



International Council for Arts Deans INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM



Johannesburg, South Africa Sunday, May 30 – Thursday, June 3, 2027

Join colleagues and friends on the campuses of the University of Johannesburg (UJ) and the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), offering ICFAD delegates a rare comparative view of how the creative disciplines operate within major public institutions in the Global South.

Cape Town, South Africa Friday, June 4 – Monday, June 7, 2027

After the intensity of Johannesburg, an optional Cape Town extension offers a complementary chapter in South Africa's cultural story: one shaped by landscape, architecture, colonial and post-colonial memory, wine, design and global artistic exchange.

South Africa occupies a singular place in the global cultural imagination. Few countries have experienced such profound political, social and cultural transformation in living memory, and in few places have the arts played such a decisive role in shaping that transformation. From resistance art under apartheid, to the cultural negotiations of democracy after 1994, to today's experimental engagements with Afrofuturism, digital culture, climate justice, migration and identity, South African artists, designers, architects and performers have helped define how societies imagine and implement change.

South Africa offers something exceptionally rare: a place where the creative disciplines have never been peripheral. Here, the arts have been central to nation-building, critique, healing and future-making. It is a country whose artists, writers, performers and designers are globally recognized not only for aesthetic innovation but for intellectual and ethical leadership. Johannesburg is the beating heart of this story. For those who know and love the city, Johannesburg is the world's best-kept secret, a global metropolis of more than six million people whose extraordinary creative energy and cultural dynamism are far richer than the narratives through which it is sometimes viewed suggests. It is Africa's leading hub for contemporary art, performance, publishing, design and architectural experimentation, home to internationally recognized galleries, studios, universities, archives and cultural entrepreneurs drawn from one of the most socially, linguistically and culturally diverse urban populations in the world. It is also a city of profound contrasts: gold-rush wealth and migrant labor, apartheid spatial planning and democratic reinvention, global capital and radical artistic resistance collide here. For arts deans and cultural leaders, Johannesburg offers a living laboratory for understanding how the creative disciplines engage with history, inequality, social justice, memory, technology and global futures.

Johannesburg is not simply a destination choice. Rather, it is an intellectual and cultural proposition: to encounter the arts in a place where they have mattered, and still matter, intensely.





University Campus Visits

Time with University of Johannesburg's Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture (FADA) will include:

- A scene-setting lecture and faculty dialogue on practice-based research, decolonization and creative economies
- Round-table discussions with academic leaders
- Tours of studios, laboratories and the FADA Gallery
- An evening reception and performance at the University of Johannesburg Arts Centre

Time at Wits University will include:

- The Wits Art Museum (WAM), one of Africa's leading university museums housing one of the most significant collections of African art in the world
- The Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts, a unique research and production facility devoted to artists' books, printing and independent publishing
- The facilities at the Wits School of Arts

Arts Immersion

Time in Joburg will include themed days of Universities and the Creative Economy; Resistance, Memory & Social Transformation; Origins, Landscapes & Future Imaginaries; and The Contemporary City. Among places we will visit are:

- **Joburg Contemporary Art Foundation**, an academic research institute, a platform for museum exhibitions and an innovative technology laboratory
- **Artist Proof Studio**, a community printmaking center
- **Constitution Hill**, part of the Nelson Mandela Legacy Sites and UNESCO's World Heritage Sites
- **The Centre for the Less Good Idea**, an interdisciplinary incubator space for the arts
- **Maropeng**, the official visitor center of the cradle of humankind
- **Nirox**, a sculpture park where art happens in nature
- **Egon Gunther Collection**, the family home was once one of South Africa's most influential galleries
- Art galleries

The optional additional time in Cape Town will include:

- **Cape Town Opera**, one of the leading opera companies in the Global South and an internationally respected incubator of African vocal talent
- **Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa** and **Norval Foundation**, together showcasing the extraordinary diversity of artistic production across the African continent and its diasporas – from painting, photography and sculpture to film, installation and digital practice – and position African artists at the center of global contemporary art discourse
- an art walk through **Stellenbosch**, a historic university town where visits to museums and galleries – including the **Rupert Museum's** collection of European modernism and South African art – will illuminate how collecting, philanthropy and academic culture have shaped national art histories and contemporary practice
- Franschhoek, a town founded by French Huguenot refugees, whose vineyards and architecture sit alongside complex histories of migration, land and labor, where a walking tour may include a visit to the town's **memorials and museums**, where questions of cultural identity, colonialism and belonging are critically engaged

