

## PARTING SHOT

## THE ARTIST:

Maurice Hermes Mbikayi

## THE PERFORMANCE:

Voices

**I**S THIS where Maurice works?" I ask the security guard. I'm in an alley just off Roeland Street, a stone's throw from parliament and its earnest activities. "Who?" "The Congolese artist." "Oh, the tall guy — over there." He points me to a doorway. As I approach, Maurice Mbikayi, tall, lean, dressed in denim, not bandages, emerges.

Where did he get the idea to ride a horse wearing only bandages, I ask the Kinshasa-born artist when we reach his studio, an artfully messy former admin space marked by the scent of Brut deodorant.

"I always wanted to ride a horse, since I was little," he responds in his best Francophone English. A call for entries for the 2010 Spier Contemporary, a pan-South African art exhibition currently on at Cape Town's refurbished city hall, prompted him to devise this elaborate performance. The exhibition includes a film of Mbikayi riding a horse wearing his mummy suit, and a series of real-life public performances.

This public show, which happens this weekend and again in two weeks' time, is the outcome of a workshop Mbikayi attended last August, led by



performance doyen Professor Jay Pather. Mbikayi told his mentor that he wanted to "emotionally engage with the public" while riding a horse. Pather, an associate professor at the University of Cape Town, sagely nodded his head and helped Mbikayi

think through his idea. Horse-riding lessons weren't part of the deal.

"The idea of the public performance was of someone coming from the past with wounds, which is why I used the bandages," says Mbikayi.

"The horse is an image of strength

and confidence." It is very different from the abstract paintings on the wall, I offer.

"They are what I do for a living," he responds. "When I came to South Africa, I wanted to learn something more — new media, film, video. I

always wanted to do it. If you ask me what I like to do, I love to paint and sculpt. But I came to realise in contemporary art you have to come up with something new. For me it is about doing that, going into this new field and taking the risks."— Sean O'Toole