

PROFESSOR KIM BERMAN HONOURED WITH NRF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AWARD

Professor Kim Berman, a renowned figure in the South African art community, was recently awarded the National Research Foundation's (NRF) Public Engagement with Research Award. This prestigious accolade recognises her exemplary efforts in making her research more accessible to the public. Prof Berman, a senior academic at the University of Johannesburg since 1995 and a full professor since 2018, received this honour on 22 August 2024 during the NRF Awards Ceremony at Sun City.



Throughout her 29-year career, Prof Berman's commitment to blending art with social change has been unwavering. Her work extends beyond academic boundaries, focusing on community-based projects aimed at poverty alleviation and social upliftment. One of her notable contributions is as co-founder of Pumani Paper, a government-funded project aimed at alleviating poverty across 20 communities through teaching print and papermaking skills. Her hands-on involvement in this initiative since 2000 highlights her dedication to empowering communities through art.

Prof Berman also co-founded The Lockdown Project, an initiative that raised over R3 million to support artists affected by COVID-19. Notably, the project gained traction with the help of acclaimed artist William Kentridge, whose contribution helped raise an additional R1.5 million through print donations.

Over the past decade, Prof Berman has further cemented her legacy by introducing two pioneering postgraduate Art Therapy programmes at the University of Johannesburg's Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture (FADA). These programmes, approved by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA), are the first of their kind in Africa. They offer innovative approaches to addressing trauma and social issues through art, extending her passion for using creative methods to bring about social change.

Prof Federico Freschi, Executive Dean of FADA, aptly summarised her impact, stating, "Prof Berman's research journey exemplifies a steadfast commitment to community engagement and social change through innovative arts-based methodologies, resulting in tangible benefits for marginalised communities."

Prof Berman's work continues to bridge the gap between academia and community involvement, leaving a lasting legacy in the fields of both art and social justice.

Berman K. 2024. The story of Artist Proof Studio and the building of a democratic art school in South Africa in *Designing Schools and Democratic Learning Environments: A Global Perspective*. Nathan Mendoza, J. Rojas, G. (Eds) Palgrave Macmillan.

Link to my research papers: https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-46297-9_34

Link to my NRF award: https://www.nrf.ac.za/about-us/nrf-awards/2024-2/public-engagement-with-research-award-2024/?fbclid=IwY2xjawE-sEV1eHRuA2FlbQixMAABHayXgXpBlzhLqMeGxmVsxuqhpptyOqSl-jNjgXMg8mrykdVMqHSztITNpw_aem_316-5PwQ4WBX_dNu3bQiBw

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