

22 March 2007

ELAND by CLIVE VAN DEN BERG: WINNING ARTWORK FOR THE BRAAMFONTEIN 'GATEWAY' ARTWORK COMMISSION:

Work on the Gateway artwork site has commenced with the preparation of foundations to support the 50 ton, 7.5 metre high concrete *Eland* by Clive van den Berg. Onsite casting of the two *Eland* profiles will take place through July with a spectacular hoisting and installation of the two profiles scheduled to take place on Saturday 18 August (Corner Bertha and Ameshoff Streets Braamfontein).

Official Mayoral Launch to be announced.



(Clive Van Den Berg submission model)



(Commission site rendering by: ASM Architects and Urban designers / MMA Architects / view of site)

On the initiative of the Johannesburg Development Agency (JDA) and the Braamfontein Improvement District (BID) a new artwork will be installed on the 'Gateway' site in Braamfontein, guided by the Braamfontein Art Committee and managed by The Trinity Session.

Clive van den Berg's submission entitled *Eland* was selected out of submissions by four other proposals by Retha Erasmus, Churchill Madikida, Usha Seejarim and Jeremy Wafer.

Clive van den Berg statement: *I started with a sense of what I did not want to do. Having worked in, studied and theorized public space for some years I knew that I did not want to make a heroic sculpture of the Mandela Square variety, nor a sculpture that would be too immediately located in time and place, like say a memorial to the Sharpeville Six. This is not a claim to the universal but rather an attempt to explore what for me are underlying and persistent themes; simply stated, the relationship we have to land, our need to find ways to share it, to understand and use it's resources and capacities, as well as it's historical, economic and cultural meaning. Eland places a large representation of an eland on a corner where it has long since disappeared. This slightly forlorn image of a majestic animal would I imagine bring beauty and grandeur to a busy place. I hope it would also be an emblem that prompts reflection on our relationship to the past, and to the interconnectedness of environmental, cultural and spiritual destinies. The gateway corner is a busy connector of lateral geography but what I am concerned with here is the geography of memory and the spirit.*

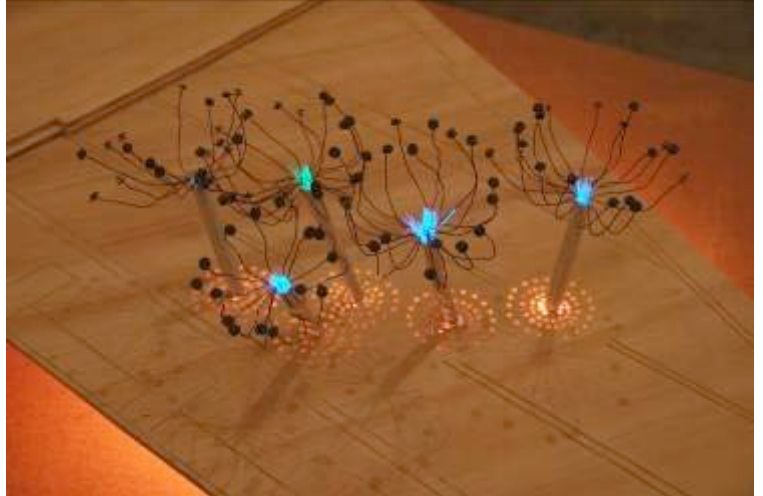
The process to date has involved a two round judging process where the above mentioned artists were nominated to respond conceptually to the site followed by finished submissions consisting of schedules, budgets and finished models. Judging, public walkabouts and student workshops were conducted during a short exhibition period at the Wits Substation.

The Gateway commission will be completed by the end of July; further releases will be issued regarding the associated Wits School of the Arts on site student project, the commencement of construction and installation and the unveiling event. (Members of the Braamfontein Art Committee are listed on the following page)

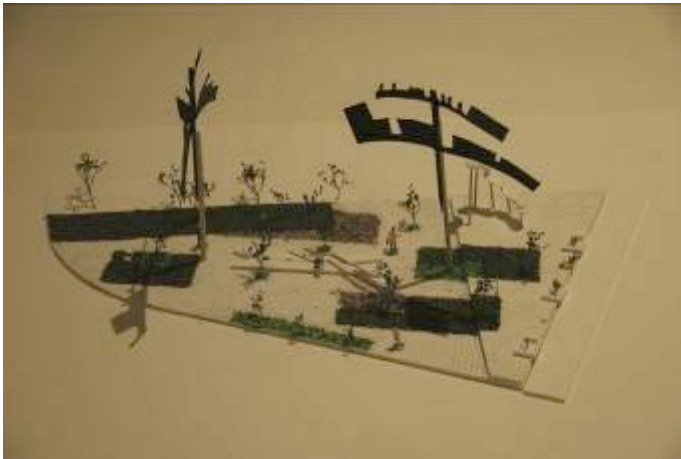
Proposals by Retha Erasmus, Churchill Madikida, Usha Seejarim and Jeremy Wafer:



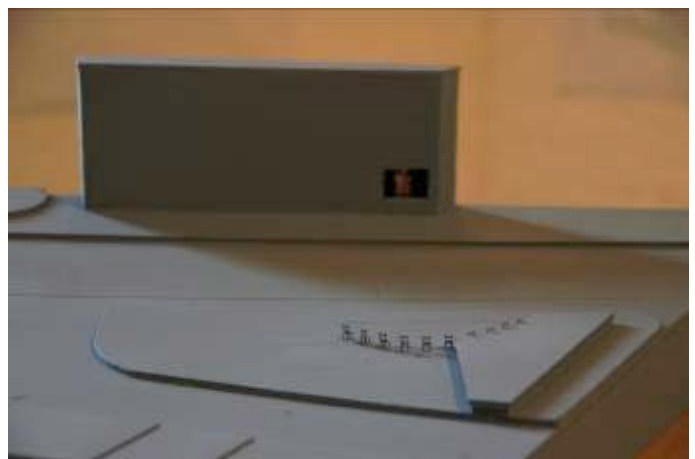
Retha Erasmus



Churchill Madikida



Usha Seejarim



Jeremy Wafer

Braamfontein Art Committee:

Steven Sack: Director of Arts Culture and Heritage for the City, Anne Steffny: Central Johannesburg Partnership, Paul Arnot-Job – Johannesburg Development Agency, Clive Kellner – Director Johannesburg Art gallery, Andre Oberholzer: Group Head Corporate Affairs – SAPPI LTD, Robyn Hebdin: Senior Manager – SAPPI, Solly Mboweni Asset Manager – Liberty Life Properties, Professor Penny Siopis: Wits School of the Arts, Katie Engelbrecht – Braamfontein Improvement District Communications, Nadia Broccardo Administrator Braamfontein Art Committee and Commissioning Agent – The Trinity Session

CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION PERTAINING TO THE COMMISSION

With respect to the following background information, the artists were asked to consider various issues and histories particular to the site, and emphasis was placed on permanence and durability. Furthermore, given that the site was originally conceived by ASM Architects and Urban Designers as a site for temporary interventions and related public space educational projects the artists were informed of this aspect as a component to be considered within their proposal and delivery.



The Gateway

With the early theorizing around the naming of the Cultural Arc in 2000 - The Gateway soon became the term to describe a key point of entry into the inner city - as a rising approach from the north over the Braamfontein ridge forming a dramatic line of site with the Nelson Mandela bridge to the South. Flanked by Wits University Campus and a confluence of motor vehicle and pedestrian movement, the site still possess, for many, strong memories of place, forged by the likes of Pop's 'Corner' Cafe, Street Records, and Herman Wald's bronze buck water feature. The site continues to be a point of convergence for secondary and tertiary student bus commuters and employees from the area and with its subsequent planting and surface upgrade appears as something of a forecourt for the student's resident in the flats above.

In this sense, the significant social history of the site combined with its strategic axial flows on the Cultural Arc and in relation to the culture branding concerns of the City, it is understandable that this site prompts a large scale iconic sculptural intervention. It would seem however that the socio-historical make up of Braamfontein informs a commissioning process that acknowledges this dimension but that of a more collective approach, which may well deliver an iconic sculptural statement, however having resulted from a broader reach to the artistic and cultural community.

Braamfontein context

In the broader context, anyone familiar with moving through the Cultural Arc portion from Constitutional Hill to the Nelson Mandela Bridge, would be aware of the significant changes to the public face of the area including such developments as the Constitution Hill Precinct, Sappi Precinct and park / SABB Studios / Premises Gallery, the Braamfontein Regeneration Programme including The Heartlands and more recently the Information Centre building at the Metro Centre. And in terms of future developments there is the Wits strategies development framework and the relocation of the Wits Art Galleries.

These varying transformations propose various thematics ranging from: corporate and civic, education and health to social and cultural which served as contextual inputs for the commission brief, furthermore to quote the architects Albonico Sack Mzumara, the architects and urban designers instrumental in Braamfontein's recent upgrade "Empowering public spaces through innovative and strategic design interventions" has been the approach to the regeneration of the improvement district. The emphasis here has been on the people of Braamfontein to the extent that the regeneration scheme has addressed resurfacing and opening up of sidewalks, alley ways, tree planting and urban furniture - functional transformations that acknowledge

Braamfontein as home to many, which has further been entrenched by the branding and marketing roll out in the last year.

Braamfontein's marketing payoff line: 'a place where people rise to greatness' summarises the mixed use characteristics of the area with the notion that it is a containable and manageable space, and that the surrounding corporate and educational institutions provides a context for building success.



Rendering: ASM Architects and Urban designers / MMA Architects

The commission site:

The artwork intervention for this site has to a large extent been influenced by the thinking of ASM Architects and Urban Designers. In particular the three aloe planters have electrical points embedded in their bases, a provision made by the architects for a series of vertical structures envisaged as vertical exhibition platforms, incorporating lighting components and programmed by Wits School of the Arts as a rotating experimental outdoor projects space.

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