

Dear Us, Matric 2020 | A WhatsApp status driven exhibition platform

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Dear Us, Matric 2020 speaks to the lives of 5 South African teenagers living through a global pandemic at what should be the pinnacle of their schooling career. It centralises a moment shared by many, matriculation, while allowing the audience to identify and empathise with individual stories from the matric 2020 class.

This exhibition utilises the ubiquitous social media app WhatsApp as an exhibition platform through the WhatsApp status function. The exhibition will be accessed through a cell phone number which the audience can interact with. The status update, whose lifespan is 24 hours, provides us with an ever evolving, rapidly responsive narrative structure as we are invited to witness and respond to their personal statements.

These statements will be collaborative creations by the students and three visual and digital artists; Mmakhotso Lamola, Kamogelo Tselane, and Barry Christianson. Lamola is an artist and spatial practitioner based in Cape Town. Her work focuses on investigations into the in-between spaces of disciplines, and on notions of emotional landscapes and urban realities. It is this awareness of the interplay between structure and lived experience that makes Lamola a dynamic collaborator for the matric students and this project. Christianson is a documentary photographer and photojournalist whose images allow for a complex understanding of his subjects that challenge our preconceptions. Christianson together with the matric students will present images of their world as they see it. Tselane is a digital artist and game designer currently completing her honours degree at the University of Witwatersrand. As a student Tselane holds an interesting position as a representation of a possible future for the 5 featured matric students. Tselane's background in animation and game design allows for an exploration of alternate realities and possibilities.

WhatsApp will also be used as a site for multiple activations that engages and brings in the voices of the matric class of 2020 beyond the 5 featured in the exhibition. This will include voice and textual prompts for the audience to respond to, and at least one live event hosted on the platform.

I believe in art as a social practice that must allow spaces that collapses the distinctions between artist and the spectator/ audience. *Dear Us, Matric 2020* is very much a collaborative work that prioritises accessibility. WhatsApp is the most widely used and downloaded app on the continent and with this exhibition I will be exploring the potentialities of using a familiar low-tech platform to explore digital possibilities.

About the curator

Faye Kabali-Kagwa



Faye Kabali-Kagwa work as an arts coordinator, critic, culture writer, and a Salzburg Global Seminar Young Cultural Innovators' fellow. She is an interdisciplinary practitioner with a strong focus on public engagement, identity, and accessibility with a growing interest in curation and producing.

Faye is the producer of [The Shopping Dead](#), a fast-paced dramedy WhatsApp live performance that was coproduced by the National Arts Festival and debuted on the main curated programme at the virtual National Arts Festival 2020. Faye is passionate about cultural criticism, how art engages with its audiences, and creating strategies for artist and audience to cocreate work. One such project is Film Me In, a public art intervention that screened a curated list of five South African short films and then invited the audience to dub the films live. This project was featured at Infecting the City, and the shnit short film festival in 2019.

Working as an arts and culture writer she has had her work published in the Mail & Guardian, New Frame, Culture Review, and the BASA website. She is a trusted cultural observer and critic and have served on the judging panel for the Cape Town Fringe Festival 2016 & 2017, and the shnit selection panel for South African short films 2019.

Faye holds an honours degree in Sociology, and a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology, and the Dramatic Arts from Rhodes University.