

Mapungubwe's famous golden rhino will be on show at the British Museum, London (Photo: University of Pretoria)



The South African High Commission, London is delighted to promote “South Africa: the art of a nation – An Exhibition at the British Museum, London, Great Russell Street, WC1B 3DG

From 27 October 2016 until 26 February 2017, in partnership with the South African Department of Arts and Culture, the British Museum in London will host the first major UK exhibition on South African art exploring 100,000 years of South Africa’s history.

“**South Africa: the art of a nation**” displays some wonderful examples of South Africa’s rich artistic heritage, including archaeological, historic and contemporary artworks. These items use art to tell South Africa’s story, from its ancient history, the colonial period, apartheid, and the birth of a democracy after a long people’s struggle for freedom and equality.

Objects from the Museum’s own South African collections are displayed alongside new acquisitions. There are also significant loans from South Africa in the exhibition, including rare objects such as the magnificent **gold treasures of Mapungubwe, exhibited in the UK for the very first time.**

These archaeological treasures are important in contemporary South Africa for many reasons, not least because **they are evidence that complex societies existed in the region immediately prior to the arrival of European settlers.** This rich cultural history was hidden during the apartheid era when the colonial concept of ‘terra nullius’, the myth of an empty land, was used to legitimize white rule.

Contemporary works of interest include, ‘The Creation of the Sun’ (2015), a collaborative piece from Bethesda Arts Centre in South Africa. The artists are descendants of South Africa’s first peoples, San|Bushmen and Khoekhoen who have been inspired by archival recordings of their ancestors’ beliefs to produce representations of their founding stories. There is a self-portrait by Lionel Davis, a video featuring Candice Breitz, a 3D installation by Mary Sibande, and pieces by artists including Willie Bester, William Kentridge and Santu Mofokeng.

The exhibition is generously sponsored by Jack and Betsy Ryan, and with thanks to the staff at the British Museum and their logistics partner IAG Cargo.

The South African High Commission in London will celebrate the opening of the “South Africa: art of a nation” by supporting a number of free public events for the Museum’s Public Programme.

Free South African Public Programme at the British Museum:

The public programme at the Museum takes place from October 2016 to February 2017.

This includes a varied discussion programme and an evening Lecture on South African arts and history, the 'Memories of Mandela' lecture, to coincide with the anniversary of Nelson Mandela's death on the 5th December. Speakers will include Tony Dykes (Director of ACTSA, the successor organisation to the Anti-Apartheid Movement), John Battersby (SA Business Chamber of Commerce), Brian Filling (SA Honorary Consul to Scotland) and Pumela Salela (Brand South Africa), William Kentridge (South African Artist), Lord Peter Hain (former UK cabinet minister and noted anti-apartheid campaigner in the 1970s).

The High Commission invites university students and young professionals to participate in these discussions.

Other upcoming Museum activities centred around the exhibition include:

A Jazz Music Performance, 16 December, 19.00 – 20.00, featuring Eugene Skeef, Pinise Saul, Julian Bahula, and Don Laka.

Friday Late, 20 January, 18.00 - 20.30:

- a deejay and **SA music**
- **A mini-fashion show/workshop**, by one of South Africa's fashion designers, Laduma Ngxololo, a textile and knitwear designer who draws his inspiration from Xhosa traditional wear (www.maxhosa.co.za) and Sindiso Khumalo, a designer whose label focuses on sustainable contemporary textiles (sindisokhumalo.com)
- **A Food Tasting Event** with South Africans from different cultures preparing traditional dishes for presentation and tasting.

Film Programme:

Come Back, Africa (1959)

Sat 12 Nov, 14.00–16.00

Stevenson Lecture Theatre

A jarring exposé of a carefully concealed injustice, this film captures the haunting images of an oppressed but resilient people. This classic game changer of African cinema was filmed in secret in the black township of Sophiatown, using non-actors who were experiencing the dire consequences of South Africa's apartheid system first hand. The result is an authentic and powerful journey.

Director: Lionel Rogosin

South Africa, 100 mins, Cert 15

£3 (£2)

Mapantsula (1988)

Fri 6 Jan, 18.30–20.30

Stevenson Lecture Theatre

Panic is the guru of pickpockets. This is the story of his transformation. In this landmark film, the first for, about and by black South Africans, a local gangster must choose between personal gain and a united stance against the apartheid system gripping his country.

Director: Oliver Schmitz

South Africa, 115 mins, Cert 15

£3 (£2)

Future Sounds of Mzansi (2014)

Sat 21 Jan, 14.00–16.00

Stevenson Lecture Theatre

Explore South Africa's cultural landscape through its burgeoning electronic music scene, with internationally acclaimed artist Spoek Mathambo. The film showcases DJs, musicians and producers, including Aero Manyelo, Black Coffee, Christian Tiger School, Rude Boys and more. Immersing the audience in the realities of a country still steeped in poverty, crime and injustice, these are the pioneers who are sculpting the future sound of Mzansi.

Directors: Lebogang Rasetuba & Spoek Mathambo

South Africa, 110 mins, Cert 15

£3 (£2)

U-Carmen eKhayelitsha (2005)

Sat 11 Feb, 14.00–16.30

Stevenson Lecture Theatre

Bizet's opera *Carmen* has inspired myriad interpretations and adaptations. Here the love triangle is relocated to contemporary Khayelitsha, a township on the outskirts of Cape Town, where Carmen works in a cigarette factory. Sung in Xhosa, it was the first African film to win top prize at the 2005 Berlin International Film Festival.

Director: Mark Dornford-May

South Africa, 140 mins, Cert 12

£3 (£2)

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