

International Federation of Arts Support Agencies

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Up until 1994 South African artists who lived in South Africa were unknown because of the apartheid policies, which forbade certain people to travel out of the country. All works of art were censored and Black artists in particular, were unpublished. Apartheid resulted in economic and cultural boycotts, thus exacerbating the isolation of artists. South African works seen outside South Africa were executed by artists in exile, or were smuggled out of the country.

So, for me the Federation will open doors for artists. We will be able to showcase our work and move and talk with others from around the world. The Federation will widen our horizons. South Africans can, at last feel part of the global community. In many ways we are still far behind, and have a lot of catching up to do. We shall welcome involvement in research and evaluation programs, data base development programs and more especially, exchange programs.

Arts and culture support is very difficult, particularly in developing countries where the Arts have to compete with other more pressing demands for scarce resources especially with social services such as education, health, poverty relief and social welfare. While the world applauds South Africa for developing a progressive Arts and Culture policy early in its entry into the free world, these policies are struggling for survival because of the problems mentioned above, and the lack of capacity to implement them. There are, for example, very few Arts Managers and strategic policy managers in the Arts.

South Africa has established an Arts Council as an "arms-length" body. At the moment this policy is being tested to the limits. There is a reluctance from Government to fully exercise arms-length. This is as a result of our apartheid legacy. Government and the people in general are skeptical of organizations that might seem to be too independent and grow to become uncontrollable. Various controlling mechanisms are therefore developed and implemented. This sometimes constrains the Arts Council from fully exercising its role as an advocate for the Arts. I feel that in South Africa, and indeed most developing countries, it is sometimes not the lack of resources that is the problem, but the priorities and the enormous challenges facing governments. There is also the lack of co-ordination of the arts sector and use of available resources. In South Africa this is also because of distribution of resources, which has until 1994, favoured one section of the population--The White section.

We have to look at art as an employment generator. This gets tied up with questions of royalties, social security and generally matters of eking out a living. Unfortunately, we have tended, in our zeal, to spread our energies and resources too thinly. International Federation of Arts Support Agencies can help South Africa by providing models of how those who have been in the business longer than us have tackled similar problems. It will help us to develop models of funding and running arts businesses that are of the times we live in.