

# What do you see?

*O que vê?*

**MATAMBA KOMBILA**

Independent Filmmaker

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I am the offspring of parents who originate from the coloniser's land and the colonised one. I am generally well integrated on the colonised land, yet often perceived as "white". On the coloniser's land, I am othered. Therefore, when the discussion about gaze arises, I often wonder where mine stands. I don't have an answer to that. But I believe that my film work speaks to the questioning, so I submitted myself to an exercise. I selected excerpts of my films that are emblematic of my work, hoping that analysing them would provide an answer.





My work tells me stories of unity, division, beauty, exile, resilience, tradition, future, hope, roots, freedom, love, exploitation, abuse, and sweet childhood.

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- 1 "A Walk in Beauty" | ©DougantsiFilms.
  - 2 "Legacy by Studio189" | ©studio189.
  - 3 "Mundele" | ©DougantsiFilms.



When I started looking into the visual commonality between all of these images, and by extension of all of my films, I noticed the omnipresence of skies, suns, grass, leaves, trees, plants, flowers, sea, rivers... As well as the presence on my sets of variations on natural elements, such as wood boards, fabrics with organic patterns, in street art, interiors designs, etc. I noticed that I often place my protagonist against said elements when I shoot them close up. Now, this brings me back to my gaze. I grew up in Gabon and frequently went to France to visit my mother's side of the family. Then, I often felt like an outsider, not fitting any established box. Neither black nor white, I was a special breed. It seemed most difficult to comprehend how to relate to me. Therefore, and by default, nature became my safe space because we were always physically close. She was never judgmental and always inspiring. I spent much time with her and learned a lot from her. I now realise that she has become my co-creator. She is my space of attunement.

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1 "EMO" | ©DougantsiFilms.

2 "Legacy by Studio189" | ©studio189.

3 "Mundele" | ©DougantsiFilms.



Through my work, I try to elevate the viewers' consciousness and make them want to create better, more just communities.

Friends recently taught me that there is no word for nature in several African languages. It is part of the All, just like Humans, Animals, and Birds. In most European definitions, though, nature encompasses all except the Human. I envision myself as one element of the natural world, just as crucial as an elephant, a tree or a rock.



Surrounding my protagonists with nature or some representation of it echoes greater forces, the spirits of our ancestors, all which exists and that we don't see. It's a reminder that we are mere humans. It urges never to forget to look within, around, and beyond; to leave prejudice and judgment behind; to surrender to the greater good.



I want to entice the viewers into the tender, loving caring beyond themselves, and understand that all that surrounds us is also an intrinsic part of us. It is us. As much as we are it. It is we.

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## Filmography

*EMO*. Matamba Kombila. Dougantsi Films, Gabon, 2021, 45 min.  
*Legacy by Studio 189*. Matamba Kombila. Studio 189, Ghana, 2020, 14 min.  
*influenceu.ses.rs*. Matamba Kombila. Holowaba Groupe, Guinea/Gabon, 2020, 28 min.  
*Mundele*. Matamba Kombila. Dougantsi Films, Congo/Gabon, 2019, 10 min.  
*Sens Dessus Dessous*. Matamba Kombila. Dougantsi Films, Gabon, 2018, 93 min.  
*DD Teddy Bear*. Matamba Kombila. MyryaM Maxo, USA, 2016, 4 min.  
*A Walk in Purpose*. Matamba Kombila. Dougantsi Films, USA, 2014, 4 min.  
*A Walk in Beauty*. Matamba Kombila. Dougantsi Films, USA, 2014, 5 min.

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## Biographical note

Matamba Kombila is an award-winning self-taught filmmaker, a conservationist, an educator and an author. At 40 in 2010, she decided to leave the fashion industry where she had always worked. She had reached a glass ceiling and wanted to push further her creative side. She decided to follow her heart and took on filmmaking. Her films aim to raise consciousness to create better, more just communities. It has been screened in festivals worldwide and broadcast on commercial television and VOD. Through her production company *Dougantsi Films*, she produces short or feature documentaries or fiction and creates commercial content for companies or institutions. Her mini TV/Web series, *Sens Dessus Dessous*, 2018, is currently in distribution, and her most recent work, the stage play “*EMO*”, 2021, is in distribution.

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