

Ashley Uys

"For me, success is what makes you happy. Everybody should move towards that." - Ashley Uys.



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Ashley Uys, the 33-year-old biotechnologist and entrepreneur from Cape Town has been selected for *21 ICONS South Africa Season 3* for developing medical products that can detect lifethreatening diseases and reduce the high-risk fatality through accurate and timeous diagnosis. For example, his development of a self-testing malaria kit has led to global recognition, as the tests' reliability and affordability present a more promising health future for people in low-income areas.

As the managing director of Medical Diagnostech and OculusID, the combination of Uys' entrepreneurial sense and business savvy has seen his work praised and profiled by the likes of CNN, Forbes and SAB.

He says, "At University I worked quite hard knowing that four or five years of sacrifice could potentially yield something big. Being the eldest of six children, I decided I needed to set an example. I was going to sacrifice at least six to eight years of my life to see where we could go."

And he achieved 'big things' taking his first steps towards achieving his dream when he attained a B.Sc. Honours Degree in Biotechnology. He also holds a Management Advancement Programme certificate from Wits University.

In 2010, he established the company Medical Diagnostech in Cape Town, which is run by an award-winning team of scientists. The facility locally manufactures its own cost-effective, high-quality medical test kits for pregnancy, syphilis, malaria, HIV/Aids and ovulation. It has also introduced a diagnostic tool to identify a variety of recreational drugs.

While his test kits impact socially by providing cost effective diagnostics of disease, epidemics and drug use, the organisation is also creating jobs by employing unskilled labour from the local community rather than automating the laboratory's operations. "I believe you need a team to be great. You need people who complement you and share your vision. Everything starts with hard work and getting a team together," he notes.

About the portrait

For the portrait "*Knowing and not Knowing*", Van Wyk describes the visual elements, "Responsible for the development of affordable, reliable and, in many cases, life-saving malaria testing kits, Uys is photographed walking along a dirt road in Hout Bay, traversing a straight white line - representing the visible linear result that appears on the tests themselves. The portrait imagines Uys walking the line between information and unawareness, fear and courage, and speaks to a generation of Africans for whom knowledge brings empowerment."

On the future of South Africa, he comments, "As South Africans, we should carry this country forward, and the way to do that is through social impact - creating employment and jobs."

View the video

About 21 Icons Season 3

The short film-series documents the conversations between Gary Van Wyk as the photographer and filmmaker and the icons. Each short film provides insight into both the subject and photographer's creative approach to the portrait.

Behind each portrait lies a carefully planned concept that captures not only the essence of each icon visually, but also in spirit and in terms of their unique legacy.

Season three of 21 ICONS South Africa is proudly sponsored by Mercedes-Benz South Africa.

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