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## GIVE IT HORNS

The first solo show by renowned South African ceramic artist Zizipho Poswa features a series of 12 breathtakingly large-scale works that explore the traditional African custom of lobola.

Ceramic artist Zizipho Poswa's large-scale sculptural works - which have long attracted strong interest from collectors around the world - explore her personal experience and heritage, and her first exhibition, "iLobola", continues this focus. The show pays homage to the spiritual offering at the heart of the ancient African custom of lobola or bride-wealth: the cow.

Whereas traditionally, the groom's family would give a certain number of cows to the bride's family after a negotiation between the two parties, more recently the animals are often replaced by a monetary payment. This has led the practice to be viewed as more commercial in nature, but this obscures the primary purpose of lobola, says Zizipho - that of *ukwakhiwa kobuhlobo*, the building of relations between the two families.

this perception, choosing to celebrate both strength and sensuality in her work. The 12 sculptures in "iLobola" reach up to two metres high - her biggest yet - and each sports a pair of massive bronze horns. Asked about the scale of these epic pieces, she says, "I really enjoy going big: the kiln size is usually the limit, but my team and I have discovered creative ways to beat that."

She reveals that she works with a team of two production assistants, who are "highly skilled in all my production processes", she says. "Production happens in stages: the 'iLobola' series forms are coiled from the base to the top. After completing the forms, they dry for six weeks. Then they go through two firing processes; the first is bisque firing, then there is the glaze firing. It took four months to complete 12 pieces, including the production of their bronze horns."



THE SCULPTURES IN "ILOBOLA" REACH UP TO TWO METRES HIGH.



"During the negotiation process, the families really get to know one another," she says. "They talk about what bonds the couple together and even identify potential pitfalls to the marriage. When the couple faces problems down the line, they have this safety net to turn to. I think it's a really beautiful structure that brings stability."

Lobola also raises questions that it disempowers and objectifies women, but Zizipho unapologetically overrides

The groundbreaking series straddles figuration and abstraction, employing an intuitive vocabulary of shape, colour and texture. Zizipho's artistic practice explores many aspects of black female identity in South Africa: she pays homage to mothers and the importance of sisterhood, and celebrates cultural spaces such as hair salons, where Western influence has remained at bay. "iLobola" is on at Southern Guild until 1 July. [southernguild.co.za](http://southernguild.co.za) | c [zizipo\\_poswa](http://zizipo_poswa)

PHOTOS: CHRISTOF VAN DER WALT/SOUTHERN GUILD  
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