

NEW 'BEACON OF HOPE' LAUNCHED ON SIGNAL HILL

Ultimate symbol of apartheid transformed into a dramatic sculpture inviting South Africans and visitors to Cape Town to share their hope for the future of the country

Twenty years into a new democracy and almost a year since the passing of global icon Nelson Mandela, Capetonians and visitors to the city are being encouraged to express their hope for the country's future with the unveiling of a dramatic sculpture, which will stand as a reminder of South Africa's greatest story and a shining symbol of hope for the future.

The 24-metre high sun-shaped sculpture, "SunStar", was unveiled this evening on Signal Hill in Cape Town. The sculpture was conceptualised and designed by Cape Town artist and founder of the Robben Island Art Company and Trust (RIACT), Christopher Swift, and is also a showcase project for Cape Town: Design Capital of the World 2014.

The SunStar is a temporary art installation and will stand on top of Cape Town's Signal Hill. It was constructed in large part from the steel from the original fence that once surrounded Robben Island. Sun International, sponsors of the project, said that this critical component of the sculpture showed how the ultimate symbol of Apartheid has been transformed into an inspiring piece of art that stands as an invitation to the world to share their hope for the future of South Africa.

Sun International Chief Marketing and Strategy Officer Rob Collins says: *"the SunStar is an emblematic of and a visual reminder to South Africans of how far the country has come since our first democratic elections, but also of the journey yet to come. The SunStar project is closely aligned to our commitment to community, environment and sustainability and we are very pleased to be associated with its symbolism and message."*

The site for the SunStar sculpture was chosen for its impressive views over the city and to enable locals and tourists easy access.

Michael Farr, Sun International's Group General Manager: Brand and Communications, says *"Signal Hill has a shared history amongst all Capetonians and is easily accessible by road just a few minutes outside of the City Centre, with uninterrupted views of Robben Island, Table Mountain, Lion's Head, Devil's Peak and the city. Being able to stand beneath the sculpture with spectacular views of both the City of Cape Town and Robben Island in the distance will give people a powerful incentive for contemplation, reflection and conversation about our future."*

Swift's design importantly takes the environment and sustainability into account too. The sculpture features a solar powered light system made up of low-power LED strip-lighting and flood light support which will light up the sculpture at night. In daylight and after dark, the sculpture is clearly visible from the air and visitors flying into Cape Town will be treated to aerial views of the installation as they come in to land.

The sculpture has been approved by SanParks, the Robben Island Museum, the City Of Cape Town, and the Department of Public Works.

The installation of the sculpture has been in itself a remarkable project. Following comprehensive environmental and geotechnical assessments, the SunStar has been installed using an innovative ground anchorage system rather than conventional concrete foundation bases. This system is specifically designed for use in ecologically sensitive areas or areas where excavation is not possible, and requires no earth works or concrete pouring and allows the soil at the base to remain unsealed. It also means the structure can be easily removed after the permit period.

The project is also likely to have a positive impact for tourism in Cape Town with the SunStar being an added draw-card to Signal Hill for local and international tourists alike. Signal Hill is already a well-visited spot by tourists, but the addition of the SunStar will add a new dimension to something many have experienced previously.

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NOTE TO EDITORS

About the Artist:

SunStar has been created and built by Cape Town-based artist, Christopher Swift – founder of the Robben Island Art Company and Trust. The installation, which will be illuminated, is highly sustainable because of its use of LED lights. Swift has previously won Spier Contemporary Arts Awards and the Michaelis Award.

About the Structure:

The structure is in the form of an eight-point star. The wiring from the Robben Island fence will fill the internal areas of the sphere, giving this historic material an artistic casing, and will be surrounded by a metal frame depicting the sun's rays, to form the eight-pointed star. The sphere will be lit at night using solar-powered LED lighting, repurposed from other art installations. The sphere in the centre of the sculpture has a radius of 6.4m and the sculpture is supported by scaffolding that blends with the colour of the sculpture.

The project involves the construction of a Star out of aluminium trusses which have been founded using a ground anchorage system rather than conventional concrete foundation bases (conventional concrete foundations would have a negative environment impact on the site).

About the Robben Island Art Company & Trust:

The Robben Island Art Company and Trust (RIACT) was established by Christopher Swift who received permission to remove the discarded Robben Island Prison fence - the original fence that surrounded the prison while former President Nelson Mandela was held there - and store it for use in art projects. RIACT is now custodian for the fence materials and creates artefacts from it for sale.

Creating artefacts from the Robben Island fence does not only generate jobs and impart skills to disadvantaged South Africans, it also means that the original fencing from the Robben Island prison is helping to create jobs in a new South Africa, rather than rusting away in a landfill.

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