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Celebrating South Africa's icons of the past and present, the 21 Icons series moved from the fight for freedom through the country's growth during democracy, concluding with the third season that focused on a vision of the future. It shed the spotlight on South African youth icons under the age of 35, capturing their energy and drive in brightly coloured portraits, a major departure from the black-and-white images from previous seasons.

Here's a recap of the inspiring youth icons featured in Season III.

Athi-Patra Ruga

Visual artist Athi-Patra Ruga believes that unity can be achieved through disruptive art. The National Arts Festival's 2015 Standard Bank Young Artist for Performance Art is making waves by creating characters that challenge people's refusal to accept differences in structure, ideology and politics.

Ruga continues to use his art to explore and push boundaries, to reach people of all colours and levels of social classes – and to breakdown stereotypes of race, sexuality and gender identity.

Jes Foord

Rape survivor and activist Jes Foord is the driving force behind her eponymous foundation, which provides counselling and does advocacy work with health and policing-related organisations, as well as the Handbag Project, an initiative that gives rape survivors a useful kit to help them through the traumatic task of reporting their rape to the authorities.

Aside from her frequent motivational and educational talks at schools, Jes also created the Cinderella Project, to provide kids in underprivileged schools with formal wear for their Matric balls.

Thulani Madondo

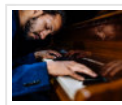
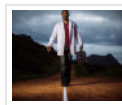
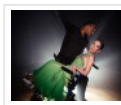
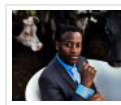
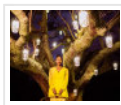
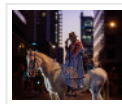
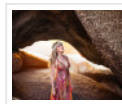
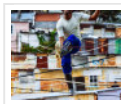
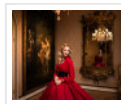
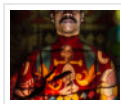
Education activist Thulani Madondo grew up in Kliptown, Soweto in abject poverty. Today, Thulani, who was the first member of his family to matriculate from school, works in the Kliptown community to provide support to school learners in the form of the Kliptown Youth Programme (KYP).

The NPO gives classes, tutors, gives daily meals and provides after-school care to 400 local learners, and does fundraising to assist them with paying their school fees, for learning materials and their school uniforms. Thulani is the

executive director of KYP and is a leader in the Kliptown Project Gumboot dancers, one of KYP's art and culture programmes.



Athi-Patra Ruga



Lucas Sithole

Paralympian and triple amputee, 28-year-old Lucas Sithole is one of the world's top wheelchair tennis players. In 2013, Lucas claimed both the US Open singles title and the British Open singles title, making him Africa's first title holder for both a super series and grand slam title.

He is South Africa's top wheelchair tennis player, and one of the best in the world, holding the fourth spot in international rankings. On top of all of his other accolades, Lucas also represents the Wheelchair Tennis South Africa organisation.

Catherine Constantinides

Environmentalism Catherine Constantinides is a former Miss Earth SA (as well as the programme's national director), and is globally active in environmental advocacy and conservation education.

In addition to her role at Miss Earth South Africa, Catherine is also the executive director of Lead SA. Plus, she is the co-founder of Generation Earth, an organisation that works with the youth of South Africa on environmental issues.

They call themselves a 'green networking platform', and work with schools and groups on developing and implementing solutions, as well as identifying youth leaders. She is also passionate about working with and empowering women on environmental and related issues.

Laduma Ngxokolo

Textile designer Laduma Ngxokolo incorporates his Xhosa heritage into award-winning design. Now based in London, Laduma draws inspiration for his colourful knitwear garments from traditional Xhosa beadwork, having learned machine-knitting from his mother.

His MAXHOSA BY LADUMA knitwear range was initially intended for Xhosa men, specifically *amakrwala* (initiates) to wear once they swapped their childhood gear for more formal clothing signifying their status – but his eye for design has earned him fans from all walks of life, locally and internationally.

Thato Kgatlhanye

Thato Kgatlhanye is a social entrepreneur who turns waste into wonder with her project Repurpose Schoolbags. The 22-year-old turned a student project into a non-profit organisation that turns discarded plastic bags into sturdy, waterproof, reflective school bags for underprivileged children.

The bags come with a solar panel (charged as their bearers walk to school and back), and can be used to shed light on homework, books, or general family life after dark. So it not only protects the environment by recycling waste plastic, it also provides educational and social benefit to the learners who receive the bags.

Ludwick Marishane

Ludwick Marishane shows vision and drive as SA's youngest patent holder, and a successful entrepreneur by 25. He is the inventor of DryBath, a waterless bathing replacement solution. Although designed with the poor and water-insecure in mind, it has found a successful market among young, wealthy, first-world campers and festival-goers.

He was 17 when he lodged his patent claim on the components of DryBath, and today, at 25, he is the founder of a business called HeadBoy Industries, has a Bachelor of Business Science, and has earned a slew of awards and titles.

Michaela Mycroft

Activist Michaela Mycroft is an accomplished ballroom dancer: she and her dance partner Damian are ranked first in the world for their category, despite the fact that Michaela was born with cerebral palsy, is a quadriplegic and uses a wheelchair to get around, even on the dance floor. In 2005, Michaela became the youngest ever finalist in the Shoprite Checkers Woman of the Year awards, and, in 2009, she was the youth category winner of the South African Social Entrepreneurship Awards.

In 2012, Michaela was honoured as one of the *Mail & Guardian's* Top 200 Young South Africans and with a Nobel Peace Laureates' Medal for Activism, hot on the heels of her 2011 International Children's Peace Prize. Earlier this year, she became the first woman quadriplegic to climb Kilimanjaro. She is also the first disabled UCT student to live on campus in a university residence.

Through her NPO, she has raised funds to buy wheelchairs, hearing aids and other items that promote the social inclusion and personal empowerment of young people with disabilities, giving them the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Ashley Uys

Ashley Uys turned a passion for science into three innovative companies. He developed reliable, fast and affordable testing kits for malaria, manufactured by his company Medical Diagnostech, which also produces drug tests, HIV tests and pregnancy tests.

This is only one of this serial entrepreneur's three medical innovation-related companies, and he is only 33 years old. In fact, Ashley founded his first company, Read World Diagnostics, when he was just 24.

Phindile Sithole-Spong

The company founded by 26-year-old HIV activist Phindile Sithole-Spong is called Rebranding HIV. It offers training, strategy development, public speaking services and even products like flavoured and textured condoms, in line with Phindile's contemporary, youth-focused approach to HIV awareness and management.

'For me, the best way to educate anyone about HIV – if you're living with HIV – is to just be yourself, because there's this misconception that HIV positive people are scary. But I'm still Phindi,' she says.

She was named by *TIME* magazine as one of the 'Next Generation Leaders', and in 2015 was included in the *Mail & Guardian's* 200 Young South Africans list.

Kyle Shepherd

This acclaimed young jazz pianist and composer learned to play the piano from scratch in under a year, and now also sings, plays sax and has mastered a traditional mouth bow. Straight out of university, Kyle's first album '*FineART*' won two South African Music Awards (SAMAs), and more albums, critical acclaim and awards followed. In 2014, he was named one of the Standard Bank Young Artists of the Year, and in 2015, he received the Newton Memorial Music Scholarship to study at Stellenbosch University towards a Masters degree.

See [21icons.com](#) for more.

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21 Icons celebrates Laduma Ngxokolo

Xhosa-inspired design has landed textile designer Laduma Ngxokolo some major global wins, and a #21Icons portrait too.



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21 Icons celebrates Thato Kgathanye

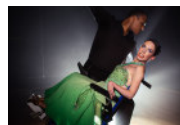
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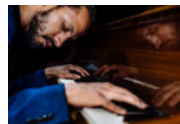
The ninth 21 Icons portrait (Season III) features ballroom-dancing, mountain-climbing ability activist Michaela Mycroft. #ourfutureisnow



lifestyle

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Ashley Uys turned a passion for science into three innovative companies, and claimed a spot in the third season of 21 Icons.



people

21 Icons celebrates Kyle Shepherd

In the spotlight with 21 Icons this week is acclaimed jazz pianist and composer Kyle Shepherd.