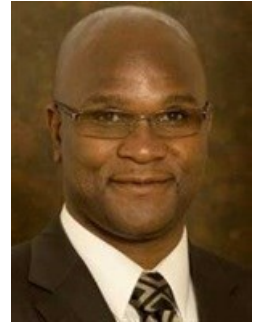


Corporate sponsorship vital for the arts

The importance of business supporting the arts is not a frivolous pursuit. The arts play an important role and, when they thrive, it benefits not just the practitioners but also the country as a whole. However, in this economically driven world, art requires adequate funding to thrive.

Speaking at the national council of province's policy debate recently, newly appointed Department of Arts and Culture (DAC) Minister, Nathi Mthethwa, defined the role of the arts in South Africa as outlined in the National Development Plan. "Arts and culture open powerful spaces for engagement about where a society finds itself and where it is going. Promoted effectively, the creative and cultural industries can contribute substantially to small business development, job creation, urban development and renewal."

Mthethwa said the DAC was "working towards building a creative eco-system and an enabling environment within which all our citizens can flourish and which enable people to work together to achieve common goals."



Nathi Mthethwa (image via Who'sWho.co.za)

Art goes beyond employment

The arts serve as a beacon of hope in a country that is rife with unemployment, but developing the arts can do more than provide a living. It encourages urban regeneration, nation-building, education, preservation of cultural heritage and even philanthropy.

This is said to be the reason why organisations such as Business and Arts South Africa (BASA) work to encourage the private sector to enter into sustainable partnerships with the arts sector. This is done through a multifaceted approach, including an awards event, a mentorship programme, business-specific gatherings and a three-tiered education programme.

Lonwabo Mavuso, Marketing and Operations Manager at BASA recently told *Destiny Man*, "We have placed great emphasis on entrepreneurship. We have observed that artists are often just creative - they haven't thought of business models and don't have the knowledge to turn their arts and crafts into businesses."

BASA is a facilitator, but stresses that it is up to the private sector to play its part in uplifting South African arts by getting involved.

Sasol's contribution

For over three decades, petrochemicals company Sasol has been supporting the arts. Its commitment to the arts can be seen through the company's 25-year sponsorship towards the Sasol New Signatures art competition and its 35-year sponsorship of the South African National Youth Orchestra.



Sasol's sponsorships manager, Richard Hughes said, "There is no doubt that art is one of the biggest platforms of expression. As a company, we are committed to finding innovative ways to unite and unlock the potential of South African artists. Through our partnership with the Sasol New Signatures art competition, we have helped launch the successful careers of many artists on a national and international level."

Relationship is growing

Although facing a tough environment, the relationship between business and the arts is growing, according to BASA's latest biannual Artstrack Research. In 2013, there was a double-digit growth in arts sponsorship, despite an adverse economic climate. The research predicted that an estimated R438 million was spent on arts sponsorship, which is an 11% growth on the R394 million spent in 2011.



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BASA CEO, Michelle Constant said, "While the research cannot measure the full extent of arts sponsorship in the country, it is positive news and speaks directly to the shared value that both business sponsors, arts projects and organisations are getting out of their relationships."

This is a positive figure, but rampant unemployment in South Africa means that more can and should be done. While there are many examples of big corporates investing in the arts sector, it is up to all businesses, big or small, multinational or local, to recognise the value art can add to their business, and society, and spur some action.

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