



FACTSHEET

ArtSpeak 2:

Topic: Freedom of creative expression versus cultural sensitivity

Date: Tuesday 8, September 2009

Venue: Museum Africa, Newtown, Joburg

Time: 09:45 for 10:15 start

Programme duration: 10:15 - 12:00 noon

SPEAKERS

Host: Annabell Lebethe – CEO: National Arts Council

Chair: Mike van Graan – WSoAC Programme Director

Panellists:

- Charlene Foster: Creative Industries consultant
- Khwezi Gule: Curator & writer

Respondent:

- Julialynne Walker – Director: Africa & Diaspora Development Linkages

BIOGRAPHIES:

Charlene Foster: Creative Industries consultant

Managing Partner in **Afra'stocracy**, a 100% BEEE consultancy focused on the development of SMME's, the Creative Industries and Cultural Tourism through Knowledge Work, New Media and Technology.



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Khwezi Gule: Curator & Writer

Khwezi Gule is a young, proactive curator who, as co-founder of the Dead Revolutionaries Club, specialises in organising lectures and art classes.

He is currently curator of the Contemporary Collection at the Johannesburg Art Gallery and co- curator of both the Esikhaleni Exhibition at the Afrika Cultural Centre and the Africa in Oslo Exhibition.

Julialynne Walker is the Director of Africa and Diaspora Development Linkages

Based in South Africa, Julialynne has been active in cultural and development activities throughout Africa and the Western Hemisphere Diaspora for over forty years.

DISCUSSION POINTS

TOPIC: “Freedom of creative expression versus cultural sensitivity”

Food for thought from Mike van Graan: Summit Programme Director

Art facilitating intercultural dialogue

- Music, theatre, dance, literature, film and the visual arts are seen by some policy makers and politicians as possible bridges between cultures, as safe, non-threatening points of entry into understanding “other” and as facilitators of “intercultural dialogue”.
- Yet, the arts can also play a divisive role, reinforcing cultural faultlines as shown by the literature of Salman Rushdie or movies that spark protests by Christian groups or the drawings of a Danish cartoonist or exhibitions that depict religious icons as gay.

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- What effect will the political imperative and the need for social cohesion across cultural divides have on the arts if they are burdened with facilitating intercultural dialogue? To help to make the world a safer place, are public authorities demanding “safe” art?

Arts for the public good

- Many artists hate being – or feeling - conscripted for any cause, even ones they believe in. If they are to use their creative skills for “the public good”, then they want to choose to do this, or not.
- On the other hand, politicians, government officials, development agencies and public funding bodies often give the impression that when artists or arts projects are supported with public funds, it is legitimate to expect them to align their creative work with the “national interests”, as defined by those who inhabit political power at the time.
- In an increasingly security-conscious world in which culture is one of the roots of global tensions, is it acceptable for artists to be “conscripted” in the cause of building intercultural communities at local, national and international levels?

Public funding for nation building

- What would this mean for South Africa? What if the NAC makes available funds for artists to create art that rejects xenophobia and that affirms good relations with refugees from other African countries? This would be considered in the interests of the greater public good.
- But what if an artist decides to make an art work that calls for the country’s borders to be closed to foreigners in order for government first to address the needs of impoverished South Africans?

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- Should the artist be prevented from receiving public funds to create this art because it is not consistent with “the national interests”?

ENDS

Boilerplate

The 4th World Summit on Arts and Culture is hosted by the National Arts Council and the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (IFACCA).

South African partners include: the Department of Arts and Culture, the Gauteng Department of Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation, the City of Joburg, Joburg Tourism and Business and Arts South Africa.

International partners include: Arts Council of Finland, Danish Arts Agency, Arts Council of Norway and the Commonwealth Foundation

The World Summit on Arts and Culture is a triennial event created by the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies. It is the only international event of its kind within the arts and culture policy development field. The World Summit events are a pivotal platform for national arts councils, ministries of culture and other agencies active in the global arts and culture sector across the world.



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Key website links:

- Official 4th WSoAC website: www.artsummit.org
- IFACCA: www.ifacca.org
- National arts Council: www.nac.org.za

Issued By:

Talawa Communications

On behalf of:

The National Arts Council of South Africa & the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (IFACCA)

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