

Arts & Culture Trust Awards



Resident luminary Dave Koloane in his studio at the Bag Factory

Realistically speaking, the market is simply not big enough.

But while the studios have experienced an uncertain destiny, they have never been in real danger of closing, thanks to a list of (mostly international) sponsors in the form of embassies and trusts, as well as individuals sponsoring studio rental costs for artists.

The project has enjoyed support for some years from the Arts & Culture Trust of the President as well as the MTN Art Institute and Business Arts South Africa among others, but realising active, visible and sustainable links between art and business is still very irregular.

As a unit, the Bag Factory houses tangible skills and services that can benefit both the professional and educational art communities at large.

The Artists' Press operates from the complex, providing professional artist's printing facilities managed by master printer Mark Atwood. Printmaker Paul Emmanuel offers design and layout services.

Koloane and Xinisteris are aware of the need to make further facilities available to the public, including a planned photographic darkroom that could begin to generate revenue while filling a huge need for the artists who work there.

A "free space" is under construction, to be used for workshops, seminars and events by both Bag Factory stakeholders and members of the public, taking this pressure off the gallery area to establish a full-time exhibitions programme.

With the residual insecurities around space and access created by old political and ideological structures still a reality, the establishment of the Bag Factory counteracts this. Attention is finally being paid to the protracted Newtown regeneration project. Koloane is convinced that the role of the Bag Factory is becoming increasingly more important, offering guidance and nuts-and-bolts advice to other initiatives like Cross Path Culture.

"Our presence here, and that we have been here for so long, is significant for that very reason. It's about foresight, being located in this precinct."

An exhibition by resident Canadian performance artist Mara Verna, who also features prominently on the Joubert Park Public Art Project, opens on Wednesday October 17 at 6pm. In the next few weeks Magdalene Odundo (Kenya/UK), Marie-Angie Bordas (Brazil) and Veronique Tadjio (Ivory Coast) will move in.

Putting art in the bag

Kathryn Smith

The former Speedy Bag Factory at 10 Minnaar Street, Fordsburg — a stone's throw away from the Oriental Plaza — is an art pit stop where some of South Africa's brightest art stars and guest residents from around the world are available for serious studio visits or a bit of a laugh over lunch.

And now the Fordsburg Artists' Studios, popularly known as the Bag Factory, has been awarded this year's Arts & Culture Trust Best Practice Project of the Year.

Stifling in summer and chilly in winter, with all the appropriate quirks and idiosyncrasies typical of old buildings, the Fordsburg Artists Studios, comprising 18 studios and a gallery, has managed to establish

its position as an internationally-renowned constant in a shifting cultural landscape. Other spaces in Johannesburg are floundering and are being forced to re-evaluate their operating strategies, but the Bag Factory recently turned 10.

Global networking and identifying points of creative connection and exchange across different communities define the artist's collective, which began with the activities of the Triangle Arts Trust founded by Sir Anthony Caro and Robert Loder.

Originally confined to the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada, the network, fuelled by artists' workshops and the establishing of a charitable trust in the UK, expanded to include more than 15 countries worldwide. About 1 800 artists have participated in this growing network, which now boasts three

studio facilities: the pilot Bag Factory project, London's Gasworks Studios and Greatmore Studios in Cape Town.

While South African artists are benefiting immensely from greater exposure on the global art scene, the local art scene is becoming increasingly less about paying lip service to the great secular cathedrals of art (museums and high-end galleries that are fighting for audiences) and more about engaging with street-level opportunities and artist-led support structures.

The Bag Factory is home to core resident luminaries Kay Hassan, Sam Nhlengethwa, Joachim Schonfeldt, Pat Mautloa, Ben Arnold and David Koloane. Dominic Tshabangu, Rookeya Gardee, Stephen Maqashela, Bongzi Bengu, Tamar Mason, Verna Jooste and Paul Emmanuel are currently full-time residents. Three

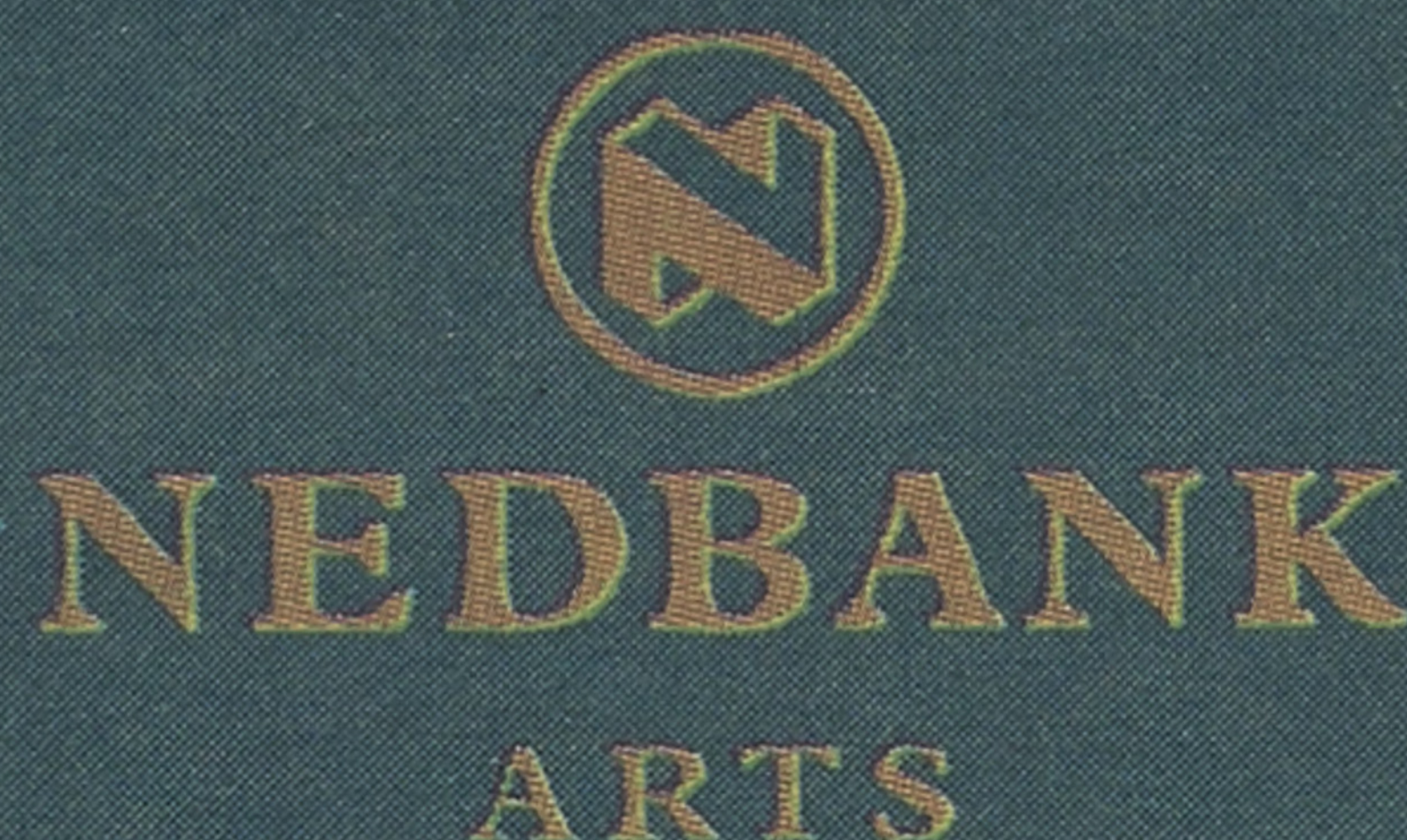
additional studios house visiting residents for a period of about three months, who are then "married" with other institutions and projects ranging from universities to community projects to facilitate workshops.

Koloane and coordinator Koulla Xinisteris are often asked whether such an initiative can be self-sustaining to the point of gathering real capital to allow them to realise plans for renovations, further facilities and so on. The answer is an emphatic "no!"

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Arts & Culture Trust Award Winners

1. **Arts Administrator of the Year:** Georgina Thomson
2. **Arts and Culture Journalist of the Year:** Mike van Graan
3. **Media in Support of the Arts:** eNews
4. **Arts and Culture Publicist of the Year:** Juan Els
5. **Cultural Development Project**

6. **International Arts Sponsor of the Year:** Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
7. **Arts & Culture Trust Best Practice Project of the Year:** Fordsburg Artists' Studios
8. **Lifetime Achievement Award:** Joyce Levinsohn

Message from the chairperson

The Arts & Culture Trust Awards recognise excellence in those strategic areas without which the arts cannot develop and thrive. All entrants and the finalists for the 2001 awards are therefore commended for their fine work and their participation. The winners, judged by an independent panel to represent the highest

levels of professionalism, dedication, leadership and achievements in their respective fields, are all warmly congratulated by the Arts & Culture Board of Trustees and our sponsors. We also thank the adjudicators for their time and expertise. — *Professor Andries Oliphant, chairperson of the Arts & Culture Trust*

Thebe Mabanga on the players who are bringing arts and culture to the fore

The veterans and the blonde date

The nominees for this year's Arts & Culture Trust Award for Arts Journalist of the Year are crusaders who have displayed enormous chutzpah to speak their minds and champion the cause of a sector that is besieged by troubles ranging from finding finance for innovative work or pulling in audiences if such works ever see the light of day.

Between them Michelle Constant, Robert Greig, Roger Lucey and Mike van Graan represent major electronic and print media outfits and cover most disciplines in arts entertainment and popular culture.

Constant is a self-confessed live-music junkie who has been in radio for most of her career. She hosts two shows on SAfm — *Saturday Wired* and *Art on the Edge* at midday on Wednesdays. Constant is also a contributing editor for men's magazine *GQ* and author of the *Blonde Date* column.

Three of the many events she has covered on *Saturday Wired* are the Pukkelpop Festival in Belgium, Arts Alive and World of Music Arts and Dance (Womad).

"At [Arts Alive and Womad] you get to see artists in a relatively intimate space," she says. "My issue with the festivals is their timing. Organisers do not talk enough."

Constant adds that publicity for Arts Alive "was appalling".

She says that when it comes to arts coverage, "there is too much content but not enough context". She emphasises that arts need to be covered in a

way that appeals to a wider audience. "My work with *GQ* has shown that there is a broader audience for music and arts in general." In this case the audience is made up of men and women who are turned on by style and sports.

The *Sunday Independent's* Robert Greig's career as an arts journalist stretches back to 1976. This was interrupted in the early 1990s by a five-year stint as a Standard Bank consultant. The post was not for the bank's arts sponsorship though — "Oh God, they would not let me touch that," he says. Greig's tenure in the world of finance ended in 1995 when he became arts editor of the newly formed *Sunday Independent*.

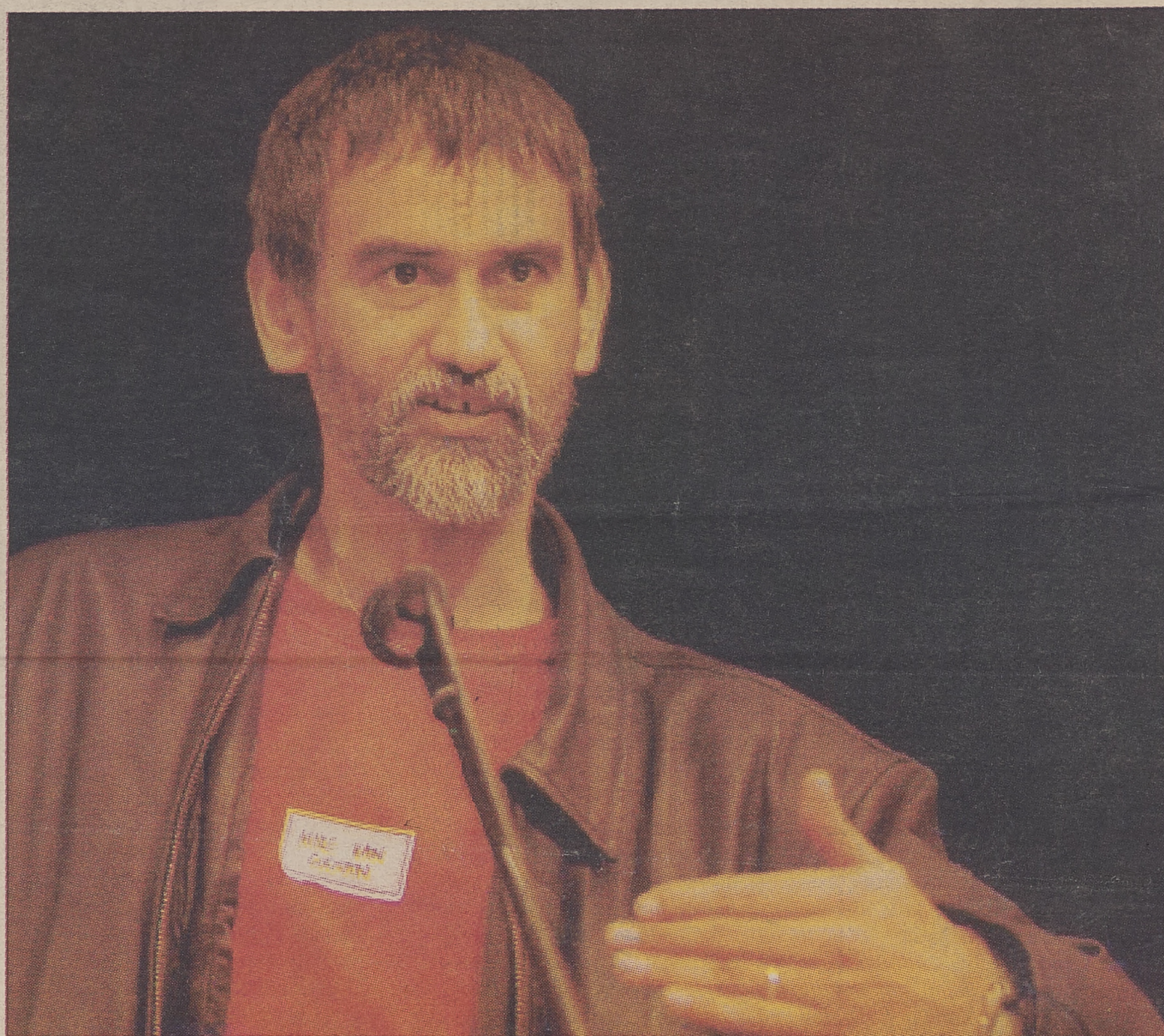
What the arts need now, says Greig "are structures to ensure that the best work gets put on stage and funding for innovative work".

He believes that coverage of popular culture should depart from a premise that the broader arts and culture influence and are influenced by it. "It is like building a dam," says Greig. "You need to have a strong flow of current before you start construction."

When free-to-air TV channel e.tv decided to extend its prime-time news bulletin to an hour, long-time TV cameraman and news production manager Roger Lucey saw an opportunity to cover the arts and present it to a broad, engaging audience.

"If sports get so much attention, I do not see why arts should not. For me there is no difference," says Lucey.

When management approved his idea, the best support he got was a camera, three minutes on air and



Arts Journalist of Year Award-winner Mike van Graan

good luck wishes. Now Lucey compiles the Cape Town reports and edits and produces the segment, focusing mainly on grassroots arts projects in far-flung communities. Since his debut on February 5 Lucey has installed himself as an integral part of the news line-up and, thankfully, gets to be on air for far longer than three minutes.

It is hard to think of an arts journalist who has made more noise on cultural commentary over the past year than Mike van Graan. And it is he who has won this year's Arts Journalist of the Year Award. The Cape Town-based arts consultant brandishes his *Cultural Weapon*, a column on the Artslink website — which has also been nominated for an Arts & Culture Trust Award — where he takes on everyone who has an influence in shaping the arts and culture landscape. This includes the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, Ben Ngubane.

In a bare-nuckled open letter to the minister, Van Graan pointed out

that while the department is trying to implement the Cultural Industries Growth Strategy, "we have lost an orchestra or two, a few dance companies have closed, our national gallery has been unable to purchase art work, and the odd musician has died as a pauper".

Since 1986 Van Graan has woven himself into the arts landscape as commentator and practitioner. He has served on the executive of the Congress of South African Writers and the Theatre Action Group, and he is chairperson of the Western Cape region of the Performing Arts Network of South Africa, which he helped set up.

Van Graan's talents as a theatre performer and director have seen him take to the stage in works such as *Some of our Best Friends are Cultural Workers*, *Dinner Talk* and *The Tables Trilogy*, all of which have featured at the Standard Bank National Arts Festival.

The *Mail & Guardian* predicted bigger things for Van Graan when it named him as one of the Top 100 South Africans in 1997.

'When it comes to arts coverage, there is too much content and not enough context'

