

## CCAC Interview with Vincent Baloyi

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**Interviewer name (and acronym):** Kay-Leigh Fisher (KLF)

**Interviewee name (and acronym):** Vincent Baloyi (VB)

**Name of translator, if applicable:** Thina Miya (NTM)

**Name of transcriber:** Kay-Leigh Fisher

**Notes on access and use, if applicable:**

**Mode of interview:** In person

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**List of acronyms:**

**SCN:** Sokhaya Charles Nkosi

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**START OF AUDIO RECORDING: 00:00:00**

**KLF:** I'm Kay-Leigh Fisher. I'm here with Bra Vincent Baloyi. Joining us in the room is Mr Sokhaya Charles Nkosi, as well as the assistant curators of the Constitutional Court Art Collection. We will be interviewing Mr Baloyi today. I'm just gonna read out a bit of the consent form again. The Constitutional Court Trust, custodian of the Constitutional Court Art Collection, is conducting interviews with artists represented in the CCAC and with others who have knowledge of the CCAC in order to gather information about how, when and why and by whom artworks in the CCAC were made and collected. The research conducted will be used for purposes of reference, exhibition display, collection management, collection diversity study purposes and general promotional usage. So, in addition, photographs and videos of the interviewee will be taken as part of the interview process and may be used for promotional usage in the CCT, CCC reports, publications, web stories, social media, CCAC publications and research related to the CCAC. Is that okay, Mr Baloyi?

**TIME ON AUDIO RECORDING:00:01:21**

**VB:** Mmm.

**KLF:** Okay. So just to start, can you please tell us a bit about where you grew up and how you became an artist?

**VB:** Yes, I was born in Newclare, Johannesburg. I grew up here in Johannesburg. And then...what else again?

**KLF:** And how you became an artist?

**VB:** Okay, well, I can say it's a talent because when I was young I liked to go behind the calendars and start drawing anything I could see (unclear), it was just drawing. As from school, you know, my books were dirty because instead of concentrating on other things— I'd keep drawing all the time, drawing anybody or anything in front of me, playing with mud, building things there. You know, you just... construct. I liked to construct all the time. That's why I became an artist. I don't know whether I would call myself... Yeah.

**KLF:** You were doodling? What kind of training did you get to be an artist or are you self trained?

**VB:** Before I could go to Rorke's Drift, as I have said from interviewing that I want to... (unclear), so my teacher there was Judith Levine and Eric Mbatha. So Eric will say to us, okay, you know, he was coming like Judith to Rorke's Drift by that time and then showing us his work; print work like linocuts and etchings. Then I'd always have a question like how did he make this etching? I could hear the word etching, and then I said to him, "okay, can you teach us?" Then he'll say "no, it's easy. You just take anything, a surface like a board, and you start scooping, scooping and print. That is an etching." [Laughs] But it didn't work like his, you know? And then when I got home this still was burning in my mind, I want[ed] my print to look like his. So, I would take Indian ink and sugar, and mix it together to make a paste, so that I can then print, you know? So, take this paste and put it around the surface and start working the image on the surface, and then from there, what I would do (scoffs) is start printing. And then, my— You know the sugar, you know it's sticky, like that paste was sticky because of the sugar. Then it [would] stick to my hands, sometimes I'd try to peel the print but it doesn't really— doesn't look like his and then it will take maybe some couple of hours and when it is dry then I'll take those prints to him again and say here [are] prints I've made. And then [laughs] when I compared his prints and mine, they won't look like his. And he'd say "no, don't worry, take time, you will reach this stage sometime (unclear)." Then, unaware that, okay this guy is just making us [laughs]... to, I mean— And then, as I'm

back here in 1973 and then remember I said next year, in 1974, I'll go to a college called Rorke's Drift in KZN (KwaZulu Natal) and then that's where you will learn more about printing and other things and so on. So when I got to Rorke's Drift, the print was cheaper than now, etching... now it's no more like [when] I was making with the paste we would use a... press. Yeah, printing press. (Unclear) This guy [Eric] was just maybe pulling [laughs]— playing with us, making us want to work. So during our holiday time, when I came with a print I said "no man, Eric, huh uh". Now that's when I will say no, this is etching that I learned, not the one you were teaching me. You see? So that's when I started to understand what's going on in other media, in art.

**TIME ON AUDIO RECORDING:00:01:21**

**KLF:** Okay, that does lead to the next question that I wanted to ask first: can you tell us more about how, when and why *After the Wedding*, the print that we have in the court, was made?

**VB:** *After the Wedding*, yes. *After the Wedding*, actually it's my wedding with my wife. It wasn't a— We didn't marry in a white wedding, it was just a ceremony. So, I can say a traditional ceremony. That is [where] the print is coming from just to let [everyone] understand that okay, one of the society is also married. Yes, because I wanted, afterwards, to produce a print. But I'm not done with the theme [yet], because I haven't started with the new work. But I'm still able and feel that okay, I will produce it, maybe in a sculpture or painting, it still...

**KLF:** Continues...

**VB:** Continues, yes.

**KLF:** So how did you come to be a part of the *30 years in Soweto: From Resistance to Leadership* print portfolio, by the Artist Proof Studio?

**VB:** I met with Kim [Berman] at Newtown before... Then, after university that's when it started. So, Kim would come to me all the time and ask me to work with them at Artist Proof [Studio]. So, under Kim I learned more things in printing like in intaglio etching, and... Like other type of print types like litho[graphy], woodcut, you know, and monotypes. That's what I [learned] at Artist Proof. I [would] go there in my spare time on weekends, sometimes [in the] afternoon when I came from work and I'd work till late and then— and weekends, yes.

**KLF:** Okay, so the next question is: how did you become a printmaker? But I think you have spoken on that quite a bit and what was your experience working with the Artist Proof Studio?

**TIME ON AUDIO RECORDING: 00:11:14**

**VB:** Well, it was nice to work with other artists there in the studio, that's where you learn every time and from, I mean, everybody. So, that's an experience that I gained, working with other people and students.

**KLF:** How does *After the Wedding* relate to the 1976 Soweto Uprising and where were you when the uprising occurred?

**VB:** I was always in Johannesburg, Gauteng, because it's my place [laughs].

**KLF:** Helping with what? With teaching and engaging with other artists and students?

**VB:** Yes, like Funda, I would go to Funda. Sometimes I'd go to Funda Arts Centre. I don't know if you've heard of Funda Art Centre? Yes. Also... making— Printing there.

**KLF:** How do you look back at the uprising? How did you look back at the uprising in 2006 when you made the print, 30 years after the uprising occurred, and how do you look at it today, in 2021?

**VB:** It's a big get at me because if you mentioned the work of today in 2000, our school, that time. So you look at the concepts of today, they're more advanced, because there are new things all the time. Yes. So there is a division, that's okay and to divide okay this, myself and (unclear) and others. As I said old school, and then let's say like you, a new school. So the concept is not the same all the time.

**NTM:** It changes.

**VB:** It advanced today.

**SCN:** It could also mean we come from a system where we'd teach timetables [sings  $2 \times 2 = 4$ ;  $2 \times 3 = 6$ ,  $2 \times 4 = 8$ ], some wouldn't even know the answers. Then (inaudible) current system of technology. Children fail while they have calculators, but for us, if you wouldn't cough out the right answers (gestures hitting with his hands)[laughs].

**VB:** What we call today, what?

**KLF:** Corporal punishment?

**VB:** What are you, under 2000, who was born... are you [a] 2000?

**TIME ON AUDIO RECORDING:00:14:28**

**KLF:** No, I was born in 1998.

**NTM:** We're all 90s, late 90s.

**SCN:** Oh, I almost thought you were 2000s [laughs].

**NTM:** No, we're grown now.

**KLF:** So the next question is: what inspired the title of your artwork? Which you said it was after your own wedding.

**VB:** Yes.

**KLF:** And to which historical and current day themes would you say the artwork speaks to?

**VB:** Okay, the artwork I can say speaks to everybody, yes. Whether they... the whole time I could say—I don't know, it speaks to everybody, yes.

**SCN:** But also... It's similar to something Dumile Feni would say, while he lived in Bill Ainslie's house, and then people would label his work as if "that mad cap, that guy is mad". And I don't care, if it comes to that I enjoy my madness [laughs]. Because now, if you don't hold yourself in high esteem or an upsurge of esteem building up, as in a spiritual founding of something that is going to make 'the ultimate you' realizable by you, yourself. This is to get rid of the concept of saying "I was discovered by"... Who would discover a person? Similar to how Ricky Burnett used to say that "Jackson Hlungwani is my artist".

**VB:** Okay, Jackson was always after (unclear). Jackson, Jackson who?

**NTM:** Hlungwani.

**VB:** Jackson Hlungwani. Maybe he took it from there because he was always after [Ricky], where ever Ricky [Burnett] was going, you would find Jackson Hlungwani, because his work, most of the time, it was Ricky serving Jackson. Jackson was like getting paid under Ricky, I don't know how they were paying each other. Because okay, Ricky took it [laughs] from there. I don't know, after Jackson passed away and then Ricky, I don't know whether he found— maybe he found someone he'll use like Jackson [laughs].

**TIME ON AUDIO RECORDING:00:17:28**

**SCN:** (Unclear).

**NTM:** Can I add a bit of a follow up question, to give some context to the answer here?

**VB:** Yeah.

**NTM:** So when we spoke over the phone, and I asked about *After the Wedding*, you touched on ceremonies that happen during and after the wedding. Like the gifting ceremony, remember, when we...? Can you maybe give Kay-Leigh a bit of context about that?

**VB:** So it's like *ama hlabiso*. So yeah, the time that okay, this family will give gift to that family [and] that family will also bring gifts, like you know, blankets and other things. And so, they will maybe be slaughtering something. What can I put like, when it's time to eat the gull.

**NTM:** A goat, to get the... what was it that I said? The gull, I think, of it and people eat it.

**SCN:** And, just to jutt in there, Baloyi, to add onto what you said. When a couple is getting married, a goat becomes the official anointing medicine that declares that, now we're holding these people on the knot, and then a cow becomes part of more and becomes part of the food. So the divine image of the goat, supersedes that of a cow.

**NTM:** Yes.

**SCN:** But the cow offers us a lot more meat than the goat.

**VB:** Yeah. So the most important thing there is [also] blood. Yeah, the blood...

**SCN:** And the horns. [Laughs]. (Inaudible) in the traditional head hide you'll see the horns. Yeah. That is an attestation of the fact. It's like... if a boy or a guy makes a pass at you, and then you want the village to know that "hey! Don't go there, that is my lady." [Laughs]. They'd even install.

**VB:** And also to show that there was this ceremony. Everybody, like the important people in the family, maybe you're sick, you'd wear an animal wristband, then if you know, maybe you've seen people around, then you'd just know that okay, maybe it was from that ceremony, a certain ceremony.

**SCN:** And then there are those that laugh at you when you're wearing an animal wristband. They would say, "sies. You're wearing biltong!" [Laughs].

**TIME ON AUDIO RECORDING:00:20:43**

**VB:** [Laughs].

**KLF:** How do you feel about having your work part of the Constitutional Court Art Collection? And what does the CCAC represent to you?

**VB:** Oh, how can I— Actually great, because it's not easy living in Joburg and being [an artist]— collecting art for displays and I feel very great. Maybe in the future there can be more work collected by the Constitutional Court [Art Collection]. But I know that while I'm still alive, in my time maybe it will happen. My work will come here, not like maybe bringing in print (means through a print portfolio), but bringing other types of work. Maybe, for the Court, yes.

**KLF:** How do you see art as being connected to justice or human rights in South Africa or more universally?

**VB:** Well (pause) it's great, but I will say, [for] myself [that the] government needs to [start] collecting more art from us visual artists. If you look at visual arts in South Africa, it's not like other countries, like (unclear) and so on. But [it] looks like the government doesn't take it [seriously]. And like I would say, if you go to places like townships and so on, you won't find galleries and then you can count, like...

**SCN:** Art centres.

**VB:** Because in Johannesburg especially, it's only how many art centres? Katlehong, Funda.. the one I know. So the government, I think they must make more. We need galleries. And also, it must be easy for us, maybe, to sell work, to exhibit in the galleries. They must really try to change...

**KLF:** The gatekeeping of the spaces?

**VB:** Yes, we need more galleries. Government must start buying more of our art because most of us, especially in the visual arts; some of us die poor. Some never sell art. As I'm speaking now, I don't know if you know, there's an old man, he's one of the Polly Street [Art Centre] groups. He's not known. Bra Monty. I don't know, do you know Bra Monty Mahobe?

**NTM:** No.

**VB:** (unclear) also, he learned from Polly Street, guys.

**TIME ON AUDIO RECORDING:00:24:22**

**SCN:** And maybe you can use this information to head hunt those people because if the international community asked yourself like, have you checked your backyard? The lay of your backyard, what you had, and the people who were declared disposable because they are no longer useful to this state or do you take care (unclear)

**VB:** In galleries, see the old man carving, wearing some blue overalls, does the old man— who is worried—

**NTM:** About him...

**VB:** ...like we need to do something about [that]...(pause) Even myself, it's only you who knows me.

**SCN:** He's over 80, born 1934.

**KLF:** Yes. How do you perceive South Africa's constitution and its impact on the lived realities of the communities it serves?

**VB:** It's the best constitution, but some other things, like I don't know. If I'll say two million rights, maybe I might be wrong, maybe I might be right [laughs]. There are other things, like some...no... [laughs].

**NTM:** [Laughs].

**VB:** I don't know how I can put it.

**SCN:** Yeah, it's a nice concept of putting a book on the table about a book fair. But how does it sell? It can sell very well. But what does it say? What kind of justice is it oozing out? You see because now, you don't have to give SARS the license to go on committing more crimes, I mean white collar crime. They do, you know, silly things. Taking money from Paul to give to Peter, fraudulently. And then you consider that the justice system won't be a good one if it says that guy didn't steal or that guy stole, you see? Because, what's the phrase? The proof of the pudding is in the eating. And then if it becomes bitter in the mouth, you see that this was not a recipe for nutrition.

**VB:** It's too loose also. So, if somebody is killed now, that person won't be arrested. It will take months or years maybe, sometimes it just disappears. You see, I don't know.

**NTM:** Sometimes [it's] not fair.



**TIME ON AUDIO RECORDING:00:27:46**

**VB:** Not fair.

**KLF:** Are you mindful of conservation when you're making your work, like the (phone rings)...?

**VB:** (Speaking on the phone, drops call). What's the question?

**KLF:** Are you mindful of conservation when you're making your artwork, like the preservation and restoration requirements that ensure that your work will last for a long time? And do you have specific recommendations for, I guess, preserving *After the Wedding*?

**VB:** Yes, artwork must last forever. I mean it must maybe go to the museum and teach people, go to art centres, go maybe to other countries, and so on.

**KLF:** Okay, is there anything else that you would like to be recorded in this interview?

**VB:** Well, [laughs] I think for now I don't think I have something in mind that should be recorded. So [laughs].

**KLF:** Okay, thank you Bra Vincent.

**END OF AUDIO RECORDING:00:29:20**

## MONTY MAHOBE

By Pene Maniere

A history carved from life, available as a book entitled *Portrait* available from Artist Proof Studio.

55-year-old Monty Mahobe's face is etched and carved with a lifetime of memories – many of which are reflected in his staggering collection of 40 plus years of artwork, from linocuts to wood relief carvings. Harnessing a lifetime of memories, Mahobe has drawn on his background, circumstance and history to slice, cut and sculpt out a narrative to his artwork.

Born in Graaff Reinet in the Eastern Cape, he was raised in Sophiatown and later moved to Western Native Township. Mahobe attended St Peter's College (now St Martin's School) and was fortunate to be under the tutor ledge and encouragement of the founder, Father Trevor Huddleston, 'a good man,' says Mahobe, 'who believed in the artist.' It was during his years of studying art at school, that he found his biggest supporter and patron – Matthew Whipman, an artist himself and supplier of Mahobe's much-needed art materials, mostly discounted or given to him for free. Whipman saw an enormous talent in the young artist, so much so that he organised a mini exhibition for him. At the time of the exhibition, Mahobe was attending the Polly Street Art Centre, and believes the confidence he gained from this exhibition was the catalyst in realizing that he would always be an artist.

With encouragement from Father Huddleston, Mahobe's life for a while played out in a different creative style; music, in the form of the double bass. From his teens to early twenties, he pursued the American dream, playing in a trio, with the likes of African Pollies, and even a few times with Hugh Masekela, before deciding that music wasn't his forte.

Right: Monty Mahobe, *Soweto Uprising*, Woodcut Carving, 42.2x59.2x0.5cm, 2018

