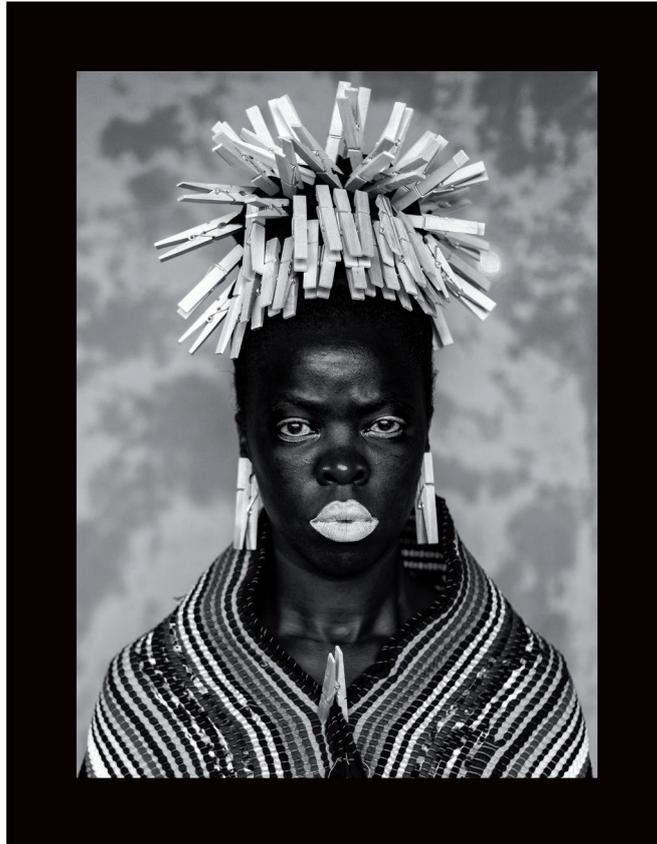


Exhibition

# Zanele Muholi

6 Apr.—4 Sep. 2022



*Bester I, Mayotte, from the serie *Somnyama Ngonyama* [2012–ongoing], 2015*

Press Dossier  
IVAM Centre Julio González

IVAM

Exhibition

# Zanele Muholi

6 Apr.—4 Sep. 2022

Curated by:  
Yasufumi Nakamori

Organised by:  
Tate Modern

In collaboration with:  
Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris  
Gropius Bau, Berlin  
Bildmuseet of Umeå University



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# Zanele Muholi

The exhibition brings together some 260 photographs by Zanele Muholi, a South African activist who identifies themselves with the personal pronoun “they”. Their work tells the stories of Black LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Agender, Asexual) lives in South Africa and beyond. Their photography raises awareness of injustices and aims to educate, while creating positive visual histories for under and mis-represented communities. Muholi also turns the camera on themselves, making self-portraits that address race, history and representation.

During the 1990s, South Africa underwent major social and political change. Apartheid was officially abolished in 1994. This was a political and social system of racial segregation underpinned by white minority rule. Anyone who was not classified as white was actively oppressed by the regime. Apartheid continued the segregation that had begun under the Dutch and British colonial regimes in the late 19th century. The apartheid regime also upheld injustice and discrimination based on gender and sexuality. While the 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa was the first in the world to outlaw discrimination based on sexual orientation, the LGBTQIA+ community remains a target for prejudice, hate crimes and violence.

The show begins with one of their fundamental series, *Somnyama Ngonyama* (2012–on-going), in which Muholi turns the camera on themselves to explore the politics of race and representation. The portraits are photographed in different locations around the world. They are made using materials and objects that Muholi sources from their surroundings. In some images they look away. In others they stare the



*Xiniwe at Cassilhaus, North Carolina, from the serie *Somnyama Ngonyama*, 2016*



*Sibusiso Gagliari, Sardinia, Italy, from the serie *Somnyama Ngonyama*, 2015*

camera down, asking what it means for ‘a Black person to look back’. When exhibited together the viewer is surrounded by a network of gazes. Muholi increases the contrast of the images in this series, which has the effect of darkening their skin tone.



*Bester V, Mayotte, from the serie *Somnyama Ngonyama*, 2015*



*Thembeka I, New York, Upstate, from the serie *Somnyama Ngonyama*, 2015*

The second room contains works from their first series, *Only Half the Picture* (2002–2006), with images of survivors of hate crimes committed in South Africa and its townships. Townships are residential areas established during apartheid for those evicted from places designated as “white only”.



*Triple III*, from the serie  
*Only Half the Picture*, 2005

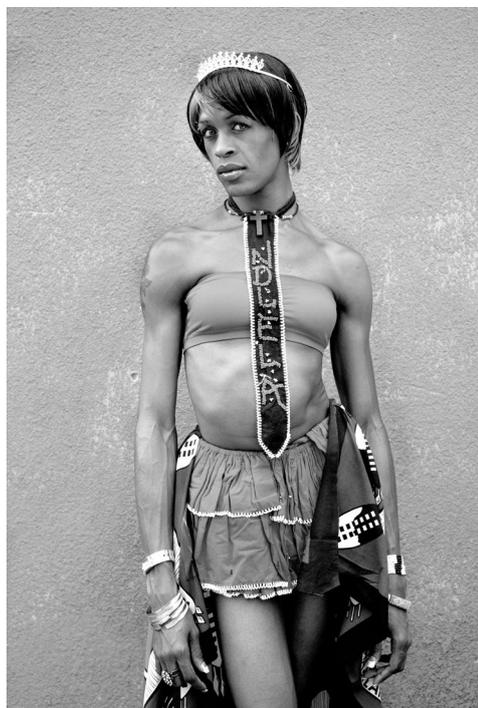
Also on display here are works from the series *Being* (2006–ongoing), portraits which capture moments of intimacy between couples, as well as their daily lives and routines. Muholi addresses the misconception that queer life is ‘unAfrican’, a falsehood emerging in part out of the belief that same-sex orientation was a colonial import to Africa. Each couple is shown in the private spaces they share. This series dismantles the white patriarchal gaze and rejects negative or heteronormative images, common in political and social systems that uphold heterosexuality as the norm or default sexual orientation.

The exhibition continues with portraits of trans women, gay men and gender non-conforming people photographed in public spaces. Photographing black LGBTQIA+ people in the public sphere is an important part of Muholi’s visual activism. Several of the locations are important in the history of South

Africa, such as Constitutional Hill, the seat of South Africa’s Constitutional Court and a key place in relation to the country’s progression towards democracy.

Collectivity also occupies a central place in Muholi’s work. Many of their large network of collaborators are also members of their collective, Inkanyiso, ‘light’ in Zulu (isiZulu), Muholi’s mother tongue and one of South Africa’s eleven official languages. The goal of Inkanyiso is “to produce, educate and disseminate information to many audiences, especially those who are often marginalised or sensationalised by the mainstream media.” The motto of the collective is “Queer Activism = Queer Media”.

Another of Muholi’s key series is *Brave Beauties* (2014–ongoing), which portrays trans women, gender non-conforming and non-binary people. *Brave Beauties* is a series of portraits of trans women, gender non-conforming and non-binary people. Many of them are also beauty pageant contestants. Queer beauty pageants



*Candice Nkosi*, Tsakane,  
Johannesburg, from the serie  
*Brave Beauties*, 2013

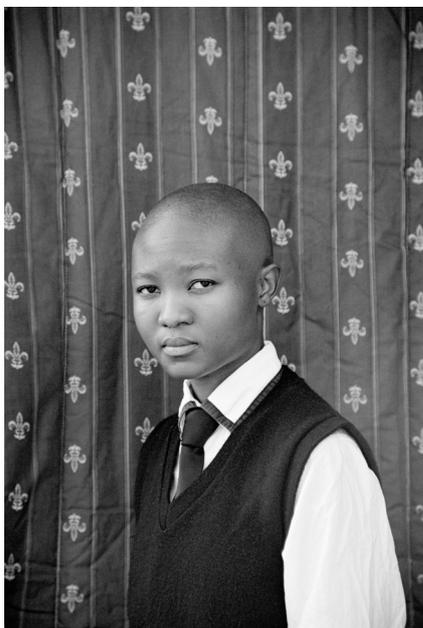
offer a space of resistance within the Black LGBTQIA+ community in South Africa. They are a place where individuals can realise and express their beauty outside heteronormative and white supremacist cultures. As with all of Muholi's images, the portraits are created through a collaborative process. Muholi and the participant determine the location, clothing and pose together, focusing on producing images that are empowering for both the participant and the audience.

The discourse of the exhibition concludes with the series *Faces and Phases*, which Zanele began in 2006. Currently totalling more than 500 works, this is a collective portrait that celebrates, commemorates and archives the lives of black lesbian, transgender and gender non-conforming individuals. Many of these portraits are the result of a long and sustained relationship and collaboration. Muholi often returns to photograph the same person over time. *Faces* refers to the person being photographed. *Phases* signifies a transition from one stage of sexuality or gender expression and identity to another. It also marks the changes in the participants'



*Futbi Mkhize, Durban,  
from the serie *Faces and Phases*, 2015*

daily lives, including ageing, education, work experience and marriage. The gaps in the grid indicate individuals that are no longer present in the project, or a portrait yet to be taken.



*Refikwe Mabhlaba, Thokoza, Johannesburg,  
from the serie *Faces and Phases*, 2010*



*Skye Chirape, Amsterdam, from the serie  
*Faces and Phases*, 2016*

## ACTIVITIES

Presentation of the exhibition by the director of the IVAM, Nuria Enguita

Date: 6 April 2022, 7.30 pm  
Lugar: auditorium

Lecture of Hasan G. López Sanz about Zanele Muholi

Date: 25 May 2022, 6.30 pm  
Place: auditorium

### Guided visits

The mediation on guided visits is provided by specialists with a training in History of Art, Fine Arts and Humanities. The intention is to provide visitors with positioned readings of the exhibition in the two official languages of the Valencian region.

Duration: approx. 45 minutes  
Aimed at: general public  
Dates: consult the IVAM website

## PUBLICATION

The exhibition will be accompanied by the publication of a catalogue edited by Tate Modern that will include photographs of the works on display. The publication will be supplemented by a booklet with an introduction by the director of the IVAM, Nuria Enguita, and translations into Spanish and Valencian of the texts in the catalogue. The volume will be available at reception in the museum.

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Photo Credits:

Courtesy of the artist and Stevenson,  
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and Yancey Richardson, New York

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