

Life seems to go on without effort when I am filled with music.

GEORGE ELIOT
English novelist, poet and journalist



ICYMI | IOL.CO.ZA

TRESOR DROPS A JAM FOR HIS BIRTHDAY

Multi award-winning Afro-Pop singer TRESOR shared news of new music on his social media pages earlier this week and released new song *Thrill* to his fans on his birthday April 24. | See more on IOL

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Dana drops 5th studio album

'Producing Bamako has been gruelling work and emotionally draining, people are in for a treat'

AMANDA MALIBA
amanda.maliba@ioli.co.za

SIMPHIWE Dana's released her long-awaited 5th studio album, *Bamako* – co-produced by legendary Malian musician Salif Keita and recorded in Mali, a country of which she is fond.

The singer said the album, which had been in the making for three years before it was released on Friday, gave her a sense of "relief and excitement".

"The musicality of Mali is godly. I am tempted to believe that the whole world learnt how to make and play string instruments from them."

"I went to Mali to enhance the music production of my work and worked with the legendary Salif Keita and his musicians Djessou Mory Kante and Madou Diabate among others."

"He (Keita) was my chosen partner because at every party or dinner that I have ever hosted, he's been a fixture in my DJ's playlist."

"I love how he composes music and his vocal prowess," Dana said.

The 13-track album features songs that were already released such as *Usikhonzile* and *Uzokhala* which, according to the songstress, were well received by the public and carry themes varying from matters of the heart, relationships, self love and a call for better leadership on the continent.

She described the album's sound as a fusion of musical styles from traditional Malian music, mixed with



DUE to her unique combination of jazz, afro-soul, rap and traditional music, Simphiwe Dana has been hailed as the "new Miriam Makeba".

reggae and dance hall grooves from the Caribbean, without losing signature her sound. "Producing this album has been gruelling work and emotionally draining but over and above that, I believe people are in for a treat."

"I am proud that I did that. I overcame my impostor syndrome and spent all those months crafting this gift. I finally had the courage to acknowledge my producing skills. I did so much production on

Kulture Noir and *Firebrand* and never credited myself. Working with Keita and his people was the cherry on top," she said, adding that she was inspired by human conditions "that create the authenticity that people emotionally

identify with" rather than her own experiences.

The album features Keita and Grammy award-winning Malian singer and guitarist Vieux Farka Toure.

"I wouldn't say that this album is way different from the other four but I do know that my personal, emotional and spiritual growth is never out of the scope of who I am."

This year Dana marked 16 years of making music and has since received various recognitions that have cemented her place in the music industry. She said she draws inspiration from South Africa's greats such as Miriam Makeba, Busi Mhlongo and Dorothy Masuka.

She has created memorable work in the albums *Zandisile*, *The One Love Movement on Bantu Biko Street*, *Kulture Noir*, *Firebrand*, *An Evening with Simphiwe Dana Live In Concert* and *Simphiwe Dana Symphony Experience*, featuring Buika and Asa.

Although this is an exciting time for Dana, she admitted that the past two years have been difficult for her.

"I don't think I have ever been more depressed and anxious as I have been in the past two years. There were months when I couldn't get out of bed."

"I couldn't drive because I'd have panic attacks."

"I lost friends because I couldn't be there for them in ways that count to them. I'm hoping that it was all for something."

The Brief



SPRAY IT, DON'T SAY IT: KENYA GRAFFITI ARTISTS SPREAD HEALTH MESSAGE

NAIROBI: A 2m image of a sad-eyed man, baseball cap askew and mask covering his nose and mouth, is spray painted on a building in a Nairobi slum.

Next to it are the words "Corona is real". There are six other pieces of graffiti like it around Mathare, the Kenyan capital's second-largest slum. One urges people to wash their hands, another to use mobile money rather than germs-ridden cash. Kenya had 303 confirmed cases of the disease and 14 deaths.

The graffiti campaign is the brainchild of Antony Mwelu, 24, content creator with Light Art Club, and graffiti artist Brian Musasia Wanyande. Mwelu, who was born and raised in Mathare, realised he needed to do something. "I was sitting with the boys and I asked them 'Do you believe in corona?'. Most of them were like, 'No.'" Wanyande had a similar experience.

"There's a lot of misinformation going around," he said. "Some information has been in difficult English words." | Reuters

Award for master of art imagery the cherry on top for Wits head

Don Makatile

AFTER winning an award for Installation Art at the recent fifth Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) Awards 2020 for his exhibition "Asymmetries", urbanist, image-maker and academic Dr Nduka Mntambo is palpably excited over the recognition.

He says: "It was incredibly affirming for me as an artistic researcher/artist, and was indeed the proverbial cherry on top after having enjoyed the incredible and generous research support from the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences through the African Pathways Mobility Grant initiative."

The works began life as a submission towards a PhD proposal that Wits University awarded him last year. Dr Mntambo says: "The exhibition 'Asymmetries' is a culmination of iterative artistic research and practice that evolved from a series of spatio-visual projects that I orchestrated in the past few years. My practice is invested in thinking through the poetics and politics of images (representations) and how their construction can tell us about the contemporary lived experiences. My artistic research project is not only about telling stories through imagery, but to interrogate the very practice of representations and map the trajectories or contours, in ways that are aesthetically and polemically deliberate." He is head of department at the Wits School of Arts.

But how different is an image-maker from a photographer?

"Well, the distinction emanates from my eclectic engagement with images over the past decade. I started out as a stage performer, then evolved into a theatre and television production designer, then worked at commissioning content for the national broadcaster and then being documentary and experimental filmmaker/visual artist, and I'm now heading the film programme at Wits. So this diversity of practice with both the two (film) and three-dimensional (installation art) imagery, seem to me, to be best accounted for by mobilising the tentative title of the image-maker/thinker," Dr Mntambo says.

The work is a series of photographs of not just one city, but several he has visited. "Yes, it is a series of audio-visual work on the cities that was a result of research field work that I conducted during the course of my doctoral research. I was fortunate to receive the NIHSS African Pathways Mobility Grant which funded my research trips to cities such as Maputo, Accra, Nairobi, Cairo, Johannesburg, Mumbai, São Paulo, and Cotonou and Moscow."

What exactly do you mean by "the relationship between cinema and the city"?

He says: "My work is heavily invested in what is termed Cartographic Cinema. Simply put, how do cinematic/artistic practices map the complex and entangled spatial, social,

cultural interactions that characterise lived experiences that are located in what can be broadly termed an urban context.

My work conceives cinematic practices as a productive cartographic site for epistemic inversions. I begin with the strong conviction that the temporal and spatial congruence fabricated in 24 frames per second can somehow enhance our perceptions of urban life forms."

Is it strictly meant at showing the African native acclimatising and grappling with being urban?

"Not at all; in fact, my work rallies against such totalising and problematic conceptualising of the homogeneous 'African' acclimatising to being urban. Such conceptualisations are loaded with highly dangerous epistemic axiomatics, that if not contested will continue to elide the diverse, fluid and complex societal interactions between subjects that move through spaces and times that are labelled as African. The grappling with urbanity is not a distinctive 'African' experience."

"I am in a very privileged position to be working at the leading humanities faculty in the continent, in these uncertain and interesting times. I get to interact with incredibly committed colleagues from across the world and the wonderful and interesting students at the WSOA Film and Television Department," he says.

What is it that's known about the "global cities of the south" that the explorer/artist finds concurs with his knowledge or torpedoes it?

"This a complex question, not sure that I can do justice within the economy of the newspaper article. Perhaps an answer to your question can be gleaned from the work of Edgar Pieterse (2013:13) in which he relates how a jazz maestro encouraged the students to be fearless in their art by not only adhering to the prescriptions of the jazz canon, but they should use their contextual reference points to find creative ways to transcend the canon. He uses this encounter to stage a debate about how practitioners of things urban should re-calibrate their sensibilities in the process of making and thinking about cities. Pieterse asserts that, to his mind, an urbanist with an abiding interest in cityness and urban transformation must adopt a creative disposition – a constant search for the intersecting points between diagnosis, analysis, critique and proposition."

How different is the urban subject and their objects from their roots, the rural setting?



Humanities Awards 2020 Best Visual Art winner Dr Nduka Mntambo. Photo by Lauren Mulligan

"I am not sure if I agree with that dichotomy between the urban and rural; I don't find it productive or accurate, for one cannot speak simply of the urban, peri-urban or rural in absolute terms because of the fluid socio-economic and cultural spatio-temporal entanglements. The wonderful filmmaker Steve Mokoena beautifully captures this problematic issue when he once remarked about the myth of Jim-Comes-to-Joburg, whereas what we should be thinking about is how Jim built Jozi."

It is said that "the installation project demands a different conception of the relationship between the screen, the image and the viewer".

Does "framing, reframing and deframing" an image constitute the process of thinking about the image?

"Yes, this reflects my obsession with critiquing the mono focal perspectival violence of the traditional two dimensional cinema screen. My work militates against the passive viewer who is offered a single point of view in a darkened room."

I am interested in what Hito Steyerl (2012:183) dubs as re-production, in which the prefix 're-', points at repetition or response, a state in which the production of images is endlessly recycled, repeated, copied, multiplied, but potentially also displaced, humbled and renewed. The installation was constructed to offer the viewer a moving target that forced them to re-calibrate their movement in time and space, very much like the experience of navigating a city."

Dr Mntambo says he is a teacher and student of images and a husband to a beautiful life partner, Cobi, and father to two

precious and talented children, Lunga and Ellen.

Is what you do today closer or farther from your dreams as a child?

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Dr Mntambo showcased his large-scale exhibition titled *Asymmetries* at The Point of Order Project Space in Johannesburg and Michaelis Galleries in Cape Town.