

15 July 2025

## ***Futures\_Past* project launches: Using immersive technologies to reimagine heritage in Southern Africa**

The Embassy of France in South Africa, Lesotho, and Malawi, is proud to announce the launch of *Futures\_Past: Amplifying Memory with Immersive Technologies* – a two-year project that invites archival and cultural institutions to explore new ways of engaging the public through immersive storytelling.

*Futures\_Past* is a regional response to pressing challenges in the heritage sector, including limited digitisation tools, shifting audience expectations, and the need for innovative public engagement. The project supports institutions in reanimating archival collections through immersive formats such as virtual and augmented reality, spatial audio, and interactive installations.

*"Futures\_Past is about pushing the boundaries of how we experience history,"* said Emmanuelle Denavit-Feller, Regional Head of New Media, Film & Television at IFAS. *"It's a chance to build unexpected creative partnerships, surface overlooked stories, and explore how technology can deepen our connection to memory and place."*

*"Electric South has been committed to building the immersive media ecosystem since 2015. We are delighted to be partnering with IFAS on Futures\_Past to create new collaborations between immersive practitioners and archival institutions,"* said Ingrid Kopp, Director of Labs and Partnerships at Electric South. *"This is an opportunity to open up archives to new audiences through engaging experiences and to make the public more aware of the incredible stories in our shared past."*

The project includes three core components:

- A **sector mapping and policy study** on immersive arts in South Africa, Lesotho, and Malawi;
- A **mobility and networking programme** in France for up to 20 professionals, to connect with immersive arts institutions, markets and festivals;
- The **creation and public exhibition of six immersive digital works**, developed by creative teams in collaboration with selected institutions.

This project is initiated by the French Institute of South Africa (IFAS) in collaboration with Electric South, and made possible thanks to funding from the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs.

## Open call now live for archival and cultural institutions in South Africa, Lesotho and Malawi

<b>Deadline for submissions: 12 August 2025</b>
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As part of the project launch, an open call is now live for archival and cultural institutions in South Africa, Lesotho, and Malawi to participate in *Futures\_Past*. Applications are welcomed from public and private museums, archives, cultural centres, libraries, universities, and heritage organisations that:

- Hold cultural, historical, or community-based archives or collections;
- Are committed to innovative public engagement;
- Can offer free access to proposed materials for creative reinterpretation;
- Are willing to host an exhibition of the final work (venue, staffing, and coordination);
- Are open to the digitisation and creative transformation of archival content.

Prior experience with immersive technologies is **not required**.

Six selected institutions will:

- Collaborate with immersive storytellers to reanimate their selected collections
- Receive a dedicated production budget and full technical support to support the development of immersive digital artworks inspired by the selected archival collections.
- Host a public exhibition of the final work
- Take part in an international mobility programme to France
- Build capacity in digital storytelling and public engagement

Interested institutions are invited to submit:

- A brief institutional profile;
- A description of the proposed collection or archive;
- A statement of interest and support;
- Contact details of a nominated project lead;
- A letter of commitment from institutional leadership.

**For full open call details**, visit the [IFAS website](#).

**For enquiries and application submissions**, please email: [info@electricsouth.org](mailto:info@electricsouth.org).

**Note:** A call for immersive artists interested in participating in the project will be published in the coming months.

**Media contact:**

Gabriella Brondani | Urban Espresso

On behalf of the French Institute of South Africa and Electric South

[gabbi@urbanespreso.co.za](mailto:gabbi@urbanespreso.co.za) | +27 79 696 1800

### **About the French Institute of South Africa:**

The [French Institute of South Africa \(IFAS\)](#), the cultural arm of the French Embassy, has supported creative cooperation between South Africa, France, and the continent since 1995. With a growing portfolio in the heritage and archiving space, IFAS has played a key role in major regional initiatives aimed at safeguarding memory and advancing access to historical resources. Notable projects include the [digitisation of the Rivonia Trial tapes](#) in partnership with South African institutions and France's National Audiovisual Institute (INA), as well as cooperation with the [Morija Museum & Archives in Lesotho](#) to preserve shared histories and digitise valuable collections. Recently, IFAS co-hosted the regional seminar Advancing Audiovisual Heritage: Policy, Practice, and Cross-Border Partnerships in Cape Town with INA and the Agence française de développement (AFD). This seminar formed part of the broader *Unboxing Mayibuye* programme, which also included a regional mapping study and a professional training course on managing audiovisual archives.

### **About Electric South:**

[Electric South](#) is a non-profit organisation based in Cape Town, South Africa. The organisation contributes to building a robust storytelling ecosystem in Africa, grounded in immersive and interactive technologies. Committed to industry development, Electric South creates opportunities and resources for African artists and creative technologists through mentorship, [workshops and labs including the flagship New Dimensions Lab](#), project funding, convenings, research, advocacy and field building. Electric South works with the ecosystem of African creators, industry, civil society, and governments, bridging these diverse sectors to create an enabling environment for artists and technologists and to reshape the trajectory of emerging technologies. Immersive projects produced with the support of Electric South have won numerous awards and been exhibited all over the world including at Sundance, Venice and IDFA DocLab.