

27 April 2012  
Cape Town  
South Africa

# TABLE MOUNTAIN CONFIDENTIAL

*An exclusive interview*



by Lucie Demoyencourt

In application for Cergy 2012 Paris Ateliers: *A visual perspective on cities,  
Revealing and staging the metropolitan landscape, Landscape as a metropolitan actor*

# Introduction / Concept



**“Bitter Fruit”** Painting by Julia Teale in 1994, oil on canvas.

*The juxtaposition of two views of Table Mountain points to political polarization within the metropolitan area of Cape Town. In the painting, we see a citizen located in the Cape Flats Fringe, she is not looking at her view of Table Mountain (unpopular view), but rather the famous old city centre view. This illustrates the dream / desire of people living on the Cape Flats to move closer to the old city centre. This is the problem I am addressing in this interview.*

It might seem strange or absurd to interview a mountain, but Table Mountain in Cape Town South Africa is no ordinary mountain. It has witnessed my city’s development, from beginning to present. It is our most famous metropolitan actor, and an ever present backdrop. Table Mountain has a defined amphitheatre of the city centre further reinforcing the concept of the mountain being on the stage, with the population and buildings as the audience, occupying different seats in the theatre. Everyday, Table Mountain performs breathtaking scenes in dramatic lights of the sunrise and sunsets, rain or cloud, lifting our spirits, defining our landscape and framing our lives.

I have chosen a casual magazine interview style for this document, not to dumb the message down, but to really think about an alternative position, to get into the head of our landscape actors that are in my view the most precious place-making elements of any city. Table Mountain is able to talk directly to his audience, making them aware of the extent to which he has directed the building of the city, as well as his future plans for a more inclusive Cape Town.

Having worked extensively in the film industry in Cape Town and abroad, being obsessed with cities, heritage and how people live, as well as currently working as a professional artist and architect, this interdisciplinary project has been a pleasure to write and illustrate. Please consider me a serious candidate for the 2012 Paris Atelier; this year’s topic Revealing and Staging the Metropolitan Landscape is what I am passionate about!

I hope that you enjoy reading this.

*Lucie Demoyencourt*

# Methodology

**1.**

**2.**

## In this interview:

- In this Interview, Table Mountain is a famous actor being interviewed on his illustrious career.
- Cape Town city is comprised of theatres for viewing the mountain., theatre 1 and 2 as indicated on the map
- We witness a behind the scenes view of the actors, audience and theatre's growth and development. Images come in the form of extracts from the various shows, with accompanying diagrams of seating arrangements for the production, and details of a typical audience seat for that production.
- Each theatre comprises of a changing array of seating from the stalls (good seats) to the and the gods (terrible seats). Each seat represents a city block or building. The seating plan diagrams are coloured so as to differentiate between the stalls and the gods, The stalls are marked in black, whilst the gods are marked in orange. The detailed illustrations of the seats are similarly marked in either grey for a seat in the stalls, and orange, for a seat in the gods.
- Two main theatres are identified;
  - 1** the Old City Theatre (this theatre opened in early 1650's, it is the current city centre) In the Old City Theatre, one can view Table Mountain from the famous postcard view, where the 'table' likenesses of the mountain are obvious.
  - 2** the Cape Flats Fringe (This theatre opened in the 1940's. this sits on the periphery of the city centre). From the Cape Flats Fringe, one experiences an unpopular view of the mountain
- We witness the 'renovations' (development of the city) of these theatres through the 6 most memorable performances of Table Mountain as we go through the ages. As the Cape Flats Fringe is a relatively new theatre, we look at the conditions which brought this theatre into existence, as well as focus on placemaking options for improving this particular theatre.
- Table Mountain does not interfere with politics and racial issues, his main concern is accomodating large audiences to his performances

# Cape Town Citizen

27 April 2012



*The famous view of Table Mountain, in full sunset performance, as seen from Bloubaai Strand.*

## *PROFILE:*

### **Table Mountain (Mountain / Actor)**

Table Mountain has enjoyed a long and successful career as an actor, having starred in many shows from the early days of “Hoerikwaggo”, to “Tafelberg”, “the silent witness of Apartheid”, and we look forward to the forthcoming blockbuster “I-Inclusive I-Future”. Table Mountain has received many accolades most importantly being voted one of the Seven Wonders of the World award for outstanding achievement in the fields of natural beauty and National icon.

In the following interview, Cape Town Citizen Magazine reveals a new side of Table Mountain, away from the glamour and the spotlights. We will look at what lies behind this famous and handsome face, revealing his true feelings towards his life, position in society from past to present as well as his upcoming projects.

CITIZEN: *Firstly, Table Mountain, is that a stage name?*

TM: (laughs) Yes it is! my first name was Hoerikwaggo meaning “Mountain of the Sea”. It’s a KhoiKhoi name, a poetic people really. In 1503, Antonio De Saldanha coined the name I am famous for today when he called me “Taboa do Capo” translated as Table Mountain. I decided to stick to this name as it is easier to remember and spell than Hoerikwaggo. I was younger then, and terribly concerned about popularity. (Rolls eyes).

CITIZEN: *Today you are an international celebrity, likened as the George Clooney of mountains, you are also the only natural site on the planet to have a constellation of stars named after you; “Mensa”, meaning table. We simply cannot get enough of you and today we get to talk to you about a cause that is close to your heart; the upgrading of the Cape Flats Fringe*

TM: Thank you! It’s great to be here. Ja you know, I love the Old City Theatre – who doesn’t? But quite honestly, while it’s been chugging on happily, The Fringe has been developing at full bloody tilt since the 50’s. It hosts my largest audience; it needs infrastructure. It’s bloody shameful that a turnout of 3.9 million spectators doesn’t have the same resources as the 60 000 seats in the Old City Theatre.

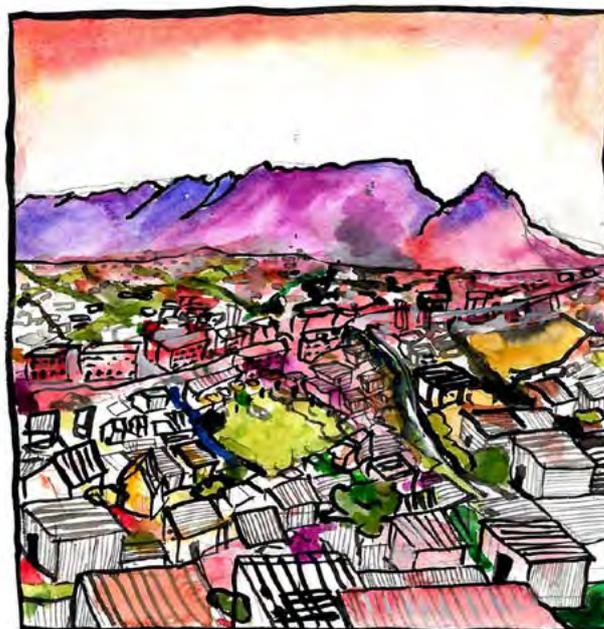
CITIZEN: *So why has it taken you so long to invest in performances for the Cape Flats Fringe audience? We are now in 2012...*

TM: Great question! I initially signed an incredibly restrictive contract with my then production company,

Apartheid. I could only perform for the Old City Theatre, severing that contract in 1994., I’ve been working flat out to make up for lost time. I was able to perform overseas to international audiences and involved in a number of key initiatives such as the 2010 World Cup, the World Design Capital Bid 2014 (which we won) as well as performing for increasing number of tourist visitors we’ve had at the Old City Theatre

CITIZEN: *What will be this new image of yours?*

TM: I am working on it, but here is a sneak peak:



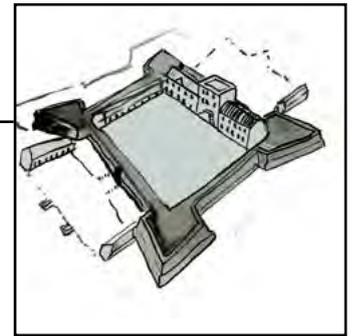


*Extract from the 1654 Hoerikwaggo show, performed for the Old City Theatre*

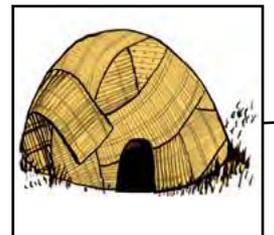


*Typical seating plan,  
Black : Stalls  
Orange : the Gods*

**1654**



*Typical seat in the stalls*



*Typical seat in the gods*

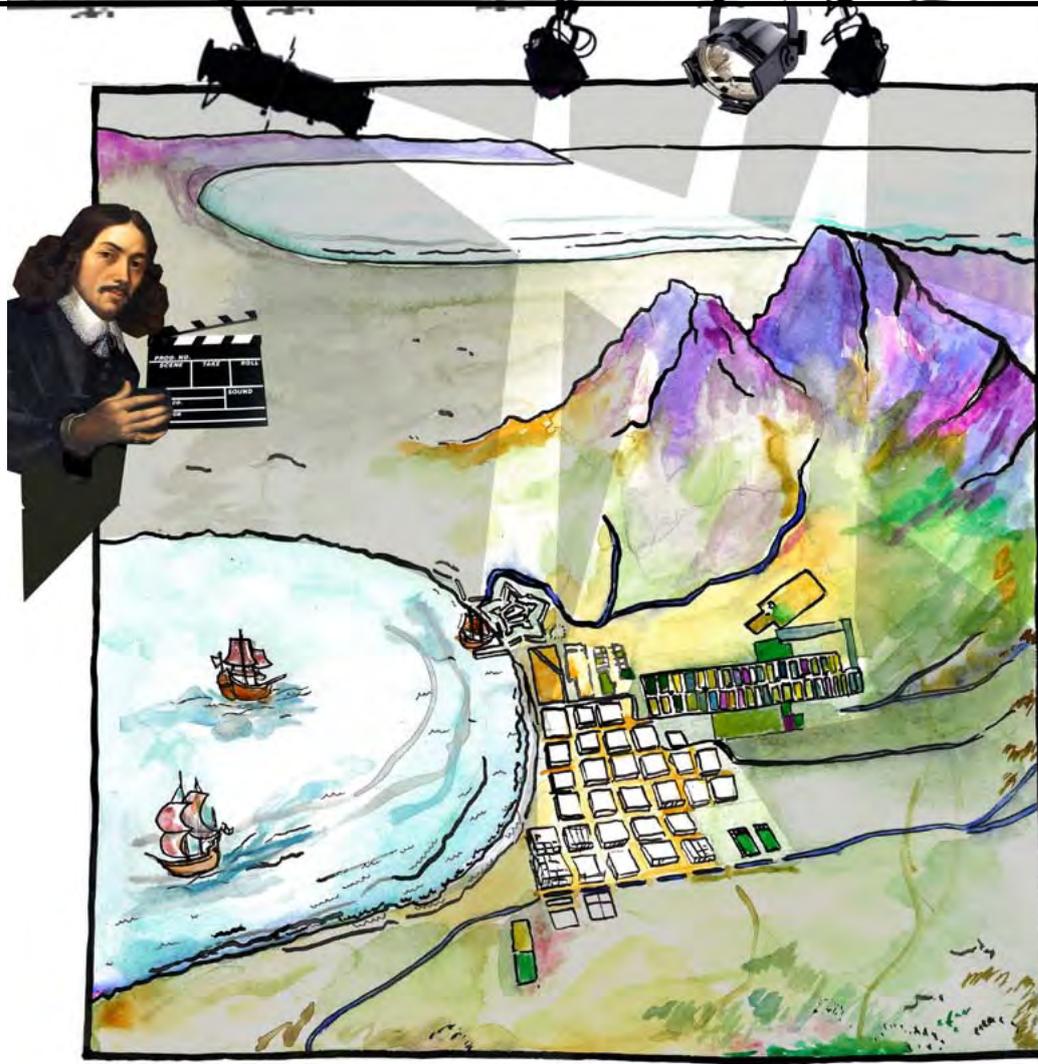
**CITIZEN:** *Each show you have acted in contributes to our understanding of ever-changing socio-political relations of the Cape audience. Could you tell us a bit about the first show you ever acted in?*

**TM:** Hoerikwaggo (1654) was my first acting job. I was really wild in those days and I guess I fell into it by chance after an ambitious director from the Dutch East India production company, called Jan Van Riebeeck, gave me a large role in his low budget show. I performed the role of a provider; generally overlooking the landscape for cattle, food, hunting, gathering and a bit of shelter.

Back then our audience was tiny. We initially drew a local following from the San (Bushmen) who were joined later by the KhoiKhoi group. Unfortunately they weren't the sort of audience Van Riebeeck had anticipated and that

resulted in a good few brawls in the Old City Theatre, which was extremely unfortunate.

By the end of the 17th century, with a bit of governmental promotion that expanded our international fan base, we had increased the Cape audience to four distinct markets: the KhoiKhoi, VOC employees, the freeburghers, and lastly the slaves, whom I believe were imported from across the African as well as Asian continents. Each group settled into different seats of the Old City Theatre with the VOC officials favouring the stalls, whilst the slaves were generally found in the gods.



Extract from the 1767 *Tafelberg* show, performed for the Old City Theatre

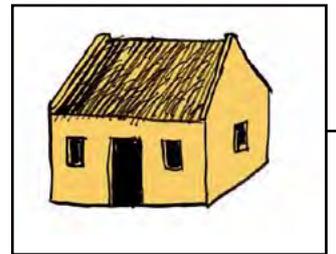


Typical seating plan,  
Black : Stalls  
Orange : the Gods

**1767**



Typical seat in the stalls



Typical seat in the gods

**CITIZEN:** Your second show, 'Tafelberg', came out in 1767, we see you get more involved in your performance, gaining maturity as an actor. The sets were more elaborate and it was generally a much more international film, receiving acclaim from Holland in particular.

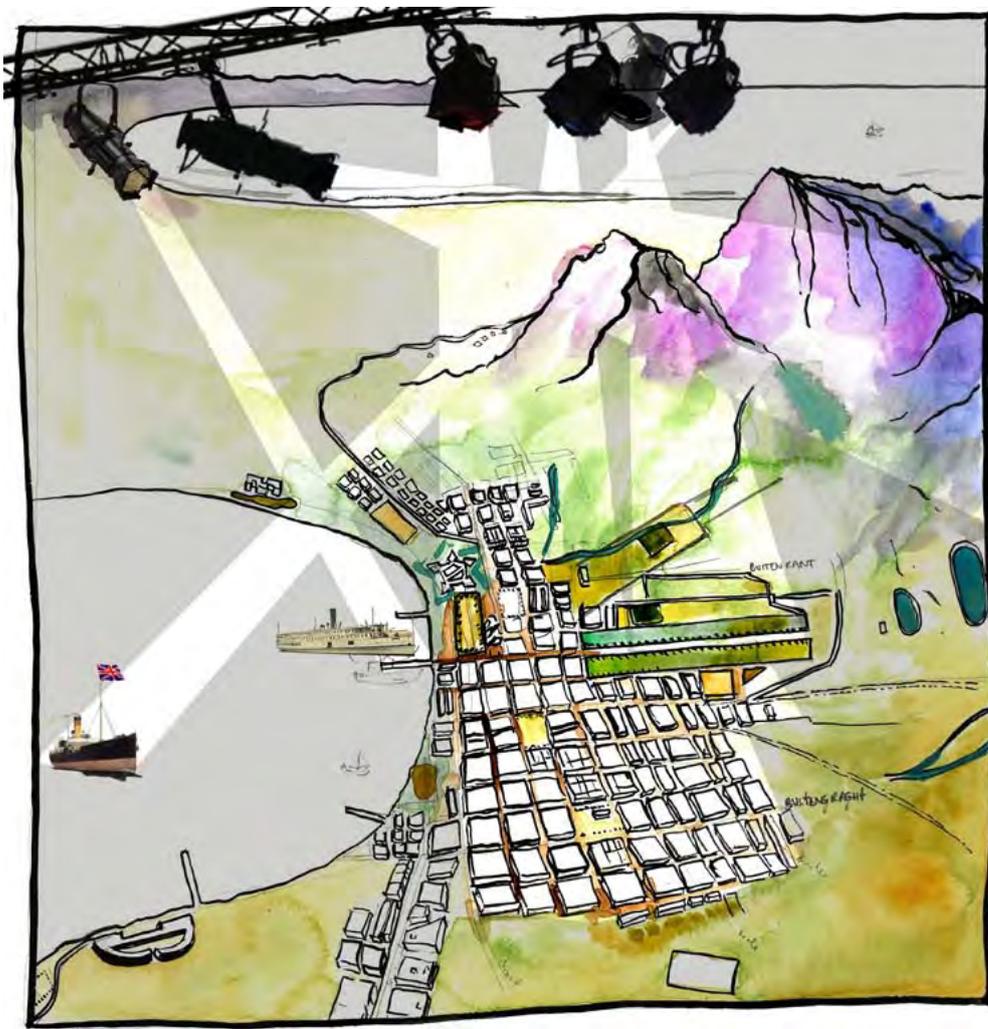
**TM:** Yes Tafelberg was a much more international show; It is the story of a tiny station with a castle and a garden that became a town.

**CITIZEN:** What role did you play in this show?

**TM:** I was pretty relieved to find myself in a more organized show; my role was again to be a provider, but also to be a landmark beacon for seamen sailing in and out of the harbour. It was also during Tafelberg that I became involved in making structural production decisions for the Old City Theatre, namely directing the construction of buildings along and perpendicular to my rivers. I

also established the urban boundaries of Buitenkant, Buitensingel and Buitengracht Streets. Remarkably, for the next 100 years of performing, these lines were respected. Most importantly, we developed 'Grachte', open channels of water in the middle of these boundary streets, which made it easier for audiences to access refreshments, namely water. This also proved useful in fighting some of the numerous fires we had in the theatre as a result of audience scuffles.

By 1700, the characteristic 60 x 60m grid formation that we are familiar with today had become a standard feature of the theatre and it was quite visible on our seating plans at the time despite my tempestuous friend the Cape Doctor Wind wreaking havoc with the audience by nearly blowing them off their seats! It's probably because of him that most of them began to build in stone, thatch, clay...



Extract from the 1795 *God Save the Queen* show, performed for the Old City Theatre

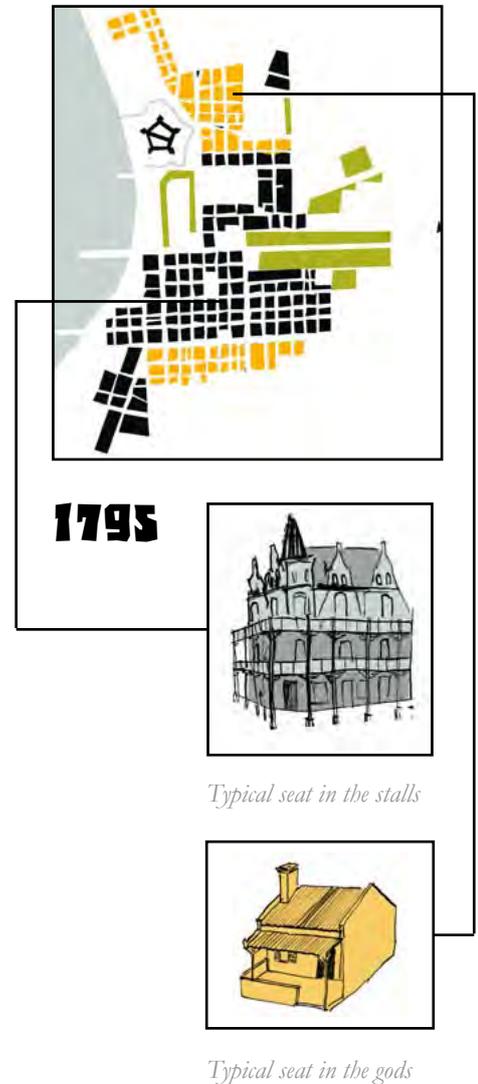
**CITIZEN:** In *God save the Queen* (1795) your producers at the Dutch East India Company walked out on the job in 1789, declaring bankruptcy in 1794. It was only a year later that the British sailed into the bay to take control of the situation. Eight years on, a Batavian director entered the scene for three years, after which the British directors took over again. You must be pretty patient not to have walked off set at this point?

**TM:** It was certainly a confusing time, but I believed in the vision of the British directors of making a more permanent and pleasant theatre from which they and their audience could view the shows. They brought with them a great deal of international publicity which helped the Cape become a commercial centre in its own right with 42 small shops in 1806. Each seat was also equipped with running water for the first time. With the arrival of the British, many of the Dutch design features such as the stoeps they loved so much were removed to make way for more road traffic on the streets. The Architecture of the early 1800's also reflects the prosperity of this transitional period with materials being imported from England and improved building construction techniques. We were thus able to build more elaborate seats such as the 93 Bree St House, City Hall and Victorian houses with their broekie lace. Steamships entered Cape Town for the first time attracting tourists from England. I was lapping up the attention in

those days and enjoyed being written about on postcards as well as photographed.

**CITIZEN:** In 1860 the world fell into a depression, the Suez Canal opened in 1864 and sea traffic through Cape Town declined. However, Cape Town seems to have expanded rapidly, stretching to Woodstock, Mowbray, Rondebosh, Claremont, Wynberg and Simonstown. Production was relieved when the opening of the rail link opened in 1863, encouraging exports and exchange.

**TM:** Yes this was a happy and prosperous time for some. The 1860's gold and diamond rush attracted large amounts of emigrants and the Old City Theatre was the entry and exit point for these visitors; a gateway to the promise of riches. In 1870 the first electric lights were lit and arrays of public buildings were commissioned. I was surprised that people wanted to move out of my amphitheatre and around the back of my slopes into the more intimate and exclusive theatre seats of Southern suburbs, where I performed some alternative shows for smaller audiences. At the same time I was hardly surprised, it was becoming very apparent that seats in the Old City Theatre were limited, and that it was only a matter of time before the theatre would be full to capacity.





*Extract from the 1966 the Silent Witness To Apartheid show, performed for the Old City Theatre*

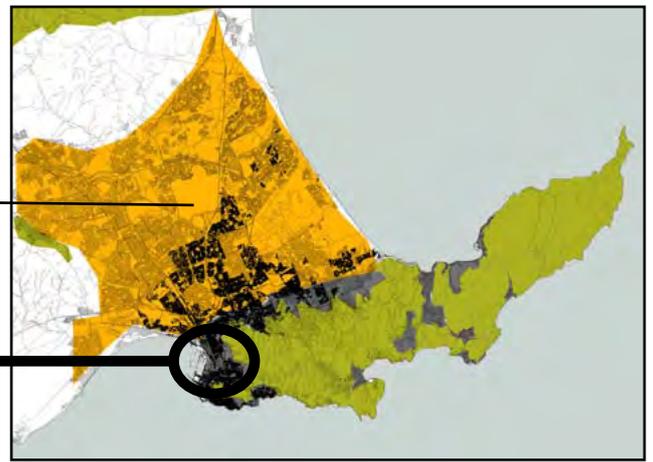
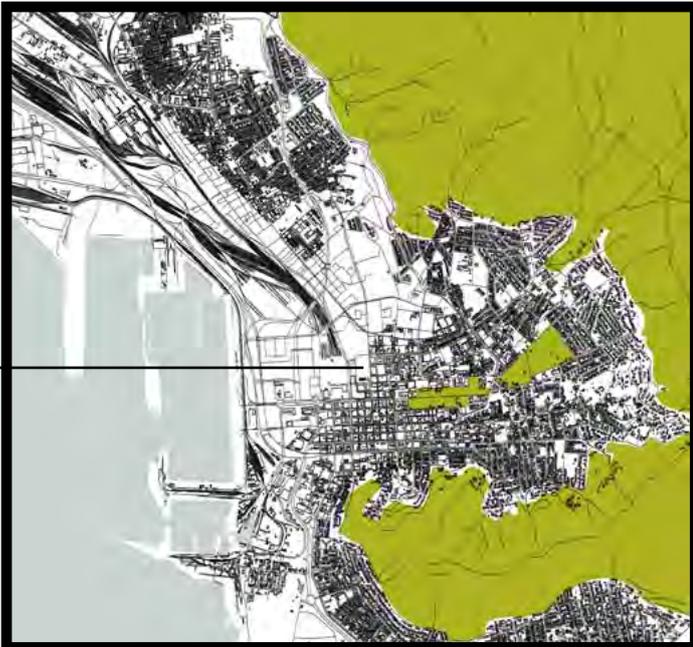
**CITIZEN:** *It seems like Cape Town was quite a leisurely destination at this time. People walked the pier and drank tea at the London Hotel. However, the show ends badly with the outbreak of World War I, rapid population growth, traffic congestion in the streets and the problem of limitations of lateral expansion for the city due to its topographical setting within your amphitheatre. In the sequel to this show; “The Dream of Modernism, Seeking Utopia”, which was later renamed: “The Silent Witness to Apartheid”, we witness some major changes in the structuring of the city and social orders. The modern movement or International Style came to Cape Town, which was influenced by new materials and building techniques as well as the global problem of there not being enough space in city theatres to accommodate people. Did you buy into the modernist philosophy behind this show?*

**TM:** Well, I think we all bought into it in the beginning, or at least were curious about it. The style for the seats grew out of the mental and physical rubble of World War

I; it was linked philosophically to the socialist and Marxist thinking of that time. The Bauhaus in Germany, led by Walter Gropius preached the virtues of the logic of function and the elimination of decorative styles of the past, so we were open to embracing a new clean, structured theatre of the future, and we welcomed these new seat designers with their reinforced concrete, sheet glass and steel frames.

**CITIZEN:** *This is when the area known as the foreshore was developed in the Old City Theatre, creating 194 hectares of new reclaimed land for seats to my performances. Could you tell us a bit about this expansive re modeling of the Old City Theatre?*

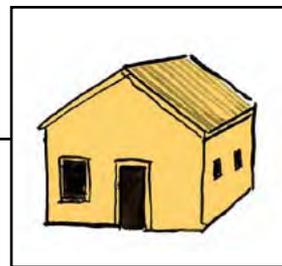
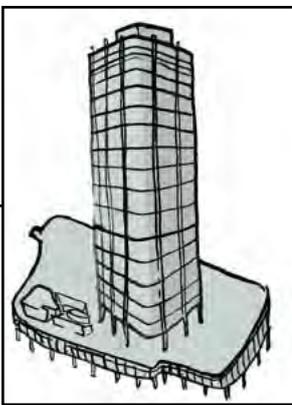
**TM:** The Foreshore presented an absolute blank canvas onto which architects and planners could reproduce their own version of social order within a city theatre.



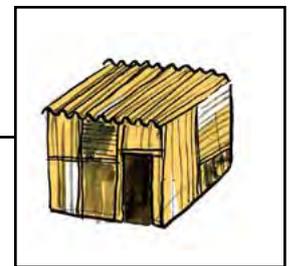
Typical seating plan,  
Black : Stalls  
Orange : the Gods

**1966**

Typical seat in the stalls



Typical seat in the gods



Typical seat in the gods

The earliest report on the Foreshore acknowledged the importance of the area in relation to its unique natural setting. However the imposed design ignored this and shunned the two most important and dynamics of any city, its people, and its environment. The Cape Doctor wind loved screaming through this wide open space doing tricks and blowing the audience over and adding to the unpleasantness of the Foreshore or back seats of the theatre.

The 1948 national elections saw the entire country being signed to a production company called Apartheid, and a series of extremely hard lined directors, heralding an era that would be increasingly dominated by strictly institutionalized audience segregation based on racial differences.

The black members of the audience were forcedly removed from my amphitheatre against my wish, and their tickets to the show were limited to matinee performances and only on presentation of limited official tickets called pass books. What is worse is that this entire system became legalized with the passing of the Group Areas Act of 1950 and others like it, with the effect of creating a highly charged political atmosphere for the next 30 years. It was awful, and with no alternatives at their disposal, the black audience crowded outside the Old City Theatre in makeshift seats with no support from the directors whatsoever. This was

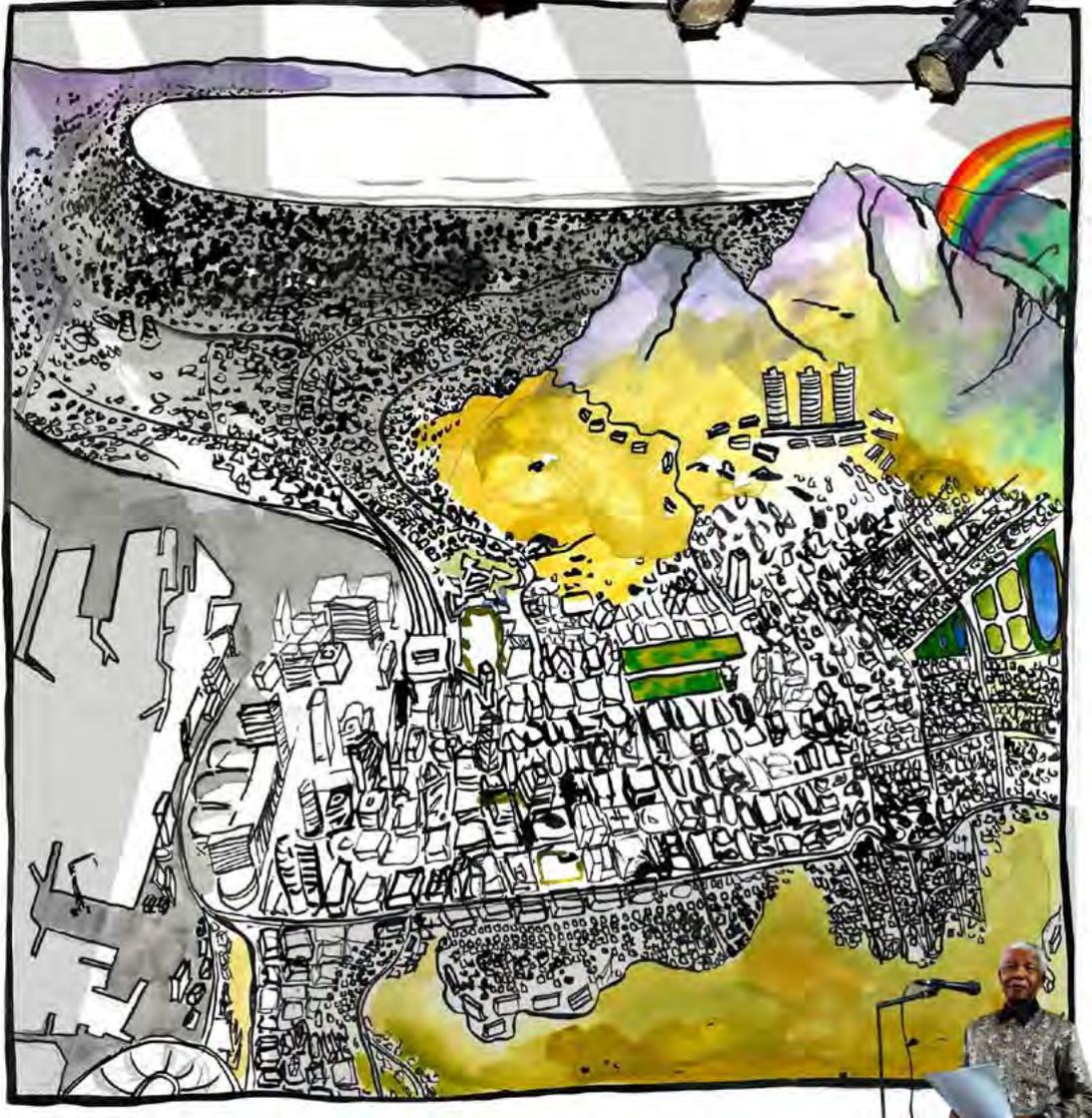
the beginning of the Cape Flats Fringe, and while full of character and spirit, it has for years been ignored as a second rate theatre, a dormitory suburb.

*CITIZEN:* In the early 50's we see the beginning of the major renovations to the Old City Theatre.. How did you feel about that?

*TM:* The Apartheid directors became obsessed with total transformation of the Old City Theatre into a 20th century theatre for the white audience. They orchestrated the building of the major highways of the Eastern Boulevard in 1977, as well as the first high-rise buildings such as Revel Fox's BP centre, the Disa Park Towers, Gardens Centre, Nico Malan, Civic Centre, and Golden Acre, imposing a new (and scary) scale of audience determination to watch the shows from within the Old City Theatre.

I watched in horror at the destruction of one of my favourite sections of the theatre, the lively District Six, which was full of character and life. I really wanted to put my foot down then, but I'm a mountain so I can't move my foot. It was around this point in 1966 that I made the decision to stop performing solely for the Old City Theatre and concentrate more on how I could reinvent myself in a way that might connect with my relegated audience in the Cape Flats Fringe.

2000



*Extract from the 2000 Rainbow Nation show, performed for the Old City Theatre and a bit of the Cape Flats Fringe*

**CITIZEN:** *Gosh! That must have been traumatic for you, not being able to put your foot down and all. The re-shaping of the Old City Theatre, formation and rapid growth of the Cape Flats Fringe, the negativity in the audience, please tell us what happened next? Does it end well? The following show was "Rainbow Nation" I believe...*

**TM:** In an amazing turn of events a local director from the Eastern Cape was elected in 1994 from within the black audience, bringing with him an immense change in the national mindset, unity in the audiences and a fresh burst of energy to the Cape. Nelson Mandela was phenomenal to work for. At his age, you'd have thought a directorial debut would have been beyond him, however together with his production house, Democracy, and the stagehands at the ANC, he pulled off nothing short of a miracle.

**CITIZEN:** *Sounds wonderful! But how did these positive, inclusive changes in the National Mindset of your audience affect the theatres and shows you were playing in?*

**TM:** Well, yes and no. They did and did not affect the theatres and shows. The Cape Flats Fringe is today still relying on productions from the Old City Theatre to sustain itself from an economic and entertainment point of view. The Cape Flats Fringe watches reruns of performances done for the Old City Centre and it is high time that a director invests in writing and producing a show that is exclusively for the Fringe audience, one that will make the Old City Theatre audience visit the Fringe. This form of cultural exchange is what I dream about!

**CITIZEN:** *I believe you are in the pre production phase a new blockbuster 'I-Inclusive I-Future' a show that you are co writing, co directing and starring in along with the ultra hip production company 'Place-Making'. This show has been described as a most innovative production in terms of maximising the entertainment effects with minimum budget and is to be performed exclusively to the Fringe audience. Without spoiling the ending for us, can you take us through your thoughts and planning strategies for this blockbuster that is going to transform the Cape Flats Fringe into an independent theatre in its own right.*

**TM:** Well for one, 'I-Inclusive I-Future' is unlike

any show that has previously been put on at the Cape. 'I-Inclusive I-Future' is wholly dependent on audience participation. We have come up with a catchy promotional campaign to gain pre-production audience support. This is called Love Your Seat

*CITIZEN: Love Your Seat?*

TM: Yes, this really is about learning to love the seat you are sitting in. We want the audience to invest in their seats, take care of them, and build on them. When dealing with a theatre of this size, audience participation is a must! You might recognise our T-shirts and Love Your Seat logo

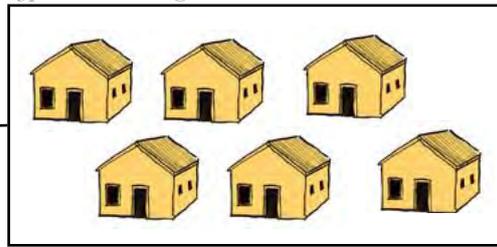
The Cape Flats Fringe must become a self-sustaining working theatre, developing and producing quality shows for its large and entertainment-hungry audience. The Place-Making producers and I have many innovative ideas on how to achieve this here are a few of them:

- Total rebranding of the Cape Flats Fringe into the Cape Flats Theatre. We are hoping the Love Your Seat campaign will encourage people to invest in business activities in the Cape Flats Theatre.
- New seat design must be guided according to the theatre's upgrade master plan. This will encourage good inclusive seat building, and allow for the best views! The flatness of the Cape Flats site actually works democratically in giving every audience member an equally good view of my shows. However audiences are so busy surviving their daily lives that they currently have very limited time for this kind of entertainment. This master plan (currently being developed) must include shopping and business streets in the theatre.
- **Greening**, I plan on donating a couple of hundred tons of my Fynbos (indigenous Cape Plants that occur naturally on Table Mountain) to the scheme. I feel like the theatre cannot become the place we want it to be without a major greening up of the land which is currently so barren; the Cape Doctor Wind is able to scream through it. Planting windbreaks can be organised to create strong spatial organising elements that will define areas of the theatre and reinforce the concept of Love Your Seat. The trees will guide the eyes of the audience to look up at the sky, and at my performances.
- **Improve connections between the Old City Theatre and the Cape Flats Theatre.** It is in this logistics department that the Love Your Seat community initiative does not work, we are addressing this issue to the heads of the state of South Africa. Major infrastructure needs to be implemented in order for us to have a chance of cultural exchange between the Old City and Cape Flats Theatres. Cultural exchange amongst artists is as you know imperative to the quality of shows our audience's will be able to witness and participate in.



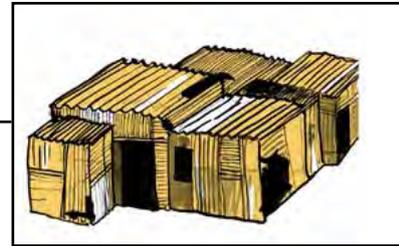


Typical seat in the gods, the RDP house

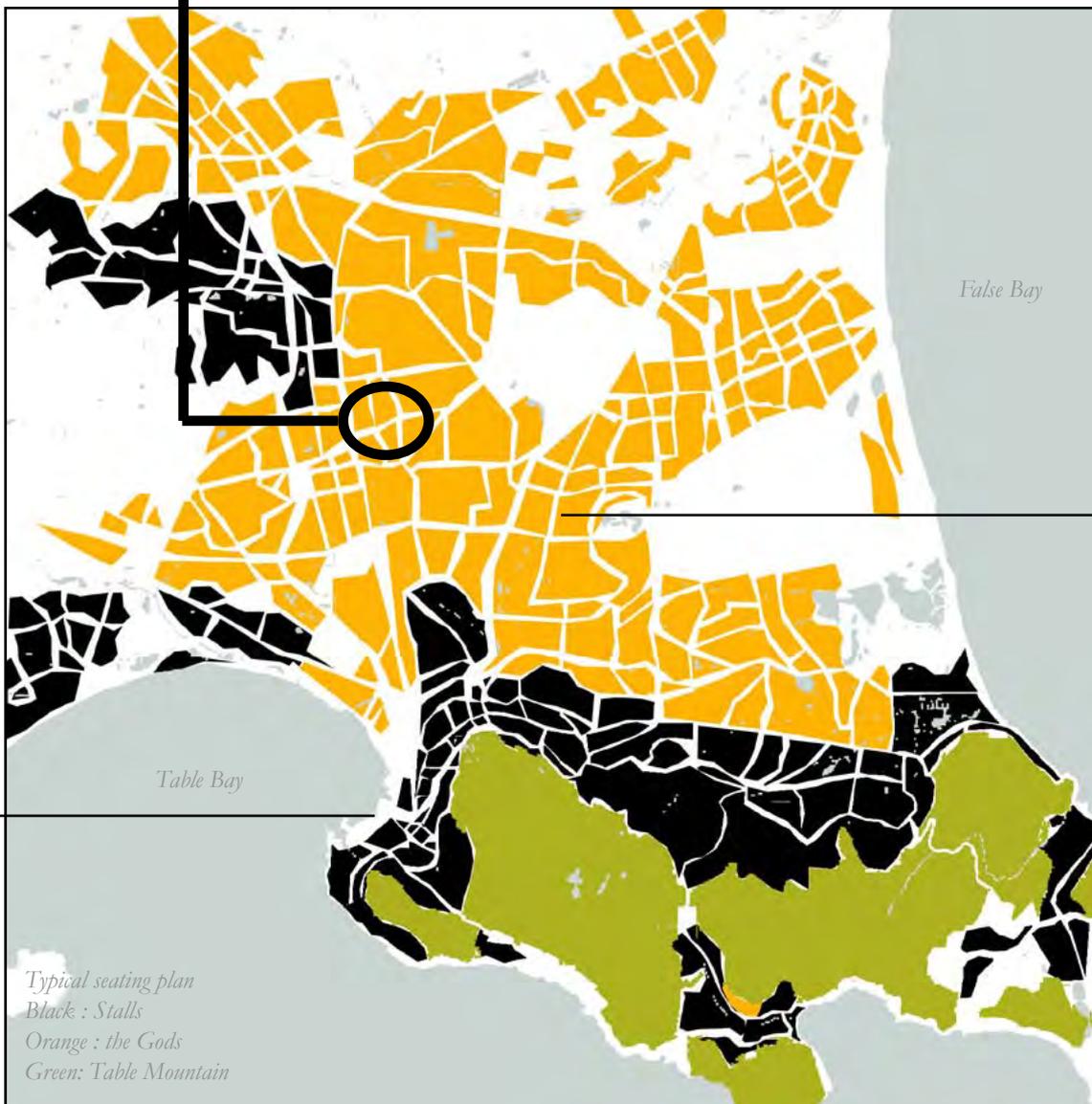


Government issued RDP house seat price:  
**R58 000** or **€ 6 800**

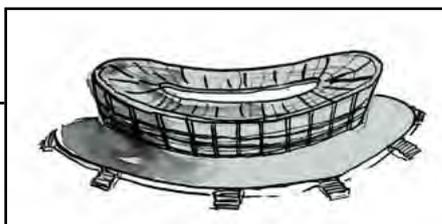
Ready made new Cape Flats Shack seat price  
**R10 000** or **€ 974**



Typical seat in the gods, the expanding shack



Typical seating plan  
Black : Stalls  
Orange : the Gods  
Green: Table Mountain

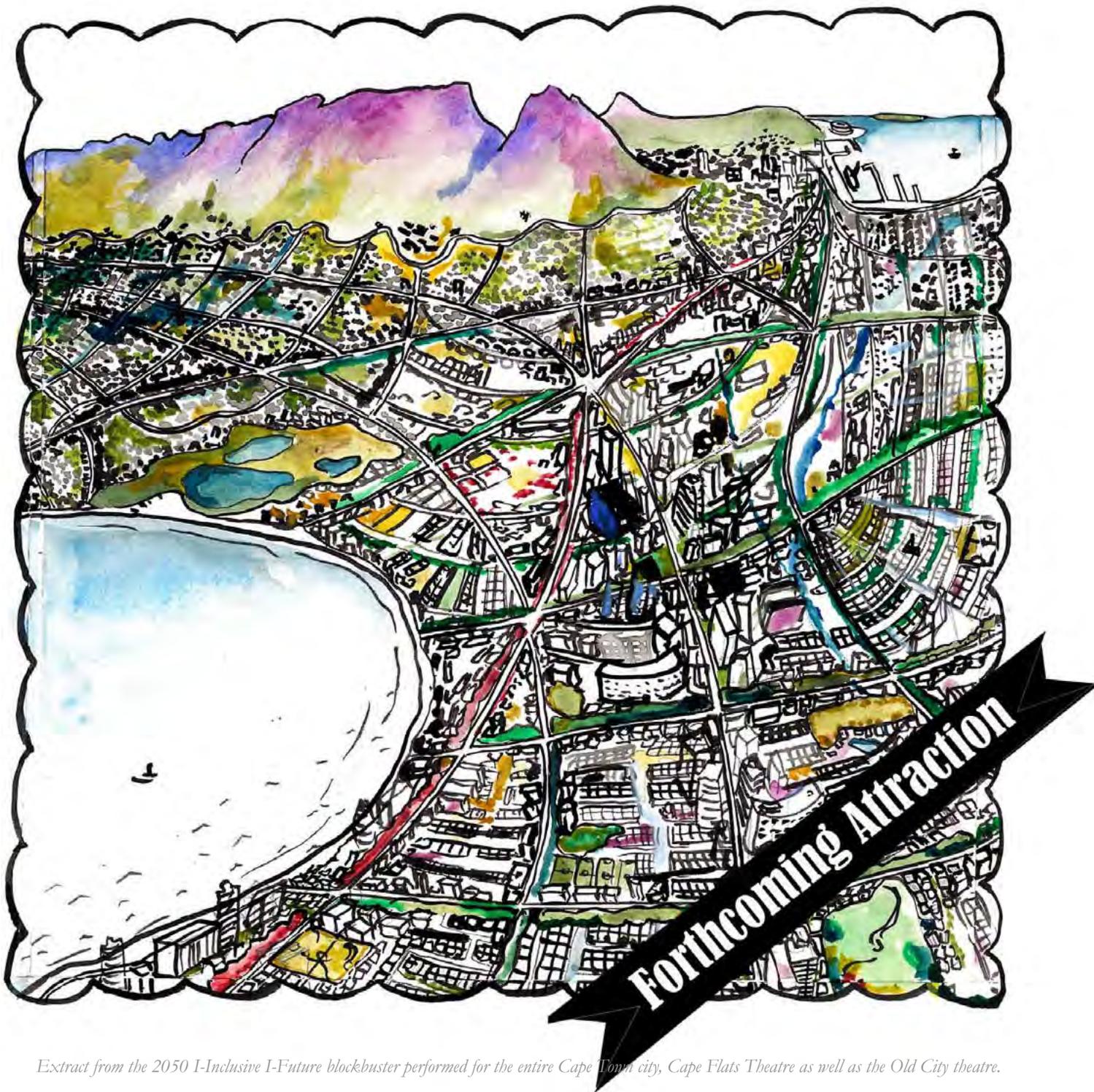


Cape Town Stadium seat price:  
**R4.4 Billion** or **€ 430 Million**

Newly built seat in the stalls

**Present day seating plan**

2050



*Extract from the 2050 I-Inclusive I-Future blockbuster performed for the entire Cape Town city, Cape Flats Theatre as well as the Old City theatre.*

As a veteran of the stage, and as someone whose audience fan base is powerful, I am calling on you Cape Town Citizens! Join us, get involved in the Love Your Seat campaign, sign up as a stage hand, plant trees, build seats, and write new stories that can be shared on stage.

*CITIZEN: Wow! There are powerful visions coming from Table Mountain. Thank you for your time, I can honestly say that I personally look forward to getting involved with the pre production of 'I-Inclusive I-Future'. The Cape Town Citizen will be following*

*your progress as well as publishing and promoting the concept of participatory theatre building.*

**TM:** Thank you! I truly hope that this 'I-Inclusive I-Future' show brings about significant transformation and a big push towards an inclusive society. **We all have to work together for an independent Fringe!**

*(Miriam Makeba's Pata Pata song begins to play, Table Mountain gets up and does the Madiba dance)*



# LOVE YOUR SEAT

*I wish to thank Professor Fabio Todeschini for encouraging me to enter this Atelier, as well as Luyanda Mpahlwa, Catherine Raphael, Sarah Lovemore and Lucy Heavens for encouragement and support.*

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