



**#She #Her #They  
THE FEMALE GAZE**

# EMBODYING HER

AN EXPERIENTIAL VISUAL ODYSSEY AND CURATED POST-GENDER CREATIVE INTERVENTION FORGROUNDING FEMALE BODIES, PSYCHES, ARTISTS, THEIR HISTORIES, NARRATIVES AND SEXUALITY, BOLDY ASSERTING PRESCIENCE, ANIMA AND PATRICARCH TO ENTER INTO DIALOGUE WITH SELF AND EACH OTHER. THE EXHIBITION EXPLORES THE SUBJECTIVE, UNFETERED INTERNAL AND PHYSICAL SPACES IN WHICH WOMEN ARTISTS BOLDY ASSERT THEIR PLACE AND PRAXIS – AS A TRANSFORMATIVE, MAGICAL PRESENCE IN THE CONTEMPORARY ARTWORLD. ARTWORK FOR FREEING THE MIND, THE NIPPLE, AND FEMALE EXPRESSION FROM ITS HISTORICAL FRAMING AND GENDERED TROPES THROUGH DIALOGUE, ENGAGING VISUAL ART & CAPTIVATING PERFORMANCES.

*Earth, Sky, Bountiful Bodies, Eros in Art, and Oceans in Anima*

**A Beautiful Celebration of Gender Non-binary and Female – Identifying Artists & Performers**



## THE SUBJECTIVE GAZE – ART FOREGROUNDS FEMALE-IDENTIFYING ARTISTS DURING THE CTAF 2023

**Aspire Art** is proud to host an exhibition and independent platform supporting female-led and owned creative businesses in the contemporary arts in South Africa, and on the African continent. Spearheading this inaugural creative arts and business partnership initiative with Aspire are **Madlozi Art Gallery** and the **Muholi Art Institute** founder Sir Zanele Muholi, and Beathur Mgoza Baker.

The dynamic duo usher in 2023 celebrating and foregrounding women in the visual arts economy with their exciting collaboration – a curated international group exhibition, **Embodying #HER** and a parallel programme of stimulating events, performances and talks connecting art-lovers and audiences to the 10 participating local and international artists and their work. The curated exhibition celebrates the presence, bodies, perspectives and power of women in representing their own image and presence in visual culture and art.

**EMBODYING #HER** foregrounds the voices of leading contemporary artists and recentres society's observance and appreciation for the critical role, visibility and under-explored value of female-identifying artists, curators, collectives, and creative entrepreneurs as key to the growth and success of the visual arts economy and cultural development landscape.

# The Collaborators + Exhibition Curators

**Embodying #HER** the exhibition and accompanying programme of talks and performances during the Cape Town Art Fair week in 2023 is hosted by Aspire Art at our Cape Town gallery and is presented by curators and creative entrepreneurs, Sir Zanele Muholi and Beathur Mgoza Baker. Informing their exciting collaboration is a strong and mutual commitment to cultural development, and to contesting problematic representations of women, Queer and Black bodies , and other marginalized groups - especially as it pertains to racial and gender inequity.

## Sir Zanele Muholi

### Biography Overview

The iconic Sir Zanele Muholi is an acclaimed international visual artist, photographer and gender / cultural activist invested in representation, placemaking, visibility and defying historical tropes around gender, identity, and belonging. The award-winning photographer and lens-based artist is also the founder of MAI – the Muholi Art Institute, a cultural space that enables and incubates the professional growth of emerging artists and fosters dynamic cultural exchange between Africa and the world.

Muholi is the current recipient of the prestigious ICP award for lens-based art and photography, and is currently showing their work as a mid-career retrospective with MEP Paris, and a travelling exhibition with the TATE Museum in London. Their work is dedicated to increasing the visibility of black LGBTQ+ people. South Africa and other African countries still have rampant occurrences of homophobic violence, and Muholi aims to uplift LGBTQ+ people in these countries through their work. Muholi's work is held in the collections of the Art Institute of Chicago, the Guggenheim in New York, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and the Tate Modern in London, among others.

## Beathur Mgoza Baker

### Biography Overview

Beathur Mgoza Baker is a South African art curator, cultural producer and gallerist invested in representing African diaspora history and artists, their work and important role in reshaping and informing the direction of the contemporary art world as an inclusive space.

Mgoza Baker is the owner and founder of Madlozi Art Gallery which addresses the under-representation of Black voices and works extensively towards addressing their visibility at the highest level with local and international collaborators. The former chairperson of the board of VANSAs, the visual arts network of South Africa has a long-standing commitment to cultural development and forging dynamic partnerships between the private, community and cultural sector with programmes such as 'Xperimenta' - a unique African-founded digital art incubator and transdisciplinary collective space. Mgoza is a filmmaker, writer and educator with a background in executive media management and broadcasting across Africa. She is actively engaged in creating better access to the creative economy for artists, creative entrepreneurs, collectives and curators to foster diversification of ownership, perspectives and independence.

# The Participating Artists

- **Sir Zanele Muholi** - collaborating with women artisans.
- *Sculpture, Beaded paintings & photography*
- **Sharlene Khan** – South Africa
- *Film / Moving Image*
- **Bianca Batlle Nguema** – Guinea + Spain
- *Painting & Live Art Performance / Painting*
- **Nandipha Jantjies** – South Africa
- *Painting & Performance / Live Art*
- **Claudie Titty Dimbeng** – Paris / Ivory Coast
- *Painting*
- **Thania Petersen** – South Africa
- *Performance & Installation Art*
- **Yonela Doda** – South Africa: *Mixed Media / Collage*



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- **Melinda Matyas** – London
- *Painting & Fine Art Prints*
- **Nobukho Nqaba** – South Africa
- *Photography / Performance*
- **Chinwe Chigbu** – Nigeria
- *Digital Art / Fine Art Printmaking*
- **Mercy Moyo** – Zimbabwe
- *Conceptual Art*
- **Haneem Christian** – South Africa
- *Photography*
- **Wana Udobang** – Nigeria
- *Moving Image / Performance*
- **Va Bene Fiatsi** – Ghana – *Photography & Moving Image*

## Artists Embracing #HER

Freeing the Nipple, the Gaze on Women's Bodies & Creating Platforms for their Voices



## EMBODYING #HER | EXHIBITION OVERVIEW

In reclaiming the image of women and the presence of our material bodies each artist uniquely explores what constitutes being a woman and draws on both individual and collective experience to confront and contest history, and the harm inflicted by mass media. In the post #MeToo digital era critical themes foregrounding women powerfully and in a consultative manner as vital participants and co-creators is mandatory and constitutes respect. Visibility includes self-authorship, solidarity and activism, and a celebration of our sexuality, bodies and selves as important to exercising our rights and freedoms.

The curators critique stereotypical depictions and imposed gender identities in fun, playful but also hard-hitting and intimate ways across material cultures. As a departure from the male gaze in the visual arts, works in the exhibition veer off unapologetically toward depictions of real and strong female bodies as site of healing, joy and self-actualisation – a reclaiming and assertion of presence and placemaking within contemporary visual culture. Expect intimate and spirited encounters with art that imaginatively and sensually engages the intellect, the eye, and the senses. The intimately curated exhibition includes photography, sculpture, installation art, performance and painting.

Artists and women collectives and artisans freely and imaginatively explore new expressions and unearth the shadow and nascent, authentic self while highlighting self-resilience and solidarity with all women. Themes and key concepts in the exhibition highlight the presence, geographies, non-binary beauty, and strength and fragility of female bodies as captured by individual, female-identifying artists from across the African continent and globally.

The exhibition as a conversation and unifier of artists voices is also a precursor to a larger exploration and symposium in development which will re-situate and frame the value of women in the artworld with a particular focus on women over 50 years old. This exciting and critical exploration is also supported by a two-day symposium inviting dialogue and shared reflection. It frees the weighted female nipple, the mind and addresses problematic historical and discriminatory practices sidelining women artists, curators, business and gallery-owners, and icons to foreground their voices, contribution and visibility throughout time.



# SIR ZANELE MUHOLI

MAI – The Muholi Art Institute  
62 Roeland Street, Cape Town