

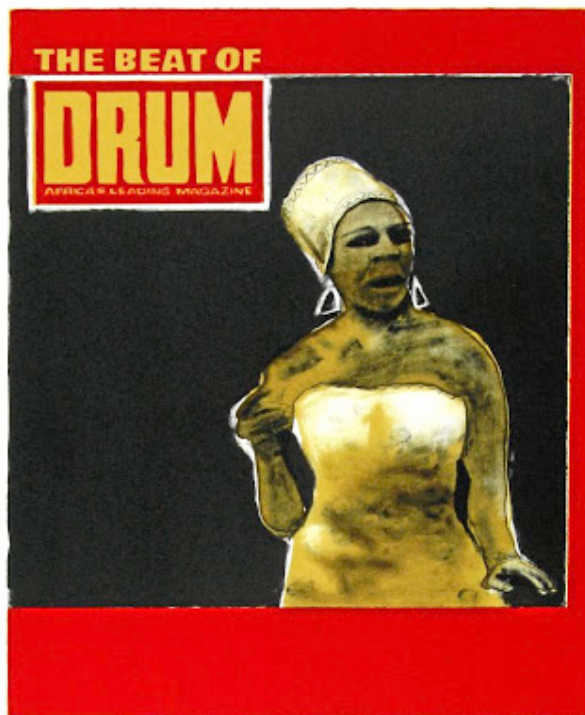
Lifestyle

Art

Sam Nhlengethwa celebrates a print icon from SA's bad old days

The acclaimed artist tells us what inspired him to recreate some of Drum magazine's famous covers in a series of prints

17 September 2017 - 00:00 By Pearl Boshame



'Ode to Miriam Makeba' by Sam Nhlengethwa.

Newspapers and magazines reflect their times, but in some cases they come to define an era.

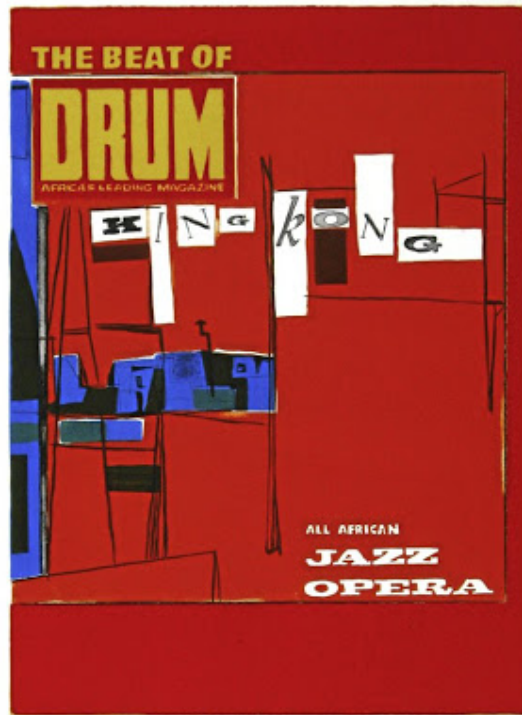
Drum magazine will forever be synonymous with 1950s South Africa, the good and the bad, the beautiful and the hideous. From the vibrancy of Sophiatown and its art scene, to the struggles of forced removals and dispossession.

This is why one of the country's most celebrated living artists, Sam Nhlengethwa, was inspired to recreate Drum covers with his *The Beat of Drum* series of prints.

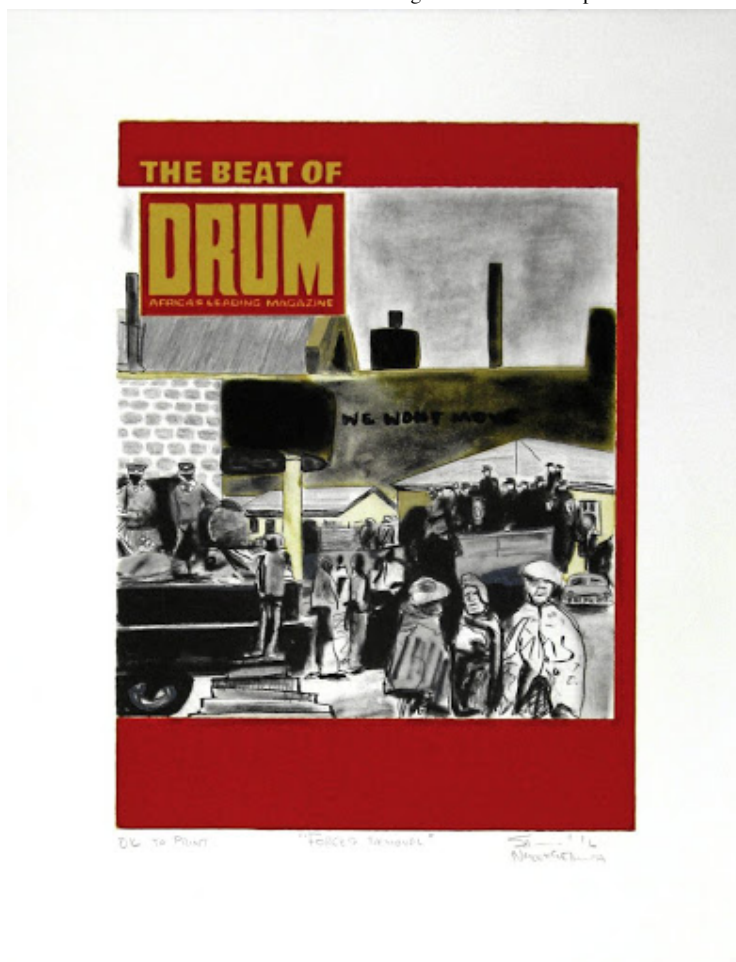
The series features five lithographs of different Drum covers: one about the original *King Kong* musical; the famous Makeba cover; a women's protest; forced removals and another of Steve "Kalamazoo" Mokone, the first black South African footballer to play soccer in Europe.

Nhlengethwa says the theme that inspired the covers was to show South Africa's past and present.

"When we were growing up, Drum was the magazine for culture, music, politics and sports. We got an education about the continent - and about us [as black people] - through Drum. So I thought, 'Let me take the nation down memory lane,'" he says.



'King Kong' by Sam Nhlengethwa.
Image: Supplied



'Forced Removal' by Sam Nhlengethwa.

Image: Supplied

Nhlengethwa praises the intelligence of the magazine back in the day, when it featured the works of some of the best writers in the country, including Henry Nxumalo and Can Themba.

The artist - who has "a hobby of collecting old things, be it vintage cars, vinyls or antique furniture" - owns some original Drum copies from the 1950s and '60s.

Nhlengethwa has also painted a portrait of Jim Bailey, the magazine's founder.

Drum's peak was during apartheid, and Nhlengethwa credits the magazine's popularity to the pride it afforded the people it wrote about, who were stripped of all dignity in apartheid-era South Africa.

"It was the voice of the voiceless majority. Drum magazine was the pride of the nation. It showed the dignity and prestige of the black masses."

- *'The Beat of Drum' prints are available from [The Artists' Press](#).*

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