



MANDISA BUTHELEZI **Emgonqweni**

# Emgonqweni

MANDISA BUTHELEZI

**CONCEPT:** EMGONQWENI——MANDISA BUTHELEZI.

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Izithunzi zami ziyangilandela.

UButhelezi usimema embukisweni oveza ngobunyoincwe ngohambo olugcwele kanye nemibono yezwe nenhlalakahle yabantu besiNguni. Sigubha lokho okungamagugu nokusezinhliziyeni zethu nokungajwayelekile kwabanye abantu. Okugqamayo nokho ukukhetha kwakhe ngokungenhlo-so isithombe sokuvula umcimbi, okuwuphahla olufulelwe ngotshani.Leli yixhiba likaGogo, ithempeli lokhokho lapho kumenywa khona abangasekho ukuthi banakekele futhi bavikele abaphilayo.Kulapho kuqala khona ukushiswa kwemphepho, ukubiza nokumema abangasekho nokubanxusa ukuba bazokweseka, bakhanyise ngokomoya kukho konke okuzobe kwenzeka lapha.Yonke imicimbi eyenziwayo okungabalwa kuyo ukubikwa kwengane ezelwe, ukubuyisa ongasekho neminye imicimbi engadalulwa, kufanele kuqale exhibeni likaGogo. UButhelezi ukuqonda ngokuphelele lokhu kukhazimula ngokomoya ngaphambi kokuba aqale uhambo lwakhe lobuciko.

Lezi zithombe azikwazi ukushiywa ngaphandle uma umuntu ehumusha. Kufanele zihlaziywe futhi ziqondwe, kujulwe ngengqikithi yamasiko, ngale kwalokho zingahlanekezelwa kakhulu. Isthombe sentombazane encane engenalutho futhi emi eduze kongase afaniswe nomkhwenyana wakhe, ngumfowabo oziqhenya ngobumsulwa kukadadewabo. Kanjalo nentombi ephambanise imilenze ihlezi phezu kocansi, umata wotshani ufundiswe kusukela isencane ukuhlala ngentombi. Lokhu ukuhlala ngesizotha nokucasha ukuze ingadonsi ukunakwa okungenasidingo.

Izinto ezincane, njengomgexo wobuhlalu, okuyinto umuntu ongefundisiwe nongenalo ulwazi ezingeke zisho lutho kuyena. Kuwuphawu lwenhliziyo yowesifazane ethambile ezinikela kowesilisa njengoba ekugcineni ememezela uthando.

Ukukhethwa komdwebi wezinkomo zamaNguni, ngemibala yazo ehluhahlukene, kwangenza ngangena ekudumiseni inkunzi kababa eyayingesabi, ngezimpondo zayo ezibukhali. Yadabula izikhumba eziqinile zezitha zayo. Nakhu ngizithola ngikhumbula kancane ngisengumfanyana okhulele esigodini elusa izinkomo ehuba “Inkunzi kaBaba” sesiya ediphini simemeza sithi:

Woza uzidedele  
 zihlangene  
 Ujikijela abuxe njengontolwane  
 Uphenduphendu bezinsizwa mahlalephenduka  
 Bathi phenduka mfana ngoba ufana nelanga

Lezi zinkomo zamaNguni zazikhona futhi zisekhona nanamuhla. Zifanekisela ingcebo futhi ziyimpahla esiziqhenyayo ngayo esibayeni somuntu. Nge-

linye ilanga ubaba uyonika indodana yakhe izinkomo zakhe ukuze ilobolo lenkomo ngayinye lifanekise ukubaluleka okuthile njengoba lethulwa emndenini walowo ozoba inkosikazi.

Akukhona nje ukuthi izinkomo zihlukaniswa ngokulandelayo kokubaluleka ezingxoxweni zelobolo, kodwa umhlambi okhethiwe ungaba ukwazisa kanye nophawu lothando olujulile kunkosikazi. Ukukhethwa kwemibala kukhombisa ukuqonda kukaButhelezi ukubaluleka okuhambisana nombala othile wenkomo. Lapha, kukhona amatshe ehlathi (omnyamanomhlophe yonke indawo), amasi mabele (obomvunomhlophe yonke indawo), kanye nenzima (omnyama ngokuphelele ngombala). Lezi zithombe zinezindalelelo eziningi. Esweni elingavuthiwe noma le-Eurocentric, azifani. Kulabo asebekhulile nabaxilile, baxoxa indaba yomlando o lethwe esikhathini samanje ukuze ulondolozelwe ikusasa. Enyakatho yomhlaba, abahlale bebonaiNingizimu njengengaphucukile futhi iyindawo yokufunda, bayathakazelisa, benza ucwaningo oluthile lwe-ethnographic ngezifiso zabo zezazi. Nokho kithina, lezi zithombe zibonisa usuku olujwayelekile empilweni yalabo abaxile esikweni labo - thina bantu baseNingizimu. Izithombe ezingcwele zabalandeli bakaShembe bebandla lamaNazareth ziphambene nombono waseNtshonalanga ngenkolo kanye nenkolo yobuKrestu.

Basikhumbuzwa uMqali wendlela (umsunguli webandlalakwaShembe);

uShembe ka Mzazela  
 Ka Sokhabuzela  
 Ka Nhliziyo  
 iNdlamhlathi kaMayekiso  
 uLanga phuma sikothe  
 Nabalothayo liyabahangula  
 Utikoloshe owavuma wathi  
 Ukube ngangiwumuntu  
 Ngabe ngiyayikhetha  
 iNkosi yase Kuphakameni

UButhelezi usegxilile ekulandiseni ngemibukiso yamasiko nemigubho yamagugu esizwe, okungokwethu, isintu kanye nolimi. Lesi siqeshana somsebenzi siwuphawu lweciko eligxile ngokungaguquki esikweni lama-Afrika futhi umsebenzi walo ususa ukuhumusha okunengqimba ukuze ufinyelele ekugcineni kwalokho okungenzeka kungabonakali ngeso lenyama.

By Sipho Sithole, PhD – Cultural Anthropologist

Buthelezi invites us to a visual journey that deliberately, yet carefully, lays bare the sacred and secular sights of the social system of the Nguni people; celebrating that which is dear and intimate to us, and maybe foreign and strange to others. Unintentional, yet striking, is her choice of opening image - the thatched roof of a hut - ixhiba likaGogo - the ancestral shrine where the departed are invited to care for and protect the living. This is where it all begins - the burning of incense to summon and invite the departed, as their spiritual guidance and support is sought here. Whether it is ukubikwa kwengane ezelwe - introduction of a newly born child, or ukubikwa komsebenzi - a ceremony yet to unveil - it all must start exhibeni likaGogo. Buthelezi understands this very well and subconsciously welcomes us to this spiritual shine before embarking on her own artistic journey.

These images cannot be left to one's loose interpretation. They must be analysed and understood within a cultural context, otherwise, they may be grossly distorted. The image of a young girl, bare-breasted and standing next to what might look like her suitor, is her brother, proud of his sister's purity. Similarly, a young woman cross-legged and sitting on ucansi - a grass mat - has been taught from a very young age ukuhlala ngentombi - to sit in a dignified and concealing manner, so as not to attract unwarranted attention.

Small items, like a beaded necklace, which to an uneducated outsider, is just what it is. It is a symbol of a woman's heart softening to a man's advances, as she eventually ordains him in a proclamation of love.

The artist's choice of Nguni cattle, in their varied colour patterns, prompted me to break into the praises of what once was my father's fearless bull that, with its sharp horns, teared through the hardened skins of its nemesis. Here, I found myself regurgitating a memory tucked away in my little self, as a young boy growing up in the village, herding cattle and reciting inkunzi kaBaba's praises as we went to the dip, shouting:

Woza uzidedele  
 Umahlaba zihlangene  
 Ujikijela abuxe njengontolwane  
 Uphenduphendu bezinsizwa mahlalephenduka  
 Bathi phenduka mfana ngoba ufana nelanga

These Nguni cattle were there and are still here today. They symbolise wealth and are a proud possession in a man's kraal. One day, a father will

give some of his cattle to his son to pay lobola and each cow will symbolise a specific significance as they are presented to the family of the would-be wife. Not only are the cows categorised in the order of importance in the lobola negotiations, but the herd chosen can be an appreciation and a sign of deep affection for the wife to be. The choice of colours shows Buthelezi's understanding of the value attached to a specific colour of the cow. Here, there is amatshe ehlathi (black and white all over), amasi mabele (red and white all over), as well as inzima (completely black in colour).

These images are multi-layered. To an uncultured or Eurocentric eye, they are exotic. To the cultured and rooted, they tell a story of a history brought to the present to be preserved for the future. To the global north, who always see the south as uncivilised and a site of study, they are fascinating, prompting some ethnographic research for their scholarly ambitions. Yet to us, these images reflect an ordinary day in the life of those rooted in their tradition - us the people of the south.

The sacred images of the Shembe followers of the Nazareth Church are in defiance of the Western notion of religion and Christianity's civilising mission. They remind us of Umqali wendlela (founder of the Shembe church);

uShembe ka Mzazela  
 Ka Sokhabuzela  
 Ka Nhliziyo  
 uNdlamhlathi ka Mayekiso  
 uLanga phuma sikothe  
 Nabalothayo liyabahangula  
 Utikoloshe owavuma wathi  
 Ukube ngangiwumuntu  
 Ngabe ngiyayikhetha  
 iNkosi yase Kuphakameni

Buthelezi has entrenched herself in visual narration of culture and celebration, marginality and belonging, as well as language and identity. This piece of work is symptomatic of an artist uncompromisingly deeply rooted in the African tradition and whose work peels off layered interpretations to get to the bottom of what may not be seen by the naked eye.

By Sipho Sithole, PhD – Cultural Anthropologist

Yamukela nasi isimemo saseMgonqweni.

Leli yigalelo lokuhlela kabusha inkundla yamaciko ukuthi ibe umgonqo. Okusho ukuthi nawe mbukeli usendaweni ecishe ibe mbaxambili, ngakho-ke cophelela. Buva esidlangalaleni. Uqoqeke. Uhloniphe. Ukhuliswe.

Ngena!

Cha! Lokhu okubonayo akusizona nje izithombe, kepha ubufakazi bomlando omude ohamba uze udlule emandulo, uqhubeka njalo uze uyosithela. Lapha sibhekene nolwazi olusingathe izinkulungwane zeminyaka. Siphinde sitholane nezithunzi ezihamba nathi ziwele imigwaqo nemifula ngisho nolwandle imbala.

Akuzona nje izithombe zokubukwa kepha yizithombe ezisihlanganisa nomongo wolwazi lwabaNtu. Julia. Zindla. Uzothe. Uthabe. Unabe.

Emgonqweni akugcaluzwa kepha kulezi zithombe kuyaluza iso lomthwebuli ozama ukuphendula imibuzo ngemvelaphi yakhe kanye nekusasa layo leyo mvelaphi. Ubufakazi obutholakala kulezi zithombe buveza ngokusobala amagalelo okhokho kanye nokhokhokazi bakwaZulu okuyibona abayiziko nabagcina amasiko. Lokhu kusivezela ukuthi ukwethulwa kanye nokuphathwa komgonqo kuwukwakha umuzi wesizwe sethu thina bohlanga.

Masikubeke kucace ukuthi ukwakhiwa komuzi kuyinto engapheli futhi edinga ukuthi sonke siphose esivivaneni. Lo msebenzi owubona ezindongeni ungumnikelo ophuma kuyena (umthwebuli) oledhwe kuthina. Asihlanganyele sibungaze kuhle kwalezi zithombe ezixoxa indaba.

Umgonqo usitshela okuningi ngezigaba zempilo kanye nezinhlolo zolwazi oluhambisana nalezo zigaba. Kulesi sikhathi esiphila kuso sesimanje siyisizwe samaNguni, kungenzeka nokuthi sigonqise isizwe sonke njengoba sengathi kuningi esidinga ukucushiswa kukho. Miningi imibuzo ekusamele sifunde ukuyibuza. Ziningi futhi nezimpendulo ezihleli obala kodwa esingaziboni. Kuningi nokusha okusamele sikuhlaziye lapha Emgonqweni. Phosa nawe esivivaneni, ngena Emgonqweni.

By Russel Hlongwane

Welcome to umgonqo, a knowledge-based convening which takes many forms and today umgonqo is enacted through a curatorial form.

This work attempts to configure the exhibition space into a familiar zone (umgonqo), a safe zone. The invitation assumes you're familiar with the social contracts that underline the encounters of such an assembly. If you do not know, what will you do with that knowledge gap?

eMgonqweni is also a place, a built environment whose materials are nothing else but social relations carried over kusukela emandulo. The architecting of such a place is a result of the dialogue between that which (is not past, but rather, that which) has got us here; with that which we have yet to encounter. More than a place, uMgonqo is an occupied state. In the same way that the photograph is an occupied document. Occupied by amaNazaretha, who, in large numbers still manage to exude such quietude. The same repose is felt when the artist-as-subject turns the camera onto herself. But therein, akayedwa, unezithunzi zakhe and it is here where the 'photograph as a document' falls short. Fortunately, we have umgonqo to make sense of that which defies logic or that which we cannot see yet can bear witness.

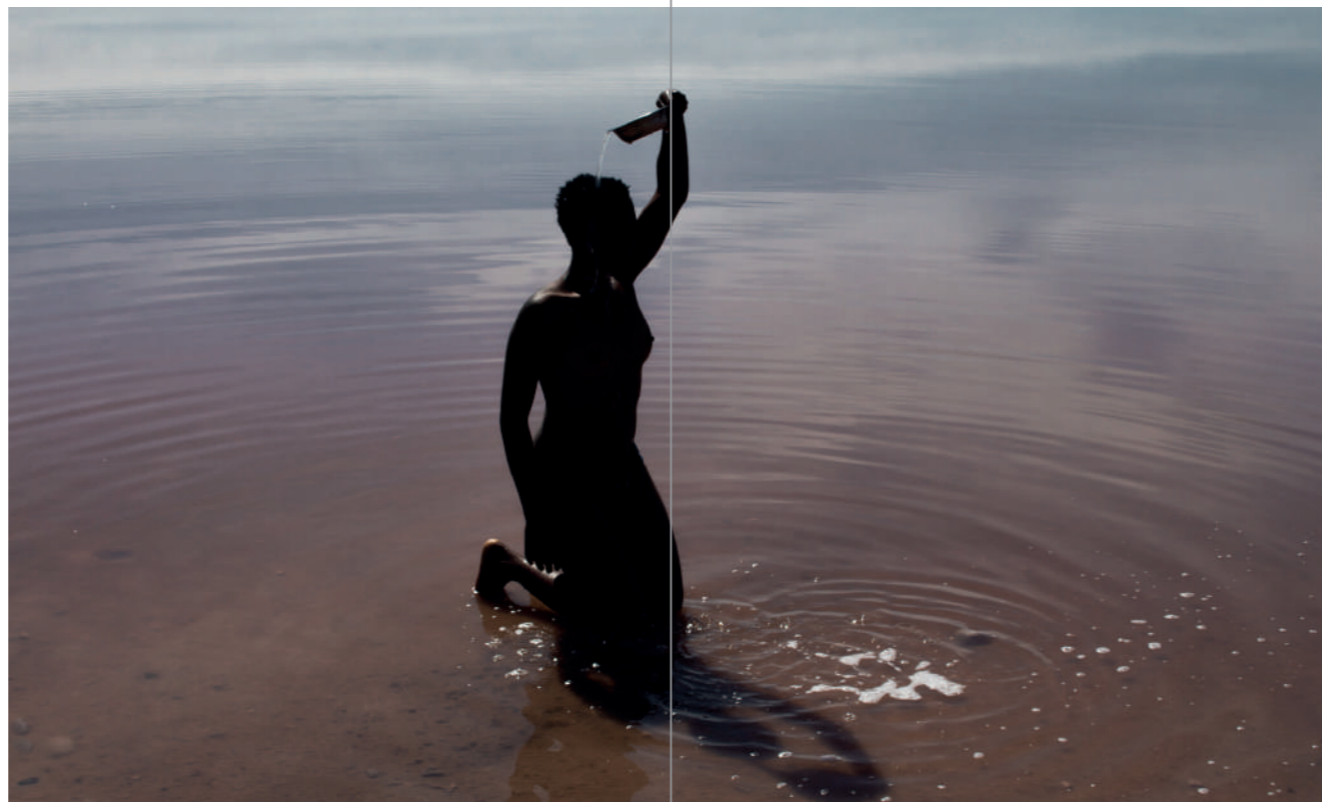
For it is, through and by, structures such as umgonqo that social fabrics are woven. Evidence of threads from the far reaches of our ancestry to the close trimmings of our futures. Siluka ikusasa ngohala wase mandulo. A small part of this exhibition is about visual perception, the greater part of it is about sensing. The making sense of life stages through umgonqo. The sensing of izithunzi. The sense of being one amongst a million unlike being one in a million. uMgonqo is about making sense of one's place in community, whether it be the one you're in or the one you're about to enter. Speaking of entering, to access this exhibition is to enter umgonqo, treat the invitation with respect.

By Russel Hlongwane











# Mangihlanjululwe.

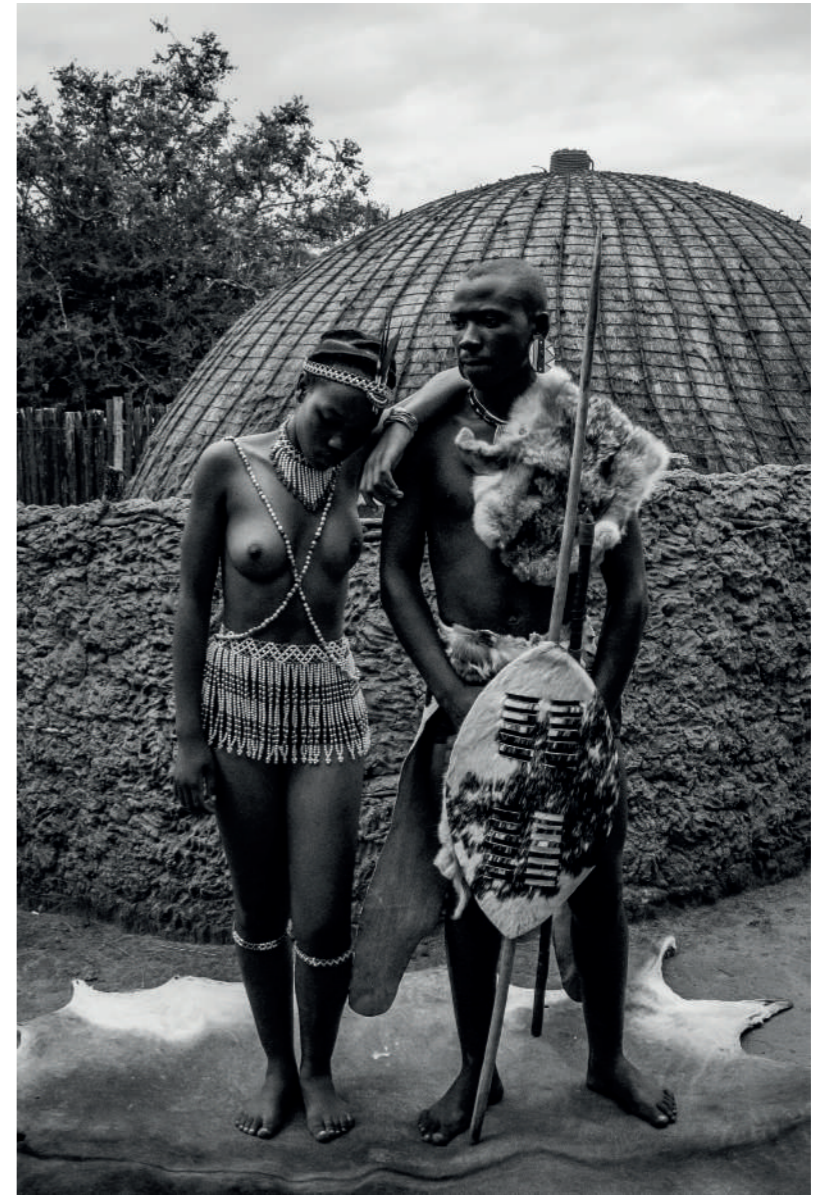
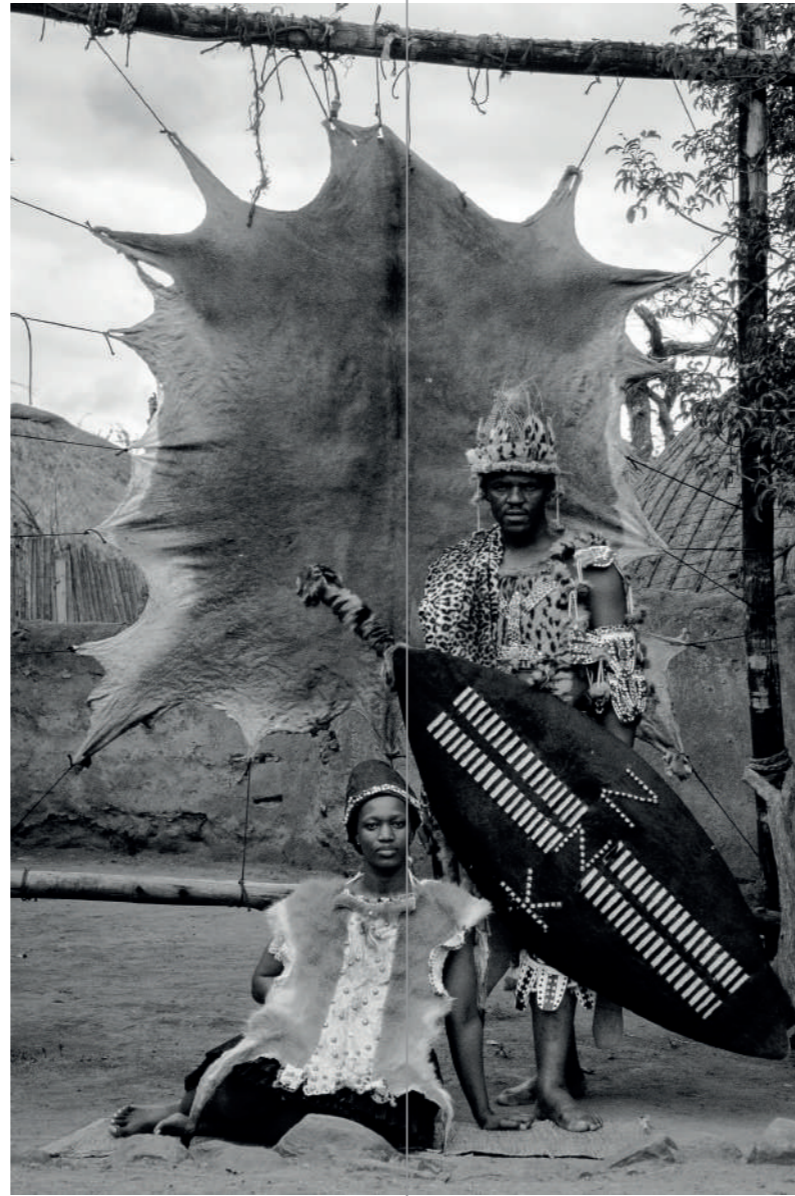
There is calmness and healing that water brings.





Ngaphakathi kumina  
kunomhlaba, izulu  
nenkazimulo.

I have the universe in its entirety running in me and  
I am slowly embracing it.







UGogo.

My Grandmother.









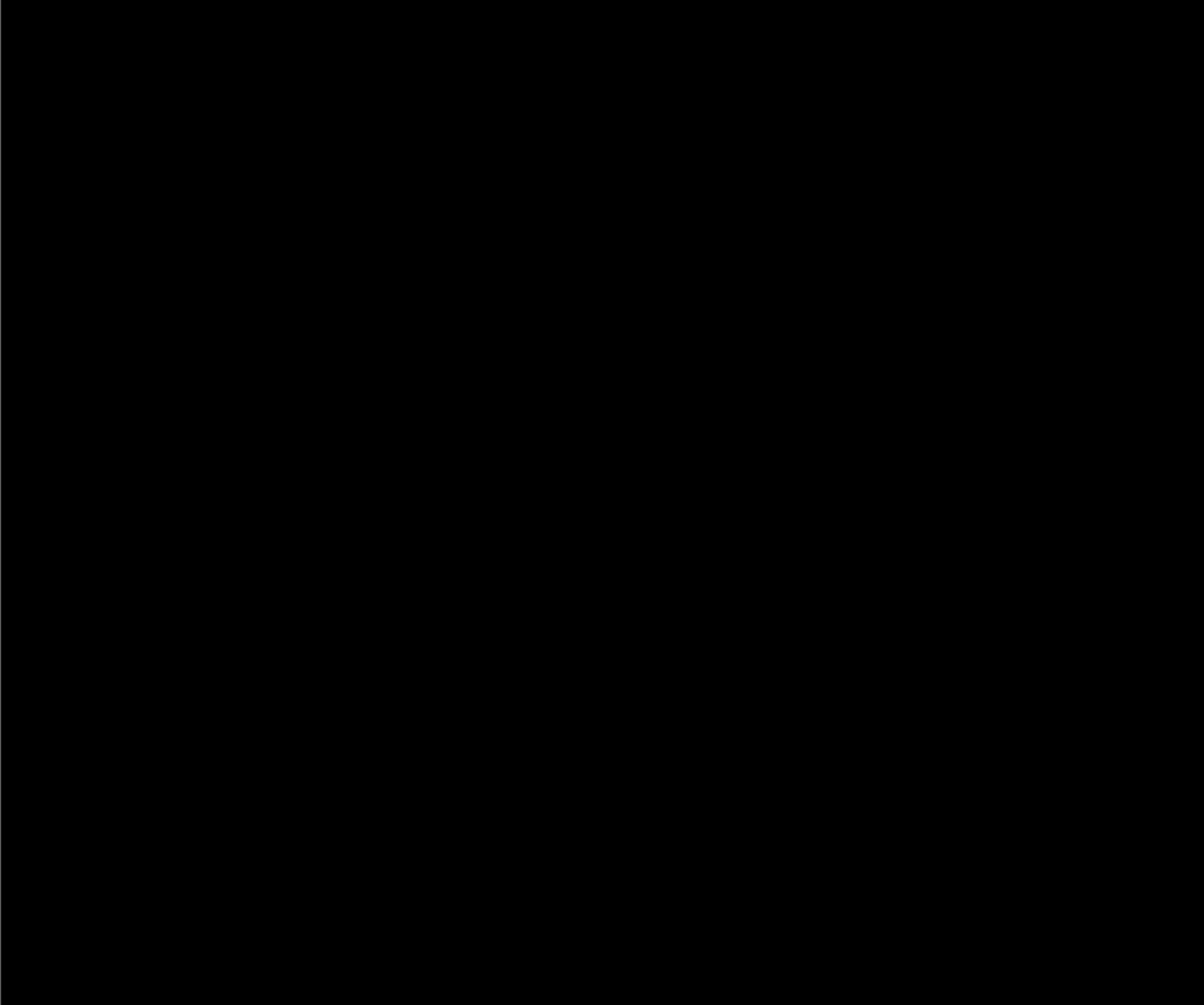


Ngiyalamukela leli  
thuba engiphiwe  
abangaphezu kwami,  
lokuzazi kabanzi  
nangokujula ngokuthi  
ngingubani futhi  
ngingowakabani.

I will utilise this opportunity these shades have given me to make  
better sense of who i am and whose i am in this world.









Lesi simo  
sokuzila  
siyinduduzo  
kimina.

How does this aloneness feel so comforting?



Ngisho ngingayaphi,  
izithunzi zami  
ziyangilandela.

These shades, they are with me wherever I go.







RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBITION





Ngizizwa  
ngilahliwe.

I feel very alone.











Angihambi  
ngedwa.

I am not alone.





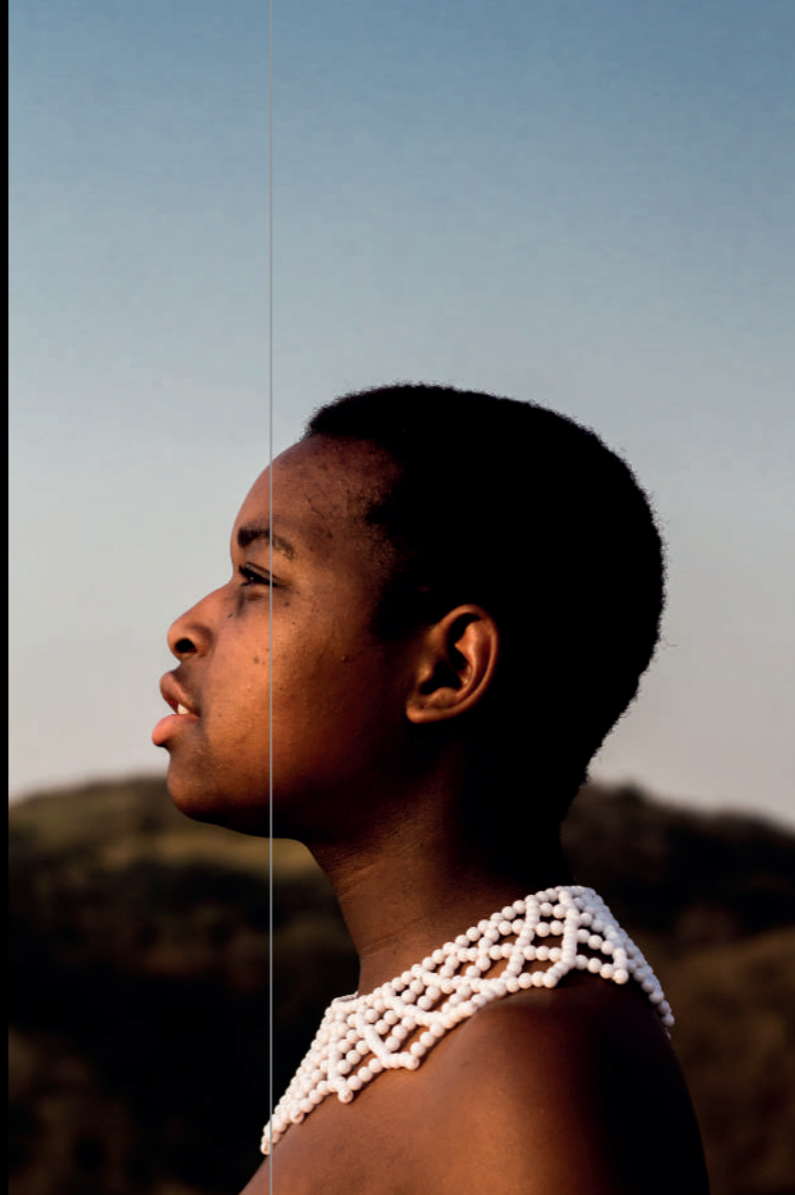


Namhlanje ngizophila;  
ngizohlala ebukhomeni  
bami, ngizindle kubona.

Today I will live, I will live in my own self and choose to stay there.







Lolu uhambo  
lokuzamukela.

This is a journey of self-welcoming.



Thank you.

Ngiyabonga.



**PAGES 06,07:** Izithunzi Zami 6 | 2016.  
**PAGES 08,09:** Izithunzi Zami 17 | 2016.  
**PAGES 10,11:** Izithunzi Zami 15 | 2016.  
**PAGES 12:** Izithunzi Zami 10 | 2016.  
**PAGES 13:** Izithunzi Zami 2 | 2016.  
**PAGES 16:** Ubhuku Lukamenzi 10 | 2019.  
**PAGES 17:** Ubhuku Lukamenzi 4 | 2019.  
**PAGES 18:** Ubhuku Lukmenzi untitled 17 | 2019.  
**PAGES 19:** Ubhuku Lukmenzi untitled 13 | 2019.  
**PAGES 22:** Ubhuku Lukamenzi 8 | 2019.  
**PAGES 22,23:** Ubhuku Lukamenzi 19 | 2019.  
**PAGES 23:** Ubhuku Lukamenzi 15 | 2019.  
**PAGES 24,25:** Ubhuku Lukamenzi 6 | 2019.  
**PAGES 28:** AmaNazaretha 1 | 2018.  
**PAGES 30:** AmaNazaretha 9 | 2018.  
**PAGES 31:** AmaNazaretha Untitled 1 | 2018.  
**PAGES 32:** AmaNazaretha 7 | 2018.  
**PAGES 33:** AmaNazaretha 11 | 2018.  
**PAGES 35:** AmaNazaretha 5 | 2018.  
**PAGES 36,37:** AmaNazaretha Untitled 2 | 2018.  
**PAGES 41:** Izithunzi Zami 3 | 2016.  
**PAGES 42:** Izithunzi Zami 12 | 2016.  
**PAGES 44:** Izithunzi Zami 5 | 2016.  
**PAGES 45:** Izithunzi Zami 7 | 2016.

**PAGES 48,49:** Izithunzi Zami 8 | 2016.  
**PAGES 52:** Izithunzi Zami 1 | 2016.  
**PAGES 53:** Izithunzi Zami 13 | 2016.  
**PAGES 54:** Ekhaya 14 | 2015.  
**PAGES 55:** Ekhaya 13 | 2015.  
**PAGES 56:** Ekhaya 2 | 2016.  
**PAGES 57:** Ekhaya 1 | 2016.  
**PAGES 60:** Ekhaya 3 | 2015.  
**PAGES 60,61:** Ekhaya 16 | 2016.  
**PAGES 61:** Ekhaya 10 | 2019.  
**PAGES 62,63:** EMahlabathini 5 | 2014.  
**PAGES 64,65:** Ubhuku Lukamenzi 1 | 2019.  
**PAGES 66,67:** EMahlabathini 3 | 2014.  
**PAGES 68,69:** EMahlabathini 2 | 2014.  
**PAGES 72,73:** EMahlabathini 1 | 2014.  
**PAGES 74,75:** A Saturday Morning eMahlabathini | 2014.  
**PAGES 78:** Izintombi 15 | 2018.  
**PAGES 80,81:** Izintombi 4 | 2018.  
**PAGES 82:** Izintombi 3 | 2018.  
**PAGES 82,83:** Izintombi 11 | 2018.  
**PAGES 86:** Izintombi 9 | 2018.  
**PAGES 86,87:** Izintombi 12 | 2018.  
**PAGES 87:** Izintombi Untitled 1 | 2018.

Born in Empangeni and raised in the township of Umlazi, in Durban, Buthelezi began her journey in the cultural and creative sector in 2014 as a self-taught photographer documenting the social and cultural landscape that exists within the rural and peri-urban areas of the province. With close to a decade of visual arts experience, she currently serves as an Advisory Board Member for the Department of Photography at the Durban University of Technology.

Buthelezi also holds a Post Graduate Diploma in Business Administration from the University of Witwatersrand (2021) and an Advanced Project Management Certificate from the University of Cape Town (2018). She also holds a National Diploma in Construction Management & Quantity Surveying from the Durban University of Technology (2011). Buthelezi is currently enrolled for her Master of Arts in Cultural Policy and Management from the University of Witwatersrand (2023—).

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Ngithanda ukudlulisa ukubonga kwami okukhulu kubantu abama nami kusukela ekuqaleni kwami ukwenza umsebenzi wokuthatha izithombe. Ngibonga isintu sakithi ngokuba yisisekelo nomthombo wogqozi nolwazi. Ngicela ukubonga kakhulukazi abantu bakithi nezithunzi zami ezingingunge mihlayonke. Ngiyethembisa ukusihlonipha lesi siphoniniphe sona. Lo msebenzi ubungeke uphumelele ngaphandle koMnyango Wezemidlalo Ezobuciko Namasiko waseNingizimu Afrika.

Ukube ngangemZulu, ngangiyoba yini?

I would like to express my utmost gratitude to the endless individuals who have inspired and stood with me throughout my photography career. I would also like to thank my culture for being a foundation and fountain of inspiration and knowledge. Above all, I would like to thank my family and my shades who surround me every day—I promise to respect this gift that you have given me.

This project would not have been possible without the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture.





Lolu uhambo lokuzamukela.



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