

Boris Nieslony

Boris Nieslony is solid.

He paces, speaking in tongues, anguished and angry.

Five harsh white spotlights overhead, directed at the concrete floor where a neat stack of documents rest. A tower of sheet glass is also waiting. A statement is waiting to be read too.

He unfolds a black cloth, a tenderness, and first to the documents. Papers being placed one by one, acknowledged, held; a haemorrhage of newspaper reports, of birth certificates, of appalling documents of atrocities, of now. The urgency of now. The intensity of this moment.

Nieslony draws the cloth over them, holding them together, a cradling. A burial. A breath. He drops a single feather and it lands perfectly. It is drawn to the cloth.

He stops. A battle tank dead in its track. Facing us. Silent.

He has stopped beside the tower of sheet glass. Jürgen Fritz voices the artist statement:

“This performance is dedicated to people killed by other people; people killed by capital punishment and human rights injuries incurred by the State; by mass-murder, by ethnic cleansing, by crimes against humanity, by global wars, by civil war, by massacre, by genocide!”

This performance is dedicated to people. *In the following countries.*

And the roll call begins.

Angola.

The first scrape of glass as a sheet is drawn by Nieslony, loaded into both his hands and delivered – *bang* – to his forehead, smashing then dropped to the floor. *Ethiopia*. Another scrape of glass. Slide. Bang. Smash. Drop. *Brasilia. China. Iraq.*

Each country drives plate after plate of glass flat against his forehead. Blood dripping on the shattered glass at his feet. *Israel*. Slide. Bang. Smash. Drop. *Kenya*. Methodical, impassive, injury inflicted again and again and *Pakistan, Rwanda, smash, drop.*

Reflections dance on the wall. The list goes on and on. *Sierra Leone. United States of America*. The call to name. The call to witness. The glass at our feet. The blood on the floor.

What is left falls to the floor until there's no more glass but the call to memory. The call to act.