

Ubuhe Women

Beadwork and the Art
of Independence

TRAVELING EXHIBITION SERVICE

IA&A

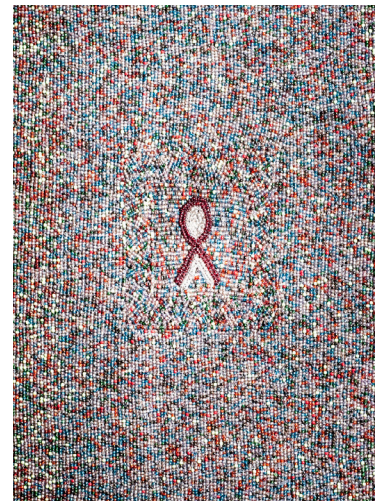
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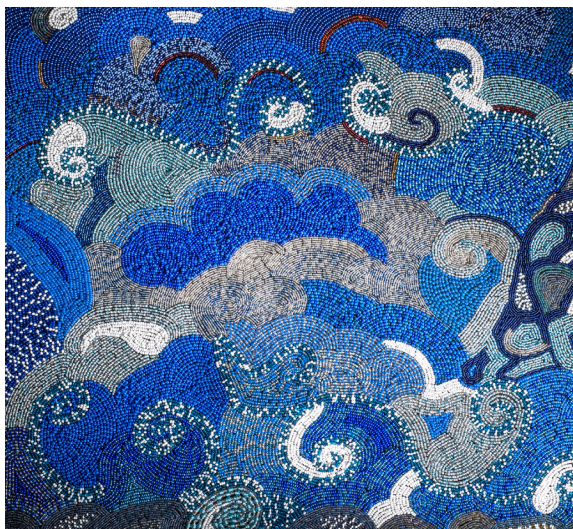
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"The dazzling ndwangos provide guests with an opportunity to experience a new perspective, yet also represent universal and relatable themes, making this exhibition accessible as well as impactful."

Katherine Ryckman Siegwarth, Curator of Collections and Exhibitions, The Dayton Art Institute

FRONT Detail of Thando Ntobela, *Ankoli Bull*, 2013, glass beads sewn onto fabric. 1 Zondile Zondo, *I am ill, I still see Color and Beauty: Jamludi The Red Cow*, 2012, glass beads sewn onto fabric. 2 Bongiswa Ntobela, *Beshu*, 2007, glass beads sewn onto fabric. 3 Detail of Nolindelo Sidibi, *"Ndenzeni": What Have I Done?*, 2008, glass beads sewn onto fabric. 4 Ntombephi "Induna" Ntobela, *My Sea, My Sister, My Tears*, 2011, glass beads sewn onto fabric. 5 Ntombephi "Induna" Ntobela, *Tribute to My Sister Bongiswa*, 2010, glass beads sewn onto fabric.

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Ubuhle Women: Beadwork and the Art of Independence showcases a new form of bead art, the *ndwango*, developed by a community of women living and working together in rural KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The six artists featured in the exhibition call their paintings in beads *ndwangos*, which translates as "cloth" or "rag." The black fabric on which the Ubuhle women work is reminiscent of the Xhosa headscarves and skirts that many of them grew up wearing. By stretching this textile like a canvas, the artists transform the flat cloth into a contemporary art form colored with Czech glass beads.

Using skills handed down through generations, and working in their own unique style "directly from the soul," according to artist **Ntombephi Ntobela**, the women create abstract as well as figurative subjects for their *ndwangos*.

Ubuhle means "beauty" in the Xhosa and Zulu languages and it describes the shimmering quality of light on glass that for the Xhosa people has a particular spiritual significance. From a distance, each panel seems to be formed from a continuous surface, but as each tiny individual bead catches the light, the viewer becomes aware of the meticulous skill that went into each work and the scale of ambition: a single panel can take more than 10 months to complete.

EXHIBITION SPECIFICATIONS

Number of Works

38 works, including beaded mosaics, photographs and video

Organized by

Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum, Washington, DC

Curators

Bev Gibson, Founder of Ubuhle Women; James Green, Co-Curator

Requirements

Moderate security;
200–300 linear feet

Shipping

IA&A makes all arrangements; exhibitors pay outgoing shipping costs within the contiguous US

Booking Period

12 weeks

Tour

June 2017–April 2022