

As She Is

A Photographic Exhibition
Celebrating Women with Disabilities



Exhibition Portfolio
6 – 29 August 2026



Western Cape Chapter



in collaboration with

**THE ARTISTS
GALLERY**

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Model: **Amanda Matthee**
Photographer: Jeffery Abrahams
Disability: Blind



Amanda Matthee is a South African storyteller, poet, activist, and broadcasting practitioner whose life is defined by resilience, purpose, and unwavering faith. After losing her sight at the age of five, she overcame significant challenges, including two brain tumor operations, before matriculating from Athlone School for the Blind. With numerous qualifications and extensive experience in public relations, Amanda has served in leadership roles within the South African National Council for the Blind and the Winelands Toastmasters club. Passionate about justice and positive change, she uses her voice to inspire, advocate, and empower others, building a legacy of courage, determination, and hope.

Model: **Charné Hugo**

Photographer: Josie Boraine

Disability: Paraplegic



Charne Hugo is a South African singer whose life is defined by determination, resilience, and hope. A paraplegic since infancy following heart surgery, she has never allowed her disability to limit her ambitions. Music is her greatest passion, and performing at venues such as Artscape gives her a sense of freedom where only her voice takes centre stage. Charne dreams of inspiring others to believe that no obstacle is too great to overcome. Through her journey, she hopes to show that a wheelchair is simply one part of her story, and that with courage, perseverance, and self-belief, anything is possible.

Model: **Daneline Swarts**

Photographer: Max Bosanquet

Disability: Deaf



Daneline Swarts is a devoted wife, mother, and community member whose life reflects resilience, compassion, and service. She lost her hearing at the age of ten after contracting meningitis and has been part of the Deaf community for more than four decades. Married to her husband, whom she met at Nuwe Hoop Centre for the Deaf in Worcester, they have been blessed with one son. Daneline enjoys hairdressing in her spare time and serves as a treasurer at Lief en Leed. She dreams of seeing its Centre of Excellence completed, creating a safe, supportive home for persons with disabilities.

Model: **Dineo Masilo**
Photographer: Sapho Wulana
Disability: Above knee amputee



Dineo Masilo is a resilient woman from Thaba Nchu in the Free State. In November 2024, her life changed forever when a tragic accident claimed her leg and, most heartbreakingly, the life of her beloved daughter. Despite immense physical, emotional, and psychological challenges, she refused to let tragedy define her. Determined to regain her independence, Dineo taught herself to navigate everyday life again, discovering remarkable strength through perseverance. Every milestone became proof that resilience can emerge even from life's deepest adversity.

Today, she serves her community as a member of the Barolong boo Seleka Tribal Council and leads an initiative promoting indigenous games that foster unity, wellness, and cultural pride. She also provides soup to people living on the streets, believing that compassion can restore hope.

Dineo's journey is one of courage, faith, and purpose. She inspires others by showing that even after profound loss, it is possible to rebuild a meaningful life. Her guiding belief remains: "My pain became my purpose. Every time life knocked me down, I rose stronger, wiser, and more determined to make a difference."

Model: **Hanlie Stehli**
Photographer: Josie Boraine
Disability: Blind



Hanlie Stehli is a passionate South African vocalist whose heartfelt performances reflect her warmth, authenticity, and unwavering faith. Born with Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP), she gradually lost the limited vision she had and became completely visually impaired by the age of thirteen.

Despite this, Hanlie pursued her lifelong dream of music, releasing her debut album, *Sunset Cruise*, in 2018. Its original songs draw inspiration from her personal journey, faith, and love of nature.

Committed to serving others, Hanlie performs at fundraising events and initiatives supporting people with disabilities. Through her music and life, she inspires others to embrace every challenge with courage, gratitude, hope, and resilience.

Model: **Keisha Johnson**
Photographer: Radcliffe Roelse
Disability: Spastic Diplegia



Keisha Johnson is a model, academic, athlete, and business owner who is passionate about people and embraces every opportunity to inspire others. While her journey of living with a disability has not always been easy, she believes it has shaped the person she is today.

Participating in the Bold Beauty Project became a meaningful step in her journey of self-acceptance. For the first time, she posed confidently with her crutch, overcoming vulnerability with the support of the team around her.

Surrounded by remarkable women, Keisha found renewed confidence, purpose, and hope, believing that this is only the beginning of what is possible.

Model: **Laura Wagner**
Photographer: Karina Turok
Disability: "Little person" - uses crutches



Laura Wagner-Meyer is a South African fashion designer, model, content creator, motivational speaker, and disability advocate dedicated to redefining beauty and inclusivity. Born with a congenital neural tube defect, she has transformed personal challenges into a platform for empowering others through creativity and authentic representation. Passionate about diversity in the fashion industry, Laura uses her work to celebrate individuality and challenge perceptions of disability. Her journey has been featured in leading local and international publications, and she has collaborated with globally recognised brands. Through her advocacy, Laura inspires others to embrace their uniqueness with confidence, pride, and purpose.

Model: **Marlene le Roux I**
Photographer: Karina Turok
Disability: Post Polio - wears a Leg Caliper



Marlene le Roux is a renowned South African cultural leader, disability rights advocate, author, and Chief Executive Officer of Artscape Theatre Centre. As the first woman, first person with a disability, and first person of colour to lead the institution, she has championed accessibility, inclusion, and social justice through the arts. A passionate advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities and the LGBTQI+ community, she has transformed Artscape into a more inclusive space while leading numerous national and international initiatives. Her lifelong commitment to empowering others has earned her multiple honorary doctorates and prestigious awards. Through her leadership, writing, and advocacy, Marlene continues to inspire meaningful social change through the transformative power of the arts.

Model: **Marlene le Roux II**
Photographer: Jeffery Abrahams
Disability: Post Polio - wears a Leg Caliper



Marlene le Roux is a renowned South African cultural leader, disability rights advocate, author, and Chief Executive Officer of Artscape Theatre Centre. As the first woman, first person with a disability, and first person of colour to lead the institution, she has championed accessibility, inclusion, and social justice through the arts. A passionate advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities and the LGBTQI+ community, she has transformed Artscape into a more inclusive space while leading numerous national and international initiatives. Her lifelong commitment to empowering others has earned her multiple honorary doctorates and prestigious awards. Through her leadership, writing, and advocacy, Marlene continues to inspire meaningful social change through the transformative power of the arts.

Model: **Michelle Botha**
Photographer: Ian Landsberg
Disability: Blind



Michelle Botha was diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa, a condition causing progressive sight loss, during childhood. Encouraged by supportive parents, she embraced her talents, curiosity, and identity as a visually impaired person. Her love of learning led to a PhD in Disability Studies from the University of Cape Town in 2021. Today, she is a Senior Lecturer in the Division of Disability and Rehabilitation Studies at Stellenbosch University, where she is committed to reshaping perceptions of disability through education and advocacy. A proud guide dog owner, she shares life with her Labrador, Elva, while cherishing her roles as a daughter, sister, godmother, and fiancée.

Model: **Nadine McKenzie**

Photographer: Max Bosanquet

Disability: Paraplegic



Nadine McKenzie is a South African performing artist, cultural leader, mother, and disability advocate who believes in the power of visibility, authentic representation, and human connection. As Artistic Director and co-founder of Unmute Dance Company, she has pioneered inclusive dance and championed accessibility through performance, education, and cultural leadership. A wheelchair user, Nadine's journey has taught her that true strength lies in embracing oneself fully. She is passionate about creating spaces where people of all abilities experience belonging, creativity, and joy. Through her work, she continues to inspire others to celebrate diversity, resilience, and self-acceptance.

Model: **Natacha Williams**
Photographer: Radcliffe Roelse
Disability: Acute Spinal Cord Injury



Natacha Williams is a South African human rights and heritage activist, social media influencer, author, and founder of the KeepingUpWithNatacha Fund NPC. Passionate about uplifting others, she has dedicated her life to creating hope, inspiring resilience, and serving her community. Her memoir, *Imperfectly Perfect*, reflects her belief that strength is found in vulnerability and authenticity. Proudly describing herself as an "Imperfectly Perfect Warrior Woman," Natacha courageously shares her personal journey to encourage others facing adversity. Through her advocacy, compassion, and unwavering determination, she continues to use her voice to empower others and promote dignity, inclusion, and positive social change.

Model: **Nikita Scott**
Photographer: Max Bosanquet
Disability: Neurological Functional Disorder



Nikita Ashleen Scott is a South African singer, community leader, and disability advocate from Atlantis. Following a life-changing car accident in 2019 that left her a wheelchair user, she transformed adversity into purpose by inspiring others through music, advocacy, and service. As CEO of Born to Shine – Just Me on Wheels, she champions inclusion and empowers people with disabilities while also running a community soup kitchen and a home of safety for vulnerable children. An international pageant titleholder and award-winning performer, Nikita continues to use her voice to promote hope, resilience, and the belief that every person is born to shine.

Model: **Nolonwabo Shumane**

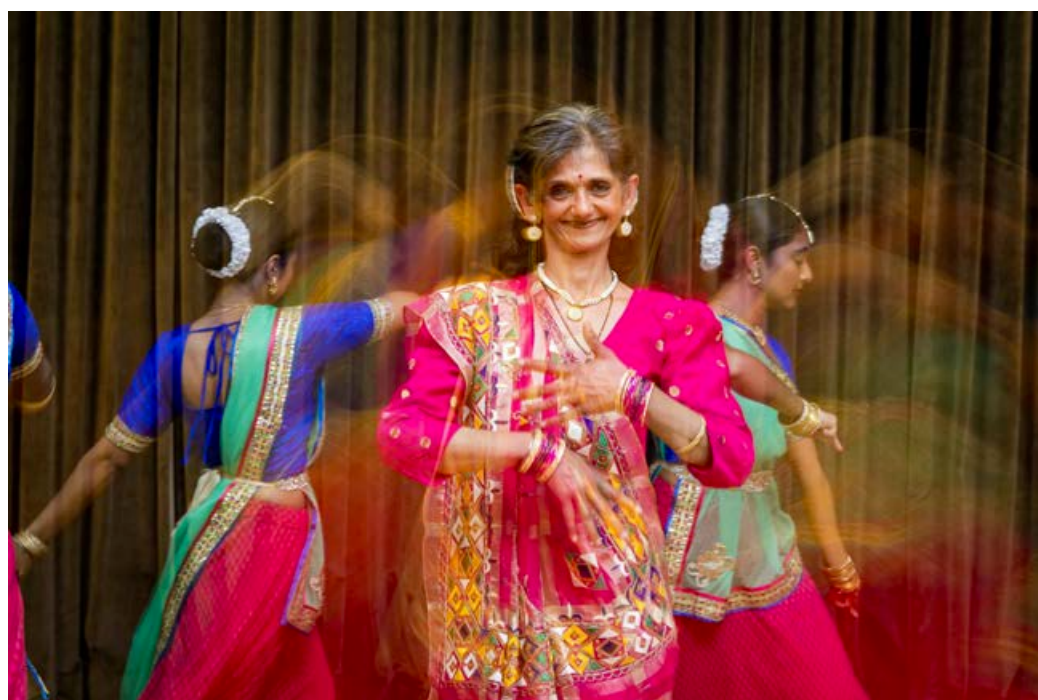
Photographer: Natalie Gabriels

Disability: Quadriplegic



Nonkoliseko Nolonwabo Ngqola Shumane is a devoted wife, stay-at-home mother, and proud parent of three beautiful daughters. A warm, people-centred individual, she treasures her family above all else. She enjoys reading, cooking, and spending quality time shopping with her daughters. Through her own journey, she hopes to inspire others by sharing her experiences of transitioning from being able-bodied to living with a disability while raising children with resilience and love. Her aspiration is to encourage parents living with disabilities to embrace their uniqueness, remain confident, and celebrate life every day.

Model: **Rita Magan**
Photographer: Natalie Gabriels
Disability: Deaf



Rita Magan is a devoted wife, mother, and proud member of South Africa's Deaf community. She became deaf at the age of one and a half after developing meningitis and attended V.N. Naik School for the Deaf. Rita is married to her husband, who is also deaf, and together they have two hearing children, Sumita and Ravi, who lovingly help interpret for them. Family is at the heart of Rita's life, and she treasures every opportunity to spend time with her loved ones. Her story reflects resilience, love, and the importance of connection despite the challenges of distance and communication.

Model: **Samantha Muller**
Photographer: Ian Landsberg
Disability: Muscular Dystrophy



Samantha Lisle Muller is a passionate advocate for people living with muscular dystrophy and neuromuscular disorders. Born with congenital myopathy, a rare genetic condition causing progressive muscle weakness, she has transformed personal challenges into a life of service, awareness, and inclusion through her work with the Muscular Dystrophy Foundation of South Africa. She enjoys building meaningful connections, travelling, and discovering new places. Participating in the Bold Beauty Project inspired Samantha to embrace her beauty and strength with renewed confidence. Guided by her faith, she hopes her journey encourages others to feel seen, valued, and empowered to embrace their own unique stories

Model: **Shani Little**
Photographer: Natalie Gabriels
Disability: Blind



Shani Little is a resilient and inspiring South African who has embraced life with courage despite being visually impaired from birth. Determined never to let disability define her, she built a career in massage therapy, accessibility services, and psychological counselling, earning an Honours degree in Psychological Counselling in 2024. An adventurer at heart, she has enjoyed ballroom dancing, horse riding, tandem cycling, and bungee jumping. After overcoming breast cancer, Shani emerged with an even deeper appreciation for life. Guided by faith, she believes that our scars reveal our strength and hopes her journey encourages others to choose hope, courage, and light over adversity.

Model: **Tarryn Tomlinson**
Photographer: Josie Boraine
Disability: Rheumatoid Arthritis



Tarryn Tomlinson is a South African leader, advocate, and changemaker dedicated to creating a more inclusive society. As a wheelchair user living with Rheumatoid Arthritis, she has transformed personal experience into purpose, championing accessibility, universal design, and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities. Passionate about empowering communities, she believes meaningful change begins when people are placed at the heart of design and decision-making. Her lifelong appreciation for art, design, and culture, enriched by time spent living in Italy, inspires her creative perspective. Through her work, Tarryn continues to promote resilience, dignity, belonging, and opportunities that enable everyone to thrive.