



AFRICAN IMAGINARIES

Fak'ugesi Festival 2026

African Digital & Innovation Festival

13 to 17 October 2026 | Johannesburg

Programme Snapshot

Please read this first

This booklet is a **snapshot** of the programme, taken on **9 October 2026**.

Times, rooms and sessions **may change**. All live updates and every change will be made on the **Fak'ugesi Signal Guide**, never in this booklet.

Not sure how to open it? Turn to the last page, or ask a festival volunteer or someone in your family to help.

How to use this booklet

1

Find the **day** you want to come in the contents below.

2

Each session shows its **time** in the dark label, then its **name**.

3

The line marked **Where** tells you which building and room.

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Where things are

Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct

The main festival home: talks, workshops, exhibitions, expo, films.

Origins Centre

Talks, panels, exhibitions. The Opening is here.

Chris Seabrooke Music Hall

Keynotes and talks, Thursday and Friday.

Wits Anglo American Digital Dome

Films shown on a dome ceiling, and the Awards.

The Bioscope

Evening film screenings and a Saturday panel.

Tip: Festival volunteers can point you to the right room.

Tuesday

13 October

OPENING DAY

08:00 to 08:30 REGISTRATION

Check In & Connect

Where: Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct

Start your festival day right. Collect your pass, grab a coffee from the café and meet creators, innovators and other participants before the first session gets underway.

Presented by: Webtickets

08:30 to 15:00 HACKATHON

AI & Music Business Hackathon

Real industry challenges. African music solutions.

Where: Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct, Accelerator

How might AI, data and emerging technologies unlock new opportunities across Africa's music ecosystem? Over four days, multidisciplinary teams will tackle real-world industry challenges, developing innovative solutions that support creators, businesses and communities.

Presented by: South African Music Performance Rights Association (SAMPRA) and Southern African Music Rights Organisation (SAMRO), with Music Business Lab, Aions Ventures, Wits Innovation Centre and Wits MIND (Machine Intelligence and Neural Discovery Institute)

Topics: AI, Music & Sound, Ownership & IP

WHO IS TAKING PART

Kerryn Campion FACILITATOR

Facilitator, Aions Ventures | South Africa

Working at the intersection of operations, venture development and investor readiness, Kerryn helps founders turn ideas into viable businesses. Known for bringing clarity, commercial discipline and practical problem-solving, she supports teams to test assumptions, strengthen business models and focus on what matters most.

Christo Doherty **HOST**

Programme Director, Wits AI & African Music Project | South Africa

Speaking 08:30 to 08:45: Welcome & Hackathon Overview. Christo is programme lead and host of the hackathon

Working at the intersection of creativity, technology and innovation, Christo brings together artists, researchers and industry partners to explore new ideas, build collaborations and create pathways for African-led innovation. He is the founder of Fak'ugesi and leads the AI & African Music Project.

Karabo Senna **SPEAKER**

General Manager: Licensing and Sales, SAMRO | South Africa

Speaking 08:45 to 09:25: Rights, Royalties and the Hidden Infrastructure of the Music Industry

General Manager: Licensing and Sales at SAMRO, Karabo leads music licensing, royalty collection and revenue growth initiatives. With a background in business, intellectual property and member services, he is a passionate advocate for music rights, creator empowerment and strengthening the royalty value chain.

Nick Matzukis **SPEAKER**

Music Law Specialist and Advocate of the High Court | South Africa

Speaking 09:25 to 10:05: AI, Copyright and the Future of Music Value

Music law specialist, educator and Advocate of the High Court with extensive expertise in copyright, royalties, licensing and music industry regulation. A respected author and advisor on music policy, he brings a unique perspective on how AI is reshaping copyright, ownership and value flows in the music ecosystem.

Nick Argyros **SPEAKER**

Co-founder and CEO, Audio Militia and INJOZI Technology Studio | South Africa

Speaking 11:00 to 12:00: Technology, Data and Platforms in the Music Industry

Co-founder and CEO of Audio Militia and INJOZI Technology Studio, with expertise spanning music, technology, AI and digital innovation. A serial entrepreneur and venture builder, he has helped develop award-winning creative and technology businesses and is a recognised voice on the intersection of AI, media and the creative industries.

Thando Makhunga **SPEAKER**

Managing Director, Downtown Music Publishing Africa | South Africa

Speaking 13:00 to 13:40: Gaps, Bottlenecks & Opportunities

Managing Director of Downtown Music Publishing Africa, Africa's leading independent music publisher, and Chairperson of the Music Publishers' Association of South Africa. With leadership experience spanning broadcasting, publishing and rights management, she is a leading advocate for creator rights, music publishing and the future growth of Africa's music industry.

Gift Lubele **SPEAKER**

CEO, Auraa Africa | South Africa

Speaking 13:40 to 14:30: AI and the Future of African Music

CEO of Auraa Africa, an AI-powered platform supporting African creators to create and monetise AI music. With a background in business and AI/data analytics, he has been associated with South Africa's first AI-generated amapiano album and is a recognised voice on AI and music innovation.

18:30 to 22:00 **EVENT****Official Festival Opening: sync://synchronising***Every room is live. Follow the signal.***By invitation only. Not open to the public.****Where:** Origins Centre

The Festival opens as a living transmission. Guided through a series of activated spaces, audiences encounter immersive moments, performances and reimagined Fak'ugesi favourites woven into a bespoke curatorial journey. Part exhibition, part performance, part provocation, it is an invitation to step inside African Imaginaries before the festival fully ignites.

Presented by: Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct**Topics:** Speculative Futures, Immersive, Visual Arts**WHO IS TAKING PART****Fak'ugesi African Digital & Innovation Festival 2026** **HOST****Signal 1** **EXHIBITION****Postcards from Latent Space***AI & African Photography | Cross-Cultural Exploration.*

A digital exhibition of AI-assisted photographic work, built for three LED screens and designed from the outset to travel, from Braamfontein to partner venues in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Kenya without a single crate being shipped. It is the public face of AI & African Photography: Cross-Cultural Exploration, an Institut Français-funded project asking how African artists are reshaping tools that were largely built elsewhere.

Presented by: Institut français through Appui aux Opérateurs Culturels en Afrique**Topics:** Visual Arts, AI, Community & Collaboration

WHO IS TAKING PART

Evans Akanyijuka **ARTIST**

Artist | Uganda

Evans Akanyijuka is a digital artist currently based in Kampala, Uganda. His practice unfolds at the intersection of different media including collage, photography, and emerging technologies. He uses these forms as both an archive and inquiry into memory, heritage, and identity through bodies of work such as “the battle of kagogo”. Through these explorations Evans hopes that his work uncovers the layered and often fragmented ways in which we understand ourselves and each other.

Signal 2 SCREENING

Best of Cape Town International Animation Festival

The African Roots Short Film Selection.

Eighteen films. Eight countries. Seventy-six minutes. The Fak'ugesi Micro Film Festival opens the doors to the best of the Cape Town International Animation Festival, a selection that travels from Johannesburg to Cairo, Kampala to the Amazon, and never once stops moving.

Presented by: Cape Town International Animation Festival

Topics: Animation, Community & Collaboration

WHO IS TAKING PART

Dianne Makings **ARTIST**

Dianne Makings, Festival Director, CTIAF Kaydee De Villiers, Curator, CTIAF | South Africa
Kaydee de Villiers, curator of the African Roots film collection, specializes in animation development, project management, and production and has produced content across multiple platforms, overseeing the creation of content from idea to production, greenlight, and distribution. As well as managing exhibitions and digital events in the local animation industry through the largest animation networking event in Africa, Cape Town International Animation Festival.

Kaydee has also consulted broadly with international animation studios, including on features for Parovoz (Russia), Glassworks (Amsterdam and London), and Preymaker (New York), before establishing her own animation company, Ferin Collective. She has most recently worked with Triggerfish (South Africa) on Disney Plus' Kizazi Moto: Generation Fire, Episodes E04, Surf Sangoma, and E08, Stardust, as well as other local productions through Ferin.

Her deep expertise in building, managing, and maintaining global teams and complex operations transferred well to events and animation, where sourcing international animators and managing an organized and efficient workflow and operational event space are essential. Kaydee is a passionate and compassionate manager and problem solver who believes in collaboration, communication, and strategic leadership to drive productivity. Above all, Kaydee loves visual and cultural storytelling and is continually inspired by the artists with whom she collaborates.

In 2024, Kaydee helped to found WATA Africa (Women Activating Transformation in Animation), where she and her fellow Mami WATA's advocate for and support womxn in the animation and gaming industries.

Signal 3 **SCREENING**

Umfula - Echoes of the River

One river. A changing world.

The Umfolozi River - a sacred, life-giving force flowing through the Zulu heartland of KwaZulu-Natal. From source to sea, the journey reveals a river carrying more than water. It carries memory, culture and the weight of a changing world, where industrial agriculture, mining and unchecked expansion place fragile ecosystems and communities under increasing pressure. Through breathtaking 360° aerial and underwater cinematography, an evocative sonic landscape and the river's own voice, Umfula transforms environmental crisis into lived experience. It invites us to see one river clearly, and, through it, confront the future of freshwater everywhere.

Presented by: VR Capture

Topics: Climate & Environment, Heritage & History

WHO IS TAKING PART

Telmo dos Reis **ARTIST**

Founder and Director, VR Capture | South Africa

Telmo dos Reis is an award-winning immersive media director, creative technologist and founder of VR Capture, with a media production career spanning 20 years and a focus on immersive technologies since 2014. He leads one of South Africa's experienced immersive media studios, producing VR, AR, XR, cinematic 360o and fulldome content, with a particular focus on conservation, cultural heritage, wildlife and science communication. Telmo has worked with organisations including South African Tourism, Botswana Tourism, Wits University and the South African Astronomical Observatory, creating immersive experiences for planetariums, museums, global expos and VR platforms. His work combines creative storytelling with strong technical and post-production expertise, allowing him to lead complex projects from concept through to final delivery. He is currently the Director of Umfula – Echoes of the River, an immersive 360o experience exploring the Umfolozi River, water spirituality, Zulu traditions and the environmental challenges facing freshwater ecosystems. The project combines cinematic aerial and underwater 360o cinematography, immersive sound and storytelling, and is scheduled for release in late 2026 in

both 3D 360o VR and fulldome formats. Telmo also worked as Creative Technologist on Kings of Lesotho, an immersive VR project developed in collaboration with Electric South and the French Institute of South Africa, contributing his creative and technical expertise to the project's immersive production. His award-winning work includes Close Encounters, which won Best Environmental Fulldome Film at Dome Fest West 2025 in Colorado, USA. Sida Tsoatsoas, a cultural fulldome film created in collaboration with the #Xhomi San community, won Gold at the 2022 International Tourism Film Festival Africa. Other career highlights include Exodus – The Great Migration (2016), one of the early fully narrated cinematic wildlife documentaries in VR. He is also currently developing a VR experience exploring San rock art and spiritual heritage sites across Southern Africa. Telmo continues to pursue ambitious projects that bring together storytelling, culture, science, conservation and emerging technology, using immersive media to create experiences that are both technically innovative and meaningful.

Signal 4 **SCREENING**

Des/Aria

Bodies in motion, memory in frame.

Created via collaborative process between South Africa and Italy, filmed in March 2021, Des/Aria is one musician and one dancer in conversation. Des /Aria features an original composition by Luca Ciarla, with choreography by Louise Coetzer, and is performed by dancer Tania Mteto with videography by Oscar O'Ryan. The collaboration between Luca and Louise came about after both artists were invited in 2018 to show work in Johannesburg, at The Center for the Less Good Idea, a creative space founded by visual artist icon William Kentridge.

Presented by: National Lotteries Commission and produced by Luca Ciarla Volipiano & Darkroom Contemporary.

Topics: Music & Sound, Community & Collaboration

WHO IS TAKING PART

Luca Ciarla ARTIST

Violinist | Italy

Dark Room Contemporary is a Cape Town based, project-driven contemporary dance theatre company founded in 2010 by Artistic Director Louise Coetzer and Company Director Oscar O'Ryan. Over 15 years, the company has built a reputation for reimagining dance through interdisciplinary collaboration and new media and technology, pioneering work with kinetic motion sensors, full dome 3D projection, interactive laser and projection mapping, artificial intelligence, live streaming and 360 degree VR filmmaking. Its portfolio spans site-specific performance, dance film and digital art, including works such as "META | m o r p h," "Blame it on the algorithm," "deus::ex::machina," and "autoplay | AI Opera." Guided by a vision to present contemporary dance in ways that are current, relevant, innovative and accessible, Dark Room Contemporary positions itself as a catalyst for innovation and preservation within the South African performing arts landscape. It operates as a registered Non-Profit and Public Benefit Organization, funded primarily by the National Lotteries Commission.

Louise Coetzer ARTIST

Choreographer | South Africa

Tania Mteto ARTIST

Dancer | South Africa

Oscar O'Ryan ARTIST

Dancer | South Africa

Signal 5 EXHIBITION

Where Does the Rest of the World Begin?

Human, microbe, machine, the border keeps moving.

Dagmar Schürer brings her multimedia installation Where Does the Rest of the World Begin? to the Tapestry Room with large screen animation, built around SYNTHIA, a hybrid avatar modelled on the world's first computer-designed bacterium. The work asks where the boundaries really sit, between human and microbe, body and code, one consciousness and another. Schürer trained at Central Saint Martins and has shown at Tate Modern, Ars Electronica and the Louvre.

Presented by: Austrian Embassy | Austrian Cultural Forum

Topics: Speculative Futures, AI, XR

WHO IS TAKING PART**Dagmar Shürer** **ARTIST**

Partner | Austria

Dagmar Schürer is an Austrian digital artist based in Berlin, Germany. She holds a degree in Fine Art from Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in London and works across expanded animation and extended reality (XR).

Her practice explores the intersections of science, emerging technologies, and human perception. Drawing on biology and neuroscience, she combines XR, artificial intelligence, digital world-building, and poetic approaches to consciousness and its environmental entanglements. Through intricate animations, immersive environments, and spatial multimedia installations, she creates contemplative experiences that reflect on the evolving relationships between technology, perception, and the more-than-human world.

Her work has been presented internationally at exhibitions and festivals including New Contemporaries at the ICA London, Louvre Auditorium in Paris, Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin, the Moscow Biennale for Young Art, Eunam Museum in South Korea, the Museum of Waste in Changsha, China, Fotografiska Berlin, Belvedere 21 in Vienna, and Tate Modern in London. She has also contributed to conferences including ISEA – International Symposium on Electronic Art in Brisbane and Seoul, the Expanded Ars Electronica Conference in Linz, and the IVA – International Conference on Intelligent Virtual Agents in Berlin.

Schürer is an artistic research assistant and workshop leader for XR development at the University of Applied Sciences Berlin and an active member of the Berlin media art association.

Signal 6 **TALK****A Decade Later: Wits' Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct****WHO IS TAKING PART****Mark Harris** **SPEAKER**

CEO, Tshimologong Precinct | South Africa

Signal 7 TALK

An Innovation District in the Making: Wits

WHO IS TAKING PART**Prof. Lynn Morris** **SPEAKER**

Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Innovation, University of the Witwatersrand | South Africa

Signal 8 TALK

African Imaginaries: Fak'ugesi african Digital & Innovation Festival 2026

Setting the Frequency

Topics: Speculative Futures

WHO IS TAKING PART**Alby Michaels** **HOST**

Festival Director, Fak'ugesi Digital & Innovation Festival | South Africa

Signal 9 IMMERSION

Dis/locating the Centre

Rendering (memory) infrastructures audible.

Andi Stecher + Bhavisha Panchia make memory infrastructures audible in a live sound performance exploring the machines, energy and resources behind the systems that store what we know, remember - and forget.

Presented by: Funded by the Austrian Music Export / Musicfonds

Topics: Climate & Environment, Memory & Identity

WHO IS TAKING PART**Andi Stecher** ARTIST

Artists | Austria

Andi Stecher is an Austrian born drummer, producer and composer. Stecher's music does not know a clear genre classification, he includes influences from a diverse range of styles and types of music into his pieces and thus forms a hybrid sonic mixture. In his compositions and research he reflects on topics such as his upbringing, class and class politics in music, alpine musical traditions, heritage, the general meaning of musical tradition / consumption and fetishization of traditional music in Europe / globally and the exoticizing of global sounds by western audiences. For his work via his Stecher production outlet he draws inspiration from a wide variety of sources to create multi-layered tracks and innovative rhythmic patterns. Working at an intersection of sounds ranging from post-club music and drill to avant-pop, polyrhythmic beats and beyond, he weaves multiple contemporary production styles together to push the sonic boundaries of electronic music. Stecher is also about collaboration and community - sharing musical ideas and themes with a diverse range of artists and vocalists and bringing music to life through egalitarian global collaborations. In addition to solo works Andi Stecher plays in a diverse range of bands and projects and composes for a wide variety of media.

Bhavisha Panchia ARTIST

South Africa

Bhavisha Panchia is a curator and writer. Her work centres on the social, cultural and ideological signification of sound and music in contemporary culture. With an interest in auditory media's relationship to geopolitical paradigms, anti/postcolonial discourses and imperial histories, she considers how we can critically listen back to listen forward. She is the founder of Nothing to Commit Records, a label and publishing platform committed to the production and expansion of knowledge related to contemporary art and sound within and across the global South. Her writings have been published in books, journals and exhibition catalogues.

Adam Pantanowitz ARTIST

South Africa

Signal 11 EXHIBITION**Planetary Cognitive Ecologies: Gondwana***Intelligence as a behaviour of matter.*

Planetary Cognitive Ecologies: Gondwana is research-creation in which scientific method is the medium. Around 290 million years ago, forests of *Glossopteris* spread across Gondwana. What was buried before it could decay became coal, and that coal, ground by hand, is the pigment Henrietta Scholtz works with. The plant is extinct, so she reconstructed two ancestral proteins from organisms alive today, one from plants that survive drying and one from the fungi that break down wood, and

joined them into a fusion construct that never existed: one half takes material apart, the other endures. Where the reconstruction could not decide, several pasts remain possible, held the way a seed holds dormancy, which is not absence but suspension. The rupture that broke Gondwana apart raised the Himalayas, still rising and eroding at almost the same rate. Across virtual reality, video projection, and works in foraged ochre and hand-ground coal, this exhibition holds decay and possibility together.

Presented by: University of Johannesburg. Artists in Residence Programme

Topics: Research & Policy, Climate & Environment, Speculative Futures

WHO IS TAKING PART

Henrietta Scholtz **ARTIST**

Artist | South Africa

Henrietta Scholtz is a transdisciplinary artist and researcher working across bio-based materials, computational protein design, and emerging technologies. Her practice develops Bio-Material Translocation (BMT), a framework for thinking through what happens at the threshold, where biological material crosses between physical, biological, digital, and public layers, and what each crossing leaves behind. She works through painting, virtual reality, and computational practice, and in 2026 was selected for the University of Johannesburg Artists in Residence Programme. Her work has been exhibited widely, including at Forum Création Africa in Lagos, the National Arts Festival in Makhanda, and the Investec Cape Town Art Fair.

Wednesday

14 October

MEMORY ENGINES

08:30 to 09:00 REGISTRATION

Check In & Connect

Where: Chris Seabrooke Music Hall or Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct

Start your festival day right. Collect your pass, grab a coffee from the café and meet creators, innovators and other participants before the first session gets underway.

Presented by: Webtickets

09:00 to 17:00 HACKATHON

AI & Music Business Hackathon

Real industry challenges. African music solutions.

Where: Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct, Accelerator

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Topics: AI, Music & Sound, Ownership & IP

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Kerryn Campion FACILITATOR

Facilitator, Aions Ventures

Working at the intersection of operations, venture development and investor readiness, Kerryn helps founders turn ideas into viable businesses. Known for bringing clarity, commercial discipline and practical problem-solving, she supports teams to test assumptions, strengthen business models and focus on what matters most.

09:15 to 10:20 IMMERSION

From the Inside of a Memory Engine

The Origins Centre as a GLAM case study.

Where: Origins Centre

Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums (GLAM spaces) are the world's original Memory Institutions, built to decide what gets kept, what gets shown and what gets left out. Since opening in 2006, the Origins Centre has reclaimed Africa's place in the story of human origins and innovation. From 2.6 million-year-old tool technology, the world's earliest art, and the ancient, spiritually-imbued rock art of the San, the museum enlivens these narratives through multisensory experiences and AR. Archaeologist Dr Tammy Hodgskiss Reynard turns the museum into a living case study, tracing memory as infrastructure, the African roots of innovative technologies, and the blueprints for the institutions of the future.

Presented by: Origins Centre

Topics: Archives & Museums, Heritage & History, Indigenous Knowledge

WHO IS TAKING PART

Dr Tammy Hodgskiss **HOST**

Archaeologist and Head, Origins Centre

Dr Tammy Hodgskiss (aka The Ochre Lady) is the Head of the Origins Centre museum at Wits. Tammy is an archaeologist, ochre researcher, museum professional and mother. Her research focuses on archaeological and historic ochre and mineral pigments. As Head of Origins she is responsible for the academic leadership, programming and operational oversight of the museum.

10:20 to 11:00 KEYNOTE

We Are the Future's Ancestors

Memory is not inherited. It's made.

Where: Origins Centre, Tapestry Room

As co-founder of Open Restitution Africa and one half of MADEYOULOOK, Moilola's work sits at the intersection of land justice, heritage return and the infrastructures that hold communities together. In this session, Moilola argues that restitution is more than the return of objects. It's the restoration of people, memory and legacy. Archives become more than records of the past, they become blueprints for the future. The future doesn't just need more memory. It needs better ancestors.

Presented by: Open Restitution Africa and MADEYOULOOK

Topics: Archives & Museums, Social Justice, Memory & Identity

WHO IS TAKING PART

Molemo Moiloa **SPEAKER**

Molemo Moiloa lives and works in Johannesburg, and has worked in various capacities at the intersection of creative practice and community organizing. She currently works on notions of ungovernability, social infrastructures of cultural organizing, and relationships to nature. Molemo is co-director of creative sector insights and data analytics company, Andani.Africa. She is one half of the artist collaborative MADEYOULOOK, who explore everyday popular imaginaries and their modalities for knowledge production. She also co-leads the Open Restitution Africa project, an Africa-focused research platform for restitution of African heritage and co-leads the ungovernable, an experiment in community practice and ungovernability. Molemo was a Soros Arts Fellow 2023/24, was a Chevening Clore Fellow 2016/17, and winner of a Vita Basadi Award for 2017. MADEYOULOOK were selected artists of the South African Pavilion for the Venice Biennale 2024, were DAAD Artists-in-Berlin fellows for visual arts 2022 and Lumbung artists at documenta fifteen, 2022. They were nominees for the VLC Prize for Art and Politics 2016/17 at the New School, New York and the MTN Young Contemporaries 2012.

11:30 to 12:30 **PANEL**

Futures_Past: Archives, Storytelling and Community Collaboration

Whose stories, and who gets to shape them?

Where: Origins Centre, Tapestry Room

Join Futures_Past producers, archive partners and project team members for a discussion on the practical and ethical questions that arise when working with archives, creativity and communities. The conversation will consider whose stories are represented, who helps shape them, and how collaborative approaches can respond to the perspectives, responsibilities and needs of different partners. Futures_Past is a two-year programme supporting research and collaboration between artists and archives across South Africa, Lesotho and Malawi to co-create immersive works from archival collections.

Presented by: The French Embassy of South Africa, Lesotho and Malawi and the French Institute of South Africa (IFAS), developed in partnership with Electric South, with the support of the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs.

Topics: Archives & Museums, Heritage & History, Immersive

WHO IS TAKING PART

Canda Kincses FACILITATOR

Producer, Futures_Past for Electric South

Canda Kincses has been a media producer since 1999, starting with print media at the beginning of the digital printing revolution and moving into animation and games production in the early 2000s where she worked with South Africa's first mobile games company. She has produced award winning games, films and live action visual effects with South Africa's best artists and now XR having joined Electric South as a consulting producer.

Xabiso Vili PANELIST

Creative Co-director, We Are What Remains

Xabiso Vili is a writer and multidisciplinary artist working across storytelling, immersive media, and archive-led practice. His work centres living memory, community knowledge, and the ethical translation of history into contemporary experience.

Telmo dos Reis PANELIST

Technician, Kings of Lesotho

Telmo dos Reis, founder of VRCapture, is an award-winning immersive media director with extensive experience creating VR, AR, XR, and fulldome content with a focus on conservation, cultural heritage, and science communication.

Kaelo Molefe PANELIST

Co-Director, To All Who Live In It

Kaelo Molefe is an artist and medical doctor based in Johannesburg, South Africa. His work explores the bureaucratization of human difference and interrogates how this socio-historical process is embedded in contemporary power structures, the production of bodies, the organization of space and the politics of knowledge production. He explores these phenomena through a variety of visual forms including collage, creative research and mixed media.

Kieran Reid PANELIST

Producer, Acts of Care

Kieran Reid is a game designer, researcher, and facilitator based in Johannesburg, exploring play as a tool for learning, strategy, and cultural expression. He is managing director and co-founder of Two Name Games, a playful development agency working across games, education, and creative industries.

Amy Sephton PANELIST

Iziko Museums of South Africa Representative, Lucid Dreams of Sweet Water

Amy is Iziko's Exhibitions Creative Director. She plays a key strategic role in integration of immersive media in Iziko's Exhibitions.

12:30 to 13:20 PECHAKUCHA

A Memory of Sophiatown

What the bulldozers couldn't take.

Where: Origins Centre, Tapestry Room

The making of a virtual reconstruction of the Johannesburg neighbourhood the apartheid state bulldozed and renamed Triomf. Sophiatown, nicknamed "the Chicago of South Africa," home to Drum-era writers, jazz, and Miriam Makeba's early career, was barely documented before its destruction, the connected VR experience rebuilt it from the only record left: the memories of former residents. It doesn't pretend to undo a demolition. It holds space for what people remember. Heritage, here, isn't reconstruction. It's testimony.

Presented by: University of Johannesburg

Topics: Memory & Identity, Social Justice, Community & Collaboration

WHO IS TAKING PART

Dr Izak Potgieter **SPEAKER**

Researcher, Department of History, University of Johannesburg

Dr Izak Potgieter is a University of Johannesburg researcher and designer working at the intersection of extended reality (XR) and cultural heritage, converting oral history and ethnographic data into spatial VR representations of physically lost heritage sites. He holds a Master's in Architecture and a PhD in Art and Design and has developed VR/AR applications for heritage representation and education.

12:30 to 13:20 PECHAKUCHA

Can Video Games Preserve Indigenous Knowledge?

What a playable culture holds that an archive doesn't.

Where: Origins Centre, Tapestry Room

Games are systems of rules, and so are cultures. Randle's work treats African-themed games as vessels for indigenous knowledge, where memory isn't displayed but played. What can a game hold that an archive can't, and who gets to build it?

Presented by: Wits School of Arts

Topics: Indigenous Knowledge, Games & Play, Heritage & History

WHO IS TAKING PART

Dr Olu Randle **SPEAKER**

Head of Digital Arts, Wits School of Arts

Dr Oluwarotimi "Olu" Randle is an academic, researcher, and the Head of the Digital Arts Department at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) in Johannesburg, South Africa. With over 12 years of experience bridging the gap between technology and the humanities, his work focuses on artificial intelligence, computer science, and game design. As the founder and lead researcher of the Games Artificial Intelligence and Culture (GAIC) Lab at Wits, Dr Randle specializes in indigenous ethno-gaming, machine learning, and the decolonisation of digital media. His innovative research includes developing AI players for traditional African board games and integrating indigenous African languages into modern gaming environments. An accomplished scholar with a PhD in Information Systems and a Master's in Computer Science, he also serves as a fellow at the Wits Machine Intelligence and Neural Discovery (MIND) Institute, where he continues to champion the intersection of African culture and digital innovation.

12:30 to 13:20 **PECHAKUCHA**

The Impermanence of Memory

Navigating the stories we inherit.

Where: Origins Centre, Tapestry Room

An immersive journey that moves from washed-out archival photographs of Helen Martins's home in Nieu-Bethesda, through the intimate traces of her letters, and into richly saturated work-in-progress imagery, bridging memory, voice, and the act of creation.

Presented by: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

Topics: Memory & Identity, Archives & Museums, Visual Arts

WHO IS TAKING PART

Lebo Leitch **SPEAKER**

Artist and Producer

Lebo Leitch is a South African XR (extended reality) producer, creative director, and youth development strategist with over 20 years of experience leveraging media and immersive technology for social impact. She currently serves as the Creative Lead for JiK'iZinto at Girl Effect, an organisation empowering South African youth, where she creatively directed the SABC1 comedy series DiChiPi to Culture & Society mental health and financial literacy. Passionate about leveraging cutting-edge technology for advocacy, she has partnered with immersive studios like Habitat XR to use virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) for environmental conservation, while also driving audio storytelling as the former operations manager for Sound Africa. As a recognized voice in the African creative economy, she frequently speaks at prominent industry events like the Joburg Film Festival, championing the power of narrative-driven tech to change human behavior and uplift communities.

12:30 to 13:20 **PECHAKUCHA**

Hack the House: Reimagining Heritage From the Inside Out

What happens when you hand the keys to history to a new generation of digital storytellers?

Where: Origins Centre, Tapestry Room

Hack the House is Iziko Museums of South Africa's bold experiment in reimagining heritage as a living platform for imagination, innovation and belonging. Hosted inside the historic Iziko Groot Constantia Manor House, the initiative aims to bring emerging creatives together to transform one of South Africa's oldest house museums into a space for immersive storytelling, co-creation and cultural reinvention. The session reveals how talent discovery, immersive technology and youth-led worldbuilding are opening new pathways between museums and the futures they can help shape. It's not just about preserving the past. It's about designing who gets to tell the next story.

Presented by: Iziko Museums of South Africa

Topics: Archives & Museums, Creative Economy, Heritage & History

WHO IS TAKING PART

Amy Sephton **SPEAKER**

Chief Curator Exhibition Design and Production, Iziko Museums of South Africa

Amy Sephton is a creative heritage practitioner and Chief Curator of Exhibitions Design and Production at Iziko Museums of South Africa, working at the intersection of heritage, technology, design and cultural. Over the past decade, she has worked on more than 50 exhibitions across art, natural history and social history, helping to transform how exhibitions are conceived, designed and produced at Iziko Museums.

Her practice is rooted in widening the lens through which heritage is understood; making space for different ways of knowing and being, and creating the conditions for more voices, experiences and perspectives to actively shape what heritage can become, and how heritage can be experienced.

Amy's practice in exhibition-making has led her to experiment with interactive media, AR, immersive surround sound, projection mapping and other emerging technologies, creating experiences that connect people with place, memory, history and each other in new ways.

Her work asks what museums could become when heritage is not treated as something fixed, but as something we can collectively make, question and reimagine. She sees museums not simply as archives of settled questions, but as working platforms for imagination and belonging.

13:20 to 14:15 Lunch

14:15 to 15:30 **LAUNCH**

Futures_Past: Mapping Immersive Arts

Three countries. One immersive map.

Where: Origins Centre, Tapestry Room

Futures_Past is researching and mapping the Immersive Arts ecosystems across South Africa, Lesotho and Malawi. Join the Futures_Past research team, in-country researchers and policy advisers for the launch of the programme's regional mapping study. Following a presentation of key findings, the panel will examine current trends, opportunities and challenges in the sector, and what they reveal about the development of digital and immersive storytelling across the region. Futures_Past is a two-year programme supporting research and collaboration between artists and archives across South Africa, Lesotho and Malawi to co-create immersive works from archival collections.

Presented by: The French Embassy of South Africa, Lesotho and Malawi and the French Institute of South Africa (IFAS), developed in partnership with Electric South, with the support of the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs.

Topics: Immersive, Research & Policy, Community & Collaboration

WHO IS TAKING PART

Lauren Fletcher **SPEAKER**

Audiovisual Project Manager, French Institute of South Africa

Lauren Fletcher is the Audiovisual Project Manager at the French Institute of South Africa (IFAS), where she fosters collaboration between French and South African creative sectors in film, animation, XR, and digital arts. With over 12 years of experience in arts management, she holds a Master of Fine Arts from Rhodes University and has managed premier cultural events, including the Creativate Digital Arts Festival, Fak'ugesi, Design Indaba, and the FNB JoburgArtFair. In her role at IFAS, Fletcher spearheads international talent development and connects local creators to global platforms like the Annecy International Animation Film Festival (MIFA) while championing immersive media and AI integration across the region.

15:45 to 16:15 **IMMERSION**

Dis/locating the Centre

Rendering (memory) infrastructures audible.

Where: Origins Centre, Tapestry Room

Dis/locating the centre is a 40-minute live sound performance that explores the audible and material realities of data centres in Johannesburg, and their implications for resources, memory, and knowledge systems. Working with field recordings and archival material, the piece takes an immersive, atmospheric approach to the industrial, low-frequency hum of these technological infrastructures, recognising the centre as an acoustic object. Generally hidden from view yet shaping the textures of everyday life, these data centres are material forms of mediation, connecting past events to present realities. Additionally the piece listens for legibility: for the ways we become visible to systems of power, and the conditions under which we are recorded, recognised, and represented.

Presented by: Austrian Music Export / Musicfonds

Topics: Music & Sound, Memory & Identity, Immersive

WHO IS TAKING PART

Andreas Stecher **ARTIST**

Artist

Andi Stecher is an Austrian born drummer, producer and composer. Stecher's music does not know a clear genre classification, he includes influences from a diverse range of styles and types of music into his pieces and thus forms a hybrid sonic mixture. In his compositions and research he reflects on topics such as his upbringing, class and class politics in music, alpine musical traditions, heritage, the general meaning of musical tradition / consumption and fetishization of traditional music in Europe / globally and the exoticizing of global sounds by western audiences. For his work via his Stecher Production outlet he draws inspiration from a wide variety of sources to create multi-layered tracks and innovative rhythmic patterns. Working at an intersection of sounds ranging from post-club music and drill to avant-pop, polyrhythmic beats and beyond, he weaves multiple contemporary production styles together to push the sonic boundaries of electronic music. Stecher is also about collaboration and community - sharing musical ideas and themes with a diverse range of artists and vocalists and bringing music to life through egalitarian global collaborations. In addition to solo works Andi Stecher plays in a diverse range of bands and projects and composes for a wide variety of media.

Bhavisha Panchia **ARTIST**

Artist

Bhavisha Panchia is a curator and writer. Her work centres on the social, cultural and ideological signification of sound and music in contemporary culture. With an interest in auditory media's relationship to geopolitical paradigms, anti/postcolonial discourses and imperial histories, she considers how we can critically listen back to listen forward. She is the founder of Nothing to Commit Records, a label and publishing platform committed to the production and expansion of knowledge related to contemporary art and sound within and across the global South. Her writings have been published in books, journals and exhibition catalogues.

16:15 to 17:15 **PANEL**

Memory Making: XR at the Intersection of Heritage, Education and Renewal

What a Southern African XR heritage model could look like.

Where: Origins Centre, Tapestry Room

How extended reality can transform the way African heritage is preserved, experienced and imagined? While XR heritage industries are well established in Europe and China, this panel asks what a distinctly Southern African model could look like, rooted in local histories, communities and contexts. Through research, experimentation and creative practice, it positions XR as a tool for education, cultural preservation, tourism and urban renewal, beginning in Johannesburg and expanding towards new ways of experiencing heritage across the continent.

Presented by: Independent

Topics: Heritage & History, Education & Youth, XR

WHO IS TAKING PART

Grace Meadows FACILITATOR

Founding Director, BRICS Culture Commons NPC

Grace Meadows is a cultural leader and partnership strategist working at the intersection of arts, heritage and digital innovation. She is a founding director of BRICS Culture Commons NPC and a DSAC-appointed board member of the Market Theatre Foundation, where she is a former council member. Before moving into the innovation space, she spent seven years at the British Council, latterly as Head of Arts for South Africa and Regional Lead for Cultural Exchange across Sub-Saharan Africa. Her work centres on African-led cultural diplomacy and Global South partnerships. She holds an MA in Applied Arts and a BA Honours in Dramatic Arts from Wits University.

Dr Izak Potgieter PANELIST

Immersive Reality Researcher and Developer University of Johannesburg (UJ)

A virtual reconstruction of the Johannesburg neighbourhood the apartheid state bulldozed and renamed Triomf. Sophiatown, nicknamed "the Chicago of South Africa," home to Drum-era writers, jazz, and Miriam Makeba's early career, was barely documented before its destruction, so this VR experience rebuilds it from the only record left: the memories of former residents. It doesn't pretend to undo a demolition. It holds space for what people remember. Heritage, here, isn't reconstruction. It's testimony.

Prof Maria Frahm-Arp PANELIST

Executive Director of Library and Professor in Christian Studies University of Johannesburg (UJ)

Prof Maria Frahm-Arp is a Professor in Christian Studies in Africa. She specialises in Pentecostalism in South Africa. She is the author of Professional Women in South African Pentecostal Charismatic Churches and Into the Deep: Finding God in the Midst of Suffering. Over the last fifteen years she has worked extensively on gender in South African Pentecostal churches. Her latest journal publications focus on the relationship between Pentecostalism, politics, and economics in the lived experiences of South Africans. Prof Frahm-Arp is currently serving as the Executive Director: Library and Information Centre at UJ but continues to collaborate closely with the department, for example, as a supervisor to a number of postgraduate students.

Palesa Mnyaka PANELIST

Public Culture Manager City of Johannesburg (CoJ)

Palesa Mnyaka is a cultural manager, heritage researcher, and public practice practitioner specializing in municipal cultural governance and digital heritage innovation. Serving as the Manager of Public Culture within the City of Johannesburg's Arts, Culture and Heritage Directorate, her work focuses on the intersection of public art, urban renewal, and historic preservation. Through collaborative digital initiatives, she works to bridge creative practice, community context, and digital transformation to expand how African heritage is preserved, navigated, and imagined.

17:30 to 18:45 SCREENING // FULLDOME

COSMOCENO 2026 - International Networked Visual Music Festival

Where: Wits Anglo American Digital Dome

COSMOCENO 2026 - International Networked Visual Music Festival stems from the synergy between the showcases UVM (curatory: Ricardo Dal Farra), EFEMERA Imagem (Andreia Oliveira and Matheus Moreno), and SUBVERSO (Cristiano Figueiró).

Featuring global works selected in the 2025 open call, the touring festival occupies university planetariums in Brazil (UFSM, UFBA, UNIPAMPA, UFRGS) and South Africa (Wits University). In these immersive fulldome environments, the audience experiences ephemera images and visual music guided by "Ecopoetics," aiming for sensory experiences that call for urgent awareness of the climate crisis.

More than an exhibition, COSMOCENO consolidates a robust network of international academic and artistic cooperation, connecting institutions from the Global South and the Northern Hemisphere (such as UNTREF and Concordia University).

Curators: Cristiano Figueiró; Andreia Oliveira; Matheus Moreno; Ricardo Dal Farra

Presented by: COSMOCENO UVM: Understanding Visual Music EFEMERA Imagem SUBVERSO

Topics: Music & Sound, Immersive, Visual Arts

FILMS IN THIS PROGRAMME

Zonas Críticas

Inspired by the scientific concept of "critical zones", the thin layer of the Earth's subsurface essential to life, now under threat. Velázquez builds a journey of images and sounds evoking hybrid beings, mythological figures and artificial voices, crossing oceans, mycelia, earthquakes and human intervention in the landscape.

Artist: Fernando Velasquez; Uruguay

Ecos Originários

A work reflecting on the sonority of Indigenous music in contrast with the sound structures of electronic music.

Artist: Cristiano Figueiró (direction), Nala Quimera, Edson Dantas, Peter Marques and Vitor Rizzato; Brazil

Texografias

Texografias (2019) is an immersive audiovisual work in fulldome format (360° hemispheric projection) developed by Argentine artists and researchers Marina Vila, Elena Laplana, Susana Landau and Nahuel Morón Diperna.

Artist: Marina; Argentina

Patuá

Patuá 1: Nada is the first volume of an audiovisual series invoking the power of amulets, songs and ancestral memories. The "Nothing" is not absence but potency, a primordial space where knowledge, speech and poetry intertwine. Designed for fulldome, it reverberates traditions and voices that inhabit bodies, territories and mythologies.

Artist: Calixto Bento; Brazil

las Memórias del sol

An immersive audiovisual fulldome short film created in 2022 by Colombian artist Álvaro Rodríguez Badel. Combining new technologies with the Amazonian universe, it explores the relationship between sunlight and natural ecosystems.

Artist: Álvaro Rodríguez Badel; Colombia

3LOAS

A fulldome short film celebrating the 80th birthday of percussionist Naná Vasconcelos and his musical and poetic legacy. It blends Afro-Brazilian rhythms with contemporary music, immersing the viewer in Brazilian culture and Naná's global influence.

Artist: Victor Valentim; Brazil

SynthCore-X

A creative journey through organic fiction where neither the laws of nature nor physics apply. A simple substance travels through the bloodstream and settles as a microscopic swarm of interwoven circuits, with encrypted messages forming hallucinatory ecosystems: a visual exploration of a reality woven from the synthetic.

Artist: ztaa + Buena Tarde; Mexico

Abstrata Circular

A fulldome work investigating the impact of human action on nature through abstract visual narrative. Organic forms and mutating geometries pulse between harmony and rupture, like a living organism that breathes, becomes contaminated and transforms.

Artist: Davi Cavalcanti (Vj Gabiru); Brazil

20:00 to 21:15 SCREENING

Fête du cinéma d'animation 2026: animated short film screening

Where: The Bioscope Independent Cinema

Presented by: Association Française du Cinéma d'Animation and French Institute of South Africa

FILMS IN THIS SCREENING

Sulaimani (16+)

France | Animated Short

Two Indian women in a Paris restaurant; memory, displacement, emancipation.

Director | Vinnie Ann Bose

Dieu est Timide (God Is Shy) (16+)

France | Animated Short

Hallucinatory genre-bending debut; Cannes Semaine de la Critique 2025.

Director | Jocelyn Charles

Fille de l'Eau (Water Girl) (16+)

France | Netherlands | Portugal | Animated Short

Hand-drawn meditation on memory, ageing, the body; César Best Animated Short 2026.

Director | Sandra Desmazières

Next? (16+)

France | Belgium | Animated Short

Half-human, half-animal speed dating; difference and connection.

Director | Christel Guibert

Balconada (16+)

Bulgaria | France | Animated Short

A downpour reconnects neighbours to the present.

Director | Iva Tokmakchieva

Thursday

15 October

IMAGINATION ENGINES

08:30 to 09:00 REGISTRATION

Check In & Connect

Where: Chris Seabrooke Music Hall or Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct

Start your festival day right. Collect your pass, grab a coffee from the café and meet creators, innovators and other participants before the first session gets underway.

Presented by: Webtickets

09:00 to 17:00 HACKATHON

AI & Music Business Hackathon

Real industry challenges. African music solutions.

Where: Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct, Accelerator

How might AI, data and emerging technologies unlock new opportunities across Africa's music ecosystem? Over four days, multidisciplinary teams will tackle real-world industry challenges, developing innovative solutions that support creators, businesses and communities.

Presented by: South African Music Performance Rights Association (SAMPRA) and Southern African Music Rights Organisation (SAMRO), with Music Business Lab, Aions Ventures, Wits Innovation Centre and Wits MIND (Machine Intelligence and Neural Discovery Institute)

Topics: AI, Music & Sound, Ownership & IP

WHO IS TAKING PART

Kerryn Campion FACILITATOR

Facilitator, Aions Ventures | South Africa

10:00 to 10:20 PROVOCATION

What Happens When Intelligence Learns From an Incomplete Picture of Humanity?

Where: Chris Seabrooke Music Hall

Artificial intelligence is increasingly shaping how we create, communicate, govern and make sense of the world. Yet every intelligent system learns from data, histories and assumptions that are inherently incomplete. Drawing on his pioneering work in socially intelligent AI, Prof. Sennay Ghebreab examines what happens when cultures, languages, communities and ways of knowing are absent from the systems we build. As AI becomes embedded in everyday life, the challenge is not simply creating more intelligent machines, but ensuring that intelligence itself reflects the full complexity and diversity of humanity.

Presented by: Fak'ugesi African Digital & Innovation Festival

Topics: AI, Social Justice, Community & Collaboration

WHO IS TAKING PART

Prof Sennay Ghebreab **SPEAKER**

Founding Director, Civic AI Lab, University of Amsterdam | Ethiopia

10:20 to 11:00 **KEYNOTE**

The Intelligence Century and Why Africa Must Help Invent It

Where: Chris Seabrooke Music Hall

Artificial Intelligence is reshaping economies, industries and societies, but the real question is bigger than technology. Who will define intelligence in the century ahead? Drawing on pioneering work at the Wits MIND Institute, this keynote explores why Africa must move beyond adoption and become a co-creator of the science, governance and imagination of intelligent systems. From machine learning and neuroscience to culture and public value, the session argues that Africa's greatest opportunity is not to catch up to the AI revolution, but to help shape what intelligence itself becomes.

Presented by: MIND Institute

Topics: AI, Research & Policy

WHO IS TAKING PART

Dr Benjamin Rossman **SPEAKER**

Director, MIND Institute and Director, RAIL Lab, School of Computer Science and Applied Maths, Wits | South Africa

Benjamin Rosman is a Professor of Computer Science and Applied Mathematics at the University of the Witwatersrand, where he is the founding Director of the Wits Machine Intelligence and Neural Discovery (MIND) Institute. He also directs the Robotics, Autonomous Intelligence and Learning (RAIL) Laboratory at Wits. His core research focuses on reinforcement learning, decision-making under uncertainty, and autonomous systems, specifically examining how learning can be accelerated by abstracting, composing, and generalising knowledge across tasks. Benji co-founded the Deep Learning Indaba, a landmark initiative strengthening African machine learning capacity across more than 40 countries, as well as Lelapa AI, an enterprise dedicated to building AI tailored for African languages and contexts. A Fellow of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research (CIFAR) and an IEEE Senior Member, he was named one of TIME's 100 Most Influential People in AI. Highlighting his leadership in driving Africa-led artificial intelligence innovation, Benji has recently been profiled on the cover of Forbes Africa. Through his foundational research and community-building efforts, he continues to shape global AI discourses while advancing regional innovation and technological sovereignty.

11:30 to 12:30 **PANEL**

The Art in Artificial Intelligence

Human-centred AI in the cultural and creative industries, the artist as orchestrator.

Where: Chris Seabrooke Music Hall

This panel will be an interactive discussion, encouraging participation from the audience on a range of issues related to the adoption and use of AI in the creative process in the CCIs from film-making, digital art to journalism and social media. The focus will be on the experience of both artists and academics, exploring on how AI has enabled innovation in the work of artists. The session will explore ideas about the shifting role and identity of the artist, the impact of AI, and the intersection of the creative process with technology: what are the policy issues arising? How are artists re-imagining art, communication and what does a human-centred interaction with AI look like?

Presented by: Fak'ugesi African Digital & Innovation Festival

Topics: AI, Ownership & IP, Memory & Identity

WHO IS TAKING PART

Dimitri Martinis FACILITATOR

Principal Consultant, MCM Digital Media | South Africa

Dimitri is a development sociologist specialising in research, digital media, and information and communications technologies (ICT). He was researcher for the Digital Broadcasting Advisory Body (DBAB). He was key to the development and launch of the South African Film and TV Production incentive. He was part of the team of expert consultants on the Review Panel that produced the "Integrated ICT Policy for South Africa", the originating policy that gave rise to the draft Audio-Visual policy. He served as researcher for the SA National Editors Forum inquiry into media ethics. More recently he was the lead author for a country study on the impact of artificial intelligence in the information space for the Forum for Information and Democracy. In the corporate environment he was part of the top management team that launched South Africa's first commercial free-to-air and also subscription television stations. He has also played a key role in the launch of several commercial radio and community TV channels. He now focuses his energy on driving innovative projects in new content development, policy and regulatory advisory and business consulting services. He is a graduate of the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) reading for a BA honours degree in Cultural and Media Studies and an MA in Development Sociology.

Dr Renzo Filinich Orozco PANELIST

Featured Festival Artist; MIND / Origins postdoc | Brazil

Media artist, Researcher in Technological Culture and Aesthetics. PhD in Interdisciplinary Studies / Post-doctoral researcher at Origins Centre, and Machine Intelligence & Neural Discovery Institute (MIND) Wits University. Renzo is the featured artist of the festival, Dr Renzo Filinich O., will reflect on the evolution of his artistic practice, beginning with Aguas Revueltas (Troubled Waters), a collaborative work created with members of a local community in Chile before AI became central to his creative research. He will then guide the audience through a selection of key works, his own alongside those of other artists - that map an evolving engagement with sound, ecology, cybernetics and artificial intelligence. The journey culminates in his latest work in progress, The Ecology of Collapsing Meaning: Plant-Guided Language Evolution and Machine Hallucination, an experimental exploration of AI, plant intelligence, and emergent language that reimagines communication as a multispecies, more-than-human process.

Avril Joffe **PANELIST**

UNESCO Chair, Cultural Entrepreneurship & Policy, Wits | South Africa

UNESCO Chair, Cultural Entrepreneurship and Policy; Member of UNESCO's Expert Facility on Cultural Policy and Governance, Wits School of Governance, University of the Witwatersrand Avril Joffe is a leading researcher and recognised globally for her pioneering work on the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) Avril will share ideas emerging from a global study she is involved in on the impact of AI on the CCIs across the world, focusing on the global South. Avril is particularly interested in exploring what is at the intersection of artists and creatives experimenting with AI and using it in their workflow, and the decisions we need to make about AI policy that considers the CCIs. Are artist's voices being heard in the global policy discussions, and the decisions being made by the global tech platforms and AI companies? What are the questions we need to be asking and what are the issues an AI policy must consider specifically taking the needs of the CCI into account, from issues regarding authorship, copyright, transparency, accountability, through access to technology.

Athandiwe Saba **PANELIST**

Investigative Journalist, Editor, AI Strategist | South Africa

Athandiwe Saba is an award-winning investigative journalist, editor and AI strategist whose work examines how technology, data and artificial intelligence are reshaping journalism and public life in Africa. She has led cross-border investigative and open-source intelligence teams across the continent and works with newsrooms, researchers and international organisations on responsible AI, digital power and the future of African media. Athandiwe will examine the idea that AI tools are neither autonomous nor neutral: they are human-built systems shaped by the priorities, biases and limitations of their creators and the data used to train them. She will argue that artists must remain recognised as the creators and decision-makers, while asking whose work, languages and cultural histories are included, extracted, misrepresented or erased as AI becomes part of the creative process. Her focus will also include the basics of how these tools are created and the possibilities of using this technology outside of the extractive big tech companies.

Nobuntu Dubazana **PANELIST**

OMBONISI Group; BusaBuntu Pictures; NFVF Council | South Africa

Nobuntu 'BusaBuntu' Dubazana is the visionary force behind BusaBuntu Pictures (Pty) Ltd, a disruptive African media company and The BusaBuntu Foundation, a youth and women-focused non-profit company changing the face of storytelling on the continent. She serves as a Council Member of the National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF) and is a former Council Member of the Film and Publication Board of South Africa, roles that speak to her deep-rooted influence on national content creation, policy and regulatory frameworks. As one of the world's few formally qualified Creative Economists, BusaBuntu blends over 34 years of culturally and geographically diverse storytelling expertise with boardroom strategy, entrepreneurial fluency and cultural foresight. She is also a strategic operator, capable of bridging art and accountability, creative freedom and compliance. Her leadership fuses feminine disruption, emotional intelligence, systems thinking and cultural empathy; making her a force for innovation across both public and private sectors. BusaBuntu will share her focus on digital and transmedia storytelling from an African perspective. As a child born into Apartheid she will share her experience about how her work has been influenced by the need to use art as a form of activism, empowerment, disruption and unification, whilst creating opportunity for young and vulnerable people. She will reflect on the current policy environment of content regulation and she will share her experience of how AI can be adopted in production processes.

12:00 to 13:30 **PLAY READING****Provenance + AI-Curious***Where did this come from?***Where:** Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct, The Lab hosted at IBM

Joke becomes anecdote. Anecdote becomes memory. Memory becomes evidence.

A comedian walks on, works the room and tells you his life. Goa. Durban. Grassy Park. A box of his father's measuring tapes. A friend who always seems to know what he's about to say. Then the stories start telling themselves.

Provenance is a solo work that begins as stand-up and becomes something closer to testimony. This Fak'ugesi Writer's Residency new play development reading is read by its writer, Ashraf Johaardien, directed and facilitated by Lesley Wright, and followed by a live interrogation of origin, memory and ownership.

The play is still becoming. You're in the room while it does.

Presented by: M\e.**Topics:** Ownership & IP, AI

WHO IS TAKING PART

Ashraf Johaardien **PANELIST**

Writer | South Africa

Ashraf Johaardien is an award-winning playwright, performer and interdisciplinary artist, and former Executive Producer of the National Arts Festival and CEO of Business and Arts South Africa. His work spans theatre, performance and writing, with a particular interest in technology, authorship, identity and the politics of cultural production.

Lesley Wright **FACILITATOR**

Director | South Africa

Lesley Wright is a director and facilitator working across education, performance and collaborative development.

A drama teacher and former Head of Dramatic Arts at Roedean School (SA), she creates spaces for students, artists and audiences to interrogate ideas through live exchange, critical thinking and storytelling.

For Provenance + AI-Curious, she directs the table reading of Provenance and facilitates the conversation that follows.

12:45 to 13:30 **DIALOGUE**

Same Prompt, Different Planet

Two artists. One machine. Two radically different futures.

Where: Chris Seabrooke Music Hall

Festival Director Alby Michaels turns the act of curation into the conversation itself, bringing together featured festival artists Dagmar Schürer, and Renzo Filinich Orozco - whose work spans immersive worlds, self-taught AI experimentation, and Global South cosmotronics. Moving beyond polished demos, they reveal unseen failures, unexpected breakthroughs, and the moments the machine refuses to behave. Then the conversation flips: the artists interrogate the curator about power, access, and who gets invited into the future.

Presented by: Fak'ugesi African Digital & Innovation Festival

Topics: AI, Visual Arts, Immersive

WHO IS TAKING PART

Alby Michaels HOST

Festival Director, Fak'ugesi African Digital & Innovation Festival | South Africa

Festival Director of Fak'ugesi African Digital & Innovation Festival, hosted by the Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct at Wits University, where he has curated flagship programming from "Power Surge" to "African Imaginaries" and the global immersive premiere of *Kancicà* at the Digital Dome, growing Fak'ugesi into one of the continent's leading platforms for African digital creativity across immersive media, gaming, animation, AI and digital arts. He's also affiliated with Business and Arts South Africa (BASA), lending a sponsorship-and-partnership fluency that shows in Fak'ugesi's growing roster of corporate and institutional collaborations. Before digital-festival leadership, Alby built a career in South African theatre and television as a director, designer, dramaturg and performer, holding a BA in Drama (cum laude) and rising to Resident Director at UJ Arts and Culture. Credits include directing *The Crucible*, *Equus* and *African Gothic*, set design for **Boesman and Lena**, and television roles in **One Way** and **Inkaba**. That dual background, a dramaturg's instinct for staging, paired with a partnerships operator's eye through BASA, shapes his curatorial hand at Fak'ugesi: building not just a programme but a systems-level cultural platform.

Dagmar Schürer PANELIST

Fine Art, Central Saint Martins; Tate Modern, Ars Electronica | Austria

Austrian media artist based in Berlin. Studied Free Art and New Media at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, London. Works across digital, moving image, expanded animation and XR/AR, drawing on neuroscience, AI and digital world-building to explore consciousness and environmental connection. Since 2018 she's been a research assistant and workshop instructor for artistic XR development at the University of Applied Sciences Berlin, and she sits on the board of medienkunstverein, a Berlin association championing new presentation formats for media art. Exhibited at ICA London, Centre Pompidou, Tate Modern, Ars Electronica Linz, the Moscow Biennale for Young Art, Supernova Festival Denver and the Museum of Waste, Changsha. She's the Fak'ugesi contact linked to the Austrian Cultural Forum / Kulturforum Berlin relationship in the project notes.

Dr Renzo Filinich Orozco **PANELIST**

Postdoctoral researcher / Media Artist at the Origins Centre, Wits University School of Arts, Johannesburg, his research there investigates the "epistemologies created between the practices of Art and Science." | Brazil

Renzo Filinich is a media artist and researcher based at the Origins Centre, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. His practice explores the intersections of art, technology, sound, and philosophy through installations, AI-generated media and speculative technological artifacts. Drawing on the work of Gilbert Simondon, Bernard Stiegler and Yuk Hui, he investigates how technical objects participate in processes of perception, memory, and individuation, opening new perspectives on intelligence, ecology and human-machine relations. His recent works include Quantum Echoes of Humanity, an AI-driven exploration of anthropological archives from a Global South perspective, and Echoes of the Machine – A Cybernetic Song, which examines cybernetic feedback, machine learning and environmental data through sound-based artistic research. His research has been published in journals including AI & Society and Artnodes. Filinich has exhibited and presented internationally, contributing to interdisciplinary dialogues on media arts, artificial intelligence and digital aesthetics.

13:30 to 14:30 Lunch**14:30 to 14:45** **TALK****The Languages We Imagine into the Future**

Every technology has a mother tongue.

Where: Chris Seabrooke Music Hall

What happens when the languages we inherit become part of the technologies we imagine? Drawing on her work as a writer, African-language scholar and researcher in digital technologies, she explore how language, knowledge and imagination shape the futures we build with AI. At the heart of the conversation is a simple question: whose languages, knowledge and ways of knowing do we carry into the future?

Presented by: University of Pretoria

Topics: Indigenous Knowledge, AI, Speculative Futures

WHO IS TAKING PART**Dr Tsosheletso Chidi** **SPEAKER**

Lecturer: Department of African Languages Research Fellow: Department of Computer Science
| South Africa

Dr Tsosheletso Chidi Bongwadi is a linguistic researcher, writer and literary curator working at the intersection of African languages, literature, knowledge systems and digital technologies. She holds a PhD in African Languages and an MA in Creative Writing, and is a Lecturer in African Languages at the University of Pretoria, where she also contributes to research in data science and African-language technologies. Her work explores language, representation, knowledge production and the role of African languages in shaping more inclusive digital futures.

14:45 to 16:15 **MASTERCLASS // IMMERSIVE AUDIO**

FLOW

Where: Wits Anglo American Digital Dome

Grammy-winning sound artist Hans-Martin Buff (Prince, Scorpions, Peter Gabriel) presents Flow, a 360° immersive composition, in the 8.2 surround system. The 90-minute session pairs the ~30-minute piece with a demonstration of Buff's layering technique and a Q&A on the craft of 3D sound. No visuals: just the dome, in low light, built for listening. Flow was developed by Real World Studios in partnership with Dr Ruth Farrar of Bath Spa University, founder of the Immersive Audio Network, with Dr Felix Carter (University of Bristol) and Theo Kozlowski (University of Bath). The composition was written and recorded by Adrian Utley and produced by Hans-Martin Buff. Funded by UKRI's Strength in Places programme MyWorld, with support from Digital Catapult.

Creator: Hans-Martin Buff; Germany

Presented by: Bath Spa University Immersive Audio Network

Topics: Immersive, Music & Sound

15:00 to 15:15 **TALK**

An Optimist's Guide to The Singularity

Using Machines to Celebrate Humanity

Where: Chris Seabrooke Music Hall

AI conversations have a habit of collapsing into either hype or doom. I'm interested in the more useful question: if machines keep getting better at doing things for us, what do we want all that capability to be for?

There are real reasons to be uneasy. Automation is changing work, wealth and power faster than most of our institutions can keep up. But I don't think the answer is to

romanticise drudgery or compete with machines at being machines.

This talk makes the case for a more human-centred technological future: one where automation gives us more room for creativity, culture, judgement, play, community and the strange business of actually being alive.

The future isn't simply something technology does to us. We build it together. So what would it mean to build one worth being optimistic about?

Presented by: We ARe VR

Topics: AI, Speculative Futures

WHO IS TAKING PART

Dale Deacon **SPEAKER**

Founder, We ARe VR | South Africa

Dale P. Deacon is a Johannesburg-based digital artist, director, producer and worldbuilder working across emerging technology, interactive media and spatial computing.

He founded worldbuild.io and the weAReVR community, and his work has ranged from social VR experiences at Venice Immersive interactive projects for the Cradle of Humankind UNESCO World Heritage Site and Loerie-winning brand experiences.

Much of his work sits at the intersection of technology and human experience: exploring what new tools allow us to make, how they change the way we work, and what parts of being human are worth protecting and celebrating.

More at deac.worldbuild.io

15:15 to 15:30

TALK

Griot AI

Reclaiming ancestral histories through generative AI and immersive transmedia storytelling.

Where: Chris Seabrooke Music Hall

Griot AI is a transmedia experience by Brazilian creative tech company mobCONTENT that uses generative AI to tell the story of Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua. Rather than using AI simply as a tool, it uses it to reclaim and personalise history, bridging ancestral storytelling (the griot) with the future of XR and interactive media. In this talk, Marcos Ferreira challenges AI to make room for the silenced voices of the colonised South, and shows how AI can be "hacked" to embody and carry these narratives: moving from the critique of AI's incomplete picture of humanity into an active practice of reclaiming memory and centring African and diasporic tradition.

Presented by: mobCONTENT

Topics: Memory & Identity, Heritage & History, Games & Play, AI

WHO IS TAKING PART

Marcos Ferreira **SPEAKER**

Founder & Creative Director, mobCONTENT | Brazil

Marcos Ferreira is a Creative Technologist, Senior Full-Stack Developer, and Founder & Creative Director at mobCONTENT, based in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. With extensive expertise in software architecture, generative AI workflows, and immersive media, he builds innovative digital products that bridge technology, culture, and interactive narrative. His work focuses on leveraging emerging tools such as AI, XR and IoT to reclaim heritage, empower storytelling, and create impactful user experiences across global cultural initiatives.

15:30 to 16:45 **PANEL**

Young Innovators

SMPTE Launches In Africa

Where: Chris Seabrooke Music Hall

The Young Innovators Panel is an SMPTE initiative, successfully run by the SMPTE UK Section, that connects students and young professionals with working industry professionals to help them better understand how to build and navigate a career in film, television, broadcast and media technology.

The panel deliberately features emerging-to-mid-level professionals rather than only senior industry leaders. Their career journeys are recent and relatable, allowing younger attendees to see achievable next steps and hear practical advice on entering the industry, developing skills, building networks and progressing their careers.

The Fak'ugesi edition will also focus on building a career in the AI era: how AI and emerging technologies are changing roles and workflows, which skills young professionals should develop, and how they can use new technologies to remain adaptable and create new opportunities.

Presented by: SMPTE

Topics: Creative Economy, Film, AI, Education & Youth

WHO IS TAKING PART

Sondia Viljoen **PANELIST**

Chairperson, South African Finishing Artists and Imaging Technicians Society (SAFAITS) | South Africa

Sondia Viljoen is a DIT, colourist and producer based in Johannesburg, with more than a decade of freelance experience across documentaries, adverts, series, reality and narrative work. She runs her own production company, Balanced Productions, and is Executive Producer on several films in development. Sondia chairs SAFAITS, the South African Finishing Artists and Imaging Technicians Society, with a strong focus on advocacy and professional development. She shares the chair of the SMPTE South Africa Student Chapter. She is also convening the AI White Paper Programme to help shape AI policy for the South African audiovisual sector. Her newest venture, Overvu, is a media asset management and review platform with a built in AI editing assistant. She also brings Overvu to work preserving South African film and broadcast heritage.

Dean Zier **PANELIST**

Founder and Executive Producer, 10th Ave Entertainment | South Africa

Dean Zier is the founder and executive producer of 10th Ave Entertainment, a Johannesburg-based studio pioneering the Hybrid Production model, bridging the gap between traditional cinema and generative technology. Dean spearheaded the development of XIA, a proprietary AI orchestration engine and pipeline, designed to bring studio-grade consistency and control to the generative workflow.

Billie Elizabeth **PANELIST**

Writer-Director and Producer; Founder and Festival Director, Joburg Underground | South Africa

Billie Elizabeth is a Johannesburg-based writer-director and producer. Her debut feature *My Cannibal Crush* (2024) is internationally distributed and currently streaming on Tubi, Amazon Video, Apple TV and Plex. She has two features in active development: *Tjommie*, an ensemble drama set in Joburg's alternative party scene, with an attached cast that includes Andreas Damm (*Legacies*, The CW), Ayanda Seoka (*The Wheel of Time*, Amazon), Tina Redman (*Ludik*, Netflix), Ilana Cilliers (*Johnny is Nie Dood Nie*) and Maude Sandham (*The Smell of Apples*, TIFF 2026); and *Three Whispers of May and Avery*, a feature about friendship and mortality. She is the founder and festival director of Joburg Underground, an experimental short film programme at The Bioscope now in its fifth year, and lectures Film and Television at The Open Window Institute.

O'Brien Manana **PANELIST**

Director and Owner, Soulfiler Productions | South Africa

O'Brien Manana is a creative 'artpreneur', director, editor, animator and owner of Soulfiler Productions, a 100% black-owned Johannesburg-based film and content production company he has run for the past 15 years. Soulfiler Productions has serviced a diverse set of clients across a variety of industries. A young and ambitious filmmaker with 18 years' experience as a music, commercials and documentary director, he is now an aspiring film director and skilled digital artist. He is passionate about working with brands and people in collaborative ways that bring their stories to life in various visual forms, and about telling African stories beyond what we've seen in the past. He is currently developing short films in the thriller and sci-fi genres, while continuing to tell impactful visual brand stories.

Tami Kusvabadika **PANELIST**

Head of Media Operations, Africa XP; Co-Chair, SMPTE South Africa Chapter

With over a decade of experience in television, production and post-production, Tami Kusvabadika is Head of Media Operations at Africa XP, a leading content creation and distribution company in Africa. A Professional Member of SMPTE and Co-Chair of the SMPTE South Africa Chapter, Tami contributes to advancing the art, science and craft of the image, sound and storytelling industries in South Africa. Tami leads a team of 15 media professionals, overseeing end-to-end delivery and quality assurance of all Swarm branded original content, with expertise spanning media management, QC workflow, OTT digital distribution, technical project management, IMF standards, vendor onboarding and production technology. Tami is passionate about creating and distributing diverse, engaging content that resonates with global audiences.

17:00 to 20:00 **LAUNCH****SMPTE Africa Launches**

Where: Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct, Deck

The panel will be followed by a separate mixer at another Fak'ugesi venue, allowing attendees, panelists, SMPTE members and industry professionals to continue the conversation and build connections informally.

Subject to funding, the mixer may be opened to the wider Fak'ugesi festival community, creating a broader networking opportunity across film, television, broadcast, technology, digital arts and innovation.

Presented by: SMPTE

Topics: Creative Economy, Community & Collaboration

WHO IS TAKING PART**Sondia Viljoen**

Chairperson, South African Finishing Artists and Imaging Technicians Society (SAFAITS) | Africa

20:00 to 21:22 SCREENING

Best of Cape Town International Animation Festival: animated short film screening

Where: The Bioscope Independent Cinema

Presented by: Blacknative Studios

FILMS IN THIS SCREENING

UBUNTU

South Africa | 2D/Traditional Animation

Ubuntu is a heartfelt story about a community uniting over the simple yet profound act of sharing a meal. It weaves together themes of mindfulness, discipline, agriculture, and the legacies we pass down through generations. Through the intimate perspectives of our characters, we journey across the vibrant and evolving landscape of New Oakland - witnessing their struggles, their growth, and the moments that bind them together. Each scene is a reflection of how food, culture, and shared purpose can heal, inspire, and transform a people.

Writers and Directors | Joel "Cyzo" Matladi and Mogau Kekana

To The Dream

Egypt | 2D/Traditional Animation

Trapped at the bottom of a strange, mystical well, a young woman finds herself surrounded by eerie phantoms and alien flora. Looking up, a distant glint of light from the well's opening becomes her only hope. But as every grueling attempt to climb out ends in failure, despair begins to take over. Just as the darkness threatens to swallow her whole, a spectral manifestation of her own inner self appears - sparking a transformative race to the top to finally break through into the light.

Created by Hana Khaled Mahmoud Kamel

The Vincent's Night

Brazil | Stop Frame Animation

Vincent van Gogh-inspired one-minute stop-motion short, made by rural Brazilian children through Cine Jericóollywood, a community film collective in Paraíba. Using handcrafted sets and frame-by-frame animation, kids with little access to cinema recreated Van Gogh's starry-night wonder as a hands-on lesson in storytelling and self-expression. Though brief, it shows how art crosses time and place, and how imagination can flourish anywhere.

Director | Janiglécia Tavares Lopes

About Sarah

Nigeria | 2D/Traditional Animation

When asked if he believes in love, a nameless narrator traces the memories of his past relationships, each a fragment of affection, illusion, and longing. Among them stands Sarah, the woman who quietly became his obsession. "About Sarah" is an intimate exploration of memory, desire, and the stories we tell ourselves about love.

Director, Writer and Editor | Daniel "S.A.D." Alaka

One Way or Another

United States of America | 2D/Traditional Animation

A determined romantic races to meet their partner at the train station, but encounters a number of obstacles along the way.

Created, Directed, and Animated by Benny Seals

Pictures for Piano

South Africa | Pinscreen

An abstract interpretation of Chopin's Etude Opus 10 no. 12. The film was made without any planning by improvising on the pinscreen.

Director and Animator | Diek Grobler

The Black Raven

Egypt | Stop Frame Animation

A little Raven unsatisfied with his black dull feathers, has jealousy take the best of him when he sees the beautiful colourful peacock and decides to watch him, in order to copy his graceful moves. However, after several attempts he fails and hurts himself.

Later when he decides to go back to his normal self, he realizes he has forgotten how to be himself.

Direction and Animation | Menna el-Atroush Music | Abdallah Yusuf Puppets | Ramy Sobhy, Asmaa Fahmy and Raghda Hesham

BICI, The Story Of A Bike

Brazil | 2D/Traditional Animation

Bici is a mountain bike that travels to Afuá, a city in the Amazon region, to experience adventures. Abandoned after breaking down in an accident, she needs to reconnect with herself and find new meaning in her life while exploring a society where the only transportation is bicycles.

Director | Otoniel Oliveira

Crocodile Dance Teaser

USA | Nigeria | South Africa | 2D & CG Hybrid Animation

Expect elements of myth, science fiction and shades of horror set in a fictional West African town. It is the story of the magnificent griot, Roukia. We meet her in the West African seaside town of Itesi, where she delivers a powerful opera. After a fateful, romantic encounter with a local surfer, Biokun, she settles in this seeming promised land with a dark secret legacy: A curse. Years pass and the looming threat of the Mami Wata curse strips her of joy—her musical gift, the gojé. She is a grieving, faded star, and looked upon with suspicion. She retreats into herself, and becomes obsessed with the cure for her ill child and husband—a musical pacemaker. Yes, Roukia has a secret of her own. Her music may be the key to unraveling the curse and the tension weighing Itesi down. On the night of the Crocodile Dance, Biokun ascends the mountain and Roukia follows. She encounters the monster—the very real Mami Wata of Itesi. The water goddess, Elusu!

Directors: Shofela Coker, Nadia Darries

Tribe

South Africa | Zimbabwe | 3D/ CGI Animation

In a divided galaxy where only royals can wield magic and planets are ruled by fear - the paths of three unlikely teenagers - a timid girl with a dangerous gift, a disgraced prince out of his depth, and a fugitive with unpredictable powers and everything to lose - collide on a high-stakes mission that reveals they might be the key to saving their world.

Creator, Writer and Director | Tendayi Nyeke

Journey To Athlos

USA | South Africa | 2D/Traditional Animation

An athlete trains for Athlos NYC, finding purpose on the winding trails of Central Park, where every stride strengthens her resolve. Her journey leads to the Athlos stage, where she races before a roaring crowd. Beyond the finish line, an even greater reward awaits.

Writer and Director | Lola Aikins

Teddy on the Edge

United Kingdom | 3D/ CGI Animation

A teddy bear, alone on the edge of a cliff contemplating ending it all, is interrupted by a wise old bunny rabbit with a life-affirming message to pass on - a whole new perspective that will change the way he views the gift of life going forward!

Created by P.L. Kerr

Bru & Boegie: METEORITE

South Africa | 2D/Traditional Animation

After Bru's animated movie idea about a looming meteorite is rejected – only for it to come true – Bru & Boegie must stop the Bru-shaped space rock using the power of their excellent music.

Created, Written, Animated and Directed by Mike Scott

THE ADVENTURES OF PABLO

Uganda | 2D/Traditional Animation

Pablo takes a plane for the first time

Director | Richard Musinguzi

SMASH!

South Africa | 2D/Traditional Animation

COOL FROG learns the true meaning of SMASH from HEART GUY.

Created, Animated and Directed by Mike Scott

WHO KILLED CAPTAIN ALEX? THE RUSHIAN MASINARI

Uganda | 2D/Traditional Animation

A family man who is no stranger to a gun is forced to fight for a gang in order to return home

Director | Louise Lubega

Rorisang & The Gurlz Back to School Mayhem

South Africa | 2D/Traditional Animation

Rorisang's first week back at school is anything but chill. Between dreary assemblies, strict teachers, and a oceans of homework, she's already in deep. Luckily, her bestie Cassie is there to keep her grounded... and maybe help her stay out of trouble (maybe 😊).

Created by Kabelo "Cabblow" Maaka

HOPE

United States of America | 2D / Traditional Animation & Live-action

Her room is small, but her phone is endless. A playful young poet named Salome doom-scrolls through a world consumed by conflict, catastrophe, and hunger. Heartbreaking images force her to absorb more than humans were ever made to. The future feels like despair. Her breathing grows heavy. Her body becomes still. Then a butterfly appears. After falling through a magical teacup, Salome enters a fantastic animated realm encountering towering prismatic flowers, giants, war-torn cities, and a majestic Black Crowned Crane that desperately needs her help.

Written and Directed by Jamal Ademola

Friday

16 October

FUTURE ENGINES

09:00 PITCHATHON

Johannesburg Innovation Exchange

Where: Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct, Gaming Hub

The Pitchathon Marathon puts ideas and prototypes in front of people who can help take them further. Across nine pitch sessions, practitioners and early-stage ventures present work spanning creative technology and innovation. Projects are tested against the realities of building and sustaining work: audience, market positioning, intellectual property, operational clarity and sustainability. The wider Pitchathon brings together investors, venture capitalists, accelerator leads, producers and industry strategists working across African markets and cultural sectors.

Presented by: City of Johannesburg

WHO IS TAKING PART

Lebohang Likhojane

South Africa

09:00 to 11:30 HACKATHON

AI & Music Business Hackathon

Real industry challenges. African music solutions.

Where: Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct, Accelerator

How might AI, data and emerging technologies unlock new opportunities across Africa's music ecosystem? Over four days, multidisciplinary teams will tackle real-world industry challenges, developing innovative solutions that support creators, businesses and communities.

Presented by: South African Music Performance Rights Association (SAMPRA) and Southern African Music Rights Organisation (SAMRO), with Music Business Lab, Aions Ventures, Wits Innovation Centre and Wits MIND (Machine Intelligence and Neural Discovery Institute)

Topics: AI, Music & Sound, Ownership & IP

WHO IS TAKING PART**Kerryn Campion** FACILITATOR

Facilitator, Aions Ventures

09:15 to 10:00 REGISTRATION**Check In & Connect****Where:** Chris Seabrooke Music Hall or Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct

Start your festival day right. Collect your pass, grab a coffee from the café and meet creators, innovators and other participants before the first session gets underway.

Presented by: Webtickets**09:30 to 10:30** PITCHATHON**Pitchathon Marathon: Wits Innovation Centre + Student Entrepreneurial, Session 1****Where:** Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct, Accelerator**Presented by:** Wits Innovation Centre**Topics:** Startups & Investment**WHO IS TAKING PART****Thandeka Mhlanga** MC

Juror | South Africa

Jury: Thembela Ntlemeza; Nandi Mtethwa; Alu Chokoe; Mashudu Netshiswinzhe**Pitching:** Nhlanganiso Tshabangu; Alimerinda Mlambo; Tshilidzi Sibara; Osca Kholopha**09:30 to 10:30** PITCHATHON**Pitchathon Marathon: Johannesburg Innovation Exchange, Session 1****Where:** Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct, Gaming Hub**Presented by:** City of Johannesburg**Topics:** Startups & Investment, Climate & Environment

WHO IS TAKING PART

Lebohang Likhojane MC

Juror | South Africa

10:00 to 11:00

The Child's Question

What happens when generative systems meet recursive human curiosity?

Where: Chris Seabrooke Music Hall

Curiosity precedes imagination.

A child asks "why?" Then asks "why?" again. Then asks something completely sideways - and suddenly the thing everyone thought they understood looks different.

The Child's Question is a live, interactive experiment in using generative AI to explore recursive curiosity.

Participants will bring an idea, problem, assumption or norm they want to reimagine. But there is a twist: they won't be doing the prompting. The AI will.

Across a series of rapid curiosity loops, AI asks questions designed to shift the frame: Why? What if it's pretend? What if you break it? What if you say the thing you're not supposed to say? What if it's invisible? What if it's funny? Can you look at it from somewhere completely different? What if it's possible?

Participants respond from their own situated experience: their instincts, memories, cultural context, contradictions, observations and imagination. AI takes those human responses and uses them to surface a hidden insight and generate the next question, creating a recursive conversation between machine-generated prompts and human curiosity.

After each round, we'll ask: What did you notice? What surprised you? What did your context allow you to see that the AI couldn't?

The session culminates in an "Imagine" Statement: a new possibility generated from the insights uncovered through the process.

Unlike traditional prompt engineering, this is an experiment in letting AI prompt the human. Then discovering what becomes possible when generative systems are used to expand our situated instincts rather than replace them.

Because intelligence can be generated - but curiosity must be felt.

No technical expertise required. Bring your device and an idea you can't quite leave alone.

Topics: Generative AI · Artificial Intelligence · African Imaginaries · Imagination · Creativity · Curiosity · Human-AI Collaboration · Situated Intelligence · Creative Technology · Speculative

Thinking · Future Thinking · Social Innovation

WHO IS TAKING PART

Mbali Njomane

Social innovator and senior AI Literacy Strategist, consulting at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits University)

Mbali Njomane is a social innovator and senior AI literacy strategist consulting at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits University). Her work explores the intersection of human intelligence, technology, creativity and social change: particularly what shifts when technology alters the ways humans question, imagine and make meaning.

With more than 16 years of experience across social innovation, education, identity and belonging, and creative practice, Mbali develops unconventional approaches to emerging technology that put human judgement, context and imagination at the centre. Her current work focuses on AI literacy and situated intelligence: understanding what aspects of the lived human experience cannot be replicated by machines.

Her work and impact have spanned global institutions including UN Women, Amnesty International, African Leadership Academy and Jozi My Jozi.

10:30 to 11:30 PITCHATHON

Pitchathon Marathon: Wits Innovation Centre + Student Entrepreneurial, Session 2

Where: Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct, Accelerator

Presented by: Wits Innovation Centre

Topics: Startups & Investment

WHO IS TAKING PART

Thandeka Mhlanga MC

Juror | South Africa

Jury: Thembela Ntlemeza; Nandi Mtethwa; Alu Chokoe; Mashudu Netshiswinzhe

Pitching: Muneera Dabhelia; Fortune Thobela; Dimakatso Serakoane; Moloko Suprice Raletjena

10:30 to 11:30 PITCHATHON

Pitchathon Marathon: Johannesburg Innovation Exchange, Session 2

Where: Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct, Gaming Hub

Presented by: City of Johannesburg

Topics: Startups & Investment, Climate & Environment

WHO IS TAKING PART

Lebohang Likhojane MC

Juror | South Africa

11:00 to 11:30 Break

11:30 to 12:00 PROVOCATION

Imagination as Infrastructure

Creating the things I wish existed.

Where: Chris Seabrooke Music Hall

Named one of the Mail & Guardian's 200 Young South Africans 2026, Bylwansta is part of a generation of artists who are not simply imagining alternatives, but actively building them, through platforms, archives, communities and creative practice. This is an opportunity to encounter his work and thinking as part of Fak'ugesi 2026: African Imaginaries, and to consider what becomes possible when imagination moves from idea into action.

Presented by: Fak'ugesi African Digital & Innovation Festival

Topics: Creative Economy, Archives & Museums, Community & Collaboration

WHO IS TAKING PART

Bylwansta SPEAKER

South Africa

ByLwansta is a South African multidisciplinary artist and cultural producer hailing from Kokstad, KwaZulu-Natal, whose work spans music, design, curation, and infrastructure-building. With over a decade of independent practice, he is driven by a simple philosophy: creating the things he wishes existed. His work prioritises storytelling, world-building, and long-term cultural infrastructure over momentary visibility. From conceptual music projects and live performance to cultural archiving, writing, and creative direction, ByLwansta operates at the intersection of art and intention. He represents the new African multi-hyphenate: a creator who builds systems, who curates experiences, and one who documents the journey. His practice reflects a deep commitment to ownership, independence, and building sustainable systems for creative expression within South Africa's alternative music and cultural landscape.

11:30 to 12:30 PITCHATHON

Pitchathon Marathon: Pacific Ocean Animation Lab

Where: Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct, Mollo Academy & Studio

Presented by: French Institute of South Africa

Topics: Animation, Startups & Investment

WHO IS TAKING PART

Sthembiso Mpehle MC

Juror | CEO and Co-founder, Chocolate Tribe | South Africa

Jury: Nosipho Maketo-van den Bragt; Nompoti Vilakazi; Joel "Cyzo" Matladi

11:30 to 13:20 PITCHATHON

Pitchathon Marathon: Digital Lab Africa

Where: Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct, Gaming Hub

Presented by: Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct

Topics: Animation, Games & Play, XR, Startups & Investment

WHO IS TAKING PART

Oratile Molokaoane MC

Juror | South Africa

11:30 to 13:20 PITCHATHON

Pitchathon Marathon: AI & Music Business

Where: Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct, Accelerator

Presented by: South African Music Performance Rights Association (SAMPRA) and Southern African Music Rights Organisation (SAMRO), with Music Business Lab, Aions Ventures, Wits Innovation Centre and Wits MIND (Machine Intelligence and Neural Discovery Institute)

Topics: AI, Music & Sound, Ownership & IP, Startups & Investment

WHO IS TAKING PART

Christo Doherty HOST

Juror | Managing Director, Clout SA and Founder, Music Business Lab | South Africa

Jury: Ninel Musson; Yoel Kenan; Tresor Riziki; Mitch Adams

12:00 to 12:40 KEYNOTE

DISOBEDIENT EDGES

*Storyworld Design for Embodied Futures***Where:** Chris Seabrooke Music Hall

The most “futuristic” promises being sold to us are escapist – and already passé: AI to automate our reasoning, bodies to engineer away, a planet to abandon. Dystopian exit fantasies as product roadmap. Built on outdated science, these visions mistake narrow ideas of intelligence, life and progress for a universal future. The majority is not marginal. Constructive imagination is the technology this century has most dangerously underfunded. Monika Bielskyte’s Protopia World Stack foresight methodology connects embodiment and edge insights with the cultural force of sci-fi worldbuilding: how it changes desire and directs resources. This keynote separates evidence from hype passed off as inevitability, then makes the case for different choices about what we teach, fund and create. What if a future designed for the world as it actually is, not one fictional default, could be everything we hoped for, but not what we were told to expect?

Presented by: Fak'ugesi African Digital & Innovation Festival**Topics:** AI, Speculative Futures

WHO IS TAKING PART

Monika Bielskyte **SPEAKER**

Futurist and Founder, Protopia Futures | Lithuania

Monika Bielskyte is a foresight strategist, speculative designer and founder of Protopia Futures. Nike appointed her its first Futurist in Residence; she is an EY Luminary and Futurist Advisor to Climate Spring and the Inclusive AI Lab. She developed the Protopia World Stack, a science-informed methodology integrating Protopia Futures, Embodied Futures and Storyworld Design. Her expertise spans AI, spatial computing, XR, synthetic media, biological and cognitive frontiers, and the feedback loop between science fiction and technological development. Clients include Google, Microsoft, Nike, L'Oréal, BBC and Disney/Marvel's Black Panther; she has lectured at CERN, the Royal Society and Rockefeller University.

13:00 to 14:00 Lunch**14:00 to 15:00** KEYNOTE

Characteristics of Japanese Animation Production

*Creator-Driven Vision: The Art of High-Density Japanese Animation***Where:** Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct, Accelerator

Drawing from decades of experience - from her early days as line producer on Studio Ghibli classics *My Neighbor Totoro* and *Kiki's Delivery Service* to founding and leading STUDIO4°C - Tanaka explores how Japanese anime prioritizes creator individuality, innovative visual storytelling, and a balance between commercial and artistic success. Discover the collaborative processes, unique studio culture, and "high-density" approach that define works like *MEMORIES*, *Tekkonkinkreet*, *Children of the Sea*, and upcoming titles.

Presented by: Japanese Embassy

Topics: Animation, Creative Economy

WHO IS TAKING PART

Eiko Tanaka SPEAKER

Co-founder, CEO, and President of STUDIO4°C and Beyond C | Japan

Eiko Tanaka (born August 17, 1954) is a pioneering Japanese anime entrepreneur, producer, and the co-founder, CEO, and President of STUDIO4°C and Beyond C. After studying English literature (and Japanese language teaching methods) at Aoyama Gakuin University, she began her career in advertising before joining Nippon Animation. She later supported Studio Ghibli in its early years as line producer on *My Neighbor Totoro* (1988) and *Kiki's Delivery Service* (1989).

In 1988 (with formal company establishment later), she co-founded STUDIO4°C with animators including Kōji Morimoto as a creative hub for independent talent, emphasizing high-quality, original works (the studio name refers to the temperature at which water is densest, symbolizing "high-density" production). At STUDIO4°C, she oversees the full creative path from scenario to completion, including vision, casting, staffing, and settings. Through Beyond C., she handles planning, production, fundraising, and management.

Notable productions include *MEMORIES* (1995), *Tekkonkinkreet* (2006), *Children of the Sea* (2019), *Poupelle of Chimney Town* (2020), *Chao* (2025), *All You Need Is Kill* (2026), and *Poupelle of Chimney Town: Frozen in Time* (2026). She has also contributed to projects such as *The Animatrix*, *Mind Game*, and others. Tanaka is a Managing Director of the Japan Animation Association and is known for fostering creator-centric environments and improving working conditions in the industry.

14:45 to 15:15 **LAUNCH | REGISTRATION**

Red Balloon SA Launch

Decolonizing the Algorithm

Where: Origins Centre

Doors open on Red Balloon Festival South Africa. Arrive, register, and meet the founding community of Kipaji Lab South Africa before the formal program begins.

Presented by: Zuri Story Works, Kipaji Lab, Kemoso Consulting and Zuri Productions

14:45 to 16:00**PREMIERE | SCREENING // FULLDOME**

Umfula - Echoes of the River

Where: Wits Anglo American Digital Dome

Umfula is a fulldome immersion into the living current of the Umfolozi River - a sacred, life-giving force flowing through the Zulu heartland of KwaZulu-Natal. From source to sea, the journey reveals a river carrying more than water. It carries memory, culture and the weight of a changing world, where industrial agriculture, mining and unchecked expansion place fragile ecosystems and communities under increasing pressure. Through breathtaking 360° aerial and underwater cinematography, an evocative sonic landscape and the river's own voice, Umfula transforms environmental crisis into lived experience. It invites us to see one river clearly, and, through it, confront the future of freshwater everywhere.

Production House: VR Capture; South Africa

Presented by: VR Capture KZN Tourism

Topics: Immersive, Climate & Environment, Myth & Spirituality

15:15 to 15:24**LAUNCH | WELCOME**

Welcome: Why South Africa, Why Now

From Kenya to South Africa

Where: Origins Centre

Dr Andrene M. Taylor opens the programme: Kipaji Lab's journey from Kenya to South Africa and what it is building here, followed by a short recap film of the community and work already built through the Kenya Labs.

Presented by: Zuri Story Works, Kipaji Lab, Kemoso Consulting and Zuri Productions

Topics: Community & Collaboration

WHO IS TAKING PART

Dr Andrene M. Taylor **HOST**

Founder + Chief Narrative Architect, Zuri Productions | United States of America

Andrene M. Taylor, Ph.D. is a scholar, writer, educator, producer, and visual storyteller. She specializes in Black visual culture, creativity/transformational creativity, and adapting Black women's literature for the big and small screens. She has a profound understanding of the role media can play in disrupting systemic racial inequities and transforming stories. Whether it is in the classroom on a production set, Dr. Taylor focuses on using visual stories to advance racial inclusivity and liberation for all Black people.

Time to be confirmed**LAUNCH | CONVERSATION**

Whose Image? Whose Future?

The room becomes the panel.

An audience-centred conversation rather than a panel. Dr Andrene M. Taylor and Dr Imani M. Cheers facilitate the room through a short sequence of prompts: who tells South Africa's stories, who owns and profits from the image, what is missing from the global archive, and what South African creatives need to build sustainable careers. What the room says becomes part of what Kipaji Lab builds next.

Presented by: Zuri Story Works, Kipaji Lab, Kemoso Consulting and Zuri Productions

Topics: Social Justice, Ownership & IP, Visual Arts

WHO IS TAKING PART

Dr Imani M. Cheers

Head of Production, Zuri Productions; Associate Professor of Digital Storytelling, George Washington University | United States of America

Imani M. Cheers, Ph.D. is Head of Production at Zuri Productions and Associate Professor of Digital Storytelling at the George Washington University School of Media and Public Affairs. A scholar, producer, and educator, Cheers works at the intersection of media, culture, production, and the development of emerging storytellers. Her practice bridges the academy and the production world, bringing a critical understanding of how visual narratives are constructed, whose perspectives are centered, and how technology is reshaping the ways stories are produced and distributed. Through both teaching and production leadership, she helps creators think beyond representation toward authorship, craft, and the power structures embedded within contemporary media systems. At Red Balloon Festival South Africa, Dr. Cheers brings a rigorous production and scholarly lens to "Decolonizing the Algorithm," connecting questions of technology and media power to the lived realities of creators shaping culture in real time. Short version Imani M. Cheers, Ph.D. is Head of Production at Zuri Productions and Associate Professor of Digital Storytelling at the George Washington University School of Media and Public Affairs. A scholar, producer, and educator, her work examines the relationship between media, culture, technology, and the development of emerging storytellers.

15:30 to 18:00**HEATS**

Sketch Wars

Tournament of Power

Where: Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct, Mollo Studio & Academy

Presented by: Mollo Studio & Academy

Topics: Animation, Games & Play, Community & Collaboration

WHO IS TAKING PART**Sithembiso Mphele** **HOST, FACILITATOR**

Manager, Mollo Academy and Studio | South Africa

Lola Atkins **FACILITATOR**

Manager, Mollo Academy and Studio | South Africa

Rachel van Rooyen **FACILITATOR**

Lecturer, Wits Digital School of Arts | South Africa

15:35 to 15:45 Break**15:45 to 16:30** **LAUNCH | FEATURED CONVERSATION****Who Holds the Camera?***Visual authorship, ownership, and the future of South African storytelling.***Where:** Origins Centre

A featured one-on-one conversation between Dr Andrene M. Taylor and a South African filmmaker on visual authorship in South Africa: who gets to tell South Africa's stories, who owns the image, and what changes when the community holds the camera.

Presented by: Zuri Story Works, Kipaji Lab, Kemoso Consulting and Zuri Productions**Topics:** Social Justice, Ownership & IP, Visual Arts**WHO IS TAKING PART****Dr Andrene M. Taylor** **HOST**

Founder + Chief Narrative Architect, Zuri Productions | United States Of America

Andrene M. Taylor, Ph.D. is a scholar, writer, educator, producer, and visual storyteller. She specializes in Black visual culture, creativity/transformational creativity, and adapting Black women's literature for the big and small screens. She has a profound understanding of the role media can play in disrupting systemic racial inequities and transforming stories. Whether it is in the classroom on a production set, Dr. Taylor focuses on using visual stories to advance racial inclusivity and liberation for all Black people.

15:45 to 16:45 **PANEL****From Source to Sea***Immersive Storytelling, Environmental Crisis and the Future of Freshwater***Where:** Wits Anglo American Digital Dome

Following the showing of Umfula, the artists, collaborators and environmental voices behind the work come together to unpack the realities that shaped it. Moving between

lived experience, creative process and urgent questions about water justice, this conversation explores how immersive storytelling can transform environmental data into something deeply felt. From the communities living with climate disruption to the making of Umfula itself, the panel asks a larger question: can immersive media shift awareness into action, and what kind of future becomes possible if it does?

Presented by: VR Capture

Topics: Climate & Environment, Immersive, Myth & Spirituality

WHO IS TAKING PART

Telmo dos Reis **PANELIST**

Director | South Africa

Telmo dos Reis is an award-winning immersive media director and founder of VR Capture, with a media production career spanning 20 years and a focus on immersive technologies since 2014. He leads one of South Africa's experienced studios producing VR, AR, XR and fulldome content, with a particular focus on conservation, cultural heritage and science communication.

Telmo has worked with organisations including South African Tourism, Botswana Tourism, Wits University and the South African Astronomical Observatory, creating immersive experiences for planetariums, museums, global expos and VR platforms. His work combines creative storytelling with strong technical expertise and a deep interest in wildlife, indigenous cultures and conservation.

His award-winning work includes Close Encounters, which won Best Environmental Fulldome Film at Dome Fest West 2025 in the USA, and Sida Tsoatsoas, a cultural fulldome film created in collaboration with the #Khomani San community, which won Gold at the 2022 International Tourism Film Festival Africa. He is currently developing a VR experience exploring San rock art and spiritual heritage sites across Southern Africa.

Cheryl Tuckett **PANELIST**

Producer | South Africa

Cheryl Tuckett is an innovative documentary producer, director, and creative storyteller who specializes in immersive tech and virtual reality (VR). As a creative producer and member of the Documentary Film Council, she works at the intersection of media and social impact, most notably co-founding the production collective Light and Lion. Tuckett is widely recognized as the producer of Umfula – Echoes of the River, a critically acclaimed 360-degree VR documentary that explores environmental stewardship along South Africa's Mfolozi River. Passionate about community-led distribution, she successfully spearheaded mobile VR screening tours that used immersive storytelling to engage local residents, activists, and policymakers in freshwater conservation while simultaneously driving local economic employment.

Sihle Makalima **PANELIST**

VFX, Assistant DOP | South Africa

Sihle is an immersive media practitioner and 360° video editor based in Johannesburg, with experience spanning film and television production, virtual reality and emerging media technologies. A qualified sound engineer and self-taught 3D and motion graphics artist, Sihle specialises in 360° and fulldome production, working across capture, stitching, VFX and post-production.

His credits include the award-winning wildlife fulldome film Close Encounters, where he contributed to fulldome VFX, stitching and assistant editing, as well as Umfula, for which he worked as Assistant Editor and on 360° stitching. His broader experience includes VR production, volumetric video capture and developing technical solutions for immersive experiences.

Samkelo Mahlalela **PANELIST**

Music and Sound Design | South Africa

Samukelo Mahlalela is an audio engineer and film and television composer with more than a decade of experience across sound production. Trained in audio engineering at CityVarsity in Cape Town, he works from his South African studio, PixelWave Audio, where he combines technical sound engineering with musical composition and production.

Samukelo specialises in immersive and spatial audio, film and television post-production, location recording and music composition. He led the spatial audio post-production for Rising Star, a 24-minute, 360° fulldome planetarium and VR experience exploring South African astronomy.

A SAMRO-registered professional, Samukelo has also worked across film and television projects including Baby Mams 2 and Lobola Man, as well as SAFTA-nominated productions. His musical work spans film scoring and electronic music production, including his work with the electronic house duo Spirit Mechanix.

Mzo Phinias **PANELIST**

Traditional Healer | South Africa

Mzobanzi Phineas Madlala is a traditional healer and cultural expert who featured in the film as a guide to Zulu spirituality, tradition and ancestral knowledge. He comes from the Hluhluwe area, where his grandmother was a respected sangoma from the Ngomane family. Born at Sangoyane Reserve, adjacent to the game reserve, Mzobanzi underwent his own training as a sangoma in June 2021. His spiritual tradition is rooted in a connection to the natural world, with ancestral spirits understood as flowing from springs and rivers through the ocean.

Ofentse Letebele FACILITATOR

Planetary Manager, Iziko Planetarium and Digital Dome | South Africa

Ofentse Letebele is an award-winning multimedia artist, immersive media specialist and Planetarium Manager at Iziko Museums of South Africa. With more than a decade in the planetarium and fulldome industry, he is one of the practitioners shaping immersive storytelling on the African continent. His work sits where visual art, astronomy and immersive technology meet, making complex science accessible through powerful visual storytelling. At Iziko, he has led planetarium festivals, mobile planetarium outreach, curriculum-aligned school programmes and many sold-out public events. He is credited on the South African fulldome production **Rising Star**, and was part of the artistic collaboration behind Marcus Neustetter's **A Letter to SumbandilaSat**, which travelled to the International Space Station. He champions immersive media as a way to widen access to astronomy and bring African stories into global conversations about art, science and space.

Israel Nkosi PANELIST

Environmental Activist | South Africa

Israel Nkosi is a Human Rights Defender, South African community leader and environmental activist, and a son of the Nkosi Ndlangamandla royal family of Louwsburg, Vryheid. He is a leader of the Mfolozi Community Environmental Justice Organisation (MCEJO), advocating for the rights of rural communities affected by coal mining and environmental degradation.

In the film, Israel speaks directly about the realities facing communities living alongside the Somkhele coal mine, including the environmental and social impacts of mining, the pressure on local families, and the struggle to protect their land and livelihoods. He also reflects on the murder of fellow MCEJO activist Fikile Ntshangase, who was killed in 2020 while opposing the expansion of the mine.

His contribution brings a first-hand community and human-rights perspective to the film, highlighting the human cost of resource extraction and the ongoing struggle for environmental justice in KwaZulu-Natal.

16:30 to 18:00 LAUNCH | NETWORKING**Where the next chapter of African storytelling begins...***Red Balloon Festival***Where:** Origins Centre

Red Balloon Festival South Africa closes with a reception for the founding community. Meet the creatives, mentors, and partners building Kipaji Lab's next chapter on the continent.

Presented by: Zuri Story Works, Kipaji Lab, Kemoso Consulting and Zuri Productions**Topics:** Community & Collaboration

WHO IS TAKING PART

Dr Andrene M. Taylor HOST

United States Of America

Andrene M. Taylor, Ph.D. is a scholar, writer, educator, producer, and visual storyteller. She specializes in Black visual culture, creativity/transformational creativity, and adapting Black women's literature for the big and small screens. She has a profound understanding of the role media can play in disrupting systemic racial inequities and transforming stories.

Whether it is in the classroom on a production set, Dr. Taylor focuses on using visual stories to advance racial inclusivity and liberation for all Black people.

Saturday

17 October

THE FUTURE IS FEMALE

08:00 to 17:00 HACKATHON

Women Game Jam South Africa & Game Jam Plus South Africa

Make a Game. Build a Team. Create Something Together.

Where: Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct, Gaming Hub & Accelerator

Join fellow game creators, aspiring developers, artists, designers, writers, musicians and curious newcomers at Tshimologong Precinct for a day of game development, collaboration and creativity as part of the 2026 Women Game Jam South Africa and Game Jam Plus (GJ+ LWA IndieHub) weekend. Taking place from 16 to 18 October 2026, the two international game jams bring participants together to turn an idea into a playable game within a limited timeframe. Tshimologong will serve as a physical community hub on Saturday 17 October, where participants can meet, form teams, work on their projects, share ideas and learn from one another. You don't need to be an experienced game developer to participate. Game jams bring together programmers, artists, designers, writers, musicians, storytellers and people who simply want to try making a game for the first time. Whether you're working on your first prototype or already have experience making games, come along, meet other creatives and spend the day making something.

Topics: Games & Play, Community & Collaboration, Women in Tech & Creativity

WHO IS TAKING PART

Ronica Singh

Game Jam Regional Organiser (GJ+ & WGJ), Founder, Learn WebAnim | South Africa

11:00 to 11:30 SCREENING

The Best of Mollo Studio & Academy and Digital Lab Africa

Where: The Bioscope Independent Cinema

Presented by: Fak'ugesi Digital & Innovation Festival

Topics: Animation, Film

WHO IS TAKING PART

Russell Grant **HOST**
South Africa

11:30 to 12:30 **PANEL**

Women in Animation

Details are still being finalised. Check the Signal Guide.

Where: The Bioscope Independent Cinema

Presented by: Fak'ugesi Digital & Innovation Festival

Topics: Animation, Research & Policy, Women in Tech & Creativity

WHO IS TAKING PART

Dianne Makings **PANELIST**
Artistic Director, Cape Town International Animation Festival | South Africa

Lola Atkins **PANELIST**
Mollo Studio & Academy | South Africa

Vanessa Ann Sinden **PANELIST**
African Women in Animation, Founder | South Africa

Geraldine **PANELIST**
Artist and Operations Coordinator, Matamba Film Labs for Women | Zimbabwe

18:30 to 21:30 **CEREMONY**

4th Annual Fak'ugesi Awards

Streaming live from the Iconic Wits Anglo American Digital Dome.

Where: Wits Anglo American Digital Dome

Celebrating the boldest voices shaping Africa's digital creative future. Held at the iconic Wits Anglo American Digital Dome, the ceremony honours outstanding work across animation, gaming, digital art, immersive media and creative technology, bringing together artists, innovators and industry leaders for an evening that recognises excellence, imagination and the next generation of African creators. Featuring Dark Room Contemporary Dance Film and hosted by Msizi James.

Presented by: The British Council

Topics: Creative Economy, Visual Arts, Community & Collaboration

WHO IS TAKING PART

Msizi James

HOST

South Africa

All week

14 to 16 October

EXHIBITIONS, SHOWCASES, EXPO AND DOME FILMS

Exhibitions

09:00 to 16:00

Acts of Care: A Futures_Past Project

Where: Shepstone Gardens

With: Keiran Reid

Presented by: IFAS

Topics: Visual Arts, Archives & Museums, Heritage & History

10:00 to 16:00

What We Do Not See

Where: Wits Art Museum

Wits Art Museum (WAM) is pleased to present What We Do Not See, an exhibition that remembers David Goldblatt in what would be his 95th year. Grounded in his reflection on photography as a means of revealing what is often overlooked, the exhibition considers how images can make visible both what is hidden and highlight what exists in plain sight. On until 24 October 2026, Tuesday to Saturday, 10:00 to 16:00. Entrance is free and all are welcome.

With: David Goldblatt with Gulshan Khan, Jabulani Dhlamini, Jo Ractliffe, Jodi Bieber, Lindokuhle Sobekwa, Madoda Mkhobeni, Mark Lewis, Sabelo Mlangeni and Tshepiso Mazibuko

Presented by: Wits Art Museum

Topics: Visual Arts, Heritage & History, Social Justice

More: <https://whatwedonotsee.co.za>

Tue 13 to Fri 16 October 10:00 to 16:00

Technics of the Page - The Last Human Reader

Where: Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts, Wits Art Museum

Who, or what, is reading now? The book has always been a machine. A memory device, sequencing system, interface, portable archive and social technology for passing thought between hands, eyes, bodies and generations. Long before the prompt, the platform, the feed or the model, the codex trained us in navigation, annotation, concealment, delay, return and retrieval. Drawn from the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts at Wits, *Technics of the Page / The Last Human Reader* places artists' books in conversation with artificial intelligence. It asks what happens when reading no longer belongs to humans alone. The last human reader is not a figure at the end of history, but a provocation: who, or what, is reading now? What does a machine perceive when meaning is held in touch, sequence, weight, opacity, rhythm or hesitation? Through books as technical beings, memory systems, generative machines, hallucinated catalogues and objects that refuse capture, the exhibition tests the unstable border between reading and processing. Human and machine performances of concrete poetry and graphic scores, book films and hallucinated books extend the experiment. Open Tuesday to Friday, 10:00 to 16:00. No booking needed, except for group visits and guided tours (up to 20 to 25 people): contact ciara.struwig@wits.ac.za

With: Curated by Stacy Hardy, Renzo Filinich, Ciara Struwig, Gabrielle Mudiwa, Sahar Carter, Sam Kentridge, Twiggy Matiwana and Vuyokazi Ngemntu

Presented by: Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts and Wits Creative Writing

Topics: AI, Visual Arts

More: <https://theartistsbook.org.za>

09:00 to 17:00

Quantum Echoes of Humanity

Where: Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct, Gallery

An interactive audiovisual work that uses AI, facial recognition and recursive algorithms to reinterpret anthropological archives from South Africa's Origins Centre. By transforming archival images into constantly evolving visual and sonic forms, the work questions colonial systems of representation and invites us to imagine more fluid and entangled relationships between humans, machines and the non-human.

With: Dr Renzo Filinich Orozco South Africa

Presented by: Wits School of the Arts and MIND Institute Fellow

Topics: Archives & Museums, AI, Music & Sound

09:00 to 17:00

Echoes of the Machine - A Cybernetic Song (2025–2026)

Where: Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct, Reception

An interactive installation in which artificial neurons, light, sound and audience participation form a continuously evolving system. Inspired by South African birdsong, the work explores how humans and machines can co-create through listening, imitation, feedback and uncertainty, treating technology not as a tool for control but as a relational environment in which new forms of connection and emergence can take place.

With: Dr Renzo Filinich Orozco Brazil

Presented by: Wits School of the Arts and MIND Institute Fellow

Topics: AI, Music & Sound

09:00 to 17:00

Where does the rest of the world begin?

Where: Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct, Glassbox

Berlin-based artist Dagmar Schürer, working across expanded animation and extended realities, presents *Where Does the Rest of the World Begin*, a multimedia installation combining monitor-based animation with a Mixed Reality headset experience, anchored to the space via room-scanning. The installation may also feature one of Schürer's signature life-size 3D-printed sculptures, currently in transit from a recent exhibition in Istanbul. Presented in partnership with the Austrian Cultural Forum / Austrian Embassy.

With: Dagmar Schürer Austria

Presented by: Austrian Embassy Pretoria and the Austrian Cultural Forum Pretoria

Topics: Animation, AI, XR

09:00 to 17:00

Postcards from Latent Space: AI & African Photography - A Cross-Cultural Exploration

Where: Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct, Engine Room

Akanyijuka curates a digital exhibition of AI-assisted photographic work, built for three LED screens and designed from the outset to travel, from Braamfontein to partner venues in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Kenya without a single crate being shipped. It is the public face of *AI & African Photography: Cross-Cultural Exploration*, an Institut Français-funded project asking how African artists are reshaping tools that were largely built elsewhere."

With: Evans Akanyijuka Uganda

Presented by: Institut français through Appui aux Opérateurs Culturels en Afrique

Topics: Visual Arts, AI, Community & Collaboration

More: <https://evansakanyijuka.art> | https://www.instagram.com/akan___13.psd.tox.io/

09:00 to 17:00

Biodiversity Wall

Where: Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct, Engine Room

Habitat XR brings nature into the precinct: a holographic biodiversity wall, VR headsets, AR demos on iPad and an AI conversational pangolin you can talk to.

With: Ulrico Grech-Cumbo South Africa

Presented by: Habitat XR

Topics: Climate & Environment, AI, XR

09:00 to 17:00

After Panic

Where: Origins Centre

After Panic looks at what disaster leaves behind: the physical matter that lingers long after the spectacle fades and the news cycle moves on. Ruth Sacks traces the ongoing reality of environmental racism on the edges of the African city, from toxic mine slurry to an encased looted African icon, turning her gaze to Johannesburg and what lies beneath it, two decades after her 2005 Don't Panic skywriting work. Curated by Vaughn Sadie.

With: Ruth Sacks South Africa

Presented by: University of Johannesburg and Guns & Rain

Topics: Visual Arts, Climate & Environment

More: <https://www.wits.ac.za/origins/permanent-exhibitions/>

09:00 to 17:00

The Hazel Futa Project: The Soil Remembers

Where: Origins Centre

What remains when a story is forgotten? The Hazel Futa Project recreates the dress worn by Hazel Futa, Miss South Africa 1955, on the cover of Zonk! magazine, then inoculates fabric swatches with microbes taken from the soil of the places she remembered walking, growing them on agar plates. Grounded in biocentrism, it asks how history can be recovered when the people who lived it can no longer speak for themselves.

Topics: Visual Arts, Heritage & History, Climate & Environment

More: <https://www.wits.ac.za/origins/permanent-exhibitions/>

09:00 to 17:00

Planetary Cognitive Ecologies: Gondwana

Where: Origins Centre

What survives when a world ends, and what can still be discovered about it? This multimedia exhibition brings art, science and technology into conversation. At the heart of the exhibition is a novel hybrid protein design, developed through computational biology and brought to life as a data-driven animated reconstruction. Each visitor's presence generates a unique version of the protein, which then joins an ever-growing forest of ghost data. Through deposition paintings made using coal, ochre and bio-based inks, the fossilised remains of *Glossopteris*, an ancient plant that went extinct around 250 million years ago and survives today as coal, are represented, prompting awareness of its presence across different continents and evidence of the Gondwana landmass. The works together connect extinction, transformation and survival across molecular and planetary scales. Visitors can expect an immersive encounter with virtual reality, animated 3D reconstruction, scientific processes and material experimentation. Experience a body of work that asks us to consider what remains after disruption, what can be reconstructed and where new possibilities may still take root.

With: Henrietta Scholtz / South Africa

Presented by: UJ Arts & Culture, in association with the UJ Art Gallery

Topics: Visual Arts, XR, Climate & Environment

Showcases

WED 14 - FRI 16 October, 18:30 to 22:00

Beads as Bytes: Rooted in Knowledge Carried by South African Indigenous, Communities

Where: Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct, Engine Room

Long before "code" meant software, South African women were encoding messages in beads. Beads as Bytes proposes Ndebele and Zulu beadwork as an early, indigenous precursor to modern day computing. Drawing particularly on the Zulu love letter tradition, this installation places traditional beadwork beside its digital descendant. The work unfolds in two parts: encryption and decryption. Encryption entails LEDs being wired into a breadboard one at a time, mirroring the way beads are strung, forming a pattern rooted in indigenous structure and colour. In decryption, a projection reveals the "hidden message" purposefully encrypted by the bead artist meant only for her beloved

to receive. The question at the heart of this artwork: what would technology look like had it been built with indigenous knowledge from the beginning?

With: Tanushka Ramdin South Africa

Presented by: T A N Z

Topics: Indigenous Knowledge, Heritage & History, Women in Tech & Creativity

09:00 to 17:00

Trésors des Poubelles Reimagined

Where: Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct, Glassbox

Reimagining the archival legacy of Senegalese filmmaker Samba Félix Ndiaye's 1989 documentary *Trésors des Poubelles*, the project transforms questions of waste, memory, technology and preservation into a speculative journey across time. Through Hybrid AI-generated cinema, immersive XR environments, recycled sculptural artifacts, fashion, performance and expanded moving-image installation, *Trésors des Poubelles Reimagined* asks: What happens when what society discards becomes the foundation for the future? At its centre is ANANSI-2, a speculative AI spirit emerging from reclaimed materials and fragmented archives. The work explores African technological futures through recycling, ancestral knowledge, digital memory, surveillance and AI ethics, imagining waste not as an ending, but as a site of transformation, resistance and reawakening.

With: Nhlanhla Michael Dhlamini South Africa

Presented by: Cinémathèque Afrique and Gauteng Film Commission

Topics: Film, AI, Climate & Environment, Speculative Futures

09:00 to 17:00

Relooted

Where: Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct, Gaming Hub

Reclaim real African artifacts from Western museums in this Africanfuturist heist game. Recruit crew members, plan escape routes, acquire the precious cargo, and bounce out of the joint as fast as you can. A crew. A job. A plan. Toss those ingredients together, and you've got yourself a classic heist, but with a few twists. Your crew members are everyday citizens (from different countries in Africa) with pretty normal careers. The job is to liberate African artifacts from Western museums. And the plan? Well, that's up to you to create.

With: Ben Myres South Africa

Presented by: Nyamakop

Topics: Games & Play, Archives & Museums, Speculative Futures

09:00 to 17:00

Vetkoek Studios Gaming Showcase

Where: Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct, Gaming Hub

Meet the team from Vetkoek Studios who are dedicated to bringing the mzanzi flavour to gaming devices across South Africa and around the world. Try their most popular titles and play-test their upcoming games. This session invites gamers, prospective developers and anyone curious about what is happening in the local game development scene to come play, connect and ask questions.

Powered by: Vetkoek Studios

With: Eric

Presented by: Vetkoek Studios

WED 14 - FRI 16 October, 09:00 to 17:00

Habesha Creative Lab

Where: Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct, Engine Room

Ethiopian Imaginaries: immersive worlds shaped by history, culture and technology. Tobiya Game Studio explores this through interactive VR training; Elder Studios through narrative game design rooted in Ethiopian history and culture. Tobiya Game Studio presents interactive VR simulations in medical anatomy, space exploration and mechanical assembly, in English, French and Amharic. Elder Studios presents a playable demo and trailer of Veiled, a horror-survival game inspired by Ethiopian culture, history and the toll of conflict.

With: Oliyad Tesfaye (Tobiya Game Studio) and Joshua Mekuriaw (Elder Studios) Ethiopia

Presented by: Habesha Creative Lab

Topics: Heritage & History, Games & Play, XR

THU 15 - FRI 16 October, 09:00 to 17:00

Wits Digital Arts: Gaming

Where: Chris Seabrooke Music Hall, Foyer

Wits Digital Arts game design students bring their games to Fak'ugesi. Pick up a controller and play between talks.

With: Dr Andrea Hayes South Africa

Presented by: Wits School of Arts

Topics: Games & Play, Education & Youth

Expo stands

Open 09:00 to 17:00, Wednesday 14 to Friday 16 October, at the Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct (Engine Room) and the Chris Seabrooke Music Hall.

HD360 - Your Dedicated Marketing Team

An AI-powered sales and marketing operating system built for South African entrepreneurs and small businesses. It combines your CRM, sales pipeline, and a dedicated AI agent team into one simple platform, so you always know who to contact, what to say, and what to do next to close more deals. From your first lead to your next referral, HD360 keeps your sales moving, every single day. Turning leads into customers with a dedicated team that never forgets to follow up.

With: Joel Baloyi South Africa

Presented by: Highly Dedicated Group (Pty) Ltd

KasiConnect App

For the Kasi. By the Kasi. Connecting Township Businesses to the Digital Economy. Reimagining Township Economies Through AI, Community Data & Digital Discovery. Visitors can explore Kasi Connect, a township-focused digital business discovery platform developed from Orange Farm, Gauteng. The showcase will demonstrate how AI, local data and community-driven digital infrastructure can help township businesses, informal traders and service providers become more visible and discoverable. Visitors can interact with the live platform, explore local businesses and scan a QR code to experience Kasi Connect on their own devices.

With: Puseletso Mafisa South Africa

Presented by: Mafisa Tech Affiliate (Pty) Ltd

Naledi 3D

VR in Africa, for Africa by Africa: Over a quarter of a century ago, Naledi3D Factory imagined and pioneered VR for development in Africa, for Africa. Today that same imagination still drives community upliftment and grassroots training in underserved communities - extending into heritage, education, and training solutions across aviation, agriculture and defence, accessed the world over. We've taken VR in Africa to the world.

With: Dave Lockwood United Kingdom

Presented by: Naledi 3D

Topics: XR, Education & Youth, Community & Collaboration

The History of Cinematic Viewing

A stand celebrating the past and future of moving-image technology. Presented with Magic Lightbox, a Johannesburg film and TV equipment house founded in 2014 by Frank Meyburgh, the stand features pieces from the Celluloid and Cinematic Emporium, a collection of cinema, film and television cameras dating back to the 1880s.

With: Sondia Viljoen South Africa

Presented by: South African Finishing Artists and Imaging Technicians Society and SMPTE SA Student Chapter with support from Magic Lightbox

Topics: Film, Archives & Museums, Heritage & History

Gauteng Film Commission

With: Nthabeleng Phora South Africa

Presented by: Gauteng Film Commission

Topics: Film, Startups & Investment

Wits Film +TV

The Wits Film & Television Department's Honours XR cohort collaborated with Honours students from Theatre Arts and Performance on an interdisciplinary, practice-based graduation production for the Extended Reality (XR) Immersive Media course. Working in creative teams, the students produced four Virtual Reality (VR) short films exploring the genres of African Futurism and African Magic Realism. Works include The Land of Memory, The Calling, Currents of Return and Iqiniso Liyabiza.

With: Dr. Shmerah Passchier South Africa

Presented by: Wits Film & TV

Topics: XR, Education & Youth

VR Capture

VR Capture creates cinematic immersive media that puts audiences inside the story. Experience a showcase of our work, including Close Encounters – Virtual Safari, Umfula – Echoes of a River, Real Life Nature – Wild Adventure and Sida Tsoatsoas – Our Beginnings. Come experience immersive 3D 360° VR and fulldome films and discover a new way to see, hear and experience the world around you.

With: Telmo dos Reis South Africa

Presented by: VR Capture

Topics: Immersive, Climate & Environment

A-Game+

At the stand, we will help startups and creatives with business ideas quickly stress-test their value proposition and business model through a practical, facilitated flip-chart exercise. We will then help them create an account on the A-Game Business Operating System, build a landing page for their product or service, and launch a simple social media campaign to test market interest, generate leads and determine whether their idea has real commercial potential. A-Game Business is a South African business transformation and technology company helping African SMEs work smarter, grow faster and build profitable, self-managing businesses. Its flagship A-Game Business Operating System combines AI, automation and business management tools in one integrated platform. SMEs can manage strategy, marketing, sales, finance, projects, people and operations while accessing AI-powered business coaching through AngelAI. Having supported more than 2,000 SMEs, A-Game Business understands the realities of building businesses in Africa. Its mission is to democratise access to world-class business technology and practical growth support, empowering African entrepreneurs to build stronger, more competitive and sustainable businesses.

With: KK Diaz South Africa

Presented by: A-Game+

Topics: Startups & Investment

Latitudes Art Fair

With: Malaika Evans South Africa

Presented by: RMB Latitudes Art Fair

Topics: Creative Economy, Ownership & IP

Imaginarium

Hill Hub (InnerCircle Solutions) brings Fak'ugesi's official festival merchandise to life, with a Kalahari clothing range, a pop-up shop-stand, and an Instagram store launch tied to the first merch drop.

With: Modise Nalane South Africa

Presented by: InnerCircle Solutions

Topics: Creative Economy

MazikMail

MazikMail is a direct-to-media platform that lets artists submit their music and content straight to radio and television.

With: Prince Masuku South Africa

Presented by: MazikMail

Topics: Music & Sound

University of Johannesburg

With: Dr Izak Potgieter South Africa

Presented by: University of Johannesburg

Topics: Education & Youth

Futures_Past

Step into Futures_Past, a programme that has brought immersive artists together with archives and cultural custodians across South Africa, Lesotho and Malawi to create six new exhibitions launching this year. At Fak'ugesi, audiences can explore selected elements from five of these works through VR, sound, moving image and interactive installations. The works grow out of close collaborations with archives, using immersive forms to open up new ways of experiencing the histories, memories and stories they hold.

With: Lauren Fletcher South Africa

Presented by: Embassy of France in South Africa, Lesotho and Malawi French Institute of South Africa (IFAS) Electric South

Topics: Immersive, XR, Archives & Museums, Heritage & History

Glass Angels

Glass Angels is an immersive film and interactive experience exploring the emotional lives of Helen Martins and Koos Malgas at the national heritage site in Nieu-Bethesda.

With: Lebo Leitch South Africa

Presented by: XR Native

Topics: Heritage & History, XR

Matamba Film Labs for Women

With: Siza Mukwedini Zimbabwe

Presented by: Matamba Film Labs for Women

Topics: Film, Education & Youth, Women in Tech & Creativity

Imagination Needs Infrastructure

Art doesn't exist in a vacuum. Behind every artist is an ecosystem of people, platforms, money, ideas, audiences and opportunities that determines what gets made, seen, collected and remembered. Imagination Needs Infrastructure is an interactive installation by Latitudes that exposes some of this usually invisible machinery. A large silk-printed map traces a network spanning artists, galleries, collectors, the RMB Latitudes Art Fair, education, digital platforms, public programmes and international exchange. Follow its pathways through printed matter and moving image, or enter the network yourself. At the centre, the Build the Network table asks a different question: not what does African creativity need? but what can you bring to it? Visitors can make connections, offer ideas, explore Latitudes Online, encounter projects and browse and collect works from Latitudes Limited. Part exhibition, part marketplace, part resource and part meeting place, Imagination Needs Infrastructure makes a simple proposition: imagination is abundant. The infrastructure that allows it to flourish is not.

With: Malaika Evans South Africa

Presented by: Latitudes Art fair

Topics: Creative Economy, Startups & Investment, Social Justice

GameBuzz

The Beehive Culture Worx is proud to present games made by children from Kliptown and Eldorado Park. Every character and background was drawn and animated by hand, every scene built by the children from code blocks, and they designed and wired the arcade-style controller consoles themselves. The makers, aged 6 to 16, work on GameBuzz, a platform designed from the ground up for Beehive to run offline on a Raspberry Pi. AI takes care of tedious steps like cleaning up scanned drawings, so the creative work stays with the children. The workshops are funded by the Gauteng Film Commission and supported by Wits Film and Television, Wits School of the Arts.

With: Mocke Jansen Van Vuuren

Presented by: Beehive Culture Worx

Films in the portable dome

Wednesday 14 to Friday 16 October, 09:30 to 17:00, on rotation, at the Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct (Inflatable Portable Dome).

The Rift

Filmed across Zimbabwe, from ancient forests and sweeping plains to city streets and untouched landscapes - this 360° fulldome documentary weaves together dancers performing a shared choreography across distant locations, connected through movement, rhythm and cinematic editing. Driven by an electrifying original score, the film places water at its centre. A voice echoes through the dome: "There was water, even before there was light." That simple truth becomes its emotional spine, transforming water from a resource into memory, ancestry and survival. The Rift confronts urgent questions of our time - from water access and plastic pollution to the hidden cost of fast fashion, reminding us that the planet's fragility is inseparable from our shared future.

With: Siza Mukwedini; Zimbabwe

Presented by: XR Labs by 4Pi Productions, Matamba Film Labs for Women and AfriKera Arts Trust with support from the British Council

Topics: Immersive, Climate & Environment, Myth & Spirituality

The Land of Memory

Follow Phetheho into the living memories of the Sterkfontein Caves, where a Xhosa griot reveals the truth about her late miner father. Through this journey, audiences witness the sacrifice, illness and forgotten labour underlying Johannesburg's mining history.

With: Dr Shmerah Passchier; South Africa; Chelsi Goliath; South Africa

Presented by: Wits Film & TV Honours Wits Anglo American Digital Dome

Topics: Immersive, Social Justice, Heritage & History

The Calling

A grieving daughter uses music and ritual to guide her dying mother's spirit into the ancestral realm, and where she has to learn to let go.

Presented by: Wits Film & TV Honours Wits Anglo American Digital Dome

Topics: Immersive, Myth & Spirituality

Iqiniso Liyabiza

Three Ndlovu siblings clash as their father's political legacy haunts them in the form of an existential game show. During a heated, televised family debate, one sibling is overcome by trauma and crosses into the spirit realm.

Presented by: Wits Film & TV Honours Wits Anglo American Digital Dome

Topics: Immersive, Social Justice

Currents of Return

An African oceanographer liberates a ghost ship held captive off the Cape of Good Hope by ancestral spirits, to prevent it from carrying stolen African treasures to Europe.

Presented by: Wits Film & TV Honours Wits Anglo American Digital Dome

Topics: Immersive, Social Justice, Climate & Environment

Culture Kitchen

While cooking a pot of stew, a mother passes down her mixed heritage to her son, ensuring their culture lives on through a simple, shared meal.

Presented by: Wits Digital Art Honours Wits Anglo American Digital Dome

Topics: Immersive, Memory & Identity

The Great Battle of Heitsi-Eibib

A tale of the great battle of Heitsi-Eibib and Gama-Gorib: a battle of smarts, resistance, and strength for the safety of the village.

Presented by: Wits Digital Art Honours Wits Anglo American Digital Dome

Topics: Immersive, Myth & Spirituality, Social Justice

Star-Eater & The Power of Stories

When a destructive cosmic force threatens to engulf centuries worth of culture, a hopeful young girl stands resilient against this darkness.

Presented by: Wits Digital Art Honours Wits Anglo American Digital Dome

Topics: Immersive

Nanabolele

Pursued across the veld by fire-breathing crocodiles, a young Basotho girl hurls a magic pebble and summons the Drakensberg Mountains, creating a colossal barrier that saves her brothers from the monsters.

Presented by: Wits Digital Art Honours Wits Anglo American Digital Dome

Topics: Immersive, Myth & Spirituality

Mililo

A story unfolds across time, transforming from 2D cave drawings into a luminous 3D figure, showing how african storytelling evolves from oral tradition into digital form while remaining the same at its core.

Presented by: Wits Digital Art Honours Wits Anglo American Digital Dome

Topics: Immersive, Heritage & History, Indigenous Knowledge

Modjadji

After a terrible drought sweeps through the land of the Balobedu people, the Rain Queen must dig deep to bring life back to the land before the drought takes over completely, leaving nothing behind.

Presented by: Wits Digital Art Honours Wits Anglo American Digital Dome

Topics: Immersive, Myth & Spirituality, Climate & Environment

Beneath One Sky

In a world divided by culture and tradition, two lovers defy their families' expectations, telling their forbidden love story not through words, but through dance.

Presented by: Wits Digital Art Honours Wits Anglo American Digital Dome

Topics: Immersive

Larry

This is the year 2045. A curious alien happens to stumble upon the abandoned Eishkom Space Station, and what begins as a playful exploration, turns dark when stage 11 loadshedding strikes... with no one left to start the generator!

Presented by: Wits Digital Art Honours Wits Anglo American Digital Dome

Topics: Immersive, Climate & Environment, Speculative Futures

The Well of Hajar

The miracle of the Zamzam Well is one of the most foundational and emotionally powerful narratives in Islamic history.

Presented by: Wits Film & TV MA and PHD Alumni Wits Anglo American Digital Dome

Topics: Immersive, Myth & Spirituality, Heritage & History

The Cosmic Egg

Drawing on San rock art and Motswana mythology, we follow a group of African hunters who encounter three magical eggs:

Wisdom, Appreciation and Harmony.

Presented by: Wits Film & TV MA and PHD Alumni Wits Anglo American Digital Dome

Topics: Immersive, Heritage & History, Myth & Spirituality

The Eye of Rre Mutwa

A tribute to Credo Mutwa, the renowned Zulu seer, sangoma and traditional healer. The viewer is asked to observe the relationship between human rights violations and technological 'development', embedded in the algorithms which now shapes the 4IR.

Presented by: Wits Film & TV MA and PHD Alumni Wits Anglo American Digital Dome

Topics: Immersive, Myth & Spirituality, Social Justice



Want the latest? Use the Signal Guide.

This booklet is only a snapshot. Every live update and every change to the programme happens on the **Fak'ugesi Signal Guide**, not here. Always check it before you travel.



- 1 Open the **camera** on your phone.
- 2 Point it at the square code.
- 3 Tap the **link** that appears.

No smartphone? No problem. Ask a festival volunteer, or a family member, to look it up for you.

Or type this address into your phone's browser:

claude.ai/artifact/GM4y1aNmWWZ14LZz2Yy7Y