

Opening Speech of the 2014 Cool Capital Biennale- Pieter J Mathews. 29 August 2014

The honourable MMC Mr. Subesh Pillay representing the City of Tshwane, head of Open Window Dr. Elfriede Dreyer, and all the creative people who believe in our city and are here tonight to celebrate the beginning of something special..

Two year ago I was fortunate to attend the Venice Architecture Biennale when the theme was 'Common Ground'. In response to this theme the American Pavilion showcased citizen led initiatives throughout the USA where citizens started to solve problems themselves in their neighbourhoods.

The British pavilion was called "Take Away" to inspire people to take creativity to their own city, with a poster urging visitors to go beyond Venice and activate their own cities.

So that is exactly what I did. Motivated by what I saw I thought it was worth a try and hoped that the city would agree and want to join in to let creativity reign.

I also thought I was being a bit optimistic...

Yet tonight here we are breaking ground at the World's first non-curated DIY Guerrilla Biennale. Basically what this means is that every two years our Capital City will become a showcase of ideas, displays and exhibitions. But unlike a typical Biennale's submission and approval process - where many potential participants are usually turned away by a panel of judges - this is a non curated Biennale which means that any group, individual or institution can express their creativity. Our Constitution states that South Africa belongs to all who live in it; in this spirit the Cool Capital intention is to truly democratize creativity.

We need more doers and less talkers in our city, and Cool Capital is the platform for all of us who want to actually see our ideas turned into reality. Of course we would not be where we are today without the efforts and support of all the volunteers who have already given up so much of their time and energy to make this - the world's first non-curated DIY Guerrilla Biennale - possible. All 30 of them are listed on the website and will be shown on screen. To Carla Taljaard and Yolandi Viljoen from our office who organized this amazing Biennale and have put their hearts in this project from the word go almost 2 years ago, also to the rest of Mathews & Associates who have jumped in to help, thank you all very much.

Without sponsors and non-profit institutions this would also not have been possible and a special word of thanks goes out - in no particular order - to:

- The Open Window - who immediately volunteered to host tonight's event,
- The Pretoria Institute for Architecture - with their wonderful initiative of the city bus tours that will reintroduce our beautiful city to us all with guided tours to help us re-appreciate our built environment,
- The Association of Arts - where we had our first inception think tank almost two years ago - there was already electricity in the air back then, and that enthusiasm has just kept growing to what we see today.
- The sponsors DeDesign - for the construction and assistance with the Cool Capital website
- Sunshine gun for the inspired logo

- Atterbury Property Trust - who have sponsored two of our major events; the School Arts Project and the Poetry Project
- City Property - who have made available their venues and rooftops in the city for functions and film screenings.
- PPC and Business and Arts SA - for sponsoring the public benches project.
- The Dutch Embassy - who sponsored the Dutch footsteps project.
- The City of Tshwane - who are the co-sponsors tonight.

And of course to all the participants and future participants who will be directly involved in the success of Cool Capital.

'DIY' means exactly that – you have to do it yourself and source the funding yourself. But remember that it also doesn't necessarily have to cost anything; some participants are using the free mediums of recycled material and Nature Art that costs absolutely nothing while still achieving amazing visual outcomes. The Afrikaans saying "Boer maak 'n plan" sums up this part. 'Guerrilla' means to surprise, to ambush, to pop up. Usually when you want to do a creative intervention somewhere then rules, regulations and bureaucracy will almost certainly kill it. Now Cool Capital is your excuse, use this opportunity to show us all what you 'would have done if you had the chance', this is that big chance you have been waiting for.

Many of the International Biennales started small and developed into worldwide events, attracting people from all over the world. Tonight you might be part of history because my dream for 2016 is simple and I believe achievable. Lets inspire more to join in and lets take Pappastad to the 2016 Venice biennale to show the world who we really are. Let's re-imagine our city.

We do not have a mountain or a sea but we have the amazing people and creativity as our currency, and this is a more valuable asset to a city than anything else. . It is-us, the creative people who lead urban regeneration and social cohesion, creating places and cities we want to live in, as I am sure we all want to live in memorable cities. I want to live in a creative city and I am staying right here.

Enjoy tonight enjoy the biennale and see you in 2016.