

# Works of Art Committee

Annual Report 2021



Gerard Machona, *Survive*, 2018



# Contents

<b>Overview</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Committee Members</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Curation</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Beattie Installation</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Conservation</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Collaborations</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Exhibitions</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Public Engagement and Online Presence</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Website, Database and Social Media</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Research and Writing</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Collections Management</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Acquisitions</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Commissions</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Deaccessioning</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Fire</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Funding Model</b>	<b>13</b>

# Overview

The year 2021 was the first year for the Works of Art Committee (WOAC) to implement the plan it devised in a series of workshops in 2020. Working partly online and remotely, the committee set its sights on addressing the focus areas that we identified. These are:

- Curation
- Conservation
- Public engagement and online presence
- Collaborations
- Acquisitions and Commissions
- Fundraising

These focus areas are aimed at reviving curatorial approaches to art installation across campuses, generating research and writing on the individual works in the collection, as well as establishing collaboration with curators and art scholars in other higher education institutions, museums and art organisations. We commenced the work towards conserving the artworks that are displayed on campus, especially those that are at risk (i.e. to elemental damage). We also approached artists and curators to create, specifically for the UCT collection, work that is aligned to our broad mandate and advances our transformation ideals.

One of the crucial matters that occupied the committee in the first part of 2021 was the discussion about the changing of the funding model. WOAC has historically been primarily mandated to acquire artworks and relied on the acquisitions budget. That budget has been based on 1% of the cost of all new buildings at UCT (as indicated in the Acquisitions Policy). The 1% for acquisition did not include the operational budget to enable us to carry out our broader mandate. In 2021, the full budget allocation was placed within the CAPEX section of the annual budget, and would be structured as two budget asks: one for acquisitions (not based on the 1%) and the other for operations. No acquisition budget was allocated for the year

2021. The committee received only the operational budget which enabled the ongoing work in conserving works, generating writing, re-curation, storage and the initiation of public programmes.

First, we set out to commission live arts and creative interventions focussed on the significance of the Sara Baartman precinct. This project is now known as *The Fire This Time*. Second, we initiated an exhibition titled *it's a gathering of the elders: about the life and work of George Hallett* in collaboration with two curators of Iziko South African National Gallery based on the works of George Hallett that we acquired in 2020. Third, we started discussions with curators of the Goethe Institute about hosting the *Feminism Ya Mang* exhibition. These programmes will be launched and will open this year (2022).

Another key matter was the revision of the Curatorial Policy. It was brought to our attention that the existing draft, which is available on our website, is yet to be passed by Senate and Council. It was initially drafted in 2017/8 and arose out of the recommendations drafted by the Artwork Task Team of 2015 for Council. In preparing the curatorial policy for submission, a sub-committee formed in 2021.

The current Curatorial Policy draft is driven by four principles:

- 1) to ensure the provision of public access.
- 2) to demonstrate leadership in transformation, inclusivity and social justice (ensuring that issues of gender, race, sexuality, class, dis/ability are well-considered and promoted through the Collection and its public engagement).
- 3) to lead in education and researching platforms (organising with departments / faculties colloquia, seminars, lectures and other programmes of engagement).
- 4) to sustain accountability - representative of the excellence of African and South African-

focused fine and creative arts as in the display and enhancement of the built environment as well as transforming learning spaces.

There are also a number of crucial points outlined in the draft Curatorial Policy. One of these is the importance of appointing a university Curator. WOAC members have limited terms and as memberships change, institutional memory is lost. As it stands, it is hard to locate records, to find works that might have been installed decades ago, are reflected in our database but cannot be found in the locations indicated. In these past few months, the current Acting Director of the Irma Stern Museum, the administrative centre of WOAC, has had to put in hours in search for artworks and documents to update our records. Likewise, the fire that tore down the Jagger library, destroyed artworks in the collection, some of which were loan artworks, has shown us how crucial it will be to have a dedicated full time curator, advised by WOAC, who will oversee the record-keeping, conservation, archiving, educational programmes and research. The current situation is simply unsustainable and provides no mechanism to protect the university's highly valuable assets.

Also included in the draft policy is the long-standing issue of the need for a dedicated museum or gallery – a discussion spanning decades since the 1970s. Each year, the university spends a fortune on external storage costs. Not only is this fruitless and wasteful expenditure, it also makes it difficult to use the collection for teaching programmes. Works that are not on display are still important for educational programmes and research. It is difficult to make the work accessible for researchers or students to study when it is kept in an off-campus storage facility and is not catalogued properly.

Understandably, there are many dimensions to this discussion. One of them being the critique of the very nature of a museum as a relic of imperialism. However, we have seen how art spaces could be transformed and re-imagined in form and function. As a university, we lack the very basic requirement of

having an art collection: the space from which its cultural, historical and educational value can be fully realised, researched, studied and shared with the university community and the general public. Recently, we have struggled to book spaces for our collaborative exhibitions with the Goethe Institute and the Curators of Iziko South African National Gallery. The two small galleries on campus, Michaelis Galleries and CAS gallery are often occupied with internal departmental programmes. The latter charges a hefty sum for exhibitions, and is therefore not always a cost-effective option. To fully realise our transformation objectives there needs to be a recognition of the necessity to address these question of space. The draft policy places art as an integral part of the academic project and incorporates Teaching and Learning, Community Engagement as well as Institutional Culture.

As a committee that oversees the collection of a university, we acknowledge that our collection is part of a broader art ecosystem. As such, we bear the social responsibility to contribute to the collective efforts to sustain creative work through an ethic of care and solidarity with other art institutions and practitioners. The committee drew heavily on the mandate of the Transformation 2030 vision and the objectives it has set for more efficient and effective working, including better communication with stakeholders, a clearer mandate regarding acquisitions, increased focus on student and staff engagement, and ensuring that the collection becomes integral to the academic project of the university.

I am also deeply grateful to Dr Portia Malatjie who stepped in as Acting Chair from July-December 2021 while I was on Research and Study leave.

*Nomusa Makhubu (Chairperson)*

# Committee Members

- **A/Prof. Nomusa Makhubu**, Michaelis School of Fine Art, Senate Representative (Chair)
- **Dr Portia Malatjie**, Senior Lecturer, Michaelis School of Fine Art, Art History Representative (Deputy Chair)
- **Lucinda Cullum** (Servicing Officer)
- **Prof. Martin Hall**, Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Transformation
- **Prof. Jay Pather**, Director: Institute for Creative Arts
- **A/Prof. Kurt Campbell**, Director: Michaelis School of Fine Art
- **A/Prof. Alta Steenkamp**, School of Architecture, Planning & Geomatics, University Building & Development Committee (UB&DC) Representative
- **Dr Ruchi Chaturvedi**, Senior Lecturer, Dept. of Sociology, Senate Representative
- **Prof. Jane Alexander**, Michaelis School of Fine Art, Senate Representative
- **Dr Nyakato Phillipa Tumubweinee**, Director: School of Architecture, Planning & Geomatics, Senate Representative
- **Nadja Daehnke**, Director: Irma Stern Collection
- **Desleen Saffier**, Director: Estates and Custodial Services, Co-opted member
- **Matthew Field**, Student Representative Council (SRC) Representative
- **Cassie Robbertze**, Student Representative Council (SRC) Representative
- **Sivenathi Xuza**, Michaelis Student Council Representative
- Humanities Students Council Representative (tba)
- **Amogelang Maledu**, Co-opted member
- **Luvuyo Nyawose**, Co-opted member
- Curator of the University Collections (Vacant)
- Chairperson of the University's Heritage and Collections Stewardship Committee (Vacant)





# Curation

## Beattie Installation

The Works of Art Committee identified the Foyers of the Beattie Building as a high traffic area, with many students and staff passing through here, and as an area that is a central point for the Humanities Department. Symbolically this is an important site that echoes the values that underpin the work done by the Humanities Department.

Artworks were installed on the Ground and the Second floor of the Beattie building and included works by Hanneem Christian, Colbert Mashile, Sam Nhlengethwa, Laura Windvogel (Lady Skollie), Thanduxolo Ma-awu, Akudzwe Chiwa, Athi Patra-Ruga and others.

This was the first time we could re-curate on campus after a long period of pandemic restrictions.



Beattie Building, Ground Floor, Photo: Vanessa Cowling (all images of Beattie in this document)



# Conservation

The importance of conservation cannot be overstated. Since 2017, WOAC has re-curated a number of spaces across campus. These include Menzies Glass House, Environmental and Geographical Science building, Hoerikwaggo, Otto Beit, Molly Blackburn Hall, New Lecture Theatre, AC Jordan, School of Economics, Bremner, Ombud's Office, GSB Conference Centre, Bernard Fuller, Falmouth Building, Hiddingh Hall and more recently, Beattie building. This has been paramount in changing the ways in which spaces on campus are experienced. However, the committee cannot ensure optimal environments for works in all buildings (temperature control, UV protection, breakage, insect infestation, etc). For this reason, regular checks are necessary and we continue to monitor the various installations.

In 2021, WOAC members were allocated to various spaces to check for works at risk and we found many artworks exposed to too much sunlight without UV protection, sculptures that need plinths, works with many small components that may be easy to touch or remove and so on. This process is ongoing and new acquisitions are now encased or framed with conservation objectives in mind.





# Collaborations

George Hallett, *Peter Clarke's Feet*

## Exhibitions

In 2021, the committee began working on two significant collaborative exhibitions which will open to UCT staff and students and the public in 2022. These are:

- *Feminism Ya Mang* in collaboration with the Goethe Institut curated by Masechaba Moloji, Motlatsi Khosi, and Samantha Modisenyane.
- *It's a gathering of the elders: about the life and work of George Hallett* in collaboration with Ingrid Masondo and Tshegofatso Mabaso of Iziko South African National Gallery.

## *Feminism Ya Mang*

In the travelling exhibition *Feminism Ya Mang*, curators Motlatsi Khosi, Masechaba Moloji and Samantha Modisenyane encourage viewers to interrogate their own experiences and perceptions of 'feminism' as both a label and a movement. The exhibition acknowledges the different shapes and forms of female identity – both those chosen and those given by society. The exhibition further highlights the array of different interpretations and expressions of 'feminism'. The *Feminism Ya Mang* exhibition is accompanied by a series of events, performances and discussions which are archived on the website of the exhibition. The outcomes of these initial discussions will be detailed in the 2022 report at the completion of the project.





## *It's a gathering of the elders: about the life and work of George Hallett (borrowed from a James Matthews poem)*

WOAC acquired a large and very significant collection of Hallett photographs just prior to his passing in 2020. This exhibition, curated by guest curators Ingrid Masondo and Tshegofatso Mabaso, both of the Iziko South African National Gallery, is a long overdue acknowledgement of the tremendous contribution the photographer George Hallett made to both culture and the political activism in South Africa and abroad.

In looking at and engaging with the 17 black-and-white photographs that were acquired by the WOAC in 2020, Masondo and Mabaso explore a curatorial approach that is not only focussed on the 'pictures-on-the-wall' model. After months of archival research, they have designed an exhibition and an accompanying public programme. They recently received positive responses from custodians of photography archives about the possibility of viewing materials by/about Hallett. There is confidence that a deeper engagement with Hallett's work and archives will contribute richly to the exhibition.

Exploring the shared experiences and anecdotes from those who have worked with George, with contributions from some of the many relations that touched Hallett's practice and life, Masondo and Mabaso construct portraits of Hallett (the ubiquity of photography and of Hallett's works vs the multiple lives of Hallett). Grappling with the notion of photographs as relational items, and portraiture as a strategy of representation amongst the marginalised, they engage in some critical debates about portraiture and biography as constitutive processes.

To engage with some of the artistic modes, works and biographies of the people that Hallett photographed and who influenced him, the curators ask: How did his explorations and relations contribute to notions of a portrait, of authorship, biography and/or the mythology of "the artist"? What notions and politics of the archive are all the interlocutors engaged in or could share about their archival practices and speak broadly about such

The poster features a large, high-contrast black and white photograph of a hand, likely Peter Clark's 'Feet, 1979'. The text is overlaid on the image. At the top left, a stylized 'S' logo is followed by the text 'it is a gathering of the elders'. To the right, 'conversation series #1' is written in a large, bold font. Below this, it says 'about the life and work of George Hallett'. The date and time are listed as '3RD FEBRUARY 2022 | 18H00<sup>SAST</sup>'. The names of the speakers, 'Eugene Skeef' and 'Lefifi Tladi', are prominently displayed in the center. Below their names, it says 'with Valmont Layne'. In the bottom right corner, there is a QR code with the text 'JOIN THE CONVERSATION' above it and 'SCAN TO REGISTER ONLINE' below it. At the bottom left, there are logos for the University of the Western Cape and WOAC. At the bottom right, a URL is provided: 'To register online visit this URL: <https://bit.ly/georgehallettconversation1>'.

practices/institutions from their context(s)? How do these interlocking connections also speak to networks of artistic production, collaboration and creative activism? What does it mean to be a custodian of Hallett's work?

The lives and contexts of Hallett's photographs may include the people and places that have contributed to the productions and circulations, interpretations and care of Hallett's work such as family members, some of the people who are photographed, printers, publishers, collectors, archivists, curators, etc. The research involves tracking the movement and uses of the photographs, locally and internationally. Also, many of the photographs from the UCT collection forms part of larger bodies of work. Thinking through notions of archival practice, what is at stake when presenting and/or collecting single images that form part of larger narratives, and even movements?

The attempt to track Hallett's utterances beyond image through written and spoken word (in interviews, catalogues, presentations, etc.) seeks to engage with his contributions to the debates about the relationship between text and image, which is critical to photography and other productive discourses. How these questions of voice and text are also situated in different socio-political context: the suppression of apartheid South Africa, conditions of exile, and post-apartheid democratic South Africa.

During the research Masondo and Mabaso discovered that the 17 photographs have sparse captions with many of the images belonging to different and unrelated bodies of work. There is limited available material online on these 17 works. Other challenges include the fact that many libraries and archives were closed and inaccessible in the period due to the current global pandemic (including the UCT Library which has a substantial Hallett collection but was also adversely impacted on by the fire in early 2020). These gaps are currently being filled and these challenges have catalysed a series of research questions that are not only focused on the photographs, but questions of artistic production and practice, notions of collaboration, disciplinary and institutional entanglements with photography, and the politics of the archive. Through a series of discursive platforms and an exhibition, we aim to engage with some of these questions.

## PUBLIC PROGRAMMING ACCOMPANYING THE EXHIBITION

### *Conversation series*

A series of virtual conversations is being developed to engage with some of the above questions. These following are anticipated:

Participants: elders Eugene Skeef and Lefifi Tladi, who developed friendships with Hallett during his exile years in London in the 1980s, and shared their personal experiences (and perhaps archival materials) on Hallett. The conversation was guided by researcher-musician-curator, Valmont Layne. This event was covered by UCT News:

<https://www.news.uct.ac.za/article/-2022-02-22-research-exhibit-exiled-artists-work-lest-they-become-intellectual-refugees>

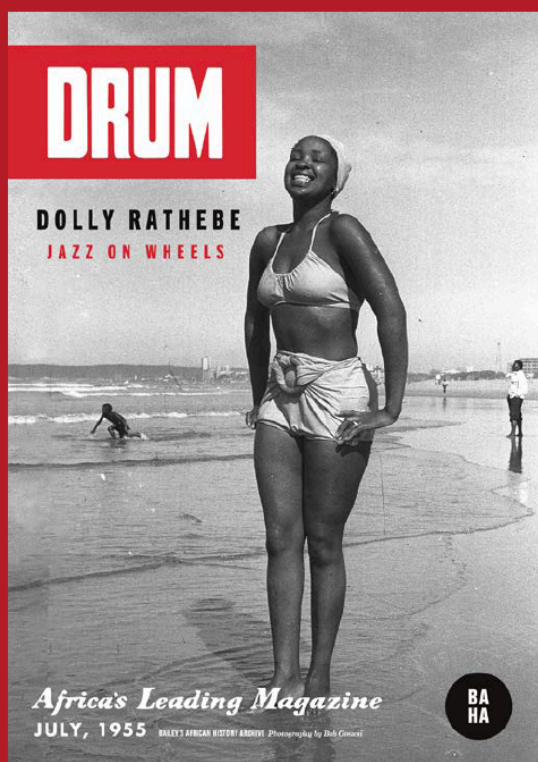
# Public Engagement and Online Presence

## Website, Database and Social Media

The website has been updated regularly to announce new acquisitions and activities of WOAC. Additional to ongoing posts on the WOAC social media pages and WOAC website, the UCT art collection and WOAC projects were also featured in UCT News.

## Research and Writing

WOAC started a new project in which we task emerging and prominent writers to write about artworks that have been newly acquired for the collection. The first two of these essays have been published and are available on the WOAC website. Writers such as Nkgopoleng Moloi, Luvuyo Nyawose, Dr Fari Nzinga, and Jared Leite have written about artists such as George Pemba, Bob Gosani, Gerald Machona and Haneem Christian. Some of these have featured in the UCT News page. Two further essays have been written and designed and will be published early 2022. This project allows deeper engagement with the collection and encourages awareness of the changing face of the UCT Works of Art Collection.



**Dolly Rathebe  
photographed by  
Bob Gosani, at  
the Durban beach  
- July 1955 for  
Drum Magazine**



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# Collections Management

## Acquisitions

WOAC is researching art trends and availability of work to augment the collection with artworks that are not only significant in their own right, but that also fill in gaps that exist in the collection in order to balance the acquisition of emerging African artists with that of major established artists. To this end the committee has started the process of acquiring a series of works from Luvuyo Nyawose, as well as a prominent multi-media work from Kim Karabo Makin. We did not have an acquisitions budget in 2021 and were only able to finalise these acquisitions at the beginning of 2022.

## Commissions

In the absence of an acquisitions budget, we commissioned a series of interventions anchored in and around the Sarah Baartman precinct known as *The Fire This Time*. The title is in reference to James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time* (1963) and Jemsyn Ward's contemporary follow-up, *The Fire This Time*. This project aims to engage with the complexities of the histories that colour the sites in this particular area and to re-imagine it through live art and temporary installations. Located on UCT's Upper Campus, the Sarah Baartmaan precinct has been a key



site of protest for decades. In August 1968, students protested against the rescission of the Archie Mafeje appointment to UCT in front of what was then known as the Jameson Hall. The Jameson Hall was renamed the Sara Baartman Hall in 2018. Near the precinct is the main library where performances responding to the Sara Baartman sculpture by Willie Bester took place. The precinct is also the contested space of the Rhodes Must Fall and the Shackville protests in 2015 and 2016. Responding to the theme of *The Fire This Time*, the space and its histories, through artistic interventions including but not limited to performance, spark conversation around the history of protest within the campus. The project outcome will be provided in detail in the 2022 report.

## Deaccessioning

Collections management is an ongoing task that is imperative and the committee was heavily involved with this. A large aspect of this was the ongoing task of selling works that had been identified for deaccessioning in 2020.

## Fire

The tragic fires, which affected the Jagger Library, the HW Pearson building as well as the Smuts and Fuller residences, impacted on the UCT Collection. The following artworks were lost:

- Derek Bauer, *Cartoon of Molly Blackburn* (1986)
- Vivienne Koorland, *Blue Contents* (1998)
- Helen Sebidi, *Life is a Wheel* [undated, Hans Porer Loan]
- Karel Nel, *Picton de la Fournaise* (1999) [Hans Porer Loan]
- Karel Nel, *Nights Tide, Reunion* (1999)
- Undocumented artist, *Ewe Cloth*, [undated, Hans Porer Loan]
- Mawande ka Zenzile, *Portrait of Samora Machel* (2013)
- Mawande ka Zenzile, *Portrait of Elizabeth II: Forever More* (2013)
- Mawande ka Zenzile, *Portrait of Toussaint Louverture* (2013)
- Mawande ka Zenzile, *Portrait of Patrice Lumumba* (2013)
- Bongji Bhengu, *The Bride* (1999)
- Andrew Putter, *Hottentots' Holland: Flora Capensis 4* (2008) (replacement print requested)

Among these were works on loan from the Hans Porer Collection. The fire was a setback for the university and for the committee in particular. A majority of the works that were lost are irreplaceable. Some were key artworks by major South African Black women modern artists, i.e. works by Bongji Bhengu and Helen Sebidi. As we continue to generate writing on the collection, we will also consider this list of works.



# Funding Model

The Works of Art Committee has historically been primarily mandated to acquire artworks and relied on the acquisitions budget. That budget has been based on 1% of all new building erected by UCT (as indicated in the Acquisitions Policy). The 1% allocation is regarded as a progressive way of ensuring a constant stream of funding for the university's art collection. The last building to which this was applied was the build for the Obz Square residence.

Following the revision of the Terms of Reference in 2016, the mandate of WOAC was placed squarely within the transformation agenda, necessitating re-curation, the co-ordination of public talks, performances and live art interventions. To fulfil this mandate, a budget request from the VC's Discretionary fund was made from 2017/2018, in addition to the 1%. This budget was placed in the Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor: Transformation and Student Affairs. Given that the VC's Discretionary funding is short-term funding, it was decided that the operations budget would be managed via UCT Properties and Services. Concerns were raised about the viability of the current allocation structure given the changes in the Higher Education landscape (tighter budgets, hybrid [online and physical] working environments, etc). The full budget allocation would now be placed within the CAPEX section of the annual budget and it would be structured as two budget asks: one for acquisitions (not based on the 1%) and the other for operations.

Discussion about fundraising have remained on the WOAC agenda. These included the possibility of establishing a Friends of WOAC, a standard practice in most institutions. Friends of WOAC would be external to the institution but would provide a resource of support for programmes. We continue to explore various possibilities to build a comprehensive African art collection with lively and vibrant public programmes.





Haneem Christian, *The House of Le Cap* (From *The Memorial Ball*), 2020

