



MANCHESTER  
**OPEN**  
EXHIBITION  
**2022**  
HOME



**MAKE PACK** by mandla rae



### mandla rae

My name is mandla and I'm frequently writing or performing but sometimes I get to curate an exhibition or a showcase of performances or film, or I facilitate a workshop.

I do not really know how to describe what I do, but I guess if I had to choose one word for it, the word would be 'artist'. I always use words in my art, whether it's a poem, a film, a play, I'm ultimately always just messing around with words. They are my first love.

#### My creative process

I make work that is generally about myself, my experiences and my responses to the world around me. I ask questions, even if I can't find an exact answer, the journey is always full of interesting stories or ideas. I use myself as a sounding board to try and bounce off the rest of the world, I am an intersectional being and existence is always a bit tricky. Sometimes the work is very obviously about me, sometimes the work isn't so obviously biographical, but I believe poetry always comes from within.

Everywhere I look, I find a story to be told. Stories are everywhere. My performative lecture "Category Mistake" was born out of a line I wrote in a poem called "Good Black Womxn" six months after I finished the poem. It was a comment about how there are no words to describe queerness in my first language. At the time, I just accepted this as a fact without questioning it. Then I started to wonder why, queer people have always existed in Zimbabwe so how are we at the furthest point in history and I have to use my colonisers language to talk about who I am. So I went on a hunt for the words, instead of just accepting the fact that they don't exist.



"When I finished my English Literature and Creative Writing degree, I noticed that all the creative writing I had done in those three years was all in English.

I asked myself why? English is my second language so why are all the words I write and read only in English?

I've been trying to deconstruct language ever since and create space for my mother tongue in my work, often without translation because I like to think that some performances will have some people who can speak the language I speak, and they will understand what I'm saying, and they'll get their own extra performance."

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## Creative prompts

Work for ten minutes on each prompt.

Responses can be poetry, reflective non-fiction or, short stories.

- Remember something someone you love has said to you. It can be a friend, a partner, a grandchild. It can be a throwaway comment, it can be a lesson they taught you, or a compliment they paid you. Maybe it was something they did for you instead of what they said? Tell me the story of why they said what they did or did what they did. How did you feel? What were they wearing? Where were you? Tell me everything.
- Our surroundings shape us, mould us, inspire us and our human sensors help us understand, connect and create. I want you to think of a colour and pair it with a smell and a taste. These could be familiar to you or maybe it's something you've never tasted, maybe it's something you've been curious about or longing for?
- What do you need to say? List as many things as necessary. Who are you saying each thing on the list to? Why haven't you said these things out loud?
- Where do you get your strength from? What have you overcome and how did you do so?
- What do you remember about how the world has changed? How has your world changed and why? This could be within the past 6 months, year, five years, ten years or more!
- What is love? What isn't love?
- Write about a secret you had to keep. Did you keep it? Did you tell? Why is/was it a secret?
- Do you have a message for the world? What is it? Why this message?
- Write about your rituals / the tasks we perform repeatedly. Not for what they accomplish but for what they mean to us.

"My ideas often start with me alone in a room with my journal and my pen.

Sometimes it's a daydream, or something someone said to me that I can't get out of my head. Or, maybe it's something I said."

## Self-care

A lot of people talk about considering the audience a lot when making work or, will feel like a piece is too self-indulgent to be shared with audiences.

I think particularly as Trans, Black or Queer people, we have every right to be self-indulgent in our creativity and make things that are simply for ourselves, for our eyes only.

I will consider the safety of my audiences when making work that's about trauma – I wouldn't want to put people who have been through similar traumas as me in a position where they are reliving it so I choose my words carefully, this is also in order to protect myself from performing words that re-traumatise me over and over again. This was the case in my solo show "as british as a watermelon" where I explore various traumas I've experienced in my personal history.

I think self-care is vital in making work as a marginalised person, my entire lifestyle is built around caring for myself and so is my work.

"Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare."

– Audre Lorde.