



## 21 ICONS SEASON THREE (THE FUTURE OF A NATION) FEATURES ATHI-PATRA RUGA

**Athi-Patra Ruga** – *“Performance art is about looking for the mundane in everyday life, and augmenting it so that people can actually see the art in it.”*

On 6 September 2015 on SABC 3 at 19h27, the acclaimed short-film series 21 ICONS will feature the first icon of its third season: The National Arts Festival’s 2015 Standard Bank Young Artist for Performance Art, 31-year-old Athi-Patra Ruga.

21 ICONS traces South Africa’s history over the course of its three seasons, moving from the fight for freedom to the country’s growth during democracy, and concluding with a vision of the future. 21 ICONS is a celebration of individuals who inspire multitudes through their impact, integrity and influence.

As a world-class communicator of powerful stories, 21 ICONS uses photography, film and narrative to showcase the pivotal moments of South Africa’s nation-building journey. To watch the 21 ICONS promo video, visit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6HqT7RjG-Bg>

Gary van Wyk (34) will step up as principal photographer for the third season. In previous seasons, Van Wyk has been a crucial part of 21 ICONS camera work, visually recording the nuances and intimate moments of each shoot in his distinctive reporting style. Adrian Steirn, who conceived the project, continues his involvement capturing the behind-the-scenes images.

This season has been envisaged as a tribute to the country’s future, shedding the spotlight on youth icons all under the age of 35. Their energy and drive has been captured in coloured portraits; a major departure from previous seasons which featured black-and-white fine arts portraits.

Ruga has been selected for 21 ICONS South Africa Season III to honour his art forms that represent a counter proposal to ideas of nationhood and belonging, the artistic process when creating both processions and tapestries as well as his means of communicating his views on integration and acceptance.

During a portrait sitting, Ruga describes his journey as a performance artist, visual explorer and content creator; how he created characters that could challenge people’s non-acceptance of differences in relation to structure, ideology and politics. The preview is available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dlbinJEk1m8>

The film gives an insightful and inspiring glimpse into Ruga’s life and reveals the power of using performance art to explore and push boundaries between fashion, performance, and contemporary art to reach people of all colours and levels of social classes and breakdown their stereotypical views on race, sexuality and gender identity.

For the portrait ‘*Self Expression*’, which will appear digitally on the Tuesday after his short-film is released, Van Wyk describes the visual elements, “Ruga stands upright, shirtless, with his hand pressed to his chest. An image from his ‘*Azania*’ series is projected directly onto his bare torso, illuminating a look of strength in his face and immersing him in his own art. Highlighting Ruga’s utilisation of his own body as one of his primary mediums of expression, the portrait constructs an increased intimacy between the artist and his art.”

On the future of South Africa, Ruga comments, “We have a future and it is a bright one! The only challenge we have is ourselves.”

For more information, visit [www.21icons.co.za](http://www.21icons.co.za)

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### PROGRAMME SYNOPSIS

Visual artist Athi-Patra Ruga talks to photographer Gary Van Wyk at his studio in Woodstock about his work, the importance of using his own body to communicate his stories, and his belief that unity can be achieved through disruptive art.



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### **ABOUT 21 ICONS SEASON III**

By making accessible the personal stories of individuals whose work has inspired the lives of many, the purpose is to show the way forward for a new generation to aspire to be socially conscious and active citizens. These young men and women have been an inspiration through their extraordinary social contribution. It is not a definitive list and does not denote any ranking.

The short film-series documents the conversations between Gary Van Wyk as the photographer and filmmaker and the icons. Each short film provides insight into both the subject and photographer's creative approach to the portrait.

Behind each portrait lies a carefully planned concept that captures not only the essence of each icon visually, but also in spirit and in terms of their unique legacy.

The narrative storyboard incorporates the icons' descriptions of the people and social advances that have created opportunities for them. By sharing their personal stories and what they have done with their freedom, the short-films communicate these stories to inspire the next generation to follow in their footsteps and move forward collectively as a new democracy.

Season three debuts on Sunday 6 September 2015 and broadcasts for a further 20 weeks, with a short film screened every Sunday on SABC 3 at 19h27.

Profiles of the icons will be distributed on a weekly basis as the series runs. Following the broadcast on Sunday evenings, the icons' portraits, taken by Van Wyk, will be published online and on digital platforms immediately available for individuals to engage and interact with these 21 remarkable new South African icons.

Season three of 21 ICONS South Africa is proudly sponsored by Mercedes-Benz South Africa.

#### **Social Media 21 Icons:**

21 Icons engages with the public through:

**Twitter:** [@21Icons](https://twitter.com/21Icons)

**Hash-tag:**

**Instagram:** [@21icons](https://www.instagram.com/21icons)

**Website:** <http://www.21Icons.com>

**Facebook:** <http://www.facebook.com/21Icons>

**Pinterest:** <http://www.pinterest.com/21ICONS/>

#### **Social Media handles for Athi-Patra Ruga:**

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/AthiPatraRuga>

**Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/AthiPatraRuga>

**Instagram:** <https://instagram.com/athipatra/>

**Youtube:** <https://www.youtube.com/user/athipatraruga>



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