

Buhlebezwe Siwani is a South African multimedia artist, working in performance, photography, sculpture and installation. She uses art and performance to explore themes as African spirituality, womanhood and religion. In addition to her independent practice, Siwani is one of the founding members of the influential collective iQhiya which was formed as an activist response to the lack of exhibition opportunity and underrepresentation of black female artists in the South African art world.

Thematically Siwanis' work interrogates the patriarchal framing of the black female body and black female experience within the South African context. As both an artist and sangoma, a traditional spiritual healer, Siwani is constantly working within a paradox where, her work as Sangoma demands a lotto be concealed, while as an artist, her practice is concerned with revelation. During her performances as well as in her overall artistic practice, Siwani uses her own body as a means of communication. From her mesmerising live performance pieces and dazzling sculptural creations to the visual documentation of her art, Siwani's body of work touches on difficult subjects without shying away from their complexity. Topics like race, colonialization, apartheid, gender, sex, language and anthropology, all emerge in her work, encouraging viewers to ask questions rather than simply providing them with answers.

"I've always said if art doesn't engage socially what are you making it for? If it doesn't engage with the social economics of our time, with the political economics of our time then why are you making it?"

– Buhlebezwe Siwani

Buhlebezwe Siwani was born in Johannesburg in 1987. In 2015, she completed her MFA at Michaelis School of Fine Arts, Cape Town, after receiving a BFA from Wits School of Arts, Johannesburg. The artist was awarded the Martienssen Prize of the Wits School of Fine Art and the Katrine Harries Print Cabinet Purchase Award. Siwani has held residencies at Theater Spektakel and Pro Helvetia, both Zurich, CH, and Het Vijfde Seizon, Amersfoort, NL. Her work has been widely exhibited internationally, along with numerous performance presentations. Buhlebezwe Siwani lives and works in Amsterdam, NL, and Cape Town, ZA.