

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](#).



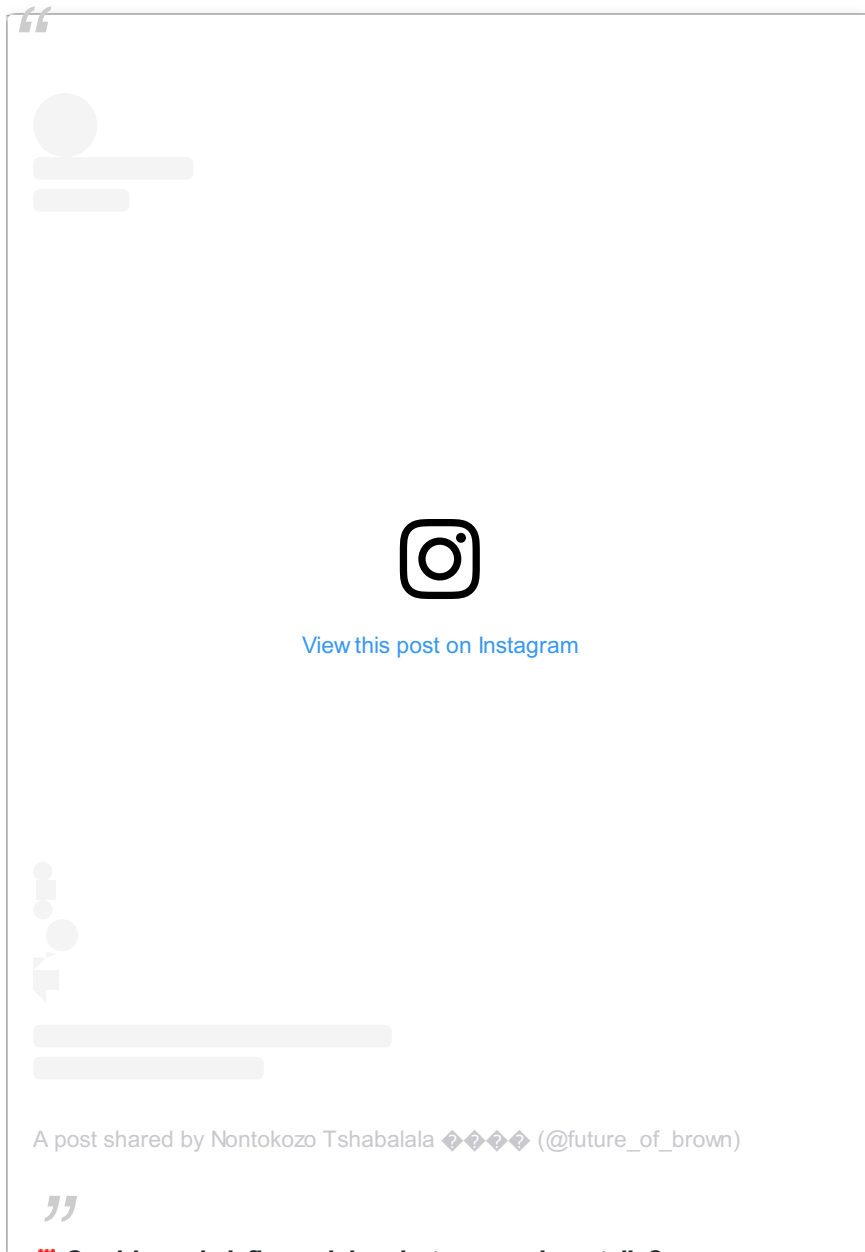
Nontokozo Tshabalala

 ***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 Nontokozi 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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