

ATLAS OF UNCERTAINTY: TRANSFORMING AFRICAN CITYSCAPES

Exhibition 18 April - 3 July Origins Centre, Wits University, Johannesburg

In the first two decades of this century, Africa's urban population grew by 469 million people. By 2050, the continent's cities are expected to hold 1.4 billion people. This is not a shift at the margins. It is one of the great sites where the future is being made. Yet the language still used to describe African cities—failure, disorder, ungoverned, problematic—arrives already tired. It cannot hold the density, motion, contradiction, and improvisation of urban life as it is being lived.

The *Atlas of Uncertainty* begins elsewhere. It starts from the proposition that African cities are not behind the curve, but ahead of it. As uncertainty becomes a shared urban condition, cities such as Accra, Nairobi, and Johannesburg do not offer warnings from the edge, but ways of seeing what is already coming into view.

At the heart of this exhibition are artworks that stay with what official frames often miss. They attend to movement and memory, fracture and repair, hidden infrastructures, spectral traces, patterned journeys, suspended lives, and the visible and invisible forces that shape the city. Through film, installation, sculpture, tapestry, sound, photography, and speculative form, the artists do not illustrate the urban. They sense it otherwise.

This exhibition brings art in relation with fragments from essays, conversations, and reflections across the Atlas. These textual traces are companions, frictions, echoes, and openings.

The show is part of a larger braided project—book, exhibition, and digital platform—in which essays, maps, survey data, and visualisations sit alongside the artworks as companion forms of inquiry. The Atlas moves from the census to the senses, allowing different ways of knowing to brush against one another: data and story, chart and feeling, abstraction and lived experience.

What emerges is not a single map, but a different orientation. African cities are not at the margins of the global urban future. They are among the places where that future is already being lived.

“The Atlas is neither ‘complete’ nor absolute, but a politicised, reimagined tool for remapping and centring the informal, the ephemeral, the rogue, and the collective.”
—Thembinkosi Goniwe, artist and art historian

Atlas Artists

Adlan Yousif, Alice Raymond, Amy-Leigh Braaf, Anastasia Pather, Angelina Kusi Hori, ASK, Austine Adika, Billie McTernan, Boitumelo Motau, Bongiwe Phakathi, Candice Kramer, Caroline Wanjiku Kihato, Clare Loveday, Clifford Assiama Bright-Abu, Daniel Muchina, Dela Anyah, DEVOLUTIONERY, Dorcas Omwenga, Jamey Ponte, Kibera Arts District, Lebo Thoka, Manjahi Njoroge, Mareli Stolp, Nana Danso Awuah-Asante, Neo Muyanga, Onyis Martin, Peterson Kamwathi, Savior Omondi, Sean Kweifio-Okai, Sebwali Mwakai Sio, Sedinam Awo Tsegah, The Herd, Tracy Akinyi, Wallace Juma, Wezile Harmans

Atlas Scholars + Writers

Adeline Chum, Afra Foli, Barbara Bompani, Brett Pyper, Brian Murahwa, Carina Kanbi, Caroline Wanjiku Kihato, Danchen Xu, Dare Brawley, Elizabeth Iams Wellman, Heather Mason, Helidah Ogude-Chambert, Huda Tayob, Jeffrey Paller, Kabiri Bule, Kuukuwa Manful, Laura Kurgan, Loren B Landau, Margarida Waco, Mwangi Mwaura, Isaac Mburu, Neo Muyanga, Nicole Stremlau, Olasumbo Olaniyi, Ragi Bashonga, Shongile Myeza, Stacy Hardy, Tau Tavengwa, Thorsten Deckler, Tracy Haggai, Wangui Kimari

About the Atlas of Uncertainty

The Atlas of Uncertainty is a project of the Oxford-Wits Mobility Governance Lab and Wits University's African Centre for Migration & Society (ACMS), the continent's leading scholarly institution for research and teaching on human mobility. The book, *Atlas of Uncertainty: Transforming African Cityscapes* (Actar/Wits Press), will be released in January 2027. The opening exhibition runs at the Origins Centre, Wits University, Johannesburg, from 18 April to 3 July 2026. Exhibitions in Accra, Nairobi and Amsterdam are planned for 2027.

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