



LESIBA MABITSELA

BIOGRAPHY &  
CURRICULUM VITAE

Born on the margins of a new democracy & dictated to by the polarised divisions inherited from history - always the outcast, always the outsider, the black sheep of society suffering from the 'twelfth-man syndrome' (part of the team, but not quite part of the team).

The sentiments above best describe the work and the interdisciplinary art of Lesiba Mabitsela who was born in Pretoria, Gauteng in 1987. In 1991 he would come to call Noordwyk - one of South Africa's first mixed race suburbs – in the north of Johannesburg home. Today, Mabitsela is based in Cape Town, South Africa where he continues to pursue interdisciplinary spaces between fashion, design, visual and public art.

Mabitsela incorporates costume, video, photography and performance into his work, using his background in fashion design to explore the relationship between post-Colonial perceptions of 'blackness' and the symbolic underpinnings of Western beauty and aesthetics. The artistic practice is informed and inspired by an African counter narrative to the dominance of Western culture.

Mabitsela has a particular interest in the construction of clothing and the use of clothing as a tool for political resistance and as a critique of the current landscape in contemporary fashion, and the politics in constructing identities. In Mabitsela's work, the garment becomes an extension of one's lineage communicating one's history, culture, social hierarchy and aspirations whilst the gaze becomes the tool in which we receive those hidden messages.

Mabitsela is a former recipient of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation scholarship contributing to the completion of his studies at the University of Cape Town's Drama Department within the Faculty of Humanities. He was part of a cohort whose practice was guided by the multidisciplinary studies offered under the auspices of the Institute for Creative Arts (formerly known as GIPCA).

Lesiba Mabitsela  
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**Public Art:**

2018 Afrovibes Festival - Amsterdam, Den Haag, Rotterdam

2018 Live Arts Network Africa (LANA) - Cape Town

2017 Live Arts Festival - Cape Town, South Africa

2016 Infecting the City (exhibited as part of Hi|jACK Collective)– Cape Town, South Africa

2015 Vrystaat Kunstefees - Bloemfontein, South Africa

2015 Infecting the City - Cape Town, South Africa

2015 Alternative Opening of Parliament Fashion Parade - Partnered by AFAI (The African Arts Institute) and the Prince Clause Art Fund.

2013 DEMONSTRATIONS - Performing Being Black curated by Khanyisile Mbongwa - Gugulethu, Cape Town, South Africa

**Group exhibitions:**

2019 The Main Complaint

Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa, Cape Town

2017 'Dress Code'

Gallery MOMO, Cape Town

2016 Material City curated by Sandile Radebe in association with Everard Read Gallery (exhibited as part of Hi|jACK Collective)  
Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town

2013 Movement curated by Abdul Dube

Fairweather House

Cape Town

2013 DEMONSTRATIONS - Performing Being Black curated by Khanyisile Mbongwa

Brundyn+ Gallery (now Gallery MOMO)

Cape Town, South Africa

**Residencies and workshops:**

2016 - Co-facilitator at OPENLab2016: The Art of Being Social

Bloemfontein, South Africa

2015 - Participant

Reitir: International Collaboration Project

Siglufjörður, Iceland

2014 - Participant

OPENLab2014 : The Art of Being Public - Exploration in Site Based Practices

Bloemfontein, South Africa

**Awards:**

2017 Winner of the Puncture Points Art competition commissioned by Burgan Cape Terminals with supported from Gulfstream Energy  
Cape Town, South Africa

2016 Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Scholarship

2014 Samsung Inspire Design Winner: Fashion Design

2014 Design Indaba Expo: First Editions

**Education:**

2016 - 2018

University of Cape Town  
MA Theatre and Performance

2015

Graduate School of Business, UCT  
Business Acumen for Artists Certificate

2006 - 2009

Tshwane University of Technology  
B-Tech Degree in Fashion Design and Technology

**Work Experience:**

2019 - Present

African Fashion Research Institute (AFRI)  
Co-Director

2018 - 2019

Research Assistant, Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa  
Cape Town

2014 - Present

Lesiba Mabitsela Studio (Pty) Ltd  
Director

2011 - 2013

Gavin Rajah Atelier  
Junior Designer

2009 - 2011

St. Lorient Fashion and Art Gallery  
Junior Designer

**References:**

Paul Gazzolla

OPENLab

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Dr. Ricardo Peach

Vrystaat Kunstefees Director

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Prof. Anne Mastamet-Mason

Tshwane University of Technology: Associate Professor and Faculty  
of the Arts

Research Ethics Chairperson

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Prof. Jay Pather

The Institute for Creative Arts

Director

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Mbongeni Mtshali

University of Cape Town

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