This exhibition is a celebration of the African creative spirit and its ability to define itself. The essence reflects that of an African alphabet.

His cultural experiences and views reveal his commitment to free creative expression, and his appreciation of the true value of the artist within the cultural context of society.

According to Lefifi, the artist has to understand that the pride of a nation lies within its culture. They are the material out of which culture is made and culture is the collective breath of its creativity.

# CULTURAL INVOLVEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA PRIOR TO EXILE:

My involvement in the cultural world started around 1966 in Ga-Rankuwa where I had a youth club called "Youth Club de Olympia". It was recreation - and reorientationally inclined and involved playing indoor games, listening to music, dance, etc. It kept us away from the streets and encouraged meaningful activities for our own development.

In 1969 through the help of my father we managed to buy a few instruments, African drums, a piccolo and a guitar and formed a jazz band that was known as the "Malombo Jazz Messengers" which later became known as "Dashiki". It was at this point that we as a group became overtly politically conscious and active. What made "Dashiki" different was that we integrated poetry into our music. This was the main thing that kind of brought us into contact with the Black Consciousness Movement.

Around 1971 we formed or rather transposed the four roomed house where we worked from into a small museum of black arts. We worked together with Victor Mkhumbuzi and Sir Isaac Nkoana. They worked hard and offered many workshops at this museum. It was through Nkoana's influence, that I got involved in making sculpture. Rantobeng Ka Dipalamonwana A Semang Kgomo Seatla Potleng was making drawings - mainly in ink. He later studied Graphic art in London.

We were the only two visual artists in the band, "Dashiki".

I met Geoff Mphakati in 1965. He introduced me to African literature. It was under his influence that I started to write poetry in 1971. It blended beautifully with the music and became a good instrument in the development of our audience's consciousness. We became politically functional as a music band, in the context of black consciousness programmes for culture.

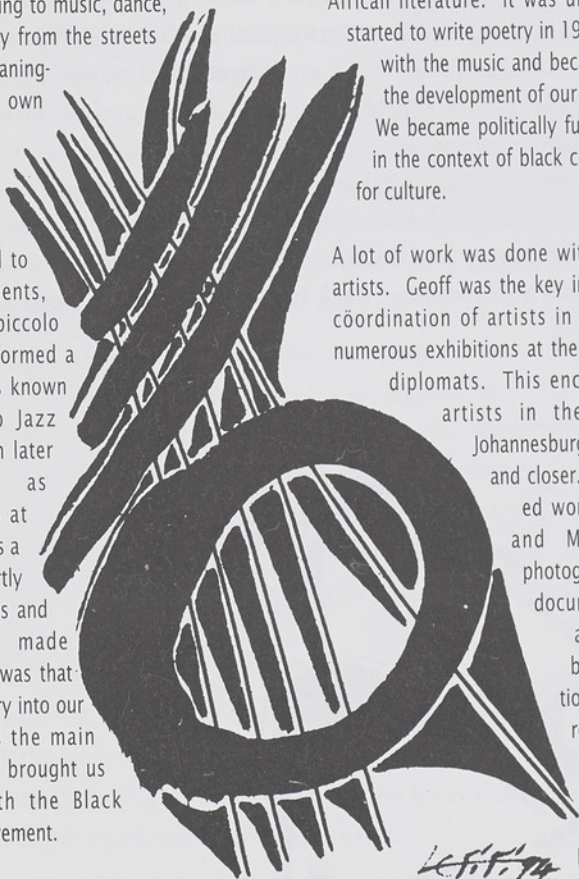
A lot of work was done with and among the visual artists. Geoff was the key instrumental person in the coordination of artists in Pretoria. He organised numerous exhibitions at the private homes of foreign diplomats. This encouraged contact among artists in the Pretoria as well as Johannesburg area. We became closer and closer. As we developed, I started working together with Geoff and Matsobane Legoabe, a photographer from Mamelodi, to document the works of artists and artists themselves. We built up a powerful collection of slides and news paper reports on everyone.

At the same time through the cultural wing of the Black Consciousness Movement, CUL-COM (cultural committee), we organized a lot of black art exhibitions at some of the major black Universities and schools because we were quite aware of our peoples' ignorance. Bantu education did not expose us as a nation to our own creative genius. These programmes were therefore very positive and enlightening.

LEFIFI TLADI 1994

INK ON PAPER

SIZE: 14,5cm x 10cm





## CULTURAL INVOLVEMENT AFTER GOING INTO EXILE:

In 1976 I was forced into exile. It took us a while to get our cultural focus and see how we could function within Botswana. With the cöordination of other culturally active comrades, we started an organization called TUKA Cultural Unit. We cöordinated and worked with artists inside the country and organized group exhibitions, promoting the work of artists inside the mother country. Drama, poetry and music was integrated and shows were held around Botswana. Later, through the A N C we managed to participate in the Pan African Arts Festival, F.A.S.T.A.C. in Nigeria. For me it was a great event and an eye opener. I was in a position to meet some of the greatest artists of Africa and of African origin and was at the same time exposed to some of the greatest works of art by African painters and sculptors, because I had been locked up in this prison country called South Africa. On our way back from Nigeria, we travelled through Africa making concerts and reading poetry and I managed to see even more great works of art especially in Tanzania and Zambia. Back in Botswana, we organized a big touring exhibition in Sweden.



LEFIFI TLADI 1992  
INK ON PAPER  
SIZE: 21cm x 14,5cm

## 1980 - SWEDEN : OPENING UP NEW PERSPECTIVES

In 1980 I left for Sweden to study Fine Arts and Art History and learned a lot about how important the work was we were doing in South Africa during the 1970's and how important it is to be conscious and to develop one's cultural knowledge and to be very conversant with all other art forms - in short, to have a broad based cultural scope. At the same time one must strive to know as much as one can about world culture, especially the so called third world culture because through a third world looking glass you can see how far you are from your own freedom and you can get a better perspective of your own freedom. If most of our brothers and sisters had this kind of exposure, we could today have had a much better tradition of the Arts of Resistance.

My point of departure now is in the context of opening up new perspectives. I think it's very important for our people not to appreciate themselves via the west, for that matter via anything. We have to look at Africa. At this point and time we know that the west looked at Africa for inspiration; not only that we educated the west before it was even known as the west, we taught the Greeks, who are the cornerstone of western civilization and culture. We know our history from the ancient to the present and we can be in a position to continue in the true context of the African spirit.

That is why my art is not in search of the past but in illuminating the future in plotting new ways of seeing, feeling and thinking. I am trying to open up new scopes of perception or rather to restore our senses because Apartheid has destroyed our peoples' senses.

***OUR ART IS A MAJOR INSTRUMENT IN THE SURGERY FOR REPARATION AND RESTORATION OF THE HARM DONE TO THE SENSES***

**Tladi, L. 1987. *Pre-Bruits to a manifesto for African Art*. AWA-FINNABA. African Literary Cultural Journal. Vol 10. West Berlin. September 1987:20.**



# AN AFROCENTRIC VIEW

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Until we have an "*afrocentric*" outlook, we won't get out of this cultural miasma. It is so important that our brothers and sisters start understanding their own value and the essence of the creative output.

**... THE EUROPEANS WHEN THEY SEE OUR WORK THEY WANT TO CLAIM AN INFLUENCE ON OUR WORK AND THROUGH A COMPLEX SYSTEM OF INDUCED SELF-HATRED SELF DENIAL AND INFERIORITY WE END UP CLAIMING THE SPOILS OF A DYING EUROPE EVEN MORE THAN THE EUROPEANS CAN UNDERSTAND**

Tladi, L. 1987. *Cubism-Afrocentric Perspective*. AWA-FINNABA. African Literary Cultural Journal. Vol. 10. West Berlin. September 1987:21.

Our people cannot see themselves and anything they do they think its influenced and inspired by the west. As I have said, the west now has the monopoly to thinking, feeling and even being ... So it is very important for our people to project the spirit of the past into the present and that's why it is so important for artists to create the African spirit in the context of today, because colonialism and cultural imperialism has put dust into our spiritual eye and even the creators of culture (artists) are blind and have been blinded by all these years of being amputated from their true selves. Now that we are free, it's very important that we return to our source and drink from those oases that have been fed by the qanats from our cultural NILE.

It is very important that we do not loose sight of the value of our work. During the days of Apartheid, it was the white man that made our work a thing of value (if they can buy this it must be worth something) and basically that is why we were never in a position to reach the masses of our people, who actually have the right to have our works because it is their heart beat we are about. It has nothing to do with the economic value of our work. If only we could expose our people to what we are all about and reclaim our rightful seats at the *king's kraal* of our culture so that we can become true creators with the ancient spirit of those masters and mistresses who spoke the language of the gods and handed it down to the people. Today we don't even understand the peoples' languages, how can we call ourselves *media mystics* with a creative voice. Our creations have lost the *voice* and *speech* of the ancient sacred Drum Mask. Our creative standards have fallen below the bottomless pit of western civilization. We have lost the ethics and aesthetics of our culture and today we measure our intrinsic depth with western aesthetic standards. It is important to go back to our roots and standards and move from there.





LEFIFI TLADI 1994  
INK ON BROWN TEXTURED PAPER  
SIZE: 21cm x 29,5cm

LEFIFI 94



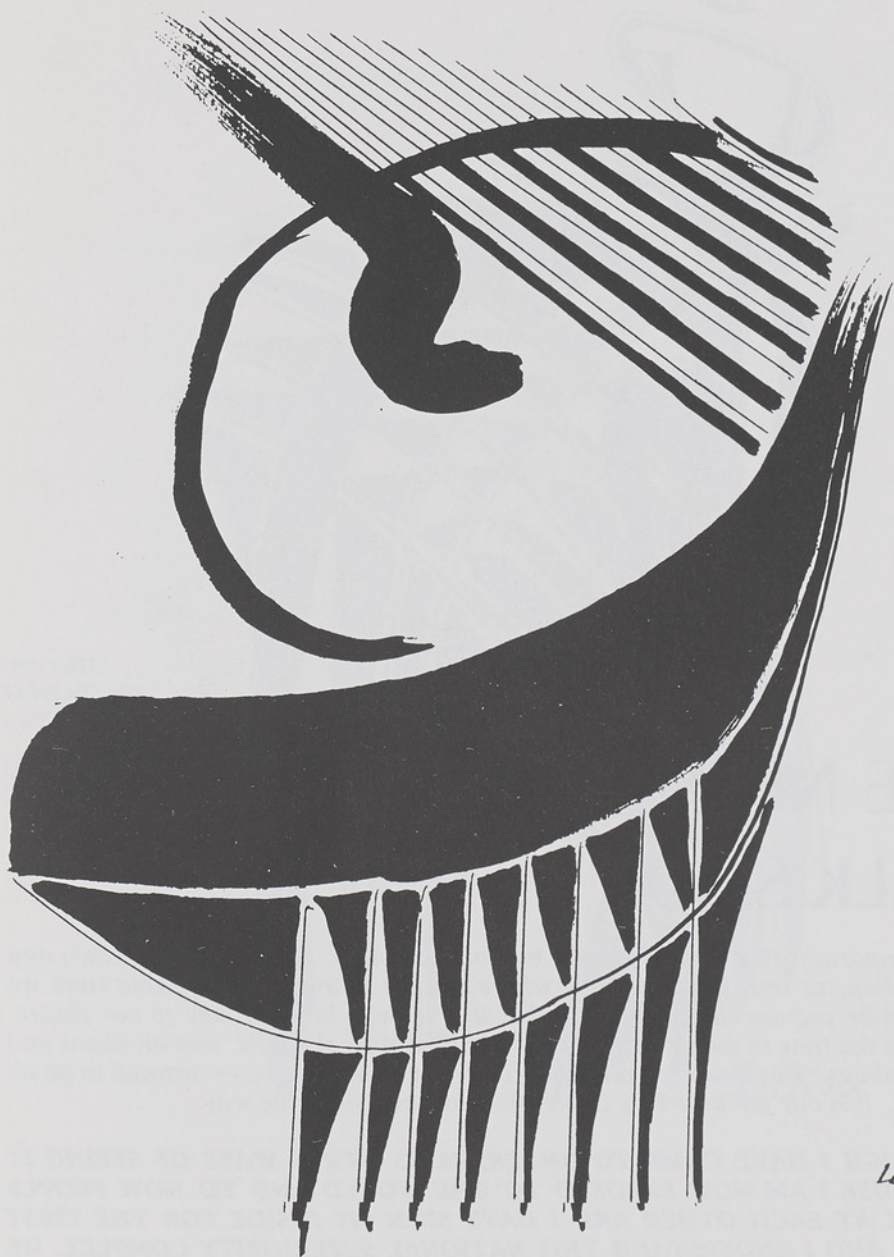
LEFIFI TLADI 1994  
INK ON PAPER  
SIZE: 14,5cm x 10,5cm

*Lefifi 94*

**WE ARE FOR ... ETHICS BOUND TO A WORLD CONCERNED  
CONSCIOUSNESS. NOT ETHICS OF CONSCIENCE OR GUILT  
FEELING.**

Tladi, L. 1987. *Pre-Bruits to a manifesto for African art*. AWA-FINNABA. African Literary Cultural Journal. Vol 10. West Berlin. September 1987:20.





*Lefifi 93*

LEFIFI TLADI 1993  
INK ON PAPER  
SIZE: 37,5cm x 26,8cm



LEFIFI 1994  
INK ON PAPER  
SIZE: 14,5cm x 10,5cm

# WE NEED TO SIT DOWN AND TALK SHOP ...

*It is important that artists need to talk to each other. We need to sit down and talk shop, so that we can know where we are going. At the same time we should be cognoscenti of the fact that it is us who hold the key to our future. Now is the time to make it clear what our liberation struggle was all about and is all about. We should tell and show (the whiteman) where we wanted to go all along. It is our job as artists to plot the path and show the way.*

**THOUGH I HAVE COME TO UNDERSTAND OTHER WAYS OF SEEING IT BECAUSE I AM NOW EXPOSED TO THE WORLD AND TO HOW PEOPLE LOOK AT EACH OTHER AND I HAVE SEEN MY INSIDE FOR THE FIRST TIME AND I UNDERSTAND THIS NATIONAL SUPERIORITY COMPLEX, WE ARE ALL ARTISTS WITH DIFFERENT ETHICAL BACKGROUNDS WORKING TOWARDS WORLD PEACE ...**

Tladi, L. 1987. *Cubism - Afrocentric Perspective*. AWA-FINNABA. African Literary Cultural Journal. Vol. 10. West Berlin. September 1987:21.





LEFIFI 1994  
INK ON PAPER  
SIZE: 14,5cm x 10,5cm

# **“THOSE WHO FEED THE SPIRIT OF MAN ELIMINATE THE GALAVANTING GHOST”**

A quotation from the unwritten history of South African myths and tales of the dreamer that walks the ever lit horizon of sunrise that's to say in tune with the melody and harmony of light, the major delight for those who have captured the smell of the rainbow and create paeans for those who hold on straws as they make their way out of the quagmire, but we who know, because they who have watched the sunflower can understand that the moisture on the cactus thorn is not a tear but a mirror for those who understand the finite note from the ocean because the oceans are nothing but a united movement of molecules with a single course LIFE and let this drop of a mirror be but the single US in this drought that was apartheid and show the people of South Africa this new cultural ocean that reflected on this crystal mirror, the artist.

*LEFIFI TLADI*

1995





LEFIFI TLADI  
01/05/92  
INK ON PAPER  
SIZE: 21cm x 14,5cm

LEFIFI  
010592

CLAUDE PHILOGÈNE

écrivain,  
journaliste scientifique  
Théâtre du Nô-Ka International  
Stockholm - Sweden

on

LEFIFI TLADI

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## MATILHO MPALE

Many people have been waiting for LEFIFI TLADI to exhibit his works of art in South Africa. Today in Pretoria, we have an excellent opportunity to share his talent as a painter, a philosopher of art, and a great musician from Ndebele Village.

TAP-Zip! ... Instantaneous Communication!

HERE COMES EVERYBODY! ... Chreods, links ... knots, braids, rings. Shumayela! ... Shumayeza! ... and Nyamakala paroles Ndebele folles! Vowels and Consonants as dieties. Freemasonry of FLASH-talk! Lefifi Tladi's paintings are third-brain calligraphy INK-PRINTS, pregnant of vibratory tachyonic sphota-seals, resonating upon the canvas of our neuronal network system. Sweats and tears, dancing syllables of unspoken words ... Oil esthetics on a virtual sculpture of futuristic hopes. His music is a constant flow of drums, strirfts and voices, braided into a haïku-ka poetry of Ikébana lights ... UDUMBARA BLUES! ...

Zimeumile izinkomo u Majiyana ...  
Cattle have increased well with Majiyana ...  
a samaja of plentifulness.

... Shaman-Pharmaceutical Ethno-Syber-News from the Kalahari desert! Direct access granted to the /Kung San's ancestral DNA-bank! ... Kia-healing with the ! Kung n/um is Nyamakala energy ..By the way does anybody speak proper Klingon in Pretoria? Zhu n! an/ wi/ twa n // e, kum, kwara. Zhu /ke/ke'm ko ku n//e-'/na e ko Huwesi osi, te a n/i/twa//''xe twa te kwawa ka. Te a n/i ku//''xe o kx'ai ka ... The old person who does not tell stories just does not exist. Our forefathers related for us the doings of the people of long ago and anyone whose head is on straight knows them ... Zhu n!a-talk! DUMB NETWORKS FOR SMART TERMINALS!

Please tell us more about Lefifi Tladi's artistic endeavours! Oui, ko! Here in Stockholm, we found in him an intuitively daring Pedi artist; a swot master of the philosophy of art in Western Europe, discussing about anything from Picasso Mont-Parnasse, to the artistic splendour of the Italian Renaissance; or the pseudo-baroque art revival of Bacon and Dali. One

would find Lefifi Tladi reading *Finnigans Wake* yesterday in Santa-Fe, drinking tea at the Cafe de la Paix, or discussing Negritude literature with creole intellectuals from Dakar and Bamako. *Hidden Treasures Revealed* at the Hermitage in St Petersburg. Degas, Picasso, Daumier, Cezanne, Toulouse-Lautrec, Seurat, Gauguin and Van Gogh! Name it! Apples, peaches and grapes ... Rendez-vous, Place de la Concorde in Paris. Renoirs and a visit to the Tokyo Bridgestone Museum.

Presumably Lefifi Tladi is interested in the digital grafiti business of creativity at a planetary level and prefers the freshness of a new kid-like worldwide echo-awareness. Over the years he has painfully gathered large amounts of data on the cultural eco-systems of the South African Republic; enough material to fill some compact-discs with precious information, beneficial to the esthetic welfare of his people. Some of us at the No-Ka International Theatre, went as far as comparing his uncompromising challenge to the established values of uncovenant successfulness in South Africa, to that of the french philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, who rejected the Nobel Price on grounds of its incompatibility with his belief system.

Most certainly, it is a matter of common parlance of the classical boudoirs in Paris, that Jean-Paul Sartre attempted to eradicate his own traditional bourgeois values; and was consequently considered a "saboteur" of the basic foundation of western life-style successfulness. But there ends a fictitious comparison with Lefifi Tladi and Jean-Paul Sartre. To us it would be more down to earth to describe Lefifi Tladi as a wise master builder of a new nano-internet way of artistically putting together seemingly unrelated cultural eventfulness, into a universal canvas of blissvoid ecstatic beingness. Curvature and flatness jointly binded through blissvoid awareness of real-life trivialities in an inflationary universe, born of the sufficient sounds of the unstructuredness of lost genetic passwords! Caba caba! amatontsi ayamuka! ... It is raining sky-flowers of compassion, somewhere close to Ndebele Village ...

LOOKING! ... LAUGHING! ... HOLDING HANDS! ...

Not so easy in South Africa? Umenziwa akakohlwa, kukohlwa umenzi?

Lefifi Tladi portrays his DNA-hint-field like pre-bruits visions of calligraphy Isitakazo-Ndebele landscapes, holding ink and brush skilful means wise; and with the subtle touch of his inner Ikebana-joy-heat-genomata force-field, animating the fractal superstringness holography livingness display if esthetic illusions! Deconstructing perceptive awareness? ...

MATLHO MPALE!

Particle Physics and Flower Arrangements!

ISO-9001 TOP-QUALITY-QUARKS!

..Lefifi Tladi's message is simple and straight forward:

"o! kanti uhamba ngeyami!"



An extract from a poem by:

## ***Lefifi Tladi***

Through a film  
Of sunsets and sunrises  
Complex fractured bones  
Filter through broken light

Sand storms rise  
From stone eagles  
Creating a cloud  
Around the blood clotted membrane

The winds of prophecy  
Turns sea birds  
into crystal dust  
The waters vomit  
Profane elements

There is foam  
Around the exhausted coast  
The mast surrenders  
a vision is manifested

The ship is anchored  
Albino ants hoist  
Their tattered flag who's  
colour is lost in this journey  
Across the wild wilderness of despair

A new world  
Breaks out of  
An old egg  
Hope is born

The soil creeps  
Out of fear  
These desperate footsteps  
Stamped on its eye lashes

The world this newly born world  
Conceived under the heel  
Of an iron dragon from the ocean  
Has multiple wounds and bleeds internally

The dimension of each wound  
Is seen in the character of each ant  
All as one branding with blue fire  
On the anatomy of a lands nerves.....



LEFIFI TLADI 1993  
INK ON PAPER  
SIZE: 20,5cm x 14,5cm

*Leffifi 94*



Lefifi  
010372

Lefifi