

African Arts Safari

Spring 2014



The Arterial Network:

The African Creative Economy

Ok we admit it! 2013 was such a busy year we had no time to include in the last newsletter our involvement with the Arterial Network. This Pan African movement was started to create a forum where artists and government officials could come together to discuss the issue facing artists on the continent. There are chapters in each African country who may elect representatives but fortunately it is also open to younger artists who need the exposure and training that the three day event offers.

Though the annual conference rotates it was held in Cape Town in October 2013. There was much deliberation by SEMEA board and our artist team to allocate funds raised at the memorial service in April to the training of members of Amasiko Lemvelo- our link project in Bulawayo.

The funds raised exceeded £1300 and the public were asked that it should be split evenly between the project and support for Mandla Sibanda's two (of four) young children based in Harare who urgently needed school fees. The Sheffield community showed huge support for the funerals so this was the second major fund raising effort. This was supplemented by additional private donations post the event.

Thus it was agreed that two members of the Amasiko Lemvelo board based in Pumula would travel and several members participated from Bulawayo in the application process through a written document and online Skype interview with the board. It was agreed Nonhlanhla Sibanda, resident in Pumula and a trainee accountant should attend.

She proved to be deferential in her bid but would in the future prove to be the most qualified in her essential work in the effort to gain and account for donor funding. Without wider knowledge of how the arts worked she would be working in a vacuum. It was also agreed Leroy Sibanda had a strong engagement with the South African arts community through working in many community contexts including disability arts in Johannesburg for several

years. With no previous opportunity to train in the context of the Bulawayo project and being much younger than the other applicants he was chosen to join the group. As a performing member of Sunduza with some proven marketing, networking and admin skills it was essential he should also be sent. He is now confirmed as the Creative Director for Amasiko Lemvelo Learning in Pumula. Our CEO, Philip Weiss regrettably had to meet his own expenses in travelling to the event! Shame! the report was in the form of a short video that has been posted to the AmasikoTV Channel on You Tube made by Leroy Sibanda.

Significantly very senior persons in the arts industry were there from many countries including the Zimbabwean former secretary for culture, Mr Stephen Chifunyise, who has been instrumental in steering Zimbabwean government policy documents on culture. He himself is both an accomplished dancer, exponent of traditional arts and well known playwright. He was delighted to discover Sunduza was still going strong and its younger members had the opportunity to train.





Stephen Chifunyise delivers his paper to the Arterial delegates. Significantly he is also one of the founding directors of CHIPAWO- Childrens Performing Arts Workshop in Harare and supports many other independent initiatives. he was previously Permanent Secretary of Culture and is central to the work of the Nhimbe Trust and other initiatives helping to shape and inform on arts policy

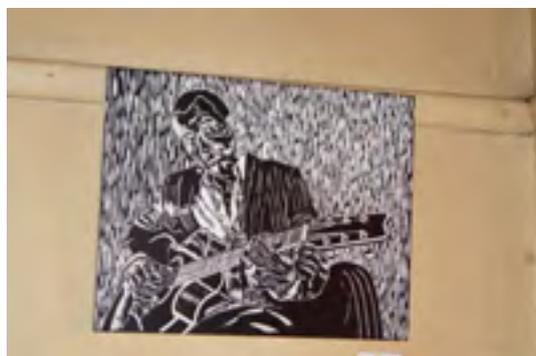
Whereas in the UK something in the order of 10% of GDP comes from a broad swathe of the creative industries less than 0.1% of GDP from Africa as a whole adds wealth to the economy. Much remains in the informal setor, unaccounted for by national bodies and rarely subject to taxation. Governments ignore this crucial aspect of potential growth to their economies at their peril. However in the absence of national investment in the sector change is coming slowly. Indeed just as culture and creativity can bring huge creative and economic benefits to regeneration and the retail sector there are strong arguments to also bring in a culture tax for re-investment into the industry. Just as artists struggle to earn money through tours and export earnings so the record labels are reeling from file sharing, piracy and the failure in many caes for the internet to deliver the artist their just rewards.

The Arterial conference focused on these and many other issues. Whilst artists were not heavily represented many more certainly would have gained by attendance. Still the event also gave exposure to practical initiatives in the region that have been taken by arts groups not necessarily with public funding but rather through community action. Many of these models are replicable in other cities and certainly our team left the conference keen to implement some of these back in Bulawayo.

Like all industries the Arts offer hope to marginalised communities but are often seen to be at the bottom of the social pile rather than as essential drivers to regional economies. It is this perception that the Network hopes to change at the highest levels of Government. That Cape Town as the centre of many festivals and as the Design Capital for 2014 this certainly shows the practical outcomes of support from local government.

One of the practical projects we visited was in iLanga Township. Here rather than expect people to visit a gallery in the centre of town to see local art the project has sought to open up a whole street of local homes each displaying the artwork of a local artist. There is a map to show which houses are in the project and when they are available for viewing. Some of the artwork is reproduced here.





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(SEMEA), Sorby House, 42 Spital Hill,
Sheffield S4 7LG email: arts@semea.org.uk
www.semea.org.uk
Skype: Manhanga
Tel: +44(0)1142437899
+44(0)7430070946

