



January 2018
For Immediate Release

Absa Gallery hosts August House group exhibition

As part of the Absa Gallery's ongoing commitment to supporting young African visual artists and assist them in positively growing their careers, the Absa Gallery will host the exhibition, *Talking to Deaf Ears*, in February 2018. The 43 artists participating in the exhibition are all drawn from the local August House creative hub, and include previous L'Atelier, Gerard Sekoto and Merit Award winners from the prestigious Absa L'Atelier art competition.

Dr Paul Bayliss, Absa Art and Museum Creator, explains that at its heart, *Talking to Deaf Ears* explores the issue of communication and the power of words, when both internalised and externalised.

South Africa's current social and political climate has created a vacuum in which our words are either ignored or not heard. Society finds itself existing within an atmosphere of continuous exposure to opinions, both written and spoken. This opens up a dialogue for artists to explore the current social norms.

The notion can bend towards an introspective discussion, where the artist unpacks the idea of having an internal 'deaf ear', as in the case where one is dismissive of their own thoughts and words. Alternatively, the concept can be opened up to express external situations where we talk and voice our opinions without receptive ears. By bringing our focus back to the importance of what we say and who we say it to, we reveal the value of words and the importance of their thoughtful use.

The pieces making up the exhibition have been created by the artists of August House – a unique creative hub in downtown Joburg with a heritage spanning 11 years in the contemporary African art arena. The venue currently houses more than 45 emerging and established artists from across Africa in private studio spaces.

While each artist is on their own independent career path, they all share a common place of work, creative inspiration, sense of community and collaboration, together in one complex urban environment.

Talking to Deaf Ears is curated by Sarah McGee, studio director of M Studio Community. McGee, working alongside August House's David Mayers and Kate Ballenden, has created an exhibition that connects all the August House artists through this single theme.

McGee says the overarching objective of the exhibition is to facilitate communication and collaboration between the artists, and provide an exhibition of vastly different works that all deal with a common concept.

"The works have been curated in such a way to express the lines of communication between these diverse contemporary artists. Each artist in August House works from their own private studio space, with the exception of those residing in open studio units. All the artists have different conceptual focuses and technical executions; this is where we feel that a show bridging these dynamic creatives is of substantial value," says McGee, adding of the singular, uniting theme, that "to deafen our ears and quiet our voices is to willingly surrender to our circumstances and abandon hope for a better world".

The mediums of the artworks vary from two dimensional paintings, drawings and prints to three dimensional sculptures and installations.

"Seeing the calibre of work on display just reiterates how August House represents one of the highest concentrations of artistic talent on the continent. I am immensely honoured to be associated with such a prolific group of individuals," says David Mayers, the passionate art collector turned 'landlord' who is responsible for August House.

Talking to Deaf Ears is the first in a series of exhibitions by August House earmarked for 2018. Over and above its primary goal, this exhibition aims to strengthen the sense of community around August House, and mark the start of an artistic movement driven by the artists of this special place.

The August House artists participating in the exhibition include previous L'Atelier award winner Diane Victor, Gerard Sekoto award winner Bambo Sibiyi as well as well-known artists Sam Nhlengethwa, Benon Lutaaya, Mbongeni Fakudze, Johan Nissen, Masetho Mohohlo, Odette Graskie, Vusi Mbulali, Jake Michael Singer, Vusi Beauchamp, Andrew Kayser, Kamogelo Masemola, Chrisel van der Merwe, Nkensani Rihlampfu, Ofentse Seshabela, Michael Selekane, Motsami Thabane, Thina Dube, Johnhnyguava, Sikelela Damane, Neo Mahlangu, Greatjoy Ndlovu, Zamani Xaba, Lesego Mongologa, Sifiso Temba, Theko Boshomane, Rhett Martyn, Azael Langa, Bukhosi Nyathi, Andrew Nshabele, Toni-Ann Ballenden, Sanusi Olatunji, Johan Stegmann, Lebohang Sithole, Layziehound Coka, Solomon Omogboye, Victor Kuster, Sizwe Khoza, Lindo Zwane, Patrick Seruwu, Quinten Williams, and Andile Buka.

Talking to Deaf Ears runs from 04 February 2018 to 09 March 2018 at the Absa Gallery, Absa Towers North, 161 Main Street, Johannesburg 2001.

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