

# 21 ICONS SEASON THREE (A FUTURE OF A NATION) FEATURES LADUMA NGXOKOLO

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SA Creatives

**Laduma Ngxokolo ?** *“Hard work opens any doors. Also, people should not focus on the success of external subjects but focus on themselves and their own work as everyone is unique.”*

On 11 October 2015 on SABC 3 at 19h27, the acclaimed short-film series 21 ICONS will feature the sixth icon of its third season: award-winning textile and knitwear designer Laduma Ngxokolo. He is the recipient of the 2014 the Emerging Designer of the Year Award at the African Fashion International Awards, where he outshone 10 other African designers to win the inaugural Vogue Scouting for Africa prize.



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.

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

Ngxokolo has been selected for 21 ICONS South Africa Season III for using traditional Xhosa beadwork motifs and patterns, to establish MaXhosa that celebrates the rich heritage of the Xhosa culture through providing traditional clothing for Xhosa initiation rituals. MaXhosa by Laduma is proudly woven in South Africa with South African mohair and merino wool. Although producing locally has its challenges, Ngxokolo says giving back to the community and creating jobs makes the work meaningful.

"In South Africa the material is more expensive and suppliers don't always offer the best quality. But knowing I am contributing towards growing jobs and the economy makes it worth my while," he says.

During a portrait sitting, Ngxokolo tells Van Wyk how in the Eastern Cape Xhosa communities, young men between 18 and 25 undergo six months of intense training in traditional circumcision schools before they're initiated into manhood. Part of the ritual involves replacing all their clothes ? handovers from boyhood ? with new items, including high-quality knits. Because few local sources are available, initiates typically turn to imported western brands. He says, "As a person who has undergone the Xhosa initiation ritual, I felt that knitwear brands like these bear no aesthetic resemblance to Xhosa traditions."

The film gives an insightful and inspiring glimpse into his role as an ambassador for African fashion, and how he is utilising the resources and inspiration we possess to create a unique voice that can be understood and appreciated across the globe. However, he points out that he feels connected to South Africa and sees more long-term value in the local market than overseas because the appreciation that he gains locally will last forever.

For the portrait '*The Explorer*' which will appear digitally #OurFutureIsNow on the Monday after his short-film is released, Van Wyk describes the visual elements, "Ngxokolo is photographed wearing his garments while seated on a white horse in the middle of Long Street in Cape Town. Playing on the idea of a rural boy delivering his wares to the city, the portrait delivers a striking blend of modern and traditional, and speaks to a generation navigating the combination of both."

On the future of South Africa, he comments, “It is our responsibility as young South Africans to take the privileges of our freedom and distribute them to underprivileged and work towards a prosperous nation so that we can create a successful nation that can increase GDP and make a better life for the people living below the poverty line.”

**Laduma Ngxokolo social media handles:**

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

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