

UCT Works of Art Committee

June 2017 to March 2019

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Image: Buhlebezwe Siwani, *Ilanga Litshonile*, 2017

Introduction

The current committee for the UCT Works of Art Collection was constituted in June 2017, under Chair of Associate Professor Jay Pather. In the wake of protests and complaints around the selection and display of works of art at UCT, the committee was tasked with:

- Addressing the transformation of the art collection and its display at UCT as a matter of urgency
- Executing decisions made by the UCT Artworks Task team and ratified by Senate
- Being the custodian for the art collection and see to collections management tasks

This is a summary of the activities and achievements of the UCT Works of Art Committee from June 2017 to March 2019.

Acquisitions

A 2016 investigation by the Artworks Task Team found that 79.1% of the collection consisted of work produced by white artists. The Task Team also found that, to a lesser extent, art by male artists dominated the collection holdings. In line with this, the WOAC was tasked with addressing this imbalance in the collection through new acquisitions.

The committee has acquired works from prominent and internationally recognised, emerging, as well as newly graduating artists.

Works were acquired by the following artists:

Sethembile Msezane	3 works
Buhlebezwe Siwani	2 works
Mongezi Ncephayi	1 work
Igshaan Adams	1 work
Senzeni Marasela	1 work
Aida Muluneh	3 works
Hasan and Husain Essop	1 work
Pamela Phatimo Sustrum	2 works
Letso Leipego	1 work
Adolf Tega	1 work
Thania Petersen	2 works
Nobukho Nqaba	2 works
Thandiwe Msebenzi	1 work
Quaid Heneke	1 work
Thembakazi Matroshe	4 works
Shakes Tembani	1 work
Maurice Mbikayi	1 work



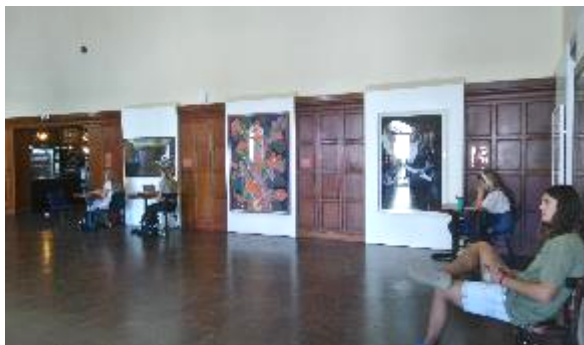
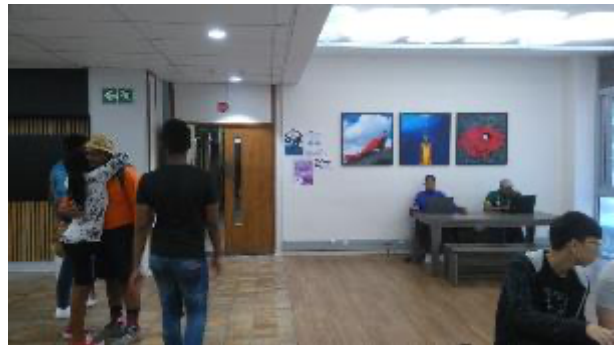
Additional to these acquisitions, the WOAC also commissioned artist Laurence Theunissen to produce a set of collages to replace those collages which were destroyed during protests.

Re-curation

The Works of Art Committee has tackled numerous campus-wide rehangs reflecting a new approach to the collection, its display and its interaction with the university community.

Additional to some re-curations in offices, such re-hangings included projects in the public areas of the New Economics building, the Environmental and Geographical Sciences building, The Menzies Glass House, The Otto Beit Foyer, and the Health Sciences Library, as well as the larger-scale projects of curating the Molly Blackburn Hall and the New Lecture Theatre building. Such re-curations are ongoing and the latest spaces to be tackled include the Wolfson Pavilion, the Sports Science Institute and the Bremner building.

In some cases re-curations were accompanied by workshops and sustained discussions with stakeholders. In most cases re-curation projects were initiated after a request from the building users and departments for a reconsideration of the art in their buildings. The only spaces where this was not the case was in areas that serve a broad number of departments, and hence do not have defined stakeholders.



Events

WOAC also organised a number of public events, open to UCT staff and students and the general public.

These events were:

Remaking Place, 2017

Remaking Place was held at the Sarah Baartman (Memorial) Hall and featured lectures, artistic and performative interventions and presentations by noted and award-winning art practitioners, theorists and academics. The event featured lectures and presentations by:

Dr Same Mdluli (curator and writer)
Nkule Mabaso (Curator, Michaelis Galleries)
Andre Lamprecht (Michaelis School of Art)
Sethembile Msezane (award-winning artist and UCT graduate)
Koleka Putuma (poet and writer)
Soul Connexion (choir from Khayelitsha)
Indoni Dance Company

Information Talks: Facts, Figures, 2017

Several talks (hosted in association with the Institute for Creative Arts) helped flesh out ideas behind collections in decolonised spaces, curation and diverse publics. These included talks by:

- David Adjaye OBE, Ghanaian British architect and designer of the National Museum of African American History and Culture, located on the National Mall in Washington, DC gave talk entitled: *Heritage, Memory and Making Place*
- Thembinkosi Goniwe,, South African curator (Venice Biennale South African Pavilion), art historian and artist gave a lecture entitled *Art and Discontentment in the Time of Decolonising the University*. Goniwe has curated and exhibited nationally and internationally
- Hlonipha Mokoena (Associate Professor at WISER, WITS University) and Desiree Lewis (Professor at UWC) delivered Keynotes on the subject on *Decolonisation and the Creative Arts at the Third Space Symposium* with responses from Zimitri Erasmus (WITS) and Lwazi Lushaba (UCT).

Fishbowl Conversation: Willie Bester, 2017

A public conversation between artist Willie Bester and UCT students regarding the *Saartjie Baartman* sculpture.

Writing on the Wall: art collection and UCT, 2018

Art Historian Dr Nomusa Makhubu (UCT) and ICA Director Associate Professor Jay Pather (UCT) discussed new visions for, and new ways of engaging with the UCT art collection.

Saartjie Baartman Sculpture, 2018

A public conversation with artist Willie Bester and invited speakers

Invitation only discussion with artist Willie Bester, 2018

This discussion between select stakeholders and specialists was a closed event, held in preparation for the public conversation re the *Saartjie Baartman* sculpture.

Uhlambulu: resurrecting memory and restoring dignity in identity, 2018

A cleansing ritual performance directed by Mandla Mbothwe

Molly Blackburn Hall Exhibition Opening, 2018

Opening of the newly re-curated Molly Blackburn Hall, including a talk by Dr Nomusa Makhubu, performances by the UCT Choir and the UCT School of Dance. The art on this exhibition is accompanied by commissioned texts from students and academics in various departments, which speak about the artworks through the lenses of diverse disciplines.

Sarah (Saartjie) Baartman – a call to respond, 2018

An exhibition in the Bindery Gallery, UCT, featuring the Willie Bester's *Saartjie Baartman* sculpture. The sculpture was exhibited with a sound installation featuring a poem by Diane Ferris that inspired the work. Also on exhibition were images of the Bester sculpture when it was robbed while still on display at the Chancellor Oppenheimer Library on Upper Campus. Show together with these were other artworks that foreground continued vulnerabilities around black women.

At the exhibition opening event award-winning poet Koleka Putuma presented a performative reading of her poetry.



Deaccessioning

In line with best practice, the Works of Art Committee has started a process of deaccessioning collection pieces that do not fall within the mandate of the collection (such as mass-produced prints) and work that is irreparably damaged. WOAC is in the process of identifying experts in the field to advise on works to deaccession.

Policy

The WOAC implemented a new Collections Policy for the management of, and approach to the UCT Art Collection.

Collections Management

The Works of Art Committee ensured the safety and accessibility of the art collection through collections management tasks, most of which are ongoing:

- Internal audit of the collection
- Updating of information on the collection
- Reframing, repair and cleaning of artworks
- Establishing a new website for easier public access to information on the collection

Additionally, collection pieces not currently on display were re-housed in a safer and more appropriate storage.



Image: Thania Petersen, I am Royal – Cape Coast, 2018