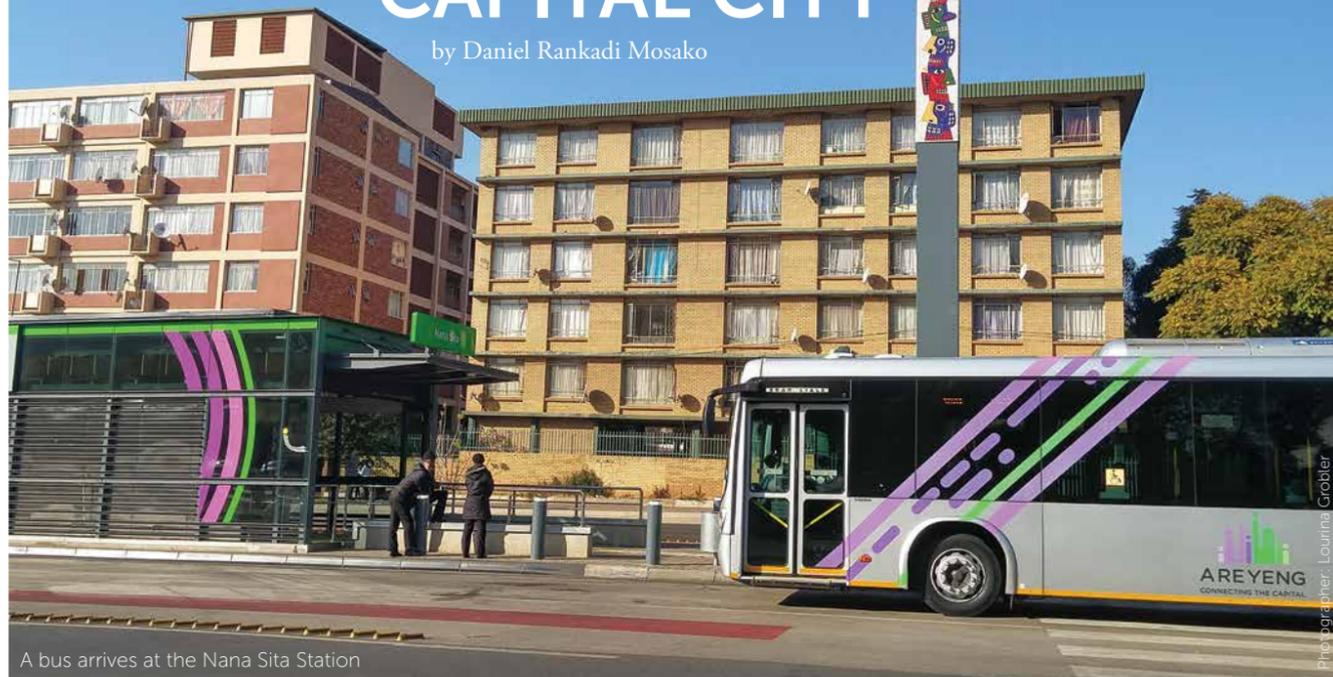


NEW PUBLIC SCULPTURES offer a progressive image of the CAPITAL CITY

by Daniel Rankadi Mosako



A bus arrives at the Nana Sita Station

Photographer: Lourim Grobler

Public sculpture has always characterised the visual landscape of Pretoria. It has also directed the perspectives, perceptions and social narratives of the city's inhabitants. The many contradictions inherent in the public sculptures of Pretoria date to the 1900s with the commission to erect the landmark statue of Paul Kruger, the then President of the Republic of South Africa. This artwork has generated ongoing debate since its inception, its location already disputed before installation could commence in 1913. Ever since, avant-garde contemporary sculptures have continued to exist as landmarks which can be called art landscapes.

Temporary or permanent, guerrilla or sanctioned, objective or protest-driven (such as the popular corner park sculptures of the 1980s), all sculpture stimulates the imagination of local citizens and tourists alike, and public sculpture always has multiple purposes that include heritage and education, but its aim is also to document an important

moment in time. Regardless of purpose, public pieces of sculpture are always traceable to a society or group of individuals.

Ever since 1994, a great many public sculptures have been commissioned with the common goal of crafting the city's landmarks. These include the statue of Chief Tshwane in front of the City Hall in Paul Kruger Street, the statue of late President Nelson Mandela at the Union Buildings, and the Spirit of Tshwane at Menlyn Maine.

In 2014 the city took the bold step to continue this course of action and decided that each of the new A Re Yeng TRT stations would be augmented by a different artwork that fits the station and its context. This differentiates A Re Yeng from other TRT projects such as MyCiTi in Cape Town and the Rea Vaya in Johannesburg, as it aims to strengthen the urban fabric and will have a lasting impact on the surrounding context.

Works such as the *The History Column* by Diane Victor at the Nana Sita A Re Yeng bus station makes reference to city individuals involved in multiple cohesion activities, including Nana Sita, Ruth Mompati and Gandhi. Social cohesion is also emphasised by Ester Mahlangu's work at the zoo station. It depicts connected Ndebele patterns that directly and indirectly portray the narrative on social cohesion, with different coloured shapes accommodated in one composition and referencing different races living together in the capital city.

The Knot by Sybrand Wiechers at the Ruth Mompati Station near the Breytenbach Theatre exhibits the many threads that weave the memories of Sunnyside together, while Banele Khoza's tree sculpture at Johnston Street reflects the surrounding tree-lined streets of the area. Norman Catherine's mosaic in Nana Sita Street exhibits classic elements of city life, including clocks and busy people. The city in all its diversity is further



celebrated at the General M. Soyothula Station in Hatfield by artist Titus Matiyane, whose artwork is an aerial depiction of Pretoria.

The composite art landscape of Pretoria compels its viewers to have an open mind and to engage in multi-disciplinary discourses, such as urban-scape aesthetics and socio-political and socio-economic debates. The city's broad spectrum of art landscapes does not limit itself to Pretoria's nucleus, but rallies with the monumental sculpture of Mandela that visually embraces the Freedom Park Monument, the Voortrekker Monument and the National Heritage Monument that pays tribute to struggle icons and stalwarts.

A critical analysis of the city's sculptural landscape reflects its inhabitants and demonstrates a footprint of the different lifestyles of its dwellers. Such a reflection covers various aspects, from fashion to architecture, ultimately portraying the

capital as an ideal artistic city with several sculptural "routes". Pretoria's sculpture collection forms part of a unique heritage collection that maps historic events from the day the city was founded. Trending into the future, an upcoming generation will continue to use monumental sculptures as the visual content of the city's historical undertakings. •

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1. Hare with book and rugby ball by Guy du Toit.
2. Ester Mahlangu signs her artwork
3. The translation of Ester Mahlangu's design into mosaic by Mosaic Arts
4. *Panorama of Gauteng* by Titus Matiyane also translated into mosaic by Mosaic Arts
5. *The History Column* by Diane Victor
6. Norman Catherine used a traditional totem pole for his artwork and interpreted it with modern figures from city life
7. *The Knot* by Sybrand Wiechers reflects on the diverse inhabitants of surrounding Sunnyside

