



Ifa Lethu
Empowering the Nation's Soul

ART EXHIBITION

Australian Minister to open local art exhibition

— Founding donors **Bruce Haigh and Di Johnstone - Veteran Australian diplomats** – to join **Kate Ellis – Australian Minister for Early Childhood Education, Child Care and Youth and Minister for Sport and other struggle luminaries at launch**

— **HOME AND AWAY: A return to the South**

Old Fort, Constitution Hill, 1 Kotze St, Johannesburg, 1 June - 31 July 2010; 9am – 5pm Mon-Fri; closes 3pm Sat

— **Ifa Lethu Foundation announces a unique art experience during the World Cup**

For the first time, in an exhibition entitled *'Home and Away: A return to the South'*, the previously lost South African artistic heritage in the Ifa Lethu Foundation collection will be shown alongside the international Art Against Apartheid collection. The show examines the similarities and differences between works produced by South African artists experiencing the oppression of apartheid and those from beyond our shores who created works in support of the struggle. Although produced from different perspectives, the two collections are united in their focus on human rights.

Building on strong Australian-South African ties, forged through the initial donations of art collections from veteran Australian diplomats Bruce Haigh and Di Johnstone collected during their tenure in South Africa during the apartheid era, the Australian Minister for Early Childhood Education, Child Care and Youth, and Minister for Sport, the Hon Kate Ellis MP will officially open the exhibition on June 14 at Constitution Hill, Johannesburg.

Ifa Lethu CEO Dr Narissa Ramdhani says; “The international spotlight is focused on South Africa in 2010 as the Soccer World Cup takes place for the first time on our Continent. The sports boycott played a key role in the dismantling of apartheid so it is fitting that this exhibition looks back on the struggle-era in a manner that brings our visual arts or lost heritage to the fore. It was a time when artists expressed their desire to rise above apartheid as well as to ensure their experiences of these years were not forgotten or silenced.

“Creativity continued - but in a hostile political climate. Museums did not support the work of black artists, considering them to be of lesser significance than that of foreign or white artists. Unsung at home, much of this art was recognised by foreign diplomats, executives and visitors, purchased almost clandestinely, and shipped away from our shores. Thousands of paintings, sculptures and art objects created by Black artists in the most turbulent time in our country's history - and depicting their pain and humiliation -

were bought by these individuals who either had an eye for art, a sense of history, or out of altruism, and then taken home with them.”

The repatriated collections now include 320 works from eleven countries with further international commitments expected in the years 2010 - 2011. Many of the artists in the collection have received little or no recognition and one of the aims of the exhibition is to accord them the place they deserve in our national heritage.

The decision to curate the exhibition with the *Art Against Apartheid* collection was guided by two factors. The first being the need to create a dialogue between works which were created by Black artists within the country and those which were created internationally by artists in solidarity with the South African freedom struggle; the second arising out of the need to demonstrate the strength and artistic skill of South African struggle-era artists who were able to hold their own against the work of international artists. The Art Against Apartheid collection had its origins in France where two artists, Ernest Pignon-Ernest and Antonia Saura, invited artists of international stature to donate their works to a collection which would only be transferred to South Africa when the country's majority secured their freedom. The works therefore only arrived in the country in 1996 and were exhibited in the country's first democratic parliament and were then placed under the custodianship of the Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

In order to respond to current challenges in the heritage sector, the Ifa Lethu Foundation has in the last three years grown its original mandate to include the developmental element into its work. This was guided by research which pointed to the lack of available and related skills in this sector and the failure to use heritage to empower communities and create a more entrepreneurial society in South Africa, thus contributing to the economic development of the country. The work of the Foundation is therefore guided by the recognition that it is not a repository, but a facilitator of the repatriation, community and educational outreach, human rights advocacy and skills, and enterprise development training initiatives. This is reflected in the exhibition in the section “Towards The Future” where the fashion designs by young fashion mentees are shown and which take their place in the exhibition acknowledging the country's future along with its past. The latter component was influenced by international strategies of linking art to fashion.

Ramdhani continues; “There is no doubt that this exhibition tells a fascinating story. It is also indicative of the relevance of heritage to the social and economic landscape of our country. Further, it is a good indicator of the manner in which Ifa Lethu has been able to live the vision of founding stakeholders such as Australian diplomats Diane Johnstone, Bruce Haigh and Jock Covey.” Johnstone and Haigh will be in South Africa specifically for the official launch of the Home & Away exhibition on June 14th.

The exhibition will be first shown at Constitutional Hill in Johannesburg where the historic nature of the space – once a prison, now the supreme symbol of justice in South Africa – will provide a highly appropriate context for the two collections. It will travel to other venues in South Africa and abroad before ending its tour in Australia in November

2011. *Home & Away; a return to the South* will run from 1 June to 30 July at the Old Fort, Constitution Hill, Johannesburg, and entry is free. It is hoped that schools will take advantage of the enforced holidays to take their learners to this unique event.

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About the Ifa Lethu Collection

The collection assembled by the Ifa Lethu Foundation consists of artworks which were taken out of South Africa during the apartheid period. Between 1960 and the mid-1980s, work by black artists was generally not promoted or purchased within the country. At the same time, there was no market for art which expressed resistance to apartheid and many artists either went into exile or remained in poverty. Some of these artists subsequently became famous, such as Dumile Feni, Ezrom Legae and Lucky Sibiyi, whilst the collection also includes previously marginalised artists whose work will astonish visitors.

The establishment of the Ifa Lethu Foundation has been a major step in correcting these imbalances and bringing the art of this period back to South Africa. *'Home and Away: A Return to the South'* will be the first major public exhibition of the Ifa Lethu collection.

About the Art Against Apartheid Collection

The Art Against Apartheid collection was started in France in 1980 when Antonio Saura and Ernest Pignon-Ernest sounded a call for artists around the world to produce art in solidarity with the oppressed people of South Africa. Significant works of art by internationally important artists were donated to the French association Artists of the World Against Apartheid. The resulting collection of over 78 works was given to South Africa in 1995 where it was housed in Parliament until it was placed in the Mayibuye archive.

In his introduction to the catalogue for the collection, Nelson Mandela states that; “This collection reminds us of the solidarity of mankind and the contribution that the visual arts can make in fulfilling human ideals”. The collection includes works from Roy Lichtenstein (USA), Robert Rauschenberg (USA), Iba Ndiaye (Senegal), Richard Hamilton (UK) and Claes Oldenburg (Sweden)

Carol Brown was formerly Director of the Durban Art Gallery and is the appointed consulting curator for Ifa Lethu. With a Masters Degree in Art History she curates exhibitions both nationally and internationally, and has worked with the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) on numerous exhibitions and projects both in the United States and in South Africa. Carol was awarded a fellowship at Emory University in Atlanta.

She frequently curates shows for the National Arts Festival (Grahamstown) which also travel to museums throughout the country, and has been an adjudicator for the Dakar Biennale, maintaining links with Senegal.

Widely published as an art expert in both South Africa 's popular press and academic journals, Carol has edited and contributed to numerous art catalogues.

She has worked as consultant to the Constitutional Court Art Collection, the Joburg Art Fair, the Keiskamma Art Project and others; and is currently the Curatorial Consultant for eThekweni's Moses Mabhida Stadium Public art project.

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.**

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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the Hon Kate Ellis MP, Australian Minister for Early Childhood Education, Child Care and Youth, and Minister for Sport