

Ubuhle Women: Beadwork and the Art of Independence

 manchesterinklink.com/ubuhle-women-beadwork-and-the-art-of-independence/

Tiffany Eddy

March 20, 2019

"I Am III, I Still See Color," Anacostia Community Museum/Smithsonian Institution

MANCHESTER, NH – The Currier Museum of Art presents *Ubuhle Women: Beadwork and the Art of Independence*, an exhibition which opens March 23, 2019. This display of distinctive beadwork was created by a community of women from South Africa. The works combine traditional images with striking contemporary design while expressing social issues and personal memories of the artists.

The artistic workshop is called Ubuhle (uh-boo-klay), which means “beauty” in the Xhosa and Zulu languages. The term evokes the shimmering quality of light on the glass beads that make up the works. Founded in 1999, Ubuhle fosters the women’s creativity, markets their art, and ensures their social and financial independence.

The artists each work in their own unique style, “directly from the soul,” in the words of founding artist Ntombephi Ntobela. While many works address important social and cultural narratives, they are also imbued with deeply personal meaning. From a distance, each panel presents a continuous surface; but as the viewer moves closer and each tiny individual bead catches the light, the meticulous skill and labor that went into each work becomes apparent. A single panel can take more than 10 months to complete.

“This exhibition is awe-inspiring in many ways,” states Samantha Cataldo, Curator of Contemporary Art at the Currier Museum. “The beadwork is technically stunning, and the works are even more impactful when one learns about these amazing women, and how their skills and artistry empower their social and financial independence. We hope this exhibition promotes thoughtful dialogue on the artists, and that their craft inspires our visitors.”

Ubuhle was conceived in response to social and cultural transformation in South Africa which shifted the country’s economy for many workers. It created a means for local women to use inherited artistic traditions as a way of achieving their financial independence. Beadwork is a customary form of artistic expression that has been practiced in South Africa for generations and it allows women artists to share their stories and support themselves.

Ubuhle Women: Beadwork and the Art of Independence was developed by the Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum, Washington, in cooperation with curators Bev Gibson, Ubuhle Beads, and James Green, and is organized for tour by International Arts & Artists,

Washington.

About the Currier

The Currier Museum of Art is an internationally renowned art museum located in Manchester, New Hampshire. The museum features European and American paintings, decorative arts, photographs, and sculpture, including works by Picasso, Monet, O'Keeffe, Wyeth, and LeWitt with exhibitions, tours, and programs year-round.

About International Arts and Artists

International Arts & Artists in Washington, DC, is a non-profit arts service organization dedicated to increasing cross-cultural understanding and exposure to the arts internationally, through exhibitions, programs and services to artists, arts institutions and the public. Visit www.artsandartists.org