

Zeitz MOCAA presents *Waiting for Gebane*, the first museum solo exhibition of artist Senzeni Marasela

Cape Town - On 18 December 2020, Zeitz MOCAA presents a long-due institutional focus on the work of Senzeni Marasela.

Marasela, who was born in Thokoza, South Africa, is an artist whose mediums include photography, video, prints, textiles and embroidery. Her work deals with history, memory, and personal narrative, and emphasises historical gaps and overlooked female figures.

Titled *Waiting for Gebane*, the exhibition is an overview of the artist's practice, and centres around Theodorah Mthetyane, Marasela's fictional alter ego who was inspired by, and is a femage to her mother.

Theodorah's story begins when her husband, Gebane, leaves her behind in a village in the Eastern Cape when he sets off to work in faraway Johannesburg. After many years of waiting, Theodorah leaves the village for the sprawling city streets to look for her partner. In a series of photographs and textile works, Marasela wears her mother's yellow ishweshwe dress to depict Theodorah's search for Gebane while simultaneously honouring her mother.

In a later performance of the character that blurs the lines between performativity and everyday life, Marasela wore for six consecutive years exclusively the same red ishweshwe dress. Through Theodorah, the artist sought to explore the conditions of waiting and the stories of black women in South Africa, to make visible their subjectivities.

In speaking about the performance, Marasela says: "The idea of having multiple dresses throughout my performance work for *Waiting for Gebane*, was about an attempt to live or to walk in many shoes. Shoes that were sometimes smaller than mine, bigger than mine, wider than mine.

"But it was an attempt to multiply this experience, this heavy experience of being a black woman on the continent. And when I do re-enact, I re-enact with the aim of changing, of altering, changing until I find a comfortable position to be in as an artist, as a person."

Koyo Kouoh, Executive Director and Chief Curator at Zeitz MOCAA says: "It is an important moment for us at Zeitz MOCAA to celebrate this artist, in presenting her first museum solo exhibition. That it is a first, is almost unfathomable - Marasela has been working consistently and steadfastly on one of the most compelling bodies of work on the African continent by a female artist.

"What fascinates me about Marasela's work is that it addresses and carries out, by way of re-enactments, a characteristic feature of contemporary life in Africa: waiting. She adds complexity to the act of waiting and translates it into an affecting visual language that is charged with political and historical gravity."

Waiting for Gebane opens to the public on Friday, 18 December 2020 and will be on view until 2 May 2021. The exhibition will be accompanied by a series of public programmes.

ENDS

Exhibition title: *Waiting for Gebane*

Artist: Senzeni Marasela

On view: 18 December 2020 – 2 May 2021

Venue: Level 1, Exhibition Galleries

Curators: Koyo Kouoh, Storm Janse Van Rensburg, Tammy Langtry

About Senzeni Marasela:

Born in 1977 in Thokoza, South Africa, Senzeni Marasela is a cross-disciplinary artist who explores photography, video, prints, and mixed-medium installations involving textiles and embroidery.

Her work deals with history, memory, and personal narrative, emphasising historical gaps and overlooked figures. She graduated from the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in 1998, and shortly thereafter completed a residency at the South African National Gallery, culminating in her work for the Gallery's *Fresh* exhibition series.

Her work has been widely exhibited in South Africa, Europe and the US. Marasela's art features in prominent local and international collections, including MoMA, New York. She was recently part of the 56th Johannesburg Pavilion at the *Venice Biennale* (2015).

Solo exhibitions include: *Waiting for Gebane: Dolly Parton* (2018) Toffee Gallery, Darling, South Africa, *Sarah, Theodorah and Senzeni in Johannesburg* (2011) Art on Paper, Johannesburg, *Beyond Booty: Covering Sarah Baartman and other Tales* (2010) Axis Gallery, New York, "Oh my God you look like shit. Who let you out of the house looking like that?", a solo performance, Sternersen Museum, Oslo, *JONGA – Look at Me! A Museum of Women, Dolls and Memories*, Devon Arts residency, Devon, *Three Women, Three Voices* (2004) Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg, *Fresh* (2000) South African National Gallery, Cape Town.

Marasela's practice has been contextualised in the following publications, *Jonga: Look at Me: Museum of Women, Dolls and Memories* (2009), *Unbounded* (2009), *South African Art Now* (2009), *Darkroom* (2009), *10 Years, 100 Artists* (2005), *History After Apartheid* (2003), *FRESH* (2001).

She lives and works in Soweto, South Africa.

Media enquiries:

Michelle Stein

Head of Communications and Marketing

Michelle.Stein@zeitzmocaa.museum

Zeitz MOCAA Communications

communications@zeitzmocaa.museum

About Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (MOCAA):

Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (Zeitz MOCAA) is a not-for-profit institution that exhibits, collects, preserves and researches contemporary art from Africa and its diaspora; conceives and hosts international exhibitions; develops supporting educational, discursive and enriching programmes; encourages intercultural understanding; and strives for access for all.

The museum's galleries feature rotating, temporary exhibitions with a dedicated space for the permanent collection. The institution also includes the Centre for Art Education, the Centre for the Moving Image, and a Project Space for emerging artists. It opened to the public in September 2017.

Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (MOCAA)

Silo District,

South Arm Road,

V&A Waterfront

Cape Town

8002

South Africa

zeitzmocaa.museum

Opening hours: Thursdays to Sundays, 10am to 6pm