



Seeking to break albinism stereotype

EDUCATION: Some of the guests during the campaign which was aimed at raising awareness about the violation of rights of people with albinism in Johannesburg recently.

PICTURE: PHILL MAGAKOE

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PEOPLE with albinism do not only live with the condition, but also face multiple forms of discrimination because it is still profoundly misunderstood, socially and medically.

Skin Deep, a series of oil paintings by Durban-based artist Lee Scott Hempson, is a body of work that aims to tackle the stigma and ignorance around albinism and the complex issues around ritual murder and femicide.

Wednesday, June 13 was International Albinism Awareness Day and yesterday Hempson showcased her body of work at the Art Eye Gallery in New Doornfontein.

The inspiration for Hempson's ser-

ies follows the murder in Mpumalanga of a 13-year-old girl living with albinism.

Gabisile was abducted from her home with her nephew in the middle of the night. The two children were dismembered and their remains dumped in a swamp. They were abducted because Gabisile was an albino.

Hempson was particularly moved by the murders because of the treatment of people with albinism.

There is a belief in certain parts of Africa that the body parts of people with albinism have powerful spiritual energy when creating *umuthi*.

"Human sacrifice is real, it's happening and it's here," she said.

Art Eye Gallery manager Nonhlanhla Mahlangu said: "The gallery thought that this story needed to be told. We take risks in terms of what stories we wish to tell to society and what our artists work talks about.

"We are willing to take those risks and go the extra mile and say this is something that is relevant in our contemporary society and people need to be aware of it."

Skin Deep consists of two bodies of work linked to albinism, the one of *umuthi* abductions and the other of identity and albinism.

The artist painted portraits of people living with albinism and the other are a form of anonymous portraiture with a message.

The faces of a number of paintings portray faces divided into two which depict a different story in each half. This portrays dichotomy in a

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human being and the various layers of a person.

In *Pretty in Pink*, one half shows an innocent girl with a pink background with childish images of flowers and stick people to symbolise innocence.

The other half depicts the outline of a face with drawings of roads, funerals and coffins.

Hempson also wanted to project positivity in her work through portraits of young people. In a painting called *Nkanyiso*, there is a portrait of a young man with albinism standing with his fist up proudly and the insignia of a Navajo eagle behind him.

"Artists see something and I think it's a place of privilege to be able to paint someone and I believe that Nkanyiso should be a spokesperson for albinism because he is really dynamic," she said.

The Art Eye Gallery was established in 2013 by Tyrone Seimon and focuses on cultivating young emerging talent among South African artists.

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