



## **Ifa Lethu in Grahamstown**

- **Village Green exhibition of struggle era works from the Ifa Lethu Collection**
- **Old meets New – 2 Ifa Lethu artists hold a two-man show at the Barrett**

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Ifa Lethu, the country's leading heritage and cultural entrepreneur development organisation, is holding its annual pilgrimage to the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown this June.

“Exhibiting part of their collection at the Village Green has become a favourite with visitors,” says Ifa Lethu CEO Dr Narissa Ramdhani. “This year we are featuring a different selection from our collection as well as some works from our Young Artists development projects.”

In an interesting exhibition at the nearby Barrett, both the past and the future come together in a two-man exhibition featuring works from struggle-era artist Mike Mmutle and Michael Selekane – a young artist who has been in the Ifa Lethu development programme for the last three years.

“Michael was one of the first group of young people we reached out to in Mabopane, north of Pretoria,” says Ramdhani. “He has been through all stages of the cultural entrepreneur development programme, which includes workshops by the old struggle artists as well as business skills, and his works are now selling for market-related prices. Michael is one of our stars in the way he has embraced the opportunity to learn from the old established artists, adapt that knowledge and experience to his own work, and follow our training on how to become economically stable through his creative endeavours.”

Mike Mmutle has followed a difficult road in bringing his work to the public's notice, having been fortunate to be mentored back in the 70s by Walter Battiss, who played an important role in the development of the black artists of the time. Says Mmutle, “Prof. Battiss saw a talent in me and then invited me to come to his house every weekend. I would paint every day at home and take my paintings to him when he would criticize them, correct me and give me guidance. I learnt a lot from him. When workshops were held at Unisa, he would invite me as a special guest to participate in the workshop with the students he was teaching. Eventually he was satisfied with my work.”

Says Ramdhani, “The two Michaels often work together and encourage many of our young artists who enrol in our programmes. Ifa Lethu takes this expertise and experience to the townships and it is heartening to see the connection bridge the gap across the generations. These activities benefit our struggle-era artists who were often forbidden to exhibit their work in South Africa, and teaches our emerging youngsters not only artistic and business skills but to hang in there and not give up.”

There will be many exciting products on sale at the Ifa Lethu Craft Stall, including the products created for the fashion and visual arts development projects. They are uniquely South African, encompass the values of the Proudly South African campaign and serve to demonstrate the strength of the South African creative sector.

Ifa Lethu will be at the Village Green throughout the Festival and the two-man exhibition, sponsored by Ifa Lethu, may also be visited for the duration of the event.

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#### **About Ifa Lethu Foundation: Empowering the Nation’s Soul**

Ifa Lethu, a nonprofit Foundation based in Tshwane, South Africa is devoted to the development and economic growth of the creative sectors in the country.

Ifa Lethu today manages the largest heritage repatriation effort in South Africa with collections having been repatriated from countries such as the United States of America, Canada, France, Australia, Spain, Holland, the United Kingdom and Germany. Further collections have been identified across the globe and every endeavour is made by Ifa Lethu to facilitate their repatriation to their home country. The very first donations were received in 2004 from veteran Australian diplomats Bruce Haigh and Dianne Johnstone who had long sought to return their collections to their rightful home and to be shared by the people of South Africa. Haigh and Johnstone were recently in South Africa to open the “Home & Away: a return to the South” exhibition, which runs from 1 June to 25 July at the Old Fort, Constitution Hill, Johannesburg.

Recent activities marked a rapid growth and an extension of our mandate, which has resulted in the Foundation focusing on the provision of skills for creative practitioners so they may become successful entrepreneurs. This extension has allowed the Foundation to align its work with the national priorities of poverty alleviation and community upliftment. Creative Entrepreneurship training initiatives are ongoing in the visual arts, fashion design and small business skills. In addition Ifa Lethu’s is committed to its education of the public and specific local and international communities through their extensive programme of exhibitions, workshops and conferences.

Ifa Lethu is headed by CEO Dr. Narissa Ramdhani and Chaired by Amb Dr. Lindiwe Mabuza.

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