

SANDILE ZULU



1:54
Contemporary
African Art Fair

smac
BOOTH G1

16 - 19 October 2014, London

Commencing his career in the 1980s, Sandile Zulu came of age as an artist in Apartheid South Africa where inequality, exclusion and discrimination were institutionalized evils. Zulu is known for his controlled methodology of burning and scorching canvases, paper, newspaper, wood and other found materials such as board. These supports have in common the quality of being readily available, offering themselves to the artist or man on the street as surfaces of inscription, on the one hand, and a conceivable source of combustion (or shelter) on the other. Zulu's choice of materials is one that cannot go unnoticed, as it is on these surfaces that we choose to record our passing, be it in the form of a picture, a telling mark on a tree, or the narratives, history and stories of those victorious and those vanquished, published in throwaway newspapers or tomes in series. We record statistics on paper, findings are published, and theories are often refuted in writing. Ultimately combustible, the knowledge, systems and subjects – both avowed or disavowed – that have and continue to be committed to writing are continually under threat or siege. The archive can easily be destroyed, or alternatively, replaced. The process always implies a loss, a forgetting, a victim in the singular, but more so in the plural, a specter, an *ignis fatuus*, all the more if the victim has been silenced or writ out from the annals of History.

Within the context of Southern Africa, Zulu's oeuvre evokes the omnipresence of fire, our fascination with it, and reminds us of its social history. Fire is a fuel for families and industry. In its primordial application and signification, it is as a source of light, protection, warmth and healing, but it is also has a darker, potentially destructive character when unbridled. The fires of desperation, anger and fear are cruel and blind. One need only think of the silencing and punishing technique of necklacing, practiced by militias in townships, but also the poor man's grenade, also known as the Molotov cocktail, employed during the height of the Apartheid years as an incendiary device against the regime. More recently, the element brings to mind the burning of libraries in protests against the non-delivery of services, but also the lost library of Timbuktu, where manuscripts

were burnt at the hands of colonialists. Janus-like, fire reveals what we do not know or wish to acknowledge about ourselves.

Zulu's work often transgresses medium distinctions. He transmutes a sheet of paper or a once-flat canvas into a three-dimensional, sculptural support, counterposing the hard geometrics of the surface he has chosen, which he often multiplies into different planes, fragmenting the gaze and the viewer's perception, for instance in the work *Spinal Diagnoses* (2014) with the organic, soft cell-like structures of his themes. Populated by atomic, molecular and intestinal looking forms, which Zulu seems to blow onto his surface of choice, these life-giving or life-taking structures and systems, normally invisible to the naked eye, render his production replete with allusions to the bio-politic. One might argue their reference to the spread and handling of viruses such as AIDS and, when read in the present, Ebola, which threatens to rage through the continent like an apocalyptic wildfire. One might even posit that Zulu's interest lies in the phoenix, in what will rise from the ashes, from certain destructive forces metaphorically embodied by fire and disease.

Sandile Zulu was born in Ixopo, KwaZulu-Natal in 1962 and is currently based in Johannesburg, South Africa. He has a BA Fine Art from the University of the Witwatersrand (1993) and a Diploma in Fine Art from Rorke's Drift Art School in KwaZulu-Natal (1982). He received a Civitella Ranieri Fellowship award in 2000. Significant group exhibitions include: *Suspicious Minds*, Michaelis Gallery, University of Cape Town (2013), *Artists in Dialogue 2*, The Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Washington D.C (2011), *Mixed Belongings: Eight Contemporary African Makers*, Crafts Council Galleries, London (2005), *Personal Affects: Power and Poetics in Contemporary South African Art*, Museum for African Art, New York (2004) and *Tremor*, Palais des Beaux Arts, Charleroi, Belgium. His work is represented in the collections of the Iziko South African National Gallery, Cape Town; the Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg; the Smithsonian National Museum for African Art, Washington DC and the Museum for African Art, New York, among others.

Spinal Diagnoses, 2014

Fire, water, air and earth on canvas

145 x 287.5 x 32 cm





Index, 2014

Fire, air, earth, water and newspaper on board

86 x 150 cm

Spinal Segment, 2014

Fire, water, air and earth on canvas

145 x 130 cm





Spinal Diagnoses: A Histopathological Case II, 2012

Burnt wood and fabric

230 x 58 x 54 cm

Sandile Zulu

Biography

Born 1962, Ixopo, KwaZulu Natal
Lives and works in Johannesburg, South Africa

Education

- 1993** - Bachelor of Fine Art, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
- 1983** - Fine Art, Technikon Natal, Durban
- 1982** - Diploma of Fine Art, Rorke's Drift Art and Craft Centre, KwaZulu-Natal

Awards and Residencies

- 2004** - In Team Residency, Dachau, Germany.
- 2000** - Civitella Ranjeri Fellowship Award and Residency, Perugia, Italy.
- 1998** - The Presidents Award, Grand Prize, 6th Biennale of Contemporary Art, Seychelles.
 - Nominated for National FNB Vita Art Award, Johannesburg.
- 1996** - Nominated for National FNB Vita Art Award, Johannesburg.
- 1995** - Identification – 7 Artists, 7 Countries, St Denis, Reunion Island.
- 1994** - Art/Omi, New York.

Solo Exhibitions (Selected)

- 2014** - *ARTOMS: Histopathology, Regeneration and Other Cases - Continued*, UJ Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa.
- 2012** - *ARTOMS: Histopathology, Regeneration and Other Cases*, SMAC Art Gallery, Stellenbosch, South Africa.
- 2005** - *More Fire!*, Afronova Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa.
 - *Fire This Time: Planetary Cycle*, October Gallery, London, UK.
- 2003** - *Points of the Delta*, Michael Stevenson, Cape Town, South Africa.
- 1998** - *Camouflage*, Millennium Gallery, Pretoria, South Africa.
- 1997** - *Artomic Project 1*, Sandton Civic Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa.
 - *Artomic Project 2*, Zola Gallery, Aix-en-Provence, France.
- 1995** - *Fire!* Rembrandt Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa.

Group Exhibitions (Selected)

- 2014** - *PAPERWORK: An Exhibition of Contemporary South African Works on Paper*, SMAC Art Gallery, Stellenbosch, South Africa.
- 2013** - *THE XMAS SHOW*, SMAC Art Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa.
 - *Suspicious Minds, Artist's Exploration of Mind and Matter*, Michaelis Gallery, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa.
 - *BACK TO THE FUTURE. Abstract Art in South Africa: Past and Present*, SMAC Art Gallery, Stellenbosch.
- 2012** - *Making Marks: Works by African Contemporary Artists*, Bekris Gallery, San Francisco, USA.
 - *Collection 17: Modern and Contemporary South African Art: 1952 – 2012*, SMAC Art Gallery, Aardklop
 - National Arts Festival, Potchefstroom, South Africa.
 - *Collection 16*, SMAC Art Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa.
 - *Artists in Dialogue 2: Sandile Zulu and Henrique Oliveira*, The Smithsonian's National Museum of African Art, Washington D.C, USA.
- 2011** - *20Stellenbosch*, Stellenbosch, South Africa. *Incite*, Myerson Fine Art Gallery, London, UK.
- 2010** - *TWENTY: South African Sculpture of the Last Two Decades*, Nirox Foundation, Cradle of Humankind, South Africa.
- 2009** - *Swamp Eyes*, David Krut Projects, Cape Town, South Africa.
- 2008** - *Beyond Matter*, Myerson Fine Art Gallery, London, UK.
 - *In Honour of The Artists of Rorke's Drift 1960's to 1970's*, Kizo Art Gallery, Durban, South Africa.
- 2005** - *Mixed Belongings: Eight Contemporary African Makers*, Crafts Council Galleries, London, UK.

- 2005** - *In the Making: Materials and Process*, Michael Stevenson, Cape Town, South Africa.
 - *Sandile Zulu and Gonçalo Mabunda*, Afronova, Johannesburg, South Africa.
- 2004** - *Personal Affects: Power and Politics in Contemporary South African Art*, Museum for African Art, New York, and Spier, Cape Town.
 - *Tremor: Contemporary South African Art*, Palais des Beaux Arts of Charlerois, Brussels, Belgium.
 - *In-Team: Schloss Ausstellung der KVD*, Dachau, Germany.
 - *A Decade of Democracy: South African Art 1994-2004*, Iziko South African National Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa.
- 2003** - *Coexistence: Contemporary Cultural Production in South Africa*, The Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts, USA and the Iziko South African National Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa.
- 2002** - *Once Were Painters*, Klein Karoo National Arts Festival, Oudtshoorn, South Africa.
 - *Lexicons and Labyrinths*, Iziko South African National Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa.
- 2001** - *Frank*, Millennium II Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa.
 - *Land*, Unisa Art Gallery, Pretoria, South Africa.
 - *Head North. Views from the South African National Gallery*
 - *Permanent Collection*, South African National Gallery [SANG], Cape Town, South Africa.
- 2000** - *Cross Currents: Contemporary art practice in South Africa*, Atkinson Gallery, London, UK.
- 1999** - *Liberated Voices*, Museum for African Art, New York, USA.
 - *Celsius: (new) Art from (new) South Africa*, IFA Gallery, Bonn, Germany.
- 1998** - *6th Biennale of Contemporary Art*, National Gallery, Victoria, Seychelles.
 - *Dreams and Clouds*, Kulturhuset, Stockholm, Sweden.
 - *Isintu*, Iziko South African National Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa.
 - *FNB Vita Art Exhibition*, Sandton Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa.
- 1997** - *New Art from South Africa*, Talbot Rice Gallery, The University of Edinburgh, Scotland.
 - *Collecting Ourselves*, Wits Galleries, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.
 - *Graft, 2nd Johannesburg Biennale*, Iziko South African National Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa.
 - *Isintu*, South African National Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa.
- 1996** - *FNB Vita Art Now*, Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa.
 - *Common and Uncommon Ground*, City Gallery East, Atlanta, USA.
 - *South Africa I: At the Forefront*, October Gallery, London, UK.
- 1995** - *Identification*, FRAC Saint-Denis, Reunion Island.
- 1994** - *Art/Omi Open Day*, New York, USA.
- 1983** - *Art Communication*, Executive Hotel, Umlazi, Durban, South Africa.

Collections

Iziko, South African National Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa.
Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa.
Smithsonian, National Museum for African Art, Washington DC, USA.
The Museum for African Art, New York, USA.
University of Cape Town Art Collection, Cape Town, South Africa.
Irma Stern Museum, Cape Town, South Africa.
Arabella Sheraton Hotel, Cape Town, South Africa.
Billiton Collection, Johannesburg, South Africa.
Deutsche Securities, Sandton, South Africa.
Dimension Data, Johannesburg, South Africa.
Gauteng Legislature, Johannesburg, South Africa.
MTN Art Collection, Sandton, South Africa.
Sasol Collection, Johannesburg, South Africa.
The Saxon Art Collection, Johannesburg, South Africa.
Vodacom Collection, Johannesburg, South Africa.

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