



Ulrika Eller-Rüter Donlisha Moahi

FOOTPRINTS OF LIFE - Untold Stories from South Africa 2015



Impressum:

Idea und Concept: Ulrika Eller-Rüter, Donlisha Moahi
Layout: Donlisha Moahi, Friedemann Geisler
Fotos: Ulrika Eller-Rüter, Friedemann Geisler, Donlisha Moahi
Contact: www.ulrika-eller-rueter.de



PLACES & SPACES: Interventions in the Public Space, Urban Performances and Participatory, Interdisciplinary Art Projects in Palestine, Poland, South Africa, Romania, China and Germany.

Ulrika Eller-Rüter is an artist based in Germany. She produces art projects in different countries around the world that are in nature intercultural, participatory, performative and interdisciplinary. Participants of her interventions in public space are very often marginalized people. Her installations, paintings, drawings and interventions in the public space are based on her interest in life-stories and the traces thereof, memories, and shadows in order to explore the subcutaneous.

What is the idea of spaces and places? Places open spaces, places generate the crossover of space and time. In places and spaces, in rooms, life takes place. All occasions, all events, all incidents have a place of realization. And here also art takes place.

The blue sofa is the platform for communication, a piece of furniture to create a place in a space. It is a link between private and public. You can sit down and rest, you can occupy it. It is on the one hand commonplace, on the other hand an allusion to the traditional symbol of a royal seat. The blue sofa is inflatable and doesn't weigh much. So you can put it in a suitcase to travel anywhere. The artist uses it as an „instrument“ for her art-based research to explore trouble and neuralgic spots, acupuncture and focal points in different places in the world, in urban space, cities, in different communities, in a social context.

The blue sofa in Palestine 2011: “Tell me the story of your shoes“

In 2011 the artist did a shoe project in Palestine and invited women to sit down on the blue sofa and tell the story of their shoes. The stories revealed the truth and tragedy of daily life in an occupied country. They also showed the energy of their owners to go on and on and face the issues of a biography. The shoes showed the real traces of life like an orthopaedic footprint. The project was based on a value exchange. The women gave their stories and their shoes and the artist invited them to buy new shoes. She prepared an exhibition with the results, filled the shoes with wax and phosphorescent pigment and painted life-sized back views of the women with acid on iron plates. During the process of rusting the shapes became more visible. So time is remembered in the paintings and shoes.

The blue sofa in South Africa 2016: Rewriting Art history. In 2016 the artist worked in the Township of Kayamandi near Stellenbosch and also in a Squatter Camp in McGregor with coloured and black people. Also in these places the blue sofa was an instrument to research the truth under the surface. The people told about what they experienced in their shoes in their daily life. Under the surface of fashion, taste, vanity and the intention to feel good in pretty shoes, the stories told about poverty, the fight for survival, social injustice, drug abuse, aids, violence and fear. Many stories referred to African traditions of dancing and initiation.

Performance 2015: The Blue Stage Krakau, Poland

For two hours in May of 2015 **the blue sofa** was a kind of protagonist and an eye-catcher in the Old City of Krakow. A new sight, but something flexible. Ulrika Eller-Rüter used it as a stage for people, for tourists, for every passerby to perform on it as a self-fashion. So the sofa was placed at important tourist points and left there. Nobody seemed to be there then. What happens here, what is this? People looked curiously at **the blue sofa**, looked around, sat down and started to “perform“. What kind of role did they play? In most cases they were photographed by their companions. There were different ways to use the sofa. If there was an artist or musician playing or performing in the market place, Ulrika Eller-Rüter asked them to continue their work for some minutes on **the blue sofa**. When the sofa was put in a place with a big crowd of people walking around, it stopped the movement like a brake and caused a deceleration. In the background a group of students and the artist herself watched the process and videoed it or took photos. When the group of artists moved to another place with **the blue sofa** on their shoulders people asked, “Are you going swimming?“ It was so easy to see how stereotypes worked.

Ulrika Eller-Rüter



Chapter I Kayamandi



These are my father's shoes. I got these shoes in 2008. Then he didn't wear them a lot. He would only wear them when he was going out to town but not here. In 2012 he died, so I had to take these shoes, they became mine. I still wear these shoes and I like them. They are elastic, leather, hard and they are comfortable inside. So when I am walking on these I feel comfortable. These are not the only shoes I got from him when he died. I got others and they are at home.



I got these shoes I am wearing from the lady I am working for in Dezalza. She was throwing out all the old clothes and these shoes I am wearing are her daughter's and she gave them to me. I enjoy the shoes because they are comfortable for my feet. It's been two years that I've been wearing these shoes and I am still going strong, they are not even broken. I've been working for Mrs. XXX for 2 years now and she gave me the shoes when I started working for her 2 years ago. At first I didn't work for her. I was working for her friend. I worked for more than 40 years for her friend. She has a factory here. I was working for her with her sister. Her sister was at the University of Stellenbosch and she went overseas. She got married and she took me to work for her only on weekends because I was working at the University of Stellenbosch for 20 years, that's where I get my pension but I am still working for Mrs. XXX. It was her 37th anniversary this month. I am still going strong. I'm still working. God blessed me with 6 children. Thank you very much.



I am going to talk about these boots, these boots are gumboots, and we use these boots for our gumboots dance. The reason why we use these boots is because of their quality, because it's 100% quality and we are dancing on a tarred road. If we ever use cheap shoes, we won't dance with them because they are going to break. We also use the tommy shoes in our traditional dance. The tommy shoes are flexible, and it's easy for us to dance in them, it's easy to lift your legs and it seems like you are not wearing shoes.

I got my shoes because I don't have time to buy shoes and clothes, because this group costs. We must draw money out from our pockets so we don't have money, so if you are buying clothes you must buy quality clothes. These shoes take a long time to break. It's been about a year now with these shoes. When you buy clothes, buy 100% quality. So if ever you are buying, look for quality. I walk in my shoes with the kids. I like my shoes, they are suitable for my group. I started my group in 2014. We chose our shoes, especially the gumboots, because they take a long time to break; the tommy shoes don't take a long time but they are flexible. Every time I see tommy I think of my group, I think of my kids. They are my kids now. They buy their shoes themselves so that if they want to leave, they can just pack their things and go away. I get to wear the tommy shoes sometimes and they represent my group. Gumboots are not traditional shoes but they fit.

Even our grandpa and grandparents used to wear gumboots when they went to the farms. Our group is called XXX. It means creating opportunities for our kids. We are opening a platform for them to perform on. When you are working with kids you must be patient because they make a lot of noise and they can make you mad and you must treat them as your children. Surely there are a few problems here and there; you must solve your problems on your own. You mustn't go to their parents; you are the parents and when you have problems you must solve them as a group. As a group we don't have money. To make money we must fundraise or ask for donations. We ask them to bring R1 to every practice or rehearsal, we make talent shows, we go to different places to perform so that our audience gives us money to have pocket money for the group.



Footprints of Life. Rewriting Art History:

In cooperation with Visual Arts Department in Stellenbosch a group of artists from Alanus University in Alfter/Bonn (Germany) went in autumn 2015 to Kayamandi for a week and did different workshops in the open space of the township. It was the idea to involve people in the research of life traces with artistic methods, like acting, plasticizing, wallpainting, material printing etc. One platform for the project was a private house and garden of a member of KCD programme (Kayamandi Creative District). The project increases its intensity when the artists worked directly on the street. So many inhabitants of the township from old to young participated and changed the appearance of the place -especially with a big wallpainting besides a IT-shop.

My name is XXX. I live in Stellenbosch, Kayamandi and the location is 3 Swartbooi Street; the 2nd house from the right hand side when you come up. My story is about my shoes because they are handmade. But the ones I wanted were the original ones but I couldn't afford them. But these for me were still the same as if I had a small old car. For me it took a long time cause I couldn't afford the expensive ones. So just like I called my old car a Toyota, I called these my carvella even though they're not carvellas. But they are made the same way, same everything but it's just that they don't have the label that says the carvella name - the original - but these take me from A to B. I wear them all the time in summer time but not in winter time because once they get in water they're going to get quickly damaged. It's not the original leather, that's one thing. As you can see it has 4 platforms for carvella and I share the shoes with my mum, but now I said, "no, you can't have them anymore. I had to keep them because now she has flat feet and my feet are small. It's my brother who bought them for me. I've had them now for 4 years and I don't want to throw them away. I don't want to take them to the shoemaker, that's why I keep them saf in winter and wear them only in summer time. If there is something you want to know about these: It's only R250, not R1999, but this is the best shoe.

The colour represents love, that's why I have these ones. All my other shoes are training shoes, takkies, sandals, formal shoes, but no high heels. This is my formal shoe, it's like a unisex but it's for males, not females but for me I like it as unisex. I wore my shoes to a Capitec Bank special event. It was a farewell for the students who were training to work at the bank. One of the bank assistants invited me to come to the event after he saw me alone when I went to get a bank card. The guy liked me and said I talk a lot and he invited me to come. I thought that I had nothing to wear but I knew I had special shoes. They are my lucky shoes even when I go for interviews I wear these. They are my lucky shoes. There I was, everyone was looking at my shoes instead of my outfit. They liked the shoes. My shoes were number one. My brother (who bought the shoes) was at work. He got married and he stays somewhere else. He doesn't stay with us but he comes from time to time, but not a lot. If my mum is sick I just call him, "Brother come, mum is sick." If I'm feeling down and my self-esteem is low I just grab my shoes and wear them. I grab the ones in front of me. Even the first day I started in KCD I was wearing these.

I am going to give you a small story about me. I am a suffering woman; a single parent. It's not easy to raise my children because I am single. My home is poor. I am trying hard to change my life. I don't understand much about my shoes. I bought my shoes at a Pep store last year in January. These shoes are comfortable. I am a domestic worker so they must be comfortable. I live in zone O in Kayamandi. I wear them when I go to work early in the morning to do kitchen work. I wear these shoes all the time because they are comfortable. Most of my shoes are flip flops because they are nice; because if I wear closed shoes or full shoes my feet are not comfortable. In summer my feet swell up so I wear flip flops.

I am a foreigner, I come from Zimbabwe, came here because of our economic situation in our country. We came here to look for work and this is where I work. Because of the economic situation in our country, we as youth, like me, we are forced to leave our country to come here to work so that we can feed our families. As you can see from my shoes here, it's because we are looking for cash. Even if I want to go to buy a new pair of shoes I can't buy them. Because fine, I am working, but I also have to think of my family back at home, they have to wear shoes, they have to go to school, they have to eat, so that's why we come here. It's not because we are poor but it's because we are trying to feed our family back home. As for coming here to Kayamandi: as you can see, Kayamandi is not a safe place to be. There are robbers, there are also even killers, we are not safe, but we are trying our best to live here so that we can feed our family. We don't have any options, we can't go back home. That's the story of my life. I'm from Zimbabwe. Before I came here I was a scholar. I was studying hotel management, then I had to stop it because I didn't have money to proceed with my studies. That's why I came here. But if I had the opportunity to go back and study I would study here because I can't go back to Zimbabwe; you know our situation in Zimbabwe. I don't have any children. I'm not yet married, I have my parents, my brothers, my young sisters and my granny, my beloved granny. These shoes are part of me.



My name is XXX. I am 23 years old, the youngest of 3. I stay with my mum, my daughter and my nephew. I matriculated at Kayamandi high school in 2010 and then I went to Boland College. I did Public Relations and Management Assistant N6. After I completed my N6 certificate I didn't get the internship training for my course so that I can complete the whole diploma thing so I'm currently unemployed. I am staying here in Kayamandi. I was born here and I grew up here in Kayamandi. I have faced so many challenges like unemployment. And there is a high rate of crime in Kayamandi and a lack of skills is also what I have experienced. I like to talk, I like to sing, I like to socialize with people and I would like to share my ideas with people. I have a very big family that supports me when I need them. One day I would like to study further and to be a teacher because I like children and I like to talk a lot, and I want to make a change in people's lives; there's a shortage of knowledge and I would like to make a difference for my community, for Kayamandi. I faced many challenges because I had a child when I was 20 but it was not my intention, but because of peer pressure and because of many challenges that I have gone through I have managed to deal with it. I would like to advise other young people not to do the same because having a child at a young age is a big obstacle. Your life changes and there are a lot of things I wanted to achieve but I didn't because I had to raise a child. And being unemployed, it's not a good thing, I can't put food on the table but am depending on my mother. In each and every decision that I have to make, I as a young mother have to think about my child, I have to think about my family. I have dreams and I have so many things I want to achieve but here in Kayamandi we are battling to find jobs, we are unemployed, we stay at home every day. Unemployment is also one of the reasons why there are people drinking alcohol, why there is drug abuse and crime - because they think that that's the best thing to do for a living, whereas it is not a good thing. But I just hope and pray that God will give me a decent job one day so that I can study further and become what I want to be and that I become a good mother and become an example for my community and family.



These are my shoes. These represent my culture. I wear them on cultural occasions. The beads represent my sangoma belief. I like them because they are comfortable and they are easy to wear and to dance in when I'm in the mood. When it's Traditional Heritage Cultural Days I wear my shoes to represent my culture. These shoes were made by an old lady in the Eastern Cape, she put on the beads. I placed an order and she made them. The lady came from Beaufort. I like them very much, they go with the earrings and the traditional wear. To me, my shoes represent my Xhosa culture, as a healer, as a traditional healer and sangoma. I don't wear them during the healing ceremony. I can go in them but when I am healing I don't wear shoes. The colours on the shoe have special meanings. The blue represents that I have been to the river, the white one shows that I am connected to the ancestors; red ones are those you get from dreams. So you combine them. The others are just for decoration. The most important ones are the white, blue, red and yellow. I have these colours on my shoes.





In 1959 I got involved in politics when I was still a juvenile. From 1960 on we were chased by the police every day. We had no rest; we could not walk at night. At night at 10 o'clock blacks were not supposed to be walking in town. When they caught you in town you got arrested. We went walking in town anyway because we knew we could run. One time we were coming from a meeting in Jonkershoek at a plantation. There at Jonkershoek there were many trees so that the police couldn't see us when we were sitting under those trees preparing our journey to Robben Island. We were nearly caught there one time, but I managed to escape because I played a coloured that time. Although the coloured were also arrested, I just ran into the coloured area so that the police would miss me. I had to come back home. One day I was working in the garage, a Volkswagen garage. I was working under a car and working on the body loosening up the engine of a Volkswagen beetle. A detective came in there and pointed at me: "Is this the one and the man who was with him?" Our secretary of the organization said, "Yes, this is the man! This is the man you have been looking for all the time, a very dangerous man" and I was caught right there. I had to go and stay at Somerset Prison for three months in the cells; I didn't go to court, but 90 days detention and I came out. I was fortunately found not guilty. I had to come back. When I came back they forgot that they were sharpening me by arresting me. I went to Cape Town to pick up pamphlets which were supposed to be put up all over in townships and the towns. I was caught again for another 18 months, 90 days detention for the second time. After that I didn't stay there in Stellenbosch without having to give a statement. How did they get a statement from me? They wrote their own statement by taking us, taking 2 tables high enough so that we couldn't reach the ground, taking a pole and putting it under your legs and cuffing it up by your ankles so that you couldn't get loose.

"See this finger?" they would say. "This is an electric switch." They tortured us like that, tying us up with a live electric wire and switching it on. What are you going to say? Nothing! You end up saying "blep blep blep blep", then it's finished. They untie you, leave you there, you are wet; you say you have done everything because you have been shocked. You wet yourself up and those damn clothes are going to dry on your body again because you were not treated as human beings. We were just treated as wondering creatures and yet there were criminals who were being catered to very, very better than us. Well I was arrested, went four times to court and the last time I was detained at Bellville Police Station next to Voortrekker Road. When it was parole I was detained there for another 3 months. Then came the day we were here at Stellenbosch but our case was first taken to Bellville, and the law said that if we were arrested at Stellenbosch we must go and get our sentence there. I was sentenced to 3 years in 1960 and we were transferred straight to the harbor and we were taken to Robben Island in chains like animals. I came out in 1963 after completing my sentence. Where I served my time I was fortunate because I saw the man who was our leader, Robert Magubane Sobokwe. He was our leader, and he was there on Robben Island. I might say I was fortunate because all the black chiefs who were fighting back against the white people were all taken to Robben Island so that they would become sheep and come back. So I was very fortunate to be there, too. Why? Because that proved that I was also a chief. The black people who were working there wore short trousers, no shoes, no jackets, no jerseys. In 1975

after I came out I bought a pair of shoes which I still have. Let me go and collect them. My elder son wore them while it was wet, and they got spoilt now. This is a pair of Johns which I bought in 1975. This was 1975 but I've got another pair of shoes which I bought in 1989 when my father passed away. In 1975 my eldest son was 5 years, but the younger one who is still alive was 3 years when I bought the shoes. This was my first shoe after I came out of detention. I was buying shoes but these were my special shoes, in 1975, and they are still here. I'm still going to take them to the shoemaker. I want him to repair them. I wear them on special occasions. I had a guitar group, and I used to take my band out. When I took my band out or maybe I went to the Eastern Cape where I usually went because I had my family there in Port Elizabeth. These shoes are 40 years old, they are older than you. I have taken care of these shoes because these were fashion shoes in our days. If you wear a white khaki trouser and you put on this shoe and any kind of shirt and a ten gallon hat, when you walk on the street everybody will look at you. And a ten gallon hat that was our way. Or you take jeans and you wear the jeans with these shoes - ooh, I'm really sorry because I am no longer like that...

I was in a guitar group and I used to take my band out. When I took my band out or maybe I went to the Eastern Cape because I had family there I knew that I must show them that I came from Cape Town. I knew what was what so these were the genuine shoes at that time. The black one is continental and this is a CJ. I was very proud of myself. Can you see me there with a cigar? I have

seen another suede shoe there in Cape Town. It is blackish and it is the type of shoe I like, it has a wedge heel. The one with a big wedge and it's a big form, ooh, that is my favourite shoe.

In my younger days I was a sportsman. I was a rugby player, and a soccer player. At that time I drank a lot. But if I was going to play the next day on Saturday, on Friday night I don't drink, I don't do anything. I just get home, sit and relax at home. I was not married at that time when I was playing. I was not yet married because we were honoring the people who were our captains, our coaches. If they even said to us, "You mustn't go drink," I didn't go and drink. We camped at one place, all of us. I was working at SFW Stellenbosch winery, driving up to Namibia, leaving home on Monday, coming back on Thursday. We were proud of ourselves because we didn't want to put our parents to shame when they saw us walking up the street drunk. We were very proud of our parents and we never wanted our parents to get hurt as our children do today: Our kids of today you see outside for 20 minutes and they come back bloody because they do funny things. They pickpocket people, rob people's cameras, phones and other things, and they end up in jail. I only went to school up to standard 6 and had no further education but I'm telling you I can stand with a child in grade 12, I can stand with him/her on the floor and just debate and he can come with his English but I don't doubt myself with my standard six, I don't doubt myself.

It sounds like an exchange if somebody comes from her country to my country. We share stories so to me it makes me feel good. So, now coming to my shoes. What I like or what I am doing now is because of my age - I will always mention my age because of my age. When I wake up in the morning for me it is not easy to put on shoes. Anyway it was like that at the time I was working; I was younger. When I wake up I must have my slippers on to go to the loo and go take a bath and after that I feel okay on my feet. But now I only take my shoes when I am going to church. When I wake up in the morning I put on my slippers and I go to the bathroom and take a shower. After that I come and dress myself and I wear my shoes but not high shoes anymore. It has to be a small heel. It's easy for me to wear because when I go to church I don't walk. I used to but not anymore. What I do now is to jump into my daughter's car and she is the one who takes me to church and after church we come back again with the same car. So it's not difficult to wear some shoes but I can't wear some shoes walking around like before so that's why I prefer to get my slippers. They give me a special feeling and for me it's easy to walk with them. While I'm busy it's easy. I don't feel anything like my feet are painful or whatever. I just have them and I do whatever I want to do, like working if I have to take my vegetables and peel them.



The vegetables are good for me. If I have to stand and cut my meat and put it in the pot; I just stand near the table and prepare my food and go from the table to the stove. Then I feel comfortable. So for me slippers are very good. In winter time I have got problems with my feet. I've cold feet. I started getting cold feet in 1970, when I was giving birth to my last child. Since then I've got these cold feet. In winter it's a must to have socks and I have to get the warm slippers, which I use throughout winter. Then in summer time I don't need any socks. I just put on the slippers and I carry on with no problem. So there are 2 different kinds that I am using.

I have one that I keep in my Kist. My children always say to me they wonder what they are going to do one day when I die because I like to keep my stuff. I've got 2 Kist, one is for my knee and the other one is for my clothes. I'm not happy if I'm not clean. I don't feel satisfied, but if I go somewhere with other ladies, at that time I also want to be like them, you know. Yea, I want to keep myself clean and be perfect. So I never mess up my clothes. I always have something. If something says to me now something has come up so can have to go now. I just go to the shower and take a shower, after that I am well dressed and then I go. So I am that kind of a person - "old style". I'm an "old style". I like to keep my stuff. I don't wear everything. I've got times to be nice when I go to church, when I go out with the other ladies, when maybe somebody invites me, just like I do have a special pair of slippers that I keep. I'm not sure how old they are. They were a present from my church members. They made a birthday present for me because I'm the only old lady in the church here in Stellenbosch. Our congregation is not that big so I'm the only old lady with them so they made a big party for me and they bought me some stuff and these were one of them. So when it comes to summer I just wash it and when it's dry I wrap it and put it in my Kist. They have been there for a long time.



Kayamandi is safe. If people from Kayamandi commit crime they can come to the police station. We help the people aside from those that rob white people. Around there there is robbing and shooting. I live in Kayamandi. I fight crime and help the police and the people on foot. People run away, child abuse. Crime is up in Kayamandi. We fight the crime. Children stay alone with no mother, no father, through water germs spread, but municipality clean. I've been a security guard since 2005. I volunteered here. I then went for training and was posted here. I walk in the road and we carry no firearms.

I bought these for myself from Truworths because I liked them and I was selling them. I wear them to advertise them for my business. I have to put them on first so that the customers can see them on me. The shoes are part of the salon business. I wear different shoes every day. But those ones I wear because I am selling them. I walk from Bellville, I take a taxi from Bellville to Kayamandi station and from there I come to the salon. My salon is here in Kayamandi because I like it here and I am not staying around here and people don't know me from here. I didn't have any place to make myself a salon. This was the first place I got for the salon. I don't have any other shop, I just wanted to do business here. Those shoes my husband bought for me at Bata. He bought them for me. They were just for me to wear to relax. They're like slippers for me. When I am wearing takkies I feel tired when I am standing up when I work, so I remove my takkies and wear them. I do take them home sometimes when I want to change but most of the time they are here and when I am working I wear them. I prefer flat shoes because of my weight.



My name is XXX, I live in Khayalitsha. I studied Graphic Design at Stellenbosch University. I am going to talk about my shoes. I'm going to start with this pair of all-stars. Growing up in a township - most people who grew up in the township will agree with me that all-stars like the Chuck Taylors are very popular in the townships and the Pantsulars - the dancers - they wear all-stars. So anyone who wants to be cool, or everyone, can wear all-stars. I bought these shoes I think it was two years ago, I sold my PC to a friend of mine because I was moving to Johannesburg. I was not going to be able to travel with the PC, it's not just a lot of work. So I decided to sell it, and I bought these shoes. The reason why I chose them is because I feel good when I wear them, and they are also comfy and stylish. I like these shoes because they remind me of the day I bought them, why I bought them and how I sold my PC. So I just love these all-stars.



I will talk about the shoes I used to wear when I was doing my first year in 2009. I used to wear the shoes coming to Stellenbosch. With shoes for me it's a way of expressing myself. I had four pairs because sometimes I would be stressing about something. You know with other people when they have stress they eat a lot, but with me I used to buy shoes. I remember I didn't make the mark for this course, and when I went to check for my results it was so depressing. I felt down. I was like what can make me feel better right now? Then I thought: let me go and buy myself a nice pair of shoes. I went to buy them and suddenly I felt good and I forgot what I was stressing about. Just buying shoes is a way of expressing ourselves. I know how if I wear these shoes on certain days. If I feel good then I wear certain shoes on certain days as a way of expressing myself. But I bought these shoes when I felt down to make myself feel good, that time. It's also in a way a way of rewarding myself, because when I passed first year going into 2nd year at the end of the year I would reward myself with something like shoe.

I was born and raised in the Cape flats, which are townships in Cape Town. I was raised in Khayalitsha and I studied at my primary school there called Mtawelanga Primary, then for my secondary I went to Wamtundo High School. After that I just started travelling around South Africa after my matric. After that I joined a bridging course which was an organization that was offering a bridging course in Khayalitsha called Learn to Earn. It was affiliated with Stellenbosch University. At the bridging course, we would do the theory and Practicals at Stellenbosch University. Eventually I applied to the university and I was accepted. That's how I was introduced to Stellenbosch. While we were still attending the theory classes here during the bridging course, I fell in love with the place and the university. It was very interesting for me, so I applied for Graphic Design and I got accepted. I did my first year in 2009, that's where I met XXX. In 2009 it was very different in terms of culture compared to where I had come from. The university is mostly white students. I became aware of my colour, my skin colour. I would go to a place like for a lecture and would realise I was the only black one or that there were only two of us. So in the beginning I was holding back a lot but as time went by, I started getting used to the place. Another thing was the language which is Afrikaans. With Afrikaans, I only know the basics so language was a challenge because some of the classmates would speak Afrikaans during a critical moment and you wouldn't know what was happening.

I graduated in 2014 March. I left Stellenbosch. I went to Johannesburg for greener pastures. There it wasn't really what I expected. Johannesburg is seen as a city of gold where if you want to be successful in life, is where most people would go. But sometimes, for other people it doesn't work like that. Anyway I went there, it was rough, and I decided to come back to Cape Town. I came back. I got a job at Sasol Art Museum here in Stellenbosch. I have also applied for a Masters' degree in Art Education. In a way my shoes remind me of my journey to Johannesburg. People actually don't really wash all-stars shoes a lot because they like them raw, dirty and filthy. For me I get the feeling that this represents the places you have been to like Johannesburg. I used to feel sad at first but I realized that not all of us can make it in Johannesburg. At first I felt like I was a loser because, you know, it was just coming back home with nothing. I went to Johannesburg twice. The first time I got homesick. I stayed there for 3 months; then the second time I stayed there for 6 months but it didn't work out. However, with my shoes, the older they get, the more I fall in love with them.



I bought these shoes specifically because I went to Kenya in July on a mission. I have never been into Africa, well "Africa, Africa". I know we are in South Africa but part of my heart was always about going to Kenya specifically, at that time Nairobi. We worked in an area which is extremely poor and it's even worse than Kayamandi. This shoe reminds me of that time we were there. We were there for 2 weeks. I bought them especially for the trip because they are comfortable and easy to put on. They are black because we walked in very dirty areas and mostly the sand. I've had them since June. I like them because I never wash them which is great. I wipe the front part. Here in Kayamandi, I use them because they are comfortable. If I have to go someplace, I can easily run. My shoes' personality is joyful. I love these shoes.

My brother gave me that thing. My brother passed away. I am very proud of my brother, and I miss him so much because he was my priority and I was his priority. And the following year after my mother passed away too, in a car accident. After that father because of sugar diabetes and heart attack, my father passed away. We are 3 at home, my eldest brother, my sister and I am the youngest one. I need the love of my parents, but my aunt is with me. Rest in Peace, my brother. I have spoken. I don't want to continue anymore.

(The aunty asks her who she is going to give the shoes to, but she doesn't answer the questions.)

I had no shoes when I grew up, I grew up in a rural place in the Eastern Cape and we started out with no shoes. If you had one pair of shoes, you were very lucky, and my mother always used to say, when it's raining you can't put them on because she feared that if step in the water with them they will be damaged. So it was only when there was snowfall - then you got to put them on. As a result I only wore my shoes every day when I was doing standard 7. So what I would do - but don't tell my mother - what I would sometimes do is steal my shoes, my own shoes, I would steal them one day and put them maybe in a little bush on my way to school. And when I went to school, my mother would know that I have no shoes on. In the meantime I knew that my shoes were already up ahead waiting. So I would put them on and I would be happy the whole day with my shoes. But I needed to remember coming back from school that I needed to take off the shoes and dirty my feet quickly so that she thought I was bare feet the whole day. But then also I needed to be careful that wherever I hid my shoes nobody would come and take the shoes out of there and leave with my shoes.

But I can tell you, it is such a privilege to have a pair of shoes. And every year as a person, personally, what I do is that at the beginning of winter I get involved in projects that will fundraise and buy shoes for children who don't have shoes. I don't know what I would do now without shoes. If I go to the Eastern Cape I try to walk barefoot but it's not something we enjoy anymore because there are stones everywhere and all that. It just shows you the comfort that I've gotten used to myself and that we have all become accustomed to, the comfort of shoes, the protection. When I wear my shoes, I feel protected because I know nothing will pierce through my skin from under my feet because shoes are there. I always make sure I take good care of them. I love shoes. I love good quality shoes because I know they will last longer. I don't know what I would do without shoes. I will always appreciate the protection, the comfort that my shoes provide. I was never caught for stealing my shoes, I made sure. My mother, she passed on, and she never knew that, that's what I used to do sometimes.





And then since we are in this yard, I will quickly read you a poem about my neighbors that live over there. The idea that it takes a village to raise a child is very true in McGregor.

Neighbours

In the beginning there were no fences
and we kept it like that intentionally.
Who would have thought such naïve goodwill gestures
would make me believe
seeing is after all in the possibility of angels.
A toddler serving lunch on a leaf,
a first devastating romantic grief.
Well stressed with equal earnest imaginings
were inflicted by nights,
parents fight skateboard landings,
misunderstandings,
willing dry humour where tenderness meets wrath
and menopause all because or unaware.
We are but angels.
We have come to see here,
right here, in this ordinary place.

And then I will end up with.... is it alright if I do it in Afrikaans?. Oh the shoes, the shoes, of course. I love shoes. But in McGregor we have gravel roads and I've got an ankle that is completely bashed. So I can't wear my beautiful shoes, and I have large collection. I can only wear the ugliest fattest shoes but they serve me well. Not that I've given away my other shoes. A while ago I was asked by a Dutch couple that fell in love in my garden on one of their ethnographic tours to make a speech at their wedding. They came back to get married here in December. They asked me to talk about my connection with Africa because they felt it, too. Which I thought was a strange request because it's like me asking them, what their connection with Holland is. In fact, with Europe, because Africa is rather a large place. Again in connection with my heritage and with my identity it took me 6 months to try and formulate something about that. I couldn't ...but to tell the truth I'm not a European standing with one foot on another continent longing with some romantic glow in Africa or longing to go back home. I have no home. My genetic conglomerate has been at the Cape for many, many years, longer than with the Xhosa. I am an African. What came out of that is a "Moppi", which is a typical Cape song. Sang by you know who. A conglomerate of different cultures about my DNA. It's in Africa.
(He recites the "Moppi" poem in Afrikaans.)

And so my genetic structure has walked very far, my feet have come over sand dunes, across the sea and I am an African.



