

Svend Laweatz: I think everybody here is very interested in how's the art scene in South Africa, and tell about you, where do you live and are you an artist all the time or you know.

Nkule Mabaso: Well I just graduated so I just starting now to be an artist formally this year going forward and the art scene around here is pretty small and it's intimate and if you don't know a couple of people it's really hard to get opportunities and get started as an artist. There is also like very little financial support (getting work bought) so its very limiting in those terms. I'm not like living in a big city or anything I'm in a small town so I'm like very far from where the actual things are happening in the country so it's a bit of a struggle that way. In terms of my works and my art practice I work with hair and hair styling practices, as you can see from my hairstyle. I mean it has to do with body politics and identity politics and constructing a contemporary identity in this globalized world that is just fast paced and fast happening I mean it doesn't have any considerations for what is happening in the local context but it is always and imposition of outside factors always coming in and no voices going out so it was kind of drawn from there, I hope that explains some of it.

S.L: Okay, great. Can I ask you, you had some photos on the exhibition, these photo's it is you behind the camera or in front of the camera?

N.M: It's me in front of the camera, so I had a friend (Helena Steenveld) she was taking the photographs of me. So I sort of planned out what the photo's are supposed to look like by looking through magazines and online magazines of things that we get from overseas and everywhere else that have pictures of black super models like Naomi Campbell, Iman, Tyra all those guys and the thing that you find that happens in those photographs is that they are portrayed as animalistic and wild and over sexed and those kinds of things. So when I was making those photographs it was a parody of that (kind of image construction). We took poses that were in some of those photographs (found images) and I had to play them out in a sense and to try and get the same sort of effect but in a parodied style. I made my own costumes sort of after the ones they were modeling and the poses also refer back to what they were doing in the advertising material. [The other important aspect] is the hair, they have a lot of weaves in the photos and a lot of "strange hairs" that are theirs so I created a three meter long braided wig that I used in the performances and the photographs as well to sort of create that stereotype of the things that you find in those types of images, you find a lot of hair, leopard print or some sort animal print some flesh or some sort of sexualized pose, some impractical shoes and a lot of make up and I don't know how anybody who lives in that kind of landscape that they portray can actually put that whole image together and what does that image symbolize and signify.

S.L: That hair that you have, the 3 meter long braids, is that real hair or artificial hair?

N.M: It's artificial, it out of synthetic fibers. It's actually plastic, most of the hair that I used there is plastic.

S.L: How did you come up with the idea of having your art exhibited at Charlottenborg.

N.M: I saw the open call for the exhibition on a website and I responded to that. I thought I will try and see what happens and it went well so...

S.L: So next year you are going to fill a whole room so are you going to work on that now or have you already made some work.

N.M: Well I'm in the process of making work and with the work I'm working now I am making it with the idea that is going to be there next year but I haven't really decided what to make specifically for when I have the show there, but I am making some work now.

S.L: So what angle are you planning to take?

N.M: My angle for work that I am going to make for Copenhagen?

S.L: Yes

N.M: I don't know, I am not too sure yet because right now what I am working with is the idea of forest people, forest nymphs, people that you don't know about you know some sort of exotic mythical people that all these adventurers go into dark forests and find new exotic people so that's the ideas I'm working with right now. This time I am behind the camera and I am getting someone else to model those kinds of images; that's what I am working with right now and I am not sure how it will translate later on as it develops further.

S.L: The things that you are going to make is it photographs or?

N.M: It's going to be a mixture mostly it's going to be a performance which get recorded as photographs. The idea is to set a scene at the local river and little forest near by and then I go and I discover it, so I am taking these photographs from an explorer point of view sort of seeing the thing between the trees, trying to follow it and trying to find it so hopefully there is going to be a video of the performance and then some photographs and then what ever else develops out of it.

S.L: The background of the photographs is very raw and sad, what is the meaning of that.

N.M: Those photos were taken when I was living in cape town last year there was a fire up on Signal Hill, it was just a veld fire there are always fires up there. The reason I chose that specific background was because when you refer back to images they are drawn from they are always set in some kind of harsh and unforgiving barren landscape, that has a sense of dry, undisturbed kind of feel that you are not really sure where this environment is but its not like a specific place either. I don't know, it just seemed to work and the harshness of it appealing because these images are sort of prescriptive but not very helpful in

terms of helping to develop one self identity but instead they want to develop a culture of their own that impose what should be understood as cultural or natural; I hope that answers it.

S.L: I think it will be very interesting to us to know how do you finance your living if you just started out as an artist you just finished college, I suppose that you need other income and so on. So how are you living and working and as an additional question you lived in Cape Town but you moved away.

N.M: I lived in Cape Town because I was studying there so I was there for four years. Now I am back home and staying at home so that's sort of cuts my costs of living substantially and my parents are helping me out right now because I don't have job so they are helping me finance my projects and stuff so its not very easy.

S.L: How old are you?

N.M: I am twenty-three.

S.L: Do you see a big difference in the perception in what is seen as western beauty and what is seen as South African beauty?

N.M: Right now there is like, in term of perceptions on beauty, everybody is trying to conform to western or American prescription of what is beautiful because that is what is being sold through every possible medium. So you get a lot of people that are trying to be thin and everybody want to be blonde and its really ridiculous and sad because it forsakes how people naturally look and chase the commercial idea of how they should appear. That is also central to the themes that I try to explore in my work that there are different ways of looking and of being and this continual prescription by media or by who ever onto people that sometimes don't even think on the decisions that they make on a personal level about the things that they consume and how they construct themselves is very damaging and damning perpetual cycle. I don't even know how one would intervene and stop it because whose mind would you have to change first, the mind of the consumer or the one who is manufacturing these products that these people consume, its very tricky.

S.L: On the exhibition in Demark, how do you think that will affect your work in the future?

N.M: I don't know, the reason I had sent my work to Denmark was to try and get a wider audience because I felt if I just sit on it, I don't have much happening here and my work would never sort of develop and have a conversation of its own or a life of its own so I don't know how it will affect my work in the future hopefully it will be a positive impact on my development but there is really no telling.

S.L: We would like to hear about your dreams, what are dreaming about?

N.M: I have super big dreams starting with studying further and going into curating but also still be able to create my work. I've been accepted to study in Switzerland later on in September so I am trying to take up that opportunity and see how it goes but is really difficult financially and stuff so I don't know how it will go. I want to stay in the arts and have a really successful career there just not too sure how it is going to turn out yet.

S.L: Well it has been a pleasure meeting you, I invited you with this crazy idea and you accepted it and it has been a great pleasure meeting and it has been an inspiration to see your work today and also to hear about your personal motives and background and I hope to see you in Europe, I hope to see you in Copenhagen one of these days when you have your own exhibition room next spring. And we would like to thank you from all of us here and we look forward to seeing you and if you do I hope you send us a mail about it.

N.M: Okay thanks but can I just ask one question though and my question is what attracted you to my work and what's the point of interest and engagement?

S.L: I think this is a... we saw a lot of art pieces at the exhibition at the show today from lots of new up comers from all over the world and great here from Scandinavia and Denmark so there was a great variety about it. What we found great about your pieces of work was that they were different and they were from anything else that we have seen particularly the *Sta-Soft-Fro* was quiet original, not something we had seen before. Its some kind of a sculpture but still very African and very inspirational somehow. It was a mystery about it, I think what you have done is great you have a great start to your art career and I hope you get you dream fulfilled in that area, and we thank you very much for being with us tonight.