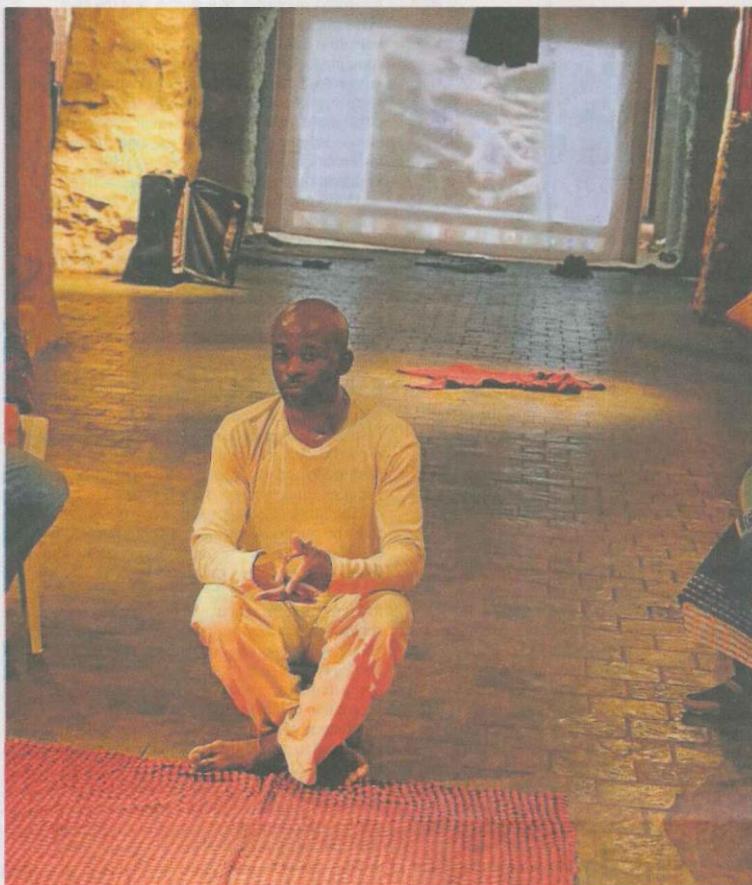


LIFE

ENTERTAINMENT • BOOKS • STYLE • ARCHITECTURE • LATERAL THINKERS • TRAVEL • HEALTH • LEISURE • FOOD

s dance from to healing



Moving spaces: Théogène Niwenshuti says he tells stories to honour those who protected him from the militia that murdered thousands of Rwandans during the 1994 genocide. /Supplied

from negative tensions. They seemed to feel less fear, had gained confidence, and had experienced increased self-esteem, trust and a sense that they could be useful to each other and society," he says.

Niwenshuti first came to SA in 2010 to attend a conference hosted by Drama for Life at Wits University and returned in 2011 to study further.

He has played a role in activities and events including his research, cultural groups, seminars, workshops, performances and conferences in Africa and abroad. These include the Great Lakes peace campaign, his interventions at a Health and Dance Seminar in Ireland, and at the Conference on Memory

Studies in December 2017 in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Niwenshuti is completing a PhD researching memory, trauma, healing and histories of violence and genocide.

He is regularly invited to speak, lecture, perform and host workshops that focus on healing and conflict resolution.

He says while it is all well and good to promote science, technology and business to young people, this cannot be done at the expense of the arts and social sciences.

"We communicate our pain through the arts; we use performance and movement to share these deep stories – we need this kind of communication to share these kinds of experi-

ences, most of which we cannot share in words. But our bodies, our dances, our songs and poetry can help us make sense of senseless stuff," he says.

"By trying to make sense of those 'non-sense' things, we can move through them and pass them. I think that is our charge, our burden as young people – can we make better choices than our parents did?"

Creativity connects him to his own humanness.

"The kind of humanity that is beyond colour of skin, beyond hate, beyond status, beyond class, beyond all regional and geographic borders – I would like to believe in that kind of light in each one of us.

"Amahoro! Peace!"

SOLO EXHIBITION

Return to the roots to find deep aesthetics

Edward Tsumele

In what is probably a first in South African art, visual artist Mawande Ka Zenzile uses cow dung to create his works. Mixed with gesso and oil on canvas, the dung creates pioneering, unique pieces that leave a lasting impression for their beauty.

Ka Zenzile creates impressive abstract pieces that examine several universal issues. Like almost all abstract art, the meaning he has embedded requires scrutiny before understanding grows.

His fifth solo exhibition presents an opportunity to learn more about the themes and ideas he is interrogating.

Ka Zenzile's body of work, titled *Uhambo luyazilawula*, consists of painting, sculpture and installation.

Through these works, the artist explores issues ranging from religion, philosophy and spirituality to politics and culture in an intense manner, positioning him as one to watch.

Born in Lady Frere, Eastern Cape, in 1986, Ka Zenzile has a BA (fine art) degree from the Michaelis School of Fine Art at the University of Cape Town and has just completed his master's in fine art. He won the Tollman Award for Visual Art in

2014 and the coveted Michaelis Prize in 2013.

He has held four solo exhibitions at the Stevenson galleries in Cape Town and Johannesburg, and at Vansa and the AVA Gallery in Cape Town. His group exhibitions include *Tell Freedom* at Kunsthal Kade in Amersfoort, Netherlands; *Looking after Freedom* at the Michaelis Galleries in Cape Town; and *I Love You Sugar Kane* and *Material Matters: New Art from Africa* at the ICA Indian Ocean in Port Louis, Mauritius.

Stylistically, he refuses to be boxed, including the idea that his art is abstract and that this exhibition is confined to exploring the themes of philosophy, spirituality, politics and culture.

"When I create art, I am not restricted with regard to the themes I have to deal with. I create art that people must be excited to watch," Ka Zenzile says. "Even the idea of calling some genre of art as abstract is quite restrictive, as this is the idea that western epistemology and their methods of teaching encompasses in order to just control aesthetics."

He says he does not reference anyone in his art practice, but taps into his deep, rural Xhosa background to create work that makes

meaning in his life, and perhaps in the lives of those who view the work.

"For example, using cow dung in art has not been done by anyone else to my knowledge. The reason I use this material is because where I come from, in the Eastern Cape, I witnessed as a child how this material was used on the floor of grass thatched houses. You could say that the use of cow dung in my art is an evolution of cow dung," he says.

"This material has been used in houses in the past in the rural areas that lasted and served their purpose. However, the very idea of longevity in material is itself problematic. For example, we know that nothing lasts, not any material, not even the body of human beings, except their souls.

"If you go to a music concert and watch a musician perform a song that you really like and spiritually connect with, you leave the concert happy and feel good long after the concert has ended. Art has done its duty.

"Art is not meant to solve the problems of the world, but it has a healing quality, and that is its only duty."

Some of the outstanding works in the exhibition are evocative of the themes that include body and soul, spirit and material.

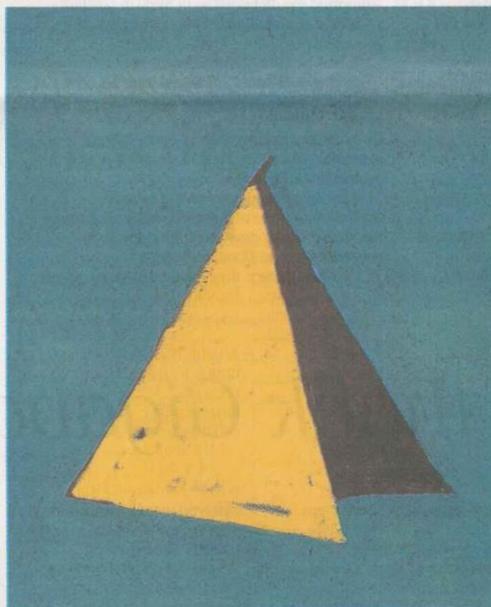
"Again, this speaks to the idea of how western philosophy tends to want to define human existence for everyone and is even trying to define our culture as Africans. I will contend that Africans are best placed to define our own culture," Ka Zenzile says.

"For example, for Africans the body and soul are the same thing. They co-exist. There is no duality there. No division.

"Let me give an example of the issue of ancestors to illustrate my point. In the eyes of western philosophy, my ancestors in me are represented by features such as my ears, mouth and so forth and so on.

"But in African culture my ancestors are ever present in me spiritually. They do not belong somewhere in the distant past. They are in the present and in the future. They live in me in my everyday existence. So my pieces are dismissing the issues of duality and division."

● *Uhambo luyazilawula* is at Stevenson Gallery in Braamfontein, Johannesburg until June 29.



More than meets the eye: Artist Mawande Ka Zenzile's piece entitled *Institutionalized Guilt*. /Supplied