

Kwasukasukela
Once upon a time



Sibusiso Mthembu
Ande Magoso

3-19 May 2024

 **KZNSA**
KWAZULU NATAL SOCIETY OF ARTS

KZNSA Gallery presents *Kwasukasukela, Once upon a time, a duo* exhibition by Sibusiso Mthembu and Ande Magoso.

What we perceive as truth depends upon what we're looking for. Woven through the work of artists Ande Magoso and Sibusiso Mthembu is the chance to recreate our truth through an alternate reality, brought home by the joint exhibition of their works, *Kwasukasukela*. If reality takes on a single trajectory, then both Magoso and Mthembu yearn to create a counter-balance, an alternative experience that works in a different direction to any singular narrative.

Magoso's paintings are rooted in land, both mythical and real, and in history and stories. In contrast, Mthembu's ceramic sculpture is light, of the air and of daydreams. Both artists use rare forms of expression in their chosen mediums. Early in life, Magoso found that drawing and painting shifted his focus to another realm, and as a young artist he was interested in the emotional responses of other people to his work. A conversation with the artist Caesar Mkhize sparked his interest in identity as subject matter. Since then, Magoso's paintings have evolved to become windows into an imagined world that depicts his identity as a young black man in South Africa. The past and the present merge through his single-scene visual stories, a mythological parallel place that uses references from the present, the past, and a cross-cultural mythology. Through cultural references and a purposeful symbolism, Magoso incorporates a variety of concepts in a single piece; the work becomes a meeting-point for different perspectives that allows the viewer to experience the work in a uniquely personal way. The male characters in many pieces reference both Pan and African sacrificial practices. In one painting, a goat tagged with the alpha symbol and a sheep tagged the omega stand together in a way that suggests both

an intimacy and an awareness of who is watching. In another piece, Magoso's twin sister stares us down through mask of blue war-paint, ostensibly ready for battle, wearing sheep's clothing. Do we, the viewer, become the wolf? Magoso's identity as a twin from a Zulu/Xhosa heritage and someone who speaks both languages, born in one place and living in another, all led to an early sense of duality in relation to other people, and works to accommodate others in his painting through his use of balance, opposition, perception, language and perspective.

Mthembu's approach is more pragmatic; he always had a dream of making a living with his hands. The mythological elements of his ceramic work draw on the tradition of Josephine Ghesa and harkens forward; his imagined animals seem to have their eyes on the future. Mthembu started ceramic lessons in 2013 with Lynette Morris-Hale, and in 2021 he met the ceramic artist Clive Sithole, who agreed to teach and mentor him. Mthembu calls himself a maker, believing that the word 'artist' is imbued with inferences and references that take a lifetime to hone. His mythological creatures, often appearing together in a symbiotic relationship, are derived from natural imagery and inspiration. Here is an imagined animal that carries a goat-form on its back; there are owls and fish, and an abundance of tiny birds. Mthembu speaks of himself as a product of the magic of nature; his background and interest is the environment, and the forms that nature takes. His references are natural and architectural, and the privilege of observation, of looking and seeing. As a result of these, something new emerges from his hands. He draws too on the works of crafters such as Noria Mabasa and Jackson Hlungwane, and sees a strong parallel between wood-carving and the

mythological sculptures he creates and decorates through the carving of patterns and textures into the clay.

Both artists are currently mentored by Clive Sithole, and the close working relationship between the three becomes a daily creative practice in the space they share. The trio works from a studio space and the cowshed in the courtyard of Glenwood's Phansi Museum, previously occupied by artists such as Derrick Nxumalo, Zamokwakhe Gumede and Peter Engblom. The balance and synergy between Sibusiso Mthembu, Ande Magoso and Clive Sithole, all at different stages of their careers, supports and informs their very different practices. The significance of the shoulders on which they stand is not lost on them. For Magoso, the importance of working on the property of the museum, a portal of historical and cultural references, adds weight and depth to his artistic practice. For Mthembu, it is an honour to work at a formal institution that offers the opportunity to reference cultural artefacts collected over time. The Phansi Museum and the merging of the artists' working and living spaces have become the foundation for Mthembu and Magoso's current work, brought together in *Kwasukasukela*.

Text by Kirsten Miller



Sibusiso Mthembu (b. 1988) was born and raised in Cabhane, a rural village in uMthwalume on the South Coast of KwaZulu-Natal. The pursuit of a better life fuelled his move to Durban in 2006, a year after he matriculated, where he explored career options in textile manufacturing and then as a business owner.

Frustrated with a life of employment and business, in 2021 Mthembu embraced the world of making as a rebuttal to oppression and exploitation. He wished to have more control of his time and to use his hands as a means to generate income. As a child he was interested in what he could make with his hands. His grandfather had one arm and endlessly worked - fixing and making with one hand and Mthembu was inspired by his capability and filled with gratitude for his own able bodiedness. His pursuit for freedom came from years of observing the dynamics of servitude as it pertains to 'his people'. He no longer wanted to be part of a group that relies on other entities for their livelihood, and making his own work provided the ideal platform for his values, interests and dreams to intersect. At this time, Mthembu began working with clay under the tutelage of world-renowned ceramicist, Clive Sithole, with whom he now shares a studio at the Phansi Museum in Glenwood, Durban.

Mthembu approaches art as a means of expression that doesn't always have to be predicated on a story. He is interested in creating whatever he feels, without always having the end in sight - a story that can develop with making. This method is based on his affinity to outsider artists and their practice and he is more comfortable being referred to as a 'maker' or 'craftsman'. For Mthembu the title of 'artist' is reserved for a very special group of practitioners creating work in several mediums,

with Thami Jali and William Kentridge as some of those who deserve such a title.

Mthembu has a keen interest in nature and how human beings coexist with it. This interest has led him, perhaps in a desultory way, to interrogate the human condition on a deeper level. It goes beyond human interaction with nature and spills over to how we relate to one another across socio-economic backgrounds and interests, and this is the energy he carries with him whenever he creates. Before there's an inkling of any messaging, Mthembu becomes absorbed in the process of making for its cognitive and therapeutic benefits. The ideas flow into the work as an extension of the state of mind he is in when creating; striving for a peaceful state each time he creates.

For Mthembu, what the audience picks up from his creations has more to do with their own ideas than an invitation into his mind. He considers making as the purest state of being and anyone who interacts with his work has the opportunity of developing their own story based on their respective frame of reference and the energy they get from the work.

In this way, Mthembu's earnest pursuit of beauty allows his audience to access their ideas of beauty based on their own understandings of the world.

Group Exhibitions

2023: *Ceramics SA KZN*, African Art Centre, Durban

Ande Magoso was born in Kokstad in 1997. Before the age of six he moved to Umzimkhulu and then to Kwa-Ngcolosi. While these places are in one province geographically, they have very different cultures and customs and this diversity is evident in his work today.

In 2017 Magoso earned a certificate in Fine Art at the African Art Centre's development programme, *Velobala*. He then acquired a certificate in visual arts in 2020 at The BAT Centre's Visual Art AIR (Artist in Residency) Programme, where he was the recipient of the Merit Award. Magoso's journey into the world of art was motivated by the desire to escape; escape from the real world by creating his own. It is not an escape that detaches itself from the world but instead uses what it offers in order to build his own.

Magoso says he is wary of attaching himself to a particular style as the story he wants to tell triumphs any stylistic inclinations. Rather, themes of culture and colonial history have become more pronounced over time. According to Magoso, those who engage with the paintings through a lens fuelled by religious rhetoric develop misinformed analyses. In his experience, western and colonial perceptions of the symbolism of horns limit the viewer's understanding of the work, and Magoso engages with those who bring tact and curiosity in order to shed light on any misreadings. His use of animals reference his upbringing where he had access to both Zulu and Xhosa customs. Goats are the animal of choice for Zulu rituals and sheep for Xhosa sacrifices.

Thanks to a conversation in late 2020 with the artist Caesar Mkhize, Magoso refined his storytelling. Mkhize encouraged Magoso to make his work even more distinct by incorporating elements that can only



be attached to his story, and nobody else's. For Magoso, his work is a window into his thoughts on being a young black man in South Africa; where feelings of frustration and anger engulf you and drive you to seek a new world; a world only accessible through imagination.

Being an outlier has allowed Magoso to experiment with technique, themes and storytelling; he likes to go against what's popular. After years of observing his contemporaries' work, he noticed that artists with commercial ambitions adopted a particular style of painting with smooth finishes and similar themes. Not wanting to be part of a trend is evident in the way he applies paint to the canvas, his choice of subject matter, and his burnished colours and sepia tones inspired by filmmaking. He references Stanley Kubrick's otherworldly framing and composition (*The Shining* is his favourite Kubrick film) and the multiple visual layers in Jordan Peele's work. The medium of filmmaking also offers ways for Magoso's characters to appear in subsequent phases of his creative process. The paintings do not exist as final pieces but as evolving building blocks in a much bigger universe where culture, frustration, anger, and symbolism intersect.

Magoso has participated in group exhibitions at the Menzi Mchunu Art Gallery, African Art Centre and The KZNSA Gallery. His work has been acquired by The National Museum Bloemfontein through The Art Bank of South Africa, and by private art collectors in South Africa and abroad.

Group exhibitions

2018: *Velobala Students' Exhibition*, African Art Centre, Durban

2019: *Reflections and Observations*, Menzi Mchunu Gallery, Durban

2020: *Year-end Students' Exhibition*, Menzi Mchunu Gallery, Durban

2020: *Botho Virtual Heritage International Arts Festival*, Wushwini Pan African Arts Centre, Durban

2022: *KZN Kwande Festival*, The Station Urban Event Space, Durban

2022: *The eThekwini – Bremen Visual Arts Collaboration*, Menzi Mchunu Gallery, Durban

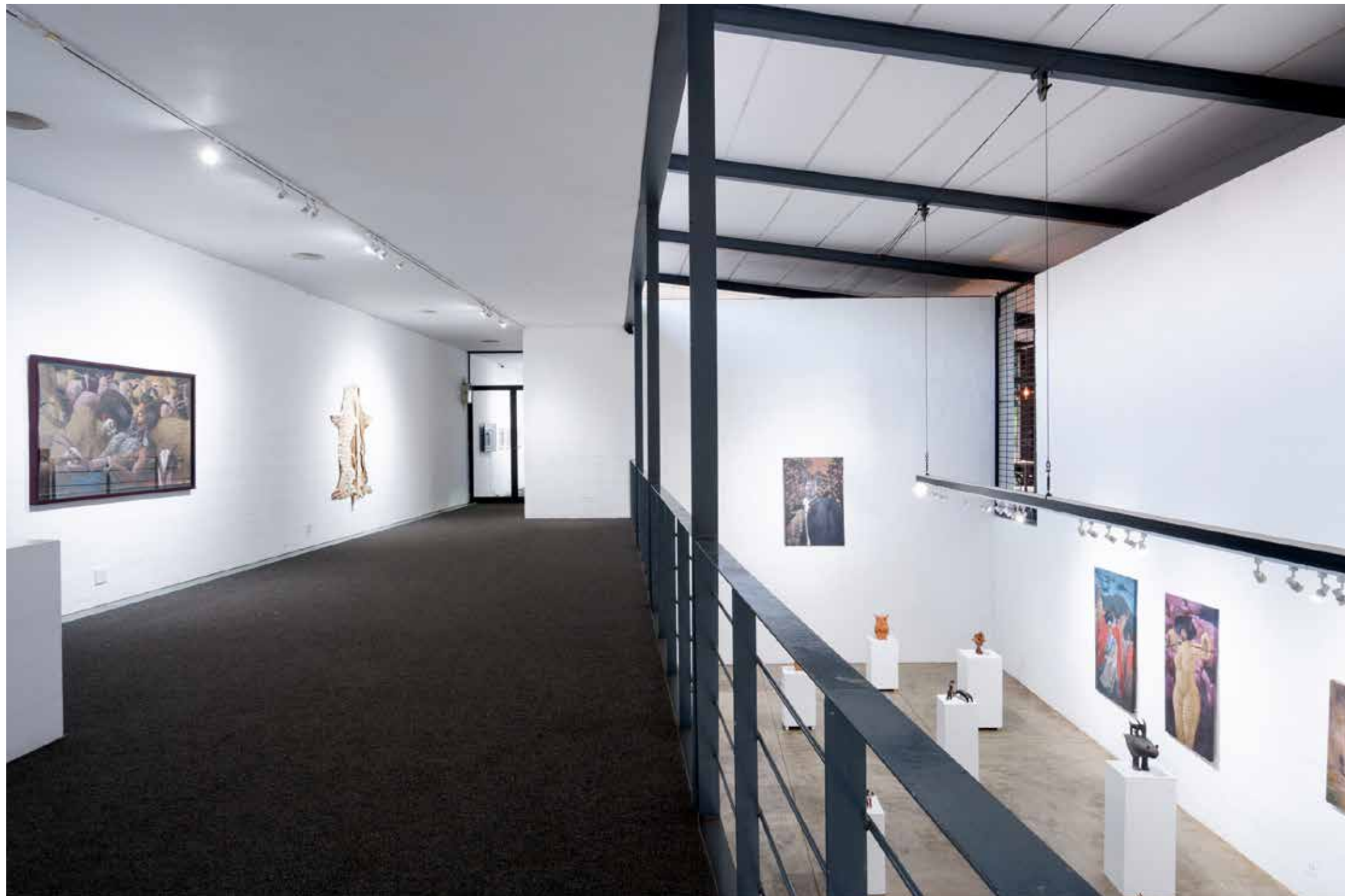
2022: *KZNSA Annual Members' Award 2022*, KZNSA, Durban

2022: *Romancing The Stone*, KZNSA, Durban

2023: *KZNSA Annual Members' Award 2023*, KZNSA, Durban

2024: *KZNSA Annual Members' Award 2024*, KZNSA, Durban







Sibusiso Mthembu

Devil with the Rooster (referencing Josephine Ghesa)

2023

Ceramic

33 x 20 x 33 cm

R 7 770



Sibusiso Mthembu
Gone Fishing (referencing the chicken man)
 2023
 Ceramic
 30 x 9 x 16 cm
 R 7 840



Sibusiso Mthembu
Centaur and a Goat (Respect to Thami Jali)
 2024
 Ceramic
 30 x 12 x 26 cm
 R 4 998



Sibusiso Mthembu
Horse and the Rooster
 2023
 Ceramic
 44 x 15 x 34.5 cm
 R 1 820



Sibusiso Mthembu

Inyonikayiphumuli with Bamana Antelope

2024

Ceramic

48 x 20 x 43 cm

R 21 000



Sibusiso Mthembu
Southern African Headrest
 2023
 Ceramic
 14 x 6.5 x 18 cm
 R 2 198



Sibusiso Mthembu
Zulu Elegance
 2024
 Ceramic
 16.5 x 7.5 x 9 cm
 R 5 040



Sibusiso Mthembu
Zulu Elegant Tile
 2024
 Ceramic
 18 x 8 cm
 R 4 200



Sibusiso Mthembu
***African Headrest
 (Respect to the Phansi Museum)***
 2023
 Ceramic
 35 x 8 x 23.5 cm
 R 5 180



Sibusiso Mthembu

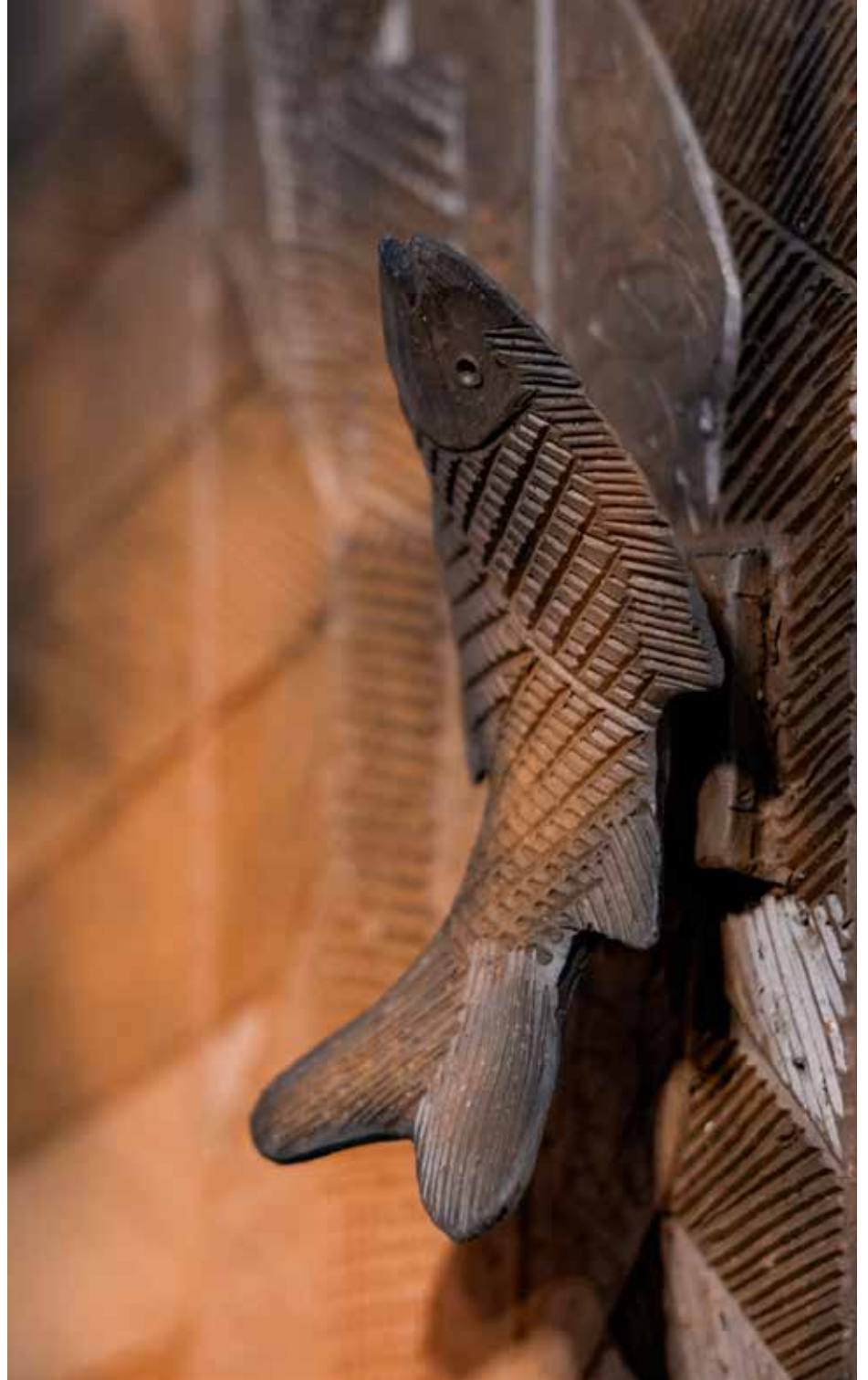
The Mask

2023

Ceramic

16 x 14.5 x 33.5 cm

R 6 678



Sibusiso Mthembu
Shack Door Tile I (right)
2024
Ceramic
19 x 5 x 37 cm
R 2 520



Sibusiso Mthembu
Shack Door Tile II (left)
2024
Ceramic
16.5 x 4.5 x 34.5 cm
R 1 960





Sibusiso Mthembu

Izikhonkwana Zekhaya I, II & III

2023

Ceramic

Various

R 2 940 each



Sibusiso Mthembu

Izikhonkwana Zekhaya I, II & III

2023

Ceramic

Various

R 2 940 each



Sibusiso Mthembu
Imbenge Nezinyoni
 2024
 Ceramic
 32 x 19 x 20.5 cm
 POR



Sibusiso Mthembu
uPhiso Nezinyoni (Dedicated to Clive Sithole and Rebecca Matibe)
 2024
 Ceramic
 23 x 23 x 31 cm
 NFS



Sibusiso Mthembu

Fish on a Drum (referencing Jackson Hlungwana)

2023

Ceramic

43 x 13 x 30.5 cm

R 11 200



Sibusiso Mthembu

Zulu Birds

2023

Ceramic

Various

R 322 each



Sibusiso Mthembu
Isikhova Nenhlanzi Ekhanda
2024
Ceramic
40 x 22 x 12 cm
R 11 900



Sibusiso Mthembu
Isikhova
2024
Ceramic
17 x 14 x 32.5 cm
R 7 000



Sibusiso Mthembu
Isikhova Nenhlanzi Esifubeni
2024
Ceramic
20 x 19 x 39 cm
R 12 460



Sibusiso Mthembu
Jo's Owl
2024
Ceramic
16 x 13 x 24 cm
NFS



Sibusiso Mthembu
Pumpkin Pot
 2022
 Ceramic
 31 x 31 x 19 cm
 POR



Sibusiso Mthembu
Copper Rock
 2022
 Ceramic
 29 x 29 x 31 cm
 R 13 090



Sibusiso Mthembu

Wabisabi

2022

Ceramic

29 x 29 x 17.5 cm

NFS

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Ande Magoso

Alpha & Omega III

2024

Acrylic on canvas

93.5 x 149 cm

NFS

Ande Magoso

Isikhumba

2024

Goat hide and cotton wool

154 x 186 cm

R 67 200







Ande Magoso

Genesis IV

2024

Acrylic on paper, framed

113 x 212 cm

R 67 200



Ande Magoso

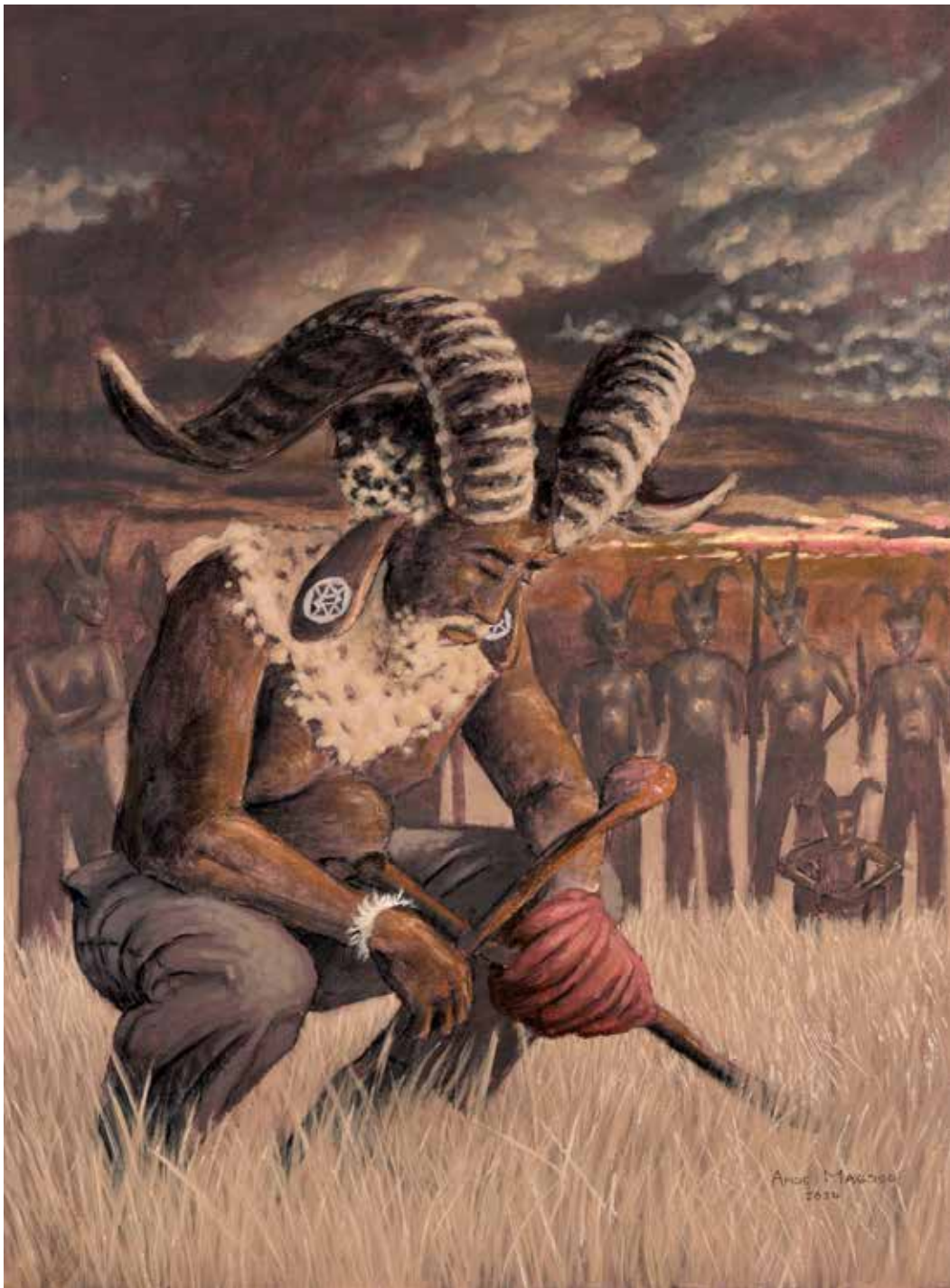
Genesis III

2024

Acrylic on canvas

91 x 191 cm

R 70 000



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Ande Magoso

Ukuhlela Kwenqama

2024

Mixed media on canvas

121 x 90 cm

R 49 000

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Ande Magoso

Jethro II

2024

Acrylic on canvas

84 x 59.5 cm

R 33 600

Ande Magoso

Jethro

2024

Mixed media on brown card

112.5 x 85 cm

R 36 400







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Ande Magoso

The Third of May

2024

Acrylic on canvas

97 x 153 cm

R 56 000

Ande Magoso

uNoncokwana

2024

Acrylic on canvas

150 x 100 cm

R 58 100



(previous page)

Ande Magoso

uMaSiwela

2024

Acrylic on canvas

154 x 102 cm

R 58 800

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Ande Magoso

uZandisiwe III

2024

Acrylic on canvas

148.5 x 93 cm

R 58 800

Ande Magoso

uMaMbanjwa

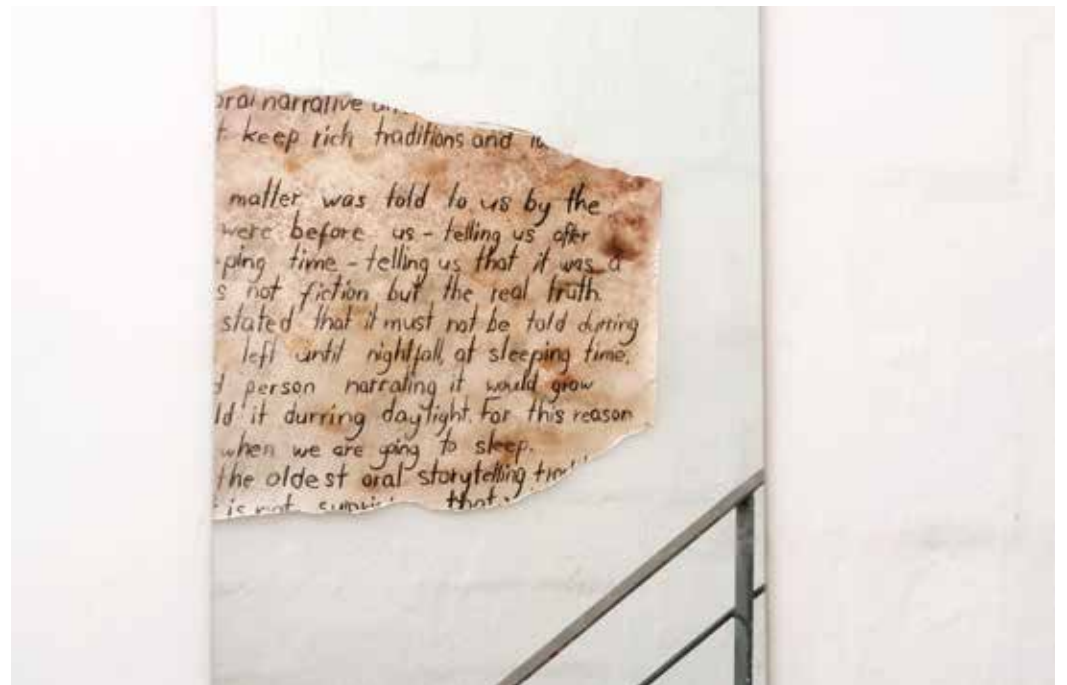
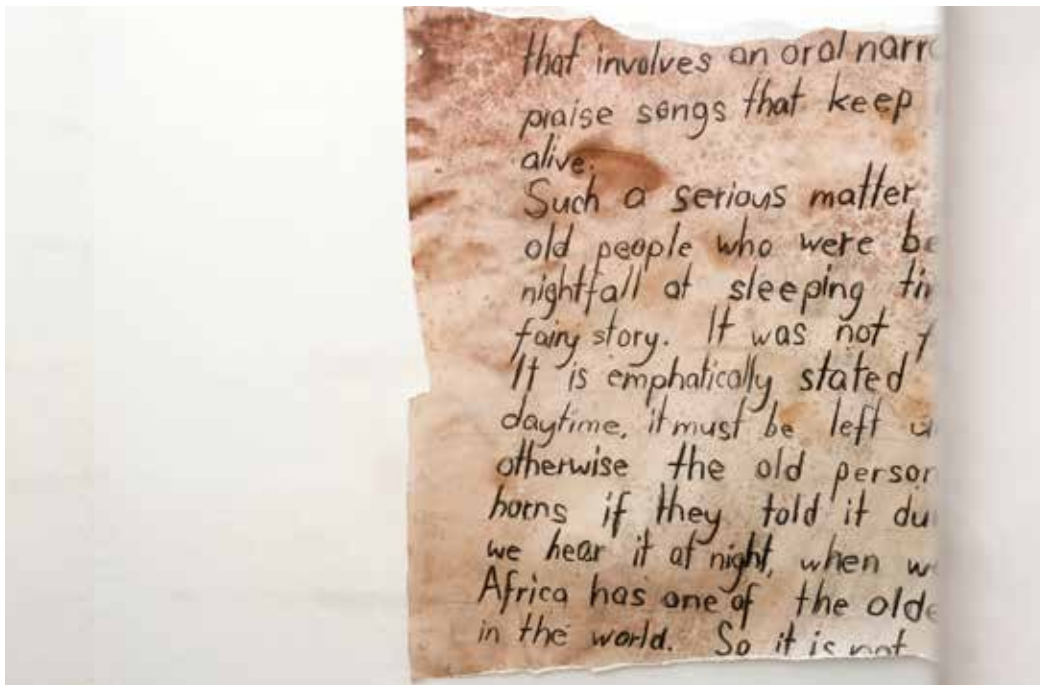
2024

Acrylic on canvas

113 x 82.5 cm

R 49 000





Ande Magoso
Incazelo
2024
Mixed media on paper
165 x 113 cm
R 16 800



Ande Magoso

Izimpondo

2024

Izimpondo and cotton wool

68 x 22 x 27 cm

R 11 200

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