

APAM – WIRE #1 | Summary

Pan African Creative Exchange (PACE)

Tuesday 10 September 2019 3:00pm

Pan African Creative Exchange (PACE) Founders: Nike Jonah (UK), Ricardo Peach (South Africa), Erwin Maas in Conversation with Naomi Velaphi, APAM

With contributions from Emma Porteus (SITUATE – Salamanca Arts Centre) , Sista Zai Zanda(poet), Paul Gazzola (artist) and Jude Anderson (Punctum)

Nike is currently a Visiting Research Fellow at Central School of Speech and Drama, she's also the lead for the Pop Culture and Social Change initiative at Counterpoints Arts. In 2018, she launched Pan African Creative Exchange (PACE) a platform for artists based in Africa. Between 2008 and 2012, Nike led the Decibel Programme, an Arts England initiative for African, Asian and Caribbean artists in England. Nike is a Trustee of the following; The European Cultural Foundation, The Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, The Royal Africa Society and The Bush Theatre.

Ricardo is the Director of the Vrystaat Kunstefees/Arts Festival/Tsa-Botjhaba, He also developed and is the Co-director of the Programme for Innovation in Artform Development (PIAD) at the University of the Free State, partnering with the Vrystaat Arts Festival He is a Council member of the William Humphreys Art Gallery in Kimberley, Northern Cape. He is also a board member of ASSITEJ South Africa theatre for young audiences. Between 2006-2013 he held a range of roles at Australia Council in the fields of capacity building and experimental practice.

Erwin is a New York based theatermaker, educator and international arts advocate from the Netherlands. He has worked extensively in Australia, Europe, South Africa and USA. Maas is a Creative Director of the International Society for Performing Arts (ISPA), Artistic Associate & Director of the Fellowship Program for the International Performing Arts for Youth (IPAY), and Programming Director for the Off Broadway Origin Theatre Company.

PACE

- The Pan-African Creative Exchange (PACE), is a biannual arts market for African artists, developed for national and international presenters and producers. It is an initiative of the Vrystaat Arts Festival. PACE provides the highest quality, inter-disciplinary arts product, covering theatre, dance, music, visual arts, crafts and more from Africa, to buyers, artists and the general public across the globe.
- PACE developed through conversations between International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (IFACCA), Nike and Ricardo.
- The purpose was always about creating a platform for African artists to share work with international presenters.
- Mobility for African artists is difficult so the market needed to come to Africa and allow for African communities to understand their context as a region and for the international market to better understand the conditions in which African artists make work.
- PACE started in 2015 and was very grass-roots. It was started from the premise - what would a showcase on the African continent look like?

- PACE runs alongside Vrystaat Arts Festival in South Africa at Bloemfontein. The festival is a cross-disciplinary festival which also incorporates a Fringe (Vrynges) model and a Literature Festival. Over 8 days there is a mix of domestic and international work presented in a range of languages. The Arts Festival is a curated program and the Fringe is an open program. Many of the internationals present in the Vrynges context with a strong component of South African work programmed in the Arts Festival. The festival started as an Afrikaaner cultural festival showcasing this areas work.
- The African diaspora voice is important for the continent and thus in 2019 PACE have opened up the opportunity to pitch work for those outside the continent for the 2020 version. PACE feel it is important to support diasporic artists in their contexts too.
- For diaspora artists and visitors, it's important to be an observer.
- In 2019, PACE supported a dramaturgy lab with leading artists from the continent and the UK and Europe. After the lab many artists / works then went on to present in the Fringe Festival. This was known as the PACE + program which looks at a presence in the off years of the market
- The market now accepts works responding to contemporary Africa enabling diasporic artists to present into an African context.
- Over 100 international delegates from the continent, Europe, UK and Australia came to Vrystaat Arts Festival this year. This relies heavily on Nike, Ricardo and Erwin's network and supporters.
- PACE has opened a dialogue and exchange between artists on the continent and the rest of the world.
- PACE curatorial panel is far reaching across the continent (Uganda, Rwanda, South Africa, Senegal, Egypt).
- Developmental programs in place so that visitors can see the work from new perspectives.
- Continuity from PACE between last year and this year is the dramaturgy lab. Next year the plan is to bring in a producing lab.
- Producers lab required for PACE. Not enough producers and how to support the artists and the way work is toured and made. Funding infrastructures are very unstable.
- Still very live political contexts in South Africa that PACE must work in amongst.
- PACE in conversations with Tanzmesse and other international platforms to seed ideas. Influencers are important to bring along to the conversation as well as artists, funders and potential partners.
- Visas are a real barrier for African artists particularly across the continent - there needs to be a touring circuit to build better mobility.
- Most African artists will ask for managers.
- Tech and production specs are very difficult to confirm from African artists due to a lack of access to equipment both financial and physical.

Connections with Australian artists

- A First Nations program within the development of Vrystaat Arts Festival started with conversations between Ricardo and Leanne Buckskin, Deputy Chair at Australia Council from the premise - How can First Nations artists and communities in South Africa learn and connect with First Nations artists in Australia?
- Residency of Tasmanian First Nations dance group Pakana Kanaplila was facilitated through SITUATE/Salamanca Arts Centre the at the 2019 festival was a profound moment of First Nations exchange on the continent opening up the possibilities across the continent for a more open dialogue and acknowledging first peoples.
- First Nations principles and communities on the continent are important
- Australian/Zimbabwean artist, Sista Zai Zanda engaged with a group of poets who have expanded her process and thinking as an artist from the diaspora working in Australia.
- Jude Anderson (Punctum) engaged with the festival through setting up a Transit Lounge and creating a space for a range of conversations about the festival, collaboration and transdisciplinary practice
- Paul Gazzola (Open Space Contemporary Arts) – has been involved in running a lab – Open Lab under the Program for Innovation in Art Form Development (PIAD) program which is an initiative of

the Vrystaat Festival Open Lab stemmed from a similar process lab which ran as a part of the Splendour in the Grass Arts Program. Connections built by Paul over the 4-5 years of the program have informed the focus around socially-engaged and participatory arts practice for the PACE model.

- A creative development for a cross-disciplinary work 2021 between Nigeria and Australia is being facilitated by SITUATE/Salamanca Arts.
- Singapore, Africa and Australia touring circuit is an ambition for SITUATE/Salamanca Arts.
- Australia has evidenced strong connections with Africa and with First Nations works. Connections between North America, Africa and Australia – there may be a role for Australia to connect the US and Africa.

Further information

PACE <http://www.panafricancreativeexchange.co.za/en/home/>

PIAD <https://www.vrystaatkunstefees.co.za/en/home/>

Open Lab https://paulgazzola.org/?page_id=502

Vrystaat Arts Festival <https://www.vrystaatkunstefees.co.za/en/home/>

Situate <https://www.situate.org.au/>

ISPA <https://www.ispa.org/>

International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (IFACCA) <https://ifacca.org/en/>

Salamanca Arts Centre <https://www.salarts.org.au/#>

Punctum <https://www.punctum.com.au/>