

Khanyisile Mbongwa on curating with cure and care



By [Ruth Cooper](#)

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Artist, sociologist and chief curator of the inaugural Stellenbosch Triennale, Khanyisile Mbongwa, chats to us about womxn in the arts, sustainability and how to curate with the theme of "cure and care" at the forefront.

Mbongwa also works with the Norval Foundation as adjunct curator for Performative Practices and with Cape Town Carnival as curatorial and socio-critical development advisor as well as the Handspring Trust's executive director.



Khanyisile-Mbongwa - © Alena Gelen

■ Can you tell us about the idea behind the Stellenbosch Triennale's theme *Tomorrow There will Be More of Us?*

The theme is about imaging and creating common sustainable futures by looking at our wounds and instigating ways or methods of healing. It's about searching for emancipatory practices through remembering the ancestral, the spiritual, the imaginative and becoming.

It's about our histories of migration, our everyday lived experience and how we have to rethink our concepts of space and the distribution of resources.



Stellenbosch Triennale announces its official selection

23 Aug 2019



■ Are you hopeful for the future of our planet?

The Amazonia was burning in Brazil last week, this is a signal of the kinds of systemic challenges we facing and fighting – it is nature against capitalism and consumerist culture.

As a realist-optimist, I always have to be critical about where we truly stand as individuals and collective and, I think, we are fighting in our capacities and that gives me hope about human attitude that can influence the condition.

But we can't be ignorant about the policies, legislation, rules and regulations that are at play and thus for fundamental change in attitudes and conditions to occur, these need to be changed.



Sethembile Msezane- Water Bodies- Isinqumo I - 2018

■ ***What would you say is the overarching theme in your practice?***

My curatorial practice is centred on curating as cure and care. How do I through my practice instigate spaces for cure and how do I practice care?

Thus I work with public space, interdisciplinary and performative practices, unpacking the socio-political, socio-economic and historical-contemporary complexities and nuances of the everyday.

■ ***What does a typical workday look like for you?***

Admin in the early hours of the morning between 6.30am and 8am; sending various people work-related Whatsapp messages. Checking my calendar to see what appointments I have for the day – preparing for them.

A lot of reading for research and a lot of calls following up on one thing or another. Always jotting ideas/concepts as they

come. Long meetings. Skype meetings in the evenings, touching base with various people I work with.

And, in between, I take time to stretch, exercise or take a walk. I love my food so, breakfast at 8am and lunch at 1pm and supper at 6pm – in between I'm nibbling on fruit.



Bronwyn Katz - x - 2019

■ ***What have been some of your career highlights?***

- Twenty Journey www.twentyjourney.com
- Puncture Points www.puncturepoints.com
- Working with Jay Pather and Nomusa Makhubo as my supervisors for my masters.]
- Being executive director at Handspring Trust.]
- Working with Norval Foundation as Adjunct Curator for Performative Practices
- Founding member of Gugulective
- Working on the Stellenbosch Triennale as artistic director and chief curator

■ ***What advice would you give to aspiring female artists and curators?***

You can plan but know that anything can change. Failing is part of the process, trust it.

Intention is an important aspect in your journey, so be intentional and deliberate about the things you want – when you are clear, the path itself crystallizes in ways you can negotiate through your intentions.

Always ask yourself: why? Why did you choose this career path? Why do you want to do this project? Why is that specific thing important? Because asking yourself why keeps you grounded and humbled in your journey.

Define your practice because that gives you more room in how to position yourself in systems that generally disadvantage you because you're womxn.



Sethembile Msezane - Sebashilo Ukuthi Basilindile II - 2017

■ ***What would you like to see change for womxn in the arts?***

I think the question of necessary changes in arts require for us look at more intersectionality as it's more a question around gender, race, class, sexuality, body-ability and accessibility.

We need spaces that are intersectionally-safe for us to develop and define our practices in sustainable ways that recognise the contribution art has in society on a cultural and economic scale.

■ ***Which local artists are you currently excited by?***

Photographer Noncedo Gxekwa, visual artist Londiwe Mtsali, visual artist Lungiswa Gqunta, conceptual-beaded headgear artist Nondumiso Qba Nkosi, painter/performative artist Selloane Moeti, theatre practitioner Mamello Makhetha, graffiti artist Nadia aka Nadstar, visual artist Philiswa Lila, actress and musician Tankiso Mamabolo, painter Robyn Pretorius.



Wealth of Nations - Ogoni Nine - Poland 2016

■ ***Your guilty pleasure?***

Dark chocolate anything.

■ ***What's your hidden talent?***

Cooking indigenous meals.

The inaugural Stellenbosch Triennale will be held at destinations in Stellenbosch from 11 February to 30 April 2020.

ABOUT RUTH COOPER

Ruth is the production manager at Bizcommunity. ruth@bizcommunity.com

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