

BASA and IDC partner to showcase creatives

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Drawing inspiration from the spirit of connection, mutability, and the organic nature of a culture in flux and emergence, *What I saw in the water* is a group exhibition that brings together three unique artists connected to the annual Business and Arts South Africa (Basa) Awards.



Since 2022, Basa and the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) have partnered on a range of projects designed and curated to facilitate the exposure of emerging artists and to support entrepreneurs within South Africa's creative economy.

Each year, Basa Awards winners receive a limited edition artwork created exclusively for that year's winners. An artist is invited to produce these works. *What I saw in the water* features works by pace-setting artist Banele Khoza (featured artist at Basa's 23rd Awards), Mariapaola McGurk who was commissioned to create the winner's artworks for Basa's 25th Awards, and Audrey Lisik van Zyl, whose work was recently shown at the IDC/Basa 'Nexus in Nature' event and has now been commissioned to create the winners artworks for the 2023 Basa Awards.

“ Both business and the arts have an essential role to play in advancing climate justice and social change. ”

- Ashraf Johaardien

Luana Malan, a representative of the IDC, expressed her gratitude for the partnership with Basa during the launch of the exhibition at Chiesa Di Pazzo Lupi, the new home of Basa in Melville. Malan emphasised the importance of partnerships and how they involve collaborating with various stakeholders such as individuals, teams, communities, mandates, brands, values, and cultures, all with the aim of achieving a collective win. She thanked Basa for enabling the IDC to add value to its efforts in supporting the creative sector and appreciated the dedication, governance, and leadership of Basa. Malan also praised Basa for including new voices and carrying out a mandate values transformation on its ideas.

Said Basa CEO, Ashraf Johaardien: “Both business and the arts have an essential role to play in advancing climate justice and social change. In the same way our Rise theme for the 24th annual Basa Awards was inspired by Maya Angelo's iconic poem, the theme for this first-ever group Basa Awards exhibition draws inspiration from the title of Frida Kahlo's striking and powerful painting, *What the water gave me*. In addition, the theme was also informed by Basa's Climate Culture Programme which seeks to amplify the current discourse of leading cultural and creative practitioners in response to the climate emergency as a growing number of creatives start using their influence and work to promote climate justice

and social change.”

Khoza’s evocative works on paper, featuring alternatively washy, vibrant or sombre colours that bleed, drift and drip, convey the immediacy of his visual language, which oscillates fluidly between figuration and abstraction. Very much an iconic artist of his time, Khoza’s aim is to give form to “the translucency of deep feeling”. His works intuitively and spontaneously – typically working on multiple pieces at once – rendering dreamlike imagery in an array of media from gouache to acrylic to pixels on a tablet.



Mariapaola McGurk and Banele Khoza

Audrey Lisik van Zyl received her first commission from Basa to interpret the first 21 days of lockdown through a collection of illustrations, 10 of which are on show in this exhibition. Her digital watercolour works reflect various arts and creative disciplines. Illustrations labelled with ‘Scene’ explore a tool, an environment, or an element from an artist’s discipline and plays with scale to emphasise the importance of their careers and how nervous they became for their livelihoods as the lockdown commenced. The artist, depicted small in the scene to represent feelings of being overwhelmed and filled with anxiety, seems to be isolated whilst showing and living their loneliness, highlighting their fears of being marginalised in an overwhelming time of the then-unknown future. Other works are lighter and more endearing in sentiment following this first take. The artworks labelled with ‘People’ show the different artists in their homes, with their families, pets and talent, but all within their craft and insecurities. These cannot help but show the optimism, resilience and perseverance of our South African artists.

Mariapaola McGurk, herself a triple Basa Award winner under the auspices of her work at The Coloured Cube, holds an Honours cum laude in Visual Arts from the University of Johannesburg and an Executive MBA from Henley Business School. Her chosen form is paper cutting. 2022, the year that she was commissioned by Basa, was a particularly difficult one, as South Africans faced fluctuating levels of Covid lockdowns, riots, increasing economic uncertainty and big questions about the future. Despite this, the partnerships recognised in 2022 persevered to maintain and produce astonishing and important work. The works created by McGurk (some of which are on show in the exhibition) reflect the tenacity and courage of the creative sector, through a series entitled, *A mother’s window: Finding the light*.

What I saw in the water is on at chiesa Di Pazzo Lupi, 34 4th Avenue in Melville until 1 April 2023. Viewing times are Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm and Saturdays from 10am to 1pm. For more information please call 011 447 2295 or visit <https://basa.co.za/>.

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