

The South African Pavilion

57th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

Candice Breitz + Mohau Modisakeng

Curated by

Lucy MacGarry

Musha Neluheni

Biennale Arte 2017

Sale D'Armi, Arsenale, Venice, Italy

13 May – 26 November 2017

Principal Agent and Project Lead	-	Connect Channel
Curator	-	Lucy MacGarry
Assistant Curator	-	Musha Neluheni
Content Director	-	Beathur Mgoza Baker
Project Management	-	Parts & Labour

The South African Department of Arts and Culture presents Candice Breitz + Mohau Modisakeng, an immersive two-person exhibition in the South African Pavilion at the 57th International Art Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia, running from 13 May - 26 November, 2017.

South Africa's Commissioner, Titi Nxumalo, said she is delighted that Breitz and Modisakeng accepted the invitation to represent South Africa. "Experimental film provides a captivating environment for viewers, and it was with the intention of creating a multi-media installation that the artists were selected. Breitz is an internationally acclaimed artist, best known for her multi-channel video installations, while Modisakeng's award-winning career is defined by his film, photography and sculpture. Their practices come together for South Africa's first exclusively cinematic experience."

Curated by Lucy MacGarry and Musha Neluheni on behalf of project lead, Connect Channel, the exhibition explores the disruptive power of storytelling in relation to historical and contemporary waves of forced migration. Breitz's seven-channel installation, *Love Story* (2016), interrogates the conditions under which empathy is produced. Featuring Hollywood actors Alec Baldwin and Julianne Moore, the work is based on and includes dense interviews with six refugees. Modisakeng's three-channel installation, *Passage* (2017), meditates on slavery's

dismemberment of African identity and its enduring erasure of personal histories.

MacGarry describes the artists' works as articulations of our past and current state of "refugeeness" within a global context of exclusion and transience. What is it to be visible in everyday life, yet invisible at the level of cultural and political representation?

Throughout her internationally acclaimed career, Candice Breitz has explored the dynamics by means of which an individual becomes him or herself in relation to a larger community, be that community the immediate community that one encounters in family, or the real and imagined communities that are shaped, not only by questions of national belonging, race, gender and religion, but also by the increasingly undeniable influence of mainstream media like television, cinema and popular culture. Most recently, Breitz's work has focused on the conditions under which empathy is produced, reflecting on a media-saturated global culture in which strong identification with fictional characters and celebrity figures runs parallel to widespread indifference to the plight of those facing real world adversities. Mohau Modisakeng's internationally exhibited photography, performance and installation work forms a personal and idiosyncratic exploration of a local narrative. Informed by a coming-of-age during South Africa's violent political transition, his practice grapples

with black male identity, body and place within a post-apartheid context. Modisakeng presents critical responses to ideas of nationhood, leadership, inequality and migrant labour that manifest visually as poignant moments of grieving and catharsis central to the current lived experience of contemporary South Africans.

Commenting on the exhibition, South Africa's Minister of Arts and Culture, Nathi Mthethwa, said that he is proud to support the promotion of Candice Breitz and Mohau Modisakeng as leading voices in the country's visual arts landscape. "South Africa has been participating at the Venice Biennale since 2011, after a long absence on the international platform. 2017 is the moment for our country to take an ambitious leap towards being amongst the very best pavilions in Venice."

About the Artists

Candice Breitz biography and selected exhibitions

Breitz was born in Johannesburg in 1972. She is currently based in Berlin. Breitz holds degrees from the University of the Witwatersrand, the University of Chicago and Columbia University. She has been a tenured professor at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste in Braunschweig since 2007. Breitz has participated in biennales in Johannesburg (1997), São Paulo (1998), Istanbul (1999), Taipei (2000), Kwangju (2000), Tirana (2001), Venice (2005), New Orleans (2008), Singapore (2011) and Dakar (2014). Solo exhibitions of her work have been hosted by the Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art (Humblebæk), San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa), Kunsthaus Bregenz (Austria), The Power Plant (Toronto), Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art (Newcastle), Palais de Tokyo (Paris), Modern Art Oxford, City Gallery Wellington (New Zealand), De Appel (Amsterdam), Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean (Luxembourg), Moderna Museet (Stockholm), Castello di Rivoli (Turin), Bawag Foundation (Vienna), Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León (Spain), Temporäre Kunsthalle Berlin, the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (Melbourne), Standard Bank Gallery (Johannesburg) and the South African National Gallery (Cape Town). Her work has been featured at the Sundance Film Festival (2009) and the Toronto International Film Festival (2013).

Mohau Modisakeng biography and selected exhibitions

Mohau Modisakeng was born in Johannesburg in 1986 and grew up in Soweto. He currently lives and works between Johannesburg and Cape Town. Modisakeng completed his undergraduate degree at the Michaelis School of Fine Art, Cape Town in 2009. His work has been exhibited at the 56th Venice Biennale (2015), MOCADA, Brooklyn New York (2015), Kunstraum Innsbruck, Austria (2015), the Museum of Fine Art, Boston (2014), 21C Museum, Kentucky, Massachusetts (2014), IZIKO South African National Gallery, Cape Town (2014), Saatchi Gallery, London (2012) and the Dak'Art Biennale, Dakar (2012). His work has been placed in numerous private collections both locally and internationally and is also held by the following public collections: Johannesburg Art Gallery, IZIKO South African National Gallery, Saatchi Gallery and Zeitz MOCAA.



About the Curators

Curator Biographies

Curator Lucy MacGarry's practice is shaped by content that emerges from the African continent and by a desire to present South African artists at the forefront of international artistic debate. From 2014-16 she was curator of the FNB Joburg Art Fair. During this time MacGarry curated an inaugural East Africa focus that explored the artistic landscapes of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda to Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan. In 2016 MacGarry initiated the first TEDx talks event to focus on contemporary African art. In 2015 she spearheaded the fair's first programme of experimental film and co-curated The Johannesburg Pavilion during Biennale Arte 2015.

Assistant Curator Musha Neluheni concurrently holds the position of Curator for Contemporary Collections and Acting Chief Curator at the Johannesburg Art Gallery. Prior to this Neluheni was the Education Officer at the Johannesburg Art Gallery (2010-2013), and she also serves on the Standard Bank Art Committee, University of Johannesburg Advisory Board and the Theme Panel for the South African Mint Collection.



For press information, interview opportunities and images please contact:

Noreen K. Ahmad at SUTTON PR - noreen@suttonpr.com | T: +1 212 202 3402 | M: +1 917 805 4128

Presented and funded by the South African Department Arts and Culture



Additional Support provided by the Friends of the South African Pavilion:

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Web – www.thesouthafricanpavilion.co.za
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