

Tinyiko Makwakwa

portfolio.

**Berman
Contemporary
All Women Art
V&A Waterfront**



TINYIKO MAKWAKWA

ARTIST STATEMENT AND BIOGRAPHY

At the heart of my work is the exploration of cultural materiality as a form of language. My artistic practice revolves around what I describe as "Matrilineal Methodologies"—rituals and spiritual practices that promote circularity and link generations. Through a visual language of Textile Totems and Beaded Talisman, My work seeks to create a seamless blend between the seen and unseen worlds, serving as a continuous, natural synthesis of traditional and contemporary expression.

Repetition and rhythm are an essential part of my art practice, as is observation. The dipping of Umbhaco in and out of the ochre dye bath, the over and under of stitch embroidery, the gathering of glass seed beads into the safety pins, threading of safety pins into wire, all the while observing the silent but consistent movement of the studio shadows day in, day out as the sun makes its way to and fro across the horizon, like a pendulum on a metronome.

Tinyiko Makwakwa (born 1984) is a Johannesburg-based artist whose research-driven studio practice offers a profound investigation into African indigenous science and realities. Primarily focusing on textile art, she creates layered compositions of vibrant colour using natural dyes; Indigo and Ochres - mineral earth pigment, glass beads, and stitch embroidery on umbhaco, a fabric integral to traditional attire for the Xhosa people of South Africa, who are known to dip-dye their umbhaco in ochre for its earth tones and apply ochre on their faces making use of its rich mineral composition as a form of sun protection.

At the heart of Makwakwa's work is the exploration of cultural materiality as a form of language. Her artistic practice revolves around what she describes as "Matrilineal Methodologies"—rituals and spiritual practices that promote circularity and link generations. By championing ancestral knowledge systems through her textile art, she presents them as a valid science in their own right, examining how these indigenous perspectives and lived experiences sustain cultures over time.

Through a visual language of Textile Totems and Beaded Talisman, curvilinear abstract shapes and forms, Makwakwa delves into the interwoven narratives between her materials, the landscape, and her artistic process. Her work seeks to create a seamless blend between the seen and unseen worlds, serving as a continuous, natural synthesis of tradition and contemporary expression.

Tinyiko Makwakwa is represented by Berman Contemporary.

Instagram @tinyikomakwakwa
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ARTIST RESUME

Solo exhibitions

- 2025 Umbhaco Oditshiweyo- SMAC Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2023 The Blueprint- Kalashnikov Gallery Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2021 Cosmos and Community - Kalashnikov Gallery Johannesburg, South Africa

Group Exhibitions

- 2025 Hlukanisa uHlanganise - Melrose Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2025 Terrain - Ebony Curated, Franschhoek, South Africa
- 2025 Vol III Tropology of image and imagination - BMWartgeneration X BMWyoungcollectorsco, Nirox, South Africa
- 2025 A very Loop Street Summer - Ebony Curated, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2024 Refuse the given world - Kalashnikov Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2024 Steelwool and other Paradoxes - Latitudes Center of the arts, South Africa
- 2024 Gathered II - SMAC Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2023 All that she carried - Latitude Center for the Arts, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2022 New Signings - Kalashnikov Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

Art Fairs

- 2026 Investec Cape Town Art Fair, Berman Contemporary, South Africa
- 2025 RMB Latitudes Art Fair - INDEX Kavula Studio, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2025 FNB Art Fair - Kalashnikov Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2024 FNB Art Fair - Kalashnikov Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2024 RMB Latitude Art Fair - Kalashnikov Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2024 Investec Art Fair - Kalashnikov Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2023 Investec Art Fair - Kalashnikov Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2023 1-54 Contemporary Art Fair, London, United Kingdom
- 2023 RMB Latitude Art Fair - Kalashnikov Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2022 Turbine Art Fair - Kalashnikov Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

Residencies

- 2025 South African Foundation and Fellowship for contemporary art and Lion Sands Game Reserve

Collections

- 2025 More Family Collection, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2024 Iziko Museum of South Africa, Cape Town, South Africa

Panel Talks

- 2024 Wits Arts Museum (Wam) Then and Now: Innovations in African Textile, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2023 twyg Textile Talk Africa, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2022 twyg Textile Talk Africa, Cape Town, South Africa

Workshop Facilitation

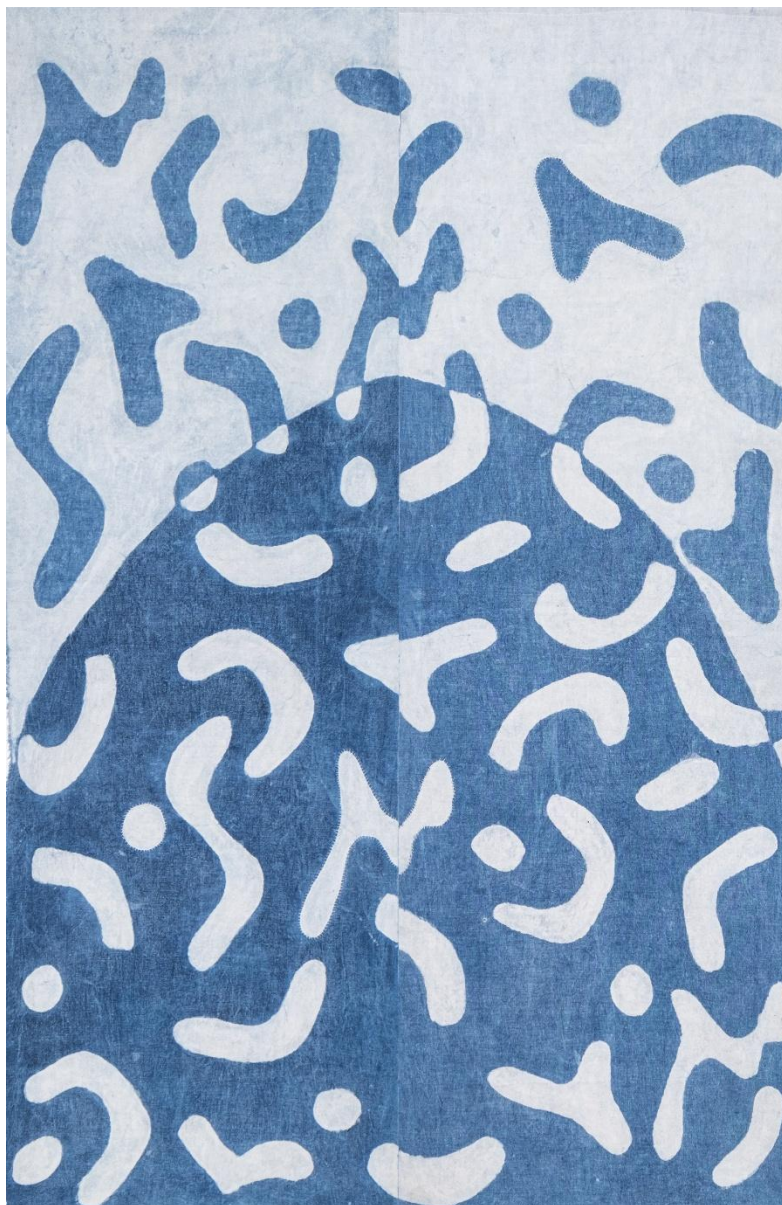
- 2024 Hazendale festival, Stellenbosch, South Africa
- 2024 Goethe Insitute JHB Lapa Brixton Project Artist in Residence Natural dye
- 2023 Goethe Insitute JHB Lapa Brixton Project Artist in Residence Natural dye
- 2022 Goethe Insitute JHB Lapa Brixton Project Artist in Residence Natural dye



From the ground up, 2023
Cotton, Ochre, glass beads and cotton thread
130 x 105 cm



We may not speak of it to each other, even if we had the words, 2023
Cotton, Ochre, glass beads and cotton thread
130 x 105 cm

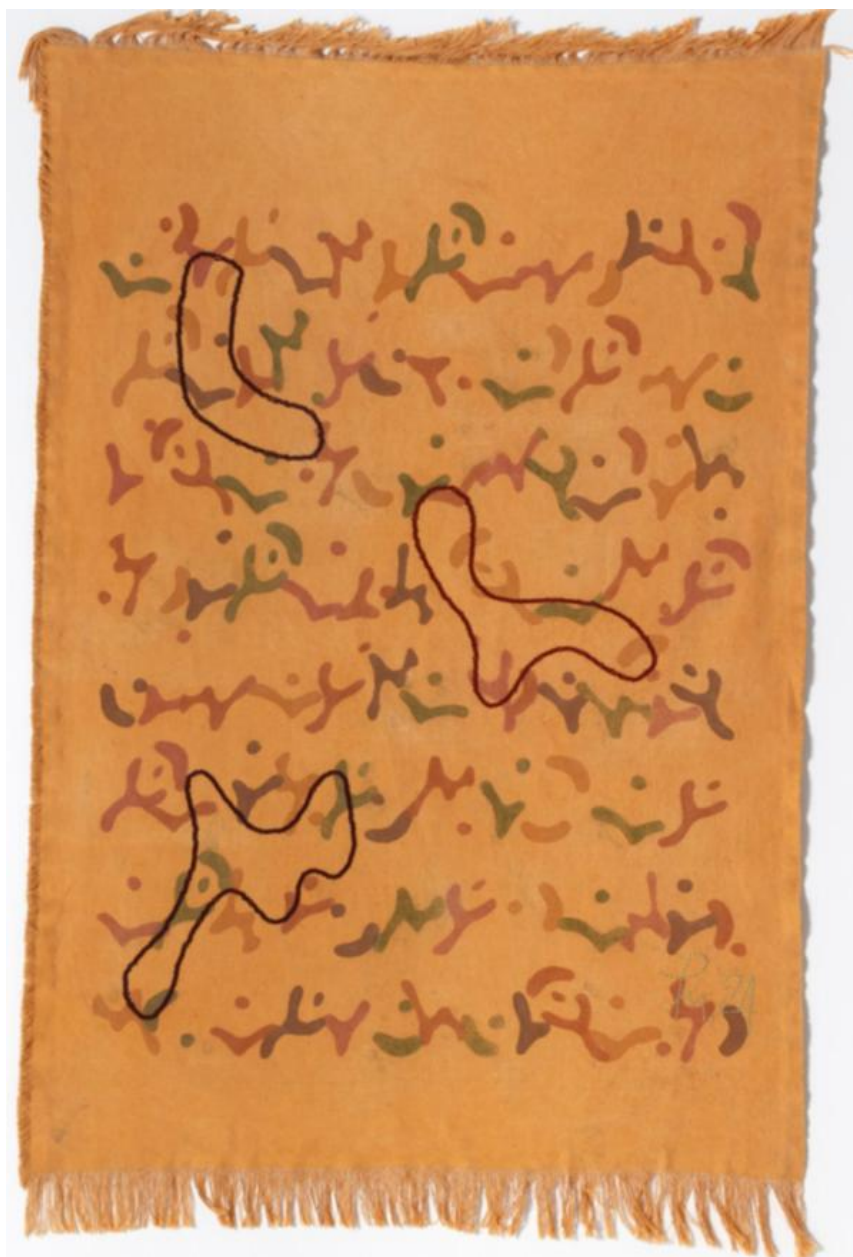


Helical Rising: A Scared Time, 2022
Hemp, Natural indigo and cotton thread
140 X 95 cm





When I last wrote to you about Africa, 2024
Umbhacho, imbola, ne iinstimbi (cotton, ocher and glass beads)
Framed 170 x 74 x 6 cm



Reading The Musical Score In Silence, 2024
Umbhacho, imbola, ne iinstimbi (cotton, ocher and glass beads)
Framed 170 x 74 x 6 cm



Textile Totem III, Cultural Heirloom, 2025
Umbhacho, imbola, nomsonto (Cotton, ochre and cotton thread)
153 x 123 cm



Textile Totem IV, Litema tsa Basotho, 2024
Umbhacho, imbola, nomsonto (cotton, ochre and cotton thread)
130 x 105 cm



Textile Totem V, Imini Esadibana Ngayo, 2025
Umbhacho, imbola nee iinstimbi (cotton, ochre and glass beads)
136 x 115 cm



Writing into the unknown, 2025
Cotton, Ochre and glass beads
Framed 85 x 64 x 3 cm



A Genealogical Recital, 2025,
Cotton, Ochre and glass beads
Framed 85 x 64 x 3 cm



Written By The Orators: Ancestral Blue Print I & II (diptych), 2023
Linen, Natural indigo and cotton thread
120 X 150 cm each



Ximumu: The return of Orion to the nights sky, 2022
Linen, Natural indigo and cotton thread
138 x 250 cm



Trance Dance, 2024,
Umhbacho, Ochre, glass beads and cotton thread
Framed 130 x 105 x 3 cm



Red Blanket, 2023,
Umhbacho, Ochre, glass beads and cotton thread
Framed 130 x 105 x 3 cm



Echoes from the Matrilineal Belt, 2025
Umbhacho, imbola, nomsonto (Cotton, ocher and cotton thread)
130 x 160 cm



Textile Totem I: Mintiro ya vulavula, 2023
Linen, Ocher, Silk and Cotton Thread
132 x 56 cm



Terrestrial Tapestry, 2024
Umbhacho, imbola, ne iinstimbi (cotton, ocher and glass beads)
130 x 190 cm



An ocean returning to Herself, 2025,
Glass beads, safety pins and wire
80 x 20 x 6,5 cm



That thing around your neck, 2025,
Glass beads, safety pins and wire
53,5 x 40 cm



Chrysalis, 2025,
Glass beads, safety pins and wire
12 x 36 cm

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Berman Contemporary is a pioneering gallery dedicated to women artists. Through mentorship, visibility, and sustained support, we nurture creative practices and amplify women's voices. Our mission is to enable women artists to shape the future of contemporary art, both locally and globally.

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