

ART PROBE

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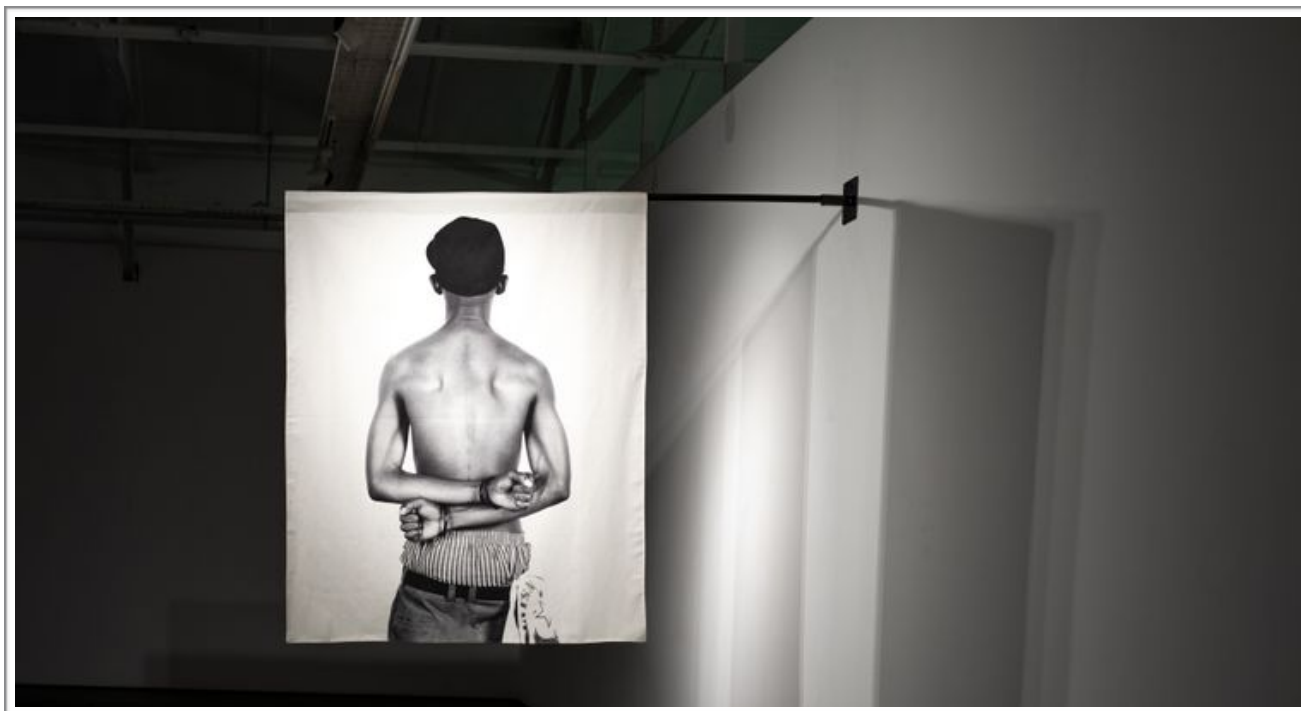
- Shristi Sainani

Exhibition : Black Luminosity

Artists : Luyanda Zindela, Usha Seejarim, Alexandra Karakashian, Cow Mash, Mary Sibande, Stephané Conradie, Pyda Nyariri, Phoka Nyokong, Zandile Tshabalala, Musa N. Nxumalo, Wallen Mapondera

Venue : SMAC Gallery (Stellenbosch, South Africa)

Dates : 20 March –20 May 2021



Musa N. Nxumalo, Story of O.J after 4.44 (imiato Matik)

Source : SMAC Gallery

Based in South Africa, *SMAC Gallery*'s Stellenbosch space brings forth '*Black Luminosity*', an exhibition, showcasing works of 11 South-African artists. They use variety of media to respond to the term 'Black' which refers to the dark, opaque surface of the artworks, as well as the contingent connotations of visibility and racial bias.¹ The show runs from the 20th of March till the 20th of May 2021, in collaboration with curator Gcotyelwa Mashiqua.²

What *Black Luminosity* asks of viewers is to immerse themselves in the darkest parts.³ Gcotyelwa

¹ *Black Luminosity*, SMAC Gallery

² Gcotyelwa Mashiqua is a South African curator, born in Johannesburg (South Africa). She completed her Bachelors of Arts Honours in Curatorship from the University of Cape Town (2015). She also holds a Bachelors of Technology in Fine Arts from the same (2011)

³ *Black Luminosity*, SMAC Gallery

Mashiqa for the catalogue of *'Black Luminosity'* quotes Édouard Glissant “...opacity is not the lack of light, because there is opacity in the light. Opacity is the reason of every light”.⁴

The artists on show are :

Luyanda Zindela (b.1991) is an artist based in Durban, South Africa. He completed his Bachelors (2012) and his Masters in Fine Art (2019) from the Durban University of Technology. He works in both physical and digital mediums, focussing on the act of portraiture-making.

Usha Seejarim (b.1974) is a visual artist, currently living and works in Johannesburg, South Africa. She obtained her B-Tech Degree in Fine Art from the University of Johannesburg (1999) and a Master's Degree in Fine Art at the University of The Witwatersrand (2008). Seejarim's work is influenced by the urban surroundings of South Africa and her heritage as a person of Indian origin. She works in the medium of photography, video and sculptures.

Also based in Johannesburg, South Africa, artist **Alexandra Karakashian (b.1988)** completed her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at the University of Cape Town (2011). Her work stems from her personal and family history and reflects on current issues of exile, migration and refugee-statues.

Kgaogelo Mashilo, better known as **Cow Mash (b.1994)** graduated from Tshwane University of Technology with a degree in Fine Art (Sculpture). In regards to her work she says, “*My work explores the experiences of existing as a black woman in this contemporary world. There is a lot of heaviness to that. There is also strength, growth, and transformation in the mix of that weight*”

Mary Sibande (b.1982) graduated with a Diploma in Fine Arts from the Witwatersrand Technikon (2004) and an Honours Degree from the University of Johannesburg (2007). She comes forth as her alter ego, Sophie, dressed in altered domestic worker uniforms to fabricate works revolving around themes of gender, class and race.

Trained as a print maker, **Stephané Conradie (b.1990)** is known for her bricolage assemblages. She is currently also a PhD candidate in Visual Arts at the University of Stellenbosch, where she completed her MA in Visual Arts (Art Education) and her BA in Visual Arts (Fine Arts).

Pyda Nyariri (b.1991) uses speculative fiction, mythology and trickery to imagine the ways in which pidgin languages came into the world.

⁴ *Black Luminosity*, SMAC Gallery

Pretoria (South Africa) based artist studying towards a diploma in Fine Art, ***Phoka Nyokong (b. 1991)*** has multiple interests including assembled sculpture, installation, drawing and writing. In his work he explores themes of gender (mis)identity, collective social anxiety and the temporality of the human material experience.

Zandile Tshabalala (b.1999) tends to revisit and make reference to the works of painters who came before her, such as Kerry James Marshall, Njideka Akunyili-Crosby, Cinga Samson, Nandipha Mntambo and Henri Rousseau to interpret or rework the works in the way she sees fit for her narrative and relatable to her practice. Currently she is completing her BA(FINA) at the University of the Witwatersrand.

Musa N. Nxumalo (b.1986) is an artist who uses the medium of photography to explore youth, culture, identity and the journey to self-discovery. Nxumalo received his introduction to photography at the Market Photo Workshop, where he completed the Foundation and Intermediate Courses between 2006 and 2008.

Wallen Mapondera (b.1985) is a visual artist, known for work that explores social mores and societal relationships using livestock imagery. He received his formal art training from the National Gallery School of Visual Art and Design (2007).

'*Black Luminosity*' has so many interesting pieces of work, it is hard to pick just three. Favourites from the show are:

- 1) **"Mah, what did you honestly see in ubaba? What were his redeeming qualities? Did he have redeeming qualities?" -"Luyanda. Mntanam" - leans back - "Ubab' wakho. Wayemuhle". (Luyanda. My child. Your father. Was attractive). -"And?" -"Wayemude." (He was tall)., 2020**
Artist : Luyanda Zindela

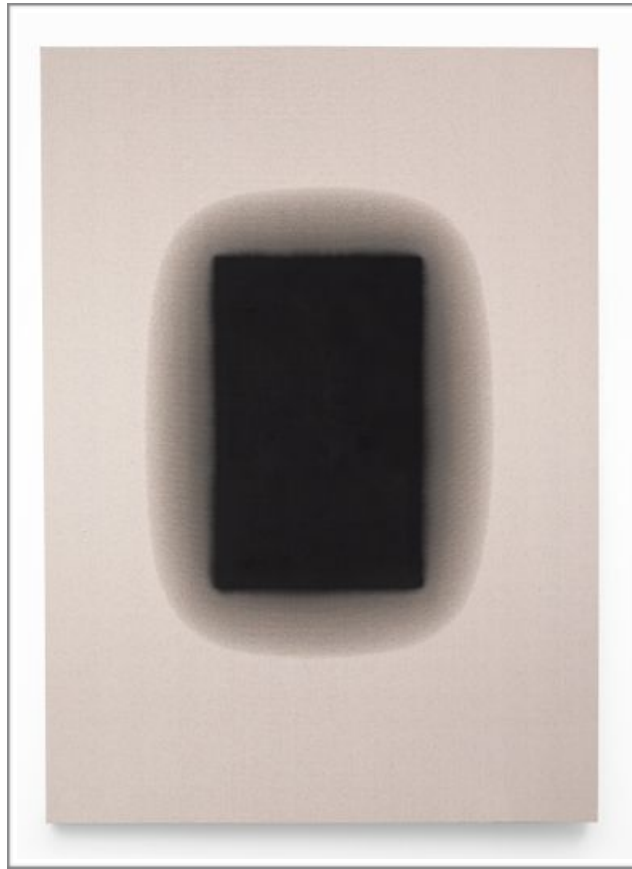


Source :SMAC Gallery

Judging from the extensive but splendid choice of title, this work is a portrait of the artist's mother. The title narrates a conversation between the *Luyanda* and his mum where the artist asks her, why she chose to fall in love with his father (Ubaba). There is a strong reminiscent quality the title holds, which is transferred on to the artwork, of how fondly she felt about the father of her son. One can associate the posture of the subject in the work, with the possible scenario of when the conversation was taking place — the mother dressed in a white chemise, relaxed while reclining on a relatively old metal-backed bed covered in white linens. The portrait fabricated using acrylic, paint marker & graphite on pine board, measuring 120 x 100 cm. It airs a light, minimal quality, in terms of both, materiality and matter.

2) Flare, 2021

Artist : Alexandra Karakashian



Source :SMAC Gallery

Having a considerable size of 240 x 170 cm, '*Flare*' is a contemplative composition. Its sparseness comprise of a clear, four-sided polygon with round edges. The geometry draws the attention of the viewer, anointing it as the focal point. The polygon spills to stain the canvas around it, gradually blotting the canvas and giving birth to another geometry, closer to oblong than to a rectangle.

Visualisation enhances meditation. Karakashian's '*Flare*' radiates a field of positive potential, a quality found among objects of meditation.⁵ It provides the viewer with a black, positive space (which is usually a colour used to depict negative space) with a strong imprint for visualising images, situations or deities. This allows for reflection.

Moreover, the work on canvas is made using engine oil, black pigment and sunflower oil. Its singularity and centrality, make this work a special one.

⁵ such as a halo or light, used as a point of concentration in religious and spiritual practices

3) boleta le bofefe, 2019-2020

Artist : Cow Mash



Source :SMAC Gallery

Cow Mash, for 'Black Luminosity', exhibits her work 'boleta le bofefe (2019-2020)' which when translated from Southern Sotho to English, equates to 'gentleness and speed'. It is a complex sculptural installation of considerable size, measuring 97 x 135 x 315 cm. Its construction uses polyester resin, faux leather, various synthetic fibres and found object to give a form, resembling a damaged vintage, Spider (also spaider) Phaeton (also phaéton).⁶

The vehicle has an interesting history when it comes to the land of South Africa. The coach reached South Africa at an early stage. Simon van der Stel, the last commander and first Governor of the Dutch Cape Colony, travelled in one when he led an expedition to Namaqualand in 1685 in search of copper.⁷ The Spider Phaeton was the more popular type of four-wheeled vehicle around town. It was used by the lower class of the society, the farmer and the townsman. With this being stated, Mash's work seems to have been rooted either in the sociological history of the nation or perhaps, her experience at a museum. Regardless of its parti, this piece has an exquisite textural quality and resonates a mechanical but feminine quality, due to its delicate textile work which echo skin and (braided) hair.

So much more could be written about this piece, but for this case it is perhaps better suited to leave the reader with questions instead : Why is it called 'gentleness and speed'? Why sculpt an object similar to a Spider and not another vehicle? If it is a Spider Phaeton, why has Mash decided to

⁶ A phaeton was a form of sporty open carriage popular in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, made for gentlemen drivers. Drawn by one or two horses, a phaeton typically featured a minimal very lightly sprung body atop four extravagantly large wheels.

⁷ Cab Proprietors, 2019

construct it as a damaged coach? And. It was a coach made for gentle men, yet it deliberately exudes a feminine quality, why?

REFERENCES

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