

African vision of the future of digital creativity

In 2019, the Fak'ugesi African Digital Innovation Festival, celebrates six years of developing young digital creatives through the Fak'ugesi Digital Africa Residency and introduces two new special collaborations.



Fak'ugesi Digital Africa Residency artists.

The Fak'ugesi Digital Africa Residency is the festival's primary annual creative residency designed to support young digital creatives for a full month (9 August until 8 September 2019) in preparation for an exhibition at the annual Fak'ugesi African Digital Innovation Festival. Established in 2014, the Fak'ugesi Digital Africa Residency now runs from the [Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct](#) in line with Fak'ugesi Festival. Since 2016, the Residency has been supported by Pro Helvetia Johannesburg, in part through an ANT Mobility Grant financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

Dr Tegan Bristow, festival director, says; "In 2019 we have a cutting edge group of four Digital Artists: Natalie Penang and Nhlakanipho Mashinini from South Africa; Wamya Tembo from Zambia; and Vanessa Lorenzo Toquero from Switzerland, who will be working together towards their residency exhibition which will open at the BKHz Gallery in Braamfontein from 30 August."

The focus of the residency will be on the Fak'ugesi Festival 2019 theme: *Own Your Force*. "This year's theme centres on an African vision of the future of digital creativity by asking: 'Who owns our digital value chain? How do we protect our creative and cultural equity in the digital world?'" notes Bristow.

Joining the annual Fak'ugesi Digital African Residency in 2019 are two new short format residencies:

- The first is a 100% online two-week residency in collaboration with Floating Reverie, in which the resident artists will work to respond to what is happening at Fak'ugesi Festival and the respective their 'Own Your Force'. More details will be available on the Fak'ugesi [website](#) and social media between 2 August and 9 September 2019.
- The second is in collaboration with Arts Research Africa and the Wits School of Arts focus on creative research (funded by the Andrew Mellon Foundation). The collaboration will see a new cross-regional Residency run for three years between the Chale Wote Street Art Festival (Accra, Ghana) and Fak'ugesi African Digital Innovation Festival. In 2019, artist and cultural producer from KwaZulu-Natal, Russel Hlongwane, will be attending both festivals with a new work titled: *Ifu Elimnyama*.

Bristow explains that the 2014 and 2015 Residencies initially acted to host established local and international digital artists (via Kalashnikov Gallery and Wits Art Museum, respectively) and focused on encounters between artists and the public to envision the future of Johannesburg as an African city. Since 2016 and in collaboration with Pro Helvetia, the Residency took an exciting turn towards emphasising and developing digital creatives from the SADC region.

“During this time, the collaboration has hosted artists from Harare, Windhoek, Cairo, Delhi, Durban, Cape Town and Johannesburg. These artists have successfully worked together to explore the development of digital creative practice in the SADC region through Digital Art, VR, AR, Interactive Installation and Digital Music and 3D Printing,” says Bristow.

The 2019 Fak'ugesi Digital Africa Residency will also welcome guest Swiss artists Andreas Gysin and Sic Vanetti, known as Gysin & Vanetti as participating artists and mentors as part of Pro Helvetia's support in extension of the Residency. “Gysin & Vanetti's work focuses on repurposing digital commercial and public signage to make graphically beautiful digital art work in real life. Gysin & Vanetti will also offer a master class open to the public, on 31 August 2019,” Bristow adds.

Joseph Gaylard, Head of Pro Helvetia Johannesburg, says: “The residency brings a new generation of aspirant practitioners from these cities together in order to plant new furrows of transnational connection and collaboration in the digital arts field beyond its traditional home in the Anglo-American-European world. We do so in the belief that this alternate geography will be an important source of new thinking and practice at the intersection of culture, art and technology in the coming years.”

Lesley Williams, CEO of Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct, which will host the Fak'ugesi Digital Africa Residency for a third year says the precinct is a natural meeting point for the digital arts community in Africa and across the globe. “This is where African digital artists interact with counterparts from around the world, collaborate around best practice and create something truly memorable,” she says.

Fak'ugesi Digital Africa Residency participants:

Wamya Tembo, Zambia, is an Electronic music artist/producer. He's been making music since 2003, starting off with dreams of being a rapper and a Hip-Hop producer. After moving to Geneva, Switzerland in 2008, Wamya developed a taste for (Nu) Disco/House which he started to produce as the Sampson project. [SHE Spells Doom](#) became his main focus in 2014, allowing him to explore darker themes and pull from all his influences: House and Techno, early 2000s Rap, Congolese Rumba and 80s/Early 90s Sci-Fi. He also plans to do more DJ sets to showcase “FELT music” and its influences.

Natalie Penang, South Africa, is a multi-disciplinary artist who completed a BADA from the University of

Witwatersrand. Photography and videography are her main mediums, the use of these mediums led to the development of her YouTube channel Hello Nice where she uses her skills in theatre and performance to connect to an online audience. Website: <https://helloniice.blogspot.com/>.

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/nataliepaneng>

Nhlakanipho Mashinini, South Africa, fell in-love with Architecture on his Euro-tour which was organised by his school for the art and drama class. Through the years of his learning journey about architecture he's always believed in pushing the boundaries of design. As an architect, part of his job entails the simplification of highly complex ideas in order for them to be easily accessible. Being someone who always has radical ideas, he's been constantly mastering the art of simplification.

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/lord_shiinzo

Vanessa Lorenzo Toquero, Switzerland, creates hybrid media ecologies embedding people, the more-than-human and the technologies that intertwine them. These interactive media assemblages seek to highlight the agency of the more-than-human. Trained as an industrial design engineer, she critically engages with technology to enable odd sympathies among species and foster post-anthropocentric futures. She is an independent researcher and designer working at the crossroads of Media, Design and Ecology.

Website: <https://vlorenzolana.myportfolio.com/>.

Andreas Gysin and Sidi Vanetti, Switzerland. The Swiss Guest Artists have worked together on research projects since 2000. They combine disciplines from the field of visual communication, architecture and new technologies. Besides their activity as teachers and designers, they build temporary interventions or permanent installations in public spaces or in exhibitions. As an artist duo, they explore images and patterns using the type geometries of multipurpose displays.

Russel Hlongwane, South Africa, is with the Arts Research Africa Residency. He is a cultural producer and creative industries consultant based in Durban, South Africa. His work is located at the intersection of Heritage/ Modernity and Culture/ Tradition as it applies to various disciplines of artistic practice. His said practice includes cultural research, creative producing, design, curatorship and the creative economy. He is part of a number of collectives, working groups and programmes spread across the SADC region, the continent and internationally. He operates as a curator, writer, producer, researcher, theorist and consultant. He has shown work in Munich, Marrakech, London, Maputo, Karlsruhe, Harare, Bristol, Tokyo as well as throughout South Africa.

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