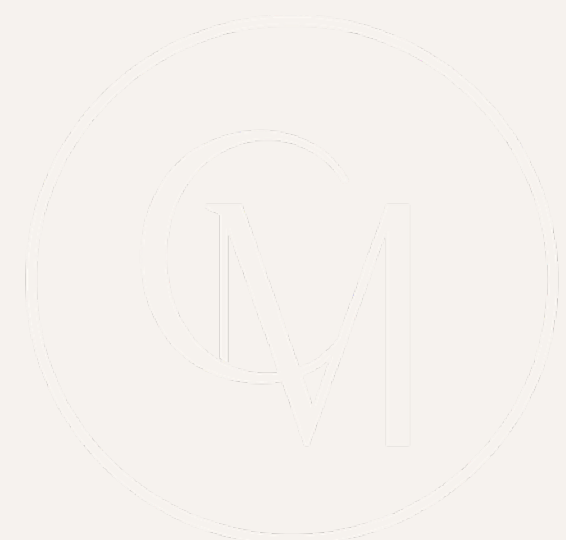




CHRISTOPHER MOLLER

GALLERY

TSOKU MAELA



DAVID OLATOYE 'LOVE'

AUGUST 2023



GALLERY



APPROPRIATE III - MATEBELE LIVE THERE

In 1883, the Ndzundza Ndebele clan were defeated in a war against President Paul Kruger's Afrikaansche Republiek Army and seized their ancestral farmland, placing Ndzundza families on Boer farms to work as indentured labour for a minimum of five years. Ndebele families, who until then, had lived in villages, were now isolated from one another and forced to confront the fundamental question of keeping their traditions alive when they had been taken from their ancestral land. Inspired by the sophisticated design of their beaded aprons, the Ndebele women developed an architectural style that made the individual family home a village and a symbol that showed that "the Ndebele lived here." Ndebele art was brought to the world's attention in the 1940s through the work of photographers like Constance Stuart Larrabee. Ironically, the apartheid government actively encouraged the painting and even went so far as to create cultural villages, which served as an advertisement for so-called tribal purity. In the end, economics has done what politics could not: As more and more Ndebele have been forced to work in cities, their culture and traditions have been gradually diluted.

A Ndebele bride will often be seen wearing the very popular item known as the Umbahlo blanket or ikombese (from the Afrikaans 'kometers', which means blanket). She will also wear copper brass rings known as idzila around her arms, legs and neck, as symbols of the bond she shares with her husband. The abundance of ornaments and jewellery, common in most traditional African attire, symbolises the Ndebele woman's status in society. The neck beads and neckpieces are handmade and can cost 1000 ZAR and above, as this is the only way for most of the older members of the indigenous groups to make money. However, very few remain who can still make diaparo tsa setso (traditional clothing). "When we die, who will teach our children? They don't want to know. When we die, our children will stay not knowing. Retailers stock things that I make but then don't know what they mean. They just sell them because they want business. I know the history. When I dress my customers, I tell them what each item means and who it's meant for."





APPROPRIATE III - MATEBELE LIVE THERE

Gicleé Photo Rag archival print, dibond mounted Ed, of 10
106 x 153cm (42.4 x 61.2 inches)
USD 4,000 excl 15% SA vat

APPROPRIATE V - WE WONT MOVE

South Africa experienced such devastation under apartheid, where families and communities were divided along racial lines by segregating cities into racially constructed group areas under the Group Area Act passed on the 27th of April 1950. This is also roughly around the same time a subculture now known as “Pantsula” emerged as a response to the forced removals occurring in Sophiatown and Alexandra, two townships located in Johannesburg. In 1955, Jürgen Schadeberg famously photographed three dandy looking men playing a game known as “Morabaraba” during the removals with the wall behind them graffitied with the phrase “We won’t move”, a sentiment shared and echoed by the spirit of the locals. Known for its unorthodox, energetic, quick-stepping body movements and inspired by dances of Mqaquanga, Marabi (Sotho culture) and the rise of B-Boy culture in America, Pantsula quickly became a dance of rebellion when younger men started to take note of it from the older heads who started it during street events and protests and inducted it into street culture. The dance can be performed as a solo performance, but it often takes on the form of a group dance where everyone is in sync and is presented as unified through motion and attire.

The dance became popular in the 1980s as a form of recognised culture beholden to its own language (tostsi taal, or “thug language”). The aesthetic - checkered shirts, flannels, a bucket hat (informally known as a spotti), a pair of All Stars and most importantly, its own music that embodied the same rebellion in style and approach, Kwaito. One would think that, today, in the age of decadence and self, where the individuation process would perfectly mirror the rebellious nature of the subculture, Pantsula would be of extreme importance to the country and the anti-establishment youth. But the subculture and dance has been relegated by the very symbols that gave it prominence as a dance of thugs and young men from the ghetto. A wayward youth that does not comply. Many young, aspiring Pantsula or teenagers from impoverished townships are often found with a Coca-Cola crate at a traffic light, waiting for it to turn red and give a 15 second rendition of an otherwise infinite culture to annoyed drivers who now only see it as a form of entertainment and way to scavenge any loose change from their pockets. To them it is charity work, not an art form. Once again the remnants of a racist legislation remain in modern South Africa where the ripple effects of the destruction of communities has forcibly moved the new generation to the streets, where they now dance for survival instead of dancing according to their own conditions. A dance of rebellion.





APPROPRIATE V - WE WONT MOVE

Cicleé Photo Rag archival print, dibond mounted Ed, of 10
106 x 153cm (42.4 x 61.2 inches)
USD 4,000 excl 15% SA vat

APPROPRIATE IV - THE LAST STAND

In 2016, I travelled to Nairobi, Kenya and had an encounter with the local Maasai draped in their traditional, strong and durable Shùka cloth while visiting the national park. They fit the stereotypical brochure description we've all come to know and imagine them to be: tall, dark and jump higher than kangaroos. The jump is known as the Adamu. They perch themselves strategically outside the reserve where tourists pay \$100 to see wild animals, and realised they could make a quick buck. \$10 gets you a participatory jump with the infamous Maasai warrior and surprisingly, many tourists pay it. And jump. Then leave. When the Maasai asked me why I had refused their generous offer, I said: "I'm from Africa, my brothers," to which they joined in with laughter before we sat and spoke about the different Maasai tribes in Kenya. They did not charge me for that, but the experience sounded like a well-rehearsed sales pitch or oration by a tour guide. These were younger, new generation Maasai who had capitalised on Kenya's tourist market and, to be fair, probably knew very little of their own history, but tapped into the exoticisation of their culture by a Western gaze.

The tourists favourite Adamu highlights a pivotal moment as part of a series of rituals known as the Eunoto, ceremonies in which junior warriors, or "Morami", graduate to the ranks of manhood. A notable part of the ceremony is the Emuratta, when the young Maasai are circumcised and required not to flinch, after which they elevate to junior Moran. The young Morani are then moved to a manyatta, an encampment where they can eat and drink in the presence of women as a symbol of their independence. The ceremony may last for about ten days where ritual cow slaughter and alcohol made from fermented roots of aloe and honey may pass the lips of the new warriors for the first time. And only then, the Adamu takes place inside a circle of bodies formed by the Morani, one or two entering at a time, with heels never touching the ground the Morani begin to jump in the presence of song to match the jump. The higher or more graceful the jump, the more appealing they are to the young women looking on. This is perhaps but a facet of a rich Maasai culture that was lost into economical translation, just as it was in 2012 when Louis Vuitton paraded their spring/summer collection of hats and scarves inspired by the Maasai Shúka. Fast-forward to 2018 and most Tanzanian Maasai find themselves homeless in their native Loliondo area as the government favours tourism over culture.





APPROPRIATE IV - THE LAST STAND

Cicleé Photo Rag archival print, dibond mounted Ed, of 10
106 x 153cm (42.4 x 61.2 inches)
USD 4,000 excl 15% SA vat

FATHERS AND SONS

The line between hero and villain is blurred by perspective and experience. A villain is defined as a cruelly malicious person involved in or devoted to wickedness or crime. Conversely, a hero is defined as courageous or someone who can be regarded as a role model. Depending on your experience with law enforcement in South Africa or indeed anywhere in the world, your description of the word 'hero' or 'villain' may vary for the police. If you're an African (African-American) police may be villains, especially when entering Black neighbourhoods as their presence is hostile and disarming. Slavery is big business. That's the trading of humans. That's cheap labour. So what is a system built off the backs of slaves supposed to do when the slaves are freed? Devise other means to incarcerate them in privatized prisons where more profit can be made off their backs.

Perhaps the most sinister part of this tale lies not in the rate of incarceration and criminalisation of the black male body but the militarisation of the public, which has resulted in the senseless killing of innocent civilians. The 'Black Lives Matter' movement not only highlighted the prevalent issues but also raised an important question on the killing of young black males. Who are we giving guns to? Is the only thing that differentiates police from criminals their uniform? Do they even remember the oath they took to protect and serve the public? It's no different in South Africa, we are just less vocal about it. Law enforcement brutalises black bodies every single day – my friends and I almost spent a night in jail because a seasoned officer couldn't tell the difference between a jar of sugar and cocaine. While that happened a security guard lay dead across the street from us. We lack guidance as young men because our mentors are chasing us down in the streets, harassing us at traffic checks and arresting us everyday. Our fathers, wake up to put on a uniform that makes them different from the rest of us, protected by the law, but when it comes off they are just likely to be criminals in the face of the system they protect and work for. A criminal record literally turns a person into an alien. You cease to exist in a world of sinners and righteous men. You simply disappear, denounced of any honour or birth right. You become nothing and no one. That's if you don't disappear quietly in the system, first.





FATHERS & SONS

c-type print on fuji crystal
archival print, Diasec
mounted. Edition of 10
100x 112cm (40 x 44.8
inches)
USD 3,000 excl 15% SA vat

WHAT IS YOURS IS MINE'

Martin Luther King Jr. was once quoted as saying that capitalism as a system does not permit an even flow of economic resources where a privileged few are rich beyond conscience and almost all others are doomed to be poor at some level. One is inclined to side with Dr King as the romance behind capitalism lies in the prosperity that comes with hard work, yet a quick glance at the world around us shows quite the opposite. The labourer (the blue collar worker), whether part of the industrial enterprise or the manufacturing of products, keeps the system alive but earns significantly less while working in conditions suitable for chattel. They are equally as dispensable in a system that prioritises profit over life.

'What is URS is mine' pays tribute to these unsung heroes in our society, not as men, but as Gods. The fathers who leave their families and homes to travel far and deep into the earth to bring back the riches of its womb. The victims in an abusive relationship between profit and freedom. The ghosts of a broken vow. No bullet can harm them anymore. No chain can shackle them anymore. They are above the system and with that power they return to take back what is theirs so that their loved ones and future generations can reap the riches of their labour as was promised in the beginning.





WHAT IS URS IS MINE

c-type print on fuji crystal
archival print, Diasec mounted,
Edition of 10.
112 x 100cm (44.8 x 40 inches)
USD 3,000 EXCL 15% S.A vat

BIOGRAPHY

Inspired by the realm of dreams as an archive, Maela's work and practice primarily concerns itself with human behavior and well-being within socio-economic and psychospiritual frameworks, particularly in African contexts. Tsoku Maela was born in the Limpopo province, South Africa, and works between Johannesburg and Cape Town. He completed his undergraduate at The South African School of Motion Picture Medium, Cape Town, in 2014. He worked as a copywriter and scriptwriter for both corporate advertising and live television shortly thereafter, but it was in his experimental photography as a hobbyist where he found clarity in issues of the mind, body, and spirit through modes of storytelling and dreams as an archive of past and future realities.

Growing up in a country scarred by colonial histories and living as part of a generation navigating the self through a young democracy, Maela's approach utilizes these memories and histories to construct new African, global perspectives and futures. In short: Using story to empower and heal instead of reliving historical traumas with no end in sight.

Maela was awarded the Standard Bank Rising Star Award in 2016 for Media & Marketing, and has exhibited in Lagos, Zürich, Miami at Art Basel and a selection of student-organized exhibitions such as Ljubljana University Medical Centre in Ljubljana, Slovenia. Private collections of his works include the contemporary art collection M&C SAATCHI, Amawal collection, and the JP Morgan Abadali art collection, among others.

EXHIBITION HISTORY

2022

STORIES WE SHOULD TELL WITH DESIGN, Harvard Graduate School of Design
AFRICA PHOTO FAIR, MuCut, Côte d'Ivoire

2021

ART MARKET BUDAPEST ONLINE FAIR, Christopher Moller Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa (October) – Group exhibition.
AFRICAN ARTY AT TURBINE ART FAIR | HYBRID ART FAIR, Ilovo, Johannesburg (September) – Group exhibition.
AFRICAN ARTY AT PHOTO LONDON | DIGITAL BOOTH, LONDON, United Kingdom (September) – Group exhibition.
ONLINE EXCLUSIVE EXHIBITION – CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN PHOTOGRAPHY, African Arty (July) – Group exhibition.
MOVEMENT: ART FOR SOCIAL CHANGE, United States of America (May) – Group exhibition.
AFRICAN ARTY AT LONDON ART FAIR: EDIT (January) – Group exhibition.
LONDON ART FAIR, African Arty



EXHIBITION HISTORY

2020

HEART & MIND, Silvermine Arts center, New Canaan, Connecticut.
JE SAIS POURQUOI CHANTE L'OISEAU EN CAGE, Montreal, Quebec.
PHOTO LONDON FAIR (Digital).
AKAA (Also Known as Africa) Art and Design Fair, Paris.

2019

IN SILVA, KKNK Festival, Oudtshoorn, South Africa.

2018

ICT CAPE TOWN ART FAIR, group show with Neo Matloga, Ablade Glover (including Andrew Solgado Solo).
NO MORE CLICHÉS, PLEASE, solo. Lizamore & Associates gallery.
IN SILVA GROUP EXHIBITION (including: Gina Waldman, Diane Victor, Anastasia Pather), Kalashnikov gallery, Johannesburg.
APPROPRIATE, PULSE ART FAIR, Art Basel, Miami - Christopher Moller Gallery.

2017

PHOTO17, solo, Directors selection (Broken Things), Zurich.
TURBINE ART FAIR, Lizamore and Associate Gallery.
35 YEARS: TRAILBLAZERS GROUP EXHIBITION, Lizamore & Associates gallery.
FNB JOBURG ART FAIR, group exhibition with Ablade Glover & Tony Gum, Christopher Moller Gallery.

2016

BARONGWA: I am that I am: Solo Exhibition, 99 Loop Gallery.
RITUALS, Lagos Photo Festival, Nigeria (Broken Things).

2015

MASS IS ART GROUP EXHIBITION: Pan African Market, Cape Town.
CAPE GRID INTERNATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY BENNIAL: Castle of Good hope, Cape Town.
BROKEN THINGS: A story of self-love: Solo Exhibition, 99 Loop Gallery.

2014

BOOM! Baby group exhibition: Young Blood beautiful life Gallery, Cape Town.
MONTH OF PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP EXHIBITION AND TALK: Mogalakwena Gallery.



CHRISTOPHER MOLLER

GALLERY

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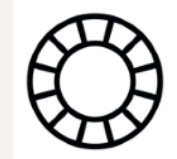
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ACQUISITION PROCESS

- Once you have chosen your favourite piece, please contact our team at info@christophermollerart.co.za to confirm your request and advise on your shipping address.
- Please note, your requested piece and invoice will be valid for 7 calendar days. Once payment has been processed and received, ownership of the piece will be transferred.
- Art pieces will be released to the waiting list after 7 days.
- Shipment date will be confirmed per purchase. Kindly note, artwork will only leave the Gallery post exhibition.
- Kindly note all ZAR prices are excluding 15% SA VAT.
- Kindly note, shipping cost excludes any destination taxes & import charges

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Our bank (Nedbank) has given us the option to do the credit card transaction via e-payment solution for credit cards. This is a secure product that enables the Gallery to send you a link with the amount pre-populated. It requires you to complete your credit card details. This protects you, in that you don't have to give out your credit card details to a third party, while you complete it online. Unfortunately, this system does not accept American Express or Diners Club credit cards.

Please inform your bank of the transaction in advance and provide them with our Merchant code: 2738375 should your bank reject the request from a foreign country.

This is how it works; You will receive an email with the link from the Christopher Moller Gallery. This will include a PDF copy of the invoice. Please click on the link and complete the transaction by completing your credit card details. Kindly note each link has an expiry date and is valid for 2 days. Once the transaction has been authorised, you will receive a notification that the payment has been successful.

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VIEWINGS BY APPOINTMENT

Please contact us to view in person.

Tuesday - Friday · 10h00 - 16h00

Monday & Saturday · Viewings by Appointment Sunday · Closed

CHRISTOPHER MOLLER

GALLERY

VISIT US

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