



THE  
MELROSE  
GALLERY

## MEDIA RELEASE

### **The Melrose Gallery Announces Two Exciting Exhibitions IN CONVERSATION: "The Agitation to Regain... To Regain, The Regeneration of Africa" and "30 Years of Wishful Thinking"**

The Melrose Gallery is pleased to announce the upcoming exhibitions, "The Agitation to Regain... To Regain, The Regeneration of Africa" curated by Ruzy Rusike, and "30 Years of Wishful Thinking" curated by Siphso Mdanda. These exhibitions will open on 5 July 2024 and run until 25 August 2024, offering a profound exploration of democracy, cultural identity, and artistic resilience. The exhibitions although separate will also dialogue with each other through panel discussions, performances. Inspired by a conversation between Achille Mbembe and Bayo Akomolafe, and borrowing from the Igbo people's aesthetic of meeting the other to trace patterns of convergence and divergence, this dialogue between Rusike and Mdanda embodies that spirit.

#### **The Agitation to Regain... To Regain, The Regeneration of Africa**

*Curated by Ruzy Rusike*

Through intentional gaps and aesthetic density, the exhibition prompts reflection and contemplation, bridging to light the gap between past and present while carrying forth the significance of our cultural heritage. As we commemorate 30 years of democracy, this exhibition serves as a poignant reminder of the progress made and the challenges still faced on our journey towards societal renewal. It underscores the interconnectedness of democracy, cultural identity, and creative expression, encouraging viewers to actively engage in reclaiming and revitalising their narratives within the context of a democratic South Africa, and Africa at large. Ultimately, fostering a slow yet urgent conversation pertaining to the regeneration of Africa within the creative realm, inviting viewers to contribute to the ongoing narrative of empowerment and transformation.

#### **About Ruzy Rusike**

Ruzy Rusike is an artist, curator and social activist. Rusike has curated local and international exhibitions: *Esther Mahlangu 85*, The Melrose Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa (2021); *Ubuntusim Re-Enchanted*, Palazzo Bembo, Venice, Italy (2019); *This landscape. This landscape! The Quintessential Metaphor For Life Tribute Exhibition to David Koloane*, RMB Turbine Art Fair, Johannesburg, South Africa in collaboration with LL Editions (2018); *Towards Intersections: Negotiating Subjects, Objects and Contexts* UNISA Art Gallery, Pretoria, Museum Africa, Newtown, Johannesburg and Gordon Institute Of Business Science, Hyde Park,

Johannesburg (2015). Rusike contributed an essay to catalogue: *A Resilient Visionary Poetic Expressions of David Koloane* (2020). She is currently working as the Head Curator at The Melrose Gallery, having previously worked at the South African Foundation For Contemporary Art (S.A.F.F.C.A) as the Head of Communication and Curator in South Africa and France and as Curatorial researcher and Exhibition co-ordinator for KAURU! in organising *Towards Intersections: Negotiating Subjects, Objects and Contexts*. (2015)!

Her research delves into African modernism and its impact on twentieth-century artistic and political movements. Notable projects include curating the groundbreaking virtual exhibition "Azibuyele Emasisweni - Return to the Source" in response to the COVID-19 pandemic which is currently on a national museum tour. Rusike has also implemented alternative curatorial models, fostering collaborations and resource sharing in exhibitions like "A Flagrant Arcade in Contemporary Art" at the 2017 Art Africa Fair. Her ethical approach is grounded in the principle of interconnectedness, promoting collaborative efforts for impactful curatorial endeavors.

### **30 Years of Wishful Thinking**

*Curated by Sipho Mdanda*

After 30 years, many of our artists remain on the periphery with little chance of exposure to local or international audiences. The shortage of museums, commercial galleries, and access to art fairs in South Africa exacerbate this problem.

Sipho Mdanda curates '30 Years of Wishful Thinking' to shed some light on a small portion of talented artists who have committed their lives to creating artworks and who deserve recognition and the fruits of their labour.

Apartheid led to the underrepresentation of black artists in South Africa. Many of our artists had no way of exposing their artworks to international and even local audiences.

"It is sad that this remains the status quo for many of our artists who are forced to remain on the periphery."

For many of these artists creating art is a calling. They understand and value the importance of art as "an enhancer of human consciousness" as reasoned by Lefifi Tladi.

Artists featured include Charles Nkosi, Paul Sibisi, Vincent Baloyi, Thami Jali, Sabela Judas Mahlangu, Avhashoni Mainganye, Sfiso Ka-Mkame, David Phoshoko, Lefifi Tladi, Isaak Nkoana, Anthony Makao, Mechak Raphaelane, and Michael Maimane. These artists narrate stories of life, triumphs, and failures, advocating for social, economic, and political rights in the post-apartheid era.

## **About Sipho Mdanda**

Sipho Mdanda is a curator at Freedom Park the iconic post-apartheid heritage Project (incorporating Park and Museum that opened in 2007 and 2013, respectively) and a Research Associate at Visual Identities in Art and Design Research Centre (attached to the University of Johannesburg). He is currently studying towards a doctoral degree with the University of South Africa. He holds degrees in Fine Arts, History of Art, Art Education and Heritage Studies from Fort Hare, Cardiff, and Witwatersrand Universities. He has taught art education at many institutions, ranging from high school (Mzuvele in Kwamashu, KZN), Teacher training Colleges (Mbumbulu in Kwamakhutha, KZN and Lehurutshe in Northwest Province), Community Art colleges (Fundu in Soweto, Gauteng Province, Artists Proof Studio in Johannesburg, Gauteng Province and Bat Centre in Durban, KZN) and universities (TWR: University of Johannesburg and Fort Hare University in Alice, Eastern Cape) around South African cities.

He has participated in many initiatives as an artist, curator, writer, curriculum developer, mentor, researcher, and external examiner for postgraduates' students at universities of South Africa and Wits. He has also curated a number of local and international shows, including '*Urban Features*' (2000), '*Sondela: Witnessing Ten Years of Democracy*' (2004), '*Cleansing and healing: A travelling Photographic Exhibition*' (2004-2005). He has also published numerous conference and academic papers in peer-review journals and chapters in edited books like '*Democracy X*' (Unisa Press: 2005), '*Visual Century: South African Art in Context*. Vol. 3: Wits University Press: 2011), '*Freedom Park: A Place of Emancipation and Meaning*: Freedom Park Publications: 2014). He is serving as an Editorial Board Member for the South African Museums Association Bulletin (SAMAB) since 2019 to the present.

## **About The Melrose Gallery:**

The Melrose Gallery is a leading Pan African Contemporary space located in Johannesburg. The gallery represents established and emerging artists whose voices speak to issues of significance to the Continent of Africa on a global basis.

We are passionate about ensuring that the elders who have made a valuable contribution to African Contemporary Art are recognized and that their important voices continue to be heard. Our stable includes iconic names of the likes of Dr Esther Mahlangu, Professor Pitika Ntuli, Mam Noria Mabasa, Dr Willie Bester, Paul Weinberg and Arlene Amaler-Raviv

These stalwarts provide a stable foundation to an exciting young guard of artists who are swiftly emerging from the African Continent and Diaspora to establish themselves globally. These include the likes of Ronald Muchatuta, Christiaan Diedericks, Philiswa Lila, Mederic Turay, Gerald Chukwuma, Senzo Shabangu, Restone Maambo, Papytsho Mafolo, Clint Strydom, Aza Mansongi, Denis Mubiru and others.

We run a curated programme of exhibitions, participate in respected art fairs, support many of our artists in their participation at Biennales and conceptualise and implement significant non-commercial exhibitions in association with leading museums

For more information regarding the exhibitions, contact Ruzy Rusike at [ruzy@themelrosegallery.com](mailto:ruzy@themelrosegallery.com) or visit [www.themelrosegallery.com](http://www.themelrosegallery.com)

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*Join us at The Melrose Gallery to witness these powerful exhibitions that delve into the heart of our democratic journey and the resilient spirit of our artists.*