

**PRESS RELEASE**  
19 July 2022



# **POWER TALKS: a space for conversation about power in the creative and cultural sectors in South Africa**

**A multidisciplinary, multi-site programme in Gqeberha & Bhisho, Durban, Cape Town and Johannesburg, which allows for a disruption of the performativity of critical debate that often skirts dissensus and discomfort in the dissection of power.**

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In 2018, the Goethe-Institut South Africa's Cultural Programmes Department initiated Power Talks, a project aimed at unpacking the nuanced forms, dynamics and functions of power, to better understand the relationship between European cultural institutions and the various African societies in which they are active.

A collaboration between the Goethe-Institut South Africa and the University of Cape Town's African Centre for Cities, Power Talks seeks to critically examine the practice of European cultural institutions working in post-colonial / post-apartheid contexts.

The onset of Covid-19 precluded the hosting of Power Talks in 2020 and 2021. The pandemic's dramatic impact on the African cultural sector motivated the Goethe-Institut to forge a new path for Power Talks: in 2022, a once-off moderated panel format has been abandoned in favour of more expansive programming to be implemented in Gqeberha and Bhisho, Durban, Cape Town and Johannesburg.

Buntu Fihla and Yanga Mgabadelo (Eastern Cape); Niamh Walsh-Vorster and Mary-Anne McAllister (Durban); Valmont Layne and Ukhona Ntsali Mlandu (Cape Town); and Danai Mupotsa and Naadirah Patel (Johannesburg) are the curators behind Power Talks 2022.

These curators have developed contextually responsive programmes, in collaboration with a range of cultural actors and producers, with the aim of provoking and inviting conversation about the nuanced forms, dynamics and functions of power in their respective creative and cultural contexts.

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**Power Talks Durban**, taking place from 3-5 August across Central City Mission, Durban Art Gallery, Diakonia Council of Churches, the Chairman, and Community ZA and Gugu, invites the city's creatives, policymakers and art institute representatives to interrogate how space, people, art, and politics influence local creative dynamics. Nomcebisi Moyikwa (provocateur), Russel Hlongwane (animateur) and Nocebo Bucibo (reflecteur) are the facilitators who will guide Power Talks attendants through the process of unpacking the forms and implications of power for Durban's cultural sector.

**Power Talks Bhisho** (20 August) and **Gqeberha** (27 August) seeks to realistically highlight some of the Eastern Cape's artist-run spaces. The Bhisho programme will be based at Mbaula Backyard Sessionz, and will include such highlights as a guided bicycle tour of the capital, a live painting session and Xhosa games and storytelling to encourage the participation of children. The Athenaeum on Athol Fugard Street will host the Gqeberha programme, which will incorporate discussions on art education and cultural sector accessibility, an artist-led walking tour and visual presentation, among other things. Officials from various public and private institutions will be invited to engage with the programming, to experience and thereby gain insight into the province's cultural community.

**Power Talks Johannesburg** (12-15 September) commences with an opening exhibition - a collaboration with Nothing Gets Organised's "Accumulation of Uncertainties" project - which addresses questions of repair, care, and intimacy. Incorporating a discussion on questions of reparative/non-reparative approaches to power interventions, questions on uncertainty, aesthetic conceit, material forces and lexicons of violence, the opening exhibit sets the tone for Power Talks Johannesburg. Successive days navigate attendants through Breezeblock Cafe, Constitution Hill, Point of Order, Windybrow Arts Centre and more, for panel discussions, interactive workshops, a performance piece and more informal convenings placing under the microscope the issues of power broadly and exhaustion and care more specifically.

Rounding off the programme, **Power Talks Cape Town** (23-25 September) takes place in the neighbourhood of Woodstock, in and around Greatmore Studios. The programme straddles heritage month, but also moves beyond it, since the discourse of heritage, on one hand, and contemporary art, on the other, are in perpetual tension in 'liberated' South Africa. Power Talks Cape Town reflects, among other things, on the radical traditions of thought that have shaped soft power in the city: from Peregrino to Cissie Gool, anti colonial intellectuals and artist-built knowledge spaces inside, outside, and sometimes in spite of formalised institutions.

Each iteration of Power Talks is documented in visual and text form; these documentations serve for a further exploration of the presented themes and topics, which will be published on the Power Talks website: [www.goethe.de/PowerTalks](http://www.goethe.de/PowerTalks)

The project will also be documented through an Instagram channel: [@powertalksza](https://www.instagram.com/powertalksza)

For images, please follow this [link](#).

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