



**A navigation guide to
Kwanqingshe**

**A solo exhibition
by Phumulani Ntuli**

**29 May – 23 June 2021
11:00 - 14:00**

**10 Mahlathini Street, Newtown.
www.bagfactoryart.org.za**

CURATORIAL STATEMENT

"One day a man stared at the reflection of the sun in a lake. Lost in reverie, he found himself somewhere he had never been before. It was nothing like the earth."

- Ben Okri, The Freedom Artist.

Mirrors have an ethereal, occult place within the collective culture of humanity – they are often seen as conduits offering a clear, unblemished reflection of what truly is. Yet in mirrors, we often see a haunting inverse of our reality, and the clarity which mirrors show us is often unwelcome. To search our reflections in a mirror is an uncanny, jarring experience as we are never able to see ourselves in a singular way. Every observance is tinged by our own experiences and imaginations, as well as the experiences of our culture, mythologies, and expectations. Mirrors, therefore, may not show what is, but rather, show what we expect to see.

Phumlani Ntuli's work is influenced by this idea of reflection – an analysis of not only the self, but how we come to define ourselves through our personal and collective stories. For Ntuli, this is an intimate exploration of boyhood into manhood. In his exquisite work on canvas and through collage, the real and the fantastic are blended, as we cannot find the self without delving into both our realities and our imaginations. These ideas define each other rather than being mutually exclusive: the real is underpinned by fantasy, and the fantasy is given depth by reality. Human beings are an amalgamation: a beautiful, complex tapestry of these kinds of contradictions – and only in blending seemingly opposite ideas can there be any harmony with, or the revealing of, the self.

Ntuli's work is vivid, sharp, and colourful, yet it evokes a fluid, otherworldly quality – like a dream in which you are not quite sure if it is a nightmare or not. It embraces the darkness present in both our reality and our mythology: there can be no progress towards understanding the self or our collective futurity without embracing the darkness that has influenced and even created us.

This mass of contradictions, this smashing together of disparate ideas, suggests that the understanding of the self is akin to a quantum reality: where all things and possibilities exist at one time. And like quantum mechanics, only through our personal observance of phenomena can we influence the outcome. The self is a mass of realities and fantasies that all seem to exist at the same time, and each time we observe ourselves, we influence a different definition of who we are. Ntuli explores this reflection and observation through an embracing of reality, fantasy, science fiction, a dystopic past, and a hopeful Black future.

Phumlani Ntuli's work loosens the boundaries between the real and the occult – offering a glimpse at who we are and how we have come to define ourselves. There is an integrity about his work, both evoking a playful sense of wonder while still understanding the need to observe and embrace reality.



Swaving through the portholes 2021.
mixed media collage, paper transfer and acrylic on canvas, 1750mmX1520mmX50mm.
R80000



The Hawker 2021.
mixed media collage, paper transfer and acrylic on canvas, 1750mmX1520mmX50mm.
R80000



Bodies for hire 2021.
mixed media collage, paper transfer and acrylic on canvas, 1780mmX1320mmX50mm.
R75000



Congregants, 2019
mixed media collage, paper transfer, linen and acrylic on canvas, 1660mmX1050mmX50mm.
R70000



Stolen Songs, 2019.
mixed media collage, paper transfer, linen and acrylic on canvas, 1660mmX1050mmX50mm.
R70000



Camouflage I 2021
mixed media collage, paper transfer and acrylic on canvas, 900mmX714mmX50mm
R18000



Camouflage II 2021
mixed media collage, paper transfer and acrylic on canvas, 900mmX714mmX50mm.
R25000



izikhukhula. 2021
mixed media collage, paper transfer and acrylic on canvas, 913mmX1213mmX50mm
R35000



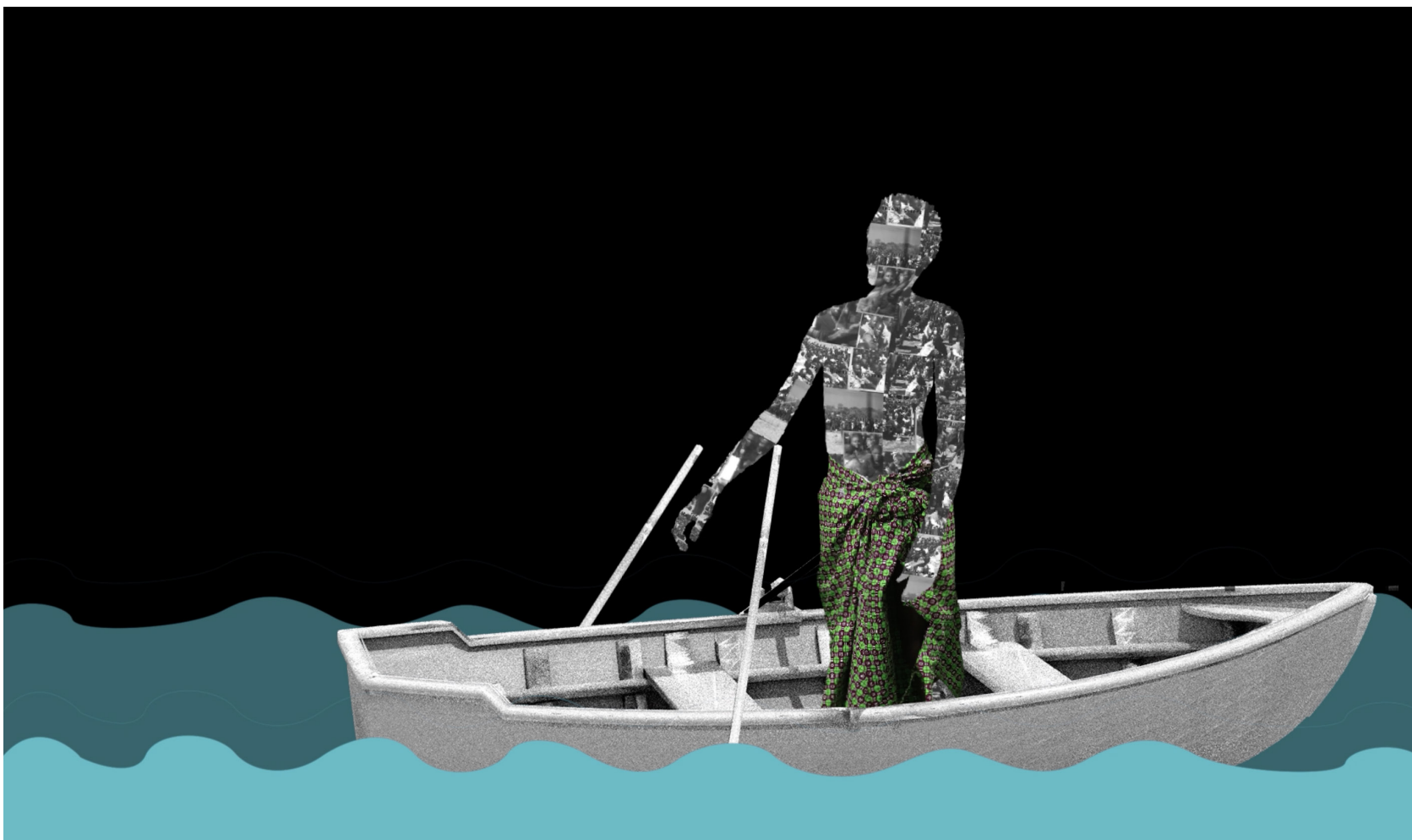
Short circuit 2021
mixed media collage, paper transfer and acrylic on canvas, 900mmX760mmX50mm
R20000



The voyeur 2021
mixed media collage, paper transfer and acrylic on canvas, 960mmX800mmX50mm.
R25000



Remembering Spring 2020
Edition: 10, AP: 3, PP: 3
Lino print on 285 Fabriano paper, 350mmX350mm.
R5000



Godide part 1, 2 and 3, 2020
HD 1080p video
Duration: 7:17
Edition 3
R50000

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Phumulani Ntuli, born in 1986, obtained a Bachelor of Fine Art degree in 2012 from the University of Johannesburg, where he majored in sculpture. He holds a Masters of Fine Arts - Arts Public Sphere from (ECAV) Ecole Cantonale D'Art du Valais in Sierre-Switzerland and was awarded Prix-excellence for his ongoing research project Permutations of an event centred around notions of archives and surveillance. His work merges the ambit of artistic research, sculpture, video installations and performative practices. He consistently engages diverse publics/audiences and attempts to make visible history's gaps/breaks/silences/pauses and remnants.

As an artist and practitioner Phumulani has presented and/or contributed work within the context of the Spier Light Art Festival 2021, Fak'ugesi African Digital Innovation Festival 2020, Young Congo Biennale 2019, Live Works V6 curated by Simone Frangi and Daniel Blanga Gubbay, Kampala Biennale 2016, Uganda curated by Elise Atangana, the Bone Performance Festival 2016, Bern Switzerland, curated by Valerian Maly and also performed in the Act Festival 2016 in Geneva, Basel, Sierre and Zurich.

During the aforementioned year, Ntuli participated in residencies/workshops at the Fondazione Pistoletto in Biella, Italy and the Alps Art Academy in Chur, Switzerland. This is his third solo exhibition, after two solo performance projects at Alps Art Academy in Chur, Switzerland in 2016 to 2017, Umjondolo at Goethe-Institut, Johannesburg; Thupelo, Cape Town and Infecting the City, Johannesburg in 2012 to 2014.

ABOUT THE CURATOR

Ruzy Rusike, born in 1992, graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Art degree from the University of the Witwatersrand in 2014 and received her Honours in curatorship at the Michaelis School of Fine Art in 2017.

As an artist and Bag Factory alumnus, curator, and social activist, Ruzy has participated in a several group exhibitions including at the Turbine Art Fair 2014 Johannesburg and Wits Art Museum 2013, Johannesburg and curated many local and international exhibitions such as, Ubuntuism Re-chanted, Palazzo Bembo, Venice, Italy, This landscape. This landscape! The Quintessential Metaphor For Life Tribute Exhibition to David Koloane, RMB Turbine Art Fair and alongside Thembinkosi Goniwe for A Flagrant Arcade in Contemporary Art at The Art Africa Fair 2017.

Ruzy was the curatorial researcher and exhibition coordinator for the touring exhibition Towards Intersections: Negotiating Subjects, Objects and Contexts hosted at UNISA Art Gallery, Pretoria; Museum Africa, Newtown, Johannesburg; and Gordon Institute of Business Science, Hyde Park, Johannesburg. To date she currently holds the position of Gallery Manager and Head Curator for The Melrose Gallery, Johannesburg.

Credits

Photographs taken by Solomon Moremong

Poster Design by Lindokuhle Ntombela

Curatorial Statement by Ruzy Rusike