



INSIDE OUT CENTRE FOR THE ARTS

**PRESS RELEASE
(DATE)**

Roger Ballen's Inside Out Centre for the Arts launches with inaugural exhibition *End of the Game*

The Inside Out Centre for the Arts will open in Johannesburg, South Africa, on Tuesday 28 March 2023 with an exhibition that highlights the ecological crisis of the African continent.

Founded by internationally renowned artist-photographer Roger Ballen, the Inside Out Centre is set to become a significant landmark on the bustling Jan Smuts Avenue. Together with the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Museum and the Joburg Contemporary Art Foundation, it forms part of a trio of cultural centres in the central suburb of Forest Town. This area is situated close to the historical landmark of Constitutional Hill and the gallery-dense, restaurant-rich area of Rosebank.

The Inside Out Centre for the Arts is an art exhibition space and educational centre.

It will present shows that explore issues related to the African continent from a distinctively aesthetic and psychological perspective. The Centre will also facilitate a dynamic programme of educational talks, panel discussions, masterclasses and presentations that reflect on the current exhibition and on topics relevant to arts and culture.

The opening of the Inside Out Centre for the Arts has been years in the making. The Roger Ballen Foundation, established in 2007 and renamed the Inside Out Trust Foundation, is dedicated to the advancement of education through the arts in South Africa. The Foundation has sponsored exhibitions in Johannesburg of notable international artists and brought guest lecturers to students in the city. After some time, Ballen felt that the Foundation needed a home so that shows and programmes could run on an ongoing basis. In January 2018, he finally found a property in an ideal location to bring his project to fruition. The Inside Out Centre was built on this piece of land.

The name 'Inside Out' reflects the idea that the Centre's exhibitions will encourage introspection, and the design of the building itself is inspired by the same objective. Raw concrete is used on the interior and exterior surfaces of the building, the latter of which conceals the entrance that opens into a breath-taking, double-volume, naturally lit space.

"I sometimes think that the building looks like it has been turned 'inside out'," comments Ballen, who worked closely with local architect Joe van Rooyen of JVR Architects to create a landmark building with presence and personality.

The inaugural show, *End of the Game*, grapples with the decimation of wildlife in Africa through both an historical and artistic lens.

Using documentary photographs, artefacts and film clips along with Ballen's photographs and installations, the exhibition attempts to record and highlight the historical significance and context of the 'Golden Age' of African hunting expeditions by colonialists and powerful Western figureheads – such as Churchill, Theodore Roosevelt, King Edward VIII and Hemingway – which took place from the mid 1800s onwards. In true Ballenesque form, the artist's approach delves into the deeper psychological relationship that man has to the natural world.

The exhibition chronicles the practice of unrestrained hunting which has resulted in the ecological devastation we face today. Poaching remains a significant threat to many African species, including elephants, rhinos and big cats.

According to the World Wildlife Fund, in recent years, an estimated 20 000 elephants have been killed every year for their ivory, and 1 000 rhinos were killed in South Africa alone in 2020.

Countries such as South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Tanzania continue to attract international trophy hunters despite concerns about animal welfare, sustainability and ethical issues associated with this practice. The illegal trade of wildlife continues.

"This exhibition," says Ballen, "encourages vital discussions about our treatment of animals, wildlife management, responsible tourism and environmental stewardship in our current world."

Since the beginning of Ballen's artistic career, the animal has been an important symbol in his work. The artworks in *End of the Game* are taken from various series from the mid-80s onwards, and comprise the mediums of photography, installation, painting and drawing.

Portraits of gunmen have been selected from one of Ballen's early photographic series, taken in the South African countryside and entitled *Platteland: Images from Rural South Africa* (1994). Some years after this series, Ballen began photographing on the outskirts of Johannesburg. The disappearance of the human subject, the emergence of the animal in various forms, and the presence of linear figures and drawings characterise his later series, most of which were published as books.

These series, namely *Outland* (2001), *Shadow Chamber* (2005), *Boarding House* (2009), *Asylum of the Birds* (2014) and *Roger's Rats* (2017), demonstrate Ballen's characteristic style, which can be described as theatrical, dark, dreamlike and absurd.

Light boxes made from the *Theatre of Apparitions* (2016) images, shown at the Venice Biennale in 2022, also appear. For this series, Roger Ballen and Marguerite Rossouw painted and drew

ghost-like figures on the windows of a Johannesburg warehouse and photographed these creations.

The exhibition includes some of the artist's latest coloured photographs, dating from 2017 onwards, marking his transition into colour after 50 years of working exclusively in black-and-white.

Over the last decade, Ballen has been creating installations to accompany his photographs in various exhibitions. Most of these installations are made from found objects collected by the artist over the last 40 years. In this exhibition, the photographs and the three-dimensional artworks enhance the experience of what is now referred to as the distinctive style of the Ballenesque.

Together, these pieces from Ballen's oeuvre probe the complex relationship between human and animal through the artist's aesthetic. In most cases, this relationship is adversarial, exploitative and destructive, and is reflective of a dystopian world in ecological crisis.

"A central challenge in my career has been to locate the animal in the human being and the human being in the animal," says Ballen, "and the rooms that I photograph represent the conflictual relationship between civilisation and nature, where opposites attract and break apart in a world built not on logic, but on irrationality. Delirium, mirage, dreams and nightmares coexist and cannot be categorised as light or dark."

Ends

Notes to the Editor

Exhibition viewing is by appointment only. Bookings can be made on the Inside Out Centre for the Arts website.

Tickets cost R150 for adults and R100 for students. This price includes a copy of the catalogue for the inaugural exhibition, *End of the Game*.

For further information visit www.insideoutcentreforthearts.com

Instagram: @insideoutcentre

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About the Inside Out Centre for the Arts

The Inside Out Centre for the Arts is a not-for-profit Foundation established in 2008 by internationally renowned artist-photographer Roger Ballen. Its aim is to make a meaningful contribution to the cultural arena of Johannesburg and to the African continent at large.

As an art exhibition space, the Inside Out Centre presents shows that explore issues related to the African continent from a distinctively aesthetic and psychological perspective. In addition, as an educational centre, it facilitates a dynamic programme of educational talks, panel discussions, masterclasses and presentations that reflect on the current exhibition and topics relevant to the arts.