

eclectica
contemporary

The
AFTERLIFE
of
EMPIRE

ARTiSTS

Thando Phenyane

Johannes Phokela

Desire Marea

Ayanda Mabulu

Lebo Mbewe

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Khaya Witbooi

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The **AFTERLiFE** of **EMPIRE**

The Afterlife of Empire brings together artists from across Africa whose work considers the ways histories of empire and colonialism continue to inhabit the present.

The exhibition does not seek a single African narrative. Instead, it brings different histories, places and sensibilities into proximity, asking what survives when political structures change: in the city, in the landscape, in the body, in memory and in the imagination.

The works move between history and the contemporary, between what is inherited and what is being remade. They consider questions of power, race, identity, migration, extraction, belonging and desire, while resisting the idea that these histories can be neatly resolved.

In this sense, the “afterlife” is not simply what remains of empire. It is also the space in which inherited histories are reworked, disrupted and imagined otherwise.

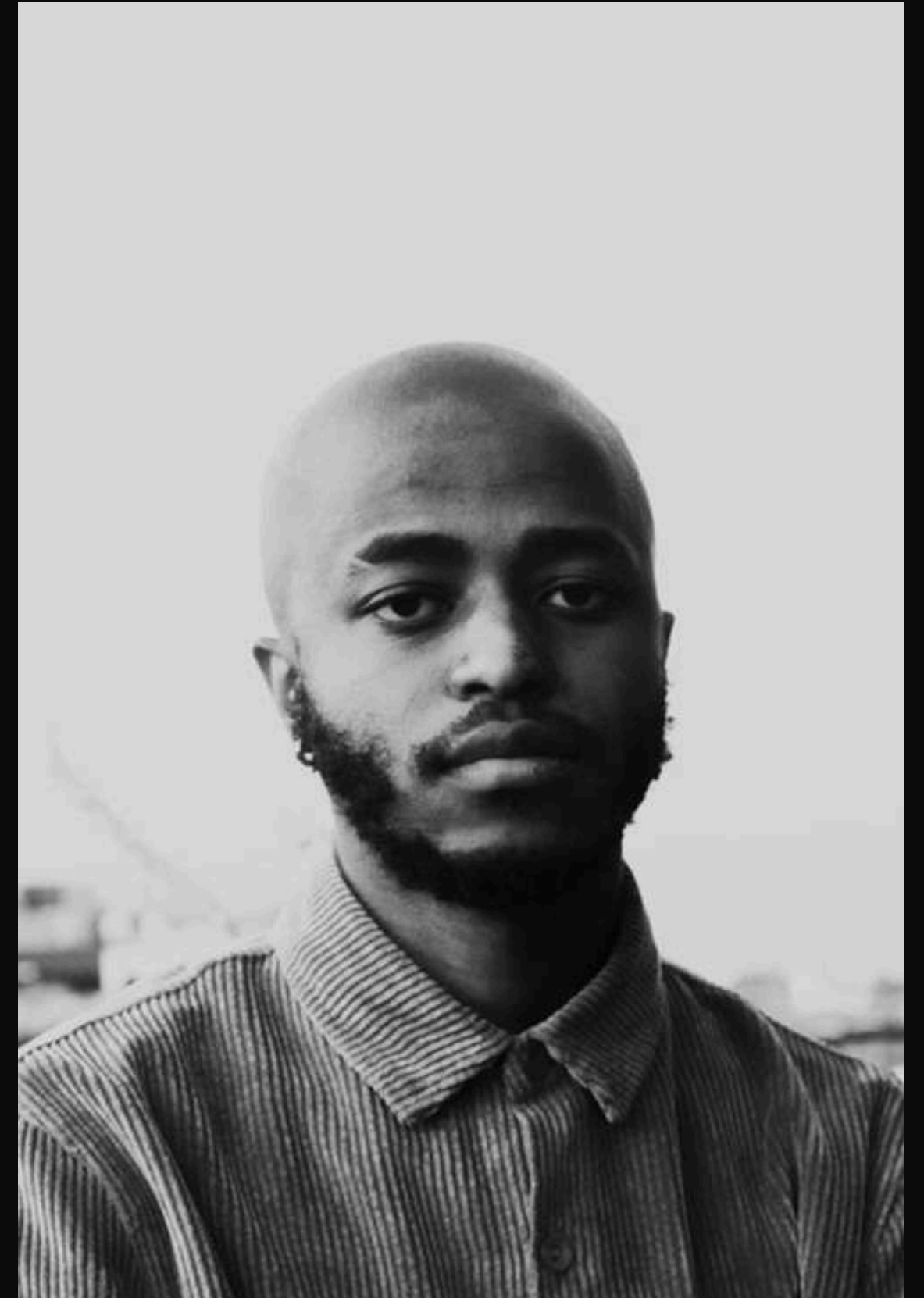
From Johannesburg and Cape Town to Lagos and Cairo, the artists gathered here approach these questions differently. Some confront history directly; others arrive at it through landscape, architecture, the body, memory or the everyday. Together they suggest that the past is neither finished nor fixed, but continues to shape and sometimes distort the ways we inhabit the present.

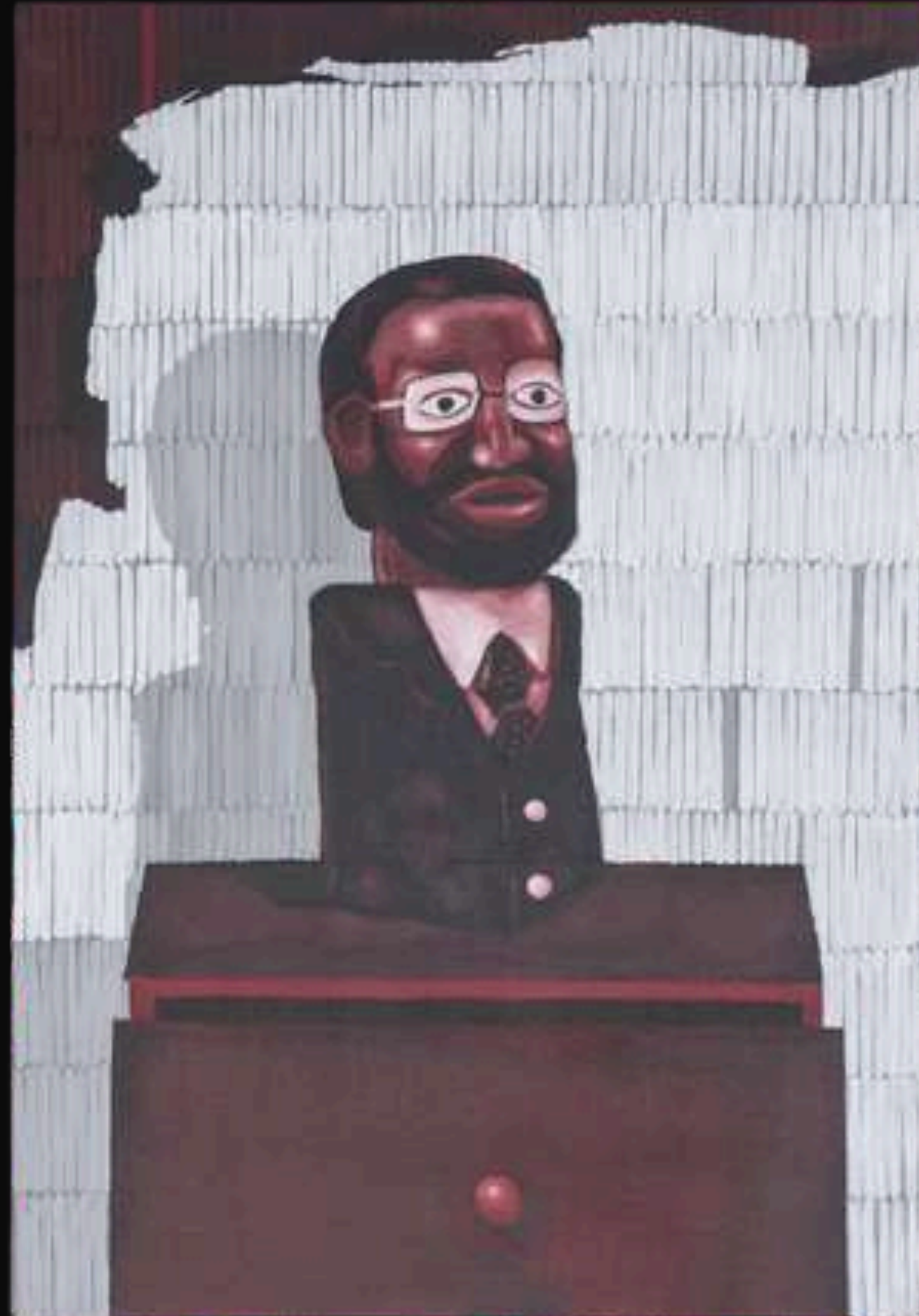
The exhibition asks not only what empire left behind, but what we might do with what remains.

THANDO PHENYANE

Thando Phenyane (b. 1997, Johannesburg) is a figurative painter with a wide pool of influences. Trained as an architect, his process draws heavily on art history and pop culture, employing a unique painterly language that presents Black figures as dark, whimsical characters, at once comical and menacing. He took part in the 2021 Design Indaba Emerging Creatives programme and the 2021 V&A Waterfront Artist Alliance Programme.

Phenyane's work disrupts Eurocentric standards, but it does so with a sense of playful defiance. His art dismantles binaries of beauty and worth, weaving together the serious and the whimsical, the historical and the fantastical. Phenyane reclaims visual space for Black bodies and narratives, not only as acts of defiance but as moments of joy, spontaneity, and possibility. Through vibrant aesthetics and playful forms, Phenyane challenges the colonial gaze, turning it into a mirror for new visions of Blackness sovereign, fluid, and full of life. Phenyane's paintings invite us into a future where Blackness is no longer constrained by the weight of colonial history but liberated through the act of play, a future where empowerment is found in the freedom to create, disrupt, and dream.





Thando Phenyane
Shenge, 2026
Acrylic on Canvas
53 x 77 x 5 cm
ZAR 42,000 excl. VAT



Thando Phenyane
Zulu Evolve, 2026
Acrylic on Canvas
53 x 77 x 5 cm
ZAR 42,000 excl. VAT

JOHANNES PHOKELA

Johannes Phokela is a South African artist born in Soweto in 1966. He began his formal art career in 1984 at the Federated Union of Black Artists (FUBA) Academy in Johannesburg, where he obtained a three- year diploma.

In 1987, he moved to London, where he completed a year-long foundation course at Central St. Martins: University of the Arts London before acquiring a bachelor's degree at Camberwell College of Art: University of the Arts London (1988). He then completed a master's degree at the Royal College of Art (1993) and returned permanently to South Africa in 2006.

Phokela has established a distinguished career both locally and internationally. He played an advisory role in establishing The Bag Factory, Johannesburg (1990) and was awarded the prestigious year-long residency at Delfina Studio Trust, London (1993). He was also one of the founding members of the Gasworks Studios, London (1994 – 2005), producing studio work as well as participating in the International Residency Programme. He did volunteer work for The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 1995 and led to his participation in a residency programme in Senegal through the British Council (1997). He is a recipient of the Decibel Award from the Arts Council of England (2004).

Phokela has exhibited extensively worldwide, including exhibiting 8 works at the Venice Biennale.





Johannes Phokela
Pan [Fried] II, 2026
Oil on Canvas
165 x 130 cm
ZAR 360,000 excl. VAT



Johannes Phokela
Honeymoon II, 2023
Oil Sketch on Paper
148 x 62 cm
ZAR 90,000 excl. VAT

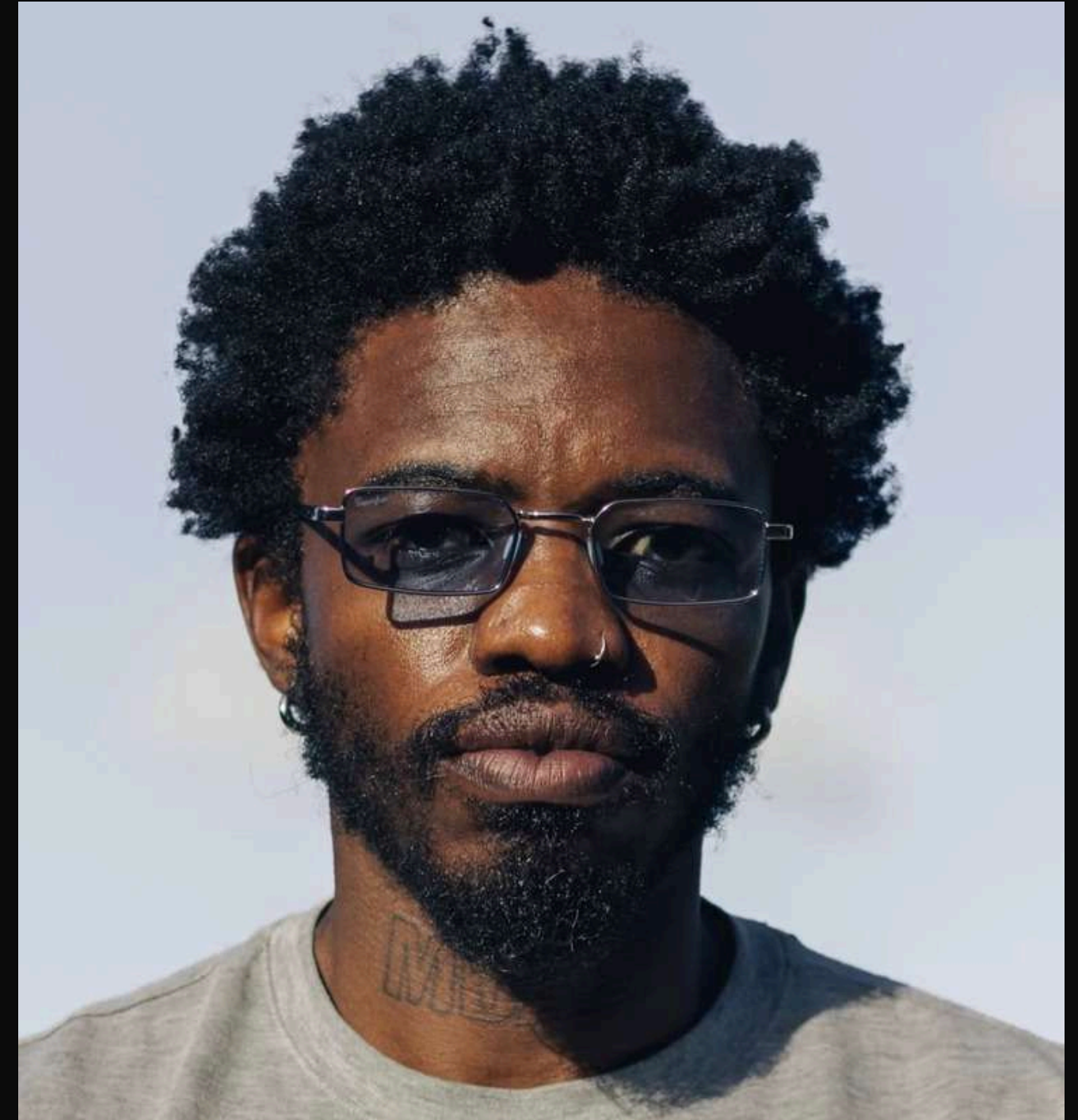
DESIRE MAREA

Desire (Duma Buyani) was born in the serene coastal town of Scottburgh, KwaZulu-Natal, in the year 1991. Today, he makes his home and hones his craft in the vibrant community of Amandawe, within the same province.

Orphaned at the tender age of six, Desire was nurtured by a close-knit extended family, whose dynamism and unwavering support became the bedrock of his aspirations. From an early age, he felt an inexorable pull towards the arts. Upon confiding his ambitions to his family, he learned of his illustrious lineage: his father, Menzi Mcunu, was a celebrated artist from Lamontville, Durban. Menzi's legacy was not merely confined to his artistic prowess; he was revered for his community outreach programs, imparting the gift of art to homeless children. His contributions earned him the honor of having the main gallery at Durban's BAT Center named after him.

Desire pursued his artistic education at the prestigious National School of the Arts, later earning a BA in Visual Communication from Vega School.

His creative spirit is kindled by the rich tapestry of culture and history, the camaraderie of his peers, and the enduring strength of loving Black families. Among the artists he reveres are Zanele Muholi, Athi-Patra Ruga, Sabelo Mlangeni, and Luvuyo Nyawose.





Desire Marea

Khokho Mademoiselle, 2026

Print on Hahnemuhle Potorag

(1/5)

90 x 65.4 cm

ZAR 17,000 excl. VAT

AYANDA MABULU

Born 1981, Qonce (formerly King William's Town), Eastern Cape, South Africa.

Ayanda Mabulu occupies a singular position within contemporary African art. Entirely self-taught, he has built a practice distinguished not only by its technical ambition and visual power, but by an unwavering commitment to the role of the artist as witness, philosopher, storyteller, and cultural agitator.

For more than two decades, Mabulu has pursued painting with uncommon intensity. To encounter his work is to enter a world governed by its own internal logic, populated by ancestral figures, political actors, mythological archetypes, prophets, saints, victims, and visionaries. History, spirituality, folklore, memory, and contemporary life collide within vast pictorial constructions that resist easy interpretation.

Exhibited internationally and represented in significant public, private, and corporate collections, Mabulu remains one of the most compelling and insufficiently understood artists of his generation. His work challenges, unsettles, and inspires in equal measure, affirming the enduring capacity of painting to serve as a vehicle for memory, critique, imagination, and transformation.

At a time when much contemporary art privileges immediacy, Mabulu continues to create works of extraordinary complexity paintings that insist on sustained looking, sustained thinking, and sustained engagement with the unresolved questions of history and human experience.





Ayanda Mabulu

The Healers (African Renaissance), 2026
Oil, Table Spoons and Gold Leaf on Canvas
500 x 280 cm
POA

LEBOGANG MBEWE

Lebogang Mbewe is a Johannesburg-based artist, architect and interdisciplinary design practitioner whose practice investigates the relationship between space, memory and systems of power.

Holding a Master's degree in Architecture from the University of the Witwatersrand, she works across textile, installation and spatial research, using material processes to examine ruination, contamination, inherited conditions and possibilities for repair.

Mbewe explores care and tenderness as radical political acts, considering softness, slowness and intimacy as forms of resistance within realities shaped by extraction, dispossession and violence. Her labour-intensive textile processes become acts of accumulation, mending and insistence, transforming fragmented materials and histories into new forms.

Her visual language embraces density, texture and abundance, challenging the perceived neutrality and austerity of modernist architectural traditions. Moving between the intimate and the structural, Mbewe uses making as a way to examine what has been damaged, what persists and what might still be regenerated.





Lebogang Mbewe

After Extraction, Between Ruination and Repair, 2026

Hand-stitched and Tufted Cotton, Acrylic & T-shirt Yarn on Monks Cloth

141 x 85 cm

ZAR 40,000 excl. VAT

IBRAHIM KHATAB

Ibrahim Khatab was born in Cairo in 1984 and works as a lecturer at Cairo University. His practice spans across the mediums of painting, video art and installation. Khatab has been practicing since he was 12 years old when he created billboards on cloths and walls that were put up in the streets of Cairo. This early experience continues to influence his work and also ignited his passion for Arabic calligraphy which can consistently be seen as a significant element across his body of work.

Since 2007 Khatab's work has frequently been presented in group shows and solo exhibitions. He has garnered notable recognition locally and regularly exhibits across various art centres and galleries in Cairo. Additionally, Khatab has seen impressive exposure abroad, having exhibited widely – from Sweden to Cape Town to Oman. He has regularly participated in the annual Youth Salon, Cairo and has also led many workshops in Visual Arts Centre, Oman; Fine Arts Association, Doha; and Sharjah Children Biennial (2013). He has been awarded various prizes for his work and in 2018 obtained his PhD from Cairo University.

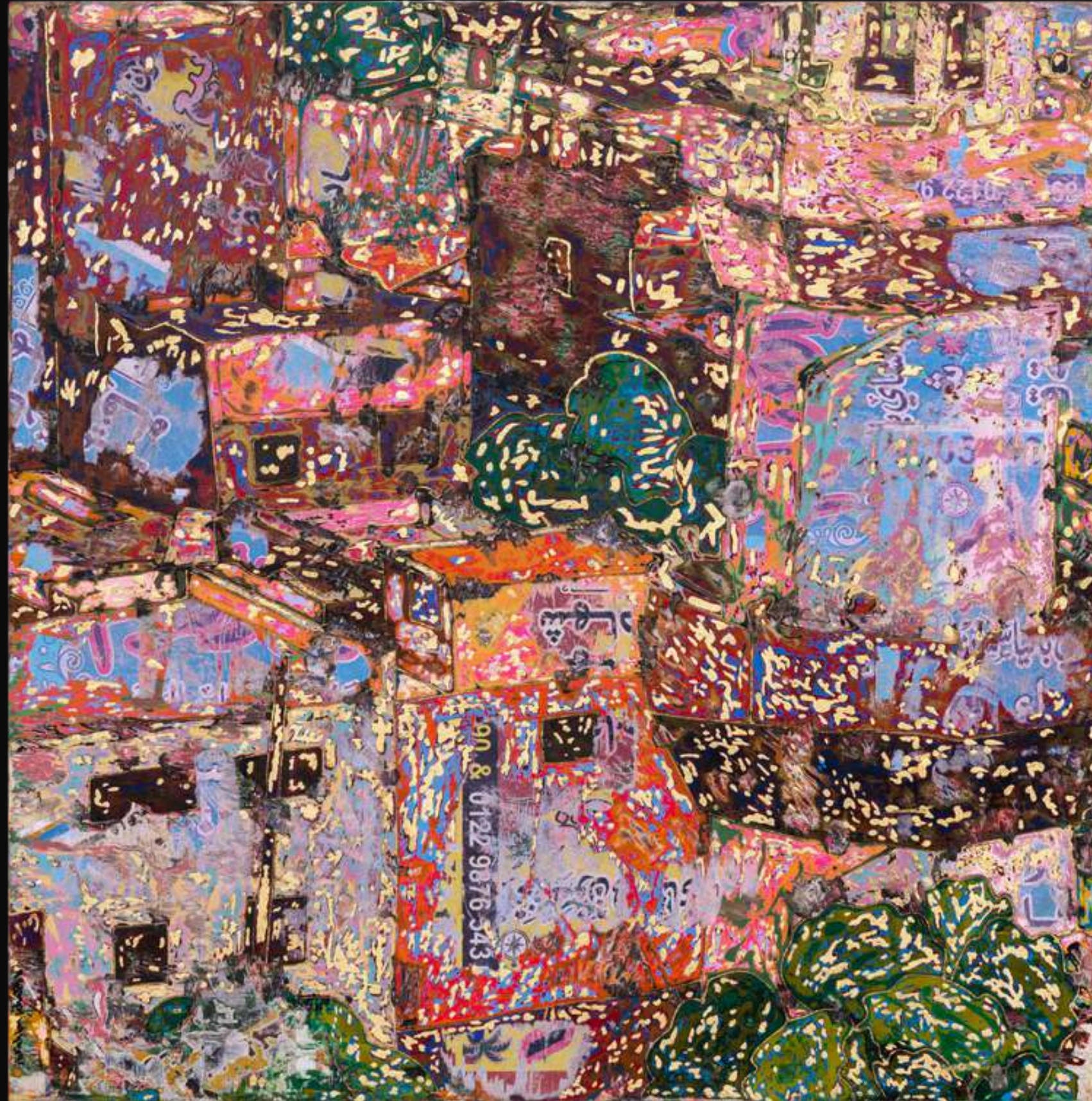
Ibrahim's artwork is found in numerous private and institutional collections.

His recent solo exhibition at IZIKO South African National Gallery, Cape Town, further affirms his continued relevance and reach.





Ibrahim Khatab
Built to Distract 4, 2026
Mixed Media on Wood
120 x 120 cm
USD 7000 excl. VAT



Ibrahim Khatab
Built to Distract 5, 2026
Mixed Media on Wood
120 x 120 cm
USD 7000 excl. VAT



Ibrahim Khatab
Built to Distract 6, 2026
Mixed Media on Wood
120 x 120 cm
USD 7000 excl. VAT

HASAN ESSOP

Hasan Essop was born in Cape Town in 1985, a South African artist and educator whose practice has for nearly two decades, explored identity, belonging, faith, culture and the complexities of contemporary South African society.

He graduated from the Michaelis School of Fine Art at the University of Cape Town in 2006 with a Bachelor of Arts in Fine Art, majoring in Printmaking, and completed a Postgraduate Diploma in Art in 2009, specialising in print media and photography.

Essop's practice developed through an engagement with photography, digital manipulation, performance and constructed imagery. Together with his twin brother, Husain Essop, he became known for a distinctive photographic language in which multiple versions of the artist appear within carefully staged and digitally constructed environments. Their collaborative practice examined Muslim identity, popular culture, globalisation, faith and the negotiation between traditional and contemporary ways of being.

Following an extended period devoted to education and community engagement, Essop has returned to his studio practice with a renewed body of work that revisits many of the ideas and processes that have shaped his career while opening them toward new questions. Drawing, photography, performance, costume, found imagery and digital collage, the work continues his interest in the constructed image as a space where truth, fiction, memory and identity can coexist.





Hasan Essop

House of Mercy, 2026

Charcoal, Watercolor, Collage

105 x 85 cm

ZAR 17,800 excl. VAT

WILLIAMS CHECHET

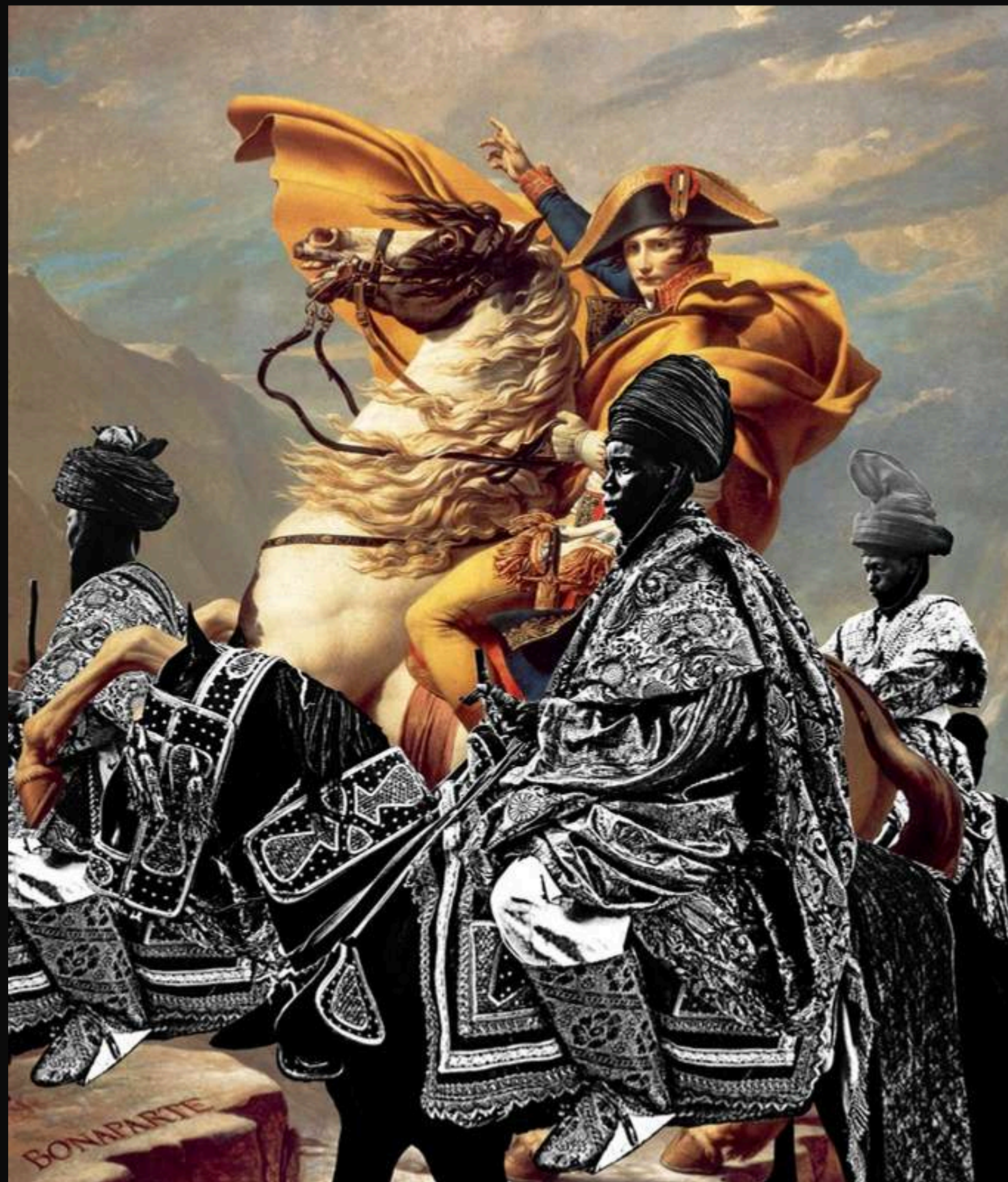
Williams Chechet is a Nigerian Visual artist, interested in popular images that circulate in our culture, focusing on cultural iconography of the African society through a Pop art lens. Isolating photographs on a colored flattened plane, the images are taken out of context and overlapped with colorful accessories.

His work pays homage to the pop art movement of the 1960s, with references to artists such as Andy Warhol and Jean Michel Basquiat. In the Royal Niger series, Williams layers facial features of past Nigerian presidents alongside cartoon text, in an ode to artist Roy Lichtenstein.

Williams has exhibited in group exhibitions in the US, The United Kingdom, South Africa, and Morocco.

Born in Kano and raised in Kaduna in Northern Nigeria, Williams studied Industrial Design at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. He has also created murals for Hard Rock Cafe in Lagos and MTV Base Africa. He was a finalist for The Access Bank Art X Lagos Art Prize 2018 Edition.





Williams Chechet

What is your Dream, 2020
Archival Giclee Print on Paper
(1/5)

120 x 100 cm

ZAR 92,000 excl. VAT

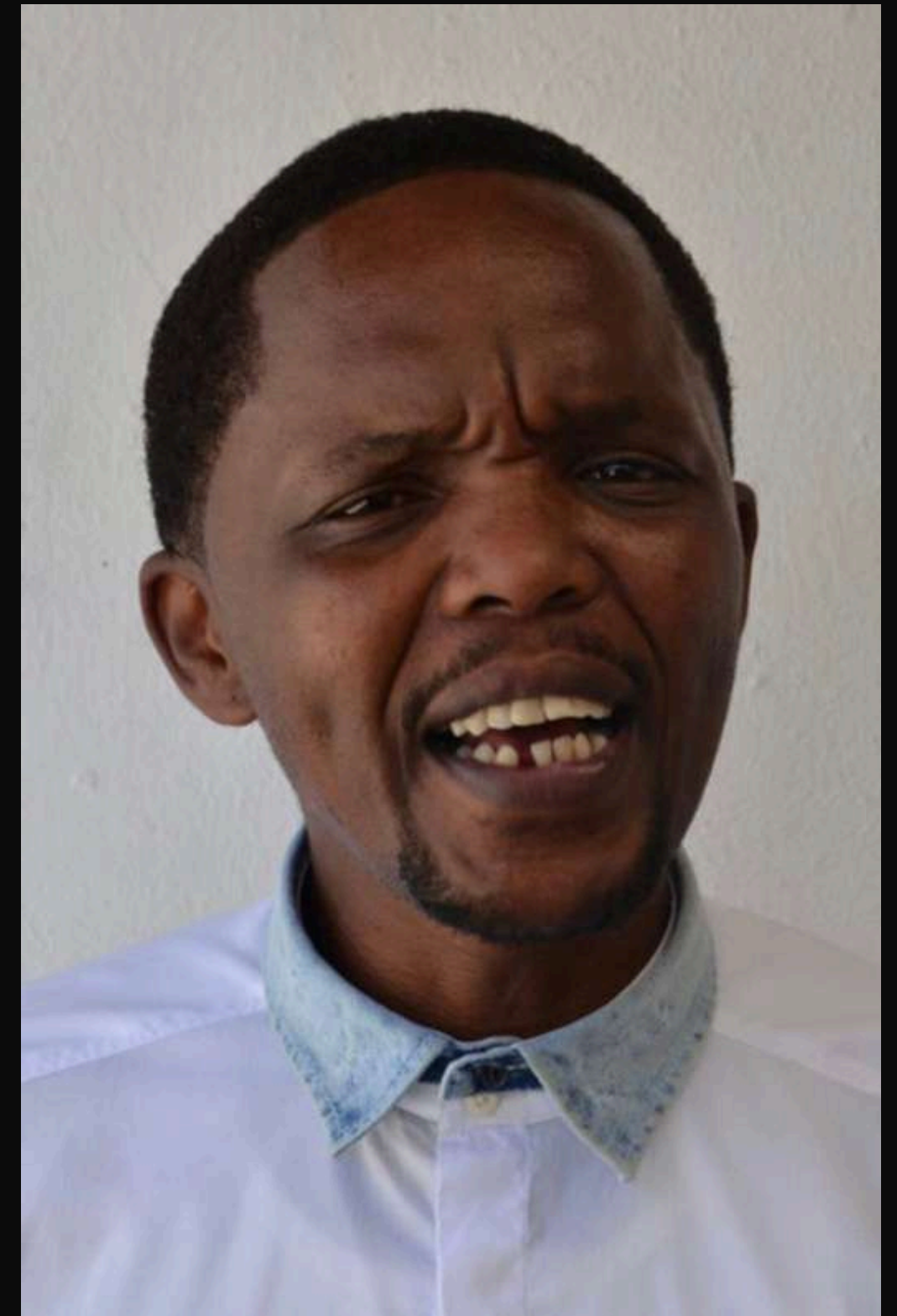
KHAYA WITBOOI

Khaya (Khayaalethu) Witbooi was born in 1977 in Uitenhage in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa, where he grew up. After matriculating in 1995, he studied draughtsmanship and worked as an illustrator for an architectural firm. During this time, he also freelanced for the Argus newspaper in Cape Town, making court sketches and cartoons, while also painting portraits for various clients.

In 2010 he was selected to join the Good Hope Artist's Studio programme, where he began painting full-time. Today Witbooi, who lists Picasso and South African artist Asha Zero as influences, is renowned for his 'Afro-pop' collage-style paintings, which consist of various juxtapositions.

A top 40 finalist in the SPI National Portrait Awards, Witbooi's paintings are strongly influenced by street art and urban underground culture and he describes his work as 'urban art'. He uses a combination of stencilling and oil painting to express his observations and concerns. The result is edgy and urban, with an African relevance. His work often deals with issues related to post-colonial and post-apartheid South Africa, human behaviour in this context, and the impact and effects of globalisation.

Witbooi has been a resident artist at Greatmore Studios in Woodstock, Cape Town, for a number of years. He often shows his work at Worldart Gallery in Cape Town.





Khaya Witbooi

Martyr #1, 2014

Spray Paint on Paper

65 x 44 cm

ZAR 30,000 excl. VAT



Khaya Witbooi

Martyr #2, 2014

Spray Paint on Paper

65 x 44 cm

ZAR 30,000 excl. VAT

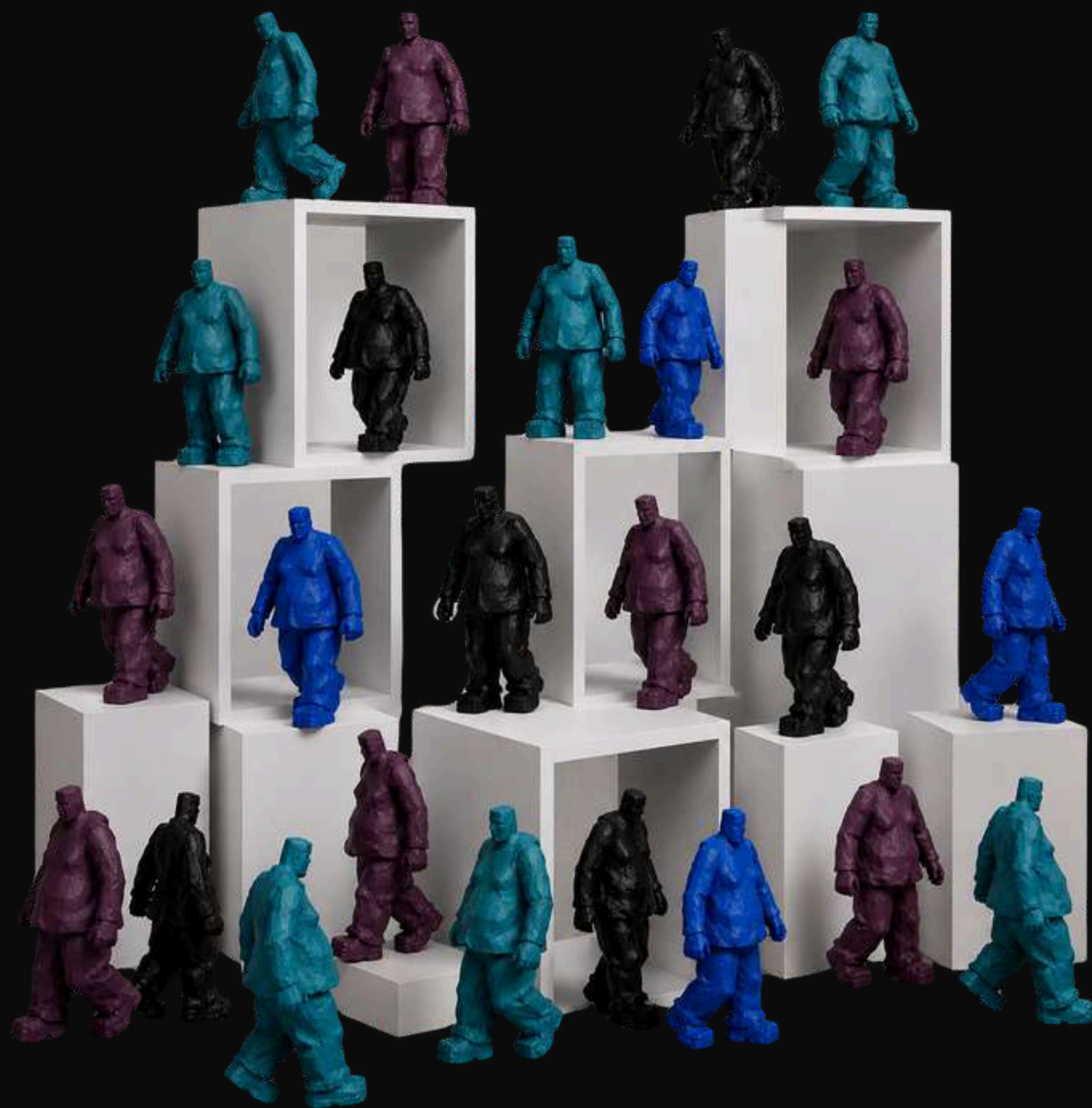
KAMAL EL FEKY

Born in 1984, artist Kamal El Feky has earned a Bachelor's Honours Degree in Fine Arts (with a focus on sculpture) from Helwan University. He has been an active member of the Syndicate of Fine Artists in Cairo, as well as the Academia d'Egitto in Rome, and has participated in many exhibitions and international cultural fairs in Egypt and abroad.

El Feky's sculptures attempt to capture the familiar yet foreign concept of waiting. The artist evokes the viewer to become content with the uncomfortable pause that his weighted figures narrate in their ageless suspension. The sculptures presents the futile, yet adventurous journey of becoming and the perpetuating cycles of human desire that accompany that role.

El Feky's sculptures illustrate human life cycles as a plexus of events and desires. They draw us into a state of stillness, anticipation and entraps the viewer in a dormant state of reflection.





Kamal El Feky

In Search of Meaning (I-XX)

Bronze Sculptures

30 x 17.5 x 14.5 cm each

USD 500 excl. VAT each

BOB-NOSA UWAGBOE

Bob-Nosa Uwagboe is a Lagos-based artist known for his bold, provocative paintings that expose the dark side of humanity. His works, often layered with fabric, acrylic, charcoal, and spray paint, vividly depict troubled souls and societal injustices.

Growing up in a politically unstable Nigeria, Bob-Nosa witnessed civil unrest and police oppression, which deeply influenced his art. His early craftwork evolved into powerful protest art, reflecting his desire to challenge corruption, oppression, and societal evils.

Establishing Protest Art Studio in Lagos, he quickly gained recognition for his rebellious style, defying critics who dismissed his work as unsellable. Bob-Nosa's art often portrays corrupt officials and victims of police brutality, capturing both the pain and resilience of his subjects.

His work has been exhibited internationally, including two solo shows at OOA GALLERY in Barcelona and a solo show “Transit” in the National Modern & Contemporary Museum Gdansk, Poland .





Bob-Nosa Uwagboe

Two Men, 2018

Acrylic on Textured Canvas

153 x 122 cm

USD 10,000 excl. VAT

Eclectica Contemporary is a Cape Town–based gallery dedicated to contemporary artistic practices from Africa and its diaspora.

The gallery presents a dynamic program of emerging and established artists and has participated in leading international art fairs. Artists represented by the gallery have participated in major international biennials and their works are held in significant institutional collections including the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa, the Rupert Museum, and the Iziko South African National Gallery, as well as major international foundations and private collections.

Through exhibitions, international presentations, and collaborations with curators and institutions, Eclectica Contemporary contributes to the global discourse surrounding contemporary African art.