

NO 31

BECAUSE

THE SA PAVILION SHINES IN VENICE

The South African Pavilion at the Architecture Biennale in Venice, curated by architect Pieter Mathews, turns the spotlight on Pretoria.

The theme of the International Architecture Exhibition 2016 at the Venice Biennale, Reporting from the Front, offers participating countries an opportunity to put their stamp on the contemporary architecture discourse by giving an account of innovative current activities dealing with real-world issues. The South African Pavilion – located in the Sale d'Armi in the Arsenal, a 13th-century building in the Venice dockyards – features the work of the 2014 Cool Capital initiative, a non-profit organisation dedicated to the rejuvenation of Pretoria's inner city by way of art and design. Its intention? To foster a new relationship with the city by encouraging active citizenry.

"The design of the pavilion had to take into account the restrictions of working in a heritage building," says curator Pieter Mathews. "The architects decided to free up the space previously divided by dry-walling



01



02

and embrace the raw nature of the existing interior. The entrance was enlarged so that the staircase leads directly into the exhibition space. In contrast to most other exhibitions, natural light is welcomed and views to the exterior are encouraged to place the pavilion within the context of Venice."



03



04



05

PHOTOS CARLA CRAFTED WORDS TRACY GREENWOOD

South African projects on display include the Voortrekker Monument lit up in pink as an example of an icon that adapts to remain relevant in changing times; Diane Victor working on a dust drawing of Paul Kruger lying in state in front of an Alexis Preller mural in a neglected provincial administration building; a graphic plan of Pretoria by Eric Duplan; and a documented

land art project, a joint venture between artists Ke Neil We, Banele Khoza and children of Mamelodi. Cardboard replicas of the Koeksister and Logo benches represent a successful public bench project.

"In keeping with the DIY guerrilla nature of Cool Capital, the exhibition, although planned, came together in the final moments with pink builder's tape, custom-

made faceted cardboard furniture and Cool Capital catalogues," says Pieter. "In the academic environment of the Biennale, the South African Pavilion enforces the idea that good design is the product of a passionate creative collective." The pavilion is open until 27 November.

- southafrican2016pavilion.co.za
- coolcapital.co.za
- maaa.co.za
- labiennale.org/en

- 01 A City Connected by Erik Duplan and a cardboard replica of the Logo Bench.
- 02 The Diane Victor installation *Let Sleeping Ghosts Lie* at the entrance to the South African Pavilion.
- 03 *Teater vol Stoele*, an installation featuring 16 chairs hand-painted by Garsfontein High School learners, and an installation called *Pinned in Transition* by Rina Stutzer.
- 04 On the left wall is a photo of the Voortrekker Monument lit up in pink, by Dewald van Helsdingen.
- 05 Cool Capital posters.