Asanda Kupa
Theories of The Crowd

Solo Exhibition | 19 April-16 May 2018 | Johannesburg

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About ‘Theories of The Crowd’

Sociologists, psychologists and social historians and have long been interested in the study of crowd behaviour, including at rallies and protest gatherings. Collective behaviour typically occurs when people desire societal change that cannot be achieved through existing institutions. But how do crowds think, act and make decisions? Does a collective mentality transform individual behaviour?

Asanda Kupa’s (b.1981) work is grounded in the lives of those forced to the periphery of ‘the New South Africa’, based on his experience of growing up, living and working in Molteno, Eastern Cape. Since 2012, regime failure and grassroots protest have been central themes of the artist’s work, which was initially catalysed by the Marikana massacre. Kupa’s new solo exhibition ‘Theories of The Crowd’ poses questions about the tensions in society between group and individual identity, focusing on South Africa’s black working classes, who bear the brunt of socio-economic hardship in one of the most unequal countries in the world.

Uniforms are constant reminders of the social order, making the labouring classes immediately identifiable, as well as substantially anonymous. In their standard-issue overalls and set against foreboding skies, Kupa’s crowds are faceless. But who comprises the crowd? Whose individual lives and emotions comprise the crucible in which civic action, social movements and mass protest emerge?

In a rare turn toward portraiture that echoes crowd theorists’ questions about individual behaviour, Kupa has created a series of charcoal drawings of people known to him - primarily unemployed men from Molteno - in a critique of the local Public Works Programme. Raw, incisive and urgent, Kupa’s work captures an important period in South Africa’s political history, as he reflects on the breadth and depth of economies of hope(lessness) and popular protest.
The Chosen (2018)
Acrylic on Canvas
134.5 x 83.5 cm
SOLD
What comes around goes around I (2018)
Acrylic on board
37 x 37 cm
SOLD

What comes around goes around II (2018)
Acrylic on board
37 x 37 cm
SOLD
Acrylic on Canvas
144 x 96 cm
SOLD
What comes around goes around III (2018)
Acrylic on board
37 x 37 cm
SOLD

What comes around goes around IV (2018)
Acrylic on board
37 x 37 cm
R 8,000 incl VAT
The Fixer (2018)
Charcoal and pastel on paper
80 x 92 cm (variable)
R 15,000 incl VAT
Gossip Development (2018)
Charcoal and pastel on paper
60.5 x 75.5cm (variable)
R 13,500 incl VAT
Bridges and Fire (2018)
Charcoal and pastel on paper
61 x 81.5cm (variable)
SOLD
We in this together
Oil on Canvas
192 x 147cm
SOLD
Less Green Pasture (2018)
Acrylic on Canvas
128.5 x 89cm
R 28,000 incl VAT
Detail from *Less Green Pasture* (page 11)
The Crowd I (2018)
Acrylic on canvas
60 x 60cm
R 16,000 incl VAT
The Crowd II (2018)
Acrylic on canvas
60 x 60cm
R 16,000 incl VAT
RESERVED - contact us for more details
These fields are mine (2018)
Charcoal and pastel on paper
62 x 74cm (variable)
R 13,500 incl VAT
Omunye phez komunye
(Trans. ‘Each one to another’)
Acrylic and pastel on canvas
235.5 x 142cm
SOLD
Detail from *Omunye phez komunye* (page 14)
Job yi job (2018)
(trans. ‘A job is a job’)
Charcoal and pastel on paper
75.5 x 56.6cm (variable)
R 13,500 incl VAT
I paved the way (2018)
Charcoal and pastel on paper
59.5 x 77cm (variable)
R 13,500 incl VAT
Thuma thina (trans. ‘Send us’)  
Ink on paper  
82 x 71cm (variable)  
R 8,000 incl. VAT - RESERVED - contact us for more details
Acrylic on Canvas
146 x 110 cm
SOLD
Detail from *Imbovane ezibomvu* (page 19)
Indoda itya ukubila kwebunzi (Trans. ‘A man feeds from the sweat of his forehead…’)
Oil on Canvas (unstretched)
Approx 192 x 147cm | R 40,000 incl VAT
Underground Safety (2018)
Charcoal and pastel on paper
62 x 77cm (variable)
R 13,500 incl VAT
Asanda Kupa | Bio and Exhibitions

Asanda Kupa lives in Johannesburg, and works from his studio at the Bag Factory, situated in central downtown Johannesburg. He returns to his childhood home frequently, and is an active Molteno community member. Kupa holds an NDip in Fine Art from Walter Sisulu University and a BTech degree from Tshwane University of Technology. He worked at and reinvigorated the Molteno Museum from 2009 to 2011. In 2010, he received the Ann Bryant Young Artist of the Year award, and in 2013 he was the recipient of the Reinhold Cassirer Award. His work sits in a number of important South African collections, including The Southern African Foundation For Contemporary Art and Nando’s.

2018  Civil Rights and Civil Wrongs, Mattress Factory, Pittsburgh, USA (forthcoming)
2018  Feast Your Eyes, Nando’s, London (forthcoming)
2018  Theories of the Crowd, Guns & Rain, Johannesburg
2018  Guns & Rain, Investec Cape Town Art Fair
2018  Kooshk Residency Exchange Program, Tehran, Iran
2017  National Art Bank Group Show, Oliewenhuis Museum, Bloemfontein
2017  Guns & Rain, Also Known As Africa, Paris
2017  35 Years: Trailblazers, Lizamore & Associates, Johannesburg
2017  MK & Artists, Turbine Art Fair, Johannesburg
2017  Un_Learn, my soul, Eclectica Contemporary, Cape Town
2017  “#AMANDLA![Re]form,Debate,[Re]dress?” , Oliewenhuis Museum, Bloemfontein
2016  Charting, Eclectica Contemporary, Cape Town
2016  Art Source SA, Turbine Art Fair, Johannesburg
2016  Droogte Drought/Imbla Isomiso, Artvark, Cape Town
2016  Guns & Rain, LL Editions, Turbine Art Fair, Johannesburg
2015  Guns & Rain, LL Editions, Turbine Art Fair, Johannesburg
2015  ‘Introspection… Where art Thou?’, Wits Art Museum, Johannesburg
2014  ‘Dialogues with Masters’, Special Projects, FNB Joburg Art Fair
2014  Bag Factory, Turbine Art Fair, Johannesburg
2013  Joburg Fringe Art Fair, Johannesburg
2013  Thami Mnyele Art Competition Exhibition, Johannesburg
2013  Albany Museum, National Arts Festival, Eastern Cape, South Africa
2013  ‘Urgency’, Bag Factory, Johannesburg