

One Take Grace (Year of production: 2021)

Tagline:

Eclectic cinematic portrait of full-time domestic worker and part-time actor, Mothiba Grace Bapela, as she reflects on her extraordinary life, and searches for a way to break out of the societal roles cast for her.

Synopsis:

An experimental cinematic portrait of Mothiba Grace Bapela (58), South African mother, grandmother, film & television actor, and former domestic worker for over forty years. Bapela recounts and performs some of her life experiences, observing and absorbing what goes on in the intimacy of other people's homes and families - ranging from the banal to the macabre - while suppressing her own frustrated desires and trauma. Narrated by Bapela herself, it is the perspective of one who has spent the majority of her life servicing the dreams of others, attempting to use her experiences to break through to her own. Director Lindiwe Matshikiza leads a multidisciplinary creative process in producing this collaboratively-made portrait of the often precarious, sometimes miraculous position of an African female migrant worker.

Description:

The collaboration between artist, Lindiwe Matshikiza (39), and actor and community leader, Mothiba Grace Bapela (58) began with the two women meeting as actors on a local film set in 2010. Lindiwe was struck by Mme Bapela's reflections on her life, and on the conflict of needing steady – if poorly paid – domestic work, alongside the desire to break into a more satisfying though equally problematic, poorly paid and unreliable film and television industry. That first encounter started a process of collaboration lasting over a decade, with Lindiwe following Mme Bapela around - sometimes with the help of friends with equipment, sometimes alone, with whatever was on hand – recording her day-to-day life and past experiences.

Through this deeply intimate project, a portrait of both the woman and the country begins to emerge, with certain questions being asked: How are the roles of our dysfunctional society dished out? Who's doing the casting? What kind of set is this??

Length: 91mins

Teaser link:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vZoLqVsMIC3XUS2ElrrEGaOSGLzk8s6z/view?usp=sharing>

Credits:

Mothiba Grace BAPELA, Performance + Writing + Associate Producer

Lindiwe MATSHIKIZA, Direction + Writing + Producer

Khalid SHAMIS, Editing

Zen MARIE, Cinematography + Post-production

João Renato ORECCHIA ZÚÑIGA, Original Compositions + Sound Design + Final Mix

Masello MOTANA, Sepedi Language Consultant + Translations + Writing

Meghan JUDGE, Animations

Daniel Sixte KAKINDA, Original Artworks

Noluthando LOBESE, Art Direction + Costumes

Cinematography by Breeze Yoko, Lindiwe Matshikiza, Sifiso Khanyile, Mothiba Grace Bapela, Zen Marie, Mandlakazi Zilwa, Katlego Bapela, Karabo Sathekge & Nokubonga 'Mothiba' Bapela

Produced by Motherbox in association with Mothiba Grace Bapela

Stills Images and audio-visual systems by fierce not shady

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Some artist bios:

Motherbox is an artist-led, non-profit organisation that initiates, supports and produces art projects and processes. We pool our collective resources, networks and skills to realise our own work and the work of those in our communities across many kinds of artistic practice and research. We use our imaginative and practical training in the arts to operate as a decentralised arts organisation, developing creative strategies on a project-to-project basis. Many of the projects with Motherbox aligns and invests in have long-term visions. We are interested in creative process that is non-hierarchical, organic and that engages holistically with the various challenges that the artists involved confront. While working, we are simultaneously researching, reflecting and writing about the processes themselves.

Mothiba Grace Bapela began her working life at the age of 14, leaving her home in Ga Mothapo, Limpopo to find work in Johannesburg in the early 1980s. For thirty years she worked as a domestic worker and nanny, caring for families in Johannesburg, Cape Town and in the USA, whilst being a mother and grandmother to her own children. In the early

2000s, seeking escape from this kind of work and better financial conditions, she began working simultaneously as a part-time actor in the South African film and television industry. She has appeared on prominent local productions such as *Muvhango*, *Rhythm City*, *90 Plein Street*, *Sokhulu & Partners* and *The Coconuts*, and in films such as *Mrs Right Guy* and *State of Violence*. Mme Bapela has since returned to her home in Ga Mothapo, where she is building her community wellness programme and centre, **Legae lelebotse la kgothatso ya Cancer**: <https://www.backabuddy.co.za/champion/project/lilya-fundraiser>

Lindiwe Matshikiza is a multidirectional artist with a background in theatre-making and a special focus on performance, writing and directing. Her projects are largely process-driven, collaborative and often take on more than one form over time, and she has worked with a wide range of artists across various kinds of practice in Africa and the rest of the world. In recent years, Lindiwe has been a fellow of The Camargo Foundation (France), Vila Sul (Brazil) and Institute for Creative Arts (SA). She is co-founder and co-director of Motherbox, together with artists, **João Renato Orecchia Zúñiga** and **Mmakgosi Kgabi**.

Masello Motana is a multi-lingual and multi-disciplinary performing artist whose practice includes acting, public protest theatre, heritage and vocal performance. She is the creator of The Vocal Museum Show in which she performs as a storyteller and lead singer. She has a wide experience across various mediums and is mostly known to the South African film and television audience for her various roles such as in the box office hit *Matwetwe*, *A Million Colours* and the 2020 telenovela hit, *Lithapo*. She has worked with directors such as Jahmil Qubeka, Pascale Lamsche, Rehad Desai and Kagiso Lediga. She also works on productions as a language coach, translator, language and aesthetics consultant under the Language Lab of her company The Vocal Museum.

Zen Marie (b. 1980, Durban) is an artist and educator working at the intersection of lens-based media, social practice and installation. Zen holds an MA in Cultural Analysis from the University of Amsterdam and is a graduate of the two-year residency program at De Ateliers in Amsterdam. Through a practice which spans film, photography, performance, drawing and writing, he investigates the relationships between power and place, and medium and meaning. His current and recent projects propose decolonial re-readings of the narratives that become entangled with nature via conquest and representation. The ocean recurs in his work as a site where the personal, the political and the social are refracted through the experience of the sublime. His current research extends this interest in the politics of the sublime to landscape. Zen's studio practice is complemented by his position as a lecturer in Fine Art at the Wits School of Arts in Johannesburg, where he is also engaged in research towards a practice-led PhD.

João Renato Orecchia Zúñiga is an artist, composer and maker of physical and virtual “things” that play with reality by deconstructing it, shifting expectations of standard uses or purposes of objects and processes. Through experimentation and improvisation Orecchia explores sound’s connective capacities through both its physical properties and material preconscious properties, seeking a balance between computer technology, field recordings and traditional musical instruments. Orecchia’s background as a self-taught musician is in improvised performance and composition for video art, film and theatre. His practice extends to public performance and intervention and the completion of a master’s degree in

Digital Arts brought a shift towards a more spatial and physical approach to composition, where sound, vibration, space, music and audience become connected in experience. Orecchia participates in gallery and museum exhibitions with installation, video, drawing and printmaking, and has received a South African Film & Television Award for sound design and has published in the Leonardo Music Journal and the Oxford Handbook of Sound Studies.

Khalid Shamis: Half Libyan, half South African, former Londoner. Khalid manages to both direct and edit documentaries, although at vastly different paces. His own films have taken up to 7 years to finish whereas he constructs and completes numerous films a year as an editor. This becomes a strange place of guiding first-time filmmakers, directing directors, imbibing worlds alien to his, containing and creating another's vision, manifesting the dreams of the subjects in the films and being taken by the voice of the material itself. Khalid has worked with some of the leading filmmakers in South Africa and has gathered a few awards along the way.

Noluthando Lobese – Armed with a fashion design background and mentored into maturity by set designer Nadya Cohen, Noluthando is an award-winning stage and costume designer, and prolific art director in the South African Film and television industry. She has travelled the world with her theatre designs under a range of directors. As an installation artist she uses found materials to transform environments. Her primary medium is thread, fabric, plastic - any materials that can be distorted in order to take new form.

Meghan Judge is an artist, researcher and organiser who works with animation, sound and social narratives. Her works generally experiment with time and often condense into moods and atmospheres that are affected by and speak to the material world. Compositionally, she is interested in how multiples come together, how difference is contained and the importance of sound in relation to this. She has taken part in and organised artistic exchange experiments, both as participating artist and as curator/organiser. These include ongoing activity in the Africa|Nosy Art Exchange that finds connectivity (despite border constraints) and generates actions amongst artists in Southern/Eastern Africa and the Indian Ocean. She is a PhD Fellow in the Oceanic Humanities for the Global South project at WISER, Wits University.