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Michaela Mycroft – Chaeli, to her friends and family – is an accomplished ballroom dancer. Her and her dance partner Damian are ranked first in the world for their category. No wonder then, that 21 Icons photographer Gary van Wyk chose to capture her on the dance floor, in motion, for their ninth portrait and short film of Season III.

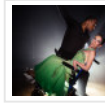
What might surprise you though is that Michaela was born with cerebral palsy, is a quadriplegic and uses a wheelchair to get around, even on the dance floor.

Ability activist

Michaela's disability and her mode of transport have never held her back; not as a student at the University of Cape Town, and not when she is climbing mountains or championing her own non-profit organisation (NPO), The Chaeli Campaign. In fact, Michaela chooses to see a wheelchair as empowering, and considers herself an 'ability activist'.

It is this determination, positivity and vision that has earned Michaela so much respect and many international accolades at such a young age.

International acclaim



In 2005 Michaela was the youngest... she was the youth category winner...

...the Year awards. Then, in 2009, ...ds.

In 2012 Michaela was honoured... Laureates' Medal for Activism, hon...

...African and with a Nobel Peace... Peace Prize.

Conquering mountains

And she continues to smash misconceptions and perceived limitations: in September 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.

Giving back

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.

About 21 Icons

The 21 Icons project was established 2013 by photographer Adrian Steirn, as a film and photographic initiative that captures and commemorates South African champions. What started as a dream to photograph Nelson Mandela, has become a way to 'showcase the pivotal moments of South Africa's nation-building journey'.

This, their third season, focuses on our icons in the making, the country's visionary youth leaders under 35. You can connect with 21 Icons on Twitter, @21Icons, or with the hashtag #OurFutureIsNow

For more coverage, check out our stories on the third season so far:

- [Ludwick Marishane](#)
- [Thato Kgatlhanye](#)
- [Laduma Ngxokolo](#)
- [Catherine Constantinides](#)
- [Lucas Sithole](#)
- [Thulani Madondo](#)
- [Jes Foord](#)
- [Athi-Patra Ruga](#)
- Photographer [Gary van Wyk](#)

See 21icons.com for more.

Tags

[people](#) [south africa](#) [lifestyle](#) [photography](#)

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lifestyle

21 Icons: fresh eyes, same vision

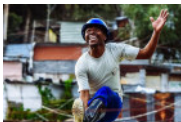
After two seasons behind the main lens at 21 Icons, photographer Adrian Steirn is swapping roles with behind-the-scenes shutterbug Gary van Wyk.



lifestyle

21 Icons celebrates Jes Foord

Rape survivor and activist Jes Foord has turned her experience of sexual violence into a beacon of hope for others.



advice

21 Icons celebrates Thulani Madondo

Rising up and bringing his community with him, education activist Thulani Madondo is featured in the latest season of 21Icons.



lifestyle

21 Icons celebrates Lucas Sithole

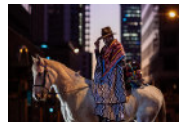
Top of his game: 21 Icons features our top wheelchair tennis champ, grand slam winner Lucas Sithole



lifestyle

21 Icons: Catherine Constantinides

21 Icons celebrates the passion and work of environmentalist Catherine Constantinides in its latest portrait.



lifestyle

21 Icons celebrates Laduma Ngxokolo

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



lifestyle

21 Icons celebrates Thato Kgatlhanye

21 Icons features social entrepreneur Thato Kgatlhanye, who turned waste into wonder with her project Repurpose Schoolbags.



lifestyle

21 Icons celebrates Ludwick Marishane

21 Icons's Ludwick Marishane shows vision and drive as SA's youngest patent holder, and a successful entrepreneur by 25.

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