

Grahamstown National Arts Festival launches Creativate Digital

The National Arts Festival will be launching a new programme for the inaugural Creativate Digital Arts Festival, taking place between 28 June to 1 July 2018 in Grahamstown.

The programme, which comprises a mix of lectures, workshops, film and performance focused mainly in one Creativate Hub in Grahamstown has been dubbed ‘inspiring, innovative, jaw-dropping and attention grabbing’.

“Creativate seeks to explore the space where creativity, innovation and technology converge. It’s a playground for artists and audiences interested in how the digital age is helping to bring our imaginations to life, and who want to experience the creative tools of the future.



The Doghouse - Photo by Asmund Sollihgda

“The festival is for the curious and creatively minded – we want audiences to check in with us in the morning and spend a full day wandering through the spaces and events we have created,” Lankester said. “We’re expecting the events to appeal to those aged 12 - 80, and technical fluency is less of a pre-requisite than an enquiring mind!” said Tony Lankester, Festival CEO and co-curator of the new festival.



Grahamstown's National Arts Festival reveals new programme features for 2018

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Creativate highlights include:

Lecture series

“We’ve invited some of South Africa and the world’s brightest thinkers to come and share their insights with us,” said Tony

Shapshak, co-curator.

Headlining the Creativate Engage series is Monika Bielskyte, described as 'a futurist with an artist's eye and an inventor's mind', presenting a mind-bending journey through what could be and sharing her experiences in designing Sci-Fi worlds for the entertainment industry.

Other lectures include:

- William Kentridge-collaborator, filmmaker and Museum designer Yoav Dagan;
- WeChat founder and CEO Brett Loubser asking if artificial intelligence could ever replace artists;
- Tom Gray, a UK-based South African innovation consultant reflecting on the worlds – and opportunities – created by virtual and augmented reality.
- Maximilian Kaizen shares her insights into how artists can use new tools to make their careers sustainable and to build independence using tech and story craft

Performances

Curatorial advisor Ashraf Johaardien says: "Genres and traditional forms are blurring fast and with adoption of technology into the arts space, the trajectory has become even more interesting. Certainly, this digital infusion has the potential to expand the role of the arts, attract more diverse audiences and brings new skills and ideas to the creative space. It's an exciting growth area and we are attentive to how this will also play out in the South African context."

The Creativate programme will showcase two international performances that illustrate how artists are integrating technology into their work. In a Swiss production of *Hamlet*, author and director Boris Nikitin rewrites the most famous of all theatre pieces and transforms it into a contemporary performance, featuring a mix of experimental documentary play and music-theatre.



Hamlet by Boris Nkitin

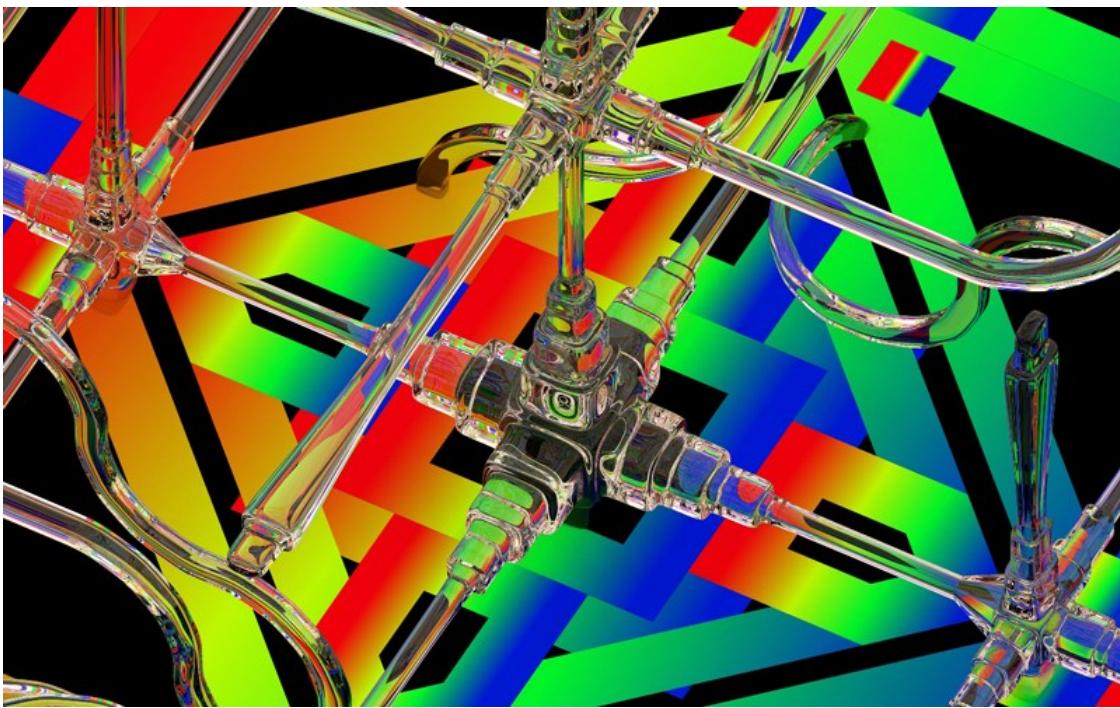
Doghouse is a 20-minute virtual reality play from Denmark, which an audience of five people experience through headsets.

Workshops

A critical part of Creativate is giving participants the opportunity not just to hear about new tools and technology, but to roll up their sleeves and to play, says Lankester. “Often the biggest barrier to using new technology is fear – fear of breaking something; anxiety that something is too difficult, remote or foreign to be useful.”

To respond to that, organisers have selected workshops that are closer to playrooms than laboratories.

Leading the way, the Johannesburg-based Fak'ugesi African Digital Innovation Festival will be hosting two workshop spaces - *If These Walls Could Talk* will teach participants how to use electronics to craft props and touch sensitive surfaces for use in theatres; while their *Games Play Room* will showcase local computer games designed and developed by the Wits Digital Arts Division.



Source Fold Compositor

Rhodes University's Alette Schoon will be working with local hip-hop artists to create and animate Afrofuturist cartoon characters in a computer lab, while Zimbabwean artist Thuthukani Ndlovu will be running a poetry hackathon leading to a digital art exhibition.

Music takes a front row at Creativate with DJ Strat3gy doing a talk titled *How to produce 10,000 hours of live TV and serve a billion pages of content – from behind the DJ mixer*, before jamming live with long-time drummer in the Johnny Clegg band, Barry van Zyl and Freshlyground bass player, Josh Hawkes. Van Zyl and Hawkes bring their popular Slaves to the Rhythm series of talks and workshops to Creativate. Apart from a workshop Songwriting and producing in the digital age, they will present two lectures that take audiences on a musically-illustrated journey through music's past, present and future.

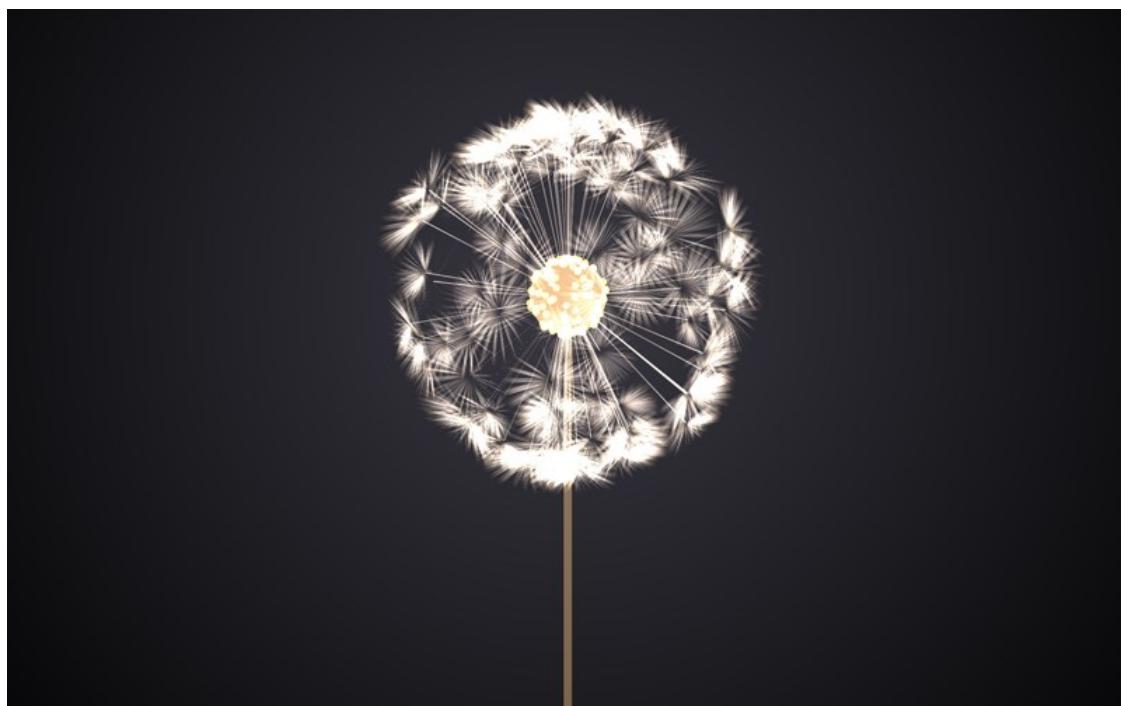
UK-based artist Rebecca Smith will work with local artists to create digital projections that will use the buildings of Grahamstown as a night-time canvas throughout the festival.



Installations

A series of films and installations will showcase new techniques and approaches and will challenge audiences and present them with multiple opportunities to interact and engage with artists' work.

Brothers Donald and Wesley Swanepoel explore the theme of #LandExpropriation through an exhibition that responds to live discussions on Twitter, while Paige Rybko's exhibition *Self-made* draws a feed from Instagram and presents it in a gallery space. In a similar vein Terrance Nzuza is creating a 'live streaming graffiti' exhibition called *Graffiti Hyper Realism*; while visiting artists from Finland, MSHR will be bringing an immersive computer music system in which audiences create sounds by moving through a room.



Wesley Swanepoel - Dandelion

Creativate is supported by Standard Bank as a space where artists can embrace innovation and explore new ideas through technology. "As the long-standing sponsor of the Standard Bank Young Artist Awards, we see this event as another way of inspiring the next generation of artists and helping them push the boundaries of what is possible in their craft. We are excited to see how Creativate influences the arts landscape in the years ahead." says Jenny Pheiffer, head: brand, sponsorships and events Standard Bank.

As part of this commitment, all artists taking part in the National Arts Festival's Main or Fringe programme will be given free access to Creativate events.

The full programme of Creativate events is available [online](#) and will be in the printed editions of the Festival programme. Booking is open at www.nationalartsfestival.co.za.

The National Arts Festival takes place from 28 June - 8 July 2018 in Grahamstown.