

Message to the Opening of the Dumile Exhibition  
from  
Mazisi ka Mdabuli w'Ekunene

Dumile is without doubt one of the greatest visionary artists in Africa today. It is necessary to mention the African continent because for some time now the African continent has served as a source of inspiration for various styles and forms of art. The multi-form symbols of African art and their universal meaning are no better represented than in the art of Dumile. His images violate the normal symmetry of visual phenomenon and in doing so, constantly suggest the other reality. It is this reality that projects a cosmic dimension and a relevant African philosophical comment. Dumile's art is therefore more than a representation, it is a mythic statement and a story in the highest sense of the word. Even when he makes a portrait, it is no longer a copy of reality, but a concession to the artistic stamp of his vision.

I have known Dumile for a long period. For me, Dumile is both a genius and a fool. Often I wish his foolishness would take the form of permanent dreaming. I believe this way he would no longer be forced to deal with reality and its agencies, namely human beings. But Dumile needs human beings because his world is predicated on their existence and their ultimate annihilation. As an observer of this phenomenon, Dumile is a non-participant and therefore creates his own world based on what he sees and not what exists. Yet what exists becomes in his discipline superior to what he sees. Consequently annihilation becomes itself a statement describing the cosmic order. The immanence of this reality and its representation in Dumile's art, makes this art relevant not only in the era of Apartheid and conflict, but also in the era of reconciliation and its ultimate resolution as in the moods of the goddess Maat and the goddess Nomkhumbulwana.

As you observe this large variety of Dumile's art, you are called upon to experience its artistic and philosophical message. For those who desire to be entertained by form alone, enough is available on its primary level. But for those who would venture deeper into the fundamental truth of African cosmology, meaning, symbol and representation will never be the same.