



NEXT GENERATION:
Emerging Photographers From South Africa

GODWIN-TERNBACH MUSEUM, QUEENS COLLEGE, CUNY IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
THE ROGER BALLEEN FOUNDATION, JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA
FEBRUARY 5 – MARCH 21, 2015

NEXT GENERATION

Emerging Photographers From South Africa

February 5 – March 21, 2015

SANELE MOYA

SIPHO MPONGO

MUSA NXUMALO

ESSAY BY SAME MDLULI

AT THE GODWIN TERNBACH MUSEUM, QUEENS COLLEGE, CUNY, FLUSHING, NEW YORK
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE ROGER BALLEEN FOUNDATION, JOHANNESBERG, SOUTH AFRICA

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Cover image: Sanele Moya, *Ancestral Prohibit, Vumani*, 2014



Sipho Mpongo, *Young girls watch car drifting in Benoniub, 2014*

INTRODUCTION

ELIZABETH HOY

Each year Queens College, a senior college at the City University of New York, selects and celebrates a country or region. In this, the Year of South Africa, the Godwin-Ternbach Museum paired two groups of artwork spanning the past 40 years. Through a partnership with the Roger Ballen Foundation of Johannesburg, an organization dedicated to the advancement of education of photography in South Africa, the museum is proud to present photographs by three emerging South African artists who have come of age since the abolition of apartheid and the first democratic election in 1994. Exhibited alongside the photographs is *The Collection of Violet and Les Payne*. Les Payne, a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist, collected the artwork during his time reporting in Johannesburg beginning with the Soweto Uprising in 1976 through the mid-1990s.

The exhibition exemplifies the resonance and importance of art and art making as a marker of history. The photographs provide a unique opportunity to experience, through art, a palpable sense of the shifts that have taken place in South Africa and provide a glimpse into the current cultural and social atmosphere. This catalogue reproduces the photographs of artists Sanele Moya, Sipho Mpongo, and Musa Nxumalo. Artwork by this generation of artists reflects both the momentous shift to democracy twenty years ago as well as the end of an era with the death of Nelson Mandela in December 2013. So much of what we, as Americans, know of South Africa is filtered through the often-sensational news media. By looking at South Africa's history through the lens of artwork, the audience is able to see the course of history through the eyes of the participants—young artists whose vision and choices will help shape the future of South Africa. Through this artwork we are better able to reflect on a broader understanding of the role of colonialism, racial discrimination, and the fight for democracy in our history. By creating a meaningful exchange with another institution across the globe our hope is to create a space for dialogue and understanding. I would like to extend a special thanks to Same Mdluli and the staff of the Roger Ballen Foundation for their work on this project.



Musa Nxumalo, *Sihle Khambule 1, Spruit, Eastrand*, 2009

NEXT GENERATION

SAME MDLULI

The collaborative exhibition between the Godwin-Ternbach Museum and the Roger Ballen Foundation was encouraged by a conversation around the twenty years of South Africa's democracy. It presents two sets of visual artworks that reflect South Africa's past and current socio-political status. It does this through its medium – a collection and a series of photographs that encompass the complexities of a transforming society still dealing with a painful past.

One of the lasting legacies of the apartheid regime is the impact it had on the cultural lives of the black majority population. Not only were black artists faced with the challenges of racial discrimination, but they were also deprived of resources, facilities and, more importantly, space for art appreciation. The result is that many artists and artworks left the country, leaving a fragmentary and often displaced account of the black art historical narrative. The Payne collection thus invokes and fills a historical epoch, one that refers to a fragment of a larger story documenting the development of black art in South Africa.

The partnership between the museum and the foundation comes at an encouraging time in the prominence of newer expressive modes such as photography. The last decade has seen a number of South African photographers showcasing works that have earned them some of the top accolades in the profession. A significant amount of these photographers are young and based in the major urban centers, although their work is not restricted to these centers and sometimes not necessarily rooted in the South African context. The three photographers selected for this exhibition thus share a common thread in how, with cognizance of South Africa's past, their work starts to weave a narrative about the current conditions of South African life.



Musa Nxumalo, *Self Portrait*,
Naledi, Soweto, 2008

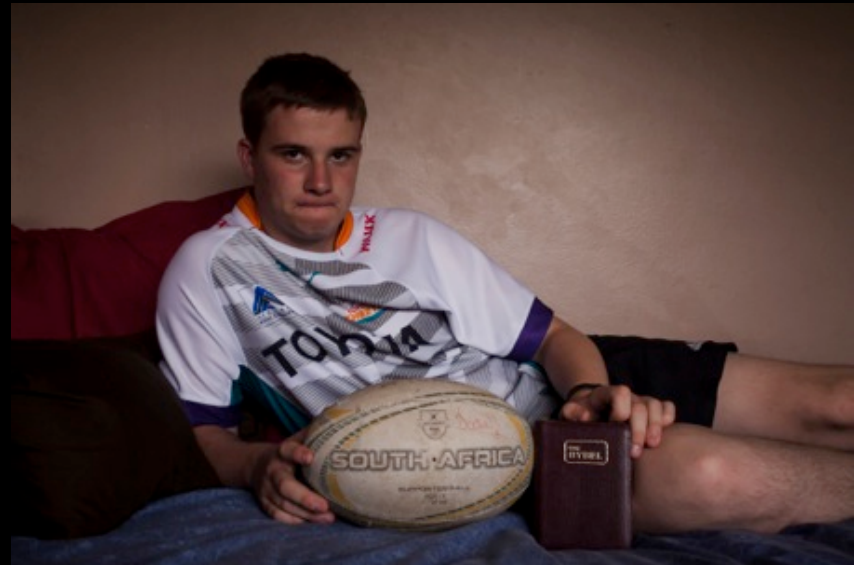
Sanele Moya's process of layering and superimposing one image onto another disorients and captivates the viewer at the same time. While the work plays with the ambiguity of space, time and depth, there is something unsettling about the density and illegibility of the imagery. It alludes to the pace of city (Johannesburg), but also to a personal account Moya says is "an exploration of the idea of self as a fragmented and unstable construction." The viewer is left with a sense of dissatisfaction of not fully making out what the images are of, or their meaning. On the other hand, the *Antonyms Validity* series is visually and conceptually less demanding. It displays a more sensitive play with light, perspective, and a sense of imagination. There is a magical construct and interpretation of the city created by both the photographer and the viewer; the images could hence be of any city, anywhere in the world.

Musa Nxumalo's *Alternative Culture* series is an early body of work taken from 2008-2009. According to Nxumalo it "documents urban black youth who choose to identify with alternative culture," and is as much about the personal as it is about the public space. In this series alternative culture refers to "the status of contemporary subjectivities," which borrow from the aesthetics and ideologies of so called subcultures like punk culture. In the South African context, however, the rejection of social values and norms associated with such a culture (given its basis in western culture) would suggest that this urban black youth culture is challenging an established set of values and norms. Nxumalo's images thus start to carve out a picture of this alternative space by placing emphasis on symbols that invoke personal space, identity, and self-expression, albeit with a sense of sameness. The viewer is left with the impression that this could be any group of young people, in any neighborhood, anywhere in the world.

In Sipho Mpongo's *Born Free* project we are confronted with an interesting paradox of life in post-apartheid South Africa. As described by the title, the project documents and interrogates the lives of a generation of young South Africans born into freedom. An important aspect of Mpongo's approach is that in photographing some of his subjects, he notes how it revealed more about his own character—his discomforts and unease—than it did about the subjects themselves. In other words the process of photographing those you perceive as different from you becomes self-reflective.

The *Born Free* series is, in Mpongo's view, a long-term project, which could lead to an intriguing archive of a personal journey that also reflects the complexities of a changing society. Although some of his images display remnants of the past, their strength lies in the notion of intercultural exchange between the photographer and his subjects.

Since its leap into democracy, South Africa has often been described as an infant, a child that had to learn to walk, talk, and express itself. Now in its twenties, the child can no longer be seen as an uncertain teenager but a young adult faced with challenges and responsibilities. Addressing some of these challenges is perhaps too much to expect from a twenty-year-old. However, the precarious place of reflection in which South Africa finds itself is encouraging, in that it is not only about finding its place in the global world, but also richly expressed by its colourful past and sense of rejuvenation, displayed by the works in this show.



Sipho Mpongo, *My grandfather is masculine...*, 2014

SANELE MOYA

(b. 1993, Ngamakwe, Eastern Cape)

ARTIST STATEMENT

Fragments of self

Through this work, I explore the idea of self as a fragmented and unstable construction. For me, the fragmented self is shaped by feelings, events, and moments frozen in one frame. Through my documentation of populated and sometimes abandoned spaces, I try to form a sense of cohesion by identifying somewhat of a pattern or motif. I chose to photograph using an analogue format; using black and white film 35mm and medium-format images, the work is scanned then retouched using Photoshop. I chose black and white images as I don't want any disturbing, shouting vivid tones flashing, just strong tones—white to grays and strong, black liner contrast tones.

BIOGRAPHY

Photographer Sanele Moya studied at the Market Photo Workshop and started an internship at *The Times* newspaper where his love for taking photographs blossomed. Moya's experience as a photojournalist, recording social conditions, was an eye-opening situation that persuaded him that he indeed wanted a place in the industry. He then moved to the *City Press* newspaper where he learned more approaches to photography, specifically what people would see in a Sunday paper. With experience as a professional photojournalist he chose to find his own way. By working on numerous film productions as a video and stills photographer he expanded his knowledge while working with different mediums. Moya is currently living in Johannesburg and working at the Market Photo Workshop as a course assistant.



Sanele Moya
*Antonyms Validity,
Light Streaks*
2014



Sanele Moya, *Ancestral Prohibit, Vumani*, 2014



Sanele Moya, *Ancestral Prohibit, Kho Kho*, 2014



Sanele Moya
*Antonyms Validity,
Parked Recreation*
2014



Sanele Moya
Antonyms Validity,
Pimville
2014



Sanele Moya, *Ancestral Prohibit, Makhosi*, 2014

SIPHO MPONGO

(b. 1984, Soweto, Gauteng)

STATEMENT

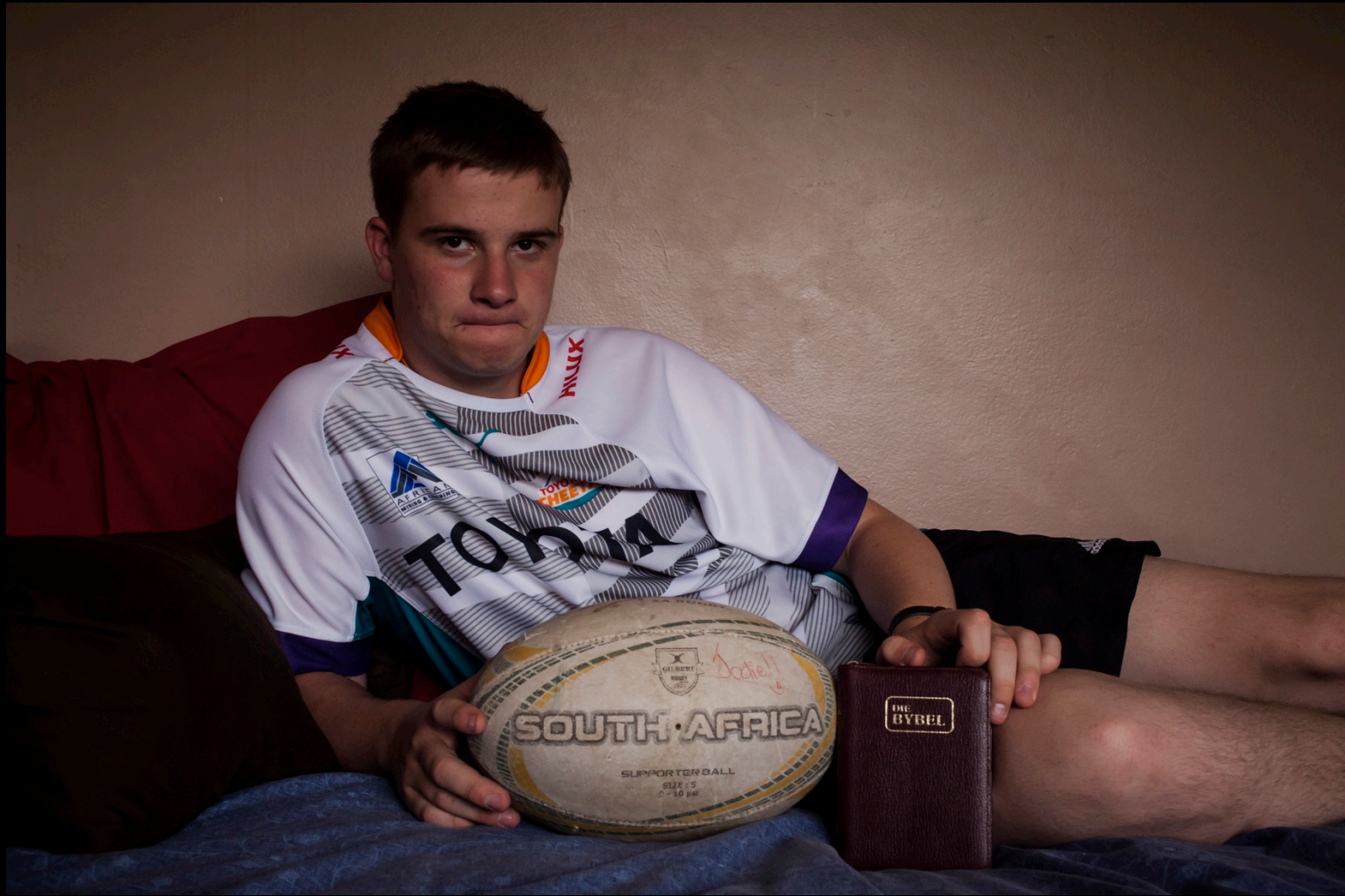
The “born frees” make up about 40 percent of the population, and the critics among older South Africans contend that they are apathetic and apolitical, unaware of the history of the struggle that made their lives better. Will they allow themselves to be defined by the scars of apartheid, or will they embrace freedom, choice, and opportunity? Taking responsibility for being exactly where you are gives you the power to be exactly where you want to be. They are the future. I will focus on the future. This project aims to challenge the idea of freedom, choices, and expectation that come with being a young person in South Africa. It also shows a connection through the exchange of knowledge, belonging, loss, dreams, and the exchange of being rebellious between people I photograph and me. My interest in anthropology and philosophy allowed me to become the one in front of the camera.

BIOGRAPHY

Sipho Mpongo was born in the Eastern Cape in a rural village called Nqamakwe in 1993 and was raised in Langa, Cape Town. Illiso Labantu, a photographic mentorship program based in the townships around Cape Town, provided the platform for Mpongo to launch into a photographic career. Mpongo has recently completed a full-time course in study at the Cape Town School of Photography whilst simultaneously contributing to various photographic group shows and projects in Cape Town and internationally.



Siphon Mpongo, Sixteen year old Chris gets ready for the Polo Game at Inanda club, 2014



Sipho Mpongo, *My grandfather is masculine...*, 2014



Sipho Mpongo, *Young girls watch car drifting in Benoniub, 2014*



Sipho Mpongo, JJ Mulder from Coronation Park, 2014



Sipho Mpongo, *Untitled*, 2014



Sipho Mpongo, *We are bokkoms*, 2014

MUSA NXUMALO

(b. 1986, Soweto, Gauteng)

ARTIST STATEMENT

Musa Nxumalo's project *Alternative Culture* documents urban black youth who choose to identify with alternative culture. In doing so, Nxumalo re-presents and repositions not only mainstream South African youth culture, but also the ability of alternative counter-culture to react against social stereotyping. In this context, alternative culture is both culturally dissonant and individually liberating. It demonstrates how counter-culture can function as a mode of complex self-fashioning. First popularized in predominantly western capitalist societies in the 1970s and 1980s, punk culture was characterized by a rejection of commercialism and political idealism. Today, however, alternative culture has largely been absorbed into mainstream society; it is no longer largely associated with anarchism, radical politics, and a rejection of social values and norms. Nxumalo's photographs question the nature of (intentioned) cultural divergence and the status of contemporary subjectivities, particularly in relation to the emergence of new urban cultures and dynamics. Nxumalo says that he hopes this project will "encourage cultural exploration among young South Africans."

BIOGRAPHY

Musa N. Nxumalo is a photographer and artist who lives and works in Johannesburg, South Africa. His photographs explore youth, culture, identity, and the journey to self-discovery. Nxumalo completed the Foundation and Intermediate Courses at Market Photo Workshop between 2006 and 2008 and has since participated in several workshops and master classes. Nxumalo has had three solo exhibitions and a range of group exhibitions both locally and internationally. His work continues to contribute to a larger discourse around the youth of Africa, their identity and culture. Nxumalo has won several awards such as 1st prize in Visual Art for the Impact Awards 2010, 2nd Prize for the MTN CIT:Y Festival 2009, and the Edward Ruiz Mentorship in 2008.



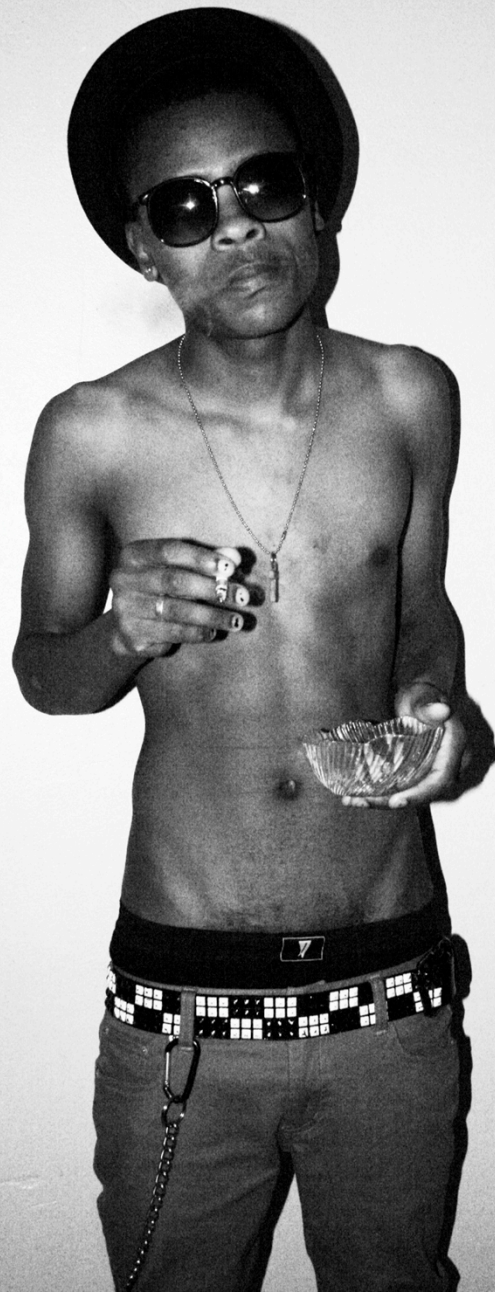
Musa Nxumalo, *Untitled*, Berea, Durban, 2009



Musa Nxumalo, *Sihle Khambule 1, Spruit, Eastrand, 2009*



Musa Nxumalo, Mamaki Rakotsoana, Rock Therapy Session, Pimville, Soweto, 2008



Musa Nxumalo
Self Portrait, Naledi, Soweto
2008

Musa Nxumalo
Self Portrait, Vaal,
Vereeniging
2009





Musa Nxumalo, Thato Khumalo, Vaal, Vereeniging, 2009

SAME MDLULI (b. 1983, Botswana)

Same Mdluli is an artist, arts administrator, and writer living in Johannesburg. She completed her B-Tech in Fine Arts in 2006 at the University of Johannesburg (formally Wits Technikon) and a Master's degree in Arts and Culture Management at Wits University in 2010. She is currently completing a doctorate in Art History at Wits University whilst working part time as the programmes coordinator for the Roger Ballen Foundation in Johannesburg.

ELIZABETH HOY (b. 1981, New Hampshire, United States)

Elizabeth Hoy, an artist and collections curator at the Godwin-Ternbach Museum, has worked in galleries and museums for 10 years, curating exhibitions, conducting research, and installing exhibitions at Queens College since 2011. Hoy received a BA from Wesleyan University and an MFA from the University of Pennsylvania. She has participated in Wave Hill's Winter Workspace Program, the Alfred and Trafford Klots International Program for Artists, Chashama Studio Program, the Stonington Painters Workshop, and AIM at the Bronx Museum. Her work has been exhibited in the United States and internationally.

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