

Q&A with Mohau Modisakeng about Lefa La Ntate exhibition

 By Eugene Yiga

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Lefa La Ntate, the critically acclaimed exhibition, is coming to the Standard Bank Gallery. Eugene Yiga spoke to artist Mohau Modisakeng to find out more.

▣ *Where did your love for art begin?*

It began when I was a child at home but it became real for me when I realised I had an ability that other people could recognise. That was in primary school.



To Move Mountains (Video Still 6), 2015-16

▣ *How did you decide to become an artist?*

I'd always known that I wanted to be an artist but I decided on a career in art in 2004, during my matric year, when I got a chance to travel to London and got exposed to a lot of art. The following year I needed to make a decision in terms of what I was going to study at tertiary level so I decided to enrol myself in the Fine Arts program at the University of Cape Town



To Move Mountains (Video Still 4), 2015-16

■ ***What surprised you about your career when you began?***

After spending four years at the Michaelis School of Fine Art, which is a predominantly white institution, I was shocked that in the art world itself – outside the insulated environment of the school – there was a lack of black artists in a predominantly black country. I'd imagined that things would be a bit more democratic and that artists were playing on a level field.

■ ***What do you do on a typical day?***

Most of my days are spent doing admin – communicating with the institutions, curators, and collectors who might be interested in my work – so I'm constantly trying to figure out my next project or the next thing to keep me busy. The rest of the time is spent between the studio and home, and sometimes on the road depending on what sort of project I'm working through.



To Move Mountains (Video Still 5), 2015-16

■ ***What would someone find surprising about the work you do?***

People might find it interesting that my work is often a result of a process of research and immersing myself in my chosen subject matter and theme, but also submitting myself to the work so that the process of making becomes a more intuitive sort of 'conjuring'.

■ ***What do you love most about your work?***

I like that the work takes an archaeological approach to engaging the many layers of history.



To Move Mountains (Video Still 1), 2015-16

■ ***What is most challenging about your work?***

I use my own image in my work so people tend to relate more to the image and not so much the work. When I meet people for the first time they approach me with a sense of familiarity, which is a bit strange. It's difficult to get used to.

■ ***What's been your most memorable highlight so far?***

Participating in the South African Pavilion [at the Venice Biennale] two times in a row.

■ ***How do you hope to maintain and grow your creativity to reinvent yourself and keep things 'fresh'?***

I think I made a good decision from the start to focus on more than just one medium, so I do photography, films,

sculpture, and performance. In-between those mediums it's easy for me to find slippages, tensions, and contradictions that always lead to the next work.

Lefa La Ntate by Mohau Modisakeng will be at the Standard Bank Gallery in Johannesburg from 2 June to 8 July.

www.mohaumodisakeng.com

www.sponsorships.standardbank.com

ABOUT EUGENE YIGA

Eugene graduated from the University of Cape Town with distinctions in financial accounting and classical piano. He then spent over two-and-a-half years working in branding and communications at two of South Africa's top market research companies. Eugene also spent over three-and-a-half years at an eLearning start-up, all while building his business as an award-winning writer. Visit www.eugeneyiga.com, follow @eugeneyiga on Twitter, or email hello@eugeneyiga.com to say, um, hello.

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