

Ik Ben Een Afrikander II seeks to engage new Afrikaans intellectuals

Artspace Gallery's Ik Ben Een Afrikander project, currently on show at the Stellenbosch Woordfees, seeks to engage the rising voices of new Afrikaans intellectuals, artists, poets and literary thinkers who have been grappling with the concept of an Afrikaner identity that is not merely a now shameful label from a time the country is trying to forget.

Ik Ben Een Afrikander II is a compelling exhibition that deals with the dichotomy of the historical baggage intrinsically tied to being Afrikaans. The show features the work of visual artists Hanneke Benade, Willie Bester, Lien Botha, Hannelie Coetzee, Johann du Plessis, Pauline Gutter, Sandra Hanekom, Marieke Kruger, Clare Menck, John Murray, Mea Ox, Henk Serfontein and Jaco Sieberhagen.

"As an Afrikaner of a certain age I was raised during Apartheid and also witnessed its downfall. I must point out that although my roots are Afrikaans, I went to an English school, an Afrikaans church, and my parents both being Afrikaans, spoke to me and my siblings in English, so I ask the questions, what makes an Afrikaaner?" says curator Teresa Lizamore.

Difficult to be an African

"One thing that as an Afrikaner I have never been allowed to easily say is that I am an African. During the height of Apartheid, African meant black. To the white, superior race, being African, or in any way black, or sympathiser with a black, was the worst thing to be. It was for some punished by death. Now that the tables have turned, trying to claim that I am also an African, born, bred and invested in this country, is almost as contentious a matter and often seen as downright insulting. It has been an interesting irony then to examine the roots of the term Afrikaner," she continues.

"There is a wonderful synchronicity in that the second exhibition of the project is being presented at the Universiteit Stellenbosch Woordfees 2012. A third show will be presented at the Absa KKNK (Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees) 2012. With this publication I hope to have begun a long term project and debate that makes us more aware of the never ending process of how we construct identity, and in particular Afrikaner and African identity," says Lizamore.

Ik Ben Een Afrikander II runs until 11 March at the Stellenbosch Woordfees 2012.