



WOAC Senate Report 2023

Introduction

In the period covered by this report WOAC focused on re-structuring, with important and significant developments in terms of staffing and reporting lines. The focus on these large-scale structural issues meant that WOAC decided to be less active in areas such as acquisitions, events and re-curations.

New Curator and Collections Manager Post

2023 was a significant year for WOAC as, for the first time in the history of the UCT art collection, the university committed to and started the recruitment process for a dedicated, full-time T2 contract Curator and Collections Manager. The UCT Works of Art collection was founded in 1978 with the establishment of a committee and allocation of an acquisitions budget. Prior to this, the university had more informally acquired art through donations and bequests. During the 45 years of the WOA Committees existence up to 2023, the management and oversight of the collection always relied on the passion and input of already full-time employed and otherwise committed members of UCT staff.

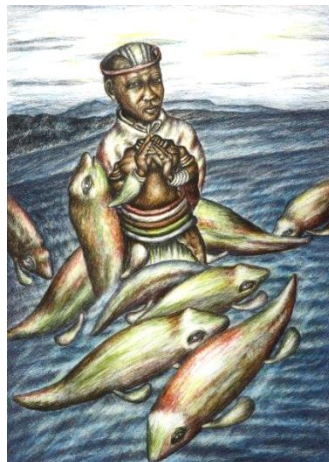
The major focus of WOAC's work in 2023 was to motivate for this post of Curator and Collections Manager. With UCT supporting and implementing this post, the Works of Art Collection can now get the artwork management it needs to maintain the assets in an acceptable condition. Additionally, the filling of this post means that the committee can more successfully fulfil its mandate of curating art at UCT in support of the university's Vision 2030.

Move to Libraries

Until 2023, the Works of Art Committee was housed under Property and Services (P&S). The second major achievement of 2023 was the move of this portfolio from P&S to instead fall under UCT Libraries. This move brings with it a strengthening of potential to use the collection for research, teaching and learning. Housed within the library, the collection will also fall within a context that is well-equipped and knowledgeable to deal with the conservation, record-keeping and archival aspects of an art collection.

Additionally, the siting of the collection in Libraries means that WOAC will be part of realising the exciting vision of a GLAM (Gallery, Libraries and Museums) strategy at UCT.

It is also anticipated that the change of reporting lines to Libraries will bring progress for the ongoing search for a dedicated WOAC art centre and on-campus storage for the collection (which is currently housed in very costly off-site commercial storage).



Curation

With the focus on motivating for and implementing the new curator post and move to Libraries, curatorial and other projects were given less emphasis in 2023. Nonetheless, WOAC managed a substantial re-hang of art in Glenara, additional to several smaller-scale curation and collections management projects. These included:

- Removals and re-installation of artwork to ensure the safety of displayed art where departments were renovating
- Discussion and planning of new art installations for the Office of the Ombud and the New Neville Alexander Building
- Confirming insurance values for works in the collection
- Dealing with loan requests from the Iziko South African National Gallery and loan returns from the Barnes Foundation (Philadelphia, USA) and the Norval Foundation
- Work toward a WOAC brochure
- Making ongoing corrections where there are errors in the database

Research and Publication

Since 2020 WOAC has commissioned emerging writers to write an essay on recently acquired artwork. In 2023 two such commissioned pieces were published on the WOAC website.

Conservation

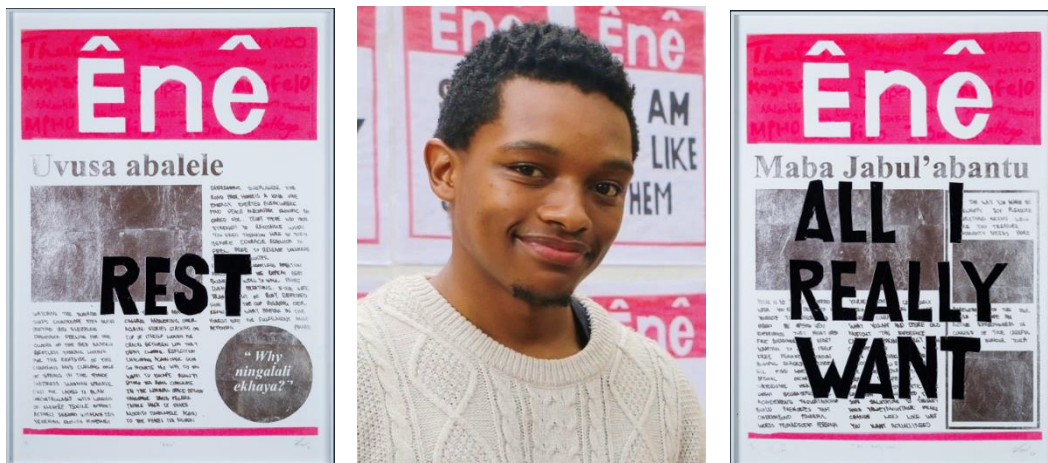
WOAC identified that four high-value artworks were at risk and had already seen some damage due to historical inadequate framing. This meant that these works had to undergo conservation treatment and be reframed. This sort of conservation work is imperative as without it UCT's investment in art is at risk.

Leadership

The Chair of the Works of Art Committee Chair, Professor Nomusa Makhubu, handed over to Acting Chair Professor Portia Malatjie in July this year. In turn Dr Ruchi Chaturvedi took over as Acting Chair in October 2023.

Acquisitions

For an art collection to remain relevant and to grow as an asset, it is important that new works get acquired and accessioned into the collection. This year WOAC focused on work that was considered important to purchase to fill a gap in the collection, with the acquisition of two art-pieces that consider the complications of masculinity and gender, created by emerging artist Oratile Papi Konope.



Ongoing projects

In 2023 WOAC has received a number of requests to re-curate spaces at UCT, and these are either pending action when the new Curator takes up their position, or are in process. Similarly, WOAC started working towards a booklet, to be completed in 2024.

Website and Database

Website and Database maintenance is an ongoing unavoidable expense. The database is at the core of Collections Management, and regular updates are crucial to maintaining the collection. The WOAC website is the primary way in which WOAC communicates with its audiences and hence is kept up to date and functional.

Meetings

The Works of Art Committee met quarterly, with several additional meetings by the sub-committees.

WOAC thanks UCT and community for the ongoing support during 2023, and is excited to move forward in 2024 within the fold of UCT Libraries, and with the new possibilities brought by the appointment of a Curator and Collections Manager.

Dr Ruchi Chaturvedi

**Chair, WOAC
December 2023**

Images: Rona Nkone Chaka, *Time Traveller's Uniform 1 & 2*
Helen Sebidi, *Talking to the Past*
Oratile Papi Konope, *Rest & All I Really Want*
Photo of the artist