

Nelisiwe Xaba
Performer/Choreographer



Born and raised in Dube, Soweto, Nelisiwe Xaba began her vibrant professional dance career of more than 20 years in the early 90's when she received a scholarship to study dance at the Johannesburg Dance Foundation. In 1996 she was awarded a scholarship to study dance at the prestigious Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance in London where she studied various forms ballet and contemporary dance techniques under the artistic direction of Ross Mckim. Returning to South Africa in 1997, Xaba joined the Pact Dance Company and later launched a freelance dance career in which she worked with various esteemed choreographers, including Robyn Orlin.

Since then Xaba launched a solo career, working in various multi-media projects and collaborating with visual artists, fashion designers, theater and television directors, poets and musicians. Xaba's seminal works *Plasticization* and *They Look At Me & That's All They Think* have toured various parts of the world for the several years. The latter piece, inspired by the Hottentot Venus (Sara Baartman) saw Xaba collaborate with fashion designer Carlo Gibson of Strangelove. In 2008, Xaba collaborated with Haitian dancer and choreographer Kettly Noel to create a duet titled *Correspondances* – a satirical look into the politics of women to women relationships, which toured various continents in South and North America, Europe and Africa. In 2009 Xaba premiered her piece *Black!...White?* Which was produced by the *Centre de Developpment Choregraphique* (CDC) which toured throughout France. In the same year Xaba produced *The Venus*, combining two of her solo pieces, the earlier work *They Look At Me* and *Sakhozi says non to the Venus*, originally commissioned by the Musee du Quai Branly. Xaba's work is informed largely by her feminists, racial politics which challenges stereotypes on the black female body and cultural notions of gender mainstreams.

In 2011 Xaba became one of artists represented by the Goodman Gallery South Africa which represents a pool of leading contemporary artists on the African continent.

In her recent work "Uncle and Angels" Xaba collaborated with film-maker Mocke J van Vueren to produce an interactive dance and video performance piece which questions notion of chastity, virginity testing, purity, and tradition, while at the same time casting a wry glance at the power relations encoded within corporeal interaction through performance and projection. Since its premier at the FNB Dance Umbrella "Uncles & Angels" has toured in Germany, France, and Austria. Uncles & Angels has won the 2013 FNB Art fair prize, and will be exhibiting the 3D movie made on Uncles & Angels. Xaba is currently working on a new piece "Scars & Cigarettes" in which she continues to probe the socialization of men and women into performing specific gender roles in society, this time focusing on the different rites of passage or rituals performed by men such as male circumcision.

This year (2013) Xaba was selected to present "The Venus in Venice" at the South African Pavilion at the 55th la Biennale di Venezia (Venice Biennale) to take place from 1st June to 24 November 2013.