



Futures & Beyond Forum Programme Announced

On 16 and 17 March 2021 UJ Arts & Culture, a division of the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture (FADA) at the University of Johannesburg (UJ), in partnership with Andani.Africa will host the inaugural free-to-attend **Futures & Beyond Forum**. The forum aims to contextualise the African creative economy in relation to the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and facilitate an Africa-centric conversation around the transformative role it will play in the sector.

“To develop a successful strategy for the production of literature on 4IR, we must frame our findings through an African lens. There might be global commonalities, but the world’s North-South socio-economic divide remains. Severe unemployment, economic instability, limited investment in technology and inequality continue to hinder local progress. We do not exist in the same context as Europe, and so our way forward must cater for and address our continent and country’s particular idiosyncrasies,” says Head of UJ Arts & Culture, Pieter Jacobs.

The rapid advancement of integrative technology and the power of new platforms has preceded an awareness of the immense change 4IR will bring, yet it was the global outbreak of Covid-19 that threw a stark light on the reality the creative sector faces.

The forum offers no bias for or against technology, but rather seeks a moment to pause and reflect with the intention of growing a body of knowledge that can inform strategy and innovation. The current line-up of speakers reflects a broad spectrum of the creative sector from across the continent.

The programme brings together a range of talks, workshops and demos and also includes the opportunity for attendees to drive the agenda, hosting self-determined ‘world cafe’ sessions. The combination of programming looks to be equal parts informative, challenging, inspiring and collaborative. The programme closes with a collective agenda setting process in which all attendees can contribute to the development of a common agenda for further research, exploration and conversation for the development of 4IR and creativity.



Ghana-based **Emmanuel Gamor** is an ecosystems builder in the creative industries and tech arenas, and host of the Unpacking Africa podcast. He will be speaking about the potential for 4IR to enable greater connectivity, build creative business and enable the growth of the arts more broadly. His experience as Co-Chair of the World Economic Forum Global Shapers advisory council on Knowledge and Impact, and as an ex-Googler and former YouTube country manager informs the knowledge he shares.

South African-based **S'onqoba Vuba** is the Co-Founder and MD of the SME implementation consultancy Perpetu8, COO of 10X-Entrepreneur Accelerator and served as a Commissioner on the South African Presidential Commission on 4IR. S'onqoba's vast experience in the shifts of work and workplace needs in the face of 4IR will see her share her experience and knowledge on the ways in which SMME, Freelance and Gig Economy work will change in the future, and how this will impact the Creative Industries.

We end off the first day with a series of workshops, technology demos, networking sessions and world cafes that are open and flexible sessions for attendees to get involved and directly connect to the debates of the morning. Demos will be presented by the **UJ FADA Fab Lab (South Africa)** and the **Deko Ak N̄iëp Fablab at Kher Thioossane (Senegal)**. The world café sessions are currently open to proposals via social media. Anyone interested in hosting a world café just needs to propose a theme, and a session will be developed for them to host on the day, and for interested members of the public to join.

We begin the second day with South African social innovation expert **Beth Arendse**, who will be speaking about South Africa's plans to take on 4IR, partly through creativity and creative economy. Beth co-founded the SA Creative Industries Incubator which is providing access to accredited skills training and business incubation for creative industries practitioners and entrepreneurs. She is a member of the Presidential Commission on 4IR in South Africa and played a substantial role in highlighting the role of the Creative Economy within the South African Presidential 4IR Commission report. "The economy of the future is at the intersection of creativity and technology... and that future is now," says Arendse.

Wilhelmina Nekoto is a Namibian Data Scientist and Natural Language Processing (NLP) expert. Her interests lie at the intersection of data, society, science and technology, forming a strong interest in how machines are used for data-informed and data-driven decision making. She will be speaking about her experience as a leader on the Masakhane project which is an NLP project for African languages and on which she specifically works towards the preservation of the Khoekhoegowab: #Nūkhoen language.

South African-based **Monica Newton** will be speaking about the learnings from 2020's big change, bringing the National Arts Festival to the virtual stage as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Having undertaken this process at short notice, and having to learn very much on the go, the Chief Executive Officer of the Grahamstown Foundation and National Arts Festival is well placed to speak to the changes, skills and innovations coming to the creative sector and how it might become more change ready.

Uganda-based, **Neema Iyer**, is an artist, technologist and founder and director of Pollicy, a civic technology organisation that intersects the space of technology and society. As an artist herself



she will speak to the roles artists can play in contributing to the change that 4IR brings to the world as a whole. She will speak to the work of Policy and the opportunities, gaps and challenges for creative design practice to impact inclusive digital futures.

Sabelo Mhlambi is a Human Rights Fellow at Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at Harvard University and his work centres the place of Africa in reimagining our digital futures, and particularly the ways in which Artificial Intelligence develops. Sabelo will speak about the potential Africa plays in shifting the ethics debate for 4IR.

Each of these speakers will lay the groundwork for discussion, debate and further conversation that will mitigate uncertainty and open the door that allows the African and South African creative industries to boldly step forward into a technologically driven future.

“I think that Africa may very well skip some of those revolutions that other parts of the world have gone through and leap-frog itself into the future. Through conversations like the ones we’ll be having at the forum, we’ll be able to reflect collectively and think about how we start to position Africa in a slightly different way to the rest of the world,” says Lonwabo Mavuso, Director of Andani.Africa.

Futures & Beyond: Creativity & 4IR Forum is a free-to-attend virtual event hosted live from the UJ Arts Centre in Johannesburg. For more information and to register to attend [CLICK HERE](#)

About UJ Arts & Culture

UJ Arts & Culture, a division of the Faculty of Art, Design & Architecture (FADA), produces and presents world-class student and professional arts programmes aligned to the UJ vision of an international university of choice, anchored in Africa, dynamically shaping the future. A robust range of arts platforms are offered on all four UJ campuses for students, staff, alumni and the general public to experience and engage with emerging and established Pan-African and international artists drawn from the full spectrum of the arts.

In addition to UJ Arts & Culture, FADA (www.uj.ac.za/fada) offers programmes in eight creative disciplines, in Art, Design and Architecture, as well as playing home to the NRF SARChI Chair in South African Art & Visual Culture, and the Visual Identities in Art & Design Research Centre. The Faculty has a strong focus on sustainability and relevance, and engages actively with the dynamism, creativity and diversity of Johannesburg in imagining new approaches to art and design education.

About Andani.Africa

Andani.Africa is a research, insights, and strategic advisory company specialising in the creative and cultural industries. It was formed in 2016 out of a need to strengthen research approaches that address knowledge-gaps in the understanding of Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) in Africa. We do this by creating and co-creating valuable insights through research, strategic advisory and content engagement. Andani.Africa’s purpose is premised on the belief that in order to grow CCIs in Africa, sophisticated data collection and analysis need to be developed to navigate the complexities and intricacies that underpin the CCIs in Africa.



Andani.Africa works within the intersection of tradition and culture that we like to call Data Humanism: African forms of storytelling that share insights and knowledge in the tradition of the oral histories of our forebears, and the technological advances afforded us by new digital forms of data analysis and visualisation, harnessing AI for African creative industries knowledge production.

