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Mthimkulu we mpilo (2023)

Cleared exotic gum tree trunks, recycled steel.

Mthimkulu we mpilo is the conceptual depiction of a phylogenetic tree of life.

This structure speaks of the evolution of organisms and life and their continuing dependence on one another rather than slavishly reproducing a scientifically accurate example of a phylogenetic diagram. It is a loose visual representation of the evolutionary relationships among species.

In a traditional tree and branch structure the branches separate out and do not meet up again (bifurcating tree). In reality most organism "kingdoms" are reticulate

(net-like), integrated and exist together. Bacteria exist in our guts and enable animals to digest food. Mycelium and Fungi connect plant life and are even said to aid plants communicate. The structure of this tree is such that it builds up and out like a traditional tree but in the stacked construction the many kingdoms and species become layers supporting each other with the most 'evolved' species being the most vulnerable. Remove a trunk and the whole structure becomes unstable.

Complex co-existences are required for a sustainable planet.

Constructed from cleared exotic tree trunks and recycled steel elements, the cleared tree trunks, once invasive species, now take on a new life as they form the new structure. Recycled steel elements, fixed and embedded into the logs suggest the textures of various living organisms.

The sculpture pays homage to the interconnectedness of all life, inviting viewers to ponder the wonders of biodiversity and evolution.