

## **Artspace Mentorship Programme Concept Document**

### **1. Introduction**

Operating since 2008, this programme sees artists given the invaluable opportunity to work under the mentorship of an established artist towards a solo exhibition. The programme is designed to allow artists who are ready to enter the market at a professional level, the opportunity to have their first solo contemporary commercial gallery exhibition, and gain the insights of professional mentors who have forged long career paths themselves.

Rather than an opportunity for artists fresh from art school or completely new on the scene, this opportunity is for visual artists who have been working on their artistic voice for sometime and are ready to take the next step. This programme would serve as a launch platform or introduction to the professional art sector.

The programme has run for four years and has showcased eleven new artists working under the guidance of some of our top contemporary artists.

Started with only R 10 000-00 of seed funding from RMB, the project has been realized by the full sponsorship of Artspace, and the voluntary time of committed artists, arts administrators and curators. Some of our past participants have already been making an impact in the industry.

Lindi Arbi, mentored by Tanya Poole, was one of the winners of the 2010 Spier Contemporary Award. Nomusa Makhubu, mentored by Tanya Poole, has been selected for the prestigious Dali International Photography Exhibition in China in August 2012. Samé Mdluli was mentored by Leora Farber and is currently studying towards her doctorate in Fine Art.

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Artist Louis Olivier's mentorship exhibition was a sellout. His artistic profile continues to grow with a second very successful solo exhibition at Artspace late in 2011. Once again this show was a sell-out. He will be presented at the Artspace gallery stand at the Joburg Art Fair 2012 alongside artists Karin Preller, Mbongeni Buthelezi and Richard Smith.

Pat Sithole will be launching his solo exhibition in August 2012 and has already achieved a great deal of media attention. He is being mentored by Francki Burger. Ruhan Janse van Vuuren will be launching his solo exhibition in September 2012 and he is being mentored by Marco Cianfanelli.

Past mentors include among others: Walter Oltmann, Tanya Poole, Leora Farber, Usha Seejarim, Wilma Cruise, Kim Berman, Kagiso Pat Mautloa and Gordon Froud. Past mentees include among others: Senzo Nhlapo, Louis Olivier, Nomusa Makhubu and Thabang Lehobye.

The Artspace Mentorship Programme was hosted at the 2010 & 2011 Joburg Art Fair as one of the featured development projects alongside Artist Proof Studio's FUNDA and the Market Photo Workshop. Both the work of selected mentors and mentees gained exposure to the public and the art market. This was through the generous support of the Gauteng Provincial Government and BASA.

## **2. About Artspace**

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Established in 2001, by Teresa Lizamore, the objective of Artspace is to service the growing market of buyers investing in South African art. By showing the work of newer up and coming artists, as well as those by more senior established names, the gallery provides collectors opportunities to acquire work by artists that have a proven investment value, as well as works by artists who have promising career potential.

## **3. The Role of the Mentor**

- To nurture and assist the artist to produce a body of work for an exhibition.
- To guide the artist and assist with the compiling of a portfolio of work for marketing purposes.
- To assist with curatorial decisions.
- To assist with the pricing of artworks for the show. Prices should be kept in line with both the market and the mentee's positioning in the industry.
- To write an essay about the work for publication purposes.
- To assist with a public walkabout during the show if desired.
- To assist in facilitating an academic crit for the mentee.
- To opening the show.

#### **4. The Role of the Mentee**

- To produce an entirely new body of work.
- To work closely with the mentor who will guide and assist with all aspects of a show and marketing of work.
- To use the opportunity to learn about professional practice in the art industry.
- To be available, if required, to work with other artists in a workshop / walkabout during the show.
- To acknowledge and respect the opportunity by being punctual for all meetings and workshops and ensuring that they engage with all aspects of the programme fully.

#### **5. Role of the Gallery**

- Host the exhibition.
- Handle all marketing, both of the exhibition and after the show, of the work provided by the artists at the gallery's cost.
- Provide programme input in formal and informal ways to the mentees process.
- Assist in installation of the show.
- Provide quality control for the mentee.
- Handle all sales.
- Manage the programme.
- Seek sponsorship (As of this date there is no sponsor and hence the gallery is carrying all the costs of the programme.)

#### **6. Programme Elements**

- Participation in a workshop on Professional Practice Source (hosted by Les Cohn, Taryn Cohn and Teresa Lizamore) on professional practice in the industry.

This programme is designed to introduce to the newer artists how to handle themselves within the arts industry, what to expect from a gallery relationship, how to handle PR and marketing of their work and shows and how to build towards a sustainable career.

Les Cohn, a fine art project consultant, has hosted similar lecturers at many of the tertiary facilities in the country including WSOA, TUT, VUT and is a field work supervisor for the UJ professional practice course. Taryn Cohn is an art consultant specializing in the marketing and communication for the art industry.

- Studio visits by gallery curator Teresa Lizamore to engage with how the development of the exhibition work is progressing.
- Each mentee is required to host a walkabout that will be open to the public and attended by the other mentees. This is required in order to give the artists exposure to the process of talking about their work to a public audience and being coherent and articulate about what they present.
- A formal critic session will be organized by the gallery. An outside artist/lecturer will be asked to give feedback on the final body of work to the mentee.

## **7. Reporting and Outputs**

- Each mentor is expected to produce an essay based on the process and the mentee's work. This essay will be used at a future date for a publication planned to cover the programme from its inception.
- In addition each mentor is expected to submit a report that will cover the mentee's progress, areas for consideration and their working experience. This report will be a tool for both the gallery to further plan the growth of the programme, and for the mentee to learn from.
- Each mentee is expected to draft an artist's statement about their work with the assistance of the mentor. The artist's statement will be used to draft a press release which the mentee will be expected to write, with the assistance of the gallery's marketing manager.
- Each mentee is also expected to submit a report on their experiences in the programme.

## **8. Growth and Development of the Programme.**

Previously, the mentees were selected by the selected mentors, or matched by Artspace. The artists chosen by the mentors or gallerist, were selected on the basis of who they believed were suitable to take up such an opportunity. For the 2011 programme however, the selection process was changed and it was decided to open up the opportunity to artists to nominate themselves or be nominated by others for consideration. A panel, which comprised the gallery curator and external industry experts, selected two mentees for this programme from the nominations received.

In addition, it was also decided to extend the mentorship project cycle from 12 - 18 months. This was based on the experience and feedback from past years. Artspace believed this would give artists the benefit of working with their mentor for a concentrated period of time which would facilitate their producing a new body of work for their solo exhibition.

Part of the purpose of the programme is to expose new artists entering the industry to working with a gallery and a curator under the guidance of an experienced mentor. As an added benefit the project will provide workshops under the auspices of the gallery, for the mentees, on professional practice. In addition it will foster a close working relationship with the mentees to support them during the experience of mounting their first solo exhibition. These workshops will cover topics such as managing the gallery relationship, presentation and curation of their exhibitions, developing their professional artistic profile, marketing their work appropriately and managing all aspects of their professional careers within the business sector of the art industry.

## **9. Selection Criteria:**

Only the following artists are eligible for participation in the programme:

- Artists who have not yet had a solo exhibition at a commercial contemporary gallery in South Africa and who are not committed to a solo exhibition within this time frame. (For the purposes of this programme, project rooms, cultural organisations and corporate galleries are not considered commercial contemporary galleries. They are however considered important career builders on an artist's CV.)
- Artists who are residents of Gauteng.

- Artists who are prepared to commit to the duration of the programme and who are available for the necessary studio visits and workshops. (Artists who are employed may apply but need to commit to the requirements of the programme).
- Artists who are committed to consider representation by the gallery for a period of 3 to 5 years after the programme. While this is not guaranteed, the programme is designed to allow the gallery to identify artists who they would like to work with on an on-going basis and bring into a stable of artists represented by Artspace. Consideration by the gallery to represent the artist would be done following the closure of the programme and would be an agreement between both parties. The basis of this relationship would be that Artspace gallery works on a committed career development plan with the artists that would consider the artists growth and development. The plan would include but not limited to solo exhibitions at the gallery in that period and consideration of other strategic opportunities and inputs for the artist. A marketing plan would form part of this process.

## **10. Application Requirements**

- A full CV.
- A profile/biography (maximum 500 words).
- An artist's statement (maximum 500 words). The artist's statement should contextualise the artist's work to date (and not be about a specific work or body of work). We are looking to gain insights into the concerns that the artist is dealing with, the mediums used and the content of the artist's work.
- A motivation of why the artist would be appropriate for this programme, and for Artspace. It is important to illustrate that the artist understands where Artspace fits in terms of the contemporary art market in South Africa and how the artist's work is appropriate to this gallery. It is also key to motivate why the artist would be an ideal candidate for this programme.
- Images should be provided on a CD or printed. Please provide no less than 5 images and no more than 15. The images should be accompanied by captions. We are looking to see the artist's development through key works of their career/practice to date.
- Identify a contemporary South African artist the artist would like to be mentored by and why. (There is no guarantee that we will contact or secure these artists but the aim of the question is to also ensure that the artist illustrate an understanding of the mentoring process and what benefits it may offer.)

## **11. Selection process**

Once all entries have been received, the panel will identify candidates who will be invited for an interview at the gallery. Selected shortlisted candidates will be informed following the interview process. Shortlisted candidates will be privately interviewed by an independent advisor. The independent advisor is a professional artist who has had exposure to the programme and who is also familiar with the rigours of an art career and will advise the panel on the candidate's readiness for the opportunity.

The final one or two mentees will be selected following this process. While two or three mentees have been selected in the past, the programme reserves the right to appoint only artists who are ideal for the programme to become mentees during each cycle.

**NB:** The panel's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into

## **12. Delivery of Entries**

All entries need to be hand delivered to the following venues:

- Artspace Gallery, 1 Chester Court 142 Jan Smuts Avenue, Parkwood, 2193 by no later than Saturday 8 September at 15h30;
- Artspace Gallery booth 28, 2012 Joburg Art Fair, Sandton Convention Centre by not later than 16h00 during the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of September 2012.

## **13. Participation in the Joburg Art Fair**

The Johannesburg Art Fair is the country's most significant commercial art event. The Johannesburg Art Fair is a key player in the drive to further grow the art sector in South Africa, and to build it as a viable commercial sector.

The art fair model works exclusively through the galleries as key institutions in the art sector and therefore accommodates the underlying vision of the Mentorship Programme, which is to allow new artists to access the professional art market and give them a holistic gallery experience.

In 2010, the Artspace Mentorship Programme secured a position at the Joburg Art Fair on the Development Projects and was sponsored by Artlogic and the Gauteng Provincial Government to exhibit artists from the programme. Our 2010 participation, supported by BASA was a great success.

In 2011, we once again secured this opportunity to showcase the Mentorship Programme at the Fair. This year in addition to showcasing past mentees and their mentors, we were also able to introduce our new mentees prior to their exhibitions in 2012.

A guiding principle for our participation in the JAF is that a careful selection of mentees is made. We considered which of our mentees would benefit from exposure on this platform IRO where their career was currently positioned. It was key that the right artists were offered the platform rather than all mentees that had gone through the programme.

In 2011 the following mentees and mentors were exposed at the Art Fair:

- Usha Seejarim (Mentor 2009 and special advisor to the selection panel 2011)
- Louis Olivier (Mentee 2009)
- Wilma Cruise (Mentor 2009)
- Thabang Lehoybe (Mentee 2010)
- Senzo Nhlapo (Mentee 2009)
- Goodness Nhlengethwa (Mentee 2010)
- Gordon Froud (Mentor 2010)

We also introduced the 2012 Mentees: Pat Sithole (Mentored by Franki Burger) and Ruhan Janse van Vuuren (Mentored by Marco Cianfanelli).

While the programme itself will not be going to the 2012 Joburg Art Fair, the Artspace gallery will be taking a gallery stand at the Fair. This stand is the first for the gallery and will feature artists represented by the gallery including one of the artists that came through the mentorship programme. This is a demonstration of the longer term commitment of the gallery towards development of these artists careers, using the programme to identify artists that would work for the gallery, and for whom the gallery would be the right home.



## 13. Media Clippings of the previous mentors and mentees

THURSDAY 27 OCTOBER 2011 BusinessDay

### The Business Life/Arts & Entertainment



Arts: South African movies shine  
www.businessday.co.za/life

# Hidden world and words behind still life

Inspired by his uncle Patrick Sithole knew by the age of 12 that he wanted to become an artist, writes Eugene Goddard

**P**ATRICK Sithole had an unusual uncle. It was at this elder relative's place in White City, one of KwaThema's most hazardous 'hoods, that he had his first dark encounter with art. Frightened by the freakish creations, he would run home, away from the off-limits imagination of strangeness. But the next day, he would be back, peering in and the ritual of running away from riveting phantasmagoria would repeat itself.

He knew he wasn't supposed to witness the weirdness — "my uncle was a very strict man; he didn't want people to see what he was doing" — but there's very little a curious boy can do to resist the magnetic pull of a peep show. When Lucas Sithole, the world-renowned artist of anthropomorphic sculptures, decided to move his studio to Pongola in northern KwaZulu-Natal, his nephew's daily popovers stopped, but his dreams didn't. Sithole was 11 or 12, but he knew he was an artist. Inspired by his uncle's childhood mentor, he recalls the watercolours Lucas bought him and that his uncle was "very impressed" by his first creations. "It was a major source of inspiration. He told me to draw every day. He told me to take it very seriously because 'art is a family tradition, it is the Sitholes' tradition', so I mustn't play with it. He also told me I must go to school and learn how to become a real artist."

The regimen his uncle instilled in him is one he honours daily in his makeshift studio in Rest in Peace, KwaThema, working from 8am to 4pm, as if keeping office hours. But that is where the similarity ends.

The African surrealism — part human, part animal — of Lucas's art, as evinced by his work held in several collections and galleries worldwide, is a far cry from Sithole's realistic pastels of poverty and products — the former always there, the latter a mirage of consumerism, an aspirational ideal.

This theme of the elusive truth behind illusion recalls a particular sculpture of his uncle's that has stayed with Sithole all his life.

"It was of a mother carrying a child. The child was asleep and the mother's eyes were closed. Both seemed at peace. But the mother's head was turned backwards."

For Lucas, the unnerving undercurrent of things lay in the unseen that, when revealed, gave his work a haunting, often horror-like, lingering quality. With Sithole's large-frame pastel canvases, the cruel beauty of humility in the face of day-to-day hardship creates a feeling of disquieting despair.



HUMANITY: Much of Patrick Sithole's art features a strong sense of humanity but depicts people's penury in open spaces. Picture: EUGENE GODDARD

To say his pieces, mostly highly stylised studies, are still life is simplistic if one holds the view that secrecy has more to say than what is stated or shown. German theorist Wolfgang Iser refers to this technique as Leerstellen — "open spaces". In Sithole's work, the obvious open space is the background, regularly in black, a contrasting and surrounding presence closing in on his usual subject matter of poverty's material culture depicted on newspaper ads of government jobs and gazetted information.

One interpretation could be that it is an indictment on the power that officialdom holds over the dispossessed, people who probably can't apply for the jobs advertised. But if there is any doubt that poverty dominates his work thematically, consider his use of text that references consumer ideals and products supposed to bring comfort in inclement times.

From Sithole's point of view, this state, of lacking the basics to get by, is a nonseasonal condition, a glaring reality of South African life that almost

needn't be spelled out. Why then the use of text?

The effective use of it in his art is in large part thanks to the involvement of Francki Burger, a conceptual photographer known for her layering of images over one another.

**His usual subject matter of poverty's material culture depicted on newspaper ads of government jobs**

Burger was introduced to Sithole by ArtSpace gallery director Teresa Liazmore who, on the strength of the raw, sensuous beauty of his pastel sketches, decided to include him in the Rosebank gallery's mentorship programme.

Whereas Lucas had immersed himself in the lore and love of art, Burger encouraged the younger Sithole to develop his style of medium and message, transforming type from its advertising origins by

lodging it firmly in the realm of fine arts for a more abstract, albeit meaning.

The use of text is also more than a key to unlocking the understated quality of his work — it cues in an essential part of his past. After matriculating, Sithole co-ran a ramshackle art and drama school in Rest in Peace before enrolling for a course in commercial art at Intec College in Johannesburg.

His decision to go for commercial and not graphic art ties in with his fastidiousness, slogging away eight hours a day as if he's getting paid for it, and also recalls his initial efforts to work for an advertising agency.

"In the space of three years I must have posted between 20 to 30 CVs to agencies. Most didn't bother to get back to me. Those that did didn't say why my applications had failed. I felt like my art was dying."

To keep his talent "going", he started sketching on the street, offering his services from door to door, creating pictures of people for R150 to R200 apiece. The many people he encountered doing knock-knock

In one of the works, *Hope for Food*, an empty serving bowl against a plastic shopping bag provides stark insight into being penniless — not being able to pick because you can't pay.

In another, *Disadvantaged*, a chipped, metal washing basin clinically cuts cleanliness down to grassroots size. Portrait of an Old Woman features the expressionless profile of a gogo against a background of cold consumerism. And in *Observation*, a woman, much smaller in size than the cardboard box she's looking up to, looks at an advertisement for heating. With her back to the viewer, her forlorn body language says everything her obscured expression hides. The same piece shows cardboard pieces peeled away in places, revealing corrugated blandness. This peeling away, or turning over of pages, is a recurring theme in his work.

From a technical point of view, the work is so good it's hard to believe he switched to pastel, one of the most difficult mediums for drawing, in 2006. That same year he made his first breakthrough, participating in one of Absa's prestigious L'Atelier competitions, and in 2009 he made it into the top 200 during the Sasol New Signatures competition. That's when Liazmore spotted him.

Today his work, held in storage at ArtSpace with the view towards a solo exhibition next year, is priced in the R6 000-R7 000 range, framed. Even his unframed works, exhibited at the recent Joburg Art Fair, elicited much interest, sparking offers from private collectors.

"Hardship forced me into fine arts, and that opened opportunities for me... I'm so glad I didn't get a job with one of those agencies."



# Steering the arts to greater heights

Artspace's mentorship initiative is bringing new talent to light, writes CHRIS THURMAN

WILMA CRUISE didn't want to be a teacher. When Teresa Liberator, owner and creator of Artspace, invited her to participate in the gallery's mentorship programme, Cruise was adamant: "I said to Teresa, 'I don't want to teach skills, to nurture anybody or in struggle with fundamental'."

Fortunately for Cruise, the young artist she was paired with, Louis Olivier, didn't need to be taught. Instead, the mentor herself takes shock by "the array of Louis's sculptural and painting skills". It's a thing of beauty to watch him cutting, grinding and manipulating material. He has an instinctive understanding of "how things work".

Indeed, Olivier's September exhibition, *Pale Male*, evinced a facility with both drawing and sculpting in a range of materials and media – including bronze, ceramic, wood, steel, wax, charcoal and acrylic resin (he is also adept at producing free-digital, 3D-printed sculptures).

Artspace started the mentorship programme last year to help address the problem that "young artists usually have to get into galleries because they're not yet 'big names' whose work is guaranteed to sell". This year the programme has included not only the pairing of established mentors with newcomers, but also workshops and exhibition launches.

Along with Olivier, there are two other artists presenting work: Sana Nhlape and Sinta Specter, mentored by Kagiso Fat Maitlo and Chris Seearin respectively.

That talented young artists should learn from older, more experienced practitioners is a principle so ancient as to be archetypal – but the nature of the relationship is difficult to define.

In the case of the Artspace programme, the mentoring process is too short to constitute an apprenticeship and is not intended to be directly pedagogical. Nonetheless, each participant affords in its great value and, judging from the work produced, it has been well worth the effort.

Instead of "teaching", Olivier, Cruise introduced him to the work

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of various contemporary and conceptual artists, "My role," she says, "was to be a guide through recent art history." She also saw her task as "turning Olivier's gaze inward", persuading him "to express the intricacies of life with the same skill he applies to the external appearance of things. Perhaps this was the most difficult part of the process – to give Louis permission to be subjective."

VULNERABILITY is so important a part of the mentoring relationship as mentor and mentee have to develop a candid rapport and a mutual trust. Nhlape and Maitlo have done so over many years. Their formal mentor-mentee dynamic is merely the continuation of a longstanding influence: it was when he first saw



DIFFERENT ANGLES: Above, the 'woven' final photographic product from Sana Nhlape's *Jewel* exhibition; below, 'woven art' by Sinta Specter.

Maitlo's paintings as a teenager that Nhlape decided to pursue visual art seriously.

Speaking to Nhlape and engaging with his work one is challenged to see Johannesburg in new ways.

Having spent some years studying abroad, he returned to SA with a sense of the prevailing moods in different urban environments.

After visiting European metropolises, Nhlape was delighted to rediscover "the orchestra of Johannesburg, like an avant-garde soundscape of noise" and to observe "the intricate movement of people across the city ... as if they were part of an installation".

Consequently, he has a particular interest in the different forms of behaviour elicited by public

transparencies – for instance, "How do people react when they're in a cramped space?" Such preoccupations are evident in the photographs and paintings that make up his exhibition *Jewel*.

In addition to depictions of life "at street level", however, there are also cityscapes that portray downtown Johannesburg in a flattering and almost futuristic light: the City of Gold series presents an impressive night-time urban skyline, neat and clean and shimmering. The arresting feature of Nhlape's work is that all his images are composed.

His signature approach is to cut multiple prints of the same photograph into horizontal and vertical strips, then weave them together into a series of both aesthetic and symbolic significance.

Aesthetically, the interwoven strips add depth to a two-dimensional surface. The squares they create complement the quadrilaterals of buildings, windows and balconies, drawing attention to architectural features that would otherwise be ignored. In other images, this is offset by the diagonal mesh of a fence or the curves of human figures and faces.

The intended effect is to break the neat photographic line, to distort the image as Nhlape notes, "It can affect the eye, provoking the viewer into dialogue."

Dialogue, in turn, provides the symbolic impetus in Nhlape's work. He aims to explore interconnections between the lives of the city's residents – sometimes literally, as when he documents the activity at the intersection of two busy roads, and sometimes figuratively, as when he weaves together images of a black couple and a white couple posing for the camera.

There is also a dialogue between traditional craft and contemporary artistic practice. Nhlape states: "We Zulu people used to weave everything – hats, kraals, mats, everything! I felt my work had become too Eurocentric."

and wanted to find a style that would reflect heritage."

SINTA SPECTER locates her work somewhere between that of Olivier and Nhlape. Like Olivier, she is concerned with the nuances of the human form, but instead of exposing the body, she clothes it in creations that straddle the worlds of art and fashion (wearable art). Whereas weaving is both method and metaphor for Nhlape, Specter's forthcoming exhibition *Nomadix* emphasises knitting.

"Knitting is an inclusive activity – a technique that can be passed from skilled to unskilled people," she says. "It also has a therapeutic function." These practical considerations are central to her project; while *Nomadix* is the title of her exhibition for the programme, it is also the name of an art agency and catalogue.

It's unusual for an artist to declare: "I am for work that is replicable by others." But Specter has a vision of economic upliftment through helping other women to produce both fashion garments and visual artworks in the way that she has – colourfully blending fabrics with found objects. "I want local manufacturers to be both respected and profitable. There's no reason that community projects can't supply high-end fashion," she says.

Specter's social engagement is complemented by environmental concerns, using natural elements such as feathers and textiles that have been "reinvented" and misnomers moulded from recyclable bottle-caps. "This material world will no doubt be wandering through galleries worldwide in the years to come."

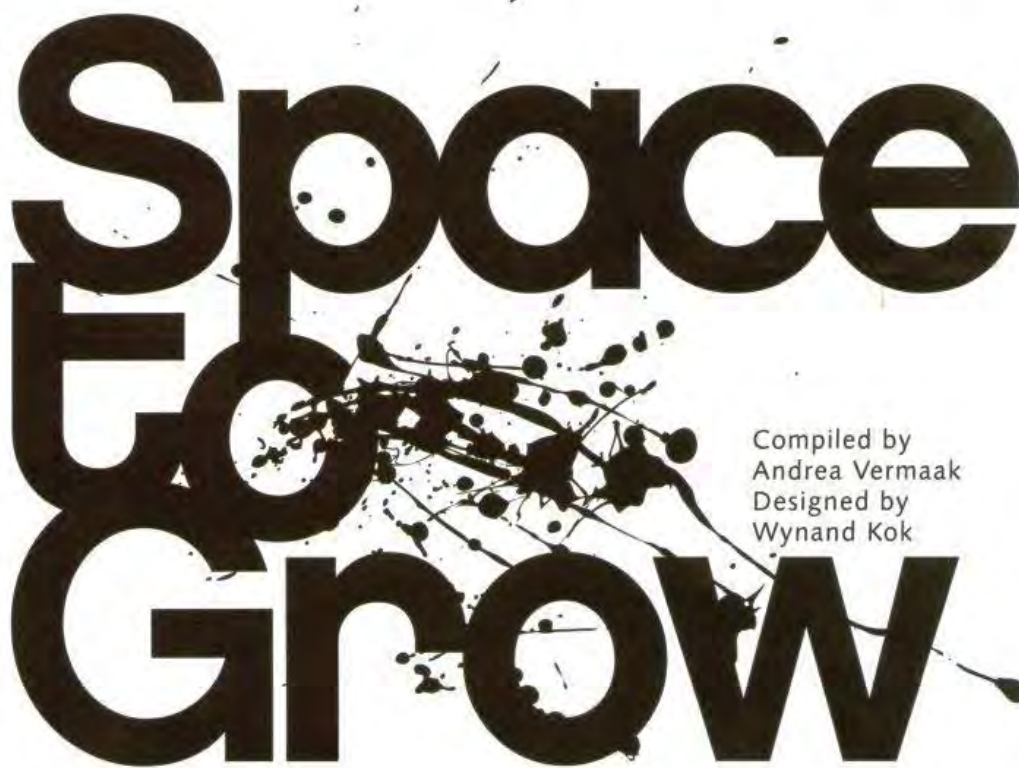
*"That talented young artists should learn from older, more experienced practitioners is a principle so ancient as to be archetypal – but the nature of the relationship is difficult to define."*

■ *Jewel* runs at Artspace, 142 Jan Smuts Ave, Parkview, Johannesburg, until October 21. *Nomadix* runs from October 23 to November 7. [www.artspace.co.za](http://www.artspace.co.za)





# Space to Grow



Compiled by  
Andrea Vermaak  
Designed by  
Wynand Kok

History has seen many a budding artist taken under the wing of a mentor to be nourished with invaluable skills and later be left to grow and create on their own, perhaps too becoming mentors to nourish yet another generation of creators. The Artspace Gallery in Rosebank has taken the idea of mentorship to the next level, launching an unique programme that not only allows unknown South African artists to develop skills under established artists, but that provides them with a platform from where they can fly the nest and launch their art careers.

The unique mentorship programme was launched in 2008 for new artists. Three individual exhibitions were held to the public from 19 September to 7 November 2009 to provide new artists, under the guidance of established artists in the same field,

with valuable experience and exposure in a professional gallery environment. "It is very difficult for a new artist to break into the market," says Artspace Gallery curator, Teresa Lizamore. "Galleries rarely work with unknown names. This programme is designed to give these artists a foot in the door and to expose them to working within the professional sphere. Navigating through relationships with galleries can be intimidating for a new artist with little experience."

Mentors Wilma Cruise, Kagiso Pat Mautloa and Usha Seejarim started working in March 2009 with their respective mentees Louis Olivier, Senzo Nhlapo and Sinta Spector. The mentors supported and assisted the new artists with all aspects of the exhibition from conceptual development to writing their proposal, as well as the production process and the curation

of their exhibitions. The exhibitions showcased a diversity of mediums from photography to sculpture and wearable art. The mentor's endorsement of the new artist is aimed at giving credibility to the new artist's work. They, thereby gain access to an audience who respects the established artist's judgement.

The new artists were also expected to host public walkabouts. They were exposed to a critique by a respected academic in the field.

The 2009 programme included workshops on Professional Practice hosted by Teresa Lizamore and presented by Les Cohn and Taryn Cohn of Art Source South Africa, a consultancy that offers strategic career management to contemporary artists.

The programme is also endorsed by Business and Arts South Africa's

Bartoworld Mentoring Programme which recently hosted a workshop conducted by Gordon Massie of Art Insure. Issues relating to the marketing and management of an artist's work within the commercial sector were explored, as well as issues relating to managing gallery relationships, pricing and developing value in their product as an artist.

All works that were not sold at the exhibition will receive exposure and marketing at the new Artspace Warehouse in Fairland for about two months. The programme and a selection of the artists will also be presented at the Art Fair as a special project.

We got a little bit more insight into the world and work of each of the mentors and mentees and later spoke to the young protégés to get their thoughts regarding the programme and art in general...



**“The mentor’s endorsement of the new artist is aimed at giving credibility to the new artist’s work. They thereby gain access to an audience who respects the established artist’s judgement.”**



# The Mentors

## Wilma Cruise

Wilma Cruise is an independent artist and writer. She has curated many exhibitions, has had thirteen solo exhibitions and has completed a number of public works including the National Monument to the Women of South Africa at the Union Buildings

in Pretoria, for which she won the Architects Project Award in 2000. She also created the Memorial to the Enslaved in Cape Town (in collaboration with Gavin Young).

Cruise has won several other awards, including the quarterly Vita Award in 1993 for *Nicholas* – October 1990 and the Lorenzo il Magnifico Award at the Biennale Internazionale Dell'arte Contemporanea in Florence in 2001. Her work is now represented in public collections at The Iziko

National Gallery, The Pretoria Art Museum, Durban Art Museum, University of South Africa, MTN, B.H.R. Billiton, Corobrik, Standard Bank Gallery, Sasol, University of Johannesburg, Sasol University Museum and the Constitutional Court.

Cruise was keen to be a part of the mentorship project from the beginning, but wished for Artspace gallery's Theresa Lizamore to recommend an artist.

## Kagiso Pat Mautloa

Kagiso Pat Mautloa is a painter and installation artist. He completed a diploma in Fine Art at the ERC Art Centre in Rorkes Drift, KwaZulu-Natal before going on to study at Mofolo Art Centre in Soweto where he grew up. He currently resides in Alexandra, Johannesburg.

This urban context has influenced much of Mautloa's work. Renewal and erosion are linked and are concurrent themes that characterise his work. Mautloa draws inspiration from urban waste and detritus, as well as the cryptic text on faded posters and billboards, and storm-bleached colour. He aims to restore and reconstruct vanished memories and anecdotes in the process of renewal, while he works with paint, rusted metal, stained canvas, old window frames and discarded tools.

Mautloa's work is part of public and private

collections across South Africa and abroad. He has exhibited in many solo exhibitions since 1982, as well as group shows and workshops in South Africa, Botswana, Belgium, Germany, France, Holland, Switzerland, the UK, Ireland, the United States, Cuba and India. More recent exhibitions include a show on the Sasol Wax Art Awards, Johannesburg (2005); *Faces to Names* at the Alliance Francaise, Johannesburg (2006); *Shift* at Goodman Gallery, Cape Town (2007) and *Double 07* at Polokwane Art Museum, Limpopo Province.

## Usha Seejarim

Usha Seejarim graduated with a Masters in Fine Art from the University of the Witwatersrand at the end of 2008. She was an artist-in-residence at the South African National Gallery's Fresh programme. She is strongly committed to arts education.

Seejarim has been said to recast "the ordinary as something worthy of attention". She combines aesthetic transformation and urban concerns, as well as her own South African-Indian heritage in a unique way. Much of her

work is inspired by daily life, particularly daily commuting. She spent a year photographing reflections of her commuter bus in passing shop windows.

Seejarim has not only been commissioned for many projects, but has been nominated for and has won many prestigious awards. In 2007, she was a finalist in the Sasol Wax Art Award and in 2008, she was nominated for the Mercedes-Benz award for public art. Among her more recent accolades, the Sandton Central Arts Programme in 2007/08 won a Business Day-Business and Arts South Africa Award for the Best Use of new Commissioned Art for her light-art installation, *The Why Men*.

Seejarim had worked with light as a medium

before. She was commissioned two years prior to the award to make a Christmas Tree for Anglo American's annual project in Main Street, Johannesburg. She used a metal frame and ordinary light bulbs in "Fordsburg Buckets" decorated with crystals for her installation. She was also commissioned to make a chandelier for the MTN head office. The installation used one hundred and forty thousand safety pins.

Her latest work was the Kiptown Commission for Walter Sisulu Square for the Johannesburg Development Agency. The tenets of the Freedom Charter are expressed through ten sculptural installations made of slate-stone.

# The Mentees

(A Look Away chats to the mentees on the following pages)

## Louis Olivier

Louis Olivier is a sculptor, born in 1976 in Vereeniging, raised in Bethal and now based in Pretoria after graduating with a degree in Information Technology from the University of Pretoria. A dramatic career change in 2001 from the field of commerce to the field of commercial art helped him develop skills in moulding, casting and welding, as well as gain invaluable knowledge of different materials. He helped create themed environments, including uShaka Marine World Aquarium, Durban and Itri Bataiz Mall, Dubai.

His desire to become a sculptor was

confirmed when he met Carlo Gambelli at the Vignali Art Foundry in 2004 and was exposed to contemporary art for the first time. Olivier started by securing private commissions and slowly built up a collection of works. Among the commissions undertaken was the Sandton Benchmark Project - two life size bronze figures sitting on a public bench - for Rand Merchant Bank.

Teresa Lizamore, who afforded Olivier the Sandton Benchmark Project, invited him to participate in the Artspace Mentorship Programme under the mentorship of Wilma Cruise. As Cruise's mentee, Olivier experimented using his own body cast as form in space.

His exhibition, *Pole Mole: sitting standing*

walked ran from 19 September to 3 October 2009 at the Artspace Gallery in Rosebank, Johannesburg. It began as the process of casting his own body in the stances of sitting, standing and walking. "I find myself of all adornings in these positions. The figures, drawings and a stop frame animated video interrogate the axiom that we come into the world empty handed and depart it equally empty handed," says Olivier of his work. "The unknown, the unclear and the yet-to-be-discovered are mysteries that have intrigued me throughout life. Under the guidance of Wilma Cruise, who also uses the body as a vehicle of meaning, I explore the sense of being-in-the-world, being part of it, yet not defined by it. The sculpted body and figures in space become metaphors for a spiritual condition."

## Senzo Nhlapo

Senzo Nhlapo is a visual artist who was born in 1979 in Soweto, matriculated in Lenasia and studied Fine Arts at Funda Community College in Soweto. He also trained in print-making at Artist Proof Studios in Johannesburg. He then went on to study photography with Angie Langele from Norway and mosaic and design in Germany. Nhlapo then graduated with a Master of Arts in the Public Sphere from L'Ecole d'Artionale

du Valais (ECAV) in Switzerland.

Now living in Lawley, Nhlapo has participated in many curated exhibitions. He is also an experienced workshop facilitator in the creative arts sector. Nhlapo is currently teaching at Vega, The Brand Communications Schools.

His exhibition, *Jowzi*, ran from 7 to 21 October 2009. Nhlapo works with mixed media, using a series of photographs and paintings of places of transit, such as train stations, bus stops and taxi ranks. His images deal with interactions between the people of Johannesburg at these intersections. "I view

my art as a way of documenting how society lives in the urban sphere," says Nhlapo. "Especially in the big cities where a question of living in these environments demands the answer of identity." He has developed a technique of weaving his images, his photographs and paintings, referring to his concerns related to tradition within a contemporary context.

Nhlapo has a long relationship with his mentor for the *Jowzi* exhibition. Mautloa's work as a professional artist has inspired Nhlapo to pursue his career as a visual artist.

## Sinta Spector

Sinta Spector graduated with a Bachelors degree in Fine Art from the Corcoran College of Art and Design in Washington, D.C., USA. Thereafter she lived in Japan, Swaziland and Indonesia before working as an artist in Johannesburg. In Japan, she served an internship with a German clothing designer, Jurgen Lehl, cataloguing thousands of different textile swatches by texture and colour. She is currently completing a MFA at the University

of the Witwatersrand.

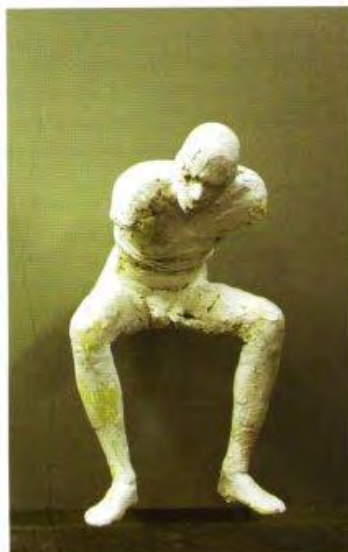
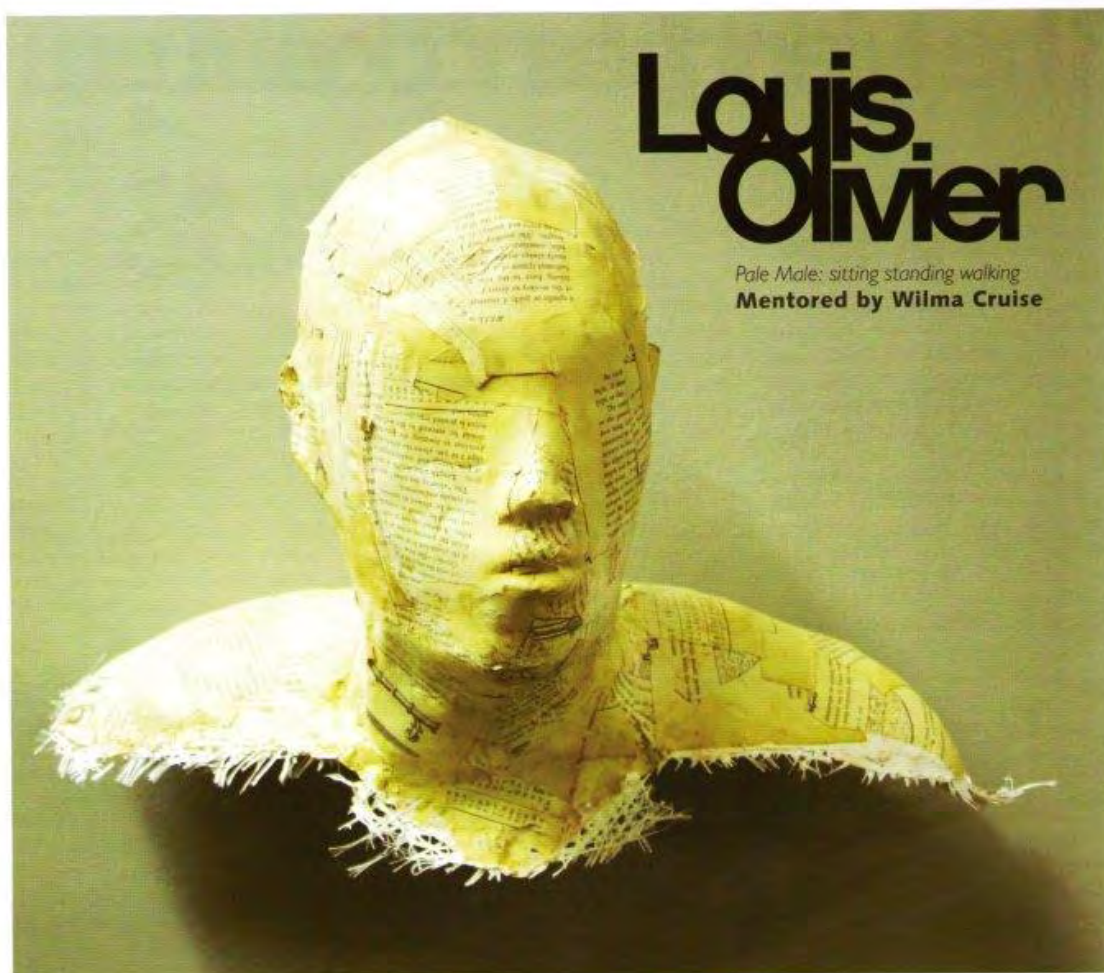
Previous exhibitions have included installations at the Goethe Institute in Johannesburg; in galleries in Rosebank, Johannesburg; on the University of Witwatersrand campus and in Washington, D.C.

Her exhibition, *Nomodix*, under the mentorship of Usha Seepanm, took place from 24 October to 7 November 2009. Her work deals with issues relating to job creation and are created out of recycled, reinvented textiles, leathers, buttons and found objects. Her work attempts to consider the intersection between the creation of art and work

and reflects her environmental concerns. "Ultimately, I aim for work that is replicable by others. The mannequins I use to support the textile work have recycling potential and are included from paper maché.

A focus of her current work is knitted, knotted textiles. "I focus on ways to reconstruct and re-use textiles - expensive or cheap, high or low quality, purchased or found, recycled or discarded material. I integrate these into new pieces of wearable art. The fabric is torn into strips, knotted and knitted into various patterns and motifs, resulting in a new product. Sometimes I construct a garment from these knitted materials."







*Your exhibition sold out 95% before the show even opened. The rest was sold during the following two weeks. How does that feel?*

I was overwhelmed by the response to the work. Some clients previewed the show on the day before the opening and bought some of the works. It was just what I needed to set the atmosphere for the following day at the opening. The work was reasonably priced and the strategic pricing was one of the key factors in people buying the work. The outcome was unexpected, yet so pleasant... Can you ask for more?

*What was it like being mentored by an established artist? Do you think it helped you grow or do you think it stifled your creativity?*

It was wonderful. We all need input and feedback on what we do. I was excited to show and work for approximately six months under the mentorship of Wilma Cruise. Being my first exhibition, with no formal art training, Wilma helped me to make confident decisions by pushing the boundaries in producing works for the exhibition. She was always there to guide and comment on evolving work. I was amazed at her love for the arts and the passion to produce conceptually strong works. It definitely helped me to grow.

*Was your mentor sympathetic to your themes and do you think the match was a good one?*

It was a perfect match. The role of mentor and mentee shifted at times as we learned from one another. From the first cup of coffee to much thereafter, we shared similar inspirations and artists work that inspired us both. We both have a passion for sculpture and the figure in sculpture. Wilma always gave an honest opinion, it was incredibly helpful at times when I needed to make crucial decisions. Her excitement for the works as they developed encouraged me a lot and gave me the boldness to take risks.



*Have your original themes and issues changed or evolved through the input of your mentor?*

The theme did not change. I chose a theme right at the beginning which we agreed on. The mentor helped me through the thought process, conceptualising the theme and she helped to develop a language to convey the message. I found her way of thinking fresh and inspiring, and it led to the unleashing of my potential.

*Do you think that the mentorship programme has been beneficial to your career? If so, in what way?*

Absolutely. The experience gained was invaluable. Something I can surely build

on. I gained a lot of insight from the workshops held at Artspace prior to the exhibition. It was aimed to better equip us for our careers in the art scene. It showed me healthy boundaries, defined true success, and taught strategy and maturity. I feel the timing of this exhibition to be very strategic and one can only hope for broader horizons.

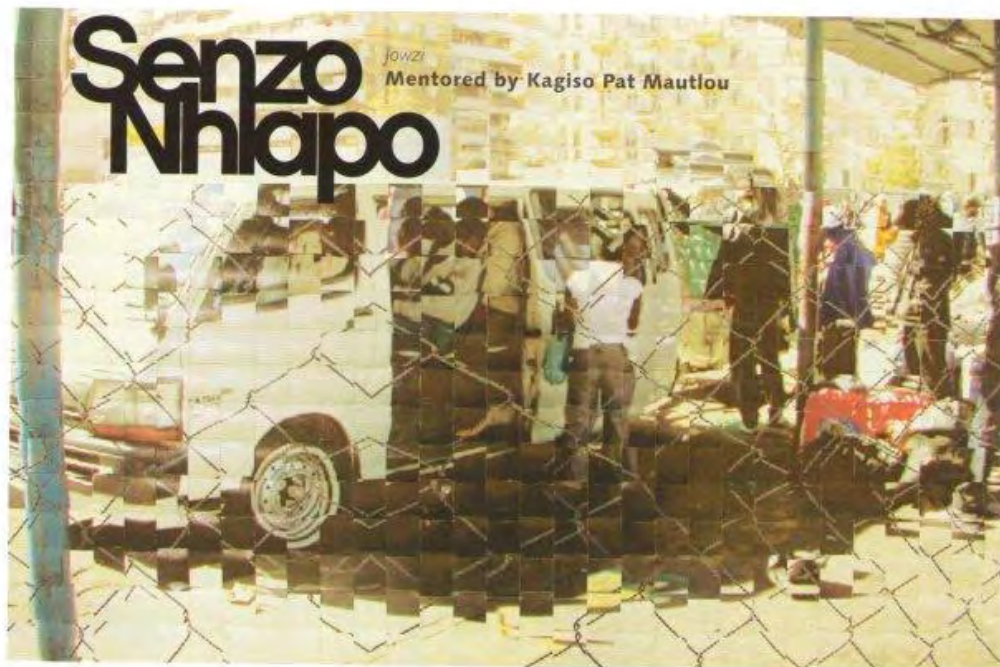
*Has it helped you to focus your direction as an artist?*

Most definitely. I was always dreaming about entering the contemporary art scene. This opportunity gave me a chance and I am now more confident to pursue the dream.



# Senzo Nhlapo

*Jowzi*  
Mentored by Kagiso Pat Mautlou





*I believe you've had a long working relationship with Kagiso Pat Mautloa. How do you know him and what was it like working with him?*

I knew Pat because his family lived two streets away from my house and he was the most popular artist at Mofolo Village Soweto. Working with Pat was like working with a colleague who knew what I want and what we both wanted from each other. He taught me a lot in terms of technique and of what it takes to become a professional artist.

*What is it like being back at an exhibition where you know that people are going to evaluate your work based on the fact that they know someone has helped you?*

It is challenging because you know that the world will be viewing your work with the highest expectations.

They know that you were mentored by a very established international artist who travelled the world and who knows what is expected of artists in a commercial gallery. That also creates pressure that drives one to be better than their mentor, or creates that impression of being the best of the best.

*What did you learn from the critique given about your work?*

When working with a theme or with themes there is a certain way or narrow way of thinking. Maybe that is what they call academic arrogance, which is driven by what one conceptualises to be the truth in their artwork. I learned to be a little bit loose and be able to feature other subject matters that are easy to relate to or to be recognised by the viewers at some point. The critique is sometimes what one can learn from or loose direction from, but I chose to learn from it, which was a positive decision for me.

*Have your original themes and issues changed or evolved through the input of your mentor?*

My theme evolved and I started to look at the theme even deeper. Luckily we are both from the City of Jozi, so we share a lot in common.

*Would you recommend the mentorship programme to other artists?*

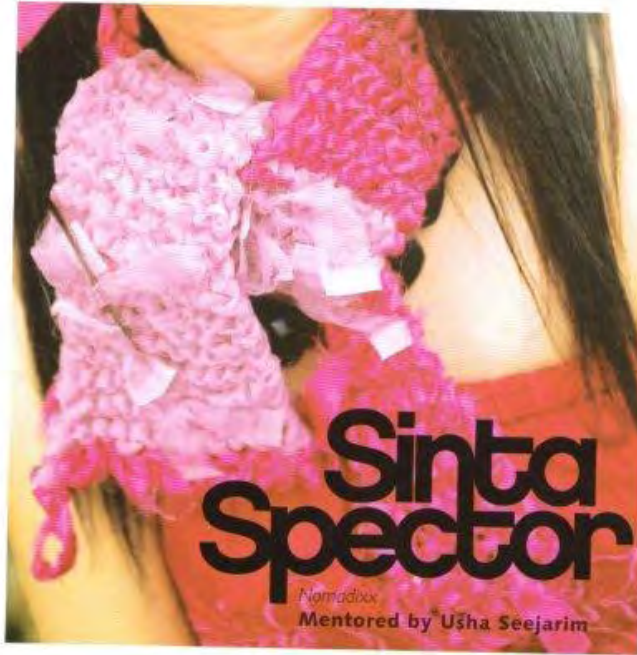
Yes, I would love to because it would help them understand the relationship between the artist and the gallery, to have that mutual understanding and create transparency between them. Also, they would learn how the commercial world works with the artists.

*How will you implement what you have learned from this experience?*

I will encourage artists, especially young and upcoming artists, to identify who could mentor them so we can share our experiences. Also, one day I hope to have a gallery in the township that could run the same programme.









*Do you think that living in so many very different countries has influenced your work? If so, in what way?*

Yes it has. Each culture on each continent on earth uses art in daily life, whether one calls it craft or art. The difference is that craft is a functional product humans create for daily life and art is created by people to affirm their own identity. All these cultures have affected my identity.

*Is this the first time you have been mentored by an established artist such as Usha Seejaram?*

In the past I had worked with some pretty big names in the industry. Whether I was taught by them or met them through connections, I have learned from many mentors. Shaun Chapman, Karl Nel, Annette Polari, Kendel Buster, Rashied Lani, Xholi Norman, Linda Ballen, Feika Ainsley, and family friend William Kentridge are but to name a few. Usha Seejaram is one of many who has been my mentor.

*Was your mentor sympathetic to your themes?*

Usha and I work with very different mediums and make use of very different techniques to produce our work. We had to come to an understanding of each other's needs and figure out how to help each other through the very personal process of creating art.

*Have your original themes and issues changed or evolved through the input of your mentor?*

Yes, by bringing sculpture into what I do, the functional and artistic fell into place. I have subsequently been working on papier-mâché mannequins which are selling for R500, and these have been successful so far.

*Do you think the workshops were beneficial? If so, in what way?*

Through the workshops I have

learned, most importantly, that art is a business and we create our own jobs. Thus we need to learn the basic skills of how to build a business and what is needed to make it work for you and your clients. What goes behind the organising and managing of each individual's art exhibition is also important to understand.

*What was the greatest lesson that you learnt through your experience in the mentorship programme?*

Do not jump the gun and do everything at once. Select one goal, accomplish that first, then move towards the next concept and build on. It's kind of like building a house. You need the blue print and your materials to make the dream become a reality. You first

come up with a concept, sketch out and write down what you want to do. Then you find the building blocks to make it happen and a technique that works for you and the materials you have selected to work with. You have to think about what materials you are going to pick and how they can be manipulated to create something unique and aesthetically pleasing to the eye.

It also has to make sense to your viewers; you want them to come back to see your next show. By creating a buzz around your name and work, you make can make a big difference to your career. Marketing is so important.





## Management &amp; Leadership

## The big break that put the new kid on the map

Sculptor Louis Olivier and his sought-after bookends are proof that a corporate gift can be the personal benchmark that launches a career, writes Katy Chance

THINGS haven't changed that much, despite all this gender equality malarkey. Just as girls were once (and probably still are) expected to get "proper jobs" as teachers or nurses, for boys it's to "sort of make clear that it's IT, engineering or medical".

Consequently, arts and sculpture Louis Olivier, after marauding in Detroit and because he was "quite interested in computers", did a BCom Informatics at Trent University. "I had always dreamed of working with my hands," he says, "and had always enjoyed installation art and using found objects, but I'd never been introduced to sculpture, despite doing art in music level. And it was definitely not considered a potential occupation."

In 2000, Olivier took what he calls a drastic step, leaving the IT world, giving himself just a month to decide that he would "jump into the unknown". He hasn't looked back, he's been too busy.

The jump was made easier by having met his future wife, a full-time painter and art teacher. "I thought we'd make a good team," says Olivier.

And they did. They got work as part of a team at Utsukia Marine World in Durham, which led to work in Dubai at the Ibn Battuta mall. The work was "demanding" and involved a lot of reconstruction and reproducing art types, but the projects introduced him to mould-making and casting, which piqued Olivier's interest. "It's fairly similar to sculpting, so I started teaching myself about the methods and materials."

By now he and his wife were based in Prescott, a city he describes as a great base for artists and as having a "big social arts scene" and supportive arts community.

"I met a lot of artists and my art world opened up, and through them and their work I



realised I could be a success as a sculptor." But success ensued constantly approaching people for potential private and usually small commissions. Then a friend introduced him to Teresa Litamore, in about 2005.

Litamore was an curator for Sault and Rand Merchant Bank (RMB). She left curating for Sault last year after 27 years, but is still curator for RMB and has been for 15 years. It's between corporate curating she found time to create Artspace in Jo'burg in 2000, a top-end gallery and the base for her art-memorial programmes.

"Teresa needed a sculpture urgently for a corporate commission for Sault, for a plan in Qatar," says Olivier.

Another sculptor had dropped out at the last minute, and Litamore took a chance with the unknown Olivier.

Their relationship has continued as one of mentor and student ever since.

It was through Litamore that Olivier met Caroline Waterhouse of RMB. In 2007, RMB needed a gift, and they needed a good one.

"We wanted a top-end, quality corporate gift that would reflect our 'Traditional values, innovative ideas' philosophy," says Waterhouse.

"So we came up with the concept of a contemporary take

on Rodin's The Thinker as a pair of bookends. We were happy for Louis to innovatively interpret a traditional piece. And we wanted the finished figures to represent the thinking people in our building."

Olivier's first proposal had both figures as seated businessmen but, says Olivier, RMB felt he needed a computer, and the companion needed to be female so as to be more gender balanced.

I'm a huge fan of bookends, not least because of the object found between them, but so often they are too light.

These are heavy despite the almost ethereal visual aspect of the two thinkers, who appear whiffling and pondering calculus in equal measure. And the L-plane, unusually, slides under the books, making them part of the support, while the weight of the solid cast figures acts as a counterbalance.

The result is beautiful, so beautiful that the numbered and signed 250 pairs produced became extremely sought after.

"We got an amazing response," says Waterhouse.

"We got extraordinarily touching letters from people who had seen the bookends — which were given exclusively as corporate gifts to RMB clients — asking to purchase a set. "I had to explain they were

simply not available — not for love nor money!"

But when the Sandton General Benchmark Project was launched in March last year, and when RMB, known for their extensive support for the arts, were approached, they immediately thought of those thinking bookends.

The Benchmark Project is an "urban furniture programme" — that aims to make the area (of Sandton) more welcoming, using, you guessed it, benches.

Last week, Olivier took part in RMB's private celebration of the bench they commissioned from him, consisting of a few concrete "floating" benches in which the thinkers have grown to life size and visually function as the bench supports.

"They are almost identical to the original bookends," says Olivier, but obviously, due to the scale, there is more detail. The models, for instance.

It was a two-year project from design to delivery, and the casting of the two figures alone took six months at the firm's Visual Artistic Foundry in Pretoria — the Foundry Olivier has been using from the outset. William Kinnear says it was, as Olivier quickly found himself in August 2008.

It was due to this corporate commission that Olivier was able to upscale his studio along with his imagination, because an industrial-size studio was



BEHOLD: The RMB Thinker bookends, left, much in demand, and Louis Olivier with the life-size version created for Sandton. Picture: MARTIN BROADS

required to work on the life-size figures for the bench.

Olivier admits to being blown away by how fast doors have been opening since he was introduced to the corporate world. "Since about 2006 the idea was just to grab every opportunity I could and keep at it, like through Teresa and her contacts," he just smiles and shrugs, and looks a little tired but happy.

Last year he completed a six-month, fully funded mentorship programme at Artspace, which Artspace has applied for funding.

While pouring the finishing

touches to a corporate bench, Olivier had his first exhibition at Artspace at the end of the mentorship programme. Entitled Pale Male — Strong, Walking, Standing, Olivier used "his body as the template for the figure and as a metaphor for spiritual convictions, and to convey them with sculpture and the body as a sculptural form. I was creating life-size figures from white materials — such as plaster or Paris — and there were all these white bodies in my studio. And obviously I am white, hence the name of the exhibition."

coaches to a corporate bench.

The exhibition led to several commissions, and to funding from local government for Artspace to exhibit at this year's Joburg Art Fair, in which Olivier's Pale Male will appear again. Additions to the exhibition for the fair are two bronze versions of existing figures. "They're the same mould," says Olivier. "I'll just recast them."

Recasting the mould, rather than breaking it, seems to

make good business as well as artistic sense.

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#### MARCH 20, 2010

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