

Buseje: (laughter) I don't know if it's easy for them, they choose not to, but everything happens in a cycle. We do not live forever. People who wish to live forever try to get away from cycles but we live, we give birth, we die. The new child comes up, it lives, reproduces itself and dies. The season does the same thing, Everything is cyclical.

Susan: How is the experience of mothering tied to your creativity? Or is it?

Buseje: I have always been an artist, I've always been drawing. Even as a little child when I did not understand anything else I was drawing, it is something that happened to me naturally — the curiosity of making an image as opposed to transposing or transcribing figures. Also I was a mother at a very, very early age so that is part of my early experience, it became part of my creativity. My child was an important part of that development and a very important part of my choices. It forced me to make certain choices in terms of what I do and how I do what I do.

Susan: Has it formed your work in a specific way?

Buseje: Though I sometimes try to get away from it consciously I find that the mothering experience is a very important part of my work. I don't even try to hide it anymore. I just use it as an element of creating, as a starting point or as a point to get away from. I use it, it is there. And I don't apologize for it.

Susan: What you are saying suggests that you were at some point apologizing for it.

Buseje: Well, it was pointed out to me by a couple of young men when I was trying to apply for funding that the funding bodies might frown upon it or not find it to be terribly sophisticated. And I say, "I don't care, that is where I work from and if they choose to deny me funding for that let them do that but I will not stifle what I do or hide it in any way." I'm a woman, I am a mother and I will not pretend that's not where I am.

Susan: Is your experience common to other women?

Buseje: I don't see my experience as being exclusive at all. Where my experience is different is from a class basis in terms of finances and also from a racial point of view. It is hard for me and for many Black women to go out there daily and deal with racism, deal with being denied a job, with being pushed around. And then you have to pick yourself up and go home and encourage your Black child to smile, to go on, to have goals, to have dreams because there is a reason to go on and something out there to look forward to. The most difficult part of being a Black mother is that you have to provide nurturing and caring and inspiration for your child when you can't find any out there for yourself. Not necessarily inspiration but reason to go on, reason to believe that the world and things are going to change and be better for him or her when they grow up.

Susan: What about creating a space of your own? Does this happen because of marginalization and invisibility?

Buseje: If you are not visible then there is no margin. People who talk about marginality are already in the society and a part of the

society to some degree. So there is a margin for them. But when you are invisible and they can't see you, then they can't expect you to make way, and they do not create a margin for you, there is just this big void that you dropped off into. How you create a space is that you don't wait for people to create space for you, you don't wait for them to create a place so you can jump in and say, "This is the margin, that is the society and this is the margin." What you do is you start to push people over to make space and to make room for yourself. Saying, "Hey, I'm here! You are standing on me! Get off me!" And you make room for yourself.

Susan: Is your art a way of pushing back the boundaries and making space for yourself?

Buseje: I find empty spaces in my life. I find space to breathe. Whenever there is space to breathe, then that's where I create art. Because I have been able to say to myself: "I'm going to make art and I'm not going to wait for a space," people are starting to hear about me, or they are hearing me make noise. So some people have asked me to do work for them to deal with specific issues in terms of racism or race problems, and I breathe. When I breathe, there is a space. Under my ribs someplace. So I make room there.

BERNADETTE RULE

Cut Flowers for Linda

A wasting disease sawed slowly at her connections,
creating an undeserved arrangement of empty pews
around her coffin, where cut flowers assaulted
the few mourners' composure.

Prayers for the quick and the dead
knock against the walls of the hollow funeral parlor.
Grief is not silent, only inarticulate.
And only funerals occupy the funeral home.
The dead are absent.

Back at the house, sandwiches and cakes
have been formally arranged on the good table.
But her children lean against stove or sink,
pour themselves water glasses full of gin
and begin the vigil in their hearts' chambers
where she is safely interred.

Here, finally,
is the resurrection and the life.
Here, where clock and calendar are useless,
Martha makes her candy yet and scolds for muddy boots,
salts the eternal rabbit on the draining board
and laughs with her sister far into Christmas night,
leaning against the stove with a glass of gin.