

FIRST FLOOR GALLERY HARARE



SONGS OF SANKOFA

www.firstfloorgalleryharare.com

Songs of Sankofa

Approaches to Abstraction, Symbolism and African contemporary painting

African folklore across the continent is replete with instructional mythology, story-telling and proverbs referencing natural phenomena, history, animal kingdom, which over millennia has crystallised into symbols and metaphors which connect concepts with images. It would make sense that when it comes to visual art, the traditional approach would be to continue this tradition of symbolic representation. One needs only to think of the Shona proverb 'if you want to find baboons go to the mountains' to see how a natural and very visual description of the natural world, becomes a metaphor and a moral instruction.

However, it seems that many audiences feel that visual art is a lesser art in Africa than the arts like poetry, dance and music, which challenge our intellect, spirituality, emotions and imagination to transcend from what is represented to what is conceptualized and aspired to.

Sankofa is a word in the Twi language of Ghana that translates to "Go back and get it" and also refers to the Asante Adinkra symbol represented either with a stylized heart shape or by a bird with its head turned backwards while its feet face forward carrying a precious egg in its mouth. Sankofa is often associated with the proverb, "Se wo were fi na wosankofa a yenkyi," which translates as: "It is not wrong to go back for that which you have forgotten." Meaning the need to reflect and remember the past in order to forge a successful future. It is possibly most famous and globally recognized and used Adinkra symbol. Adinkra are Ghanaian symbols, which represent concepts or aphorisms. The Adinkra were and continue to be used in fabrics and pottery among the Ashantis and has been universalised, often appearing as a symbol on gates and residential building in New York.

In this way Sankofa is a potent symbol both metaphorically and literally for contemporary art on the continent to reflect on a tradition of thinking, conceptualising and imagining beyond mere description of the world around us. For Pebofatso Mokoena and Bouvy Enkobo, colours and shapes in and of themselves stories, symbols and symbols which play for their audiences like reflections in the water, in which you can sense the meaning but which invite you to complete the story for yourself by yourself. Each painting is story personal, individual and uniquely right and different for each viewer in the same way that any proverb or parable we receive translates uniquely in the context of each of our lives.

While not appearing to reference anything specific or recognisable, there is nothing random, unplanned or chaotic in any of the paintings in Songs of Sankofa. While paintings, there is musical pace and tone, which is immediately discernible, which takes us into a space of imagination and emotion. They require a time for thoughtful listening and reflection, with a view to both the past and the future, our personal and collective and solicit a meaning, which is both clear and mysterious all at once.

Valerie Kabov
Curator

Bouvy Enkobo

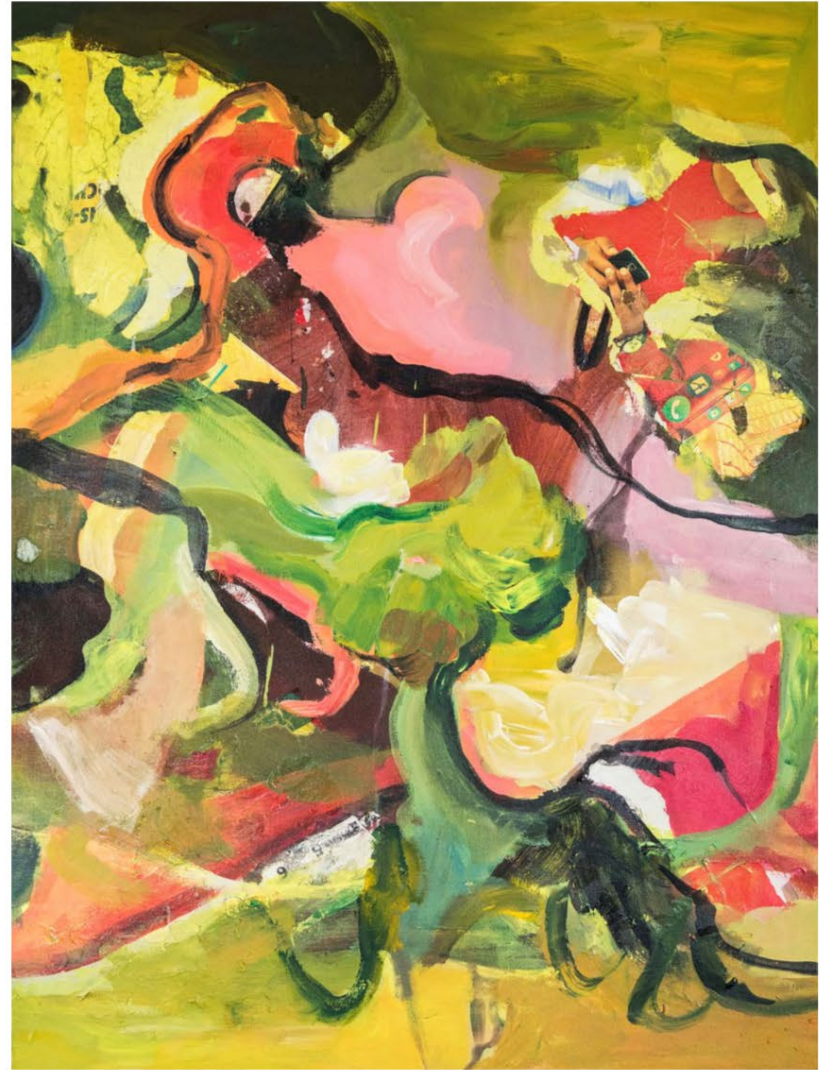
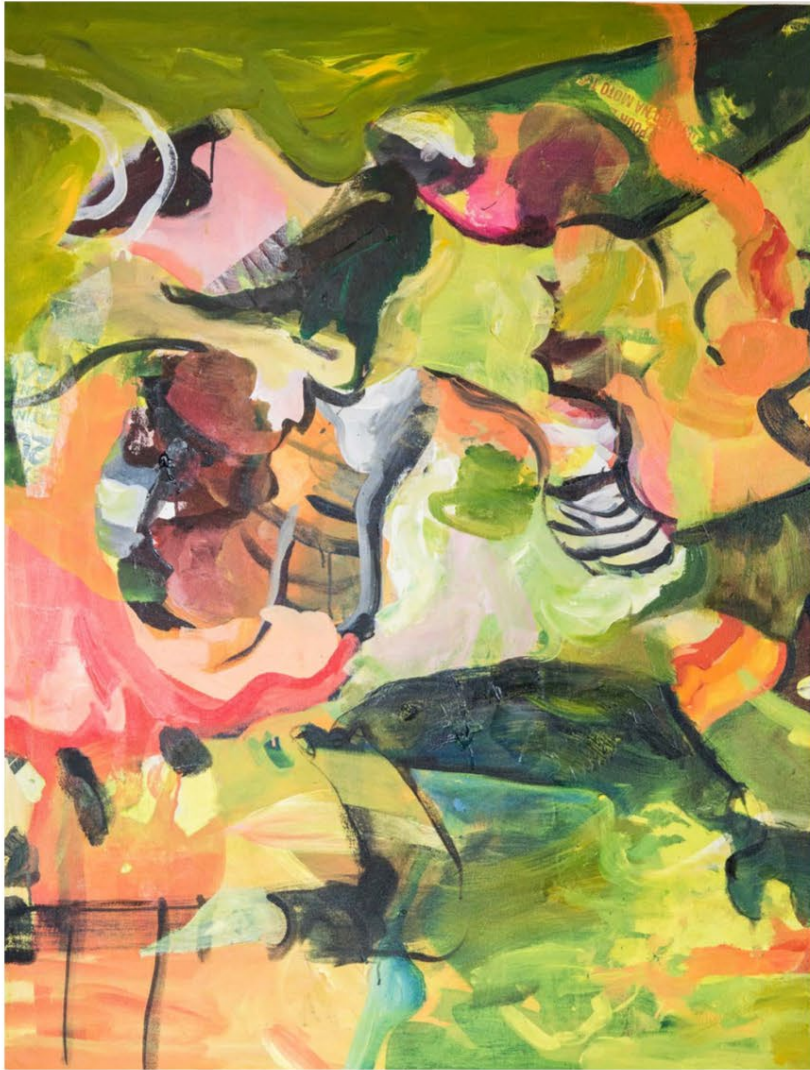
Born in Kinshasa in 1981

Lives and works in Kinshasa

For Enkobo art became a vocation from childhood. At the age of 15 he enrolled at the Institute des Beaux-arts de Kinshasa, specialising in painting, which remains his primary discipline and dedication despite exploration and studies in a range of other media from photography to animation. Quite early on Bouvy has decided to take time in forging his own path, ideas and style, away from the highly figurative and decorative Congolese style popularised by the likes of Cheri Samba. In doing so he found himself wanting to speak about the life of Kinshasa, beyond specific personalities, which inhabit it but rather as an emotional landscape at the heart of his country's difficult contemporary history. In his work waves of colour and form document the emotions, pathos and rhythms of the city, in the way that music can and does. Enkobo has exhibited widely in DRC and Belgium, taking part Maendelo exhibition in at the Walloon Parliament and Walloon Contemporary Art Centre in 2013 in Brussels and becoming the winner of the European Union special prize at Yango Biennale in Kinshasa in 2014. His work is found in numerous international private collections, as well as part of the collection of the Delegation of the European Union in DRC and Fondation Hirondelle.



Agitation, diptych, 2018
Acrylic on canvas
120cm x 150cm each



The Conquest, diptych, 2019
Acrylic on canvas
130cm x 96cm each



Alert, 2019
Acrylic on canvas
170cm x 185cm



The Sun Rises for Everyone, 2019
Acrylic on canvas
120cm x 180cm

Pebofatso Mokoena

Born 1993, Johannesburg, South Africa

Lives and works, Johannesburg, South Africa

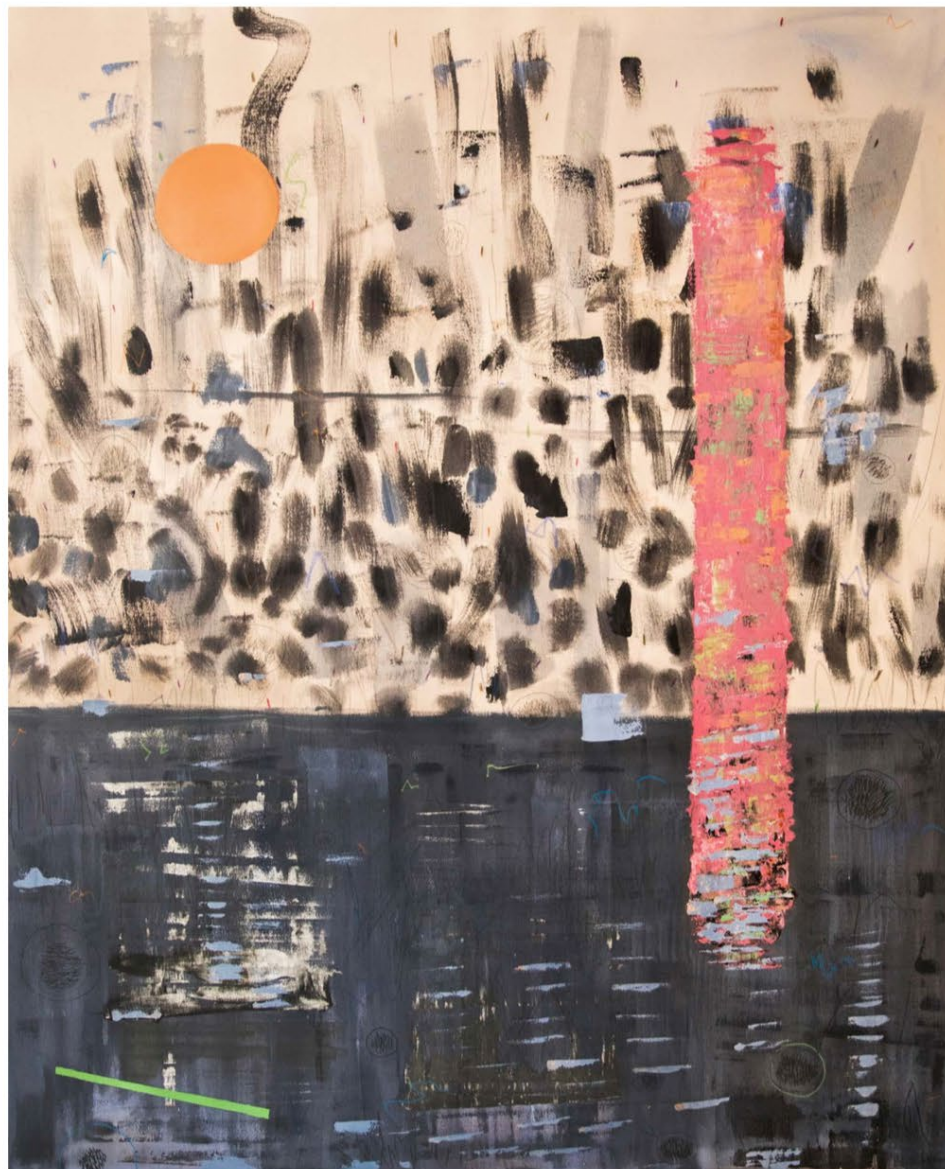
In 2014, He completed his NDip (Visual Art) at the University of Johannesburg and subsequently. Apart from working towards his BTech qualification, Pebofatso teaches drawing and presentation at the Witwatersrand school of Architecture. Emerging from early practice in printmaking, Mokoena's painting practice is formally underscored by precise mark making and division of space, while exploring ideas around Dealing with issues surrounding technology, family and communication. His work has received early recognition and support, locally and internationally. Mokoena has participated in a number of competitions and curated exhibitions including Thami Mnyele Fine Art Awards, Diptych, That Art Fair 2015, Fresh Produce in 2014, Inner Nature in Cape Town, Fortunes Remixed, and South African Voices: A New Generation of Printmakers in Washington DC and is in the the Springs Art Library Collection, the South African Embassy Art Collection (in Washington, D.C.), the Smithsonian Museum of African Art in Washington DC, and other private collections.



Everybody loves the Sunshine, 2019

Acrylic on canvas

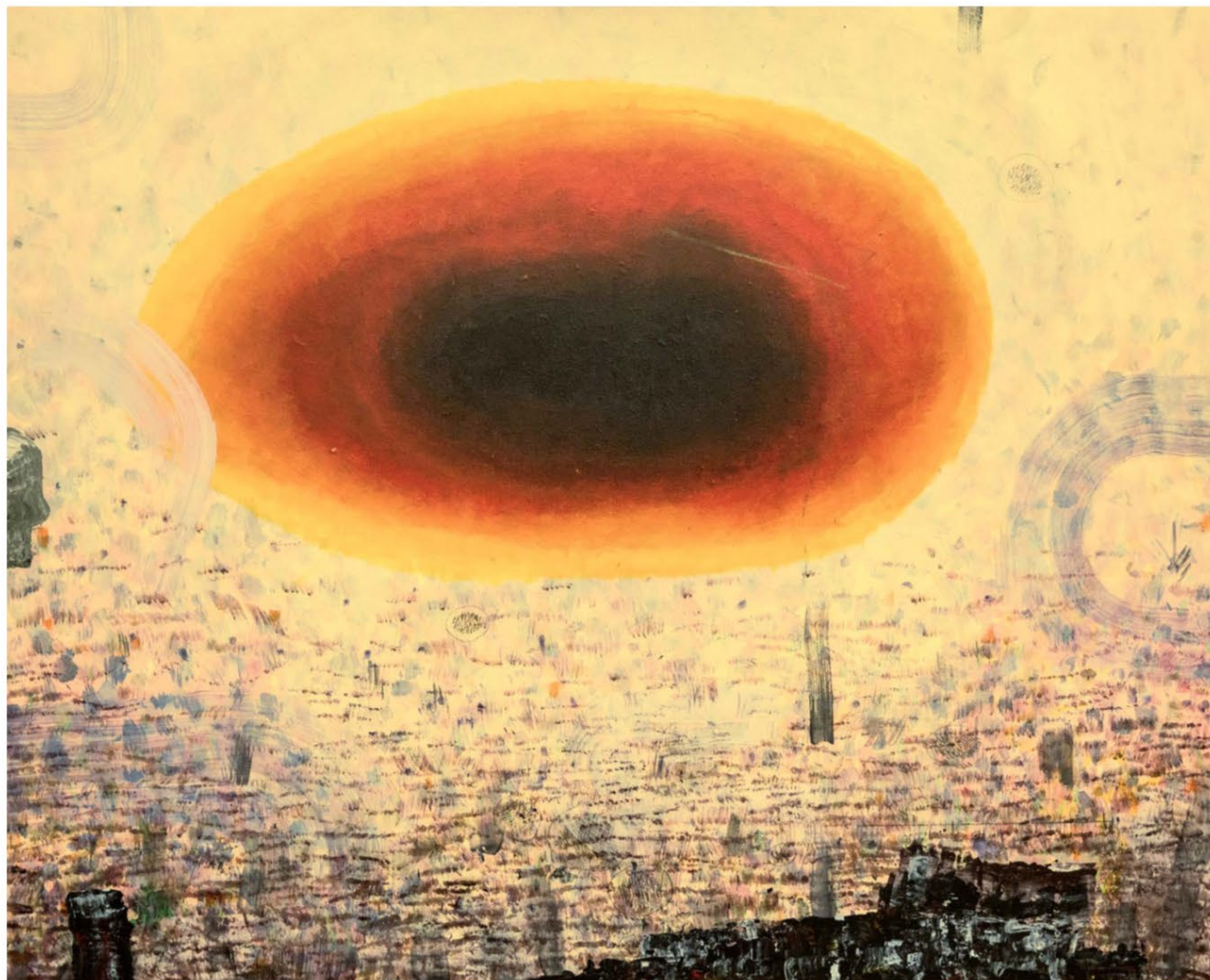
150cm x 120cm



Seismic Activity, 2019
Acrylic on canvas
150cm x 120cm



Richter Scale, 2018
Acrylic on canvas
100cm x 150cm



Fields of Prosperity, 2019
Acrylic on canvas
120cm x 150cm



Humble Beginnings, 2018
Acrylic on canvas
25cm x 30cm



Azanian Electronics, 2018
Acrylic on canvas
25cm x 30cm



Wrong Way, 2018
Acrylic on canvas
30cm x 25cm













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First Solo is an innovative practice based programme conceived by First Floor Gallery Harare for emerging artists beyond Harare, aimed at accelerating professional growth.

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