

# The secret lives of objects

What might seem like inanimate objects and silent artifacts sometimes have powerful stories to tell – it's all in the way you look at them. For a different view, visit these two Iziko exhibitions that explore sound and sound-related artifacts as a chronicle of our culture and history.

By: Alma Viviers



## Recording history: Labels by Siemon Allen

Installed on the second floor of the Iziko Slave Lodge is an exhibition by Siemon Allen, consisting of 2 500 record labels spanning decades of local tunes and diverse artists. Taking the form of an organic suspended wall inserted into a room, the exhibition draws you into a more intimate space where you can explore each item up close. The labels serve as markers of time, change, politics and culture in South Africa. Here are three recordings of key moments in our history:

### "64 RCA Victor, *Chants D'Afrique* featuring Miriam Makeba and Hugh Masekela

Recorded in France in the year that Miriam Makeba and Hugh Masekela were married, this album features Miriam alongside artists like Jonas Gwangwa and Francisco Flores, with orchestration handled by Hugh.

### "88 Recommended Recordings, *Sleep Armed* by the Kalahari Surfers

Released in the third year of the State of Emergency in South Africa, the record features tracks like *Potential Aggressor* and *Teargas*, and is hailed as a "snapshot of South Africa at the time".



### "84 Ember Records *"Why I am Ready to Die"* by Nelson Mandela, narrated by Peter Finch

The album contains extracts from Nelson Mandela's 1964 Rivonia Trial speech, read by Peter Finch, and including these immortal words: "During my lifetime I have dedi-

cated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all

persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."

Step through time and sound with Siemon Allen's exhibition at Iziko Slave Lodge, up until December 2013. For an electronic exploration of Siemon's collection, go to [www.flatinternational.org](http://www.flatinternational.org).

**Iziko Slave Lodge**  
Corner of Adderley and Wale Streets  
T: 021 467 7229  
Open 10h00 to 17h00, Monday to Saturday  
Entrance: R30 for visitors 19 years and older