

World premiere screening of *Sculpting This Earth* scheduled for 26 August 2022

Film about Stellenbosch artist Strijdom van der Merwe to premiere at Solo Studios

Cape Town, 5 August 2022

Locally produced documentary feature film *Sculpting This Earth* is to have its world premiere screening on Friday 26 August 2022, the opening day of Riebeeck-Kasteel's art-focused Solo Studios weekend. Heading a stellar line-up of exhibitions, talks, presentations and walkabouts to studios and galleries running from the Friday to the Sunday, the recently completed film will have its first public screening at 10.30 am at the new state-of-the-art Kelderteater downstairs at Die Kunshuis, Main Street, Riebeeck-Kasteel.

The 95-minute film shows internationally acclaimed Stellenbosch-based artist Strijdom van der Merwe at work in the landscape, making artworks using mostly natural materials found on the site, in a range of beautiful natural settings over the course of a year.

Sculpting This Earth, produced by Cape Town-based CineSouth Studios, is the first feature documentary globally about land art from the southern hemisphere. Land art has been around since the 1960s. Pioneered mainly in north America and Britain, it is today practised around the world. Mostly fragile and ephemeral, far removed from population centres and the commercial art market, these are works of art that rely on photography or cinematography to connect with an audience.

Victor van Aswegen, CineSouth Studios CEO and director of *Sculpting This Earth*, sketches the background: "To date, worldwide, even though land art has been in existence for more than half a century, only a handful of documentary feature films have been made about it, all of these dealing with the work of artists in the northern hemisphere. We are therefore excited to be able to present this film as not only the latest contribution to a sparsely populated genre, but also the first feature-length film about land art from the southern hemisphere. The medium of film enables us to put images of artworks that existed only fleetingly in uninhabited spaces in southern Africa in front of a global audience."

Sculpting This Earth shows Strijdom at work over four consecutive seasons, making land art works in remote and unspoilt settings in the vast open spaces of the southern African interior, using sticks, stones, leaves, rocks, grass, feathers, bamboo, water, and at times nothing more than the soil, sand and small stones on the ground – the earth itself.

Principal photography on the film started in the southern-hemisphere midsummer on 15 December 2020, in the Jonkershoek valley outside the university town of Stellenbosch in South Africa's Cape winelands, and continued throughout all four seasons in the greater Stellenbosch area, with its fertile valleys and verdant forests, and including the surrounding Boland and the beaches of nearby Gordon's Bay.

Interspersed with the sequences shot in the Stellenbosch area, the film follows the artist as he travels to make artworks in increasingly distant locations in southern Africa: initially in the idyllic setting of Churchhaven on the pristine and peaceful Langebaan lagoon in the West Coast National Park, then further afield, and in stark contrast, in the harsh, unforgiving landscape of the semi-arid Tankwa Karoo.

The viewer experiences the visible change of seasons over the course of the year and has the opportunity to witness a body of creative work accumulating and being completed, made by the artist over the course of the year in which he turned sixty.

Strijdom van der Merwe is prolific internationally, having made land art works on invitation in more than twenty countries, as diverse and far apart as Australia, Japan, Lithuania, Switzerland, Finland, Malta, Kenya, Denmark, the Netherlands and the United States. The title of the film references two books of images of his works, *Sculpting the Land* (published 2005) and *Sculpting the Earth* (2011). An aspect of the meaning of “this earth” in the film title is this southern African earth, as Strijdom makes land art internationally but the film shows him at work in the part of the world where he lives, where he is rooted, and to which he has particular personal, emotional and artistic connections.

Sculpting This Earth features a powerful soundtrack that includes 11 tracks of original music composed for the film by accomplished classically-trained composer Kristi Boonzaaier of PolyForge Media.

“What we are offering viewers, with a film set entirely outdoors and far away from the built environment,” says director Victor van Aswegen, “is a sense of reconnection to nature and the natural world at a time when many people globally feel cut off from nature, and there is a widespread and growing realisation that the natural world is under threat and in many places in rapid and terminal decline. And Strijdom’s art, made of materials known to people everywhere from their daily lives and surroundings, speaks a deeply universal human language, transcending all boundaries of country and culture, moving people with meaning and emotion, regardless of where they are on the planet.”

The project was supported by Monaco-based art collector Mike Spittal whose South African art collection is on display at his striking new home and exhibition space Die Kunshuis where the screenings will take place.

The end August screenings are an opportunity to see the film before it sets off on its journey to film festivals around the world.

Screenings:

Friday 26 August: 10h30 – world premiere • 15h00

Saturday 27 August: 09h00 • 13h00

Friday 26 August: 09h00 • 13h00

Kelderteater at Die Kunshuis, Main Road, Riebeeck-Kasteel

Tickets available on www.webtickets.co.za

Sculpting This Earth official site and trailer:

www.sculptingthisearthfilm.com

Sculpting This Earth on Instagram:

www.instagram.com/sculptingthisearthfilm

Press enquiries: reception@cinesouthstudios.com

Assets: www.cinesouthstudios.com/press-room

About Strijdom van der Merwe:

Strijdom van der Merwe was born in 1961 and studied art in South Africa at the University of Stellenbosch, in the Netherlands at the Hogeschool voor de Kunsten in Utrecht, in the Czech Republic at the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague, and in the United Kingdom at the Kent Institute of Art and Design in Canterbury. He works internationally and has made land art works in South Korea, Turkey, Belgium, France, Czech Republic, Namibia, Sweden, Lithuania, Japan, United States, Australia, Germany, Kenya, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Italy, Finland, Malta, Norway, Denmark and Switzerland. Strijdom's many awards include a medal of honour from the South African Academy for Science and Art, a grant from the Pollock-Krasner Foundation, and a grant from the Prince Claus Fund.

www.strijdom.com

www.instagram.com/strijdomvandermerwe

www.strijdom.com/wp-content/uploads/Strijdom_van_der_Merwe_CV.pdf

About Victor van Aswegen:

Victor van Aswegen is a Cape Town-based filmmaker with a background in, successively, law, economics, development, finance, private equity, consultancy and business analytics. As filmmaker and founder-owner of CineSouth Studios, he now works principally as director and producer, and does the cinematography, post-production and editing on his films himself. His work to date has dealt with the nature of complex systems, the traumatic experience of people forcibly displaced by conflict and persecution, the parallel arcs of urbanisation and the human life cycle from childhood to parenthood, and an urban resilience stress event in the form of the 2017-2018 Cape Town water crisis. He has made two previous films about artists and their work: *Máquina do Mundo* (2017), a conversation with Paris-based artist Katja Gentric, and *Displaced* (2020), a retrospective of the oeuvre of South African artist Emma Willemse that has received laurels from more than fifty festivals on five continents.

www.cinesouthstudios.com/director

www.displaced-thefilm.com/#festivals

About CineSouth Studios:

Cape Town-based CineSouth Studios undertakes and delivers feature-length and larger-scale multiyear film projects. The films of the studio's founder-owner and director Victor van Aswegen engage the big-picture topics, at a time when these include some of the most consequential questions ever to confront humanity.

www.cinesouthstudios.com