



INTERNAL OPEN CALL

Presented by: Unisa Art and Music Department

Location: Unisa Art Gallery (and selected online moments)

Exhibition Dates: 8 - 28 August 2026

Installation Dates: 4- 7 August 2026

De-Installation: 28 August 2026

Application for Participation Deadline: 25 May 2026

Conceptual Framing + Curatorial Themes

Curated by: Zinziswa Mavuso and Dr Carly Whitaker, assisted by Thomas Massigni

This exhibition embraces the layered, shifting, and intertwined realities of womxn's lives in South Africa, through the lens of intersectional feminist theory. Rather than foregrounding singular and linear narratives of women's heroism, the exhibition embraces the layered, shifting, and intertwined realities of womxn's lives in South Africa. Drawing on Kimberlé Crenshaw's framework of intersectionality, the exhibition recognises that gender is never experienced alone and that no single gender holds priority. The interlocking forces of race, class, sexuality, language ability, geography and history shape womxn's experiences in complex and distinct ways. In a country where institutional violence, economic equality, memory and cultural inheritance continue to structure everyday life, intersectionality becomes both a theoretical anchor and a lived reality.

The curatorial team would like to position the exhibition as a space for dialogue between the exhibitors and a curated selection of cultural media from the [Unisa Art Collection](#), [readings and articles](#) and a [playlist](#). These selected collections can act as a starting point for submissions. We aim to create a dialogue that makes space to interrogate, celebrate and complicate feminist concepts.

Intersectional feminism offers a set of open co-ordinates through which artists may navigate metaphorically. Below are some sub-themes through which artists may interpret their response to the open call through:

1. Challenge systematic power

This sub-theme encourages works that confront systems of power head-on. It calls for narratives of resistance, recognising the alternative methods people have used to challenge authority and systemic power. It may also be interpreted as a call for self-assertion, due to the multiple points of injustice, recognised by intersectional feminism womxn often have to be intentional about inserting themselves into spaces and conversations that were often not designed for them.

2. Response to archival matter

This sub-theme invites artists to engage with personal memory and history, institutional memory and history, the [selected collection](#), the provided [reading list](#), and the provided [playlist](#). In a country where the official record has often erased or distorted womxn's stories, the archive becomes both a site of loss and a site for re-imagining. The artists' submission may respond to or build on the personal and public archive.

3. Futuristic imagination

The imagination as a sub-theme is important to allow artists to see beyond present realities. This sub-theme explores the not-yet, the could-be and the impossible as sites of healing and development. The artists are encouraged to imagine a new social world where womxn's lives unfold on their own terms; imagination is treated as a political act where envisioned futures are not limited by present realities.

Rather than a linear thematic structure this exhibition is shaped by an intersectional feminist mind map – a conceptual web of ideas such as embodiment, agency, memory, care, and resistance. It reflects that womxn's lives rarely unfold in straight lines, they intersect and overlap not bound by time, space or social context. For the artists, the mind map encourages them to respond metaphorically, intuitively or critically between identities, histories and imagined futures. The exhibition refuses simplification, instead celebrating the complexity of being womxn in South Africa today.

Who Should Apply

We invite applications from the Unisa Art and Music department staff, research associates, post doctorates, PhD students, and Professor Emeritus's are.

Applicants from individuals or collectives who identify as artists, musicians, writers, designers, creative practitioners, researchers, technologists, and interdisciplinary practitioners.

Eligible Work

The curatorial team are open to submissions including (but not limited to):

- Traditional mediums (painting, drawing, sculpture, photography)
- New media or Digital art (video, animation, web-based work, XR, AI-generated work)
- Installation / physical works (if applicable)
- Sound, performance, or hybrid formats
- Research-based or process-driven work

Please note that staff will be required to install their work. If there are special installation requirements that you need support with, please let us know in the application.

Application + Submission Requirements

To apply for this exhibition, please submit the following:

- Artist bio (max 200 words) + social media links
- Artist statement (max 200 words)
- Artwork or Project description (max 200 words) - please include images / video links (with captions) if possible and if applicable, technical requirements.
- Portfolio (link or PDF)

Submit your application to masint@unisa.ac.za with the following as your subject line:

THE WILL TO BE - Submission - [Your Name]

Applicants will be notified of the outcomes by 14 June.

For questions, please contact: whitacj@unisa.ac.za