

Storytelling through visual language and art

 Bylise van den Berg 2 Mar 2017

"I just came out of a cave... this cave is found in the Western Cape and the image I saw in that cave was of a colonial ship sailing towards the coast. This cave painting was painted by nomadic hands, with ink and materials from the soil of this earth. This nomadic hand belonged to a bushman..."

It is the bushmen and their paintings as well as the growing influence of hip-hop, film, and popular sports on youth culture, and the community's reliance on storytelling in the form of colourful murals that has become Robin Rhode's motivation and inspiration for his art.

Rhode was born in the 70s in Cape Town, South Africa. The Berlin-based artist, a speaker on day two of Design Indaba 2017, engages in a variety of visual languages such as photography, performance, drawing and sculpture to create beautiful narratives that are brought to life using four main quotidian materials: charcoal, chalk, oil crayon and spray paint.

Motivated by the spirit of the individual

Rhode's talk was unusual and passionate and he captured the attention with his dramatic presentation - acting and drawing while at the same time explaining what inspires him as an artist who came of age in a newly post-apartheid South Africa. In this time, he was exposed to new forms of creative expression motivated by the spirit of the individual rather than dictated by a political or social agenda.





He describes how his strategic interventions transform urban landscapes into imaginary worlds, compressing space and time, as two-dimensional renderings become the subject of three-dimensional interactions by a sole protagonist, usually played by the artist or by an actor inhabiting the role of artist.

Melding individual expressionism with broader socio-economic concerns, Rhode's work reveals a mastery of illusion, a rich range of historical and contemporary references, and an innate skill for blending high and low art forms.

The South African DNA

He says that he likes to play and explore, which is actually a strong South African trait. "We laugh in the face of terror, we use humour as a way to destabilise the dark forces and overcome obstacles that are placed before us," says Rhode. "It's part of the South African DNA and I like to incorporate that in my work."

He uses drawing as a way to reflect on the daily aspects of our lives, to engage with aspects of our society, and to break down certain physical, mental and emotional boundaries.

Rhode's work is currently available for viewing at the [Stevenson Gallery](#).

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ABOUT ILSE VAN DEN BERG

Ilse is a freelance journalist and editor with a passion for people & their stories (check out [Passing Stories](#)). She is also the editor of [Go & Travel](#), a platform connecting all the stakeholders in the travel & tourism industry. You can check out her work [here](#) and [here](#). Contact Ilse through her website [here](#).
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