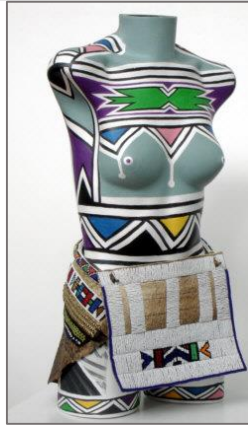


Esther Mahlangu



"Ndebele art exposed me to the world. Through my art, I have seen the world. In turn, the world learned about my Ndebele heritage."

The female form



Esther Mahlangu

(1935 –)



Esther Nikwambi Mahlangu (NaGiya Nostokana), the first of nine children, (six girls and three boys), was born in 1935 on a farm near Middelburg in Mpumalanga Province, South Africa. Esther's mother, like her grandmother and great grandmother before her, was a simple traditional woman who looked after her family and occupied herself with traditional wall painting and beadwork.

Houses were decorated during winter. This was a busy time for most Ndebele women in the surrounding areas, vying to outperform each other with their painting skills.

Drawing and painting were done with fingers; brushes were unknown. Under such hurried circumstances Esther started her painting career.

She has collaborated with respected artists, Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein and Frank Stella.. **She became the first lady and first African to be invited to participate in the BMW Car Collection.**

She painted a BMW 525 in 1991 that has toured the globe.

Esther Mahlangu travels the world adorned in her beautiful traditional Ndebele dress, touching the hearts of all who meet her while carrying high the flag of South Africa

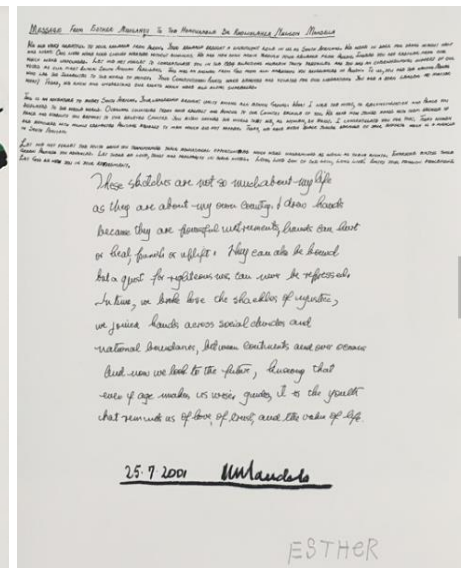
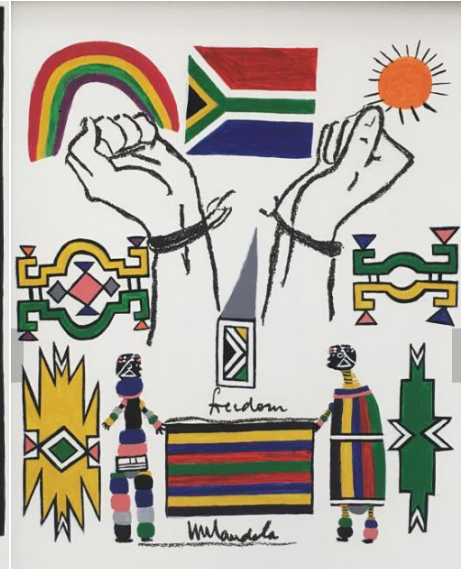
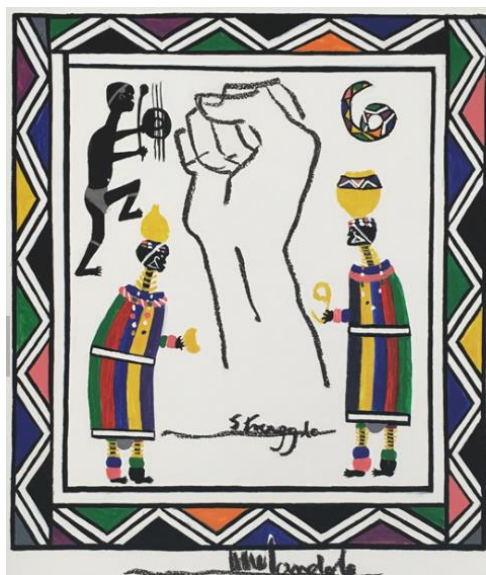
The techniques Ms Mahlangu uses (including using feathers as brushes) are the same as those used by generations of Ndebele women. However, Ms Mahlangu presents traditional Ndebele semi-abstract geometric designs in modern ways, including painting an entire 1991 525i BMW car.

<http://www.vgallery.co.za/estherpress/emcat.pdf>

Esther' Mahlangu's art is abstract geometric contemporary art, using strong, bold colours and striking geometric patterns to evoke a mood and a feeling, while keeping true to the traditional art of Ndebele women for decades.

<http://www.esthermahlanguart.com/>

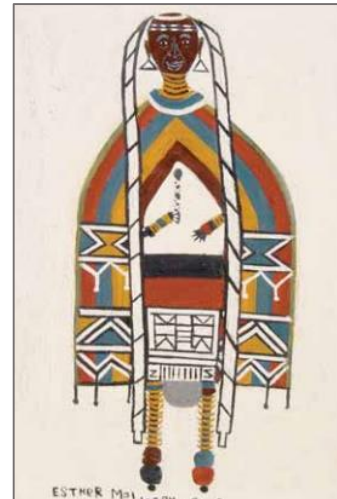
IN 2004 Esther Mahlangu was invited to Collaborate with Nelson Mandela. She created 6 paintings inspired by him by embellishing prints of drawings that he created in the traditional Ndebele style which she is known.



<http://www.esthermahlanguart.com/>

Mandela created 6 charcoal drawings of hands in different poses – titled STRUGGLE, FREEDOM, IMPRISONMENT, UNITY, CULTURE and a WRITTEN MOTIVATION Esther Mahlangu embellished these prints.

Esther herself, in traditional dress, is a living installation and performance piece!



Self-portrait, 2003 (detail)
Natural pigment on canvas



Esther' Mahlangu's current style, although very different from her original form of domestic decoration, still adheres to tradition but has evolved and changed as a direct influence of her exposure to the outside world and her connections with other cultures and art forms from around the world.

The artist's fondest memories of her visit to Paris in 1989.

In 1975 French auctioneer and racing driver, Hervé Poulain, approached BMW with his dreams of combining his two passions, motorsport and art. Alexander Calder was the first artist. The concept proved to be a hugely successful promotional tool, inspiring BMW to continue commissioning famous international artists to decorate special racing cars. Frank Stella, Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol were some of the artists.

In 1991, Esther Mahlangu was invited to paint a prototype of the new BMW 525i model. Esther's car, eleventh in the Art Car Collection, was the first to be decorated by a woman artist.

Not only her gender, but also her race made this fact all the more exceptional: a black woman artist from a little-known South African community had been included in a prestigious inter national artistic line-up, placing BMW in the spotlight of cross-cultural, out-of-Africa art promotion.

Within a week, she transformed the 5 Series BMW into a masterpiece of Ndebele art, establishing her proud place as the first woman in the line-up of international Art Car artists.



Esther Mahlangu, 1991

‘Esther Mahlangu is a dramatic colourist and her paintings, while being very flat and two-dimensional, possess a playfully mesmerizing quality. As a body of work, her paintings evoke a history and a culture that spans generations.’ [Kyle D. Kaufmann]



Abstract, 2001 Acrylic on canvas



Abstract, 2001 Acrylic on canvas



On the way to the Initiation Party, 2002
Acrylic on canvas



Around the Home, 2001 Acrylic on canvas

Esther also learned the skills to produce beadwork from her mother and grandmother and she has been practising this tradition for many years.

During her eye-opening global travels, she encountered new symbols which produced endless possibilities of new colours and designs.

From 2000, frequent requests for beaded panels led to Esther’s inclusion of beadwork in most of her exhibitions. From 2001 she started signing her beadwork and handcrafts with her initials EM to distinguish them from other works on the market.



Acrylic on shoes

