



Fatimaah Mohamed-Luke, *deCOLOURnise White*, 9476 ABS plastic building blocks adhered to Plexiglas: 1200 x 1200 x 50mm

WOAC

Annual Report 2020



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
IYUNIVESITHI YASEKAPA • UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD



Introduction

The year 2020 brought many challenges but it was also an important year for the Works of Art Committee (WOAC). While the WOAC could not carry out its physical work on campus, such as re-curation, installations, exhibitions, workshops and events, we sought to address other areas such as acquisition, the website, the database and drawing up a WOAC Strategy to enable us to plan effectively for the next two years. Most importantly, however we re-considered our priorities in the context of COVID-19. This period necessitated that we formulate strategies that would enable the committee to realise its mandate to transform the collection and deepen engagements with the university community.

It has been four years since the Artworks Task Team initiated a new mandate for WOAC. So far, very important work has been done in changing the ways in which spaces on campus are experienced. The committee has gained from the steps that had already been taken towards a more equitable collection that reflects the emergent issues in the country. This work addressed the urgent matter for re-curation and balancing the current collection in terms of representation. However, issues related to the

conservation of works, online presence and collaboration with similar structures at other universities needed to be addressed. In response, the Working Group was set up to develop a strategy.

In response to the socio-cultural and economic impact of COVID-19, the Working Group set out to plan for 2021 and 2022. This includes establishing collaborative relationships in the art community. The committee recognises that it is working in a context of uncertainty and injustice, broadly; and that the impact of its work is scrutinised beyond the university. We needed to reflect on the position of WOAC within the university and beyond. It is important therefore to understand the approaches we should take going forward and the language needed to negotiate the uneasy questions on race, gender sexuality. It became important to think about the committee's responsiveness, particularly in amplifying voices inside and outside of the institution. We recognise that the role of the committee should go beyond acquisition and display and should proactively address emergent issues through connecting with artists and art scholars nationally.

- Nomusa Makhubu (Chair)

Committee Members 2020

- Prof. Mamokgethi Phakeng, UCT Vice-Chancellor (*ex officio*)
- Prof. Loretta Feris, UCT Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Transformation, Vice-Chancellor's Nominee (*ex officio*)
- Assoc. Prof. Nomusa Makhubu, Chair, Senate Representative
- Dr Portia Malatjie, Deputy Chair
- TBC, Senate Representative
- Prof. Jane Alexander, Senate Representative
- Dr Nyakato Phillipa Tumubweinee, Senate Representative
- Prof. Jay Pather, Director of the Institute for Creative Art
- Assoc. Prof. Alta Steenkamp, University Building & Development Committee (UB&DC) Representative
- Assoc. Prof. Bernie Searle, Director of the Michaelis School of Fine Art
- Dr Portia Malatjie, Senior Art History Representative
- Nadja Daehnke, Director of the Irma Stern Collection
- Nkule Mabaso, Curator of the University Collections (standing in)
- Chairperson of the University's Heritage and Collections Stewardship Committee: Committee not yet created
- Lance-Seale August, Students' Representative Council (SRC) Representative
- Savannah Steyn, Student Representative Council (SRC) Representative (from Centre for Theatre, Drama and Performing Arts)
- Yulin Yuan, Michaelis Students Council Representative
- Zinhle Geluk, Humanities Students Council Representative
- Amogelang Maledu, Co-opted member
- Luvuyo Nyawose, Co-opted member

Lucinda Cullum, Serving Officer



WOAC Strategy Working Group

The committee set up a Working Group that would address five focus areas; namely, (1) cohesive curation strategy, (2) acquisition strategy, (3) identity of the collection, (4) communication, visibility and accessibility, (5) collaboration and WOAC identity outside of collection. Each member led a session for the 5 focus areas. These discussions were held with the objective to plan its work for a two-year period.

Members of the Working Group

(in alphabetical order by first name)

Amo Maledu
Prof. Jay Pather
Luvuyo Nyawose
Nadja Daehnke
Nkule Mabaso
A/Prof. Nomusa Makhubu
Dr Portia Malatjie

Shared Vision

WOAC is committed to transformation and social justice. Through continued engagements with the UCT community, it seeks to position the collection as a way of nurturing an equitable institutional culture and as a juncture for generating knowledge. Through exhibitions and public discussions, the Works of Art committee seeks to make the art collection accessible and to support teaching and research.

Focus Areas

The main areas of focus in the work of WOAC for the next two years will be:

- 1) Curation
- 2) Conservation
- 3) Public engagements, Communication and Online Presence
- 4) Collaborations
- 5) Acquisitions and Commissions
- 6) Fundraising

These are listed below:

1. Curation

- There needs to a planned site-specific curation. So far, WOAC has responded to spaces identified by users as needing re-curation. There remain many spaces which contain rich hidden histories which could be targeted for site-specific curation.
- This would entail identifying possible problematic spaces on campus.
- Last year cohesive exhibitions by committee members have worked well in engendering new discourses based on works in the collection and works that could potentially be acquired. In the next two years, WOAC should establish collaborations with internal/external curators.
- We should also focus on extending invitations to existing exhibitions.
- There needs to be better integration of educational programmes for curation.
- The committee needs to sustain consultative processes through roundtables and panel discussions.

2. Conservation

- Some works on campus are at risk of damage (sun damage and user damage).
- The committee should identify works that are at risk.
- It also needs to assess the suitability of certain spaces for the placement of artworks.
- For this, it needs to consider and budget for framing, conservation and treating material.
- It may also require consultation with a conservator.

3. Public Engagements and Enhanced Online Presence

- The website has gone live and the database is being developed (adding missing information on specific works, adding provenance, etc).

- There needs to be better integration of art history research and teaching (visual analyses provided by students for works in the collection).
- The committee should also plan to create artist videos and conduct studio visits in researching for acquisition. Artist videos would be made available on the website.
- The committee should sustain social media activity
- To make the collection intellectually stimulating to all stakeholders, the committee should plan public discussions and lectures.
- The committee might also engage with other constituencies on campus (programmes in collaboration with the Office of Inclusivity and Change).
- Interactive workshops would bring various UCT stakeholders & affiliates.
- Joint programmes might include the [Tshisimani Activist Education Centre](#) & Irma Stern Museum.
- While others may be with similar committees at other universities. University-wide/ Inter-university/ Inter-institutional mutual dialogues (i.e [Javett Art Centre](#) (University of Pretoria); Stellenbosch University [Visual Redress Project](#), for example) would deepen the impact of WOAC.
- Strategic partnerships should be formed and WOAC content generation with UCT-related media houses (UCT Radio and Varsity Newspaper as well as SRC's transformation portfolio representatives) would increase visibility
- The committee should work with student members who are engaged with the general programming of WOAC and can contribute with their specific interest points.
- Continuing the collaborative nature of exhibition-making projects WoAC intends to hold and engaging cross-institutionally with other university art collections that are having similar discussions.

4. Collaborations

- Internal and external collaborations (OIC, ISM, etc.) should be strengthened.
- There should be alignment with art and art history curriculum and collaboration with Art History teaching staff to make the collection a teaching resource.
- Collaborations with other institutions would be beneficial.
- Working across committees would also be beneficial.
- Consideration of an Artist-in-Residence programme would allow artists to engage with the collection and contribute to the activities of WOAC.

5. Acquisitions and Commissions

- Acquisitions are the backbone of WOAC.
- However, there needs to be a reflexive/ reflective approach in considering artworks for acquisition with less pressure on immediate acquisition. In other words, a research-based approach would be of value to the collection.

- The identity of the collection is largely Contemporary. We need to consider areas of focus – e.g. Modern Art, as well as media categories.
- Two lists of artists should be included in collection – one Contemporary, one Modern
- There should be the inclusion of Performance Art (in documented form) in the Collection.
- The committee should consider commissions aimed at supporting struggling artists.
- There should be continuous engagement with galleries to get advance notification of work available for the identified artists. The committee should be conscientious of the influence of the commercial gallery system so that it does not only benefit them
- Target artists beyond Cape Town

6. Fundraising

- There is a discussion about the possibility of establishing a Friends of WOAC for fundraising and networking.

Resources Needed

To realise the points that were raised by the working group, the committee would require the following resources:

- Administration for external exhibitions (drawing up agreements, etc.);
- Installation and conservation funds;
- Funds for database;
- Funds for videographer;
- Internships.

These intense discussions mean that in 2021 and going forward, WOAC can contribute to deepening the character and transformational drive of UCT. The discussions set the committee up 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 a major University asset.

Exhibition

WOAC started off the year with a major exhibition of recent acquisitions, housed in the UCT Michaelis Galleries. Titled *We've come to take you home* and curated by former student, UCT research associate and invited WOAC committee member Amogelang Maledu, this exhibition displayed a significant range of art acquired for UCT by the Works of Art Committee between 2017 and 2019. The show was opened by DVC Professor Loretta Ferris and included an online video component, as well as a public discussion forum.

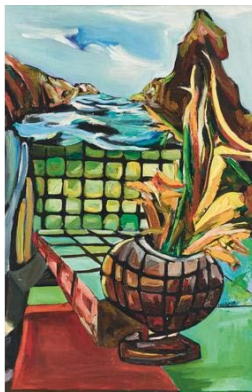


Acquisitions

WOAC acquired a number of works on behalf of the University – this includes a substantial collection of notable work by seminal photographer George Hallett, the South African Modernist Sydney Kumalo, and photographs by recent talent Haneem Christian.

Artists whose works were acquired:

Sam Nhlengethwa	3 works
Thenjiwe Niki Nkosi	1 work
Sandile Radebe	2 works
George Hallett	18 Photographs
Haneem Christian	3 works
Sydney Kumalo	1 work
Nhlanhla Xaba	1 work
Bob Gosani	1 work
Akudzwe Chiwa	1 Work



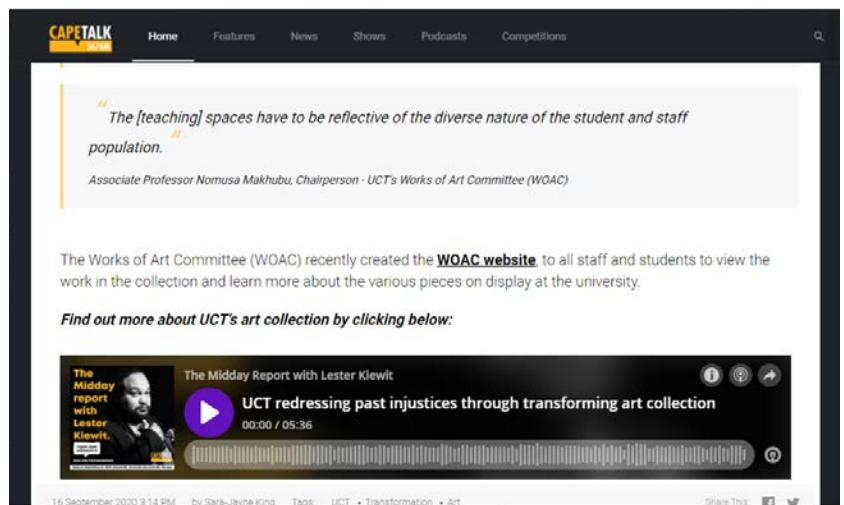
Deaccessions

Whilst carefully considered acquisitions and filling in gaps in the collection are crucial in building a strong collection, it is accepted collections policy to ensure that holdings remain relevant and of cultural value through de-accessioning works. In the case of the WOAC Collection this becomes even more important due to the holdings being heavily racially skewed. In 2016 the Artworks Task Team found that some 79.1% of the work in the collection was by white artists. Whilst WOAC has made headway in addressing this bias through new acquisitions, the size of the problem is such that it would take too much funds and too much time to rectify the matter through acquisitions only. As a result, de-accessioning is of crucial importance.

For the above reasons, the Works of Art committee has de-accessioned 36 works in 2020 and have identified a further 123 works for potential de-accessioning. The committee has now engaged with outside non-UCT experts to get feedback on the deaccession suggestions.

Website

In time for Heritage Month, the WOAC website was launched in September of this year – the first website in the history of the Collection. This site serves as an archive of past WOAC organised interventions, a news portal for upcoming events, as well as an entry-point into getting to know the collection. Past events featured through videos, text and images include exhibition openings, discussion forums and performances. A link is provided to a draft database of the full collection, whilst a highlights section on the site reflects some of the remarkable work that has added to the collection in recent years.



The launch of the website received substantial [press coverage](#) both within UCT and externally.

Database

The WOAC database has been an ideal that is now finally taking shape. The database has now been created in Omeka-S. We are currently in the process of identifying gaps where there is missing information. This work will continue into 2021. The aim of the database is to creating an informative, educational resource about the works in the collection. The link to the database can be found [here](#).

Research and Labelling

One of the main issues that have been brought to the attention of the committee is the lack of contextual information for artworks. This contextual information would also aid in framing the discourse and providing information about the artists and the content of the artworks itself. We have approached emerging writers who would be tasked with

conducting the necessary research to work on informative labelling. This information would be available online as well.

Curatorial Policy Draft

WOAC drafted a curatorial policy that would set the parameters and principles in its curatorial work. This policy arose out of the recommendations to Council by the Artwork Task Team set up in October 2015 post the events by the #RhodesMustFall movement at the University of Cape Town. The draft policy will therefore be revised and disseminated to the university community through the Transformation Forum for discussion and consultation. The aim is to get the draft policy passed through Senate and Council.

Ongoing projects

Whilst most WOAC projects could not be completed during lockdown, the ongoing site-based work of WOAC is gaining traction again in the last quarter of the year. This includes a number of projects started pre-covid, such as a radical re-think of art in the Chancellor Oppenheimer Library, curating art in the foyer of the Beattie Building, and collaborative work with a number of other UCT units and departments in the re-imagining of the Sarah Baartman Plaza. Additional to this WOAC completed a number of smaller projects in the early part of the year, including the study in Glenara, spaces in the Falmouth Building, the Ben Beinart Room, and the Deanery in Health Sciences.

