

# City

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## Capturing new heroes

**ICONS:** MEET THE GENERATION WHO IS CHANGING SOUTH AFRICA

➔ **Photographer Gary van Wyk takes the public on a thrilling journey in the third season of *21 Icons*.**

Adriaan Roets

Last week *21 Icons* hosted a sneak peek of what is to come in the third season of the photo and short film series.

This year, *21 Icons* is blasting into consciousness with striking full colour portraits. The first two seasons of *21 Icons* managed to capture a global audience, thanks to the heartfelt documentation of extraordinary South Africans captured in black and white.

Politicians such as FW de Klerk and Nelson Mandela, artists such as Kitty Phetla and humanists such as Desmond Tutu were shown in raw and powerful photography and short films. The 42 icons featured in the first two seasons focused on South Africans who changed history. This year they are focusing on a new set of countrymen: the future of the nation.

At 34, Gary van Wyk was selected to capture this new generation. Van Wyk's journey as a photographer began during an internship at Independent Newspapers in 2003. Still a student at the time, he started to work full-time for the news group. Since then Van Wyk's images have appeared in publications worldwide.

He has been a crucial part of *21 Icons*, capturing the nuances and intimate moments of each shoot in his distinctive reportage style.

Van Wyk takes over from *21 Icons* creator Adrian Steirn as the principal portrait photographer.

"In Season 3 we are getting to



A MOMENT IN TIME. Gary van Wyk documents Lucas Sithole for the third edition of *21 Icons*.

### info

- ▶ *21 Icons* launched in 2013 as a multimedia project.
- ▶ A cornerstone of the icons selected is to recognise what needs to be done to uphold racial tolerance and social harmony.

meet emerging South Africans. These are our country's new leaders and change makers and working with them, taking their portraits, is an extraordinary opportunity," Van Wyk says.

"They are all creative people in their own ways, so coming up with original concepts and working with the icons on their execution is an exciting challenge."

Taking over from Steirn is both a challenge and honour for him. "We have very different personalities, which influences the photographs and being in front



FILMED. Thulani Madondo during the filming of his 3-minute short film.

of the camera is a new experience for me.

"Shooting this season in colour is also a change. It's a way for the project to evolve and move forward. To me black-and-white deals with memory, whereas colour represents the world the way it is today."

While Van Wyk and Steirn are still busy documenting the new generation of *21 Icons* they can be proud of the first five South Africans they have already captured: artist Athi-Patra Ruga, rape survivor and activist Jes Foord, co-founder of the Klip-town Youth Program Thulani Madondo, Paralympic wheelchair tennis player Lucas Sithole, conservationist and eco-preneur

Catherine Constantinides, and textile and knitwear designer Laduma Ngxokolo.

Ruga was excited to work with Van Wyk, and also add his voice to South Africans who are living in post-apartheid South Africa, where people face challenges separate from race.

His portrait features him shirtless with one of his striking works projected on him.

Season 3 debuts next Sunday at 7:27pm on SABC 3. A new icon will be featured weekly for 21 weeks. Their portrait photos will be released after each short film.

Stay in touch by following @21icons on Twitter



ROYAL AFFAIR. Jes Foord in a striking gown, that plays off her involvement in *The Cinderella Project*.