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## **UCT PhD candidate awarded national honour for arts contribution**



UCT PhD candidate, Gavin Krastin, has been awarded the Order of Ikhamanga in Bronze. Photo: supplied.

In recognition of his contribution to performance art, curation and arts education in South Africa, Gavin Krastin, a PhD candidate at the University of Cape Town (UCT), has been awarded the Order of Ikhamanga in Bronze, a distinguished national honour presented by the state president to esteemed citizens.

The Order of Ikhamanga is awarded to South Africans who have excelled in the fields of arts, culture, literature, music, journalism and sport. It recognises exceptional achievement and dedication that benefit the country. Krastin received the award from President Cyril Ramaphosa at the Sefako Makgatho Presidential Guesthouse in Pretoria on Tuesday, 19 May 2026.

Krastin is currently completing his PhD in live art, interdisciplinary and public art in UCT's [Centre for Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies](#). His work spans live art performance,

curation, artistic research and arts education. He is also the founder of Live Art Arcade, a nomadic exhibition platform that supports early-career artists working in interdisciplinary live art, with a focus on durational and site-responsive practice.

"Being honoured with the Order of Ikhamanga in Bronze carries immense significance and is something I could never have imagined receiving when I first started making art," said Krastin. "I am deeply humbled by this recognition and for the ways in which my academic, artistic and pedagogical work has been supported through institutional affiliations, collaborations and engagements over the years."

Krastin said he was overwhelmed with gratitude that his work in the field had been recognised nationally.

"Much of my work has existed within spaces that are experimental, marginal and often difficult to sustain. So, to have live art, performance and curation recognised in this way feels incredibly meaningful."

He said the award reflects the collective efforts of artists, collaborators, students, technicians and audiences who have contributed to and shared in his work over the years. He added that the recognition affirms the important role artistic practice can play in shaping cultural, intellectual and political conversations in society.

"I carry the honour with deep gratitude, but also with a strong sense of responsibility toward the future of live art, arts education and younger generations of artists working under often difficult conditions," he said.

Krastin's doctoral research focuses on reimagining the role of curators in live art and performance. While curators are often understood as organisers of exhibitions and events, his research argues that they play a far more active and creative role in shaping artistic experiences and encounters.

"My thesis also engages with the idea of 'worlding' and asks how curatorial practices do not simply present art, but actively produce ways of being together, perceiving and relating to the world. And in this sense, curating becomes a process of creating conditions through which alternative social, spatial and imaginative possibilities can emerge," Krastin said.

Throughout his career, his work has explored the relationship between the body and the social, political, material and spatial worlds it inhabits. He is particularly interested in how bodies carry memory, vulnerability, resistance and tension, and how performance can make these experiences visible.

"I am particularly drawn to the ways in which live art can disrupt habitual ways of seeing and inviting audiences into encounters that are immediate, intimate and unpredictable. I am also continually inspired by the artists, students and communities I work alongside, which is why this award belongs to all of them too," he said.

*Story by Niémah Davids, UCT News.*

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