



# SABC ART

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## Sounding the City: Kagiso 'Pat' Mautloa at UJ Art Gallery



Kagiso 'Pat' MAUTLOA (1952-)  
*Room*  
1995  
oil on canvas

The city in all its varied textures and tempos is the creative lifeblood of artist Kagiso 'Pat' Mautloa, whose current solo *Urban Soundscapes: Crafting Spaces of Belonging* at the UJ Art Gallery has been extended until the end of October. Johannesburg asserts itself as both the content and the context of Mautloa's textured multi-media assemblages.

Curated by Thabo Sheshoka, this current solo is inspired by the socio-political currents as well as the textures, beats and rhythms that run through everyday urban life. '*Urban Soundscapes* explores how individuals create a sense of identity and belonging within the confines of unequal power relations,' says Sheshoka. 'The curatorial process was centred around unpacking notions of identity, belonging and subjugation within urban spaces.'

Mautloa works in painting, drawing, sculpture and printmaking, frequently building found objects and discarded scraps salvaged from the city streets into his artworks, so that their surfaces evoke the industrial textures and gritty materiality of urban life.

As an emeritus presence at one of the city's most longstanding and legendary studio spaces, The Bag Factory Artists' Studios in Fordsburg, Mautloa is immersed in the urban life of downtown Johannesburg, which he studies up-close, incorporating physical remnants and shards of the city itself into his distinctive, richly coloured artworks. In this way, he infuses this urban-industrial detritus with an existential load that alludes to the tough, makeshift aspect of so many lives in the African metropolis.

The SABC Art Collection houses no less than four artworks by Mautloa: *Shackscape* (1997); *Room* (1998); *Portrait of a Child* (1999) and *Weekend* (2008). The varied styles and modes of composition of these works convey a sense of the experimental spirit that feeds Mautloa's practice, which spans figuration and abstraction, often featuring built surfaces that incorporate found objects, blurring the line between painting and sculpture. There is a moody tenor that runs across these different works, which are tethered together by a palette of metallic, earthy, elemental tones and pigments that allude to a context of poverty.



Kagiso 'Pat' MAUTLOA (1952-)  
*Shackscape*  
1997  
mixed media  
78 x 100cm

While *Weekend* (2008) offers the viewer an illuminated glimpse of a city street through the window of a fundamentally furnished interior, *Shackscape* (1997) is an abstract work that cites the materiality of informal settlements, with dwellings knocked together from sheets of salvaged metal.

*Room* (1998) offers a glimpse of another low-rent, urban interior. In this case, it is as if the bed is on fire, calling to mind the shack fires that frequently rage through South Africa's informal settlements taking lives and homes in their wake. Even the door frame appears to be ablaze. It is also possible that the fire in this painting is less of a documentary rendition of an actual fire in a room than a visualisation of a state of mind. Fiercely solitary in mood, this depopulated scene conveys a sense of the states of heated madness one can descend into after many long hours of isolation. The dark abyss that can be glimpsed through the doorway has a hellish glint about it. It is not a doorway you'd walk through lightly. *Portrait of a Child* (1999) resonates with similar psychological depth. This is not a shiny, happy portrait of a child at play. Rather, this vigorously sketched, distorted visage reminds us that childhood can also be tainted with intense struggle. — Alexandra Dodd

**Kagiso Mautloa's solo exhibition *Urban Soundscapes: Crafting Spaces of Belonging* runs at UJ Gallery until the end of October.**



Kagiso 'Pat' MAUTLOA (1952-)  
*Weekend*  
2008  
mixed media and found objects on canvas  
144 x 55cm



Kagiso 'Pat' MAUTLOA (1952-)  
*Portrait of a Child*  
1999  
pastel on paper

## BIOGRAPHY

Kagiso Patrick Mautloa was born in 1952 in Ventersdorp, in what was then the Western Transvaal. His family moved to Soweto in 1954. He studied art at the Mofolo Art Centre in Soweto under the guidance of Dan Rakgoate, and at Rorke's Drift Art and Craft Centre in KwaZulu Natal. Working alongside David Koloane, Bill Ainslie, and other South African artists, he was a co-founder of the Thupelo Workshops in 1985; which would later become part of the International Triangle Network. Mautloa also taught at FUBA (Federated Union of Black Artists) and played an instrumental role in the Thupelo Gallery. In 1992, he left his job in the graphic design studio at the SABC to become a full-time artist. He is a founding member of the Fordsburg Artists' Studio and his studio is still part of what is now called the Bag Factory Artists' Studios. In 2019, he was honoured with the Helgaard Steyn Award for Painting. Mautloa has participated in numerous solo and group exhibitions and his work is represented in several important public collections in South Africa.

### **Contact:**

**Koulla Xinisteris**

**Curator**

koulla.xinisteris@gmail.com  
kxarts@sabc.co.za  
082 574 5568