

Nolan Oswald Dennis



Biography

Nolan Oswald Dennis (b. 1988, Lusaka, Zambia) is a para-disciplinary artist from Johannesburg, South Africa. Their practice explores what they call 'a black consciousness of space': the material and metaphysical conditions of decolonization. Dennis' work questions the politics of space (and time) through a system-specific, rather than site-specific approach. They are concerned with the hidden structures that predetermine the limits of our social and political imagination. Through a language of diagrams, drawings and models they explore a hidden landscape of systematic and structural conditions that organise our political sub-terrain.

In 2025, Dennis presented their first UK institutional solo exhibition at Gasworks London, and their first US institutional solo exhibition at the Swiss Institute. On the occasion of the exhibition, the Swiss Institute together with Zeitz MOCAA, Cape Town and Koenig will publish the first ever monograph on Dennis's practice in April 2025.

In 2024, Dennis designed the 'Traces of Ecstasy' pavilion and exhibition project for the Lagos Biennial in Tafawa Balewa Square. An adapted version of this project was on view at the Institute for Contemporary Art at Virginia Commonwealth University in the same year. Dennis was also shortlisted for the Future Generation Art Prize 2023/24.

Dennis was the 2020 artist in residence at NTUCCA (Singapore) and the 2021 artist in residence at the Delfina Foundation (London). They were awarded the FNB Arts Prize in 2016. They are a founding member of artist groups NTU and the Index Literacy Program, as well as a research associate at the VIAD research centre at the University of Johannesburg.

Solo shows include: Nolan Oswald Dennis, Gasworks London (2025); overtures, Swiss Institute, New York (2025); UNDERSTUDIES, Zeitz MOCAA, Cape Town (2024); geo-logics, Kunstinsituut Melly, Netherlands (2024); Nolan Oswald Dennis, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg (2023); Positions #7, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, the Netherlands (2023); models (from a black planetarium), Centre d'Art Neuchâtel, Neuchâtel, Switzerland (2022); Specifications for a Reverse Archaeology, The Javett Art Centre at the University of Pretoria (2022-2023); conditions, Goodman Gallery, Cape Town (2021); Options, Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, (2019).

Group shows and biennales include: Black Ancient Futures, Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology, Lisbon (2024); back wall project, Kunsthalle Basel (2024); 12th Seoul Mediacity Biennale (2023); the 12th Liverpool Biennial (2023), Frieze, Seoul (2023); the Young Congo Biennale (2019), Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, MACBA (2018); Palais de Tokyo, Paris; ARoS Aarhus, Denmark; 9th Berlin Biennale (2016); Poetics of Relation, LIYH, Geneva (2015).

Collections include: A4 Arts Foundation Cape Town, South Africa and the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, The Netherlands.

Dennis lives and works in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Solo Exhibitions

- 2025** _overtures, Swiss Institute, New York, USA
- 2025** *Nolan Oswald Dennis*, Gasworks London, UK
- 2024** _geo-logics, Kunstinsituut Melly, Netherlands,
- 2024** *Understudies*, Zeitz MOCAA, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2022** *no conciliation is possible (working diagram)*, CCA Berlin, Germany
- 2021** *Conditions*, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2019** *Options*, Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2016** *Furthermore*, Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

Group Exhibitions

- 2024** *Black Ancient Futures*, Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology, Lisbon, Portugal
- 2023** *Biennial SescVideobrasil*, a recurse for three oceans, Brasil
- 2023** _THIS TOO IS A MAP, Seoul Mediacity Biennale, Korea
- 2023** _From the void came gifts of the cosmos, 35th Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts, Slovenia
- 2023** _uMoya: The Sacred Return of Lost Things, Liverpool Biennale, UK
- 2023** *Umhlaba uyalingana*, Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland
- 2023** Positions #7: Everything worthwhile is done with other people, Van Abbe Museum, Netherlands
- 2022** *Living with Ghosts*, Pace Gallery, London, UK

*2022*_Magical Hackerism, SAVVY Contemporary, Berlin, Germany
2022 _LIAF (Loftoten International Art Festival), Norway
2022 _Matter of Art Biennale, Prague
2022 *20 Artists: Global Positioning*, New York, USA
2021 *Ubuntu, A Lucid Dream*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France
2021 *Silence calling from one continent to another*, Goodman Gallery, Cape Town
2021 *Deeping Listening for Longing*, Boras Art Biennale, Sweden
2021 *University of African Futures*, Institut Francois, Lieu Unique, Nantes, France
2021 *This is Not Africa, Unlearn What You Have Learned*, ARoS Aarhus, Denmark
2019 _Young Congo Biennale
2019 *I've grown roses in this garden of mine*, Goodman Gallery London, UK
2018 *A Better Version of You*, Goethe Institute, Beijing, China
2018 *African Mobilities*, TUM, Munich, Germany
2018 *In the Open or in Stealth*, MACBA, Barcelona, Spain
2018 *Tell Freedom. 15 South African artists*, Kunsthalle kAde, Amersfoort, Netherlands
2017 *Deep Memory*, Kalmar Konsthall, Kalmar, Sweden
2017 *In No Time*, MIT, Cambridge, USA
2017 *89plus: Americans 2017*, LUMA Westbau, Zurich, Switzerland
2017 *the silences between*, Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
2016 *NTUSAVE*, Berlin Biennale
2016 *In Context: Where We Are*, Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
2016 *New Revolutions: Goodman Gallery at 50*, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
2016 *New Revolutions: Goodman Gallery at 50*, Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
2015 *Young, Gifted and Black*, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
2015 *Edge of Silence*, Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
2015 *Post African Futures*, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
2015 *Other Peoples Memories*, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
2015 *Poetics of Relation*, LIYH, Geneva, Switzerland
2015 *Lumieres d'Afrique*, Group Show, Theatre National de Chaillot, Paris, France
2015 *Activate/Captivate*, museum show, Wits Art Museum, Johannesburg
2014 *Working Title*, Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
2014 *The Brother Burns the Bullion*, site intervention, Johannesburg
2013 *Ussher Fort_*, *Chale Wote*, Art Festival, Ga-Mashie, Accra, Ghana
2013 *Transitions, mural installation*, Market Photo Workshop Gallery, Johannesburg, SA and Rencontres d'Arles, Arles, France
2013 *Memory + Speculation*, Chale Wote community art festival, Accra, Ghana
2013 *LAND*, Mural installation, Cape Town City Hall, GIPCA
2012 *SOCIAL LANDSCAPE PROJECT: Transition and Show Us Our Land_*, *Market Photo Workshop*, Johannesburg, South Africa
2012 *SOCIAL LANDSCAPE PROJECT: Transition and Show Us Our Land*, Les Rencontres d'Arles _, France
2011 *Golden Eggs*, Cape Town Spier Public Art Festival

Teaching, Lectureships and Workshop

2017 Presentation Paper – Under Super Vision, symposium, University of British Columbia,
2017 Presentation Paper – Environments and the Ecological self, conference, University of Rochester
2017 Published Paper – Solomon Mahlangu House' – Centre des Laboratoires Associés
pour la Recherche en Architecture (CLARA) No. 4
2017 Published Paper 'Anxious South' – University of Rochester Journal for Visual Culture (InVisible Culture)
2016 Lecturer, Architecture department, University of Witwatersrand
2015 Artist talk – 'Space and Transformation' lecture series, School of Architecture,
University of Cape Town
2015 NTU artist talk, Swaartnet, Post African Futures

Awards and Merits

2023 *The Jury Prize at Biennial SescVideobrasil*
2016 _FNB Art prize, Johannesburg
2011 _Gauteng Institute of Architects Award, Johannesburg

Academic Record and Residencies

2020 NTUCCA, Singapore
2017 MeetFactory, Studio Residency, Prague, Czech Republic
2016 Atelier Mondial, Studio Residency Basel, Switzerland
2016 Berlin Biennale (with NTU)
2016 MIT Department of Architecture Graduate Fellowship
2015 Research Artist, Wits Art Museum collection, Johannesburg
2014 VANSAs open office residency, Johannesburg

Collections

Van Abbemuseum, The Netherlands

Commissions

*2023*_Kunsthalle Basel_backwall project