

THE ARTFUL ENTREPRENEUR

Loyiso Mkize

Cape Town visual artist and creator Loyiso Mkize - the man behind South Africa's first-ever superhero "Kwezi" - is not only a celebrated contemporary South African artist, but also prides himself on being an accomplished art entrepreneur.

Loyiso Mkize is a man of many talents. Besides being the creator of Mzansi's first home-grown superhero *Kwezi*, he is also the first Black South African to pencil a comic series for the internationally-renowned DC Comics.

Mkize studied at CPUT in Cape Town where he achieved his diploma in graphic

design in 2009. In 2015, he founded his own visual arts and communication company, Loyiso Mkize Art, which publishes the energetic South African superhero comic book, *Kwezi*. His African superhero is similarly real, as *Kwezi* is about finding one's identity and purpose. The story tells of a self-involved teenager with superpowers who must learn that with his abilities comes responsibility

towards his community.

Adding to his long list of accolades, Mkize has also been involved in many commercial creative endeavours, including commissions, brand campaigns, and publishing initiatives. His international participation has enjoyed highlights such as being commissioned to produce nine artworks for the Hollywood crime thriller, *Momentum*, directed by Stephen



Campanelli, and starring Olga Kurylenko, Morgan Freeman, and James Purefoy.

RISE TO STARDOM

Before committing himself as a full-time contemporary artist, Loyiso Mkize rose to prominence as one of South Africa's best known graphic novel and comic book illustrators, being one of the foremost contributors to the *Sunday Times* supplement *SupaStrikas*. Eventually, he discovered a passion for portrait painting, a medium he turned to as an avenue to express personal, political and social commentary.


His subjects are primarily African, and feature expressive faces, showing a fascination with skin, texture, gaze, and the emotion conveyed through facial features. In particular, he is interested in how this emotive expression intersects with notions of the soul and spirit – ultimately becoming a means to illustrate his understanding of the authentic African experience.

Mkize's use of highly stylized and technically brilliant brushwork creates realistic imagery that leans toward the surreal. His decorative framing and imaginative illustration add multiple layers to each portrait with character references and the impression of self-awareness in each of his works.



FINDING EXPRESSION

Painting has become a tool through which Mkize documents and expresses views and ideas. He paints with oil on canvas. His ability to create visual art throughout the varied arenas he participates in carries with it an intention to communicate ideas that he finds most important in his life, the most prominent being to preserve the African identity.

Mkize's work embodies a message of self-awareness, acknowledgement, strength and radical presence. In this spirit, he hopes that his work may create a platform in which we can all communicate freely. 

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