



MONGEZI NCAPHAYI



MONTAGUE CONTEMPORARY

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MONGEZI NCAPHAYI

Mongezi Ncaphayi's practice demonstrates, across multiple planes of dimension, his attempt to map his own subconscious. Inspired heavily by jazz as a saxophonist, and informed by personal traumas and lived experience, his highly emotive works form an abstract visual language uniquely his own. Forms of movement are integral for his practice - visually capturing how he listens and how he responds to his inner emotions. 'The compositions are free flowing improvisations: 'It's a communication between the work and myself,'" says Ncaphayi. 'I do not always know what I am connected to, but there are different ways of listening.'

Mongezi Ncaphayi was born in 1983 in Benoni in Eastern Gauteng, South Africa, and currently lives and works in Cape Town, South Africa. Following his graduation with a Diploma in Art and Design from the Ekurhuleni East College-Benoni in 2005, Ncaphayi completed a Professional Printmaking Course at Artist Proof Studio in 2008. In 2012, he obtained a Certificate in Advanced Studies from School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, USA. Ncaphayi was the recipient of the prestigious Absa L'atelier Gerard Sekoto Award in 2013, earning him a three-month residency at the Cite Des Arts in Paris, France. In 2011, Ncaphayi received the Ampersand Foundation Fellowship in New York City, USA, while, in 2016, he was awarded a grant from the Prince Claus Fund Grant in Amsterdam, Netherlands. Selected artist-in-residency programs include: the Thami Mnyele Foundation Residency in Amsterdam, Netherlands, in 2016, The Atelier le Grand Village Residency in Angouleme, France, in 2018, and the Cape Town Art Residency in 2023.

In 2019, Ncaphayi received the Africa First Art Prize, awarding him a residency in Israel which culminated in a solo presentation of new works at the 2020 Investec Cape Town Art Fair in Cape Town, South Africa. In 2020, Ncaphayi participated in the inaugural Stellenbosch Triennale, curated by Khanyisile Mbongwa, in the group exhibition Tomorrow there will be more of us. In 2023, Ncaphayi was selected as a finalist for the Sovereign African Art Prize at the Norval Foundation, South Africa.

Ncaphayi's work is included in a number of important collections, including: the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Washington DC, USA; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, USA; Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU), Manchester, USA; School of the Museum of Fine Arts (SMFA), Boston, USA; Thami Mnyele Foundation, Amsterdam, Netherlands; Bibliotheque Nationale de France, Paris, France; The Ampersand Foundation (TAF), London, UK; ABSA Art Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa; the Luciano Benetton Foundation, Treviso, Italy among others.

MONGEZI NCAPHAYI

Born: 1983, Benoni, South Africa

Lives: Cape Town, South Africa

EDUCATION

- 2012 Certificate in Advanced Studies, School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, USA.
- 2008 Professional Printmaking Certificate, Artist Proof Studio, Johannesburg, South Africa.
- 2005 National Diploma of Arts & Design, Ekurhuleni East College Arts School, Johannesburg, South Africa.

SELECTED RESIDENCIES AND AWARDS

- 2023 Sovereign Art Prize Finalist, Norval Foundation, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2023 Cape Town Art Residency, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2019 Artist in Residence, Africa First Artist Residency, Tel Aviv, Israel.
- 2018 Artist in Residence, Mixit Print Studio, Boston, USA.
- 2018 Artist in Residence, Atelier Le Grand Village, Angouleme, France
- 2016 Artist in Residence, Thami Mnyele Foundation, Amsterdam, Netherlands
- 2015 Prince Claus Fund Grant, Amsterdam, Netherlands.
- 2014 Artist in Residence, Atelier Le Grand Village, Angouleme, France.
- 2014 Artist in Residence, Cite Internationale des Arts, Paris, France.
- 2013 ABSA L'Atelier Gerard Sekoto Award, Absa Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa.
- 2012 "Decision 2012" Printmaking Juried Show: First Prize, School of the Museum of Fine Arts.
Artist in Residence, Mixit Print Studio, Boston, USA.
- 2011 Artist in Residence, Ampersand Foundation, New York City, USA.
- 2011 Linda Givon Scholarship, Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa.
- 2011 Artist in Residence, Nirox Foundation Sculpture Park, Johannesburg, South Africa.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

- 2023 Cape Town Art Residency (Solo Exhibition), Cape Town, South Africa
- 2023 Sovereign African Art Prize Exhibition, Norval Foundation, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2021 Let the Waters Settle (Solo Exhibition), SMAC Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

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SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

- 2020 Investec Cape Town Art Fair, Cape Town, South Africa.
- 2020 Stellenbosch Triennale – Tomorrow there will be more of us, curated by Khanyisile Mbongwa, Stellenbosch, South Africa
- 2019 ART X Lagos (Solo Exhibition), The Civic Centre, Lagos, Nigeria.
- 2019 Of the seeking or the finding (Solo Exhibition), SMAC Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa.
- 2019 Ampersand Foundation Award 21 Years Celebration Exhibition, University of Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa.
- 2019 Filling in the Gaps, Iziko South African National Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa.
- 2019 Print Promises, Iziko South African National Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa.
- 2018 aaa_bstract travelling, C-Gallery, Milan, Italy.
- 2018 Anecdotes of Sound (Solo Exhibition), David Krut Projects, Johannesburg, South Africa.
- 2018 Back to the Future III - Abstract Art in South Africa: Past & Present, SMAC Gallery, Stellenbosch, South Africa.
- 2017 Which Way is East? (Solo Exhibition), The Vault - The Silo, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2017 Mongezi Ncaphayi at DKNY, David Krut Projects, New York City, USA.
- 2017 African Amicitiae, Arti et Amicitiae Society in association with Thami Mnye Foundation, Amsterdam, Netherlands.
- 2017 10th World Triennial of Printmaking, Galerie d'Art Contemporain de Chamalières (AMAC), Chamalières, France.
- 2017 A Change in the Narrative: ABSA L'Atelier Winners Exhibition, ABSA Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa.
- 2016 8th International Printmaking Biennale Dour, Museu do Douro, Peso da Regua, Portugal.
- 2015 Map Of The New Art, Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice, Italy.
- 2014 Imago Mundi: The Art of Humanity, [Travelling Exhibition], Casa Dei Carraresi, Treviso, Italy
- 2010 ABSA L'Atelier Finalist, ABSA Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa.

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ARTAFRICA

The Arranger: Mongezi Ncaphayi

FEATURE 21 October 2022



A throw of the dice will never abolish hazard, Mallarme remarked. A game of chance cannot override chaos.

This conclusion, which will surely irk those in love with fixed origins and absolutes, is profoundly relevant now that we have returned to abstraction as the critical index of our times. Bereft, at a terrible loss for meaning, overwhelmed by the moronic noise of outrage, the moral tedium of revisionist purpose, more and more we find ourselves peering into the unknowable and unknown. Instead of subtraction we value abstraction.

Mongezi Ncaphayi, artist in residence at the Cape Town Art Residency in Woodstock, Cape Town, soon headed to Southern France, is one of the new breed of painters who draw their inspiration from the great early abstract modernists – namely Klee, Kandinsky, Miro. While drawn to Mediterranean and Southern African light, the oozing quiet of the countryside, Ncaphayi remains steadfastly urban. He loves geometry, which, according to the American poet, A.R. Ammons, nature abhors. Squares, in particular, are a passionate interest, as framing devices and as negative spaces. Our built environment is wholly informed by geometry. In particular, Ncaphayi is drawn to ‘structures in construction’, buildings in progress, or delapidated and scaffolded... ‘a staircase in a certain light’... ‘dirty walls, stained floors’... the ‘processional movement’ of Platonic solids, shapes seen in concert, which inform and lend form to the miasmic ground of the world and his paintings.

As a boy, Ncaphayi enjoyed drawing ‘packaging boxes piled up’, ‘basic things, basic shapes’. Striped clothing proved a curious consolation – a gridded life in an otherwise uncontrollable world. The processional squared windows of a building, reflective, aglitter... lines loose, thick, soft... are sights seen, absorbed, inhabited, which are then translated into paintings. His favoured medium? Acrylic markers, inks, paints, masking tape to delimit sharp forms. Returning to Mallarme’s formulation, it is the choreography of form and formlessness, solidity and liquefaction, perceptible certainty and flux, which is the artist’s energy field and engine room. Colour too plays its part – the life and hue of flowers in particular. In short, ‘anything and everything’ organic and inorganic.

However, if Kandinsky, Klee, and Miro are easily detectable sources, it is improvisatory music – sound – which proves an even greater inspiration. Keith Jarrett was a childhood inspiration – Ncaphayi owns his father’s cherished LP – in particular, Jarrett’s epically lengthy compositions that fall in and out of harmonic sense, that allow for volume, great drops and rises in sound, that are geological in their groans and howls, pleasures and pains, larval, volcanic – aleatory. Another great inspiration is the saxophonist Pharoah Sanders, who, unlike Jarrett, is no technical wizard, but possesses ‘a great deep feeling’. Somatic, ‘deeply introspective, softly melancholic’. Yet another great influence is another saxophonist, Benny Golson, who, for Ncaphayi, is a brilliant ‘arranger’ of music.

Ncaphayi first stumbled upon the word, ‘arranger’, on the sleeve of an LP. Far more than composer or impresario, this workaday word came to inform what he does when he paints – he arranges elements soft and hard, thick and thin, solid and viscous. It is the tension generated by this interplay that allows for sensation and apprehension. The first is far more significant, because its source lies in emotion, without which an artwork will not emerge, and any reason for being would prove null and void.

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Art

5 Artists on Our Radar in January 2022

Artsy Editorial

Jan 5, 2022 5:11PM



“Artists on Our Radar” is a monthly series produced by the Artsy team. Utilizing our art expertise and access to Artsy data, each month, we highlight five artists who have our attention. To make our selections, we’ve determined which artists made an impact this past month through new gallery representation, exhibitions, auctions, art fairs, or fresh works on Artsy.

Mongezi Ncaphayi

B. 1983, Benoni, South Africa. Lives and works in Cape Town.

Mongezi Ncaphayi layers watercolor and ink to build feathery abstract images that suggest constellations, maps, and musical scores. Working between painting and printmaking, the Cape Town-based artist creates works that hint at psychological interiors and larger political realities.

In “Let the Waters Settle...,” his current solo show at SMAC Gallery, Ncaphayi continues his exploration of depth and color. In *Tuesday turmoil* (2021), for example, gem-toned geometric shapes and crimson dashes fleck a blue-washed background. And in *I forget to Remember* (2021), turquoise clouds and black lines drift across an orange backdrop.

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Sunday Times

THE EDIT/FASHION & BEAUTY

Art

Wise buys: 10 African artists to invest in now

Alexia Walker of Walker Scott Art Advisory highlights some of the continent's artists whose work will add value to your collection

16 January 2018 - 00:00
BY ALEXIA WALKER



A work by Mongezi Ncaphayi.

Image: Supplied.

10. MONGEZI NCAPHAYI

Ncaphayi was born in 1983 in South Africa, and lives in Johannesburg.

His practice is inspired by jazz and he is fascinated with the complexities of migration.

He's represented by [SMAC Gallery](#).



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