

A VISUAL GUIDE TO

# SIMPHIWE NDZUBE

## ORACLES OF THE PINK UNIVERSE

There are a few symbolic visual elements that Simphiwe Ndzube repeats throughout his work. Use this guide to help make sense of them for yourself.

June 13 – October 10, 2021





**"[LIFE IS] FULL OF COLOR, IT'S FULL OF TEXTURE, IT'S FULL OF NAUGHTY MOMENTS . . .**

**IT'S ALSO FULL OF SO MANY MYSTERIES.**

**THERE ARE DIMENSIONS THAT WE ARE NOT PAYING ATTENTION TO . . .**

**MY WORK EXISTS BOTH IN A PHYSICAL [AND] INTELLECTUAL REALM,**

**BUT ALSO THERE'S THE UNCANNY, MAGICAL, INACCESSIBLE ELEMENT OF EXPLORATION."**

**SIMPHIWE NDZUBE**

## HANDS AND EYES

Ndzube incorporates collaged photos of his own hands and eyes (and sometimes his friends' eyes) into many of his figures and creatures. Not only do these components ground the viewer in reality in this fantastical world, but they also signal the creator's literal presence. Note the particular hand gestures. They seem to reveal a language that Ndzube invented for his universe.



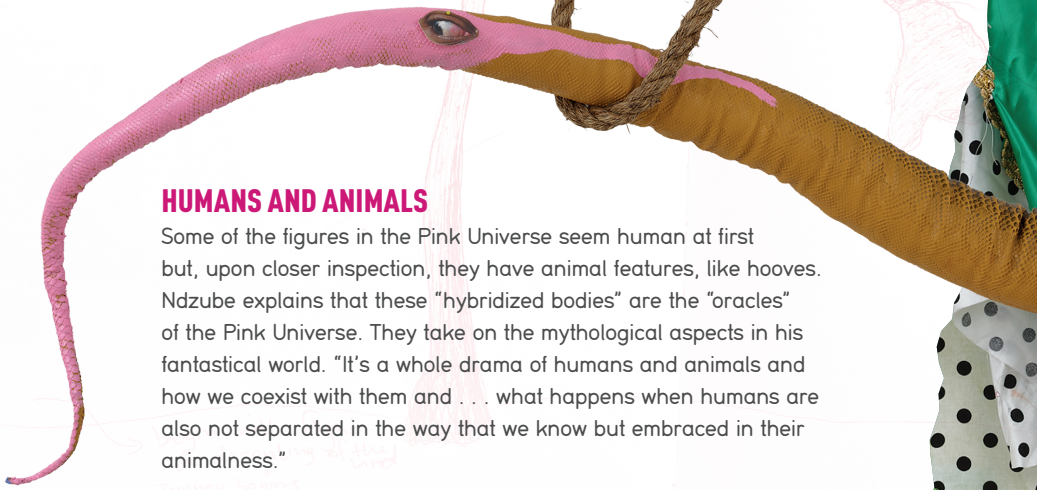


## CLOTHING

Ndzube collects secondhand clothing and stitches it onto his artworks. The pieces he chooses are reminders of actual people that were part of his upbringing: "They are like my uncles. . . . They are that gentleman singing. . . . It's a way of collecting all of these memories into imagined, fantastical worlds."



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## HUMANS AND ANIMALS

Some of the figures in the Pink Universe seem human at first but, upon closer inspection, they have animal features, like hooves. Ndzube explains that these “hybridized bodies” are the “oracles” of the Pink Universe. They take on the mythological aspects in his fantastical world. “It’s a whole drama of humans and animals and how we coexist with them and . . . what happens when humans are also not separated in the way that we know but embraced in their animalness.”





## WATER AND LIQUIDS

Rivers are abundant in the Pink Universe. The water, blue and dynamic with patterned duct tape, gives the landscapes life and flows through many of his paintings. Often, plants grow directly out of it. But you will also see flowing liquids of fiery orange, indicating that death and evil are present as well.

## CLOUDS

Skies in the Pink Universe are full of brown-gold dripping clouds, which Ndzube says "have lives of their own. . . . They are bodily. They are bruised, abused, and they are in pain. But also they are giving. They are full of life."





## BOSCH

Hieronymus Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights* was Ndzube's main inspiration for this exhibition.

"Oracles of the Pink Universe [draws] from certain elements of Bosch's work like the bodily morphed architectural structures, the alchemical, and the theatricality of human existence."

Ndzube borrowed the blue spiky object in the wheelbarrow in his painting *Dondolo, the Witch Doctor's Assistant* directly from the upper right portion of Bosch's central panel. Ndzube collects existing references to transform the familiar into the fantastical, and to give new meanings to his creations.

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