

# Art and business become one at the second BASA Arts in Business Symposium

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How can the arts innovate business? That was the question that participants and speakers grappled with at the second BASA Arts in Business Symposium, supported by *Business Day*, held in Johannesburg last week.



UK author, actor and teacher, Richard Hahlo was joined by Group Chief Marketing Officer at Hollard, Heidi Brauer as well as DNA Brand Architects founder, Sylvester Chauke in ensuring delegates left GIBS inspired, energised and full of new thoughts about the relationship between the arts and business in South Africa.

In her opening address, Business and Arts South Africa CEO Michelle Constant spoke about the shared value that the relationship brings.

"At the very core of shared value is the idea of a connected society - and that means we need to find ways of getting arts off the fringe and into the warp and weft of society," she told the audience of business representatives.

This idea of the arts being woven into all aspects of society, including business, was picked up by key speaker Richard Hahlo - founder and co-director of Dramatic Resources, a specialist training organisation that applies techniques from the theatre to encourage business leaders to communicate with greater impact and courage.

Minutes into his interactive seminar, *Winning Hearts & Minds*, Hahlo had everyone on their feet - and by the end of the seminar, few needed convincing about the value of using the arts in business to help bring about culture change.

Hahlo, an experienced actor who was an education and training associate at the UK's National Theatre for nearly 25 years, drew parallels between a theatrical performance and the world of work.

"The difference is that actors perform for only a certain time each night - the last play I was in was one hour and forty minutes, with an interval," Hahlo said, to much laughter. "But in the world of work, you are never off stage which is why techniques of the theatre can help you manage that 'on-stage' work energy."

Key to this, Hahlo believes, is the relationship between the brain and instinct. "In business you traditionally use your brain, and in acting, your instinct but being able to successfully engage audiences in business requires that you need that brain and instinct in balance."

Prior to Hahlo's seminar, Brauer had related the way that Hollard uses a layering of the arts in many aspects of its business - starting with visual artworks at Villa Arcadia, located at its Johannesburg head office, and ending with the ways the financial company used art as part of a recent event with the JPO.

Chauke's contribution was enlivening, underlining the "stand against bland" philosophy that drives DNA Brand Architect's work for some of the country's biggest brands.



"You don't need to choose between art and business - it can be one thing," Chauke said.

"Art allows us to bring a sense of magic to our work, to explore new ideas and to trust and listen to other opinions and ideas because in art there is never just one solution. Art allows us to move in a direction that's opposite to the crowd and, mostly, art allows us to be brave.

## About BASA (NPC):

Business and Arts South Africa (NPC) is an internationally recognised South African development agency with a suite of integrated programmes. Business and Arts South Africa (NPC) encourages mutually beneficial partnerships between business and the arts, contributing to corporate success and securing the future development of the arts industry in South Africa. Business and Arts South Africa (NPC) was founded in 1997 as a joint initiative of the Department of Arts and Culture and the business sector as a public/private partnership. Business and Arts South Africa (NPC) is proud to be celebrating 20 years of freedom.

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