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Art Stars Revealed: 15 of the Nation's Top New Experimental Artists Descend on Vryfees 2014

The final 15 have been chosen. Participants for the inaugural OPENLab 2014, a new national laboratory for Early and Mid Career Artists and Creative Practitioners interested in making art in the public realm have been selected from around the country.

Adri Herbert, Director of the Vryfestival says '*OPENLab is a unique national opportunity for practitioners working in dance, visual arts, performance art, architecture, fashion, new media, sound art and design to explore new approaches to site based practices across different communities, disciplines and geographical contexts. There was a very high caliber of applicants and the Vryfestival is very proud to have initiated this inaugural lab in partnership with the University of the Free State (UFS).*'

Artists participating in OPENLab 14 are: **Adelheid von Maltitz** (Bloemfontein), **Elgin Rust** (Capetown) **Francois Knoetze** (Capetown), **Gavin Krastin** (Capetown), **Kira Kemper** (Johannesburg), **Lesiba Mabitsela** (Capetown), **Nadja Daehnke** (Capetown), **Nieke Lombaard** (Bloemfontein/Capetown), **Phumulani Ntuni** (Johannesburg), **Roxy Kawitsky** (Capetown), **Sandile Radebe** (Johannesburg), **Sethembile Msezane** (Capetown), **Siphumeze Khundayi** (Capetown), **Sonia Radebe** (Johannesburg) and **Wayne Reddiar** (Durban). (*See full biographies below*).

OPENLab 2014 was developed by curators, designers and artists Carli Leimbach (AU), Paul Gazzola (AU), Lynda Roberts (AU), Tècha Noble (AU) and Jay Pather (SA) as part of the *Program for Innovation in Artform Development* (PIAD) initiated by the Vryfestival and the University of the Free State. Other facilitators include Phillipa Tumubeinee (SA, *Architect & Designer*), Nadia Cusimano (AUS, *Performer & Dramaturge*), Bec Dean (AUS, *Curator & Writer*) and Lee-Ann Tjunypa Buckskin (AUS, *Artist & Educator*). It is funded by the Australia Council for the Arts and the National Lottery Distribution Fund (NLDTF) and supported by Map (Modern art projects) - South Africa.

OPENLab Coordinating facilitator Paul Gazzola says: "*15 years ago I had the great privilege of spending three months on an artists exchange in Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town. This time was highly formative in developing my artistic practice that seeks to explore themes of people, place and the creation of works within diverse communities and cultures. Coming back in the role of Coordinating facilitator for the OPENLab 2014, is again a great opportunity to continue these explorations in dialogue with the extraordinary South African participants and facilitators involved.*"

MIDM's Sonia Radebe, a dancer, teacher and choreographer from Diepsloot, Johannesburg suggests of the lab: '*I have realized that the process that one goes through in this kind of work allows the creator and performers to be knowledgeable about the space, the texture, the history or story it is telling on it's own, and how they need to inform each other. So the space is living as much as the performers.*'

Wayne Reddiar, an interactive media arts practitioner from Durban commenting on the focus of the group work says: '*I make work where a social condition and environment intersect. This is often done both independently but also with collaborative partners.*'

OPENLab 2014, an investment in future thinking, creative networks and professional development, will take place over 10 days from 18 July-27 July 2014 at the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein alongside the Vryfestival and a weeklong studio held at Map (Modern art projects) - South Africa in Richmond, Northern Cape. <http://map-southafrica.org/>

The OPENLab 2014 artists and facilitators will present an overview of their work to the public as part of a "**Proesel**"/**Sampler** afternoon on Saturday, July 19 in the Jazz Lounge at the Vryfees from 2 to 4 pm, www.facebook.com/events/535947686514272/?ref=22 and attend the forum '**Cohesions and Disruptions: Art as a Key to Transformation**' at the Naval Hill Planetarium on Mandela Day, 18 June 2014, www.facebook.com/events/582064155215208/ For more information visit www.OPENLab-southafrica.co.za, www.facebook.com/pages/PikoPiad/1435158293383474 or contact: Angela de Jesus, Curator Johannes Stegmann Art Gallery, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein. T: (051) 401-2706 E: dejesusav@ufs.ac.za

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*The National Lottery Distribution Trust Fund (NLDTF) in South Africa has contributed generously to the OPENLab. The NLDTF relies on funds for the proceeds of the National Lottery. The Lotteries Act and regulations guide the way in which NLDTF funding may be allocated. The NLDTF wants the grants to make a difference to the lives of all South Africans, especially those more vulnerable, and to improve the sustainability of the beneficiary organisations. Available funds are distributed to registered and non-profit organisations in the fields of charities; arts, culture and national heritage; and sport and recreation. By placing its emphasis on areas of greatest need and potential, the NLDTF contributes to South Africa’s development.

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X site

Public art × Ideas × Digital culture

OPENLab 2014

THE ART OF BEING PUBLIC

EXPLORATIONS IN SITE BASED PRACTICES

SELECTED ARTISTS

Sethembile Msezane



KwaZulu Natal born artist, Sethembile Msezane, grew up in Soweto Johannesburg. She recently completed her BFA degree at the University of Cape Town majoring in photography at the Michaelis School of Fine Art. Msezane explores the

issues around her identity that are centered on her being a young Zulu maiden, growing up in the township and later leading an urban lifestyle in a metropolitan city. Recent selected group shows include Camouflage at Circa (2013), Greatest Hits 2012, If the Halls could Talk at Association of Visual Arts (AVA) in Cape Town (2013), Michaelis Grad Show at the Michaelis School of Fine Art in Cape Town (2012), CMYK exhibition at Speke photographic in Johannesburg (2012), Manifestations of self: Self Portraits by 9 Women at Youngblood in Cape Town (2012) and a group show at the Lovell Gallery as part of the Cape Town Month of Photography (2012).

Francois Knoetze



Francois Knoetze is an artist based in Cape Town. He completed his Bachelor of Fine Arts at Rhodes University in 2012, graduating cum laude. He is currently pursuing his Masters of Fine Arts at Michaelis School of Fine Art. While he specialises in assemblage sculpture, using trash and other discarded objects as a creative medium, his work is

multidisciplinary, incorporating performance and film as vehicles through which to further explore the symbolic and aesthetic potential of the materials used in his sculptures. Knoetze's work is primarily concerned with the blurring of boundaries between body and object as a product of a consumer-driven culture. His work explores the personification of things and the objectification of persons by retracing discarded materials back to their

sources - through homes, freight trains, factories, farms, shops - presenting an expansive account of the value systems and network of processes responsible for the commodities we accumulate. He exhibited in at the Absa L'Atelier in 2011 and at the Sasol New Signatures in 2011 and 2013. In 2012 he was named one of Art South Africa's 'Bright Young Things'. He has been involved in numerous theatre productions as set designer and puppet-maker, including works by the UBOM! Eastern Cape Theatre Company in 2012, Cape Town based Horse's Heads Productions in 2013, and Mike Van Graan's 'Gevalle Engel' which debuted at Aardklop in 2013. He is currently working on a short film, 'Cape Mongo', which will feature a series of site specific performances in and around Cape Town.

Website: <http://francoisknoetze.wix.com/francoisknoetze>

Phumulani Ntuni



Phumulani Ntuni graduated in 2011 from the University of Johannesburg with a National Diploma in Fine Arts and later completed a Btech degree with the same university in 2012. He was primarily trained as a sculpture and has since expanded his practice to include video, drawing, performance, installation and digital printing.

Phumulani's work explores socio-political themes often investigating notions of identity, violence, masculinities and landscape. He is currently working on an ongoing project titled "umjondolo/shack" a multi disciplinary performance project using installation and photography. The project was staged at the Goetheonmain in 2013 and for Infecting the City, 2014. He has recently completed a public sculpture commissioned by the KKV foundation in the Netherlands under the auspices of the Nirox Foundation. He has participated in numerous group exhibitions including the Sasol New Signatures 2013, Absa Latelier 2011 to 2013, Absa KKNK and Nirox projects. Upcoming exhibitions include Degrees of Separation at Absa gallery in September and an exhibition titled 20 years of Democracy in July at the Appalachian State University in North Carolina.

Website: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SHPxZSnaJSw>

Wayne Reddiar

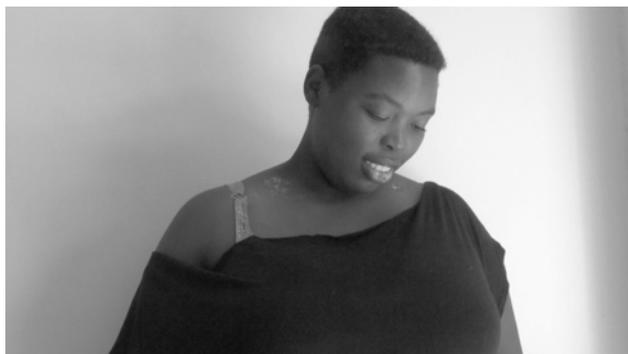


Wayne Reddiar is a lecturer at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and a practicing multi-disciplinary artist currently based in Pietermaritzburg. He received his Master of Digital Arts Degree in Interactive Media Design at Wits University (Johannesburg) and is currently reading towards a PhD in New Media Art Practice at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. His practice often involves a convergence of various media and combination of various disciplines, as well as working in collaboration with other practitioners. Reddiar has produced work

as a composer, filmmaker, writer, and new media artist. He is also a founding member of the Public Arts Collective, Vuka Ndlovu who produces work within areas that intersect with activist media, audience development and site-specific multi-disciplinary art. Reddiar's practice and research seeks to explore two interrelated conditions evident in contemporary society: the democratization of production and the ubiquitous nature of technology. Here, his primary vision entails modes of production, which negate the notion of an individual genius, in order to explore creative processes, which facilitate human exchange, interaction and participation.

Website: [_http://oldwork.blogspot.com/_](http://oldwork.blogspot.com/)

Siphumeze Khundayi



Siphumeze is a multi-disciplinary freelance performer who uses performance as activism, focusing particularly on LGBTI and women's rights. She completed a Bachelor of Arts in Gender Studies and Drama in 2010 and an Honours degree in Gender and Transformation in

2011 at UCT. She did an internship with The Mothertongue Project in 2011, and continues to work with them on various projects. She is also on their board. Her experience in the arts ranged from performance art pieces, storytelling, theatre productions, and workshop facilitation. She worked with Zakheni, a Drama Therapy organization, as a drama practitioner in their school's project in Khayelitsha. She also worked with Project Playground an organization that focuses on learning through the arts in Langa. She is currently the artistic director of a web based platform for African women to express themselves called HOLAA! (Hub Of Loving Action Africa).

Kira Kemper



Kira Kemper was born in Johannesburg, South Africa in 1988. She completed her undergraduate degree in Fine Arts from WITS University in 2010. Kira went on to receive her Masters degree in Fine Arts, with distinction, from Michaelis Art School in Cape Town in 2013. Kira has exhibited in Johannesburg, Cape Town and in Berlin as part of the Homebase Residency program in 2013. Kira's main interest lies in public space in South Africa, which

often culminates into site specific sculptures and public intervention performances. These sculptures/props/ costumes often mimic Colonial architecture found in these spaces. By using fabric as a medium, for its tactile and relational qualities, Kira is able to soften, satirize and mock these symbols of Colonial rule in South Africa. The performances of these sculptures/props/costumes are documented as videos and photographs.

Website: kirakemper.blogspot.com

Lesiba Mabitsela



Fashion Artist, Lesiba Mabitsela, currently resides in Cape Town, South Africa. Straight after completing a Bachelors Degree in Fashion Design & Technology at the Tshwane University of Technology, Mabitsela held the position of Junior Designer for St. Lorient Fashion & Art Gallery. He would later be drawn to take up an apprenticeship with world-renowned fashion designer Gavin Rajah. He has been involved with work in the arts & fashion industry as he continues to explore

other mediums of expression in an attempt to rethink & revise the stagnation of the fashion empire, both in his native Africa & abroad. His fourth year thesis focused primarily on lost African clothing traditions and textile techniques. He continued his practical studies in this world while dwelling into the complexities of sublime aesthetics and the importance of culture and tradition. These ideas grew further with his migration to the Western Cape in June 2011 where a difference in culture (such as the West African craft tourism business & Cape Malay population in Cape Town) & interactions with fellow creatives influenced this work heavily. Lesiba Mabitsela examines how art has become a medium in which he uses to express these issues. The use of 'Storm Blankets' from PEP stores was a result of subconsciously being exposed to the harsh realities of living in

Cape Town. Lesiba Mabitsela Studio Fall/Winter 2014 Capsule Collection is a commercial project which has come about through juxtaposition of all his cultural influences; Islam, Africa, Drape, Modernism, Gender, Modesty & Poverty.

Website: www.lesibamabitsela.wix.com/studio

Sonia Radebe



Sonia Radebe is an award winning contemporary dancer, facilitator and choreographer. She graduated in Theory and Practice of Dance Teaching from Moving Into Dance Mophatong 2003 and has over 12 years of professional contribution in Dance, Dance theatre, choreography and Dance Education. Her extraordinary work as a performer has been seen in Africa, USA, and Europe. Of note, is her newly discovered ability to choreograph the emotionally charged dance work “Inception”. This is her first solo work. This is an emotional journey of a female artistic traveller filled with discovery with challenges being a big part of that journey. “Inception” premiered at the Dance Umbrella Festival 2011 and received an invitation from the Global Dance Alliance in Germany where she performed at Tanzhaus in Dusseldorf, Fifth International Dance Festival in Chile and it also formed part of the Afrovibes festival in the UK and the Netherlands. Her versatility as an artist has seen her working with numerous multi-award winning artists including Arco Griffith Matlala, Jackie Semela, Gregory Vuyani Maqoma, Rhodessa Jones, Sylvia Glasser, Vincent Mantsoe, Jay Pather, Peter John Sabbagh Dada Masilo, Robyn Orlin, Mark Hawkins and many more. Companies she collaborated with ranges from professional dance companies, Schools -Isiseko Primary School, prison- Johannesburg Correctional Services, NGO-Afrika Tikkun. One of the highlights of her career was an opportunity to choreograph for women who are incarcerated at the Johannesburg Correctional Service and touring her solo work. She was recognized by Mail and Guardian as one of 200 Young South Africans they recognize as influential individuals that are innovative and risk takers. Currently, Sonia is a senior member of a renowned Moving Into Dance Mophatong Performance Company where she dazzles on stage as she continues to grow as a performer, choreographer and as a person. She has had opportunities to adjudicate in different dance festivals around Gauteng such as Dance Umbrella Stepping Stone program and Motjeko Dance Festival. Her dedication and skills are evident as Dance Umbrella awarded her for Best Female Dancer in Contemporary Style in 2008 and Gauteng Dance Manyano granted her an award of Female Dancer of the Decade in Contemporary Style in 2011. She recently choreographed a dance piece for the MIDM performance Company. ‘Treasure’ was performed as part of the Dance Umbrella Celebration and will be part of the company’s annual season. She’s currently in the process of a choreographic collaborative work with Jennifer Dallas from Canada for MIDM Performance Company.

Nieke Lombard



Nieke Lombard is an actress and theatre maker specialising in puppetry. She has been professionally based in Cape Town for two and a half years after completing her Honours Cum Laude at the University of the Free State in 2011. She hails from Bloemfontein but after interning for Handspring Puppet Company in her fourth year (as part of her thesis in Visual Theatre, Object Theatre and Adult Puppetry) she decided to make the professional leap to Cape Town. Nieke wrote, designed and acted in her fourth year production “Elnora & Nirvana” which garnered her three awards, namely: Best Free State Production Vryfees 2012, Slurpie Kanna for Best Upcoming Artist ‘Pruttel’, ‘Elnora & Nirvana’ KKNK 2013, Herrie Kanna for Groundbreaking Work ‘Elnora

& Nirvana’ KKNK 2013 and has since been toured professionally. She has designed and directed puppetry for a visual production at the main festival of the Klein Karoo National 3 Festival called “Wentel” and is currently designing and directing a puppet for “Morsig” for a youth theatre production. Recently she was nominated for a Fiesta for Best Upcoming Artist.

Sandile Radebe



Sandile is a Johannesburg based artist whose main area of interest is art practice in both, public and private spaces. Sandile explores these spaces through stimulating a new reading of graffiti and more broadly the way language works to help construct our realities. The artist visualizes graffiti in abstract sculptural forms instead of alphabetic lettering. He populates gallery spaces with installations created

from these forms which, in their labyrinthine structures, imaginatively evoke the artist’s own experience of walking through Johannesburg. The viewer is encouraged to think about graffiti and indeed language in a new way while conjuring the city ‘out there’ through a creative gallery navigation in time and space. Sandile studied BAFA(Honours) at Wits School of the Arts in from 2002 till 2006. In 2009 he studied for a PGDA in Arts and Cultural Management from Wits School of the Arts. As a student Sandile also participated in several workshops including ‘a very temporary monument for an unsung hero’ with Jean-Bernard Koeman and the ‘24 hour workshops’ with Christian Nerf in 2005. Sandile also started painting murals as part of a collective with Katlego Lefine and BJ Engelbretch (2003). This was a means

of generating income for art supplies for the collective. The collective painted murals for the 'Wits School of the Arts launch' (2003) 'Soil' a play by Kgafela oa Mogogodi (2004) Trinity records studios (2005) among other murals. After graduation Sandile continued individually to paint murals as a way of making a living. Individually he's executed many more including murals for King Kong (2011) and several for the City of Joburg (2011). As a painting facilitator he helped realise murals through his learners for the Urban Arts Platform (2012) and Keleketla! Library (2011). Sandile also participated in various group exhibitions including the 'Assemblage Pop-Up show 2.0' curated by Mika Conradie (June 2012), 'Appeal 2012' curated by Kim Gurney and Elgin Rust (September 2012), 'Basha Uhuru' curated by Kalishnikovv Gallery (June 2013), he collaborated with Mandy Johnston for 'Diptych' curated by Assemblage (September 2013). His work was recently selected for the top 100 works at the 'Absa L'Atelier' (April 2014). He has also executed public interventions 'Lest We Forget' at the Drill Hall, Johannesburg, in collaboration with Jabulani Matthews Tshuma (February 2014) as well as an installation intervention 'Graphoasis' at Afrika Burn in collaboration with Elgin Rust (May 2014). In February 2013 Sandile was invited to give a talk at the Goethe Institut's 'New Imaginaries/ New Publics' symposium facilitated by the AAC.

Gavin Krastin



South African Gavin Krastin is an award winning performance artist, theatre-maker, choreographer and designer-scenographer with an interest in the body's representation, limitation and operation in alternative, layered spaces. His work is inspired by his immediate South African environment and the history embedded in its shifting socio-political climate. Apart from operating within the conventional theatre context, Krastin advocates the migration towards unconventional spaces where unknown risk factors are imminent. The social underpinnings and philosophies of space intrigue him and inspire a questioning of operational systems, thresholds, proximities and the politics of

boundary-crossings and transgressions (and the myth making thereof) in his work. His approach offers opportunity for intimate engagement, immersive journeys and unique participatory involvement. Krastin holds a Master of Arts Degree in choreography and performance and an undergraduate degree in drama and art history and visual cultures. The dove-tailing of these various influences is evident in his multidisciplinary works which constantly seek to interrogate space, choreograph the visual and augment the body-silhouette. He presents works at numerous festivals in South Africa and internationally, has lectured at Rhodes University and the University of Cape Town and has worked with the First Physical Theatre Company.

Website: www.gavinkrastin.com

Elgin Rust



Elgin Rust was born in Düsseldorf, Germany, in 1974. After receiving her BA (FA)2007, Rust completed an MFA (with distinction) at the Michaelis School of Fine Art(UCT) in 2010. Focusing mainly on sculptural interventions, Rust nonetheless explores a wide range of media. Sound, video and performance all feature in her investigative explorations which often are interdisciplinary, straddling the realms of art, law and media. She has participated in numerous group shows in Cape Town at the Michaelis

Gallery; The AVA Gallery; the Rooster Theatre Collective, as well as participating in a workshop facilitated by L'Atelier D'Alexandrie 4 (Egypt, 2009). *Judgement-Uitspraak 2011, Case No 001/05/2008* was her first solo exhibition at The AVA Gallery. This body of work was "re-staged" as a collaborative *Appeal 2012* in Johannesburg by the independent guerilla gallery. Here Rust invited 14 artists to engage with concepts initiated as early as 2010. Most recently Rust initiated the[common]garden, a site specific collaborative intervention for GIPCA|LAND which called for active public participation. Her works are included in the UCT Works of Art Collection, the Ellerman House Contemporary Art Collection and the Sanlam Art collection as well as Private Collections. She lives and works in Cape Town.

Website: www.facebook.com/elginart

Nadja Daehnke



Nadja Daehnke was born in Johannesburg, South Africa in 1971. In 1993 she completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree with distinction at the University of Cape Town, followed by Masters in Fine Art (1998) and Masters in History of Art (2009) degrees, both with distinction. Nadja has exhibited nationally and internationally and has lectured at various tertiary institutions in both theory and practical subjects. Now working as independent curator and artist, Nadja held the post of curator of the Michaelis Galleries, University of Cape Town, from 2010 to early-2013. Prior to this she worked at the Iziko South African National Gallery as Curator for Contemporary Painting and Sculpture.

Website: www.nadjadaehnke.wordpress.com

Roxy Kawitzky



Roxy Kawitzky is an artist and writer working in a relational, performance-based format. She has written and run Live Action Role Plays and conversational games; and designed, run and facilitated writers' workshops and other fictional exchanges as part of her practice.

She graduated with distinction from the Michaelis School of Fine Art at UCT (2012), and is currently enrolled in a Masters Degree in Theatre Making (Performance Art). She has shown work on exhibitions such as A-MAZE Interact; a festival of interactive art in Johannesburg (2012), Restructuring Encounters; a group show of contemporary South African performance art at the Sanlam

Permanent Collection (2013), and Critics' Choice at the AVA Gallery in Cape Town (2013); an exhibition of works selected by South African art critics and theorists. She is currently showing work with No Man's Art, an international pop-up gallery based in Amsterdam.

Website: <http://roxykawitzky.wordpress.com/>

Adelheid von Maltitz



Adelheid von Maltitz completed her undergraduate degree and then her Master's in Fine Art in 2008, at the University of the Free State. She specialized in sculptural installation. The title of her Master's dissertation was 'Fear Transformed, constructing roaming structures as a means of confronting and overcoming a fearful response to a displaced urban environment'.

Anxiety towards a site or situation most often forms the conceptual core of her work. She is currently working part time at her Alma mater, presenting classes in sculpture and drawing. She has participated in several local and national exhibitions as well as an international exhibition. She is currently busy with her PhD in Fine Art.

Website: www.facebook.com/adelheid.vonmaltitz