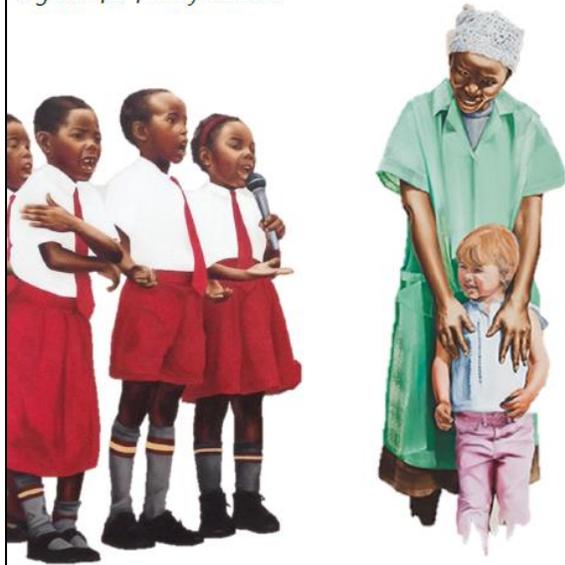


*Pax Kaffraria* by Meleko Magkosi and  
From The Memorial Art Gallery

## A Journey through *Pax Kaffraria*

*a guide for family visitors*



← We decided to change “a guide for younger visitors” to “a guide for family visitors” when our intended audience changed from 8 to 12-year-olds in a student group to middle schoolers in a family group. However, the day-of, we did not get the group we were expecting. The kids were a lot younger. But “family visitors” still applied luckily.

← Flipping the image of the school kids singing may have been an inappropriate change (modifying Magkosi’s work too much) but we got away with it.

## About Meleko Mokgosi & His Work

You’re probably wondering what “Pax Kaffraria” is. Simply put, it is a project about the everyday life of people who live in countries in southern Africa.

- Which countries make up southern Africa?
- What do you already know about this region?
- Do you know of any movies or books about or sports teams from southern Africa?

Meleko Magkosi, the painter, grew up in Botswana and now lives in New York. His paintings are about what bothers and inspires him about his homeland.



Self-Portrait of Meleko (2016). Oil on canvas.

The everyday life of the people in these paintings may be similar or different to what you are used to.

- Do think you wear similar or different clothes? Eat similar/ different food? Live in similar/different houses? Learn similar/different things in school?

Many countries in southern Africa were European colonies only 50-60 years ago and only recently became independent. That means Meleko grew up in a country undergoing a lot of change.

- What is a colony? What is colonization?
- What do you think it would be like to grow up in a changing nation?

← This page was changed a lot after the feedback from Andrew and Marlene. There suggestions were very helpful, and we shifted focus away from the history of colonialism

## Fully Belly II

Oil and charcoal (2010-2014)  
Collection of Tracey and Phillip Riese, New York

Behind the black layer of paint, you can see a group of girls wearing school uniforms with arms crossed.

- Do you wear a uniform for your school? If so, do you like wearing uniforms?
- If you look closely, can you see the girls' faces? If so, what can you read from their expressions?
- Why do you think Meleko decided to paint the black layer?



Detail of Fully Belly II

← We decided to do Fully Belly II first and progress in the order we did since it reflected the order the museum viewers would most likely go as they progressed around the exhibit room

← We decided to refer to Meleko Magkosi as just “Meleko” to make the young audience’s relationship with him more informal and personal.

← From what I observed, the kids and their families didn’t look at this one much. Then again, they weren’t the intended audience for this pamphlet. Maybe middle schoolers would have gotten more from this piece. (At the very least, the little kids were very small and it would have been more difficult for them to see the school girls’ faces)

## Sikhuselo Sembumbulu [Bulletproof]

2010-2012, Oil and charcoal on canvas  
Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. Purchase.

The man in the chair is wearing a modern suit and a traditional-looking headdress that Meleko designed himself.

- What comes to mind when you look at the headdress?
- What does it mean to be “bulletproof”? Why do you think Meleko gave this chapter this title?
- What are the connections between the people in the paintings?



Detail of Sikhuselo Sembumbulu

← I think it was a good choice to include this piece, because the kids seemed to really like his headdress.

← One of the kids proposed that the standing man was either Egyptian or had just gotten out of the shower. Kids are hilarious.

## Graase-Mans [Frontiersman]

2010-2014. Oil and charcoal on canvas  
Courtesy of the artists and the Honor Fraser Gallery, Los Angeles



Detail of Graase-Mans

Southern Africa is a very diverse region whose people descend from native African groups, European settlers, and Indian and Indonesian too.

- *Where are the people in the painting? What are they doing?*
- *What do you think are the connections between them?*
- *Do you know what places your family is from?*

← One of the families was looking at and discussing this piece together – or rather, the mother was talked to her two little kids about it. After a few minutes, she flipped to this page of the pamphlet and read the questions only to discover these were the topics she had already talk to them about on her own. That was pretty neat!

Also, with this piece, the kids began connecting to the pictures around it all on their own, trying to make some continuity, some sort of narrative.

## Ruse of Disavowal

Oil and charcoal (2010-2013)  
Courtesy of the artist and the Honor Fraser Gallery, Los Angeles



Detail of Ruse of Disavowal

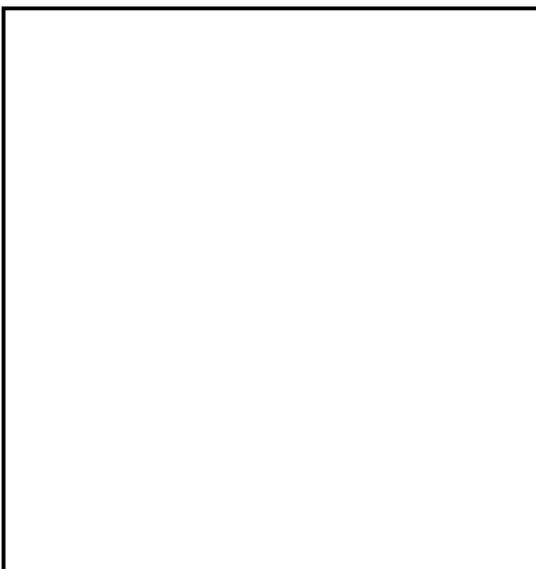
In southern Africa—like in a lot of places—some people hunt for food, others for protection, and still others for sport. The dog in this image is a Rhodesian Ridgeback, which was bred to hunt lions especially. This breed, as well as the Boerboel, were imported to the region during colonization and appear a lot in Meleko's paintings.

- *What is happening in this painting?*
- *What is the relationship between the people? Between the people and the animals?*
- *What do you think is the message of this piece?*

← During the process of making the journal, this was a difficult page to do.

Marta wanted to spell-out a moral message about how hunting is bad, but I did not want to get into any controversial moral territory. Fortunately, Andrew later pointed out that we shouldn't be spelling-out anything at all. We should be enabling the kids to have their own thoughts about it.

In the space below, please (1) Sketch your favorite painting from the exhibit, (2) Draw your own Meleko-style drawing about your own neighborhood, or (3) Write a story, poem, or song about one of the pieces.



← At one point, the purpose of this activity was for the kids to sketch one of these four paintings for later use (back when we thought we were going to do two different visiting days). But when plans changed, it became just a fun activity. However, Marta missed this notice about the change and it led to a bit of confusion and miscommunication later about the purpose of this page. Furthermore, when our audience changed to middle schoolers, we expanded the activity. I was excited to see what the kids would produce, but we ended up with very young kids on the actual family day.

#### The MAG's Five Favorite Questions

As you explore the rest of Meleko's exhibit here at the MAG, please keep these questions in mind:

1. *What do you see?*
2. *Does this remind you of anything?*
3. *What do you think is going on here?*
4. *What information would help you make better sense of it?*
5. *Who are you as a viewer? How does this influence the way you see things?*



Created by Sara Kowalski and Marta Kontny at the University of Rochester.  
Special thanks to Stella Wang and Andrew Capotta.

Front cover (left) detail from *Sikhuselo Sembumbulu*. Front cover (right) detail from *Groose-Mans*

← I immediately loved these five questions when Andrew explained them to us, and I knew I wanted to include them in the pamphlet.

← Originally, I had included all three of us (Marta, Ezra, and me). But then Marta pointed out that Ezra had done little to none of the work. Although I agreed with Marta, this was a difficult thing for me to do because I hate conflict and I like Ezra as a friend. But I suppose these issues come up, not just in group translation projects, but in any group project, both in school and the real world.

General notes about the reactions of the children and their families

- Kids apparently like to count things
- Kids know about a lot of different topics
  - o Cannibalism
  - o Primates
  - o Diabetes
  - o Rosa Parks
  - o Martin Luther King, Jr.
  - o Barak Obama
  - o Morgan Freeman
- Some kids loved the animals, as expected, but one girl loved the furniture best. To each their own I guess.
- Most of the kids commented on how realistic the paintings were
- One kid said they liked “All the different topics in the same room,” which seemed very insightful.
- One father started explaining to his son what “artistic license” is (while viewing Ruse of Disavowal). One of the girls heard this, caught on to the idea of ‘I can draw whatever I want,’ and said she was going to draw a dog with a gun (probably inspired by the elements in Ruse of Disavowal). The dog turned into a cat when she was drawing it. Kids are so innocent.