



PHILLEMOM HLUNGWANI

Rirhandzu Ra Manana The Love Of Women



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EVERARD READ
LONDON



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In the years since first we met, I have watched Phillemon Hlungwani grow as an artist and as a man of consequence and moral authority in the rural and the urban communities that he inhabits. His early works, which were etchings on a scale seldom attempted, were technically superb and had a confidence of line I had never seen in such a young artist but they also had a swagger to them which has softened with time. What is being revealed as he matures is how inextricably his compassionate and spiritual worldview is entwined with a major talent and how, with a clear and unsentimental eye, he shows us the reality from whence he came.

Hlungwani was born in a village in rural Limpopo Province, South Africa. He is a Shangaan – a tribe originally from Mozambique and to whose language and customs he remains fiercely loyal. His mother was widowed young and she had to work on a neighbouring farm to feed and clothe her family. This is by no means an unusual story but is central to Hlungwani as an artist and to his creativity, in the same way as Dickens' early poverty informed his entire oeuvre.

Terry Pratchett, another great humanist, once made an observation about entire rural economies being powered by "little old ladies in black" and this is entirely true here, except that in Limpopo, as much colour as can be afforded is *de rigueur*. The men are away in the towns and cities and, apart from young boys and dotards, are largely absent from the scene. It is women who plant the crops, chop the firewood and gather dung for fuel using the same material to plaster the walls and make the floors of the huts. It is women who tend the children and cook and wash and sew and clean. Electricity has begun to arrive but water still has to be fetched – backbreaking and time consuming work.

There is no social net here other than the kindness of neighbours who are as poor as each other. Life is hard and poverty an unrelenting reality but, being human, there is still time to gossip and drink tea and dance and watch children playing. Going to church and funerals are important as both ritual and as social meeting places. Rural lives are governed by the seasons and are closer in rhythm and tempo to the nineteenth century than the twenty first. Hlungwani effortlessly straddles the two, technologically assured, at home in Europe and America but bound to his village by ties of family and friends and, above all else, by the love that is shown by women.

This body of work speaks to that love but there is nothing mawkish here – rather a fine artist approaching his full maturity and revealing, through the daily life of an unremarkable village, our shared humanity and connectedness.

Trent Read, August 2017



Ku pfuxiwa leyi yiti pfuxaka maseve!! I
Help comes to those who try to help themselves I
Charcoal and pastel on paper
75.5 x 115 cm



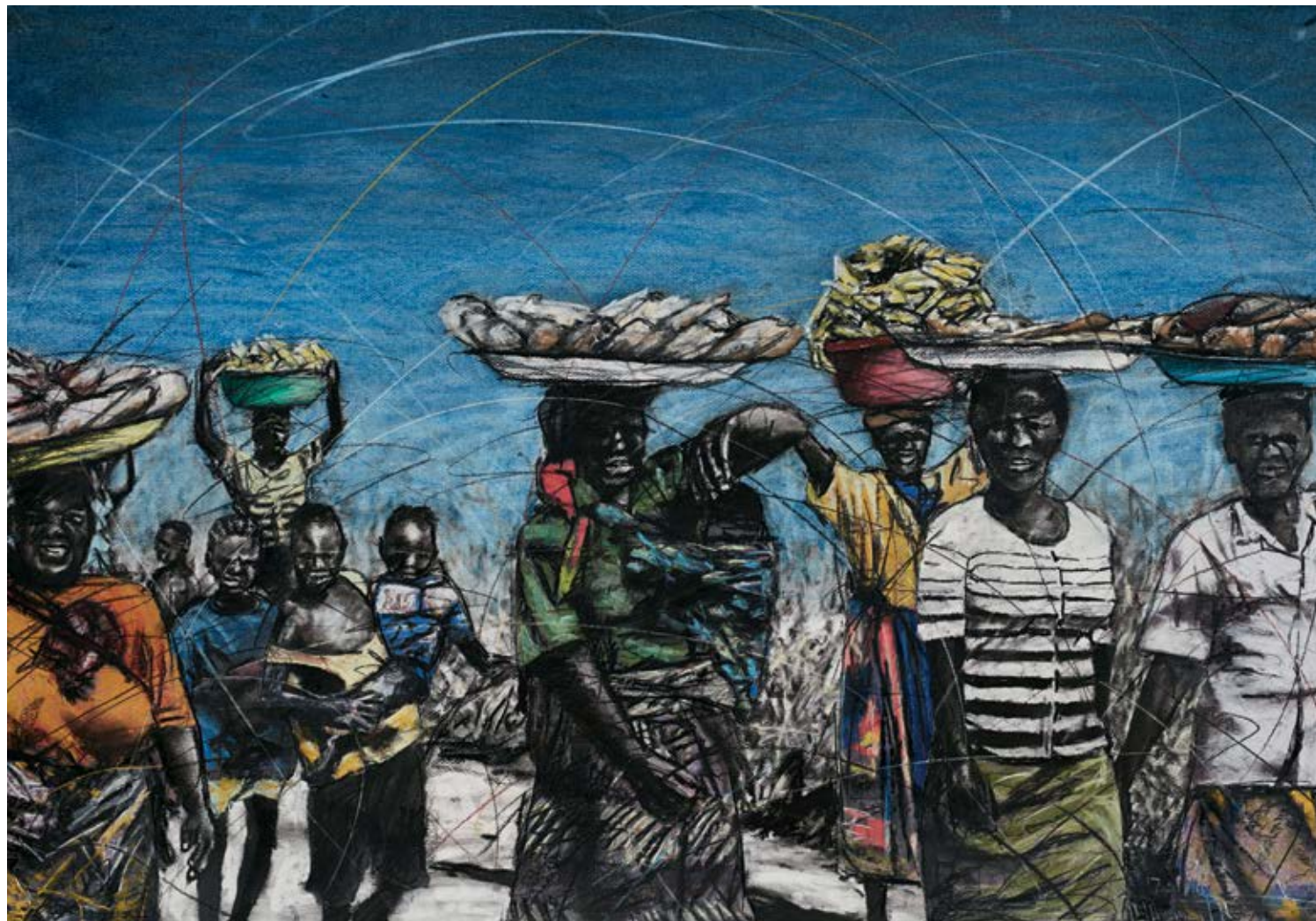
Ku pfuxiwa leyi yiti pfuxaka maseve!! II
Help comes to those who try to help themselves II
Charcoal and pastel on paper
75.5 x 115 cm



N'wansati wa ri pfumelo I
Women of faith I
Charcoal and pastel on paper
75.5 x 115 cm



N'wansati wa ri pfumelo II
Women of faith II
Charcoal and pastel on paper
75.5 x 115 cm



Rirhandzu ra manana ri ni matimba I
The Power of a mother's love I
Charcoal and pastel on paper
71 x 100 cm



Rirhandzu ra manana ri ni matimba II
The Power of a mother's love II
Charcoal and pastel on paper
65.5 x 100 cm



Rirhandzu ra manana ri ni matimba III
The Power of a mother's love III
Charcoal and pastel on paper
50 x 71 cm



Vusweti byi tshikelela va manana
Poverty oppresses women
Charcoal and pastel on paper
50 x 71 cm



Ntsako wu le mbilwini, xikanda xa hlamusela I
Happiness dwells within the heart but is outwardly shown in the face I
Charcoal and pastel on paper
100 x 71 cm



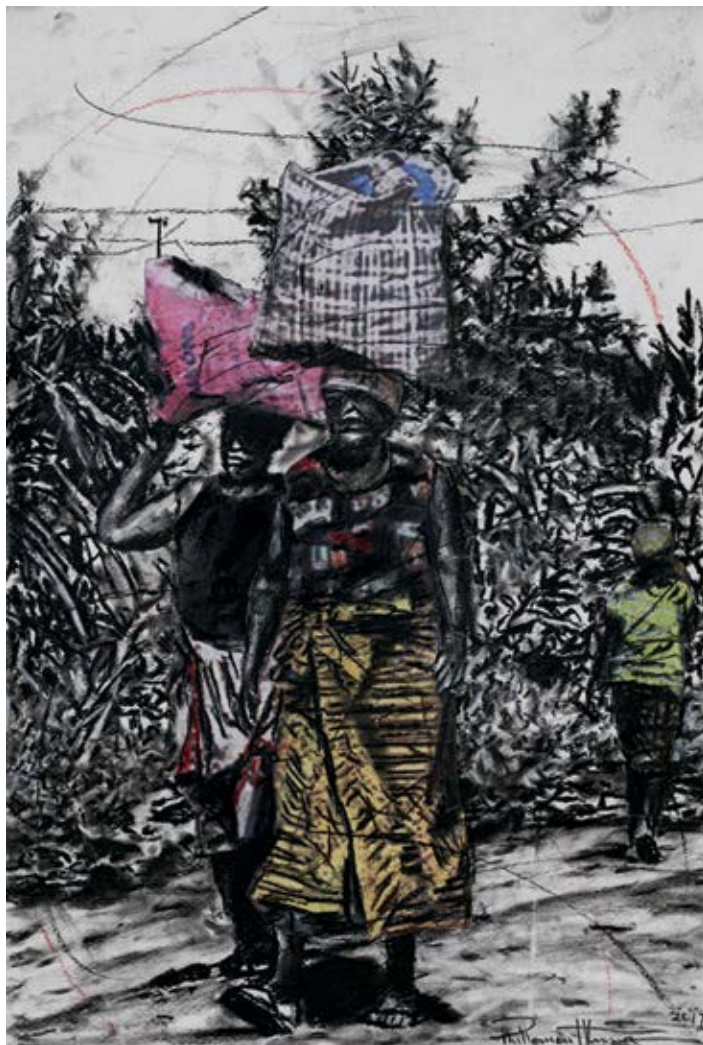
Ntsako wu le mbilwini, xikanda xa hlamusela III
Happiness dwells within the heart but is outwardly shown in the face III
Charcoal and pastel on paper
100 x 71 cm



Ntsako wu le mbilwini, xikanda xa hlamusela II
Happiness dwells within the heart but is outwardly shown in the face II
Charcoal and pastel on paper
71 x 100 cm



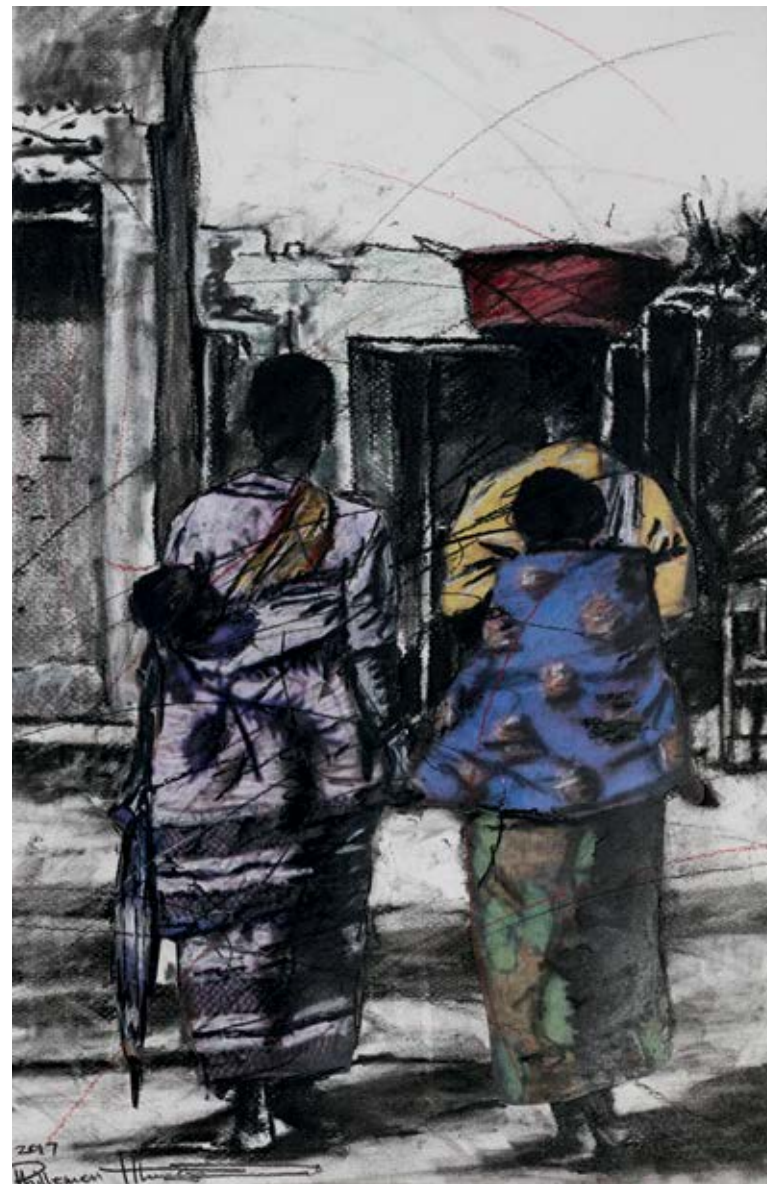
Byala leswinene eka vana u ta tshovela leswinene
If you plant a good seed in your children, your harvest will be good
Charcoal and pastel on paper
151 x 165 cm



Amukela leswi u nga na swona u swi endla swa nkoka I
Value what you have and be content with it I
Charcoal and pastel on paper
50 x 34 cm



Amukela leswi u nga na swona u swi endla swa nkoka II
Value what you have and be content with it II
Charcoal and pastel on paper
50 x 34 cm



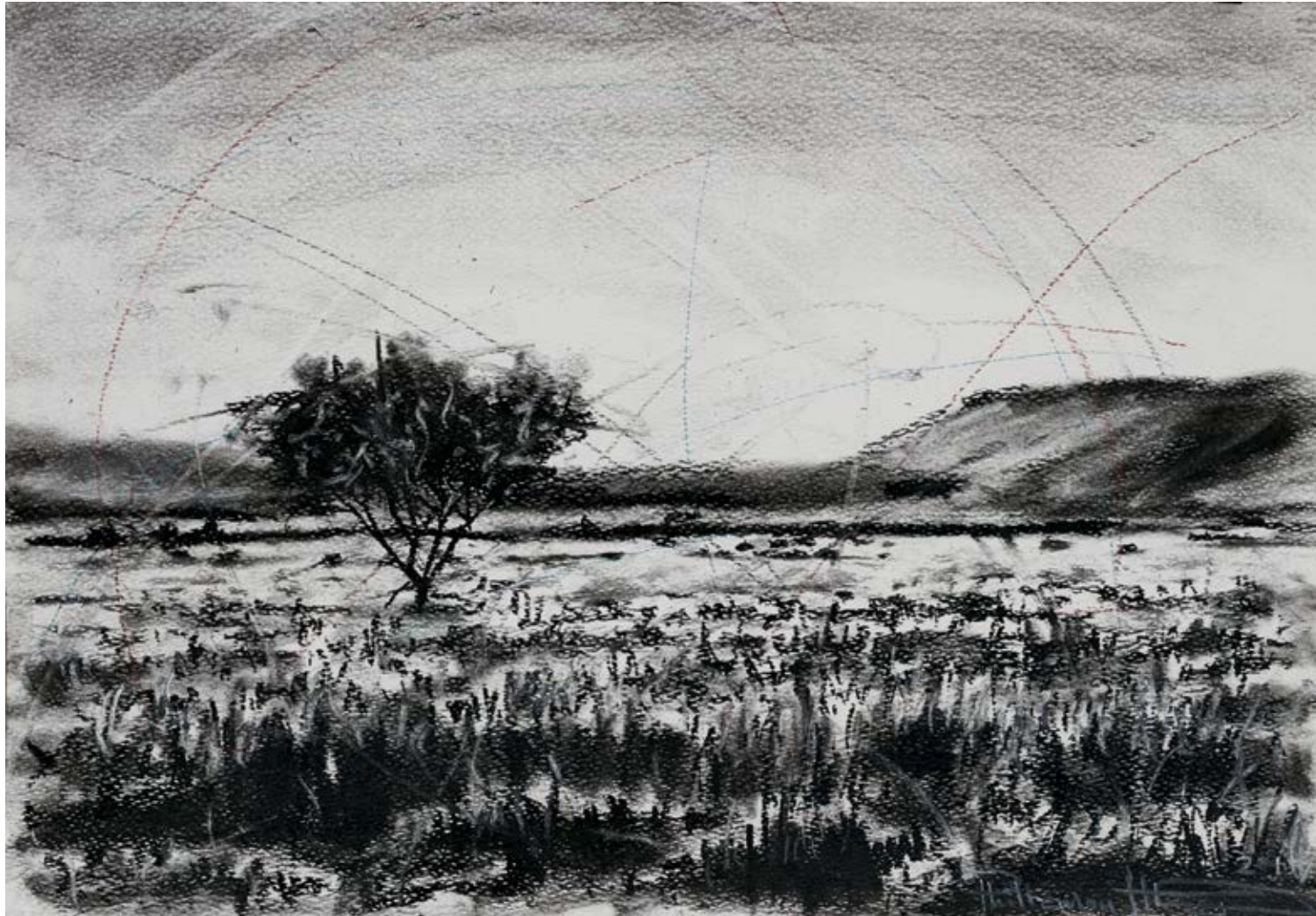
Amukela leswi u nga na swona u swi endla swa nkoka III
Value what you have and be content with it III
Charcoal and pastel on paper
51 x 34 cm



Ku hava ndhawu leyi swi nga Kotekiki Ku yi Fikelela I
There is no place that is impossible to reach I
Charcoal and pastel on paper
30 x 42 cm



Ku hava ndhawu leyi swi nga Kotekiki Ku yi Fikelela II
There is no place that is impossible to reach II
Charcoal and pastel on paper
30 x 42 cm



Ku hava ndhawu leyi swi nga Kotekiki Ku yi Fikelela III
There is no place that is impossible to reach III
Charcoal and pastel on paper
30 x 42 cm



Ku hava ndhawu leyi swi nga Kotekiki Ku yi Fikelela IV
There is no place that is impossible to reach IV
Charcoal and pastel on paper
30 x 42 cm



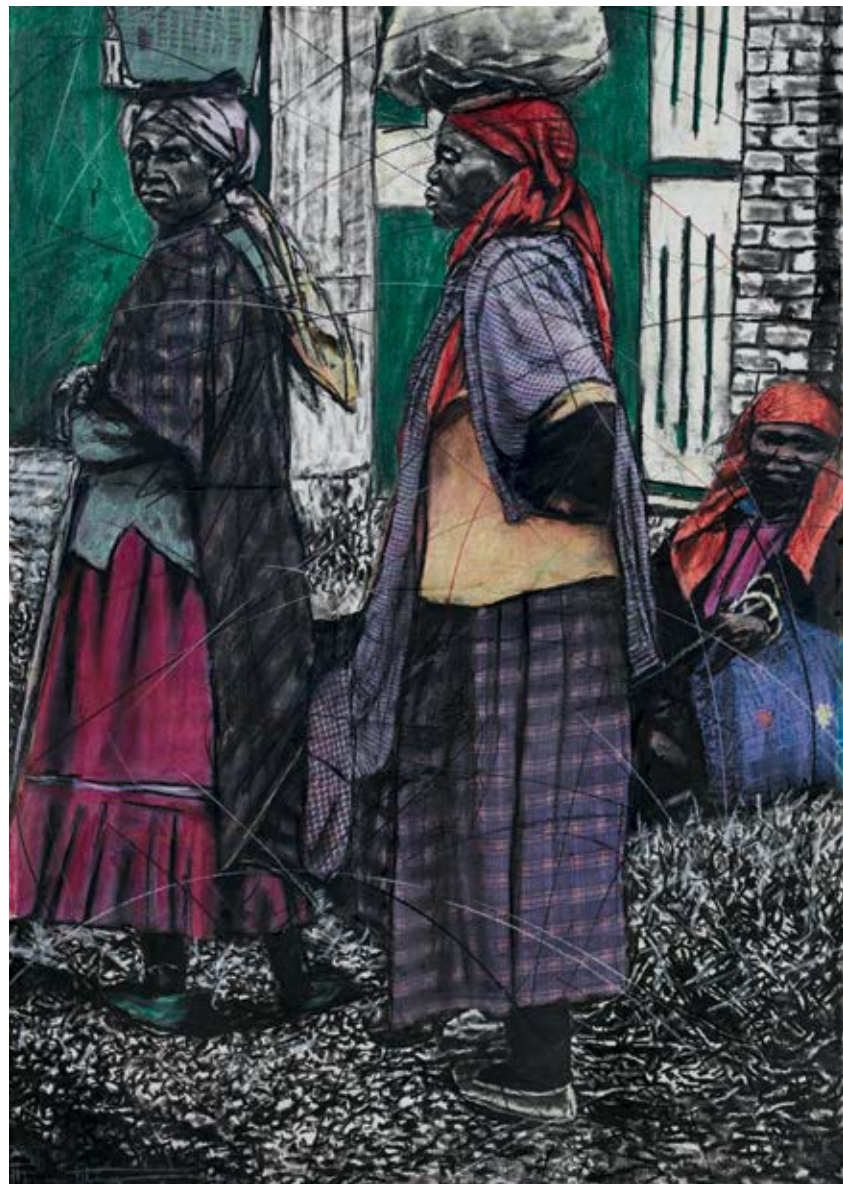
Misava i ya Yehova ni leswi swa nga ka yona
The earth and everything in it belongs to the Lord
Charcoal and pastel on paper
105 x 140 cm



Vutomi byi le mavokweni ya wena
Your life is in your hands
Charcoal and pastel on paper
50 x 71 cm



Va Vasati A Tirhweni
Women at Work
Charcoal and pastel on paper
100 x 122 cm



LEFT
Wansati wa xiviri u vonaka hi ku tirhela ndyangu wa yena
A real woman is seen through her striving to care for her family
Charcoal and pastel on paper
100 x 71 cm



RIGHT
Endzeni ka vona ku na matimba yo wondla, yo aka no tumbuluxa
Within her is the power to nurture, transform and create
Charcoal and pastel on paper
105 x 151 cm



Vamanana lava tirhaka hi ku ti yimisela xikwembu xa katekisa I
God blesses women who work with diligence and determination I
Charcoal and pastel on paper
105 x 140 cm



Vamanana lava tirhaka hi ku ti yimisela xikwembu xa katekisa II
God blesses women who work with diligence and determination II
Charcoal and pastel on paper
105 x 140 cm



PHILLEMON HLUNGWANI

b. 1975, Limpopo, South Africa

Phillemon Hlungwani is known for his large-scale charcoal drawings which depict scenes from rural life. His work powerfully conveys traditional values and a sense of community, which in turn has garnered him recognition as one of the most accomplished contemporary artists currently working in South Africa.

Many of Hlungwani's recent drawings use proverbs in his mother tongue, xiTsonga, as titles. These may be difficult to translate into English but they communicate an essential moral idea – conveying how members of a community are either sustaining or betraying the values of its people. Hlungwani's human figures are inseparable from their environment, although his more recent work has seen an injection of intense colour in the clothing of his protagonists, further drawing our attention to their vibrancy and humanity.

The scenes he depicts are typically full of life and motion – the characters bursting with thoughts, opinions and yearnings, which are communicated further through the arcs and lines that weave together the different elements of each drawing. Everything is connected. There is no distinction between the internal and the external, the animate and inanimate, the material and the spiritual.

As a boy, Hlungwani herded goats and cattle and this relationship with nature is often evident in his work. Trees provide shade and food as well as a place for community debates, ceremonies and prayer. Sometimes trees represent human figures, carrying in their roots and leaves and fruit, all that has passed beneath them.

Present throughout his work is Hlungwani's insistence that people living modest lives with few possessions can lead good, dignified and fulfilled lives. They know who they are; where they have come from and where they are going.

Phillemon Hlungwani was born in Thomo Village, Giyani, in the Limpopo Province. He studied at the Johannesburg Art Foundation before studying printmaking at the Artist Proof Studio. He has held eight solo exhibitions and participated in more than 15 group exhibitions. His work is represented in private and public collections across South Africa, the UK and around the world.



SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2016

From Giyani to Alexandra, Everard Read Gallery, Johannesburg and Grande Provence Gallery, South Africa

2014

Mi Kondzo Ya Tinghawi/ In the Footsteps of Heroes, Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees, South Africa

Qunu Drawings, Everard Read Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

2013

Cullinan Drawings, John Martin Gallery, London, UK

2011

New Works, Everard Read Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

Solo Exhibition, Knysna Fine Art, Knysna, South Africa

2009

Recent Works, The Irma Stern Museum, Cape Town, South Africa

Tshungulo wuyisiwa e mahlweni / The Healing Process, Everard Read Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

2008

Xitsonga I ndzuti wa Xigaza / The Tsonga is the Shadow of Xigaza, ABSA Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

2006

Recent Works, The Gallery Premises, Johannesburg, South Africa

2000

First one-man show in Soweto, sponsored by Kaya FM, The Sowetan, Sunday World and Absolut Vodka, Soweto, South Africa



GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2016

Opening Gallery Exhibition, Everard Read, London, UK

2015

1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair, London, UK

2014

FNB Johannesburg Art Fair, Johannesburg, South Africa

2013

Art 13, London, UK

2012

The 4th Edition of India Modern and Contemporary Art Fair, India Art Fair, India

The 21st birthday celebration of Artist Proof Studio exhibition, Johannesburg Art Gallery, South Africa
FNB Johannesburg Art Fair, South Africa

2011

Multiple Views of a Singular Beast, Circa and Everard Read Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

2010

A View from the South, Everard Read Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

2009

RENDEZVOUS Focus original lithography, an exhibition of more than 100 South African and French artists' artworks touring South Africa

The 50s: An Interpretation, Gallery on the Square,

Nelson Mandela Square, South Africa

2008

Knysna Fine Art, Knysna, South Africa

David Brown Fine Art, Johannesburg, South Africa

Aspire Contemporary Art Gallery, Pretoria, South Africa

Gallery on the Square, Nelson Mandela Square, South Africa

2007

Thomson Art Gallery Johannesburg, South Africa
 SASOL, Rosebank, South Africa

2006

Gallery on the Square, Nelson Mandela Square

2005

Touring exhibition to the Gulf of OMAN Community Art Center, Qatar Hotel, Salala

2003

The Gallery Premises and the Johannesburg Art Gallery, South Africa

2000

Heritage Day for Arts and Culture Exhibition, Belgium

1997

Polokwane Art Museum, South Africa

This exhibition catalogue is published
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EVERARD READ

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Modern and contemporary art from Southern Africa

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