

ZEITZ MOCAA CURATORIAL LAB LGBTQI+ FORUM AND PRESS WORKSHOP

Cape Town (7 November 2017) – Today, Zeitz MOCAA announced it will host an LGBTQI+ forum and press workshop on Saturday 11 November 2017 as part of its year-long Curatorial Lab focus on LGBTQI+ rights in South Africa. This forum brings together representatives from civil society organisations that aims to support and advocate for the rights of the LGBTQI+ community across Africa.

The Curatorial Lab at the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (Zeitz MOCAA) is a multi-disciplinary space for experimental curatorial practice and research that explores new curatorial methodologies, subversive curatorial approaches, non-prescriptive practices, and under-represented topics and issues.

The Curatorial Lab's first project investigates the representation of the LGBTQI+ community in the context of homophobia and the current oppression of gay rights in South Africa. This project strives to promote intercultural understanding of a community who have been excluded from society's predominantly hetero-normative culture and discourse. The exhibition promotes education through the arts and develops critical thinking about gender and sexuality.

"The exhibition is in line with Zeitz MOCAA's commitment to intercultural understanding and the Consulate General of the Kingdom of the Netherlands's protection of human rights," says Sakhisizwe Gcina, the AKO Foundation Assistant Curator of Special Projects at the Zeitz MOCAA Curatorial Lab. "Its goal is to establish dialogue and respect for human rights—regardless of race, gender, creed or sexual orientation—to create a safe environment for the discussion around similarities and differences that create a multi-cultural and diverse society."

Closed tour: Queer Gender and Sexuality (3 – 3:45 pm)

This tour will present highlights from the Zeitz MOCAA opening exhibitions that feature queer South African artists whose artworks explore the notion of queer gender and sexuality. It will investigate works by Nicholas Hlobo, Zanele Muholi, Jody Paulsen and Athi-Patra Ruga.

Nicholas Hlobo

Nicholas Hlobo (Born 1975, South Africa) explores unconventional mediums expressed in his work. His engagement with visual language relates to his own personal and national history rather than the conventions of classical art. His sculptures, installations and works on canvas are full of symbolism and ambiguity. He explores the power dynamics between masculinity, represented by rubber tubing, and femininity, represented by ribbon embroidery. This experimental use of materials portrays a queer gender identity as the fusion of traditionally masculine and feminine crafts, subverts gender binaries, and addresses issues of sexuality.

Zanele Muholi

The photographs by Zanele Muholi (Born 1972, South Africa) from her *Faces & Phases* series are not merely black-and-white portraits but an intimate portrayal of neglected lives. The photographed individuals have faced the horror of homophobia, violence, rape and murder yet still they stand proud of who they are as Africans and claim their right to be visible on the continent. With the LGBTQI+ community facing the threat of erasure in a society that fails to take responsibility for their vulnerability, the unyielding gaze upon the viewer commands respect for their humanity and speaks out against the silence about their suffering. Muholi's portraits confront injustice but also celebrate the existence of gay African individuals as they cease to become a myth invisible to the eye of history.

Jody Paulsen

Jody Paulsen's (Born 1987, South Africa) textile works, with a particular focus on felt, explores themes related to his understanding within the context of contemporary material culture. His work speaks of the process of production as he creates vast, elaborate tapestries and colourful collages of various shapes, colours, logos and fonts that reference the current age of capitalism and experiences of global culture that shape concepts of gender, sexuality and identity.

Paulsen's series of an illustrated coat of arms that subverts the fascist LGBT laws of countries such as Uganda and Jamaica, appropriate insignias, turning them into a utopian vision of a "homo-tropical" paradise that celebrates rather than derides sexual differences.

Athi-Patra Ruga

Athi-Patra Ruga (Born 1984, South Africa) is a multi-disciplinary artist whose playful visual imagery draws from a diverse range of cultural references that are not limited to a specific biology, ancestral origin or geographical location. The queer hybrid figures represented in Ruga's work exist in a liminal world between the utopian dream and reality. Their sensuality and popular appeal within contemporary art successfully challenge the hetero-normative social construction of African history and knowledge, including the critique of its dogmatic control on the continent.

Panel Discussion and Q&A (4 - 6 pm)

This forum expands on the discussions of representatives from civil society organisations that aim to support and advocate for the rights of the LGBTQI+ community. The discussion will allow the representatives to share their experiences on grassroots activism for the protection of human rights of queer people living on the continent. How can government and laws be challenged and held accountable for homophobic abuse, violence and social exclusion from the state and its citizens? Within this panel discussion, the group are asked to unpack the contradiction of state law being dismissed and ignored in society through experiences in reality.

Panellists

Bella Matambanadzo, Journalist, Editor and Author

Leigh Davids, Spokesperson and Counsellor, SistaazHood

Ndumie Funda, Founder and Director, Luleki Sizwe Womyn's Project

Nosipho Vidima, Human Rights Defender, Advocacy and Law Reform Programme, Sex Workers Education & Advocacy Taskforce (SWEAT)

Sakhisizwe Gcina, AKO Foundation Assistant Curator of Special Projects, Curatorial Lab, Zeitz MOCAA

Selly Thiam, Founder and Executive Director, None on Record

Moderator

Brian Pellot, Director of Global Strategy at Religion News Service & Religion News Foundation

Bella Matambanadzo

Zimbabwean feminist Bella Matambanadzo is the co-editor of *A Beautiful Strength – A Journal of 80 Years of Women’s Rights Movements and Activism in Zimbabwe since 1936*. She is a contributing author to the short story anthologies *Writing Free* and *Writing Mystery and Mayhem* (Weaver Press, Harare); a contributor to the book *African Sexualities* (Dr Sylvia Tamale, ed.) and *Beyond Beijing: Strategies and Visions Towards Women’s Equality* (Patricia Made, co-ed.), amongst other works. In 2006-7, Matambanadzo was named one of 11 women on the frontline of defending human rights by the global human rights watchdog, Amnesty International, for her work with Zimbabwe’s radio journalism and television news production.

SistaazHood

SistaazHood is a transgender women’s sex worker support group and safe space. The group hosts 37 trans women and sex workers in Cape Town, South Africa, where they advocate for sex work decriminalisation, and the human and health rights of transgender sex workers. SistaazHood is part of an ongoing collaboration between two Dutch artists—28-year-old fashion designer Duran Lantink and 31-year-old photographer Jan Hoek. The project started when Lantink and Hoek saw a picture of two trans sex workers in Cape Town, and were so taken by their appearance and attitude that they booked a ticket to South Africa immediately. It was here where the project evolved into an expanded series of interviews with the workers about their dreams. Lantink, Hoek and the women worked together on outfits and sets to bring their dreams to life.

Leigh Davids

Born in Cape Town, South Africa, Leigh Davids self-identifies as a trans-woman sex worker and activist. Davids advocates for the decriminalisation of sex work, and for the health and human rights of the transgender sex workers community. As an activist, Davids currently consults for various organisations—including SWEAT, Gender Dynamix, and Sexual and Reproductive Justice Coalition (SRJC)—on issues related to transgender and sex work. Additionally, Davids is

a founding member of SistaazHood Trans Women Sex Worker Support Group, the largest trans women support group in Africa, which is based at SWEAT in Cape Town. Davids has also received the award for Movement Building in South Africa by the transfeminist organisation Social Health Empowerment (SHE).

Luleki Sizwe Womyn's Project

Luleki Sizwe is a community-based non-profit organisation focused on delivering help and support across 10 township communities for black lesbians who are victims of homophobic attacks and rape. Ndumie Funda founded Luleki Sizwe after the deaths of her dear friend Luleki Makiwane and fiancée Nosizwe Bizana. Both women were raped because of who they were and died from HIV/AIDs, infected by their attackers. Luleki Sizwe means to discipline the nation constructively, and Funda believes that education is the key and her calling is to empower those who are less fortunate and to change negative perceptions. Funda and the members of Luleki Sizwe take care of lesbian women who have been abused in horrendous ways and are living with HIV and other scars of their abuse.

Sex Workers Education & Advocacy Taskforce (SWEAT)

Sex Workers Education & Advocacy Taskforce (SWEAT) has determined the discussions on a legal adult sex work industry where sex work is acknowledged as work, and where sex workers have a strong voice that informs and influences wider social debates. SWEAT has campaigned for the inclusion of sex workers as respected and valued members of society. The organisation advocates for sex work to be decriminalised in South Africa so that the human rights of sex workers are respected, protected, promoted and fulfilled by members of society and the state to reduce levels of violence, intimidation and harassment against sex workers at the hands of the police, their clients, their managers and intimate partners. Furthermore, the organisation advocates for sex work to be legally recognised as a legitimate form of work and entitles sex workers to the full range of labour law protections that employees are entitled to in other industries so that sex workers can access healthcare services and the criminal justice system without fear of prejudice because of their work.

Sakhisizwe Gcina

Sakhisizwe Gcina is the AKO Foundation Assistant Curator of Special Projects of the Curatorial Lab at Zeitz MOCAA. Gcina is completing the Curatorial Training Programme at the Centre for Curatorial Excellence at Zeitz MOCAA where he specifically works within the context of a multidisciplinary space for experimental curatorial practice and research that explores under-represented topics and social issues within a contemporary art museum. Prior to this, Gcina worked as an assistant curator for the exhibition *The Latent Archive*, curated by Khanyisile Mbongwa as part of the World Design Capital (2014) pop-up store, and was an AVA Gallery board member chaired by Matthew Blackman in 2015. Gcina received the Mellon Foundation Scholarship for his studies in Curatorship at the Centre for Curating the Archive at Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town, and has completed an African Arts Institute Business of Arts Master Class in the Visual Arts programme.

Selly Thiam

Selly Thiam is a journalist and oral historian whose work has appeared on NPR, PBS and in *The New York Times*. Thiam was previously a producer for the Storycorps Oral History Project and PBS' Learning Matters, and a Carnegie Fellow at the ABC News Investigative Unit. Thiam is the founder and Executive Director of None on Record, an African LGBT digital media organisation.

Brian Pellot

Brian Pellot is the Director of Global Strategy at Religion News Foundation (RNF) and Religion News Service. Pellot has worked and reported from more than 50 countries and currently resides in Cape Town, South Africa. Pellot's writing has appeared in the *Daily Beast*, *Washington Post*, *Huffington Post*, *USA Today*, *Inter Press Service*, *Foreign Policy*, *Religion News Service* and dozens of other publications, and he speaks regularly about freedom of expression and freedom of religion or belief at media and human rights conferences around the world. Before joining RNF, Pellot was the digital policy advisor at Index on Censorship in London and the online editor at Free Speech Debate in Oxford, UK. Pellot studied international convergence journalism and Middle Eastern studies at the University of Missouri and earned an MPhil in Modern Middle Eastern Studies as a Marshall Scholar at Oxford University.

This workshop has been organised by Sakhisizwe Gcina, AKO Foundation Assistant Curator of Special Projects at Zeitz MOCAA, as part of a year-long focus on LGBTQI+ rights in South Africa. The LGBTQI+ project at Zeitz MOCAA has been developed in partnership with and generously sponsored by the Consulate General of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, under the banner #cocreateSA.

The following hashtags can be used at this forum:

Facebook and Instagram

#ZeitzMOCAA

#ZeitzMOCAACuratorialLab

#cocreateSA

Twitter

#ZeitzMOCAA

#ZMuratorialLab

#cocreateSA

This forum is open to the public as a free programme with museum admission. Booking is, however, essential. Please RSVP by 12 pm on Saturday 11 November 2017 to [Sakhisizwe Gcina](#), AKO Foundation Assistant of Special Projects, Curatorial Lab, Zeitz MOCAA, to reserve a seat.

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NOTES TO THE EDITOR

About the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (Zeitz MOCAA)

Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (Zeitz MOCAA) is a public not-for-profit contemporary art museum that collects, preserves, researches and exhibits 21st-century art from Africa and its Diaspora; hosts international exhibitions; develops supporting educational and enrichment programmes; encourages intercultural understanding; and guarantees access for all.

More than 100 galleries, spread over nine floors, are dedicated to a large cutting-edge permanent collection; temporary exhibitions; and Centres for Art Education, Curatorial Excellence, Performative Practice, Photography, the Moving Image, and the Costume Institute.

Zeitz MOCAA was established through a partnership between the V&A Waterfront led by CEO David Green—acting on behalf of Growthpoint Properties Limited and the Government Employees Pension Fund (GEPF), represented by the Public Investment Corporation (PIC)—and collector Jochen Zeitz. The building was reimagined through a design by the acclaimed London-based Heatherwick Studio. Mark Coetzee serves as the Executive Director and Chief Curator.

The Zeitz MOCAA board consists of David Green and Jochen Zeitz (Co-chairs), Isaac Julien and Wangechi Mutu (Artist Board Members), Suzanne Ackerman, Jody Allen, Jonathan Bloch, Kate Garwood, Pulane Kingston, Gasant Orrie, Albie Sachs, Anton Taljaard, Roger Ross Williams, and Mark Coetzee (Ex Officio).