

Nontokozo Tshabalala, 2021 Loeries Young Creative



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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This week we chat to Nontokozo Tshabalala, a winner of the 2021 Loeries Young Creative Award and co-founder of [Mam'Gobozi Design Factory](#).



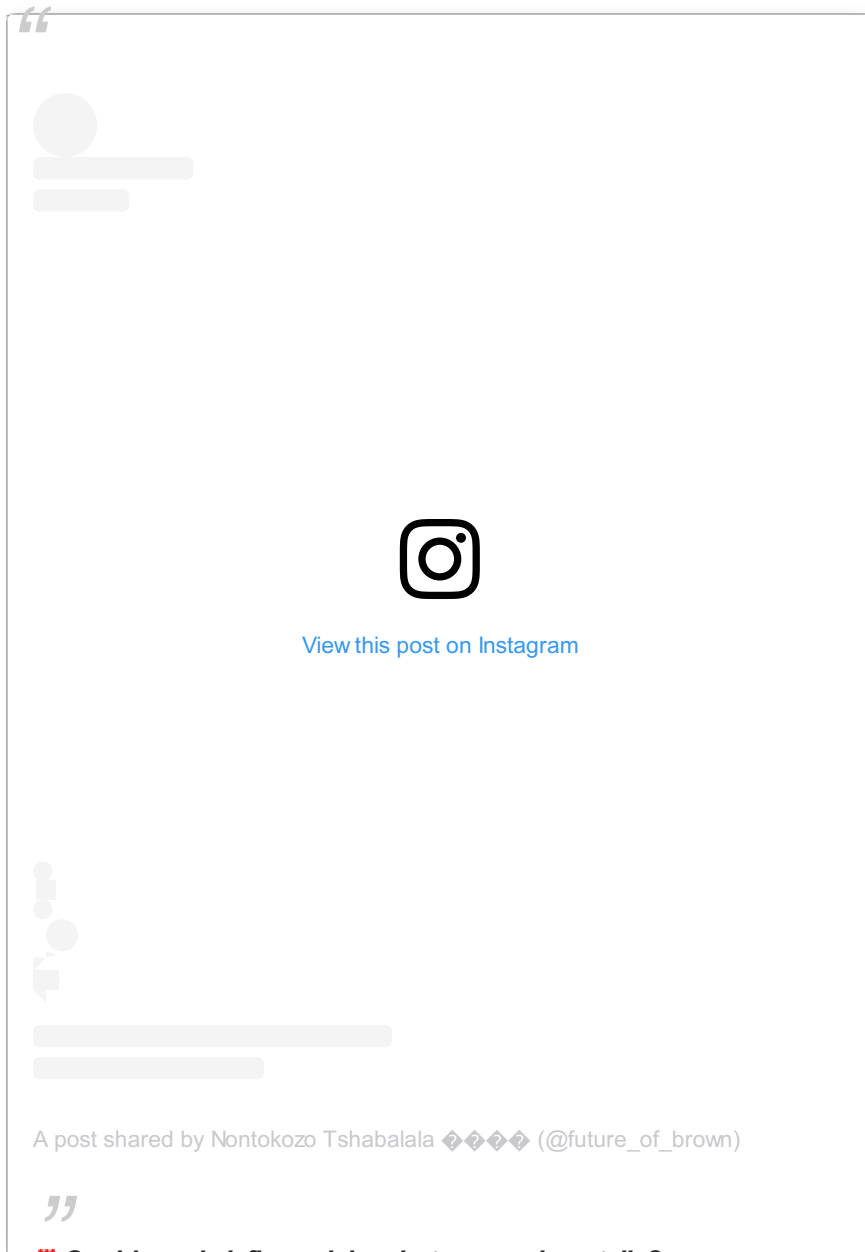
Nontokozo Tshabalala

■ You recently won 'Young Creatives Award' at Loeries 2021. Congratulations! How do you feel about being recognised as one of the top young creatives in

the brand communications industry?

Ngiyabonga kakhulu! I'm still living the glory and it's awesome! The award means a lot to me but I hope it means a lot more to a young person who's been convinced that creativity and its work is not a path to pursue. In a post I wrote, I dedicated the award to the youth of Standerton (where I was born) where our community doesn't invest in the dreams of young Black creative people. I grew up without anyone doing what I do. I hope the award will show them that they can do it.

“ Believe in your crazy dreams because they matter. You matter! ”



A post shared by Nontoko Tshabalala (future_of_brown)

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■ **Could you briefly explain what your role entails?**

I'm a multidisciplinary artist/creative and cofounder of a design studio called Mam'Gobozi Design Factory. I also work as a part-time art producer at Blå Stället, a cultural house in Gothenburg, Sweden where I'm currently based. Most times I'm illustrating, creating new projects and connecting with people. I try to create link between all the things I do all the while trying to develop our studio.

■ **What's really behind your mask - literally and figuratively speaking?**

A big smile because I'm going to have a great day today but also, someone who is ready to talk about how we can make ourselves better but also the world better from a social perspective.

■ **Growing up, what did you want to be?**

What I said: A doctor, teacher, philanthropist, fashion designer, artist, dancer, neurologist etc

What I meant: I can be anything I want to be.

I think this is evident in my career right now. I do what I enjoy and want to explore. It's a quest to constantly develop myself and not limit the things I can do.

■ ***How did you end up in the creative industry?***

When I got to matric, I knew I wanted to do something creative or something in the entertainment world. I was colourful, expressive, bold, curious and always creating something. My initial response was to study fashion design but then I ended up in graphic design because it allowed me to apply creative solutions to any problem and that meant being able to address all forms of design.

■ ***What excites you most about your career?***

Creating!!! I know why God went over the top with creating the world. It's addictive. But on the real, I love coming up with creative solutions for anything. The ideas could sound crazy but I think they aren't impossible. I also enjoy creating images and illustrations. With every task I give myself I try to see what else could be done.

■ ***What has been the highlight of your career?***

My life is full of highlights. But if I have to pick then it has to be when my nephew said he wanted to be an "artist man" or when my younger cousin decided to enroll in a graphic design course because she loves the idea of what I did. As the first graphic designer/ artist out of my family it makes me really happy and proud to hear the little ones aspire to be in creative fields.

Another was leaving advertising and realizing that I can create work that is important to me and can be done at a very low budget and acknowledge that it also matters!

■ ***When you're not busy working, what do you do?***

I love to paint, meditate, write poetry and have deep conversations with friends. I also play sports, the last being field hockey but I want to go back to boxing.

■ ***How do you socialise these days?***

Well, in Sweden, there's not much socializing anyway (jokes) but I enjoy hanging out with a group called AfroInstitution which I helped start. It is made up of AfroSwedes who gather on occasion and do things together in the effort of creating spaces of healing for young Black people in Gothenburg.

■ ***How will you be ending off 2021?***

In the arms of my love who's coming over to visit me. The rest I don't know, siyobona phambili!

■ ***What's next for you?***

At the moment, definitely resting and reflecting on the year and my journey so far. Career-wise, looking forward to doing more independent gigs, publishing some books and growing Mam'G.

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