

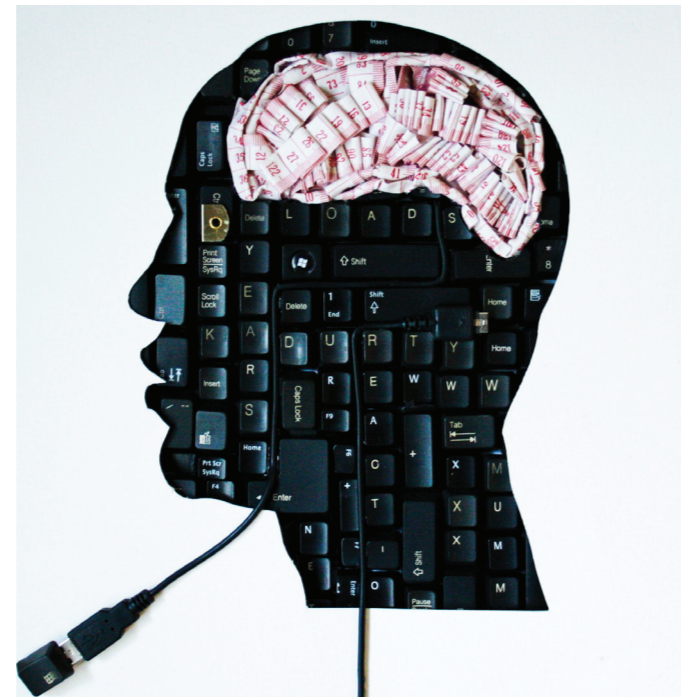
A Creative Exchange

Images courtesy of Jeanetta Blignaut Art Consultancy

The Creative Exchange programme provides financial and mentoring support to two selected artists in creating work for an exhibition to be held at the Villa Arcadia in September, just prior to the 2011 Johannesburg Art Fair.



Nomthunzi Mashalaba, Etching, 2010, 70 x 70 cm.



Maurice Mbikayi, *Measuring the Impact*, 2010, PC keyboard, tape measures and USB cables on paper, 30 x 35cm.

This programme sees Artinsure, Hollard and the Jeanetta Blignaut Art Consultancy putting their resources into furthering the careers of Nomthunzi Mashalaba and Maurice Mbikayi. Works by these artists will be available for sale to the general public, as will 'Creative Blocks' by both Mashalaba and Mbikayi, providing them with a means of generating income to support their practice and introducing them to a wider audience.

Lucy Rayner, of the Jeanetta Blignaut Art Consultancy, provides support to the artists in developing their art practice: 'I visit the artists' studios regularly, discussing practice and helping with writing,' explains Rayner, 'and then when the artists travel to Johannesburg, Gordon Massie [Managing Director of Artinsure], will conduct a mentorship programme on professional business practice within the arts.'

'Artinsure has successfully mentored artists and arts projects over the last three years,' says Massie. 'This particular project enables us to partner with colleagues to bring our knowledge

and experience of the business arts world and transfer those skills to the artists. The structure of this programme enables us to build a long term mentoring programme as part of our contribution to the promotion of emerging South African art.'

Thus multiple players combine in promoting the artists' careers: 'We want to focus on exposure, professionalising their practice and ensuring that they have a document of the exhibition,' Rayner explains, also noting that as both artists are currently based in Cape Town, this Johannesburg exhibition will help in establishing their names further afield.

'Hollard supports the arts as an essential part of our social fabric: all art evokes an emotional response in the viewer, forcing us to confront issues,' says Hollard's Gail Walters. 'It constitutes important social commentary and is an ingredient in developing social and human capital. Art is also a significant part of Hollard's heritage as Lady Florence Phillips, the original owner of Villa Arcadia, was the founding patron of the Johannesburg Art Gallery and housed her substantial personal art collection in the Villa.'

The artists have been chosen not only for their technical skills and creative talent, but, importantly, have also been seen to demonstrate a high level of commitment.

Maurice Mbikayi, who graduated from the *Academie des Beaux Arts* (in the Democratic Republic of Congo) with a diploma in Graphic Design and Visual Communication, has since participated in group exhibitions at the AVA Gallery; the Centre for African Studies Gallery/UCT; the Alliance Francaise of South Africa; the National Museum of Swaziland; CCF/Maputo, Mozambique; the Iziko Slave Lodge and the Harare International Festival of the Arts 2008 in Zimbabwe (HIFA). Mbikayi was also one of the Spier Contemporary 2010 biennale selected artists.

'After giving Maurice the opportunity to conceptualise what it means to have a solo exhibition his vision changed dramatically,' says Rayner. 'It was great because what he explored was so close to home – the impact of technology, the draining of natural resources from his home country and South Africa.' Mbikayi has worked in mixed media for the exhibition, incorporating remnants of discarded technology and elements of collage.

In his artist's statement, Mbikayi writes: 'The title of my exhibition "*Notre Peau*" (translated as "*Our Skin*") is used to illustrate a distinctly African response to the various impacts of technology on the continent. While exposed to the elements and easily injured, skin can also be described as extraordinarily resilient. It is able to bend and breath, regenerate and repair. It is a container which can change in tones and shades in response to its environment.'

'*Notre Peau* offers opportunity for conversations on several levels, not least of which being the skin itself, which has largely defined how Africa has been portrayed.' Since being chosen for the Creative Exchange project, Mbikayi has also been awarded a solo exhibition and three month residency in New York through a US-based competition.

In contrast, Nomthunzi Mashalaba's works seem introspective and highly personal. 'Nomthunzi creates a whole network of ideas; she documents her processes [which are] often very slow and labour intensive; she uses her notebooks to record her thinking about her practice, and then those works evolve into pieces... they're beautiful, very quiet works' says Rayner. In Mashalaba's own words: '*Play the Part Nomthunzi Mashalaba*, 2011, is a current project inspired by pages from my A6 notebooks; the work manifests in a series of etchings, sculptures, paintings and drawings as a kind of textual record of my thoughts. These works attempt to capture the progressive loss of memory and lived moments through Polaroid images that otherwise would exist only as faded memories.'

Since graduating in Fine Art from the Tshwane University of Technology in 2006, Mashalaba has exhibited in several group shows in South Africa, at an international workshop in Madagascar and through a residency at Greatmore Studios in Cape Town as well as exhibiting solo at blank projects in Cape Town. She has also collaborated with Hollard Insurance in the *Waste At Work* project.

The South African arts scene can only benefit if the artists and, in particular, the Creative Exchange programme, goes from strength to strength. **CF**



The Creative Exchange brings together partners Artinsure, Hollard and the Jeanetta Blignaut Art Consultancy in developing a sustainable arts programme for the promotion of creative talent in Africa.

Exhibition dates :
03 – 23 September 2011
Hollard Villa Arcadia

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