

## **SOUTH AFRICA**

**COOL CAPITAL: THE CAPITAL OF GUERRILLA  
DESIGN CITIZENSHIP**

### Commissioner

Consul-General Saul Kgomoiso Molobi

### Curator

Pieter J. Mathews

### Organization

Mathews & Associates Architects; Carla Taljaard

### Collaborators

University of Pretoria; Pretoria Institute  
for Architecture

### With the support of

South African Department of Arts & Culture;  
Atterbury Property; PPC Cement; Business  
and Arts South Africa (BASA)

### Participants

Over 1000 citizens of Pretoria participated  
in creating 150 installations across the city

While exhibiting at the 2012 13th International Architecture Exhibition, architect Pieter J. Mathews was inspired by a poster encouraging visitors to "take the discussion beyond Venice." Back in Pretoria, South Africa, with the assistance of a small group of architects and artists, the first uncurated, DIY, guerilla biennale called *Cool Capital* was launched.

The aim of *Cool Capital* was clear: dismantle the bureaucratic relationship between citizens and public space and encourage a new ownership for the city.

Designers were encouraged to rediscover marginalized parts of the city's historic center, to collaborate with residents by creating pop-up installations, and to become active agents in the rethinking of their city as place, destination, and capital city. *Cool Capital's* uncurated approach meant that the usual bureaucratic processes were short-circuited. It democratized creativity and promoted activism by putting the city into the hands of its creative community.

The city came alive as spontaneous street art and design interventions celebrated the city, inspiring urban renewal, achieving social coherence, and, above all, putting a smile on the mind. *Cool Capital* proved that real change lies in the hands of engaged citizens.

Low on budget but high on innovation, over 150 interventions took place, all of them questioning, challenging, or leveling the status quo. This year, *Cool Capital* continues with the theme "small is big." *Cool Capital* has cemented Pretoria as a notable African center of creativity.

Pieter J. Mathews, Carla Taljaard



Above: Open Window Institute & Pretoria Institute for Architecture, *Pink Voortrekker Monument*, 2014.  
Lighting Installation. Photo Dewald van Helsdingen. © Visual Books  
Below: Ke Neil We, Banele Khoza, and children from Mamelodi East, *Stone Spiral Mandala*, Sunday August 24, 2014.  
Land Art Intervention. Photo Ke Neil We. © Visual Books