

Common Ground

Curatorial Statement - HEAT 2024

Created by Nkgopoleng Moloi, Mary Corrigan, Andrew Lamprecht and Voni Baloyi

In these times of economic, ecological and political turmoil most societies are experiencing some form of social trauma. Given this context, "what conditions are necessary (and possible) to encourage 'a coming together'?" asks HEAT curator, Nkgopoleng Moloi, pointing to the central curatorial question informing the programming for the inaugural HEAT festival in Cape Town's CBD.

This is a fitting direction for the HEAT festival as it has been conceived to connect galleries, artists, collectors and practitioners during Cape Town's cold and quiet month of July. We anticipate artworks, exhibitions, performances, conversations, walkabouts and cuisine that enacts, encourages, and investigates concepts of community and collaboration.

Social or political coherence is often advanced as a ballast against turmoil and uncertainty. It is viewed as essential for effective mobilisation. Our country's transition to democracy relied on this.

"Revolutionary or libertarian acts most likely fall flat without the central moment of cohesion; a sticking together, a merger, a union under a common cause," observes HEAT curator Voni Baloyi.

"However, for a unit to form, individuals' identity markers and personal aspirations must fall to the wayside for the greater good. Similarly, a coherent and logical narrative must be sustained for the cohesive unit to exist harmoniously. This relies on logical narratives to be constructed. What silences and violations might occur to the individual in this process?" asks Baloyi.

For some, the validation of nationhood comes only through the invalidation of another which we have seen in the atrocities that have occurred in places like Israel, Gaza, Rwanda and Sudan.

As South Africa celebrates 30 years of democracy this year, many will be considering the degree to which citizens have cohered. "The decrease in young voters is a symptom of a breakdown in cohesion," suggests Baloyi.

The art market has relied on the culture of individualism to sustain its commercial interests. This has resulted in healthy competition but has also seen artists, dealers and other businesses establishing, controlling and gatekeeping their 'brand' or 'territory.' At times this has inhibited a sense of 'care' towards each other and ourselves, though we are all united in our enjoyment and valuing of art, proposes HEAT curator Andrew Lamprecht.

"The practise and notion of "care" is of importance in our art ecosystem and is often overlooked. We are all dependent on each other to realise our role in the art world," he adds.

HEAT founder and curator Mary Corrigan is interested in how our sense of community has been shaped and challenged by our environments. This is pertinent to a festival staged during an inclement season but also in a city like Cape Town which is embedded in the natural environment. Climate change is further complicating how we relate to the spaces we live in, forcing us to adapt to extremes but also in challenging our 'place' in the

world and how we conceive of the community. It has forced communities across borders and nations to connect in the face of shared problems.

“As change and disruption often need to be visualised, providing common symbols via which communities can (re)determine their identities, artists have and will play a role in this Anthropocene era. Particularly in the face of a precarious future, the necessity for resilience and adaptability but also given the proliferation of image production (via digital platforms) as the means through which our relationship to the environment is mediated,” observes Corrigan.

This curatorial call seeks to encourage artists, art dealers, curators and the community at large to consider the transformative power of small but inspiring communities that come together to connect, create, collaborate and care for one another. This is in line with the ethos driving the inaugural HEAT festival.

This layered curatorial statement offers various themes for artists and art dealers to respond;

- Transcending individualism and the cost of doing so.
- Narratives relating to how communities find each other, bond and the transformative possibilities this offers.
- A critical reflection on liberation movements.
- Barriers to social cohesion 30 years into our democracy.
- Relationships with land, the natural or built environments and how they shape community cultures.
- Abstract modes can offer a reprieve from claiming a place in a community, allow thoughts to flow, art to be guided by process, the medium, the artist’s subconscious.
- Artmaking that connects the artist to art communities of previous eras, places, as a means to finding a space, voice in the artworld (a complex, layered global community).