



PRESS RELEASE - 2023 FEMALE ARTIST STUDIO EXCHANGE

The META foundation, in partnership with the End Street Studios and August House is excited to announce the winner of the 2023 WOMXN TO WATCH Award:

Nene Mahlangu



Nene Mahlangu is a highly accomplished and multitalented visual artist and entrepreneur, based in the vibrant city of Johannesburg, South Africa. Holding a postgraduate certificate in Design from UMUZI and a Bachelor of Sciences from the University of Pretoria, her work is characterised by its ethereal and evocative representations of faith and freedom.

Drawing inspiration from the realms of sensuality, fashion, and religion, Mahlangu's work has graced the walls of prestigious local and international art fairs and exhibitions, earning her a reputation as a leading voice in the contemporary art scene.

In 2019, she made history by being the youngest woman ever to design two coins for South Africa, and the first person to feature the image of a black girl on the country's money, in commemoration of 25 years of democracy. Her international art fair debut at the prestigious Venice International Art Fair in 2020, marked a turning point in her career, solidifying her position as a leading figure in the global art world.



"Maybe I will tell", 2022, Oil Painting on Canvas, 100cm x 100cm

As a finalist for the Arts & Culture Trust, ImpACT Award for 2020, and being listed as one of Mail and Guardian's Top 200 Young South Africans, Mahlangu is a force to be reckoned with, an artist whose work is both inspiring and impactful. She has since exhibited her work in Birmingham, Ibiza, Finland and Lagos. In 2022, she was the lead visual artist for the Grammy award-winning DJ and producer Black Coffee's Hilbiza residency, creating 23 dynamic artworks for the project. Her unique approach and formidable skill set have made her a sought-after collaborator and a true master of her craft.

Through her company GreenMango, she has dedicated herself to supporting emerging artists, by providing them with the skills and resources they need to succeed as entrepreneurs. Her course "Intro to Pricing Your Art" has helped artists price their work confidently and sustainably, allowing them to fully realize the value of their creations.

The artist says of her work:

"In a world that often seeks to define and oppress blackness and femininity, it is easy to become consumed by these narratives and allow them to shape my identity. In a society that often simplifies and reduces people to their race and sexual orientation, I find it tempting to narrow the focus of my art to these themes in order to be accepted. However, my intention in my work is to celebrate individuality and the complexity of identity."



"Gotta have it all", 2022, Acrylic on Canvas, 80cm x 50cm

"At the beginning of my art journey, I used partially covered figures as a reminder of the sides we hide in this overly exposed social media age. As I have grown in my practice, these figures have come to represent an internal withdrawal, a moment of reflection, and a break from the constant politicization of the personal. I use colour, fashion, and sometimes religion to create snapshots that celebrate originality and eccentricity."

Why is this award important?

According to a 2010 national study on the visual arts, conducted by the Department of Arts and Culture, only 12% of women make a living from creating art in South Africa. Of which, 9% are White and 3% are Black, Coloured and Indians combined. The META foundation and End Street Studios are committed to supporting the practice of young, female artists. Not only by providing them with space to work from but supporting them with the freedom to explore their work and develop their voices. Through this process, the hope is that they become self-sustaining, full time practicing artists who in years to come, change the status quo.

The studio exchange provides the artist with the following for a period of 12 months:

- a studio space, at End Street Studios, which includes parking, electricity and water and uncapped internet
- the opportunities to participate in any group exhibitions curated by the META foundation
- the opportunity to participate in any August House activities
- featured (included in) August House/Meta foundation website and publicity materials

About the Partnership

The META foundation and End Street Studios have come together to launch this award. End Street Studios was founded by Bronwen Lace in 2016 and when it moved into August House it quickly became a space for womxn artists to evolve their practice. The META foundation has instigated this award. Based at August House, the META foundation will oversee the day to day running of the residency programme. It is our hope that through such a programme more womxn artists will find their voices.

About the META foundation

The META foundation was founded in February of 2020 in order to develop a set of strategically driven programmes that focus on artistic career development and

support. The ethos of the organisation is one of inclusion and diversity, focused on fairness and democratization of art – how it is viewed and consumed. August House was established as an enclave for artists in 2006 and currently houses 56 practicing artists. It is the largest studio space in Johannesburg, if not in South Africa.

Everything that the Meta Foundation does is focused on three pillars that make up the visual arts eco-system. We define these pillars as Artists, Artwork and Art Audiences / Lovers. The foundation's aim is to bring these three pillars together and to drive best practice to bolster the environment/context within which it operates.

About End Street Studios

End Street Studios is located on the 2nd floor of August House. The space does not separate itself from August House but rather runs as a faction within August House, which just happens to have a name attached to it. It consists of a community of artists who work in a mixed-use space, collective space. Consisting of nine studio spaces, ranging in size, the space invites artists to work and create within it. End Street Studios was a collective studio initiated by Bronwyn Lace in 2016, out of the need for an artist community to work alongside one another, as well as be a solution to the sharing of costs of space and logistics of having a studio. While the initiative is no longer run by Lace, as she has moved onto new and exciting projects, it continues to operate with a new bevy of emerging and mid-career artists.

About August House

In Johannesburg's inner city lies an exclusive art building, housing more than 40 independent, pan-African contemporary artists, in private art studios, known to the locals as 'The Artists' Playground'. To the outsider it's just a 1940s historic structure until one crosses the threshold and sees where the magic lives, in five storeys of private art studios.

August House gives artists a unique creative hub. With its high columns, authentic architecture, and large open plan floors, it's a wonderful blend of inspiration and stillness. August House was established as an enclave for artists in 2006 by Bie Venter and Maria Svane. Its notable tenants have included artists such as Mary Sibande, Dineo Seshee Bopape and Lawrence Lemaoana, Mbongeni Richman Buthelezi, Gordon Froud and Joseph Gaylard, Nontobeko Ntombela, Gabi Ngcobo, Gonçalo Mabunda, Jacki McInnes, Nelson Makamo, Bie Venter, Kudzanai Chiurai and Nicholas Hlobo.

For further information on the award and related activities please contact:

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