

Q&A with SOLO curator Nontobeko Ntombela

 By [Ruth Cooper](#)

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The 2018 Investec Cape Town Art Fair will take place at the Cape Town International Convention Centre from 16-18 February 2018. The fair will be launching a new section titled *SOLO* that will focus on the production of women artists. We got in touch with the curator Nontobeko Ntombela to find out more.



■ Which artists exhibiting at SOLO are you most excited about?

I'm really excited to work with all of the artists, and in different ways. I've been interested in the idea of how women artists deal with circumstances that are particular to them; women always have employed ways in which their work has an extended self. Be it called 'alter egos', some artists have appearances and others work with outer spaces – so I'm interested in what it means to be a female artist to have this extended self.



Ten must-see experiences at the 2018 Cape Town Art Fair

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■ What would you say is the common theme of the exhibition?

They all tell individual stories. These stories show us how they see the world. They give us insight into a world they have created through their art. But most important they use irony and metaphor to tell what is often a deeply held position on a variety of issues. These stories vary from mysteries of spirituality, rituals and cultural mythologies, to critical issues of gender, sexualities, politics, history and host of many other things.



Lhola-Amira, Narrative LAGOM Breaking Bread with The Self Righteous - SMAC Gallery

What do you hope the SOLO exhibition will achieve?

Critical engagement with art beyond surface representation, i.e. their gender or the aesthetic qualities of their work, but rather an engagement with the hard questions they ask through their work. I hope this platform affords them or rather adds onto, their critical acclaim in the art world at large. As a collective of many individual stories, the hope is that they show us the kind of intellectual contribution contemporary artists are making.



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

There have been many. I am grateful for the small and big things that have happened in my life. The ones that stand out the most are:

-2005: I worked with the Heritage Council of KwaZulu-Natal known as Amafa AkwaZulu-Natali as the commissioner of the public commemoration (statue) to King Dinuzulu that was installed in a public garden in front of the Durban University's city campus in Durban.

-2010: I was the guest curator of the MTN New Contemporaries Awards. For this awards, I had the opportunity to work with four artists who were, at the time, in their early careers but have since become South Africa's premiered artists.

-2012: I curated an exhibition at the Johannesburg art gallery titled: *A Fragile Archive*. This exhibition explored the work of Gladys Mgudlandlu, a South African black woman pioneer artist, who has sporadically been written in and out of mainstream South African art history. It sought to understand her legacy as a black woman artist who had a voice and agency even though she practised during apartheid South Africa.





Keyezua, Fortia 1 (3) - Mvart





Pamela Phatsimro Sunstrum, The Buffalo's Wife - Tiwani
Contemporary

▀ **What trends do you foresee in the art space for 2018?**

Critical recognition of women artists that is not essentialising.

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ABOUT RUTH COOPER

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