

WONDER BUHLE MBAMBO

To Find Me

ZÜRICH
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We are proud to announce the first international solo exhibition by Durban-based artist Wonder Buhle Mbambo. Previously, the artist solely worked with charcoal on paper, now for the first time he presents his most recent body of work: mixed media on canvas.

Mbambo states: "I understand my artistic practice as a space between my inner soul, my dreams, and my identity. I communicate my views from where I am standing as a black youth in South African society and the world at large. South Africa is in a moment of self-realization; reflecting and embracing its cultural diversities, whilst rewriting its stories through the lenses of young people who are curious, like myself."

Growing up in a Zulu village, ruled under a chief, Mbambo was brought up by his mother, the traditional healer of the community, as well as his late grandmother. Both led spiritual lives and in this way had a great influence on him. Mbambo explains: "I would go outside at night and look up at the stars, thinking that there must be so much to learn and appreciate beyond what is present in our community. I realized that one day I had to live my life outside my known environment. I had to do this, in order to find myself, and my position in this life."

The notion of 'turning towards the cosmos' is a central gesture in Mbambo's belief system. It is a way of looking into the future, believing that the stars hold answers and multiple possibilities. Through his new body of work, Mbambo expresses the pursuit of growth and prosperity. *To Find Me* is an inquiry into faces and symbols of achievement in communities. The artist highlights the need for role models, who pave the way for new ideas, bringing fresh energy and ingenuity that go beyond the struggle for basic needs.

Mbambo's curiosity stems from finding and understanding his own potential powers and a desire to inspire change. He seeks a shift away from racial stereotypes, in order to live his life beyond his imagination. His work is biographical and thus describes his personal quest in relation to his environment and the surrounding communities. The artist explains: "I feel that we are in an in-between state: while we still carry old souls, we find ourselves alienated in this contemporary world of ours – we are disconnected and may even feel displaced. Through my artistic practice, I want to bestow a feeling of spiritual guidance, in order to better ourselves and to inspire a future for upcoming generations."

Wonder Buhle Mbambo was born in 1989, in Kwa-Ngcolosi, South Africa. After he received his formal training from the BAT Centre (a visual arts residency program in Durban, 2009-2010), he studied fine art, under the mentorship of Themba Shibase, at the Velobala Apprenticeship Program at the Durban University of Technology (2010-2012). Mbambo recently had his first solo exhibition at the Durban Art Gallery (2018). In addition, the artist has been included in numerous group shows, such as at The Art House (Wakefield, 2018); Michaelis Gallery (Cape Town, 2017); KZNSA (Durban, 2015) and the African Art Centre (Durban, 2014). In 2016, Mbambo was the recipient of Bremer Kunststipendium Art Grant (three-month residency) and in 2020; he will be part of the The La Brea Studio Artists Residency in L.A.