
CCAC Interview with Khanyo Khumalo on 23/02/2020 in Hlabisa, Kwa-Zulu Natal - transcript.
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Language/s of interview: Zulu

Length of interview: 00:47:27

Interviewer name (and acronym): Thina Miya (NTM)

Documenter name/s (and Acronym): Francois Lion-Cachet (FLC) and Dominic Toerin (DT)

Interviewee name (and acronym): Nokukhanya Khumalo (KK) and Angeline Masuku (AM)

Name of translator, if applicable: Thina Miya

Name of transcriber: Thina Miya

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[Start of audio recording: 00:00:10]

I, Thina Miya, am about to conduct an interview for the Constitutional Court trust, custodian of the Constitutional Court art collection with Nokukhanya Khumalo, Angeline's daughter. In Hlabisa in Mpembeni area in kwazulu Natal on the 23rd of February of 2020.

1. Could you please tell us a bit more about where you grew up?

KK: [In Zulu] I grew up at my father's home and I'd come visit my mother sometimes because I started school whilst I was at my father's home. Then after some time I came back and lived with my mother.

NTM: *Why did you move?*

KK: [In Zulu] I loved living with my aunt from my father's side. So I lived with her, and I'd come over to my mom's house during school holidays. Then when my aunt passed on, I had to come live with my mother permanently.

2. What is your earliest memory of seeing a basket?

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KK: [In Zulu] My aunt used to make baskets. So whenever I'd go over to my aunts, or come back to my mom's to see baskets- I'd see baskets almost all the time because they were made in both my families.

3. Can you tell us more about the first basket you made?

KK: [In Zulu] It was not the best, but was also good for a first try. I actually did a very basic stitch. That's because that was what my aunt used to do. It was quite small in size then the patterns I learned from my mother. So yes, I learnt the basic stitches from my aunt then the more difficult stitches I learnt from my mom.

4. Why do you weave baskets? (Amaquthu)

KK: [In Zulu] I love doing it too, especially when I'm not in school, I can weave baskets and make extra money. Money I would have earned on my own.

5. Please tell us a bit more about your weaving process. How do you go about making a basket?

KK: [In Zulu] Start with the bottom, the base. Then I weave per row. And then if I need to introduce a new pattern, I'll introduce the colour and then keep going per row. Sometimes I'd make it plain with no colour, no design, and no patterns.

6. Do you use baskets practically in your everyday life? How many baskets have you made for yourself?

KK: [In Zulu] I've made a lot, maybe 30 but it's more than 10 I think.

NTM: Do you use them?

KK: [In Zulu] No, I sell them.

7. Do you feel like you've broken out of poverty through basketry weaving?

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KK: [In Zulu] No

NTM: Why?

KK: [In Zulu] I do not weave them because I am impoverished. I just make them for spare cash.

NTM: Okay.

8. Other articles say that there is a link between basketry in Hlabisa and HIV/Aids awareness. Is this true? Why so?

KK: [In Zulu] I cannot really say it is true or not. I don't know. I've never heard of anyone's status who is making baskets and is associated with the pandemic, I would be lying if I said I do.

9. Do you consider your basketry as craft or art? (*Craft: functional objects based on learned skill / Art: serving an aesthetic purpose and focused on self-expression*)

KK: [In Zulu] I think it's both- I think it's a craft because it's a learned skill. But I think there's a visual art aspect because of my unique designs.

10. What do you think about the divide between traditional craft and contemporary art?

KK: [In Zulu] I think it's traditional because most of it is a reflection of our culture.

NTM: So what do you think about the difference they have? It's okay if you don't have an answer for that.

[No answer from KK]

11. Is basketry weaving concept driven?

NTM: Do you say something through the colours, patterns and shapes of the baskets?

KK: [In Zulu] I don't really think of the shape. It just comes up as I couldn't see any weaving. Unless it's an order, then I'll have to do a specific shape, but just change really, I'm not someone that considers shape because like, back then I used to make pots. But they didn't have like legs. It was just like the shape of a part and lead would be bigger. Not that anyone told me to do it. I just wanted to do it that way.

NTM: Is there a message we were supposed to get from that? Or is there a message you are trying to communicate through the baskets?

KK: [In Zulu] Yeah, like a pot is not used to cook, only you can use it for displays. [KK shows us an example of a pot which is referred to as ibhodo in Zulu.]

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FLC: *Can I take a picture of that, what is it?*

NTM: *So she sometimes comes up with the shape of the basket she is making while in the weaving process unless the order is very specific in terms of shape, design and colour. She also mentioned that baskets aren't only used for their traditional purposes as pots but interchangeable as aesthetic objects.*

NTM: Do you think of patterns as well?

KK: [In Zulu] I think of the patterns before and do like different designs as it goes.

NTM: So, when you make animals, what message are you trying to portray?

KK: [In Zulu] Well, it's mostly like animals that we have here at home like we have chickens. So then I make chickens.

NTM: So do you relate it to your environment?

KK: [In Zulu] Yes, I relate it to the kind of lifestyle I live.

12. Houtlander recently collaborated with Mash T Design studios and weaver Beauty Ngxongo in the making of an artisanal bench. What do you think about this project?

KK: [In Zulu] I mean, I've never seen it, but if I were given the opportunity to do it, I'd do it because I doubt it would be difficult for me to do, you can do it in a day. So they would have started with an internal structure, right, and then you weave on to the strike chair. So it's really not difficult, we refer to the structure as a flame. Even if I would see it in a picture, I could do it.

13. Do you ever bring basketry weaving together with beadwork or other materials?

KK: [In Zulu] No, it's something I have not done. If I try, maybe I would mix beadwork and basketry weaving. I think that would look good.

NTM: Why basketry?

KK: [In Zulu] For its beauty just because you can match the colours from basketry weaving with beads, like black on black.

14. Can you give a few examples or show us some pictures?

KK: [In Zulu] Well I haven't done that yet. I've actually seen a project of that sort. It was a workshop where I had to go teach how to make baskets and mix it with beads as you can match colours. So that's where I learnt how to do it and so I thought to myself.

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15. Your baskets are usually titled “Hlabisa Baskets” as a series or go untitled as single baskets, is that a personal choice?

KK: [In Zulu] I also refer to them as llala Palm baskets. At this point in time they actually are referred to as belonging to my mom's basket my mom's company so even if it's mine still referred to as Angeline's basket. That's because I also still need to register myself or my company separately.

NTM: So if you had to title them, what would you title them?

KK: [In Zulu] I would just go by my initials.

NTM: But that's like your signature. The artwork itself, what would it be?

KK: [In Zulu] And title it in my own way?

NTM: Yeah.

AM: Maybe she might just title them in accordance to their shapes.

KK: [In Zulu] I haven't thought of that. I would think of that in the future, but it's nothing I've thought of.

17. What kind of value do you think your artwork has? Or your mom's artworks?

KK: [In Zulu] Like you mean how long they last?

NTM: No. I mean, the value I think, I think they have a huge value. How would you compare? What would you compare it with?

AM: Money because people love money.

NTM: But you said love Khanyo?

KK: [In Zulu] Yes, love because when you love your family, you're never going to change that regardless of what happens. Money. Money comes to an end, but you can't really end love.

21. Do you know of any of your other baskets displayed in other cities or galleries?

KK: [In Zulu] No.

AM: They're actually in Mexico with mine. They're shown also at the African Art Centre.

22. Have you seen your baskets being shown in galleries (where?) and how did you feel about it?

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KK: [In Zulu] No.

AM: Yes, you have shown at Showe Museum and in Cape Town and at the African Art Centre.

(Starts raining heavily.)

23. Do you think Hlabisa basketry is known about by enough people?

KK: [In Zulu] Yes.

NTM: Why?

KK: [In Zulu] Because there's a hotel here and some baskets are displayed there and on the internet - it's easy to google weavers. If you're looking for someone who makes baskets you can google them and you'll find them on the internet.

24. How do you feel about these baskets having been brought to Hlabisa for restoration?

KK: [In Zulu] Well, I'm content about it. I think they [the weavers] get more experience on new ways of fixing the baskets in comparison to the way they did before.

FLC: What's the answer?

NTM: *She does not feel bad about it as she notices that ma and other weavers get to have more experience on the conservation process of the baskets. It is also interesting that she related her answer to the previous questions to the internet and now there's a sense of continuity into the digital world.*

25. How can the baskets best be taken care of to ensure they are preserved for the future?

KK: [In Zulu] Ensure they don't come in contact with water. If ever they come in contact with water Becomes difficult to maintain the shape and not in too much sun. Ensure you don't place where they can be exposed to too much sunlight.

FLC: I have an additional question that I think they can answer separately. How does the physical environment of Hlabisa influence the baskets? So I am thinking material gathering? Then a follow-up question is how easy it would be to move from Hlabisa given that the material is based in Hlabisa. Then the last question is if there is a license fee paid to the chief for buying materials to make baskets.

NTM: [refers to FLC's questions and asks AM]

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AM: Gathering material is easy, the problem is the expensive transport fee as I do not have a car. I place an order in Manguzi-Kwa Mhlaba Uyalingana, then they gather llala for me and tell me when it is done. I would then need to organise transport for it to be fetched. I get my grass from Kwa-Nongoma but I still would need to organise transport. You are not allowed to gather grass in an area not governed by your chief, so you have to buy it from people who are from that area. This includes the materials for dyes, I travel long distances to fetch it once collected by people from those areas.

NTM: How easy would it be to move to a different area given the processes of material gathering?

AM: It would be easy, the process of material gathering would still be the same. We also would need to order wood to make the fire, so all materials would need to be ordered from different areas. I do request that school kids gather the cans for me as they can collect from different schools from their feeding schemes. After they've collected enough I organise transport and collect from each school, I also do remunerate the learners. I do not pay the chief for any of these gatherings but the people who live within those areas.

NTM: Would you consider moving to the city and how easy would it be to do so?

KK: [In Zulu] I think it is easy and difficult because living in a flat I would not be able to start a fire with my 3-legged pot.

AM: She'd need to prepare this side and leave with it all materials prepared.

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