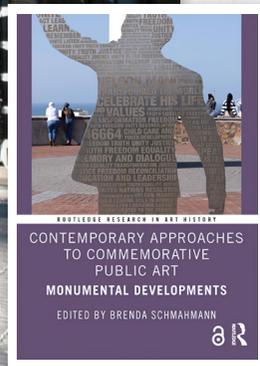


Image: Usha Seejarim interacting with her work, *The Mundane and the Magical* (2021) at the Radisson Red Hotel in Rosebank Johannesburg. Photograph by Clare Appleyard.



THE SARChI CHAIR IN SOUTH AFRICAN ART AND VISUAL CULTURE
UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

presents

Contemporary Public Art
Enabling Inclusivity and Dialogue

A hybrid afternoon symposium

Thursday 16 October 2025 ▪ 14:15 to 17:15 SAST

The symposium takes place in the seminar room of the SARChI Chair in South African Art and Visual Culture, 33 Twickenham Avenue, Auckland Park, Johannesburg.

To RSVP and for online participation, please write to Neelofir Nagdee nnagdee@uj.ac.za

PROGRAMME

14:15 WELCOME

14:30–15:30 **To inaugurate her appointment as a Visting Professor of Practice, acclaimed South African artist, Usha Seejarim, will reflect on her public art projects.**

Usha Seejarim has completed a range of important public artworks, including a monument in Kliptown to commemorate the signing of the Freedom Charter; a portrait of Nelson Mandela exhibited at his funeral in Xunu; a monument to commemorate the burning of Indian registration certificates in Fordsburg; and a spectacular set of wings made from domestic ironing soleplates outside the Radisson Red Hotel in Rosebank. She will discuss a selection of her public art projects, exploring the ideas underpinning them, the processes she followed when making them, and the challenges she faced. Her engagement will reveal how materiality, memory and civic engagement intersect in her practice.

15:30–16:00 REFRESHMENTS

16:00–17:15 **Book Launch: *Contemporary Approaches to Commemorative Public Art: Monumental Developments* (Routledge 2025), edited by Brenda Schmahmann.**

Contributors will introduce their chapters, followed by discussion.

In this book, international contributors examine a range of commemorative monuments from the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The book reveals how those monuments enable new perspectives and understanding of histories as well as a heightened involvement of viewers through not simply their subject matter but also, most crucially, their actual form and design. While some contributors explore new approaches to the art of commemoration that artists and designers have deployed in recent monuments, others examine how artists have undertaken creative engagements with historical statuary and sites, using these interventions to offer critique and commentary. Additionally, the contributions consider the impact of political change on how an inherited commemorative landscape is interpreted and negotiated.