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Portraits of artists as young activists

Cape Town artist Khayaletu Witbooi decided to take the plunge into full-time art when he was retrenched, writes Penny Haw

PAI NTED on a skateboard is an unlikely place to find the face of Miriam Makeba. But that, says Cape Town artist, Khayaletu Witbooi, is the whole point of the artwork, which is to be shipped to Bremerhaven in Germany shortly as part of the Young Visions In Motion group exhibition curated by entrepreneur, photographer and skateboarder Kent Lingevelde.

Using his signature combination of stencilling and oil painting to illustrate how he feels about the late Grammy Award-winning singer, Witbooi calls the piece "Che Makeba".

It shows her wearing a trademark Che Guevara beret and singing, not into a microphone, but a hand grenade. The unlikely locale of the image and the militant trimmings are deliberate.

"Miriam Makeba was not only a diva," Witbooi says. "She was an activist who did much more for this country than many of us are aware. She told the world where SA was, who we were and what we were going through. That's what I want to celebrate with this work."

"I also want to remind people how manipulated the history of this country can be. Because of the way we're fed our news — mostly through popular media — too many of us remember the singer only for her music. But she was an important activist. We have to look beyond the way history is presented. Often it focuses only on certain points. It's important that we don't forget about critical people and things that contributed to where we are now. And by sharing this message on a skateboard, I hope it reaches a wider audience than it might otherwise."

Witbooi — who began working as a full-time visual artist only three years ago, and has already been part of two other group shows and held his first solo exhibition, New Dog, Old Tricks at the Worldart gallery in Cape Town in March — uses an edgy, urban technique to express what he sees and cares about.

The area behind Makeba's head, for example, resembles the wall of the old corner shops found in places such as Woodstock or Salt River where, says Witbooi, "freedom of expression is more obvious than in more formal areas like the centre of Cape Town". The wall is layered with paint, then floral wallpaper. Graffiti followed. Stickers were applied and pulled off. Posters too. Street artists sprayed their tags and advertisers attached their logos.



REALITY: Khayaletu Witbooi believes artists have a responsibility to present the shortcomings of SA's democracy. Picture: TREVOR SAMSON

"I want to give the feeling that you're not looking at a painting, but that you're seeing something that is between reality and ideas. It should be something you can easily relate to and make you wonder how it all got there. I want viewers to think about the many different people — some mature artists, some immature artists and some not artists at all — who used this wall or, in my other works, garage door, corrugated iron and tiles in a public toilet, as a canvas. They used the same space to say different things, to develop a language and to tell a history."

But, while the Che Makeba skateboard celebrates the singer's contributions as an activist and warns us against accepting history at face value, another of Witbooi's paintings, this time a large spray-and-oil on canvas, entitled Sold Out, tells a more sinister story of democracy in the balance.

In this case, the artist transformed the canvas into a sheet of rusty corrugated iron. Again, graffiti artists have left their mark, someone has

imitated Andy Warhol and others have scribbled. A notice advertising "safe abortions" and a Jacob Zuma campaign poster have been pasted on the iron and then partially torn off.

Most recently applied are the stencilled images of a couple of Stormtroopers (à la Star Wars) and a parachute, and paintings of a man on his knees, a tyre and an Independent Electoral Commission voting box in a petrol can.

Makeba was not only a diva. She was an activist who did much more for this country than many of us are aware.

Witbooi created Sold Out after seeing video footage of police dragging Mozambican taxi driver Mido Macia behind their van earlier this year. The parachute represents the invasion of the masked Stormtroopers — that is, the ambiguous "keepers of the peace,

the police. The tyre is Macia. "I felt the dark side of our democracy when I learnt about the taxi driver and a stronger sense than ever that things are not going right. It seemed the police were sending a message saying, 'This is what we do to you if you mess with us'. We voted for this democracy but it can turn against us. I didn't want to be too obvious in the painting or make it a depressing piece, but I also believe that as an artist I have a responsibility to express this reality."

Witbooi's work is extraordinarily measured, both in process and content. He is precise about how he creates it and what it says, and is determined to draw viewers in and challenge their perceptions of what is real and what is not.

"One of the greatest compliments I received was when the curator of a major corporate collection said he didn't believe that one of my images was painted. He thought it was a real poster that I'd stuck on the canvas. That's the kind of reaction I like."

But it is not just his work

architectural firm where he worked as an architectural illustrator for five years, that he began the process of becoming a full-time artist.

"In a sense, being retrenched was a blessing. It was a good job and it seemed irresponsible for me to leave it of my own accord. But when the recession came and I was let go, I remembered an article I had read about Ayanda Mabulu and the Good Hope Art Studio programme."

"I knew Ayanda because we had lived in the same place when I was in Cape Town previously. So I decided to return to the Western Cape and look him up."

Mabulu was gracious. He and fellow artist Loyiso Mkiye invited Witbooi to accompany them on visits to Cape Town galleries to show them their art. Although he had none of his own to show yet, Witbooi was encouraged by the experience and briefly went to his place of birth, Uitenhage's Kwanobuhle township, to consider his options and "find my voice". By the time he returned to Cape Town a few months later, he was ready to take the step and, having found a residency at the Good Hope Art Studio at the old castle, set to work. Charl Bezuidenhout of Worldart gallery was the first to sell his work.

In December 2011, Witbooi was awarded an artist's residency at Greatmore Studios in Woodstock, where he says he is enjoying growing as an artist.

"I want to continue to share relevant things I care about. Many of these issues reference SA but actually, they are universal."

"And that's important for me. I don't want to box myself in as an African artist. The only things that restrict me are my visual limitations. And those are unlimited."



Betraying the Star Trek philosophy

PHILLIP ALTBEKER

WHILE viewing the effects-laden, inflated STAR TREK: INTO DARKNESS, it is difficult not to wonder what Gene Roddenberry, the imaginative and innovative creator of the 1960s TV series, would think of the relative emptiness of the latest movie based on his brainchild. The episodes he guided usually contained a liberal message: antiwar, religious tolerance and racial integration were just some of the themes at a time when these ideas were neither popular nor mainstream entertainment.

This latest film has no comparable agenda and is, in fact, more reliant on present concerns — terrorism, drone attacks — than on following the science fiction's tradition of using an imagined future to warn against contemporary ills.

Trekkies, even though they might not admit it, found part of the show's appeal in its doggy sets and quaint effects. All of this has changed, of course, and director JJ Abrams has ensured the shots of mass destruction are convincingly realistic, yet they remain indistinguishable from sequences in other films.

It should be noted that Abrams, who will also be making new Star Wars movies, confessed that he never quite got the philosophy, as he called

it, that was Roddenberry's intention and achievement.

The exciting opening sets the scene for disciplinary action against Captain Kirk (Chris Pine) for endangering his ship and mission when he decided to rescue Spock (Zachary Quinto), the impassive half-Vulcan, from an erupting volcano on a planet far, far away.

Back on Earth, London and San Francisco are under attack, orchestrated by John Harrison (Benedict Cumberbatch), an old enemy in a different guise, and the Starfleet Commander (Peter Weller) must of necessity pardon Kirk for breaching the protocols of the Prime Directive, the principles guiding those who serve to boldly go where no one has gone before.

The characters retain the names used decades ago, so there are such familiar officers as Scotty, Sulu and Uhura, who are joined by the disarming Alice Eve, who plays a weapons expert who, gratuitously, has to strip down to her underwear to establish her credentials.

There is also a cross-species romance that would not amuse Roddenberry, but he would be deeply envious of the computer-generated imagery that Abrams exploits to the full, thereby redeeming himself after betraying the "philosophy" that he missed as a youngster and, alas, continues to resist.

Fragments and scraps of meaning

CHRIS THURMAN

THE Brother Moves On is an exercise in transience. The very name of this difficult-to-define collective — part underground band, part arts ensemble — expresses the principle that its members are not expected to stick around for too long.

Most of what they do happens in fragments. Although they have produced two albums and are technically on a "Quantum Leap" tour across Southern Africa, there is a deliberately provisional quality to their brand. The music seems to be in a perpetual mode of jazz-style improvisation; listening to their recorded tracks, you feel the risky ephemerality of live performance.

It is only appropriate, then, that their latest venture is based at GoetheonMain in central Joburg, the Goethe Institute's "multidisciplinary project space" in the Arts on Main complex — described as a "platform to independently develop experimental art projects". Arts on Main, of course, forms part of a much broader experiment: the Maboneng Precinct, which is either the most successful urban regeneration project undertaken in Joburg or the opportunistic gentrification of an industrial-chic "ghetto". Perhaps it is both.

It is already an important arts hub. Galleries, artists and fashion designers have offices or studios there, while a busy calendar of events draws well-heeled semi-bohemian crowds. Sometimes, the work on display



MOVING ON: Shards of a broken mirror in a room in which gold no longer has the same lustre it once did, part of The Brother Moves On collective's The Brother Breaks the Bullion, which is on at GoetheonMain.

or being performed pokes fun at precisely this audience — a subversive impulse that is partly what drives The Brother Moves On.

Their new "show" is both an installation (on display until June 20) and a couple of gigs (the next one is on June 13). Dubbed The Brother Breaks the Bullion, it is based on a typically obscure parable: "Once upon a time, there was this vault filled with gold bullion. The townsfolk accused the vault minders of filling their gold bullions with tungsten instead of gold and masquerading these as real..."

Visitors should not expect any conclusion to this mini-narrative, nor any further

explanation than the claim that this is a "theatrical interrogation into the value we put into things, places and spaces". A camera hangs from the ceiling. A suitcase of aeronautical-themed newspaper clippings, postcards, books and papers lies open on the floor.

We are led into a temporary room framed by gold drapery. The same gold material covers the floor. There is a gold chair under a gold lampshade, facing a gold TV that buzzes nonsensically. If this is the vault, it has been abandoned by its previous occupant, just as the other items were abandoned by their owners. We guess some terrible event has taken place.

Perhaps the fabled gold crisis brought about some form of apocalypse. Standing amid the gilded wreckage, I find myself recalling a misguided attempt, a few years ago, to stage a futuristic South African musical based on a similar premise: Streets of Gold. Despite a foot-tapping score, some funky video projections and plenty of money from AngloGold Ashanti, the production was a flop.

It was not just that it starred Amor Vittono as a tap-dancing evil seductress, or that it gave Tumisho Masha a chance to prove he couldn't sing. The problem was that Streets of Gold took itself too seriously. There is no risk of that happening with The Brother Moves On. Witness the large hole in the gold drapery, exposing a patch of plaster on which is scrawled: THERE WAS A MIRROR HERE. IT BROKE.

While there is an implicit resistance to "meaning-making" in this haphazard jokiness, I can't help but feel there is something telling in the new arrangement. The mirror now lies in shards on the floor; the gallery assistant informs me it broke during the previous performance. Indeed, the whole installation has the air of a hanger after hedonism — scraps of meaning are all that we have. Is this an allegory of the post-capitalist world to come, the end of the era of commodities and consumerism? Or the South African economy after the collapse of the mining sector? The Brothers have moved on; we'll never know.

**IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE
CHANCERY DIVISION
COMPANIES COURT
DEPUTY REGISTRAR J BRIGGS**

No. 3838 of 2013

**IN THE MATTER OF LONRHO PLC
- and -
IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT 2006**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that, by an order dated 4 June, 2013 made in the above matters, the Court has given permission for a meeting to be convened of the holders of Scheme Shares (as defined in the Scheme of Arrangement referred to below) for the purpose of considering and, if thought fit, approving (with or without modification) a scheme of arrangement proposed to be made between Lonrho plc (the "Company") and the holders of Scheme Shares and that such meeting will be held at The Livery Hall, Plasterers' Hall, One London Wall, London EC2Y 5JU on 28 June, 2013 at 10.00 a.m. at which place and time all holders of Scheme Shares are requested to attend.

Any person entitled to attend the meeting can obtain copies of the Scheme of Arrangement, forms of proxy and copies of the explanatory statement required to be furnished under Part 26 of the above-mentioned Act at the registered office of the Company, Lonrho plc, 2nd Floor, 25 Berkeley Square, London, United Kingdom, W1J 6HN during usual business hours on any day (other than a Saturday, Sunday or public holiday) prior to the day appointed for the meeting or, if you are a Lonrho Shareholder on the UK register, by writing to Equiniti of Aspect House, Spencer Road, Lancing Business Park, Lancing, West Sussex, BN99 6DA or, if you are a Lonrho Shareholder on the South African register, by writing to Link Market Services South Africa Proprietary Limited, P.O. Box 4844, Johannesburg 2000, South Africa.

Holders of Scheme Shares may vote in person at the meeting or they may appoint another person as their proxy to attend, speak and vote in their stead. A proxy need not be a member of the Company. A holder of Scheme Shares may appoint more than one proxy in relation to the meeting provided that each proxy is appointed to exercise the rights attached to a different share or shares held by that holder. Lonrho Shareholders with Scheme Shares held through CREST may also appoint a proxy or proxies using CREST. Completion and return of a form of proxy, or the appointment of proxies through CREST, will not preclude a holder of Scheme Shares from attending and voting in person at the meeting, or any adjournment thereof. Holders of Scheme Shares on the South African register whose Scheme Shares have been dematerialised (other than dematerialised shareholders with "own-name" registration), must advise their CSDP or broker, in accordance with the mandate between the dematerialised shareholder and their CSDP or broker, if they wish to attend, speak and vote at the meeting, and/or send a proxy to the meeting. The CSDP or broker will then issue the necessary letter of representation to the dematerialised shareholder to attend the meeting, failing which the CSDP or broker will vote on behalf of the dematerialised shareholder at the meeting in accordance with the mandate held by the CSDP or broker.

In the case of joint holders of Ordinary Shares, the vote of the senior who tenders the vote, whether in person or by proxy, will be accepted to the exclusion of the vote(s) of the other joint holder(s), and for this purpose seniority will be determined by the order in which the names stand in the register of members of the Company in respect of the joint holding.

Lonrho Shareholders on the UK Register should return their Forms of Proxy to Equiniti Limited, Aspect House, Spencer Road, Lancing, West Sussex, BN99 6DA and Lonrho Shareholders on the South African Register should return their Forms of Proxy to Link Market Services South Africa Proprietary Limited, P.O. Box 4844, Johannesburg 2000, South Africa, not less than 48 hours before the time appointed for the meeting but, if forms are not so lodged, they may be handed to the chairman at the meeting.

You may return the forms of proxy in accordance with the instructions printed thereon.

Entitlement to attend and vote at the meeting or any adjournment, and the number of votes which may be cast, will be determined by reference to the register of members of the Company at 6.00 p.m. on 26 June, 2013 or if the meeting is adjourned 6.00 pm on the day two days before the date fixed for the adjourned meeting. Changes to the registered members of the Company after 6.00 p.m. on 26 June, 2013 or if the meeting is adjourned 6.00 p.m. on the day two days before the date fixed for the adjourned meeting shall be disregarded in determining the rights of any person to attend to vote at the meeting.

By the said Order, the Court has appointed Ambassador Frances Cook or, failing her, Geoffrey White, or failing him, David Armstrong to act as chairman of the meeting and has directed the chairman to report the result of the meeting to the Court.

The said Scheme of Arrangement will be subject to the subsequent approval of the Court.

DATED 6 June, 2013

Thomas Eggar LLP, Belmont House, Station Way, Crawley, West Sussex, RH10 1JA

Solicitors for the Company

Ref: 45119611