



The new communication project of MIA Photo Fair 2018 that belongs to the Les Êtres D'Africadia series, created by the South African artist Siwa Mgoboza (Cape Town, 1993) is selected in collaboration with African Artists' Foundation and Lagos Photo Festival to represent MIA Photo Fair 2018.

Siwa Mgoboza explores notions of difference and belonging as informed by his personal experiences of prejudice and assimilation. Growing up abroad and subsequently returning to South Africa as a young man, Mgoboza was profoundly struck by the difference between his expectation of an egalitarian South Africa and the stark contrast of its reality.

As response to this, Mgoboza has created Africadia – a means to transcend – if only momentarily – prejudice based on preconceived notions of gender, race, religion, class and nationality. Hybridity is at the core of the Africadian experiment and Mgoboza imagines a world where absolutes become fluid and open to debate. A utopic intermingling of notions of an unspoiled Africa and Arcadia – as referenced in Greek mythology and the painting of Renaissance artist Nicolas Pousin, Africadia represents an alternative – a space where in Mgoboza's words, "we stop talking about the 'other' and start talking to one another." In creating the hybrid beings that populate the Africadian dimension, Mgoboza has drawn on his Hlubi heritage by incorporating the bright and densely patterned Isishweshwe cloth into his photographic, sculptural and textile work. Traditionally worn by women, Mgoboza references a motif that is immediately recognizable as "African" but on closer investigation, has truly global roots having arrived in Southern Africa from India via Dutch trade routes. It became widely embraced when introduced to Southern Africa by German settlers in the mid 1800s. Isishweshwe is a symbol embedded with the ethos of Africadia – of cultural interchanges across continents, of indigenization and cultural revitalization.

As visual device Mgoboza offers the viewer Isishweshwe as an accepted African signifier, but it is simultaneously reconstituted as a question that undermines its very "Africaness". By subverting both geographical and gender specific assumptions, Mgoboza opens up alternative readings of what it is to be an African.

Biography Siwa Mgoboza

Siwa Mgoboza (b. 1993) holds a BA Fine Art from Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town (2015), He was awarded the Eduard Louis Laden Art Bursary (2015), the Cecil Skotnes Award (2015) and the Michaelis Bursary (2012 and 2015). He was named the 2015 *Young + African Visual Artist of the Year* by Creative Nestlings. Having been raised abroad for most of his life, Mgoboza's work deals with a globalized African sense of self, a Western upbringing, and the liminal spaces in which these identities exist. Mgoboza has exhibited in a number of group shows in South Africa with, AVA Gallery, SMAC Gallery, Gallery MOMO, WHATIFTHEWORLD, Lizamore and Associates, Barnard Gallery, Hazard to name few. He was a finalist in Sasol New Signatures (2015), Barclay's L'Atelier top 100 (2016), and SA Taxi Awards top 30 finalist at Lizamore & Associates Gallery. He was featured at the PGH Photo Fair at the Carnegie Museum, USA and his work was included in the *!Kauru Contemporary African Art Project: Being and Becoming*, at the Unisa Art Gallery in Pretoria, South Africa.

Mgoboza exhibited his first solo at WHATIFTHEWORLD Gallery 2016 in Cape Town and his first international solo at Semaphore Gallery in Switzerland. In the same year he was featured at the first edition of AKAA (Also Known As Africa) in France, the Lagos Photo Festival in Nigeria, *Modern Africa / Rainbow Nation* in Turkey, the Nanjing International Arts Festival in China. He was also shown in *Womens Work* the Iziko National Gallery, Cape Town and *One Colour At A Time* at WAM



(Wits Art Musuem). He has been represented at the Cape Town Art Fair (2015, 2016, 2017), Turbine Art Fair (2016 and 2017), Joburg Art Fair (2015, 2016), and Art Africa Fair (2017). He has collaborated with printmaking studios Black River Production with their online initiative *50ty50ty Prints* and with APS (Artist Proof Studio.)In 2017 Mgoboza has shown in *Here Forward* at Matter Gallery in Canada and *Anomolies* in Switzerland Mgoboza's work is in several private and public collections including the University of Cape Town, The Friends of the National Gallery of Isreal, the University of South Africa Permanent Art Collection, the Carnegie Museum, USA, The Stack Bar, Cape Town, the Laurete International Universities Collection, USA, Wedge Curatorial Projects, Canada, Pick N Pay Art Collection, Souh Africa, BONHÔTE Foundation for Contemporary Art, Switzerland and WAM (WITS Arts Musuem),South Africa. Mgoboza lives and works in Cape Town.

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