

Funding and Grant Proposal:

Nokwanda Themba is a 24year old Zambian/South African self-taught Illustrator and Visual Artist. Nokwanda's work is a visual anthropology set to challenge Western beauty standards and aids as a representation of Women of Colour, and more so, black women.

Her ongoing project "The Sovereign" is a series of portraiture work on the cultural and social identity of Women of Color from various Global ethnicities.

She is currently preparing for an artist in Residency programme in Tokyo, Japan in May-June 2019 by which she will conduct social and cultural research on the women and people of Japan to create portraiture works by which she plans to have a closing solo-exhibition at the end of her residency programme.

She kindly seeks funding and a grant for her dream project of the estimated amount of \$4,000 which will cover flight costs, transportation, accommodation, food, artist materials and other required expenses for the one-month residency programme, as it is a self-funded programme.

Your assistance and contribution in any way possible would be greatly appreciated and received with gratitude.

Thank you so much for your consideration.

Kind regards,

Nokwanda Themba

Artist Biography:

Nokwanda Themba is a 24 year old (b.1994) Zambian-South African self-taught Freelance Illustrator/ Visual Artist and Pre-med Graduate based currently in Johannesburg, South Africa. Her work focuses on the Visual Anthropology of beauty, womanism, the cultural identity and representation of Women of Color from different global ethnicities. Her work has been described as whimsical, vibrant and imaginative illustrations creating nuanced reflections of the black female form, embracing all aspects of femininity — both her own, and that of her subjects. She describes her work as a social experiment, in which she explores the complexities and individual differences in the faces she meets.

— some might consider her work far removed from her background in medicine. Nokwanda holds a Bachelor of Science in Human Physiology of which she obtained at the University of Pretoria. Carving a multi-career, she wishes to pursue her dual passion in Medicine in the following years to come.

While pursuing her studies she has exhibited her work in group exhibitions and worked with galleries such as Trent gallery. In 2015 she was chosen to be a part of ULTRACONTEMPORARY EMERGENCYART #AFRICA hosted by Copenhagen Ultracontemporary Biennale (CUB) at The Museum of African Design where she worked alongside artists from Denmark, Berlin in a group exhibition. Her work has featured in with publications such as Elle South Africa and Napizum in the United States. Voted as the top 16 Emerging Creative Leaders to look out for, she has over the years appeared in many online features celebrating her self-taught talent such as Design Indaba and worked with artists and collaborations spanning across the United States, Ghana, Tokyo and Milan.



She continues to catch the eye of many studios, residences and organizations from across the world.

Her work can be found in the 'Women who draw- worldwide open directory for female illustrators.



Nokwanda Themba

(Resume)

Freelance Contemporary Illustrator, Self-taught Visual Artist and Writer

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Website: www.instagram.com/nylamexico

Currently based in Johannesburg, South Africa

Years active: 2012 – Present

Instagram: @nylamexico

Behance: @NokwandaThemba

Twitter: @voguezambia

Current Themes:

- ▶ Portraiture work on the Visual Anthropology on Beauty, Social and Cultural Identity and the Representation of Women of Color from different global ethnicities

Mediums:

- ▶ Water Color, Gouache, Tempera powder, Compressed Charcoal, Ink, Acrylic

Education:

Bachelor of Science: Human Physiology
University Of Pretoria (2018)

Languages: English, Tswana, Japanese (Beginner)

Work Experience

Editorials:

- ▶ Napizum Magazine Issue 002
Sep 2017 (Washington, USA)
- ▶ Napizum Magazine Issue 003
Dec 2017 (Washington, USA)
- ▶ Dynamic Africa Blog – Writer and Creative arts contributor (2015-2016)
- ▶ POVO Journal 10th Anniversary Edition Issue 05
2014 (ZIM)
- ▶ Elle Magazine South Africa - The Future Is Now: Emerging Artists (2018)

Collaborations/Projects:

- ▶ Hafu2Hafu social project (JPN)
- ▶ Maki & Mpho- Hamba Collection (USA/JPN)
Position: contributing designer
- ▶ Children's Book Illustration For Nani (SA)
Commissioned work

Podcasts:

Power FM 98.7 MHz Arts & Culture segment (ZA) 2017

Panel Discussions:

- ▶ Young African Creative Conference (2017)

'The Future of the creative industry'

Exhibitions:

- ▶ Africa Day Art Group Exhibition
University of Pretoria (ZA)-2014
- ▶ ULTRACONTEMPORARY#EMERGENCYART #AFRICA
Copenhagen Ultracontemporary Biennale (CUB)
@MOAD - The Museum of African Design (ZA)- 2015

- ▶ Rooftop Group Exhibition
SA Creative Network (ZA)- 2016

- ▶ Print Art Exhibition
Trent Gallery (ZA)
2018

- ▶ Cerebral Exhibition
Newtown (ZA)
2019

- ▶ 1000 Drawings
Johannesburg (ZA)
2019

Competitions:

- ▶ Golden Baobab Illustration Prize for African children's Literature (GH) 2014
- ▶ A City Joburg-my-homeburg Illustration challenge (ZA) 2014
- ▶ The Ink-Fish Print Studio T-shirt Design Competition #Top16
2014

Personal Projects:

- ▶ A Tribe Called Nyla – Illustrated Notepads
- ▶ Benign series 2015

Organizations/Databases:

Women Who Draw - open directory for female* illustrators (2017-present)

Online Features & Interviews:

- ▶ 2014
Accra dot Alt Radio – 'NOKWANDA THEMBA'S BENIGN SERIES IS BLACK MAGIC' (GH)
- ▶ 2015
SA CREATIVE NETWORK- 'VIBRANT SELF TAUGHT CREATIVE ARTIST- NOKWANDA THEMBA'
- ▶ 2016
Accra dot Alt Radio - ILLUSTRATING AFRICA: IN VIVID COLOR WITH NOKWANDA THEMBA'
- ▶ 2017
DESIGN INDABA – 'Playful and powerful illustrations by Nokwanda Themba'
Bubblegumclub – 'Illustrator Nokwanda Themba creates whimsical reflections of self and women of colour'
- ▶ 2018
Between 10 and 5- Q&A 'Nokwanda Themba – The medical student and illustrator carving a multi career'
'Afriquette- Meet South Africa's Nokwanda Themba - the self-taught Artist celebrating the grace and strength of black women in her work'

Artist Statement:

The current theme in my work is that of Visual Anthropology. Through portraiture I create a social and cultural identity and representation of Women of colour from different ethnicities across the global society. A visual study of how women of color fit into the Euro-centric world and western standards of beauty as well as how we define the concept of beauty within our individual ethnic communities.

With Women of colour (mainly black woman) being my subject matter, a constant theme in my work is Womanism, by which author Alice Smith defines as:

*"(a womanist) loves music. loves dance. loves the moon. loves the spirit.
Loves love and food and roughness. loves the folk. loves herself.
Regardless."*

A representation of different women in our society, highlighting the beauty, femininity, complexity, vulnerability, grief, pain, struggle, softness, and grace we each identify with in our own way – all of which makes us women.

In a society where Women Of Colour, more so black women, are wrongfully viewed as weak, class-less jezebels, unintelligent and often overshadowed by toxic masculinity which aims to silence our voice, the women figures in my work stand exalted, regal, with magnificent prestige before you. They are, sovereign.

The medium use of coffee, tempera powder and compressed charcoal as mediums creates a rich brown skin texture, complemented with black ink, which is used for the extravagant and prominent hair. The figures and subjects are often represented through minimalistic clothing, in order to create timeless work.



I regard my work as a social experiment, by which I explore the different facial features of the equally beautiful and complex humans we encounter daily, which has allowed me to challenge my own perceptions and beliefs. Not only with those we regard as beautiful, but the ordinary, yet peculiar. What a culture might consider disharmonic or ugly, another might consider a beautiful imperfection. How do we respond to the different faces we meet? How do we connect with one another globally? How are our cultures similar? How do we interact, form and create community through these intra and inter differences? How do we navigate through the spaces we are in with one another? Each person we meet has inside them the same complexity and vivid life of their own, and yet, despite the joy, grief, love and trauma we are each filled up with we show up as ourselves. Who are we really? Are we what we present ourselves as? Or is this simply a mask? Furthermore, this is described as the art of Physiognomy- the science of deducing a person's mental character, personality, and temperament from facial features. By enlarging certain features (ears, nose, eyes etc.) of my subjects, they appear distorted, disproportionate, grotesque, loud and present. I am often intrigued by the shadow work, complexity, imperfections, and flaws that make us beautiful and humanly inhumane.

"If everyone isn't beautiful, then no one is."

Andy Warhol

Project Description:

Reason for residence and motivation for funding:

The aim of this one month residency stay is to begin exploring and researching the different cultures and societies of the world, specifically, Japan. I have always had a keen interest in Japan. The people, the language, the culture, the natural scenery, the lifestyle, the food and the architecture. There is a strength yet calmness in their culture I seek to understand, explore and represent through drawings.

It is important to create a cultural relationship and bridge the gap between our two different cultures, Africans and Japanese could possibly be so much alike, and in understanding each other we can create more unity and partnership. More so, creating global womanhood and connection.

This residence stay in Japan will offer me community, support and collaboration with other artists in the city. Through living outside of my comfort zone, challenging my own beliefs, experiencing a completely different culture, new surroundings and creating new experiences, this will impact and effect my work, allowing me the time to do cultural research and create new work. The cultural experiences I gain will be incorporated into my work as I create portraits of the different people I meet.

I have throughout my career created small pieces of work, due to time and economic constraints. My stay at the residency will allow me time and resources to create larger scales of work, as well as the opportunity to explore different mediums either than compressed charcoal, coffee and tempera powder- which I have been using over the years.

As an emerging artist, I not only intend to grow in means of expression but I seek intellectual growth, maturity, and professionalism. I want to develop and fully immerse myself into my craft and create multiple pieces of work.

This residence stay will become a catalyst for progress and new insights into my creative process as an artist.

Aim and mission statement:

My work aims to challenge Western standards of beauty, explore the differences and similarities that make us human and create pieces of work that depicts the different emotions and vulnerabilities and complexities we each possess.

The aim of my residence duration is to explore the questions stated in my artist statement by engaging with the women of Japan and members of the community. Through connecting with the different women and learning about their culture and what being a woman means to them.

The process of my project will include keeping an inventory journal of my experiences and people I have met, photographs in a photo journal, as well as gaining ancient insights from members of the community about the culture. With my findings I intend to create a large scale portraiture mural work as well as individual potriats of all the souls I have meet in the particular city. Which will be a part of my ongoing project titled "The Sovereign" -a solo exhibition to be held.

Examples of my project aim, as taken from artists Araki Koman and Rama Duwaji's previous work respectively:



