

A f r i c u s

JOHANNESBURG
BIENNALE

The first Johannesburg Biennale will be held in February and March 1995 in the 'downtown' district known as the Newtown Cultural Precinct.

The purpose of the Biennale is to present after the April 1994 elections, a unique visual art event in Johannesburg, which will celebrate with all South Africans and the global art fraternity, South Africa's re-entry into the international arena.

South African art is an almost unknown phenomenon about which the international art world has expressed a curiosity but lack of awareness. The Biennale will introduce South African artists and public to contemporary international trends and ideas, and vice versa.

This will be achieved by inviting acclaimed and emergent artists and administrators to exhibit and curate alongside young South Africans in such a way that artistic exchange and development can occur. It is envisaged that several artists will travel to South Africa for a period prior to the exhibition to produce their entry in Johannesburg, which will stimulate both artistic and social interaction amongst artists.

A local consultative process leading up to the exhibition has helped to define aims which underwrite the Biennale. We recognise the need to generate local and international support for black art initiatives and the emphasis will be on community art education. A forum on cultural aspects of artistic production is also planned.

It is hoped that the biennial nature of this event will establish South Africa as a major contemporary art centre.

The curatorial process which has been devised is innovative and developmental. It is envisaged that each participating country appoints a curator who will lead and inspire a young "trainee" South African curator. This is planned as a strategy revealing the curatorial process, to motivate youthful South African potential in terms of developing a future curatorial and/or art historical direction. It is also visualised that the reciprocal nature of the contact between the international and "trainee" curators will allow the international curators access to a South African and African vision in the process of curatorial selection.

An international curators' forum is planned in Johannesburg for February 1994 at which contact can be made with the young "trainee" curators. A ten day tour by the international and "trainee" curators of South African Museums, and artists' studios will allow a free flow of ideas and familiarity with a South African context. This will encourage the curators to plan exhibitions from their contributing countries incorporating a pertinent focus.

The countries invited will be free to decide their own proposals but will be asked to take into account the relationships possible in setting up an exchange with (South) Africa. The aims of each individual exhibition can be developed by the two curators and will initiate a dialogue between specific international paradigms and South African art. The international curators will be invited to work with one or several South African artists, the works produced may be integrated into the international exhibitions.

It is hoped that each "trainee" curator will then be invited for a brief period (say 4 weeks) to the international curators' countries to continue the learning process, meet foreign

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The Director of Culture
City of Johannesburg



EXHIBITIONS

Within the framework of the broadest outline listed below universal and specific perspectives expressing individual and cultural identities will be illustrated through the setting up of exhibitions which investigate:

- the relationship of art made in South Africa to that produced in the rest of the African continent.*
- the relationship of art made in South Africa to international trends*
- the correlating currents in the art made by the African diaspora, eg. Afro-Caribbean, Afro-American, etc.*
- the relationship of art made in South Africa by other diasporas to their origin cultures, eg. Indian, Portuguese*
- the art produced by marginalised peoples, and/or that on marginalised issues, eg. land rights, etc.*
- the relationship and effects of a "dominant" colonising cultures on indigenous and re-emerging art forms*
- the art of other international cultures in the process of cultural re-integration eg. Central and Eastern Europe.*

These concepts have been grouped into three exhibitions.

DECOLONISING OUR MINDS

This exhibition intends reintegrating South Africa into the African continent. The specific concepts will need to be developed by the curators.

Curators: *It is proposed that there should be a collective curatorship; one executive curator, experienced in the curation of Third World or African exhibitions, not less than two African curators and one South African curator.*

Aims: *To investigate the relationship between contemporary art made in South Africa and that from the rest of Africa, as well as art produced by indigenous cultures showing the effects of colonising cultures.*

Countries: *As many African countries as can be arranged*

Funding: *Biennale and international funding agencies*

Space: *(+/-) 2000 square metres*

VOLATILE ALLIANCES

This exhibition will explore European paradigms in relation to South African innovations. The focus will be on the relationship between Afrocentric and Eurocentric cultural perceptions.

Aims: *In this way, the Johannesburg Biennale will reflect and relate to current issues in contemporary art and culture by looking at the relationship of art made in South Africa to international trends.*

The international curators will be invited, after visiting South Africa in February and being 'assigned' a young trainee curator, to choose European artists to exhibit alongside a South African artist, indicating a spirit of integration.

Countries: *Austria, Britain, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Scandinavian countries, Switzerland, Spain and South Africa*

Curators: *One curator per European country (assigned by foreign funding agencies) and a young "trainee" South African curator, to host the international curator in South Africa, and to travel for a brief curating period to the foreign country. This programme is aimed at empowering, developing and motivating promising students.*

Funding: *International funding agencies and Biennale*

Space: *200 square metres per country*

OTHER SITES

To explore the art produced by people on social and political boundaries and artists searching for solutions to marginalised issues, in conjunction with the art of the international African diaspora and the Indian diaspora in South Africa.

Aim: *To present artistic identities and issues which, like those in South Africa, are outside the classical 'centre'. Some of these, eg. gender, religion, sexuality and land rights, have not been explored extensively by South African artists.*

Countries: *Argentina, Australasia, Brazil, Eastern and Central European countries eg. Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland etc. South and South East Asian and South Pacific countries, Caribbean and Central American countries, Canada, Chile, Columbia, Israel, India, Korea, Japan, Russia, USA, and as many African countries as can be included.*

Curators: *As with VOLATILE ALLIANCES*

Funding: *Same principle as above, except using identified Funding Foundations*

Space: *Outside/urban environment and inside. (+/-) 150 - 200 square metres each*

JOHANNESBURG AS VENUE:

*The Johannesburg City Council has approved **Africus: The Johannesburg Biennale** as its major cultural project for 1995.*

More than 65% of the country's population lives in and around the Johannesburg area

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The infrastructure that the City can offer, with its abundance of venues, accommodation and educational institutions makes it an obvious choice

The Director of Culture for Johannesburg, Christopher Till, who is also coordinating the development of the Newtown Cultural Precinct, has the support of the Johannesburg City Council, which is the largest municipality in the country.

MANAGEMENT TEAM:

<i>Christopher Till</i>	<i>Project Executive Director, Director of Culture, City of Johannesburg. Formally Director of Johannesburg Art Gallery and the National Gallery of Zimbabwe.</i>
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<i>Lorna Ferguson</i>	<i>Project Co-Ordinator, Director of Ferguson Fine Art, Johannesburg. Formally Director of Tatham Art Gallery, Pietermaritzburg.</i>
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