

Frans Thoka

Artist Statement

My work engages with the profound history and enduring pain of land dispossession experienced by Black South Africans. While I address these difficult truths, I aim for my art to also create a space for healing and open channels for cross-cultural dialogue. My practice is rooted in the belief that art can foster reflection, serve as a platform for education, and empower communities, functioning as a form of activism.

In my earlier works, I explored narrative landscapes and trees—imagery that connects to my memories of working in the fields with my grandmother. Under the trees, she shared stories of our land, our ancestors, and the loss of home and identity through dispossession. This connection shaped my practice, initially centered on representational landscapes, yet over time my work has evolved, becoming more abstract and symbolic.

Today, I work with prison blankets, hessian, oil paint, acrylics, charcoal, and drawings. My works are a response to the relationship South Africans have with the land and the pain that is often hidden due to the dispossession of so many people in this country. I feel that when a blanket is wrapped around something, it can hide what is at the centre and that thing is not exposed and dealt with. My blankets are holding and hiding the emotions of many who had to come to terms with relocating and losing the land they were born on.

Through this process, I aim to honor the land's powerful ties to identity and community, creating a space for conversations about resilience, remembrance, and reconciliation in the face of our shared history.

Biography

Frans Moshimanyana Thoka (known as Frans Thoka) is an emerging contemporary South African artist. Thoka was born in 1997 in Polokwane, in the province of Limpopo.

Education

Frans Thoka obtained his Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Visual Art from the University of Johannesburg (UJ).

Exhibition History

Solo Exhibitions

2024 – “ Ba ile kae | A way to reconcile – Chapter 1 “ Artyli Gallery 2024

2022 - ‘Kopano(ng)’, Godart Gallery, Johannesburg

2021 - ‘Dinyakishisho’, Millennium Art Gallery, Turbine Art Fair, Johannesburg

Group Exhibitions

2024 - ‘Soil’ Artyli.com, Nelson Mandela Square, Sandton, Johannesburg, 2023

2023 - ‘Roots to Wings’, Artyli.com, Nelson Mandela Square, Sandton, Johannesburg, 2023

2023 - ‘African Alchemy’, Artyli.com, Nelson Mandela Square, Sandton, Johannesburg, 2023

2022 - ‘Africa in Context/Pulse, ‘Exploring the Themes of ‘Things Fall Apart’’, Constitutional Hill, Johannesburg

2021 - ‘Ndoimadzi’, Botho Project Space, Johannesburg

2021, ‘Batho le Naga: The Land and the People’, The Viewing Room Gallery, Pretoria

2021 - ‘At Work’, Gordart Gallery, Johannesburg

2021 - Open Studio Exhibition, Nugget Square, Johannesburg

2020 - Final Year Student Exhibition, University of Johannesburg, FADA (Johannesburg), 2020

2020 - ‘Winter Show’, Gallery at Grande Provence, Cape Town

2019 - University of Johannesburg’s Best of the Best, Gerard Sekoto Gallery, Johannesburg

2019 - ‘Spring Show’, Gallery at Grande Provence, Cape Town

2019 - Parkview Art Exhibition (Heritage Day), Parkwords Literary Festival, Parkview, Johannesburg

2019 - ‘Art of Dining’ (Winter Collection), ZIO La Famiglia, Johannesburg

2019 - ‘Ke Nako’, AGOG Gallery

2019 - ‘Winter Show’, Gallery at Grande Provence, Cape Town

2019 - 'Breaking Down Walls', Association of Arts Pretoria, Pretoria

2018 - Limpopo Annual Artist Exhibition, Polokwane Art Museum, Polokwane

2018 - University of Johannesburg's Best of the Best, Gerard Sekoto Gallery, Johannesburg

2018 - 'Sacred Place of Belonging', Gaslamp Gallery, Johannesburg

2018 - Sasol New Signatures 2018 Finalists, Pretoria Art Museum, Pretoria

2017 - 'Self', University of Johannesburg, APB Campus, Johannesburg

Publications

"Art and Big Business: The Best of Bedfellows"

- Mail & Guardian (1 July 2022)

"Considering 'Happiness Ever After', How do Artworks Get Into Movies?"

- News24 (22 Nov 2021)

"Botho Project Space: Meet the 7 Young Artists for 'Ndoimadzi"

- GQ Magazine (27 May 2021)

"Nóú Kans Vir Goeie Kuns"

- Rapport Newspaper (22 August 2020) (Page 15)

African Politics and Policy International Newsletter (Issue 35)

Collaborations

Vodacom Durban July 2019 International Show, Greyville Race Course (Durban), 2019.