

DR ESTHER MAHLANGU

1935 - FOREVER



Dr. Esther Mahlangu is a South African born world-renowned artist with many South African, African and global accomplishments to her name. Ma Mahlangu, as she is affectionally known as in South Africa, has been in the art industry for close to eight decades. Mahlangu is definitely one of South Africa's most loved cultural ambassadors. Her art work was used as part of the resistance against white minority rule against a black majority, also to defend the rights of women (both black and white) as well as the fight against poverty faced by rural black women.

Mahlangu is known globally for bold large-scale contemporary paintings that originate from her Ndebele heritage. The amaNdebele cultural group are mostly found in Limpopo, Mpumalanga and today found in most areas in South Africa. The amaNdebele's are ancient offshoots of the main Nguni-speaking peoples and are reported to have migrated to the northern and north eastern parts of South Africa in the 17th century.

She's played a substantial role in various art and exhibitions but what stands out over the years after residential painting, is her art and passion in her painting in automobiles.

Partnerships include the Rolls Royce Phantom which was launched in 2020 in Cape Town at the Investec Art Fair. Her work in the Rolls Royce Phantom see's each vehicle with a glass box in their dashboard allowing the owner to personalise their vehicle. The once-off vehicle has been named "Mahlangu" in her honour.

Ma Mahlangu was born on 11 November 1935 on a rural farm outside of Middelburg in the Steve Tshwete Local Municipality which is just over one hour's drive from South Africa's capital city, Pretoria. Painting art on their traditional homesteads is part of the tradition for Southern Ndebele women and using it as a cultural and political weapon is what made Mahlangu stand out and get global recognition. Mahlangu had eight younger siblings, six boys and three girls including herself, making it a family of nine. She and her late husband had three sons. At the time of writing this piece, two sons were late.



On a professional side, Mahlangu worked at the Botshabelo Museum before becoming an artist over 70 years ago. Ma Mahlangu's paintings are large in scale, her patterns are very colourful and geometric. Her painting brushes are made from chicken feathers.

Mahlangu's claim to fame is translating and substituting the traditional surfaces for Ndebele mural art, adobe cow-dung wall, with canvas, and eventually, metal alloys. Mahlangu's signature pattern of white bounded lines set diagonally or shaped like chevrons. She signs all her beadwork in beads with the initials "E.M"

Her artistic composition is more compact, more engaging and complex than that of her contemporaries, the borders more complicated and she has a tendency to frame her pattern motifs.



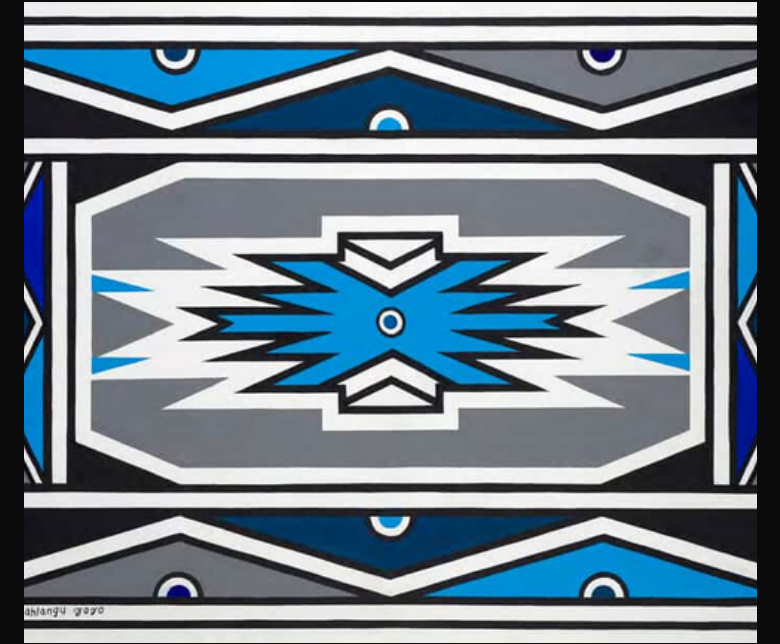
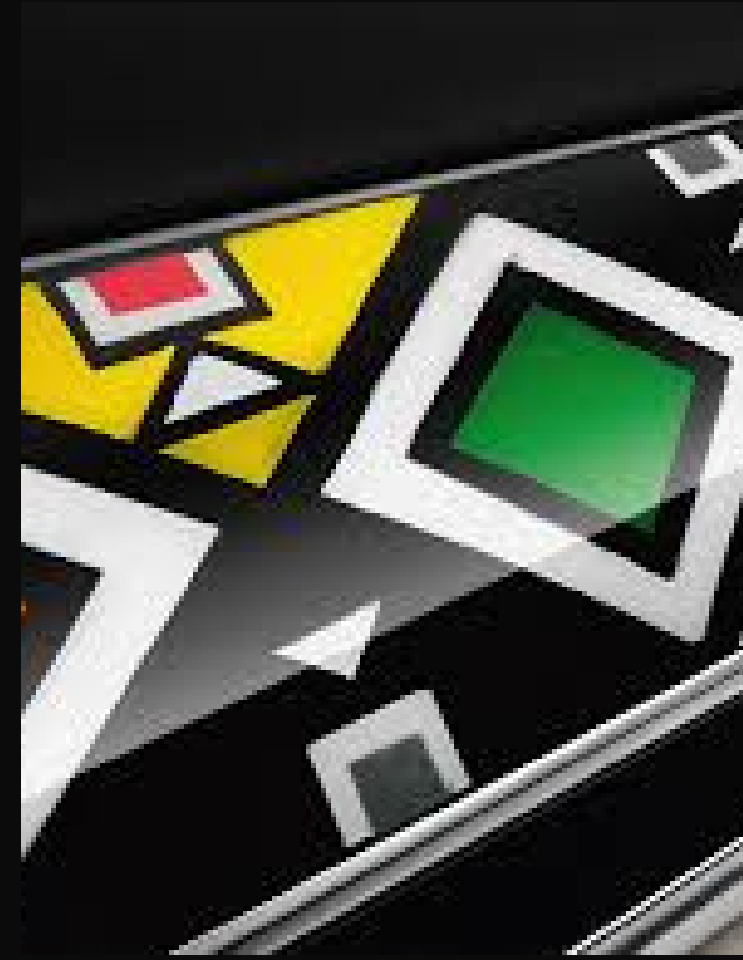
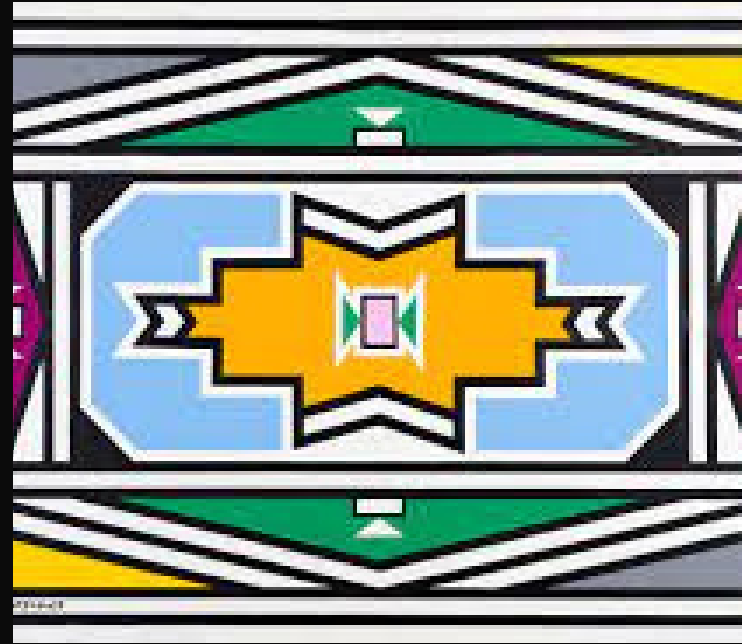
Mahlangu's first recognition internationally was in 1989 at a French art exposition titled *Magiciens de la terre* which is translated to mean, *Magicians of the World*. Two years later, she was commissioned by Germany's BMW to create an "Art Car". This BMW 525i was the first "African Art Car". The car was later exhibited at the in the United States capital city, Washington, DC at the National Museum of Women in Arts in 1994.

Esther Mahlangu's 1991 BMW Artcar was on view at th British Museum as part of 'South Africa: the art of a nation', from 27 October 2016 - 27 February 2017. The new BMW Individual 7 series with unique internal wooden trims painted by her was exhibited at Frieze Art Fair in 2016 with an accompanying exhibition of work co-curated by BMW and 34FineArt. Mahlangu recently completed a special edition premium Belvedere Vodka bottle design (50% of all profits to help fight HIV/AIDS in Africa). As an artist in residence, Mahlangu was commissioned in 2014 by the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts to create two large works of art



Mahlangu directs a school which teaches young girls not only painting but also the technique of painting designs on particular compositions of beads. The tradition is not a static entity. As the work of the same Mahlangu suggests, "tradition" is a mobile field, future-oriented and ready to incorporate diverse stimuli. In fact, although South Africa is now one of the African States which is able to facilitate and promote the work of their artists both nationally and internationally with the likes of the biennial event in Johannesburg, the work of Esther Mahlangu is even more courageous because she was born and grew up in political and social turmoil.

COLLECTION





ESTHER MAHLANGU

Esther Mahlangu has worked tirelessly exposing and developing her talent travelling around the world, and she is very passionate about sharing her knowledge with the younger generation so that she leaves a legacy that lives on for generations to come.

On 19 March 2022 Mahlangu was a victim of house robbery where she was attacked and assaulted, her house was ransacked personal possessions were stolen including a gun and an undisclosed amount of money. The crime sparked outrage raising the alarm about the high crime rate in South African and manhunt was launched by the South African police to catch the perpetrator. The suspect was apprehended and put into custody until April 20, 2022 for a formal bail application. An accomplice was released on bail and had a court hearing on May 10.

wards and honours

- Awarded the Order of Ikhamanga in 2006.
- Received the first United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) South Africa NGO and Multi-Stakeholder Award in 2019.
- Conferred with an honorary doctorate (Philosophiae Doctor honoris causa) by the University of Johannesburg on 9 April 2018.

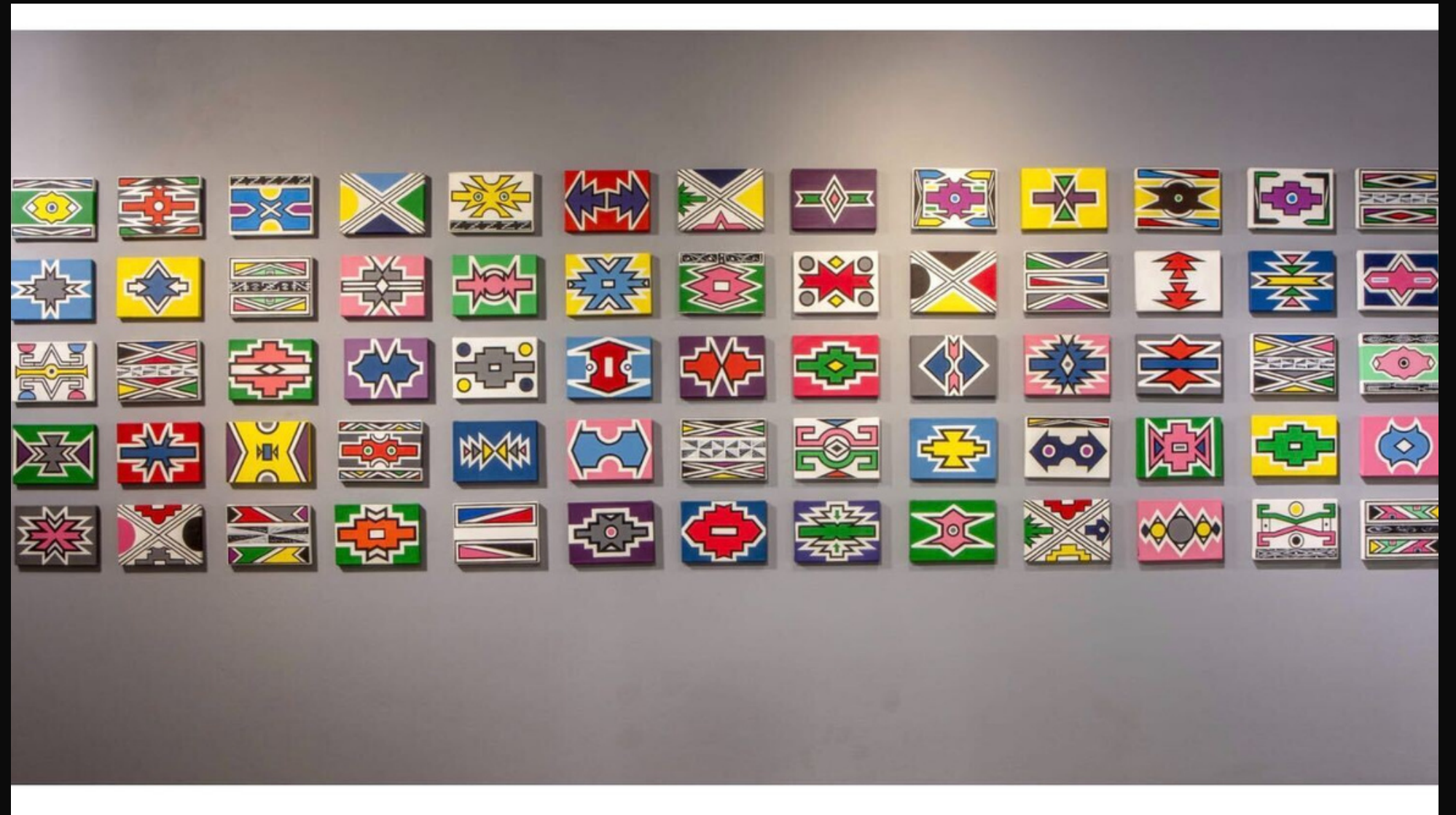




Shows

- 1989
 - Magiciens de la terre (Centre Georges Pompidou) in Paris (1989):[11]
- 1992
 - Carav Cultural Center of Contemporary Art
 - Comme des Garçons (Tokyo, Japan; New York, USA; Paris, France)
 - Documenta 9
 - Civic Theatre
- 1991
 - Caravan Auto Show (Lavante)
 - BMW Art Cars and Painting Exhibition (Johannesburg, Durban, Cape Town)

- 1993
 - Geneva International Exhibition (Geneva)
 - Nantes Fine Arts Museum
- 1994
 - Musee des Beaux-Arts de Nantes (1994)
- 1995
 - BMW Art Cars and Painting Exhibition
 - Market Theatre
- 1996
 - World Bank
 - Armour J. Blackburn Centre, Howard University
 - Parish Gallery
 - Congressional Black Caucus



- 1997
 - Het Afrika Museum
 - National Arts Club
 - African Immigrant Folklife Festival
 - Spoleto Festival
 - York College Galleries
- 1998
 - Tobu Museum of Art
- 1999
 - Van Reekum Museum
- 2000
 - 5th Biennial of Contemporary Art
- 2001
 - The Helsinki Fair Center
- 2002
 - Centro Culturale Trevi
- 2003
 - The Irma Stern Museum
- 2005
 - Museum of Fine Arts
 - Grimaldi Forum
 - Pretoria Art Museum
 - Smithsonian Institution
- 2006
 - The Jean Pigozzi Contemporary African Art Collection[12]
 - Tacoma Museum of Art
 - Roppongi Hills Art Museum
 - Scuderie Aldobrandini Frascati
- 2007
 - Art in Public Spaces
 - The Walters Art Museum
 - Durban Art Gallery
 - Pinacoteca Giovanni e Marella Agnelli
- 2008
 - Denver Museum of Art

RESOURCES

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Esther_Mahlangu

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