

Annotation_ I am because you are: A search for Ubuntu with permission to dream

Curated by Usha Seejarim

By definition, the philosophy of Ubuntu articulates a relationship between an individual and his or her community. It recognizes the reciprocal impact that one has on another. It espouses qualities of humanity, hospitality, compassion and generosity knitted together to create a healthy sense of belonging. The exhibition combs through a multi layered narrative in pursuit of these ideals, beginning with the negation thereof.

The story of *I am because you are: A search for Ubuntu with permission to dream* commences with a piece that could be described as the opposite of Ubuntu. Kudzanai Chiurai's *Minister of Enterprise* is a depiction of ostentatious accumulation, pompous ego, and a boastful display of wealth. Engulfed in a golden aura of selfishness, a young man, too young to be a minister, brazenly lights a cigar with a twenty Rand note. Adjacent to this photographic piece, Norman Catherine's *Bushbuck Rand* further presents the superficiality of the South African currency through a taxidermied springbuck with netted mouth.

The exhibition continues to journey into themes of social engineering, forced removals, modalities of representation and notions of home and displacement. Absence is captured through the presence of a bronze cast dress in Haroon Gunn Salie's *Sunday Best*, and Diane Victor illustrates in expressive charcoal draftsmanship what it would look like to have *Blind Faith*.

This exhibition further expresses the need for and ability to dream. It gives us permission to have a vision and even if just for a short while, to imagine the ideal. The curated artworks present a desire for conscious interrelatedness. It assumes an innate connectivity and asks instead from the viewer for an awareness of collective and individual responsibility. It asserts the influence of *I am because you are* and concludes therefore that *you are because I am* giving agency to individual and collective accountability.

The works of Penny Siopis, Dumile Feni and William Kentridge make real perceptions of pain, struggle, hurt and the complexity of what it means to be human.

Artworks representing indigenous people remind the viewer of a world before borders. A time of respect for a shared environment and for each other. A time devoid of accumulation, power and control. And yet, the presence of these works through colonial eyes speak precisely of power and control and accumulation.

Downstairs, the euphoria of South African nationalism is disrupted by the realities of historic violence juxtaposed by a visual elocution of the accused (by Anton Van Wouw). And a dispassionate packet of Lay's chips at the bottom of a rainbow reminds the viewer of the challenges of a perfect society in Daniel Naudé's photograph

Despite a problematic history and trying circumstances Tommy Motswai's *Taxi to Johannesburg*, prompts the viewer to a place of colour, joy, humour and fun.

The selection of artworks from the Standard Bank's collection allow for this exhibition to express realities of the past and its resultant present, both despair and the ability to dream, and ultimately serves as a vehicle on a mission to search for ubuntu.