

[Proceed to Content](#)  
[University of Minnesota](#)

- [One Stop](#)
- [Directories](#)
- [Search U of M](#)

Return to: [College of Liberal Arts Home](#) : [U of M Home](#)



WEST BANK  
ARTS QUARTER

CLA  
COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS @ 135  
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA



[Home](#) > [U Theatre & Dance](#) : Ubuntu



**Voortrekker/Pioneer**

## Draadtrekker/Wanker

## Saamtrekker/Journeying Together

### The Performance Interventions of Peter Van Heerden

The Department of Theatre Arts & Dance is proud to announce the visit of South African performance artist, Peter van Heerden, as part of our annual Wickedly Wild Workshop Week in January 2010.

Van Heerden's highly physical, intellectually challenging performance art explores how masculinity and race function in the multiethnic, democratic South Africa. At the core of Van Heerden's performance interventions is the question of how the privileged perform themselves once their privilege is deflated. Abjecting his white male body in performance, he asserts "It is only through abjection of white masculinity, that a new practice can be celebrated. The process of holding up whiteness for exploration is not in praise of its hegemony, but rather as a condition for sacrifice.... This ritual sacrifice of whiteness must become a feast and celebration, to enable the formulation of a new non-racialised practice."

Van Heerden's work with *erf* [81] *cultural collective* centers around the notion of "saamtrek" (the Afrikaans word for "pulling or journeying together"), where the audience, through their presence, actively participate in the performance's quest for new meanings and interpretations of archetypal symbols inherited from South Africa's colonial and apartheid past.

## Public Lecture

MONDAY JANUARY 11, 2010 at 6pm  
Location: Studio A, 5th floor Rarig Center  
Lecture is **free** and open to the public

To kick off his week-long workshop with students in Theatre Arts & Dance, Mr. Van Heerden will offer a public lecture on the workings of performance practice in South Africa and the exploration of his performance theory of 'saamtrekking,' supported with images and video work from his live art installations presented in South Africa.

## Ubuntu

SATURDAY JANUARY 16, 2010 at 7pm  
Location: Xperimental Theatre, Rarig Center  
Performance is **free** and open to the public  
Reserve your tickets by emailing [lewi0182@umn.edu](mailto:lewi0182@umn.edu)

Van Heerden's live art installation *Ubuntu* opens up one man's journey of being. A man is on route to his African renaissance, his new birth from adolescence into manhood. Through the eyes of the mythological creature the *tokoloshe* – a hairy, dwarf-like, mischievous figure in indigenous South African mythology with an enormous penis – the man is forced to wrestle with his demons as he passes through the complex phases of life: from youth through initiation to his coming of age.

The piece's title refers to the notion of *ubuntu*, an African understanding of the connectedness of human beings. In 1999, Archbishop Desmond Tutu described a person with ubuntu as, "open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed."

### **Artist Bio**

Cape Town, South Africa-based performance artist Peter Van Heerden completed his Masters Degree (Cum Laude) at the University of Cape Town Drama Department in 2004. He presented live art installations at various venues, including the controversial and acclaimed work titled *So is 'n os gemaak* [This is how an ox is made] at the 2004 National Arts Festival in Grahamstown. This work was followed by *Bok* [Ram], commissioned by the KZNSA Gallery for YAP 2005-2006, which was also performed for the FNB Dance Umbrella in Johannesburg. In 2007, he presented *6 minutes*, commissioned by the FNB Dance Umbrella and the performance work *Flowers for my flesh* which was selected as one of the winners of The Spier Contemporary Art Awards 2007. In 2008, Van Heerden and his artistic collaborator, Andre Laubscher, were commissioned to perform *Totanderkuntuit* [Throughtheothercuntout} at the Klein Karoo Nationale Kunstefees in Oudtshoorn. 2009 saw two new works commissioned: An Histrionic for The SPIER "Infecting the City Festival" and *out of the eater came forth meat out of the strong came forth sweet* at the FNB Dance Umbrella. He has also presented video works at national and international Festivals. Van Heerden is a lecturer in live performance at City Varsity in Cape Town and working in close collaboration with artist Andre Laubscher, presents work under the initiative *erf [81] cultural collective*.

### **More Information**

Mr. Van Heerden has recently been in residency in Baltimore at the Theatre Project. An interview with Mr. Van Heerden was just published in the [Baltimore City Paper](#).

For more information, a photo gallery, and video samples of Mr. Van Heerden's work, please visit the [erf \[81\] cultural collective](#) website.

Van Heerden's visit is sponsored in part by the [CLA Scholarly Events Fund](#).

© 2008 Regents of the University of Minnesota. All rights reserved.  
*The University of Minnesota is an equal opportunity educator and employer.*