



SOUTH AFRICAN CULTURAL OBSERVATORY

— Reviewing the Impact of the Art Bank

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Submitted by:

Nelson Mandela University

In Partnership with:

Rhodes University, University of Fort Hare and University of KwaZulu-Natal

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South African Cultural Observatory

Report

Reviewing the Impact of the Art Bank

March 2021

Submitted to the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture:

Prepared by Mary Corrigall

Table of Contents

Summary & Main Findings	4
1. Introduction	7
2. Aim, Objective(s) and Scope of the Report	7
3. Research Methodology	9
4. Historical Context	10
SA Art Market Status	13
5. An assessment of the Art Bank SA Collection.....	14
Acquisitions.....	15
Would the current Art Bank SA collection be considered leasable and/or a definitive South African collection?	16
Which artists and how many have benefitted?.....	16
Pricing.....	17
Based on these figures 20% of the budget from 2018 to 2020 was spent on the art.	18
Cataloguing and location of the collection	18
6. Emerging Artists.....	26
7. The Art Bank Model	34
Other Art Banks	35
8. Impact on Art Ecosystem	39
9. An Assessment of the Public 'Reach' of the Art Bank SA Collection	40
10. Conclusions and Recommendations	46
Bibliography	48

Summary & Main Findings

Establishing an art bank in South Africa has been a steadfast goal of government since the late 90s as it has been envisaged as the primary vehicle to support and stimulate further growth in the visual arts sector in this country.

The concept has been inspired by a Canadian model, but it has taken some time to discover a feasible and appropriate model that is suitably tailored to our country's context and the shifting conditions in the South African art market. The vision to stimulate the art market through the support of what is termed 'emerging' artists has remained unchanged, although the understanding by the directors of what that means and entails has shifted.

The first iteration, Art Bank Joburg (ABJ), established as a City of Joburg project in 2006 in the titular city, was provincial in its outlook and never managed to be financially sustainable, and closed in 2009. Its lack of sustainability appears to have related not only to high operating costs but a misinterpretation of procurement regulations (Sack 2017). The quality of the art collection, due to its model, also haunted its short lifespan (Froud 2021).

Research into and the production of a comprehensive report plotting a roadmap for a national model for an art bank was completed in 2014. In *Entity Model and Implementation Plan* (Layton et al 2014), the focus of financial sustainability, which was seen to be unachievable for at least five years in an art bank's lifespan, shifted to the immediate goals of establishing one that could piggyback on the existing resources of another state art institution, allowing the project to 'incubate', so to speak. This would save on some of the administrative and other costs that a separate institution would incur. It was recommended that the National Museum in Bloemfontein, Oliewenhuis Art Museum, operate as the co-host of an art bank that would gradually work towards sustainability (Layton et al 2014: 41) through a three-phased approach.

In 2017, the current iteration, dubbed Art Bank of South Africa (hereafter referred to as Art Bank SA), came into being. Initially, under the leadership of Brenton Maart, Oliewenhuis Art Museum's administrative resources were exploited from a distance, while he established a base in Johannesburg. Ructions and a change in the leadership of Oliewenhuis Art Museum and the DSAC's desire for the Art Bank SA to be established in Bloemfontein saw this iteration relocate its office to a building on the grounds of that institution. The location of the museum and the practices, cultures and procedures governing this type of institution have since impacted on Art Bank SA's outlook, functions and practices.

Nonto Msomi and Nathi Gumede were appointed as project manager and assistant project manager respectively in 2018, and the national character of this iteration of Art Bank SA has since been applied with vigour – staging exhibitions of the collection in different provinces and actively seeking out artists outside of the main art capitals (Cape Town and Johannesburg) of South Africa.

In the hands of Msomi and Gumede the model of Art Bank SA has taken on a different life, which has largely been shaped by its co-

Key Findings



- Unless the collection grows in size, quickly and considerably, it cannot be a sustainable entity. Currently, if 50% of the collection is rented, it would only attract R440 000 per annum (based on a 20% renting fee of the overall value of artworks currently).
- Since 2018, Art Bank SA has shifted from a business-centred model to one involved in short-term benefits for artists.
- The leasing and sale of artworks from the Art Bank SA collection has barely manifested.
- 20% of the budget from 2018 to 2020 has been spent on acquiring art.
- Staff claim that auditing regulations applied to museums are burdening their work and functions.
- The average price paid to artists – apart from the celebrated ones – compared to those figures from the exhibition circuit in 2018 (Corrigall 2019) (see graph 1.6) are on average significantly less.
- The above finding relates to the fact that the majority of artists who have works in the collection – 53% – have few exhibition records and little/no gallery representation or standing in the art ecosystem.
- 45% of the artists whose works are represented in the collection are classified as mid-career (they are over 35 years old).

host and the museum protocols governing it. Leasing art is no longer a function, with the procurement of it dominating activities.

There are currently 298 artworks in the Art Bank SA collection. They are housed in a makeshift storage facility on the grounds of Oliewenhuis Art Museum. To date R4,4 million has been spent on acquiring the artworks over a four-year period, from 2017 to 2020.

An analysis of the 146 artists whose works are in the collection show that (see infographic 1.7) 74% are black and 66% are male.

The goal of this report is to discover to what degree this national iteration of an art bank has been successful in its support of emerging artists and, related to this, how the artworks have circulated – through leasing and other programmes – to expose them to the public in ways that would stimulate the art market.

- As much as 73% of the mid-career artists that Art Bank SA has supported do not have gallery representation. This aligns with the Art Bank SA's goal. However, if an artist has reached this stage in their career and has not secured gallery representation, there is the risk that their art has little market appeal, and this would impact on leasing and sales.
- 46% of artists surveyed, said they submitted works to Art Bank SA in the hope of reaching a larger audience. In other words, that one high-profile sale would engender more sales and recognition that would lead to further sales.
- Only 41% of the art community respondents surveyed believed that being included in the Art Bank SA collection added to an artist's status; 23% believed this might be achieved in time – in other words, when the collection matured and its visibility was raised. For this reason, only 52% of this group would recommend that an artist submit their work to Art Bank SA for consideration.
- 72% of artworks in the collection were acquired from artists directly. In this way, Art Bank SA is only stimulating one segment of the art ecosystem, albeit the foundation of it.
- 43% of the artists that have benefitted from Art Bank SA acquisitions are based in Johannesburg, while 24% are based in Durban and 22% in Cape Town.
- The impact of Art Bank SA on the art industry at this time is limited to short-term gains for artists.

- The main marketing schemes and public reach of the Art Bank SA collection has been through an exhibition programme directed not at potential clients but potential artists who might apply to a public call-out. Letters have been sent to ministers (Oberholzer 2020) but as yet no department has committed to leasing any art. Government departments would need to make provision in their long-term budget planning for this to transpire.
- The promotion and circulation of the artworks from the collection in digital spheres has not been adequately pursued.
- Art Bank SA's role has shifted to one supporting struggling, unknown artists rather than cultivating a more robust art market

1. Introduction

At the dawn of South Africa's democracy, the notion of an art bank was proposed and despite its first iteration taking time to come into being and then closing down, the idea of this institution as a vehicle for government to play a vital role in stimulating the art sector and supporting artists has remained steadfast.

This is largely rooted in the fact that an art bank allows government to create, own and promote the country's artistic expression while acknowledging and promoting the value of art to society through the leasing of artworks. Contemporary art, which is often thought to be inaccessible or at a remove from the majority of South Africans, it was argued, would through widespread exposure in public and private working environments stimulate the art market, drawing new collectors and buyers.

As was noted in a guiding document created to assist the current Art Bank SA, "the visual arts sector can only be sustainable if people buy art, and one contributing factor is to make art more accessible, especially to those who have not previously purchased artworks" (Layton et al 2014: 15). This is even more pertinent given that in the absence of an art collecting culture and base in this country, the growth of the South African art capitals is tied to sales of artworks to mostly European collectors (Corrigall 2019: 17), facilitated via online trading and participation in the global art market through art fairs staged outside South Africa.

Art banks exist in other countries. Notably, the South African iteration was inspired by the art bank in Canada. As such, blueprints for establishing such an institution that is government-funded but commercial in its function, do exist and have proved successful. The Canadian version has existed for fifty years. Nevertheless, the first South African iteration of this concept, Art Bank Joburg, which launched in 2006 and was funded by the Johannesburg Metropolitan Council, proved unsustainable for a variety of reasons and closed in 2009.

A national model was revived in 2014 via an extensive report, *Entity Model and Implementation Plan*, mapping how this could be done. This paved the way for the current iteration to be established in 2017 under the banner of the Mzansi Golden Economy strategy. It was intended to be co-hosted by Oliewenhuis Art Museum in Bloemfontein.

Based on insights gained from the Joburg Art Bank, a number of adjustments to this national model were made, as were expectations of what it could achieve at various stages in its lifespan (Layton et al 2014: 131). The Canadian model had shown that such an entity only became sustainable around ten years into its existence, and so it wasn't expected that financial sustainability could be achieved in the first phase (a five-year period) of Art Bank SA (Layton et al 2014: 11).

However, several other goals had been set for this first phase. These included many administrative and collection management actions. At this juncture, the success of Art Bank SA would largely be measured against the degree to which it was working towards achieving its primary functions: to assist artists, stimulate the art economy, and cultivate new collectors through the leasing and sale of artworks.

The purpose of this report is to gauge to what degree these stated functions have been achieved, despite its short life-span and the Covid-19 pandemic hampering face-to-face meetings that might have advanced the Art Bank SA goals.

Artists should be the primary beneficiaries of art banks (Layton et al 2014: 25), so naturally, the focus of this report is not only on how artists might be benefiting, but on how to measure this from multiple perspectives. Given that the term 'emerging' is a slippery one, the report sets out to discover which group of emerging artists have benefitted the most, where they are located and whether this support is adequate and feeds into wider gains for the art industry as a whole.

2. Aim, Objective(s) and Scope of the Report

Given that the Joburg Art Bank was unable to prove sustainable in its short lifespan, coupled with the recommendation in the 2014 guiding document that Art Bank SA would unlikely achieve such a goal until six to ten years into its lifespan (Layton et al 2014: 131), the focus of this report is not to gauge Art

Bank SA's financial sustainability. Instead, as per the request of the DSAC, this report aims to weigh in on the following questions:

- 1) Has Art Bank SA been beneficial to artists?
- 2) Has this scheme brought its collection of artworks into the public domain in such a way as to derive maximum benefit for the artists, and the education of the public by increasing their exposure to contemporary art?
- 3) Are there similar art-lending schemes in South Africa, and if so, how do they compare?

Within a short time limit and within the constraints of a short report such as this, we have best tried to answer these questions in a comprehensive manner via multiple approaches outlined in the methodology.

Assessing the impact of a sale for an artist can be intangible – a sale to a high-profile benefactor, for example, carries more weight and is likely to instil a different kind of confidence in the artist and other prospective collectors and/or segments in the art ecosystem they may encounter. In other words, the benefits to artists whose work is included in a public collection such as that of Art Bank SA might be hard to quantify or measure. However, there are ways of discovering whether the financial benefits received by artists were in line with market value, whether the status and character of the collection might do credit to all the artists associated with it, and if the degree of visibility the collection has enjoyed will further boost an artist's earning potential.

As it is noted in the Unesco Framework for Cultural Statistics (2009: 43) measuring assets in a heritage domain relate to preservation and conservation and how these might be enhanced or devalued. While the Art Bank SA would not squarely fall into a heritage domain, it is concerned with acquiring assets, which through leasing and other activities would enhance the value of them. From this perspective fixing the value of the works, which is tied to the makers' reputation, experience and position in the art market aligns with the recommendations made in this landmark document, which has informed some of the methodological approaches embraced by the South African Cultural Observatory (SACO).

With this in mind, a thorough assessment of Art Bank SA's collection has been undertaken and forms the focus of the report. Identifying the status – career level and achievements – of the artists who are represented in it, will shed light on whether emerging artists (a broad category that has been broken down) have been the main recipients of this venture, and also which other statuses of artists have benefitted. This dry undertaking will be balanced against the practicalities on the ground and opinions solicited from the artists whose work is in the collection, as well as from leaders and other artists in the art community.

The 2014 guiding document created by Roger Layton et al, de facto set the roadmap for establishing this national institution. As such, the *Entity Model and Implementation Plan* document has been a fundamental reference for this report and is quoted throughout. In it (Layton et al 2014: 30), it is suggested that the impact of Art Bank SA on artists could be measured by looking at the following:

- The total amount paid out to artists by the National Art Bank [NAB, as it was termed at the time].
- The efficiency factor of the NAB, measured as the total amount paid to artists as a fraction of the total budget.
- The spread of the artists who benefit, computed over a range of dimensions, such as region, gender, race, age, artist maturity, and by type of work.
- The number of exhibitions and displays conducted by the NAB.
- The actual rental income derived from the usage of the works compared to the projected income.
- The increase in the value of the works in the collections as measured by sales with the sector for the same artist.
- The number of artists who improve their maturity by exposure to the NAB.
- The quality of the art within the NAB.

The challenges involved in achieving Art Bank SA's stated functions naturally come to light through this report and are weighed against the changes made to this model when it became fully embedded in a museum.

As doubts have been voiced around whether an art bank could, in fact, work in South Africa due to “the lack of maturity in the market” (Layton et al 2014: 29), other models or similar businesses operating in this country are looked at and compared with the state of this one.

3. Research Methodology

In service of arriving at a balanced report in which the hard data is contextualised via interviews and surveys with those invested in or linked to Art Bank SA, the author has embraced a multiplicity of sources and methodologies for this report which include:

1. Gathering and analysing data pertaining to the collection and its artists. Several datasets were created and analysed in Excel – one of the collection; one capturing the artists’ demographic information; and another comprising information relating to the exhibitions. Much of the insights gleaned from these datasets is reflected in the infographics for ease of access.
2. Requesting information from the current staff at Art Bank SA. As such, much of the veracity of this report relies on the accuracy of the information they have chosen to share and their willingness to do so.
3. Academic, journalistic and other reports on the now defunct Joburg Art Bank, emerging artists, and the South African art market were consulted.
4. Data and insights from previous studies the author has undertaken on emerging artists, non-profit organisations and the South African art ecosystem have been referenced.
5. Interviews with those who have had direct experience with state-run art banks – Steven Sack and Gordon Froud (both involved with Art Bank Joburg), and Amy Jenkins (director of the Canadian Art Bank).
6. Interviews with owners, directors of art leasing, and art bank businesses in South Africa – Morné Visagie (Art Gazette), Greg Lazarus (Image Swing), and Simon MacLennan (African Art Consultants).
7. Interviews with the staff of Art Bank SA – Nonto Msomi (project manger) and Nathi Gumede (assistant project manager), the previous project manager, Brenton Maart and Andries Oberholzer, Deputy Director: Visual Arts, DSAC.
8. Results from two surveys, processed via Excel datasets. The first of which was created for the artists who have had works acquired by Art Bank SA. Thirty-five artists participated in this survey. The second one, was directed at individuals in the wider art community, including gallerists, other artists, directors of non-profits, and managers of corporate art collections. Forty-four people participated in the latter survey. In both instances, respondents were afforded anonymity or confidentiality. As such, some of the comments made are not attributed to anyone in particular.
9. An in-person visit to the premises of Art Bank SA at Oliewenhuis Art Museum in Bloemfontein, which included viewing an exhibition of the collection’s acquisitions from 2020.
10. Consulting and studying the 2014 guiding document, *Entity Model and Implementation Plan*, authored by Roger Layton, Rayda Becker, Coral Bijoux and Daphne Mashaba, generated at the behest of the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture.

It should be noted that the staff of Art Bank SA resisted sharing information with the author. Extracting some of the information thus proved difficult and at times was never forthcoming. This might have been due to the fact that their own records are not comprehensive and that they felt they were not alerted to this report through the appropriate channels (Oberholzer 2020). According to him: “There should have been a letter from the DG of DSAC to the CEO of the Institution or from the Minister to the Chair of the Council to request co-operation in this process.”

4. Historical Context

The idea of an art bank had a long germination period before it was finally first established in the mid-noughties. Its genesis can be traced back to the 1996 White Paper published by the then Department of Arts and Culture (DAC), where it was announced that they would look into the feasibility of establishing an art bank for the country (1996: 19). At this point it appears to have been envisaged as a self-funded “agency which provides opportunities for the development and marketing of cultural industries”.

However, it would only be in 2000, after a visit to an art bank in Canada, that the then Minister of Arts and Culture, Science and Technology, Dr Ben Ngubane, guided the initiative. There were negotiations with the National Arts Council to establish an art bank but it eventually fell under the aegis of the City of Joburg, and its existence was steered by Steven Sack (the then director of Arts, Culture and Heritage for the City of Johannesburg). Sack, who had previously worked for the DSAC, drove the concept to fruition in 2006, when it opened in June of that year. It was funded by the Economic Development Unit at the City of Johannesburg (Murdoch 2008: 56).

In asserting the motivation for the establishment of the Art Bank Joburg (ABJ) as it was then called, its director, Antoinette Murdoch (2008: 56) suggested that as “not everyone can afford to invest in an extensive art collection of their own. Art Bank Joburg gives businesses the opportunity to rent works instead of buying them, giving people access to quality artworks without enormous expenditure”.

Sack (2017) had a more crude description: “An Art Bank is meant to offer to clients a service not dissimilar from what office plant hire companies do. The job of the Art Bank is to convince companies, both private and public, that instead of buying art for their office, they can hire it and therefore change the collection as they grow and develop”.

A more formal description of an art bank, as contained in the research document compiled by Roger Layton et al (2014: 4), states its function as follows:

To be a professional, income generating national rental agency investing in South African contemporary art, with the added benefit of building up a collection of contemporary art for the South African government.

The ABJ appears to have struck a chord without any advertising. In 2008, Murdoch (2008: 60) claimed that they had serviced 44 clients – comprising 60% public sector and 40% private sector organisations.

As its premises were in Johannesburg and its funding from that city’s coffers, it had a provincial outlook in many senses. Not only were many of the clients based in that city but so too the artists from whom they commissioned or acquired works. Initially, much of the artworks in the collection also represented or reflected on the city of Johannesburg. Murdoch intuited that this was linked to feedback they received from their clients.

Acquiring works by emerging artists was the focus. Yet no clear definition of what ‘emerging’ meant was established, and with a small budget and a tight turnaround time from when when the city of Joburg gave the go-ahead, the focus appeared to be on what art was available for immediate purchase. Inexpensive artworks and often editioned ones from printing studios, non-profit artist studios (such as the Bag Factory) and student exhibitions (Froud 2021) formed the bulk of works at this early phase. It was expected that with time and sponsorship the quality of the artworks would improve. However, it appears that this initial stop-gap solution – to buy as much art as possible in the quickest time – had set a culture, which persists. A R15 000 price barrier became part of the model as it kept rental costs low (Sack 2021). There was, however, recognition that the collection needed ‘weight’ and that to include artworks that could potentially increase in value would be a good investment. As such, artworks by more established and well-known artists were also included, though some of these may have been donations.

Their commissioning and acquisitions process appears to have been defined by two approaches. The works produced during workshops for artists would automatically become the property of the ABJ. Advertised open days and visits to galleries and artist studios would be frequently conducted in an effort to identify particular works or artists whose works would suit the collection (Murdoch 2009: 60).

As this first iteration of the art bank was conceptualised as being or eventually becoming self-sufficient, it appears that the staff were judicious about acquisitions – only committing to purchasing works when clients had “entered into a signed agreement with the Art Bank” (Murdoch 2008: 60). They would only deviate from this approach if it was “felt that an artwork should be purchased as a significant contribution to the collection, or if the selector feels it will easily find a home with a client” (Murdoch 2008: 60). Significantly, there is a sense that the ABJ was in close contact with artists, since an artist liaison was appointed.

Unfortunately, this first iteration of the ABJ did not last. Two and a half years into its lifespan, it had not broken even (Coulson 2009). This may have been an unrealistic goal, given that the Canadian Art Bank, which provided a blueprint of sorts, took more than ten years to become sustainable. It was reported that the ABJ required more time and financing to reach that goal. The Johannesburg Metropolitan Council invested R5 million in establishing the entity, and by 2009 it was reported that a comparable sum would be required to keep it going (Coulson 2009).

Red tape involved in the procurement of artworks and leasing them to government departments appears to have undermined the success of this first iteration, according to Steven Sack (2017):

The wheels started coming off when the legality of the JAB came under question, when it was deemed to fall foul of Supply Chain Management regulations. No one had bothered to read the regulations correctly: in fact, the Municipal Finance Management Act allows for deviations from procurement processes for the purpose of acquiring of artworks. The JAB started to be confronted by irrational actions by uninformed members of Boards who had become paranoid about procurement. The Department of Water in the City had commissioned the JAB to assemble a collection of artworks, based on the theme of water. The idea, a good one, was to make of their collection something both beautiful and educational for the users and visitors to the building, whose core business was water management. The JAB went ahead, sourced a collection and signed a contract – only for the Board to reverse this decision and force the return of the artwork to the JAB. This and other regularity hurdles, and lack of support from Lael Bethlehem’s successor, eventually drove the JAB into the ground.

Others have suggested that the artworks were not of a high quality and clients were not serviced adequately – artworks they had little hand in selecting were foisted on them (Froud 2021). When the ABJ closed, it sold off the works at bargain prices. This well-attended sale gave insight into the collection, which appeared to consist of small, insignificant works by some well-known artists. A work by Mary Sibande sold for R1 000 – her editioned photographic prints are today worth in excess of R160 000 (Froud 2021). In other words, it appears as if the artists had made or sold small-scale works to fit the ABJ’s R15 000 model. Nevertheless, the calibre of the artists whose works were in the collection lent it some status, and would have shored up its value in the presentday. As such the quick disposal of the collection was regrettably premature and is inexplicable. Andries Oberholzer, Deputy Director: Visual Arts, DSAC, claims to have no knowledge of the sale of the collection.

The drive to establish a national art bank was largely stimulated by an in-depth study into the visual arts sector commissioned by the then Department of Arts and Culture. It was executed by the Human Sciences Research Council and titled *An Assessment of the Visual Arts in South Africa* (Gaylard 2010). In it the authors motivated for the revival of an art bank.

The 2014 *Entity Model and Implementation Plan* was compiled with the intention of implementing a national model for an Art Bank. As per DSAC’s notion for the institution, it which it proposed it should be semi-autonomous and embedded in another national cultural institution. This mirrors the Canadian model, which falls under the aegis of the Canada Council for the Arts. As a result, much of the document is focused on weighing through the options of which national art entity could suitably co-host an art bank, before finally arriving on Oliewenhuis Art Museum in Bloemfontein. Also in the running were the National Arts Council – this was considered an ideal option as the Canadian Art Bank is aligned to their

equivalent – and the Ditsong Cultural History Museum, located in Pretoria, which would likely have been the best choice given that it is closer to most of the state institutions who would be potential clients. This Pretoria-based museum was rejected as an option due to the fact that it is a natural cultural history museum and did not have a dedicated art exhibition space or the staff to assist with its implementation (Oberholzer 2020).

In selecting a suitable host institution operating under the Cultural Institutions Act (CIA), the main criterion appears to have been based on “considerable interest by senior management to incorporate the NAB into the National Museum structure” (Layton et al 2014: 6).

It was noted that there was a strong commitment to the proposal from both the curator and director of Oliewenhuis Art Museum (a satellite of the National Museum), and the director of the National Museum, and that “the staff include those with competencies in gallery management, curation, conservation, exhibitions, and education” (Layton et al 2014: 41).

Despite the fact that at 180 pages this document provided a step-by-step plan to implement a national art bank, and that funds were ring-fenced and allocated to Oliewenhuis Art Museum to set it up, it would only be in 2017 that some of these plans came to fruition. Brenton Maart was appointed the project manager and he began working earnestly to set up a dual function office-cum-storage exhibition space in Newtown, Johannesburg – located in a part of the city where other arts institutions are situated – including the National Arts Council (NAC) (Maart 2021). “We needed to be near the artists, for the acquisitions and the clients – in Gauteng,” Maart explained. The establishment of a venue in Newtown “was never approved by the department, it was an interim measure to give Mr Maart time to re-locate,” according to Oberholzer, Deputy Director: Visual Arts, DSAC.

Maart deemed the relationship between Art Bank SA with Oliewenhuis Art Museum to be an administrative one: “They would be the conduit through which the funds for the Art Bank would be processed”.

Internal strife at Oliewenhuis Art Museum, which saw the executive staff at loggerheads with the CEO and CFO, resulting in a disciplinary hearing followed by their resignations, had a negative impact on Art Bank SA (Maart 2021). The council and executive staff of the museum took over the reigns and changed the concept of Art Bank SA from “an independent entity to one that was a project of the museum. The concept of it as a business unit shifted”, according to Maart (2021).

Just two weeks before Art Bank SA’s official launch, its intended location in Newtown, Johannesburg, suddenly changed to Oliewenhuis Art Museum in Bloemfontein. Maart wasn’t able to relocate to the Free State in such a short space of time and resigned. Maart’s vision appeared to have conflicted with that of the DSAC, according to Oberholzer.

Msomi and Gumede were appointed in August of 2018. In that year, the 127 works identified by Maart were the first to become part of the collection. This would prove the largest amount of works acquired in one year.

Now fully immersed in Oliewenhuis Art Museum, Art Bank SA has taken on quite a different character and purpose than its former iteration(s) in Johannesburg under Murdoch and Maart.

As Art Bank SA is co-hosted by a museum, much of its practices and day-to-day activities have had to comply with museum codes of conduct and regulations. The two staff members have to report to the CEO of the National Museum, Sharon Snell. The degree of autonomy that Art Bank SA has from its co-host appears limited, though Msomi, as project-manager, is still able to set the vision for this scheme, allocate the budget and determine other activities.

It is clear that in this early phase of Art Bank SA, the focus is on building the foundations for it to operate, which is largely creating the collection itself. In the 2014 guiding document, this is considered the first phase of implementation.

The document further envisages that only by its third phase – i.e. ten years in – might the Art Bank exist as an independent institution with its own premises, become the curator of all government and public art collections which are not under formal curation, and even promote its collection on international

stages (Layton et al 2014: 134). The report dubs the first phase 'Entity Establishment' (2014: 132), and by the third year it projects reaching "operational efficiency", which would see the appointment of permanent curators who would replace the working group, and involve an audit of existing government art collections.

As indicated above, there are currently only two staff members. Neither is designated as a curator, nor is there a marketing coordinator, sales and rental manager, storeroom or logistics manager, as was envisaged in the guiding document.

SA Art Market Status

The last decade has seen unprecedented growth in the South African art ecosystem. The segment experiencing the highest rate of expansion has been in the primary art market – marked by an increase of galleries (Corrigall & Co 2018: 133). Since 2000, 122 new platforms for art have been established, 73 of those are art galleries. The majority of those opened after 2007, roughly the same time that Art Bank Joburg was established. As such policies set by the Art Bank of SA regarding the sourcing of art directly from artists – rather than through galleries, needs to take account of this shift in the country's art ecosystems.

The establishment of art fairs – the Joburg Art Fair (now called Art Joburg), RMB Turbine Art Fair, Nirox Sculpture Fair, Investec Cape Town Art Fair, Latitudes; new auction houses, and an increase in the sale of contemporary African art, as opposed to modern works which previously dominated auction sales, have cultivated a rounded art ecosystem in two South African cities – Johannesburg and Cape Town. It is not only local developments that have contributed towards this growth but also the diversification and expansion of the global art market. This has largely been achieved through local galleries participating in art fairs outside of South Africa, on the African continent and elsewhere. Up to 53% of South African galleries currently participate in art fairs outside of their country (Corrigall 2019: 30).

This echoes shifts in other cultural industries in South Africa, which have benefited from globalisation, which has offered "developing countries a valuable way to move up the value chain, as well as projecting an international country image that could encourage investment in other sectors of the economy," according to the findings in the SACO 2019/2020 Mapping Study. The fastest growth in exports of cultural goods has been attributed to the Visual Arts and Crafts domain – though sculptures account for 7.4% and paintings 6.1% (SACO, 2020: 22). The visual arts and crafts sector were found to be responsible for a three percent growth in the South African GDP in the aforementioned study, however, in terms of employment it is the domain accounting for 43.8% of creative and cultural jobs (SACO, 2020: 20).

The growth rate in the visual art sector – with regards to the expansion of the art ecosystems in Joburg and Cape Town, is borne out in the growth rate figures for the category Visual Arts & Crafts, which from 2016 to 2018 has expanded by 5.30% (SACO, 2020: 21).

The increase in the number of art galleries in South Africa does not appear to have been equally matched by an increase in art buyers or collectors (the latter could be defined as more regular and assiduous art patrons). This is an assumption, which is evidenced in a reliance on reaching collectors in Europe, and evinced through the most successful galleries (Goodman, Stevenson galleries) pursuing collectors outside the country, and can be traced through the lack of growth of visitor numbers to the FNB Joburg Art Fair/Art Joburg. In 2010, that art fair's owner, Artlogic, reported that 10 000 people visited the fair (Gaylard 2010: 81) and in 2019 its new owner, Mandia Sibeko, cited the exact same number (Siegenthaler: 2019).

As the South African art ecosystem has grown, commercial galleries who once supported and promoted the work of new graduates have evolved alongside the young artists they first supported. The cost of participating in art fairs, which has become necessary to them remaining sustainable, has also meant that galleries need to recoup costs via works that are more expensive and therefore they need to work with more established artists. As such there are now less galleries catering for new graduates – one of the categories of artists that would be considered as 'emerging' (Corrigall 2019: 40).

The South African art market faces two great challenges that are thought to be interrelated. Firstly, the majority of galleries are owned by white people. Only 9% of commercial galleries are black-owned. Many in the industry believe this reality has impeded the growth of black collectors, who it is assumed would be more likely to buy art from a black-owned gallery, as art dealers tend to sell to those in their social network. Secondly, developing and cultivating new collectors (of any race) is required if the South African art ecosystem is to be sustained or for further growth to occur. Highly functioning art ecosystems mostly rely on local collectors – up to 57% is the international trend, according to a 2018 survey (McAndrew 2019:74).

This reality does have some bearing on the importance of a state-funded entity that is working to build new collectors and provide an alternative means for artists to sell their works, as is the remit of Art Bank SA.

5. An assessment of the Art Bank SA Collection

Developing and using a collection of artworks are the core functions of an art bank (Layton et al 2014: 86). From this perspective, the collection is the 'core' of such an institution.

The purpose of this art collection is for it to:

- 1) Be rented to government departments for their offices and public spaces.
- 2) Play a role in the preservation of the national visual heritage and the conservation of it (Layton et al 2014: 18).

It was set out by Layton et al (2014: 18) that the artworks in the Art Bank SA collection should meet the following basic requirements:

- Be South African (local)
- Be Contemporary
- Be of good quality (in execution)
- Be produced by an emerging artist

To date there are 298 artworks in the Art Bank SA collection. The largest amount – 127 artworks – were acquired in 2018 during Maart's tenure. The least amount were acquired in 2019 – 61 artworks – while last year, in 2020, 110 artworks were acquired. Maart embraced a different acquisitions approach to the one now implemented by the current staff – he identified and communicated directly with suitable artists whose works should be included in the collection and presented them to the selection committee (Maart 2021).

The sharp decrease in acquisitions in 2019 had to do with the the open-call process implemented that year, according to Gumede. However, over 250 entries had been submitted for consideration in 2019, according to Msomi (2021). As the graphic (1.1) demonstrates while submissions have increased over the last three years, acquisitions have decreased in number.

The model for Art Bank SA, as set out by Layton et al, envisaged that by its second year there would be up to 500 artworks in the collection. Looking at the submissions figures from 2018 to 2020 (graph 1.1), it is clear that this would not have been possible from via a call-out scheme. In essence, a 'year' of acquisitions was lost – given that the 2018 acquisitions were selected in 2017. This might have been due to the gap between Maart's departure and the appointment of Msomi and Gumede.

It is possible that Art Bank SA's collection is small due to the ineffectiveness of the call-out process, the poor quality of proposals/artworks and/or a complete reliance on doing it in this way. Both Maart and the previous ABJ staff made direct contact with artists, which allowed them to have a closer hand in arriving at a larger and better collection of artworks in a shorter space of time. Certainly there is no shortage of good quality art in the country that could be acquired.

The public call-out process allows for more artists to benefit from the scheme and makes it more democratic, engendering the notion that anyone can apply, even those who are not known to the curators. This call-out process, however, was instituted due to pressure from the National Museum's

auditors for Art Bank SA to comply with the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA), according to Gumede (2012). Msomi (2021) also believes that, at present, Art Bank SA does not have the ability to process more submissions and acquisitions than they are currently doing.

The small size of the collection suggests two outcomes:

- 1) Not enough artists are benefitting from the scheme.
- 2) Unless it grows in size, quickly and considerably, it cannot become a sustainable entity. Currently, if 50% of the collection was rented, it would only attract R440 000 per annum (based on 20% renting fee of the overall value of artworks currently).

Acquisitions

As stated, apart from the first round of acquisitions, public call-outs have been instituted as the main way of sourcing art for the collection, and are made via Art Bank SA's website and social media, via posts on VANSAs (Visual Art's Network of South Africa) website, and occasionally through adverts in newspapers. However, most of the artists (31%) interviewed for the report had not heard of Art Bank SA via these public call-outs but rather through word of mouth.

The only major barrier for artists presenting artworks to Art Bank SA for consideration is the requirement that they register on the Central Supplier Database system and be SARS tax compliant. This has proven difficult for some artists, according to the staff, and is obviously difficult also for those who don't have access to a computer or the internet. However, this probably doesn't impact on the majority of those applying, and once an artist is on the system, it proves beneficial should they need to apply for any other government funding or make further proposals etc.

A rotating nine-member acquisitions selection committee is appointed by the National Museum Council and they make the artwork selections. There is no public transparency about who these members are. This might afford them more independence, however, naming them could be used to add to the status of the collection, as some of the members are respected museum curators. Art Bank SA were unable to provide year-on-year lists identifying the members of the selection committee.

It is required that there be a member from each province represented on the committee and since there are provinces where only one possible candidate would be appropriate this has limited its diversity over the years, according to Msomi. Most of the committee members are embedded in museums and its practices - their selections are inevitably shaped by this, and they may not have commercial savvy or be aware of what kind of art would be 'leasable' or have good investment value. Though presumably they would be adept at selecting works that could be deemed "contemporary" and "definitive [of a] South African collection", as per the Art Bank SA's slogan.

There are currently no artworks in the collection by some of the most recognised contemporary South African artists – Zanele Muholi, Nandipha Mntambo, Nicholas Hlobo, Athi-Patra Ruga, Mary Sibande, for example – an incredibly long list that is glaringly absent from this collection. "Such works would be too expensive for the acquisitions budget and already well –established artists with international recognition already have support from government for exhibitions abroad such as the Venice Biennale" says Oberholzer. This also aligns with the Art Bank of SA's clear focus on 'emerging' artists, however, it conflicts with the slogan that this is a 'definitive' national collection and will remain an issue with the art community who would wish for a national collection to have some works by renowned artists that represent the best of contemporary art in the country. An editioned work by Mntambo for example can be acquired through an auction house for R34 000 (such as *Silent Embrace II*, which sold at Strauss & Co for that sum in 2019).

It seems clear that a public call-out is mostly going to attract artists desperate for income, possibly due to the fact that they are at a remove from art capitals, but potentially also because their art is not viable in the market.

After years of relying on an independent committee to make the choices for the Canadian Art Bank, the staff now make the final decisions, according to its current director Amy Jenkins (2021). They arrived at this decision due to the fact that only up to 30% of their collection is regarded as 'leasable' – much of the art they have acquired now sits in storage and doesn't attract clients (Jenkins 2021).

Would the current Art Bank SA collection be considered leasable and/or a definitive South African collection?

Is it possible for it to be both, given the emphasis on supporting 'emerging' artists? Perhaps this can only be appropriately measured in time, when some of the emerging artists in the collection rise to greater heights and become known as exemplary in their field. This has been the case for only a few artists in the collection to date: among them Sthenjwa Luthuli and Wonder Buhle Mbambo, whose works were coincidentally both acquired by Maart for the 2017 exhibition and prior to the public call-out process being instituted.

Undoubtedly, only a few emerging artists are likely to ever become celebrated artists, and for the leasing public, who might not even be aware of famous South African artists, this might not be important either. However, for the collection to be deemed 'definitive' – as is claimed on the Art Bank SA website – and to fulfil its remit to educate the public and carry status, it would need to include works by celebrated artists – at least 10% of the collection.

The more perceived status the collection has, the more the emerging artists whose works are part of it will be elevated. This would also work towards marketing the collection – the 'hot' works drawing attention. At present there are only two artworks – by Mmakgabo Helen Sebidi and Pitika Ntuli - in the collection that are produced by celebrated artists. However, both artists are veteran artists (over 70 years of age) and their works do not exemplify contemporary practice.

The emphasis on 'emerging' artists tied to the Art Bank SA collection also means that for those artists whose works are included, to be classified as such could do their practice a disservice in the future when they perhaps outlive this tag and become, or are well-recognised. In other words the 'emerging' tag might undermine the value of the collection, not fiscally only but perceptions of it. The classification and status of artists is dealt with in more length further in the report.

One art community survey respondent made this suggestion: "There should be different tiers of rental (emerging, established and blue chip) and an option to buy over time in monthly installments. The sale of emerging artists' works should go to the artist and a part should be re-invested in the bank. Work should only be sold after five years of being in the bank collection so the bank can use the increase in value to reinvest in new work".

The 2014 'entity model' document advanced the idea of a permanent and temporary collection. It was thought that this would allow for a balance between lesser-valued works that were more suited to leasing and those that were "designed and developed solely for the purposes of a showcase ... for exhibitions to attract potential clients and ... become a tool for raising awareness" (Layton et al 2014: 87).

There are no works in Art Bank SA's collection that have yet been earmarked for either a permanent or temporary collection, though the two works by celebrated mid-career artists (Sebidi and Ntuli) are currently being classified as heritage works that would not be able to be sold (Gumede, 2021).

Which artists and how many have benefitted?

As it stands (see graph 1.2), only 2% of the collection comprises works by celebrated artists. However, the collection does appear to favour emerging artists – with 45% designated as 'mid-career' (over 35, but not yet celebrated); 29% are 'young established' – they are under 35 years and have an exhibition record; 14% are 'recent graduates' – they are either about to finish studying or have graduated (within 3 years).

Thirty-two percent of respondents in the art community (see graph 1.3) survey agreed that the collection should mostly support mid-career artists. Those that felt this way suggested that as there was much emphasis by other artist programmes, awards and such on young artists, mid-career artists should be supported, particularly as they "have clearly demonstrated their dedication to the art practice ... they have worked through career difficulties already and need a firm base to be able to develop their full potential", as one respondent commented. This sentiment was recurring; mature artists

were believed to be more likely to continue making art and their works were likely to be of a higher quality than those produced by younger artists. Mid-career artists' works are also valued higher in the art market (Corrigall 2019: 66), though these prices are outstripped by young celebrated artists (under 35 years but have enjoyed significant recognition of their practice).

23% of respondents felt that age had little relationship to the quality of art and thought that artworks should be selected based on merit alone.

While there are 298 works in the Art Bank SA collection, only 146 artists have benefitted from the scheme. This means that many of the artists have had several of their works acquired by Art Bank SA. The most acquisitions from a single artist has been six works. In the majority of cases the works were bought in the same year and are likely to have been part of a series, and in most cases were not overly expensive.

It was advised (Layton et al 2014: 94) that the selection of artists should also be informed by demographics. The staff at Art Bank SA have not indicated whether they have employed a filtering system to meet any specific criteria, though analysis has been undertaken by them post-acquisitions and during selections – along gender and provincial lines.

An analysis of the 146 artists whose works are in the collection shows that (see infographic 1.7): 74% are black and 66% are male. This contrasts with other studies conducted (Gaylard 2010 and Corrigall 2019), which have shown that the majority of artists (represented by galleries) are white 58% and male 57% (Corrigall 2019: 22). This finding suggests, then, that artists who have fallen out of the gallery system are indeed being supported to some degree by this programme. Or conversely, it might infer that those who can't rely on galleries to make sales of their work pursue call-outs. The impact of this on the art ecosystem will be addressed further on in this document.

Pricing

The total value of the 298 artworks is R4,4 million (see infographic 1.4). Based on this figure, one can arrive at an average cost per artwork of R14 983. There are only two works by celebrated artists in the collection – Sebidi and Ntuli – and the value of their works predictably outstrips that spent on artworks by artists of lesser status.

Pricing in the art market has little to do with technique or quality and more to do with how the artist is placed in the art ecosystem. This bears out in an analysis of the average prices paid to artists of different status in the Art Bank SA collection (see graph 1.5). However, when you compare the average price paid to artists whose works have been acquired by this entity compared to those figures from the exhibition circuit in 2018 (Corrigall 2019) (see graph 1.6), it is clear that for most of the artists, apart from the celebrated ones mentioned, they received on average significantly less than market value for their work.

This finding has to be understood in the context of four conditions which may have influenced this:

- 1) The 2018 exhibition circuit figures are based on listed prices by galleries prior to any price negotiation. In other words, they may have sold for up to 20% less than the listed price.
- 2) The bulk – up to 79% of artists in the Art Bank SA collection – are not represented by galleries. As such they do not split a commission but receive the full price paid.
- 3) As the artists themselves list their price and Art Bank SA is not reported to have 'bargained' with artists, they are responsible for those pricings. Any inaccuracies may thus be due to artists having a lack of awareness of current market values.
- 4) The majority of the artists whose work is in the collection have little status in the art ecosystem and might not be able to demand higher fees.

This is not to say that the artworks in the Art Bank SA collection are worth more than what has been paid to the artists – as most of these artists (53%) have hardly exhibited, the majority of them are working outside of the main art capitals (24% in Durban, 8% in Bloemfontein and 37% in other locations), they are not embedded in an art ecosystem, nor are their outputs valued highly.

The main problem with this discrepancy is that sales and rentals by Art Bank SA might not align with the commercial art market. This tension will largely manifest when an artist, such as Luthuli, who is from

Durban, has just held his first solo exhibition in Cape Town and now demands in excess of R240 000 for unique artwork. His work in the Art Bank SA collection is valued at R54 000 - there are, of course size differences that must be taken into account. This also has ramifications for the 'new' collectors that Art Bank SA is attempting to cultivate, since they will expect to pay the same prices when they walk into a gallery or art fair, being the next rungs in their art-collecting journey.

The efficiency of Art Bank SA could be determined by the percentage of the budget that is spent on the art, and that goes to artists (Layton et al 2014: 30).

As such, this author persisted in trying to establish what budget had been ring-fenced for Art Bank SA and what had been paid out. This proved difficult, as there seemed to be (based on interviews with Msomi) a discrepancy between what was committed by the DSAC and what was actually paid into the account and firm figures being supplied.

As such, two pictures emerge: the ideal, as set out on paper, and the actuality.

In official communications (from the Acting Director General) from 2016, three amounts were requested and approved for Art Bank SA:

R6 million for 2016/2017

R8 million for 2017/2018

R10 million for 2018/2019 (Msomi supplied a document listing these figures but Oberholzer states it is not accurate). This would total R24 million over a three-year period. If you compare this to the amount spent on the art, i.e. R4,4 million, then only 18,3% of the budget over those three years was spent on art.

Art Bank SA have reported to have had a balance by "July 2018 (when Msomi joined) of R4 349 467,61. There was then a grant transfer of R3mil on 31 Dec 2018 and another R3mil transfer in March 2020. So the total number of funds this team of the ArtbankSA had to work with is R10 349 467,61, not including the interest," (Msomi 2021).

This money would presumably have been used for the 2019 acquisitions (which total **R832 845** and 2020 acquisitions (totalling R1 246 699) which total: **R 2 079 544.**

Based on these figures 20% of the budget from 2018 to 2020 was spent on the art.

Cataloguing and location of the collection

The values of the artworks are registered on Excel documents dedicated to acquisitions for each year. However, the cataloguing thus far has not been structured so as to offer the collection managers any insight into the collection in ways that could benefit future leasing.

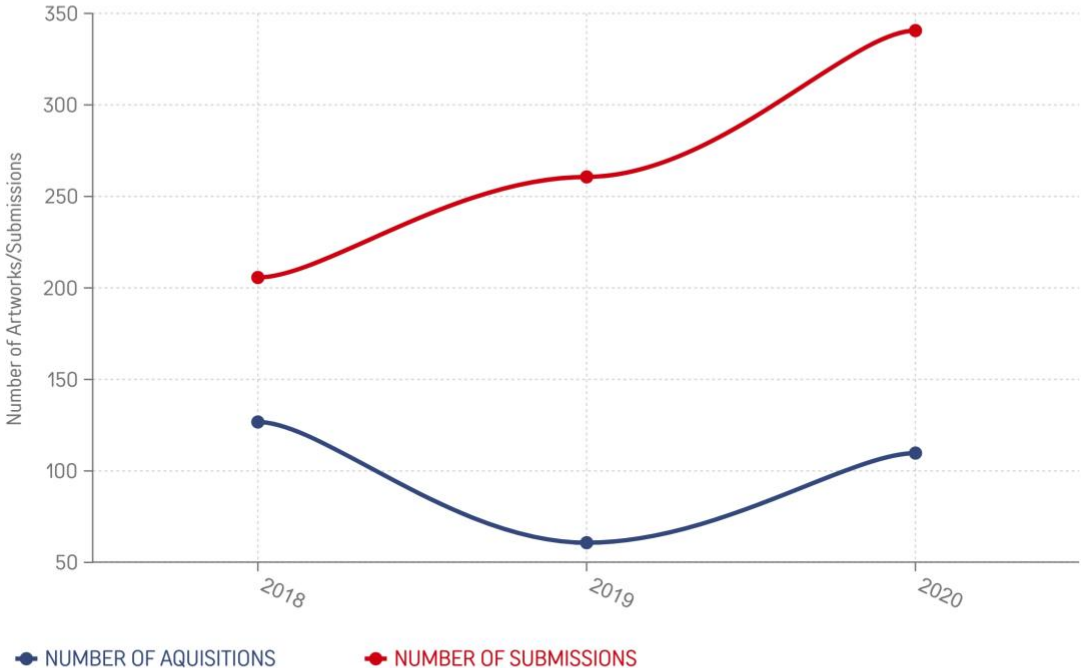
Aside from the fact that no digital catalogue with images exists, in the current cataloguing the genre of the works (abstract, figurative, portraiture etc.), orientation (landscape versus portrait), content (political satire, sartorial inspired, historical issues, identity etc.) and actual value (works that have increased in value, or which might) are all absent. These were recommended in the 2014 guiding document and are in line with most collection cataloguing practices.

The artworks are housed on the grounds of the National Museum of Bloemfontein in a small shed at the rear of one of the outside buildings. As expected, the dimensions of this building are small, and while it is a cool and temperature-controlled room and the artworks are raised above floor level, this could only be a temporary place for the art collection to be kept. This makeshift storeroom was intended as a temporary measure, according to Oberholzer. The storeroom is so small that further acquisitions could not be housed here – and could prevent further acquisitions from being made.

THE HARD DATA: ART BANK SA COLLECTION

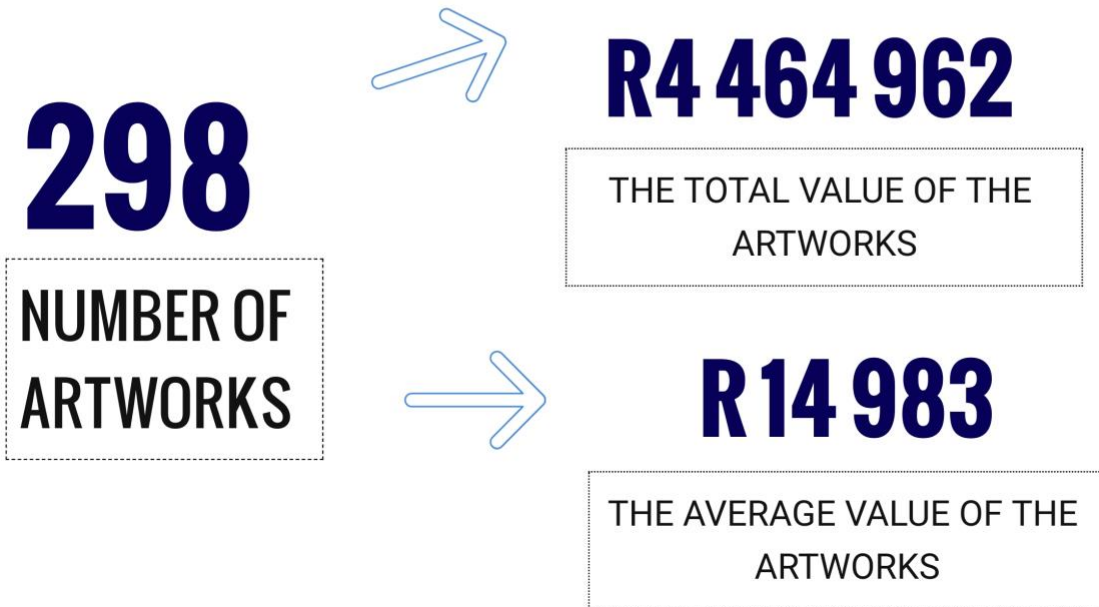
Acquisitions over 3 year period

2018 - 2020



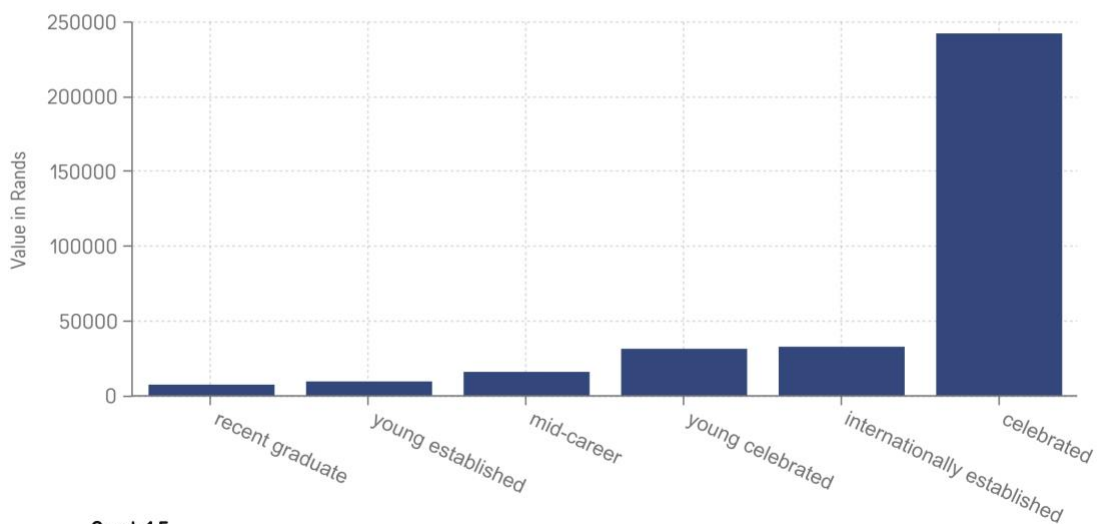
Graph 1.1

THE HARD DATA: ART BANK SA COLLECTION



Graph 1.4

Average value according to artist status

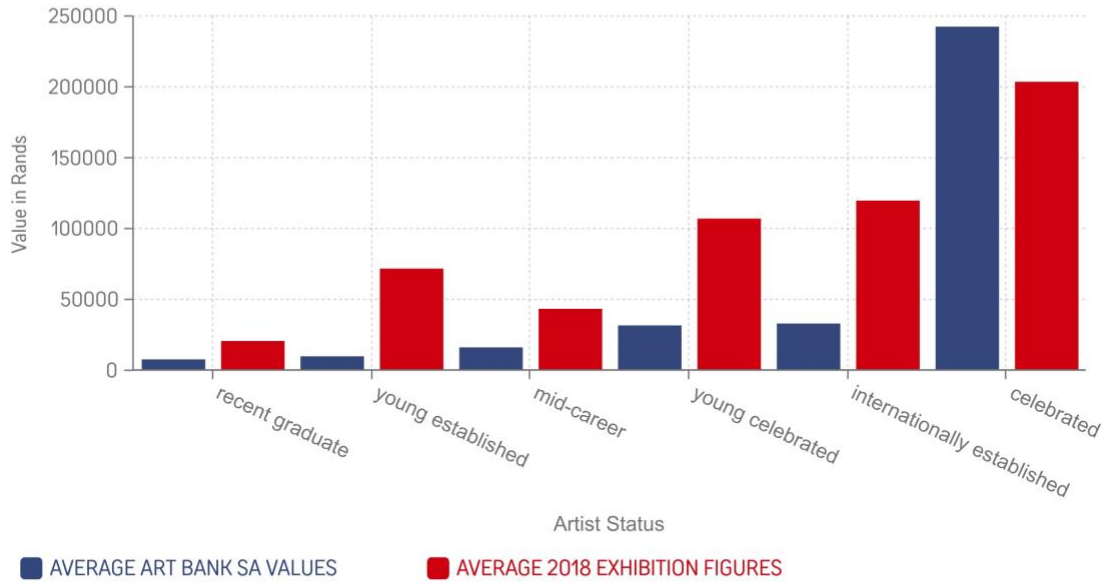


Graph 1.5

THE HARD DATA: ART BANK SA COLLECTION

Comparison of values along artist status lines

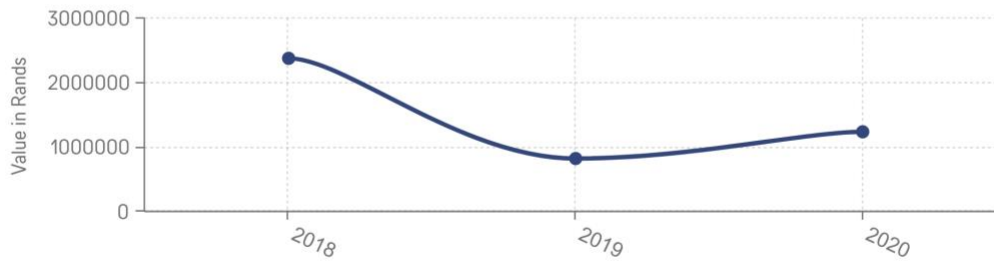
Art Bank SA versus 2018 exhibition prices*



SOURCE: SA ART MARKET PRICING & PATTERNS (2019)

Graph 1.5

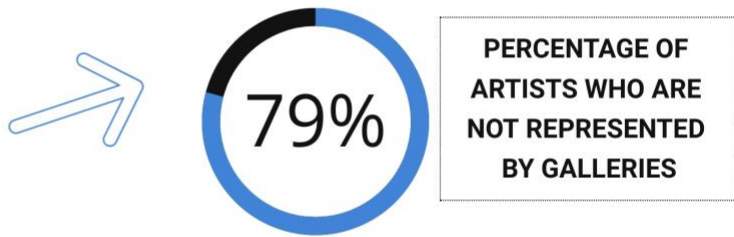
Acquisitions over 3 year period



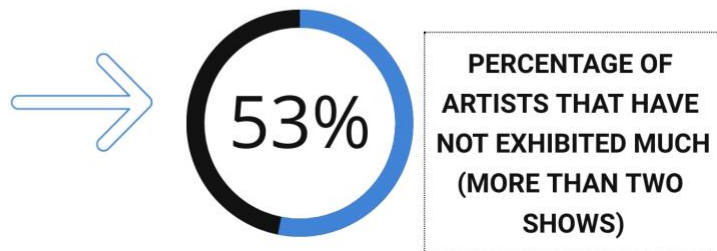
THE COLLECTION: ANALYSIS OF ARTIST DATABASE

146

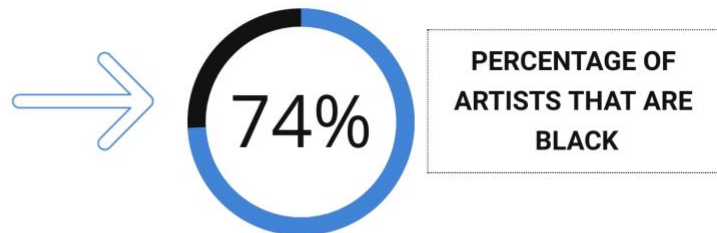
THE NUMBER OF
ARTISTS who
have works in
the Art Bank SA
collection.



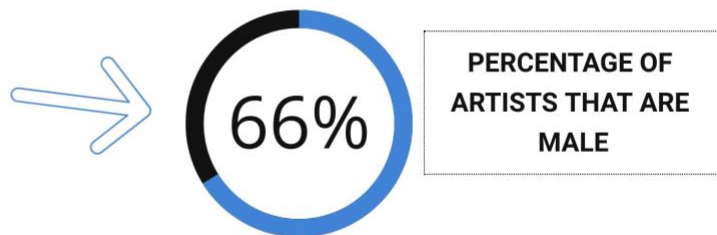
PERCENTAGE OF
ARTISTS WHO ARE
NOT REPRESENTED
BY GALLERIES



PERCENTAGE OF
ARTISTS THAT HAVE
NOT EXHIBITED MUCH
(MORE THAN TWO
SHOWS)



PERCENTAGE OF
ARTISTS THAT ARE
BLACK

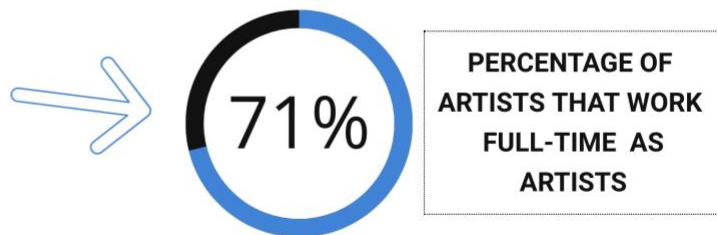
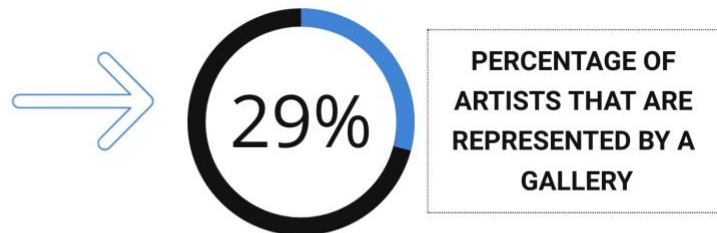
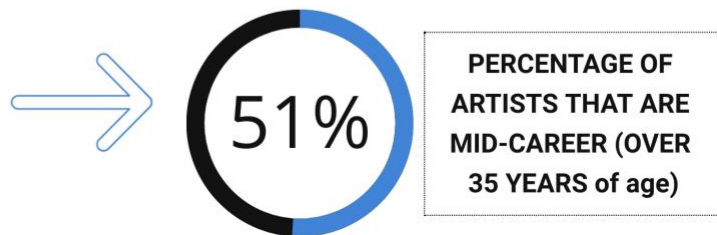
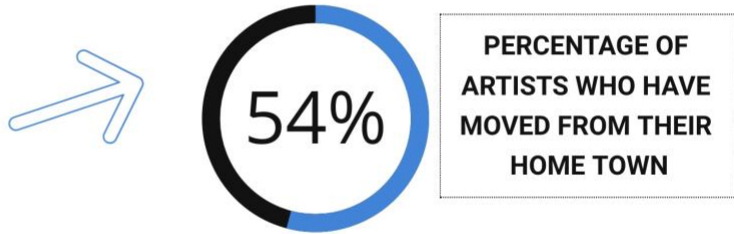


PERCENTAGE OF
ARTISTS THAT ARE
MALE

ARTIST SURVEY

35

THE NUMBER OF respondents who participated in the online survey. They all have works in the Art Bank SA collection.



ART COMMUNITY SURVEY

44

THE NUMBER OF respondents who participated in the online survey. They included high-profile artists, gallerists, corporate art collection managers, directors of non-profit entities and art journalists.



PERCENTAGE THAT KNOW OF THE EXISTENCE OF THE ART BANK SA



PERCENTAGE THAT BELIEVE AN ART BANK IS VIABLE IN THIS COUNTRY



PERCENTAGE THAT BELIEVE IT IS IMPORTANT TO GROW ART ECOSYSTEMS OUTSIDE MAIN ART CAPITALS

6. Emerging Artists

The term 'emerging' to classify artists is used frequently to refer to individuals at different stages in their art careers and its definition has often relied on the development of a particular art market. In her analysis of the Australian art ecosystem, Emily Cormack (2013: 10) suggests that the term 'emerging' has evolved with the art market in that country. Cormack suggests that as there is now a more established support system for artists who are perhaps less commercially viable, artists can remain 'emerging', yet maintain a career in the arts via different funding schemes, collectives, festivals and programmes in that country. In this way, some of the early definitions of 'emerging' have become less relevant there, and an artist could be tagged as 'emerging' even if they were in the late fifties, for example.

In South Africa, as this country's political and social situation has changed, the term 'emerging' has also shifted from being one perhaps used to refer to black self-taught artists, to one that now applies to artists of different ages and stages in their career whose work has escaped recognition. This could be in the form of representation by a well-known or high-status art gallery, inclusion in major curated group exhibitions at museums, or by being known to the art world, collectors and curators. This status is often reflected in the price of their art. As such, even if it is of high quality, the lack of recognition and demand for an artist's work means that it is likely to be undervalued in fiscal terms.

It may be more useful to think of 'emerging artist' as an umbrella term under which a number of artist classifications could fall. This more nuanced reading proves useful, as it fosters greater understanding of the different levels and types of artists who could be considered to be emerging and how best their needs could be addressed (Corrigall 2019: 47). For example, a young graduate would need an art studio more than a mid-career artist who might be looking to be represented by a good gallery that can showcase their art at fairs in Europe.

The different types of artists that could be considered 'emerging' include the following (Corrigall 2019: 47):

SELF-TAUGHT:

This artist has had no formal art education. They can be of any age and have had little or no exposure in the primary market – through galleries or art fairs.

LATE-CAREER:

Refers to an artist over the age of 60 who is still producing art or who has re-entered the art world after years spent working in another creative industry.

RECENT GRADUATE:

An artist currently completing their graduation year, or one who has graduated within the past year or two. They largely show their art in group exhibitions.

MID-CAREER:

An artist over the age of 35 who has consistently presented solo exhibitions, though to little acclaim. Many work as artists part-time.

YOUNG ESTABLISHED:

Refers to an artist under the age of 35 who has continued to make art

The current Art Bank SA has no clear definition of what 'emerging' means, or who constitutes the groups of emerging artists they are looking to assist.

During his tenure at Art Banks SA, Maart (2021) defined emerging artists "according to business principles. We wanted to find artists at that point where they were on the cusp of becoming recognised. Their work was still affordable at that point. We looked at their exhibition history, education and skills to ensure that they were likely to grow to that next level. The approach was speculative in nature".

As already stated, 45% of the artists whose works are represented in the collection are classified as mid-career. Of this amount, a minimum of 20% of them are self-taught – the author expects this figure is in fact much higher given the quality of the art and the paucity of information available, and the degree of visibility of many of these artists.

In the survey completed by artists represented in the collection, 71% of them indicated that they worked full-time as artists. This figure aligns with previous surveys conducted by this author – a 2020 survey

where 50 artists participated following a very broad public call-out, the majority were mid-career artists, and 80% indicated that they worked full-time as artists, with 42% of them not having gallery representation. This means that these artists are responsible for making their own sales.

As much as 73% of the mid-career artists that Art Bank SA has supported do not have gallery representation. Given this, it appears that this fund is reaching those who need to make sales and receive financial support. However, if an artist has reached this stage in their career and has not secured gallery representation, there is the risk that their art has little market appeal – a factor that would impact on leasing and sales.

Art Bank SA could perceivably be burdened with a collection of works by unknown artists that never increase in value or feed into dominant discursive narratives on South African art history.

Self-taught artists, or those not represented by galleries who are far removed from South Africa's art capitals, may struggle to progress or remain working artists. As such, Art Bank SA might need to consider how better to invest in artists who have fallen outside of the gallery system or are operating in locations far removed from art ecosystems while pursuing commercial ends and creating a 'definitive' collection.

Does a single commission enable all 'emerging' artists to continue in the long-term? Looking at the models embraced by the two private art banks suggests that artists need a stream of regular commissions to exist.

The artists surveyed weren't simply hunting down a sale when they submitted a proposal to Art Bank SA. 46% –indicated that they were hoping to reach a larger audience; in other words, that one high-profile sale would engender more sales and recognition that would lead to further sales.

In this way, the public visibility and reach of Art Bank SA is also relied upon to impact on the artists they support. It is not simply the sale itself. This idea bears out further when you look at the opinions expressed by the artists whose works are in the collection, and the art community, with regards to how best to assist 'emerging artists'.

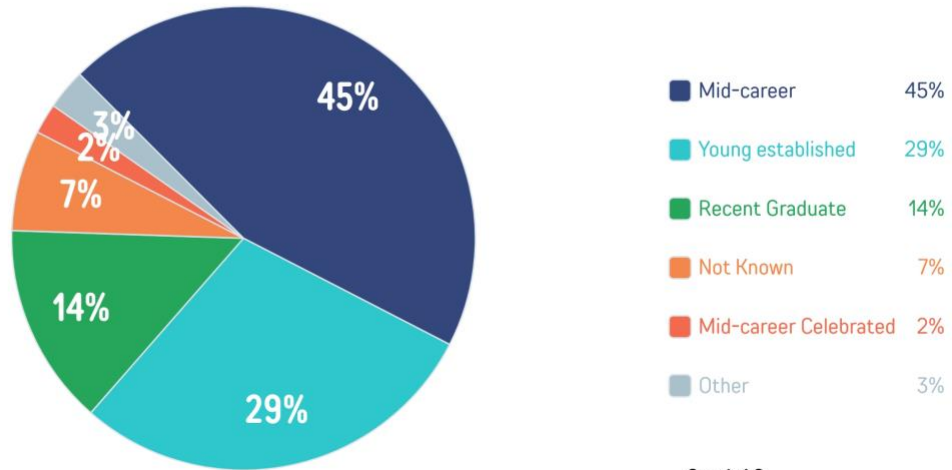
Selling art was deemed as important as having a proper art studio, gaining media attention and gallery representation, according to the artists (graph 2.1). Whereas those in the art community, which included artists and gallerists and other non-profits that support artists' interests, suggest that "mentorship and feedback" (graph 2.2) is more important than sales.

This doesn't mean that Art Bank SA should not be purchasing works, but it does suggest that if this institution fulfilled its full functions – leasing and marketing the collection – and went beyond that, it could better ensure that those sales counted for these artists. As such, if the works were leased and the exhibition records and communications around them were more visible, then the sales would further enrich the artists' reputations.

An artist's status and recognition relies on visibility via validated/respected entities. As such, 77% of the artists surveyed reflected on their CVs that their work was part of this collection. In contrast, however, only 41% of the art community respondents surveyed believed that being included in the Art Bank SA collection added to an artist's status – 23% believed this might be achieved in time, in other words when the collection matured and its visibility was raised. For this reason only 52% of this group would recommend that an artist submit their work for consideration to Art Bank SA.

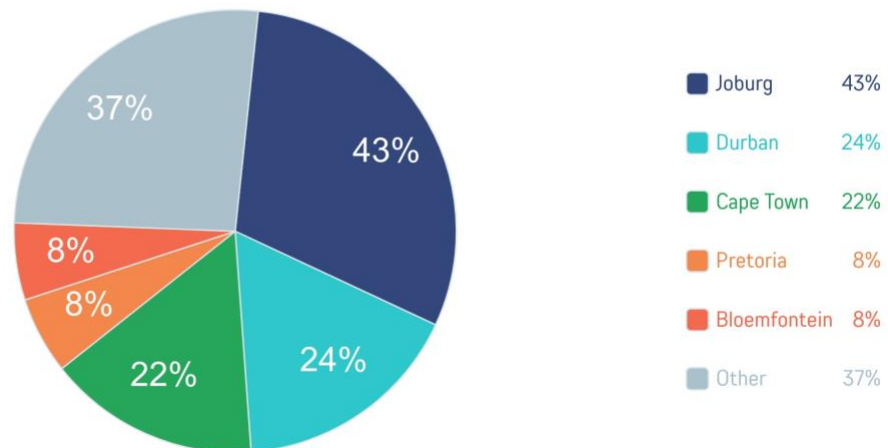
THE COLLECTION: ANALYSIS OF ARTISTS

STATUS OF ARTISTS IN THE COLLECTION



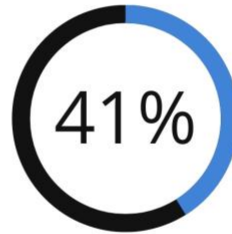
Graph 1.2

WHERE THE ARTISTS ARE BASED

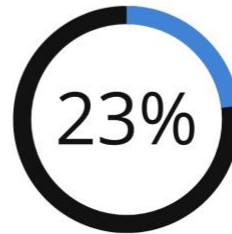
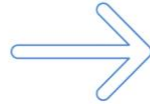


ART COMMUNITY SURVEY

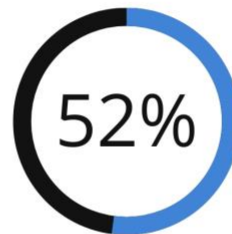
THE IMPACT ON THE ARTISTS IN THE ART BANK SA COLLECTION



PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO BELIEVE BEING INCLUDED IN ART BANK SA COLLECTION WILL ADD TO AN ARTIST'S STATUS



PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO BELIEVE THAT IN TIME BEING INCLUDED IN ART BANK SA WILL IMPACT ON ARTISTS' STATUS



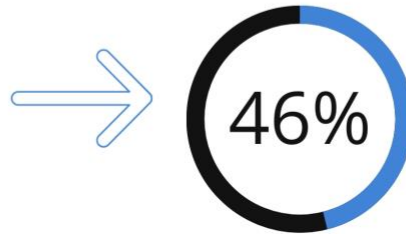
PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO WOULD RECOMMEND AN ARTIST SUBMIT WORKS TO THE ART BANK SA COLLECTION

ARTIST SURVEY

MEASURING THE IMPACT ON THE ARTISTS



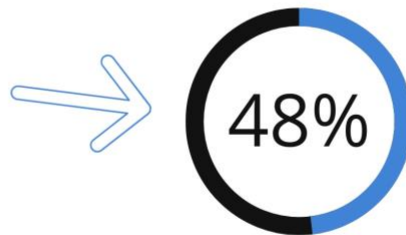
PERCENTAGE OF ARTISTS WHO HAVE REFLECTED ON THEIR CVS THAT THEIR ART IS IN THIS COLLECTION



PERCENTAGE OF ARTISTS THAT SUBMITTED THEIR ART TO ART BANK SA IN THE HOPE THEY WOULD REACH A LARGER AUDIENCE



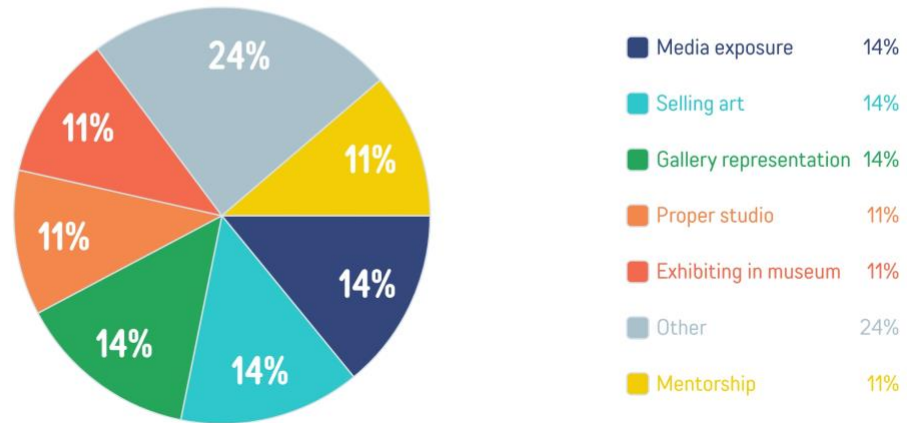
PERCENTAGE OF ARTISTS THAT SUBMITTED WORKS HOPING IT WOULD BRING RECOGNITION



PERCENTAGE OF ARTISTS THAT ARE HONOURED TO HAVE THEIR WORKS IN THIS COLLECTION

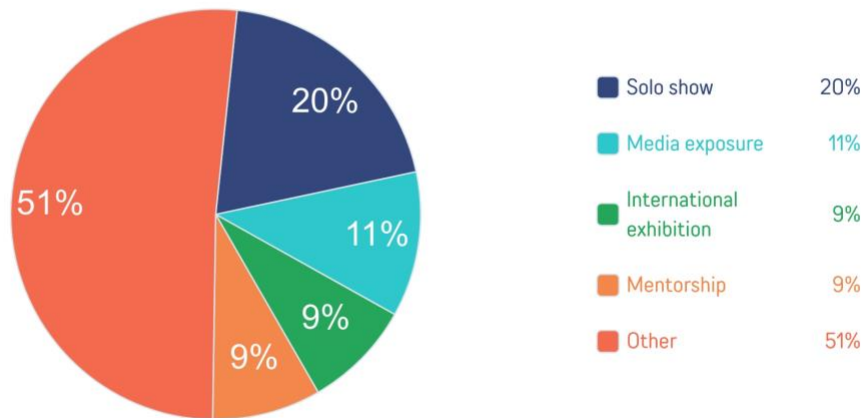
ARTIST SURVEY: EMERGING ARTISTS

MOST VITAL IN ASSISTING EMERGING ARTISTS



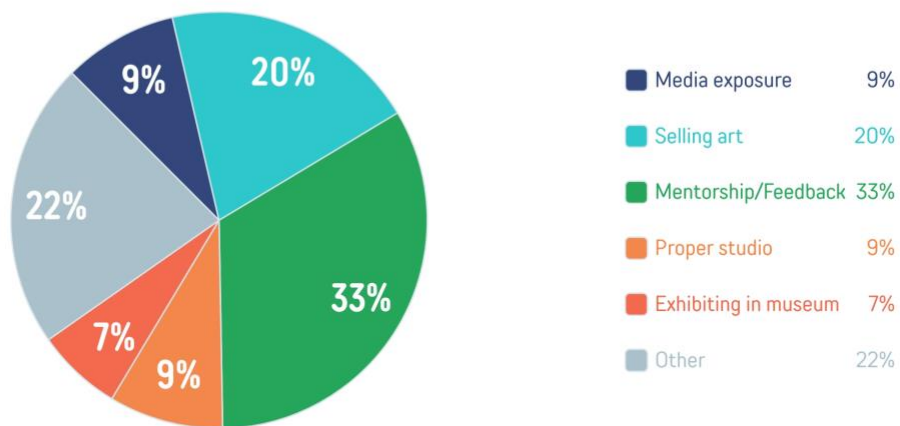
Graph 2.1

HOW TO BOOST EMERGING ARTISTS NOW



ART COMMUNITY SURVEY: EMERGING ARTISTS

MOST VITAL IN ASSISTING EMERGING ARTISTS

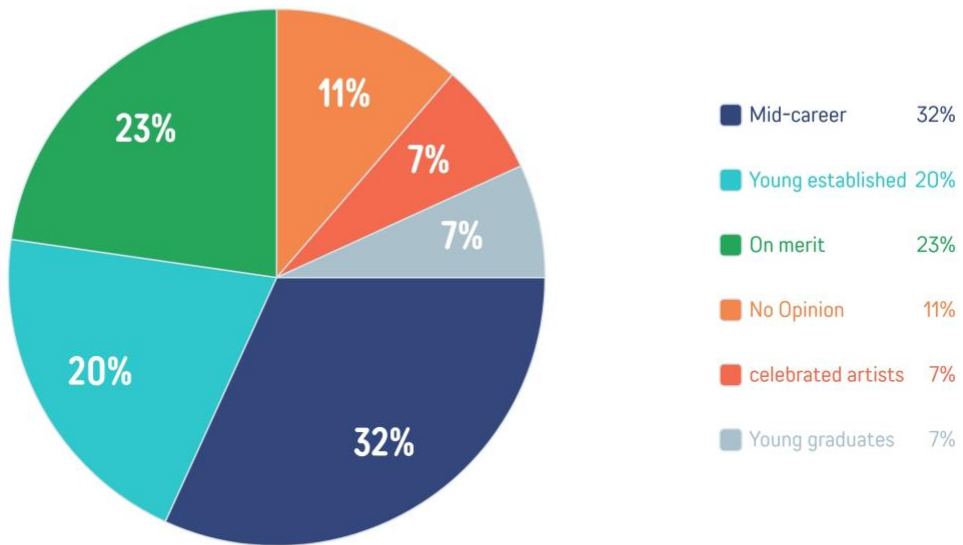


Graph 2.1

ART COMMUNITY SURVEY: THE COLLECTION

STATUS OF ARTISTS IN THE COLLECTION

Opinions on the ideal emphasis



Graph 1.3

7. The Art Bank Model

The original model developed for Art Bank Joburg relied on limiting the price of the artworks they acquired. No more than R15 000 was spent per artwork, and 5% of its value was charged to lease annually, according to Sack (2021). This made it extremely affordable and attractive to clients.

“The Joburg Art Bank was so successful that prominent artists would donate or sell higher-priced works to the Artbank for R15 000, just to be a part of the collection. The works were generally acquired directly from artists rather than through commercial galleries,” says Sack (2021).

As such, Sack believes that spending more than R15 000 on an artwork for the collection makes the model unworkable. As leasing out large, expensive art carries too many costs for the leasee – not only in transport but in the insurance fees – these are costs they would have to absorb.

This approach may have resulted in a collection of lesser-valued small artworks. The Canadian Art Bank is not currently pursuing acquisitions, but they have not set any criteria around size or value in the past. Previously, in 2011, they had less than \$50 000 to spend on art, according to Jenkins.

They went through an almost twenty-year acquisitions phase from 1972 to 1990 where they bought the bulk of their artworks. In the early noughties, they shifted to what they term a “cost-recovery” model – a euphemism for being self-sustainable (Jenkins 2021). When they made this transition, they shifted their client base from mostly government to mostly private clients.

They are very client-oriented and service them via art consultants, which Jenkins described as unique individuals who are conversant in art but are also guided by a strong entrepreneurial drive. They are located near all the government clients they used to service in Ottawa, which is at a remove from the art capitals in Montreal and Toronto. Art consultants located in those cities pursue clients on their behalf.

The guiding 2014 document produced by Layton et al may have recommended the establishment of a permanent collection that would be used in marketing and exhibition programmes, and form the core body of a state collection, however, it was clearly stated that the Art Bank “must operate and be seen as a professional, commercial business, as distinct from a traditional non-commercial gallery, and it is essential that the staff employed have business experience” (2014: 57).

They recommended that the leasing price should be “10% per year of the original purchase price, for a 2-year contract, and 20% for 5 years for a rent-to-purchase contract. These are in line with the prices charged by the Canadian Art Bank” (2014: 67).

It was hoped that within the first five years (phase one) of its lifespan, Art Bank SA would be on the road towards being sustainable. It was estimated that the total number of works on rental would be “200, 650, 1 200, 1 800 and 2 300 for each of the first five years, representing approximately 60% of the total collection” (2014: 148).

Artworks that were not being rented and where there was no interest being accrued would be sold. Sales of works would be used to generate funds for the next round of purchasing and some sales would be undertaken so as to stimulate interest in the artists. Decisions about which works should be available for sale would be made by recommendations from the Selection Working Group – the committee (2014: 148).

Art Bank SA has embraced a 20% per annum fee, based on the cost of the artwork, but has unfortunately barely leased any artworks. Only 10 artworks have been leased to a single client. Selling the art appears to have been activated in parallel to very limited efforts at leasing, and as such does not have any relationship to its ‘leasability’ nor to the recommendation of the selection committee to stimulate the market for the artists – only four artists’ works were sold. Selling the art presently appears to be viewed as a purely income-generating activity.

While Art Bank SA has a royalty scheme in mind for artists, this has not yet been implemented. This would mean that leasing and sales would generate a more steady stream of income rather than once-off purchases for artists.

“I hope it succeeds in its objectives – one of which that I find particularly interesting is the continued generation of income from an artwork through loans and the concept of royalties payable to the artist for said loans, as a way to improve the financial viability/stability of an art career,” commented one of the artists whose work is in the collection.

There is no complete, up-to-date or comprehensive catalogue available of the collection – digitally, in print or on the website – and this further inhibits the possibility of leasing and sales.

According to Gumede (2021), the processes and practices governing museums have been a challenge to the leasing of artworks:

There were shortcomings from DSAC in establishing the Art Bank; when they gave it to a national museum, they did not foresee certain things that have been consequences. That National Museum is a heritage museum and is guided by simple PFMA documents. It is very specific in its prescripts – who you can pay. We are now formulating a collection policy [for Art Bank SA] that is in conflict with the actual organisation that houses the Art Bank. When the auditors arrive, they audit the museum as a whole and not the Art Bank as a separate entity. What we buy, we can sell; you can't do so with a heritage object. We have spent the last two years [trying to] write a policy for us.

Msomi more or less concurs with this view, stating that “if you are at a museum you have to play by their rules”. She is not disturbed by the fact that the leasing of the artworks has not occurred, as it is her understanding that the focus of the first phase of Art Bank SA is on institution building and is not an expected deliverable (Msomi 2021).

A prospective client database exists, claims Msomi, but as yet, beyond exhibitions where some government heads may have attended and one trip to Pretoria to make connections with embassies in that city, there appears to have been very little contact and marketing of Art Bank SA's services. In this way, the artworks have not been circulating or seen outside of the confines of the exhibitions, inhibiting any possibility of cultivating a culture of collecting art, which is one of Art Bank SA's central functions.

It should be noted that since Covid-19, both staff members of the Art Bank of SA have been tasked with additional roles by the DSAC. Following the swift exit of the director of the William Humphrey's Art Gallery in Kimberley, Msomi was assigned to occupy that position at that institution until a suitable replacement had been identified. Gumede too had his attentions diverted by being involved in the commissioning of artworks as part of a separate PESP programme, which demanded that he travel to different destinations in South Africa. No doubt with their attentions diverted to other objectives, the Art Bank of SA and its work has suffered.

Other Art Banks

In their report, Layton et al expressed lacking confidence in the viability of an art bank in this country, given that the market was “not sufficiently mature” (2014: 53). However, they did not clarify how they measured maturity or arrived at this conclusion.

Perhaps looking at existing private art banks in South Africa might assist in establishing whether there is fertile ground for this kind of model, and if so how they might differ from how the state's Art Bank has functioned in the past.

Three functioning entities that lease art, sell and/or supply it in large numbers to corporate entities currently exist in South Africa – though it is likely there are others that have not come to the author's attention. Two of them have recently been established – Art Gazette and Image Swing (both in the last year), while African Art Consultants have existed for over three years. All three were established by art collectors who initially wanted to share their private collections but also pass on the joy of art collecting to others.

What follows is a brief description of two of the above-mentioned concerns.

African Art Consultants is a Johannesburg-based entity that leases and sells art to corporate entities in that city. It was established around 2017. The artists listed on their website are mostly ‘emerging’,

though they claim to have access to works by a few highly collectable artists – William Kentridge, Maggie Laubscher, Irma Stern, Judith Mason, award-winning Blessing Ngobeni, and Walter Battiss – and a lot of unknown artists at various stages of their careers. The artworks featured on their website are not necessarily representative of the works in their collection. Co-owner Simon MacLennan says that as they tend to tailor to a client's needs, they only acquire an artwork or similar works by the same or other artists after someone has shown an interest in it.

“Whether you are renting or selling the artworks, you can't own that many pieces. So we will put a proposal together for our clients with different budgets and styles and we fine-tune from there based on their taste,” says MacLennan (2021). The company appears to make more sales than rentals. “People like the idea of renting, but they prefer to own art,” he says.

African Art Consultants targets corporate clients, though they also field many enquiries from private individuals.

There is more of a preference for emerging artists than established ones, says MacLennan. African Art Consultants encourages sales, as this is a simpler transaction, though few rentals turn into sales in MacLennan's experience. Artists that they deal with directly derive a royalty from each sale and rental, which has proved a highly beneficial way of assisting to sustain them in the long-term.

“We have bought pieces from artists on back-to-back rentals, or when a 12-month agreement is in place they receive a steady income over that period rather than the usual troughs and spikes. This is good for a developing artist, as they can get a regular income,” says MacLennan.

African Art Consultants doesn't rely solely on their art-leasing business – they generate income from other unrelated work. However, MacLennan claims it could be a sustainable full-time business on its own with some marketing.

Art Gazette is a Cape Town-based concern with a small office in London. It was established in 2019 by property developer Mark Epstein and a London-based art dealer and curator. Its director, Morné Visagie runs the business day to day and is also a practising artist. As Art Gazette's goal is to assist in sustaining artists on a regular basis, they work with largely the same group of artists on a regular basis, mostly monthly, purchasing works they produce. They work with over 400 artists between SA, US, Europe. Their intent is to sell curated selections of artworks to corporate or leisure businesses. There are 7 000 works in their collection. They don't sell works individually but in volume. They are not in competition with galleries as they buy small, experimental works that would not normally be offered. They buy directly from artists, even when those artists are represented by a gallery.

They work with three tiers of artists, which they classify as: ‘established’ – in their 40s and 50s with impressive CVs – this makes up around 25% of the collection, according to Visagie. ‘New artists’ (in their 20s) are included too, but it is works produced by mid-career artists (in their mid-thirties) that make up the bulk of their collection.

They have already made some large deals with leisure-based companies. One sale included 700 works. To date their marketing has comprised ongoing social media campaigns. This is despite not launching the business officially. They will look at artwork leasing, but prefer to sell the art. If any of their clients sell the artworks they have acquired within a five-year period, the artists receive from 5 to 10% of the sale. Their clients are interior designers, property developers and hotels. “We meet with them first and get an idea of their needs and then curate a selection,” says Visagie.

They have a private inventory system cataloguing all the artworks by genre, medium and orientation (landscape or portrait) as well as the works' physical attributes. They have a large team – around fifteen people – that include curators, associate curators, many artist liaisons, and dedicated sales people. They give the artists regular, informed feedback and try to reach lesser-known artists through their network of artists.

The common threads uniting both of these private models is an interest in sustaining artists – usually emerging artists – over time – through a constant stream of income through sales. They are also driven to tailor to the needs of their clients – first finding out what their clients like before putting a selection together. While Art Gazette relies on stock to meet these needs, African Art Consultants prefer to locate works after establishing what these might be. That they both exist, and to the extent that they do, does seem to suggest that there is a market for the leasing and or sale of art en masse to corporate clients.

Selling curated collections of art by 'emerging' artists to corporate clients is also the focus of two new art businesses – Latitudes (Joburg) and the newly established House Union Block (HUB) in Cape Town. This demonstrates a need a viability for a formalised interface between independent artists and corporate entities.

“The Artbank’s first priority is to serve government with art works from young artists that might never get the opportunity to be collected by the businesses as outlined above,” states Oberholzer (2020). However, he has also pointed out that as government budgets have been cut in the wake of Covid-19 and are set years in advance, this has made it difficult to lease art to government departments. It should be noted also, that the Art Bank Joburg at the peak of its lifespan relied on 40% of private businesses leasing art.

THE HARD DATA: ART BANK SA COLLECTION

**INCOME
FROM
COLLECTION**



R9 350

THE TOTAL VALUE OF THE
ARTWORKS SOLD:
4 ARTWORKS



**R31 000 per
annum on value
of art R155 500**

ONE CLIENT

8. Impact on Art Ecosystem

Interestingly, most non-profit schemes focused on stimulating the South African visual arts industry have concentrated on assisting, training or awarding artists – VANSAs work, for instance, is largely focused on equipping artists with knowledge, and they have also instigated a new artist award. Artists are the backbone of the art ecosystem – they are the source of art without whom there is no industry. However, many other segments and professions need to be in existence in order to ensure that their art is bought and circulated – from curators, gallerists, writers, auctioneers, art fairs, art collectives, non-profit art foundations, museums, and biennales or festivals. As outlined earlier, South Africa only has two functioning art ecosystems in Joburg and Cape Town where all of these players and/or platforms exist and feed off each other.

If it is Art Bank SA's goal to stimulate the art market and this industry further, then it needs to be carefully considered and strategised as to how acquisitions might achieve this, and how that can happen successfully from a removed base in Bloemfontein that is embedded in a museum structure.

Of the 298 works acquired by Art Bank SA, 72% were obtained from the artists directly. Only 15% of the artworks were acquired from galleries. Only 4% were sourced from non-profit galleries, and 3% from art collectives (a group of artists working together either through the co-creation of artworks or through shared spaces). In this way, Art Bank SA is only stimulating one segment of the industry – and although a vital segment, such an approach can only assist the individual who is the recipient. In the case of a gallery, non-profit gallery or art collective, for example, the entity is more likely to be sustained, and in so doing be able to assist a greater number of artists. Many new galleries (BKHz, Botho Projects, The Gallery, The Fourth, for example) are artist-run and provide artists who have fallen out of the conventional gallery system with another platform to sell works or gain exposure. Galleries and non-profit entities that do not have the resources to participate in art fairs in and outside of South Africa limit the growth and possibilities for the artists they represent or assist. This situation has perpetuated the growth of white owned galleries and commercial entities that have more resources to dominate the market. In other words, more acquisitions from young or artist-owned galleries might work to assist a greater number of artists and contribute towards racial diversification of gallery ownership.

"I am relatively happy with the fact that my work has been selected. I now wish that they'd develop an aggressive marketing strategy to promote the collection globally – the current gallery system lacks widespread representation and is in some instances biased," commented an artist whose work is in the collection.

If a mid-career artist in the Limpopo region, for example, has an artwork acquired by Art Bank SA, will this create interest in their art and advance their reputation in an art capital? This would depend on the status of the Art Bank SA collection and awareness of it. Generating more sales might be hard for this artist if they aren't able to work with a gallery that is situated nearby. Similarly, if you grow collectors in Limpopo, how will they buy art if there are no galleries or art fairs nearby? In other words, while everyone agrees that art ecosystems outside of Johannesburg and Cape Town need to be developed, one still needs to ask whether this would best be achieved through the acquisition of artworks alone – should it be coupled with other kinds of programmes to have a lasting impact on artists?

"Although I think it is critical to have cultural hubs based outside Johannesburg and Cape Town to support emerging artists throughout the country, I do not think it is practical to stimulate a cultural hub in an area where there is no market. I have worked in art management for a while and care deeply about the local South African art scene, however, I think we need continued sustained growth in the 'art' marketplace before we can spread our resources," commented one artist whose work is in the collection.

Art Bank SA is located outside of an art capital. There was only one art gallery in Bloemfontein – Gallery Levisseur, which has closed down, and is expected to be replaced by a much smaller one called Tilt. There is an arts festival in Bloemfontein, which has a visual art component, but there is no art ecosystem as such. Gumede and Msomi affirm that there is no art scene in this city and there are practically no prospective clients.

The artists that have benefitted from Art Bank SA acquisitions are mostly based in Johannesburg – 43%, while 24% are based in Durban and 22% in Cape Town. 8% of the artists are based in

Bloemfontein. None of the artists in Bloemfontein are full-time artists, for the simple fact that there is no art ecosystem there to support them further. Acquisitions of their art benefit them directly and could encourage them to become full-time, but only if they could secure a steady stream of sales.

In this way, the impact of Art Bank SA on the art industry at this time is limited to short-term gains for artists. It is very surprising that such a large number have benefitted in Durban when there is a larger concentration of artists in Cape Town, but this is perhaps a signal that the opportunities in Durban are so few for artists – there is only one gallery in that city that has had real impact – KZNSA – that artists are motivated to seek out sales elsewhere. The call-outs might be well-marketed in that city too given that both staffers of Art Bank SA hail from there.

It was expected that high visibility for the Art Bank SA collection would stimulate the art market – and all the segments in that chain, from gallerists to auctioneers – via marketing to clients and communications to the public.

Respondents from both surveys seemed to be in favour of encouraging the growth of art ecosystems outside of Johannesburg and Cape Town. 59% of those who participated in the art community survey supported this position, while 48% of the artists whose work is in the collection similarly concurred.

9. An Assessment of the Public 'Reach' of the Art Bank SA Collection

Failure to achieve market awareness would result in a loss of income as well as undermine the sustainability of Art Bank SA, according to the 2014 'Entity' document (Layton et al 2014: 55).

As has been discussed previously, not only could the awareness and public reach of Art Bank SA play a role in stimulating collectors, collecting art and thus the art market as a whole, but it would also have considerable benefits for the artists in terms of raising their profiles and generating other sales.

The survey conducted in the art community showed relatively low awareness of Art Bank SA – 68% had heard of its existence, many via its first iteration in Johannesburg. Of this group, their awareness was largely through word of mouth rather than any other platform or form of communication. A similar picture emerged in the artist survey, where 31% had also heard about the programme via word of mouth rather than from any public communication. 9% of respondents became aware of Art Bank SA when curator Brenton Maart had approached them. The rest had learned of it via social media or through a communication posted on VANSAs website.

Even though Art Bank SA's work should stimulate the art market, the focus of their communications cannot only be to those in the art community; they need to reach prospective clients – government and/or private. Letters alerting ministers to the existence of the Art Bank SA, have been sent out, according to Oberholzer (2020).

The main efforts towards creating awareness of the collection, to date, have been through Art Bank SA's exhibition programme. In total, eight exhibitions have taken place since 2017, with the majority (five) taking place in Bloemfontein at its base – at Oliewenhuis Art Museum (see graph 3.1). This is despite the fact that both Msomi and Gumede have asserted that no prospective clients have been identified in that city.

Before the Terrace Restaurant at Oliewenhuis closed in 2017, it brought 500 visitors per month (De Kock 2021). The exhibitions tend to run for a month at a time, and panel discussions and walkabouts are conducted, so at best each exhibition at this location may have seen 500 visitors. The staff have not measured visitor numbers to the exhibitions (which could be done quite easily at Oliewenhuis, given that visitors have to sign in), nor is there a journal documenting the prospective clients that have been invited to these exhibitions.

There has been limited media coverage – at most around one story in the online press and television interviews that have taken place – for these exhibitions, with no in-depth features. The exhibitions are not documented on Art Bank SA's website, and they have hardly been promoted through Art Bank SA's various social media platforms.

For example, on March 11 2021, *Tiro Ya Diatla: New Acquisitions of the Art Bank of South Africa*, an exhibition showing the 2020 acquisitions, opened at Oliewenhuis. The exhibition was promoted on Instagram only ten days after the opening. This is the social media platform most favoured by those who work in the art industry or who are interested in art as it is visually inclined and a forum where artists and collectors connect. Previous exhibitions have barely been documented or promoted on Instagram.

One exhibition, titled *Homing in on Freedom: An Art Bank of South Africa Youth Exhibition*, was staged in Johannesburg at Constitutional Hill in June 2019 – which would have been more closely located to potential clients. However, it was the smallest exhibition Art Bank SA has staged to date, with works by only 23 artists from the collection being shown and, as the title suggests, the emphasis was on the younger artists. There is no documentation of this exhibition on the Art Bank SA website, which could be used by the artists who showed works in it to promote their art further, or for potential clients to view. It was not mentioned at all on Instagram, and on Facebook a poster of the exhibition was shared but no images of artworks or installation views or artists were included.

Due to the fact that Art Bank SA has employed a call-out process for commissioning/acquisitions, the emphasis of their public communications is focused on inviting artists to submit artworks for possible inclusion in the collection rather than on promoting the collection or the events of Art Bank SA.

The website is not up-to-date – only a fraction of the artists and artworks are listed on it, so it does not function as an effective marketing platform for the collection or for the artists whose works are part of it. Put simply, the promotion and circulation of the artworks from the collection in any digital spheres has not been adequately or effectively pursued.

Respondents from both surveys (see infographics 3.2. and 3.3) seemed to largely agree that if Art Bank SA's exhibition programme was not taking place in South Africa's art capitals, it could still have an impact through virtual promotions.

So, why the emphasis on exhibitions, when staging them is not part of Art Bank SA's core function? Msomi and Gumede have both suggested that the exhibitions – particularly those staged in other cities – allow them to market Art Bank SA to artists in other provinces. The duo seem more preoccupied with locating artists tucked away in provinces where there are few opportunities for artists, than marketing the work of their collection to potential clients. From this perspective, Art Bank SA's role has shifted to one that primarily seeks to support struggling, unknown artists rather than cultivating a more robust art market nationally.

"The communications, marketing, community engagement and curatorial processes of the Art Bank have, to date, generally been lacking in dynamism and transparency. With a more collaborative and outward-looking approach I believe there is great potential for the Art Bank," opined one respondent from the art community survey.

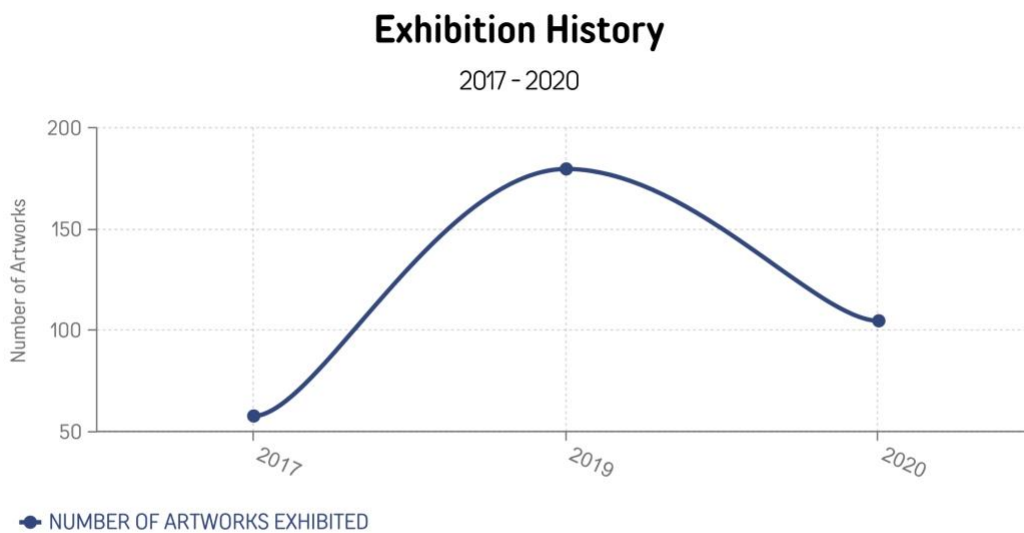
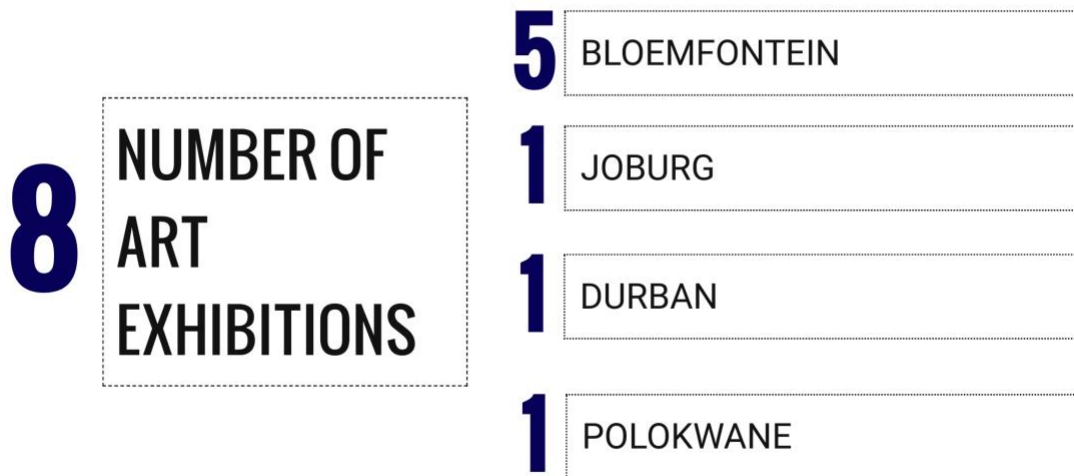
"Art Bank of SA need to do way more public awareness; many people who would use the service don't know you exist," asserted another.

Despite the fact that the bulk of potential government clients are based in Pretoria, no exhibition or launch has yet taken place in this city. "An exhibition was on the cards for Pretoria but was put on hold due to Covid-19," according to Oberholzer.

The exhibitions do not appear to be treated as marketing initiatives by Art Bank SA – the recently staged *Tiro Ya Diatla* is simply a rambling show of all of the acquired works in 2020, rather than a selection of the high-quality works that could be showcased to the collection's credit. There was not a single artwork included on the show by a well-respected or well-known mid-career South African artist. The overall quality of the artworks was poor – some works were at student level – and did not live up to Art Bank SA's promise as a "definitive South African collection".

As such, the exhibitions can only serve as marketing and educational (to promote collecting art) vehicles if the artworks are of a sufficiently good standard.

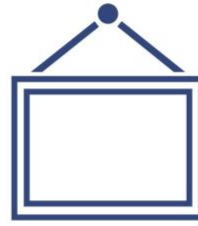
CIRCULATION OF ARTWORKS



Graph 3.1

ARTIST SURVEY

OPINIONS ON THE EXHIBITION PROGRAMME



EXHIBITION PROGRAMME:

47% of ARTISTS WHOSE WORK HAS BEEN EXHIBITED BY ART BANK SA ARE NOT AWARE OF THE EXHIBITION PROGRAMMES.



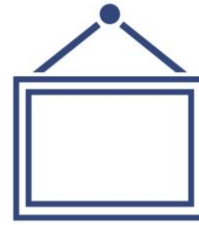
LOCATION OF EXHIBITIONS:

34% OF ARTISTS WERE SATISFIED WITH EXHIBITIONS TAKING PLACE OUTSIDE OF THE MAIN ART CAPITALS (JOBURG/CAPE TOWN) WHILE OTHERS (26%) FELT THAT THIS WASN'T IMPORTANT IF THE ART BANK SA PROMOTED THEM VIRTUALLY TOO.

Graph 3.2

ART COMMUNITY SURVEY

OPINIONS ON THE EXHIBITION PROGRAMME



EXHIBITION PROGRAMME:

THE MAJORITY OF RESPONDENTS ARE UNAWARE OF ART BANK SA EXHIBITION PROGRAMMES. THIS GROUP ARE AWARE OF ART BANK SA'S EXISTENCE.



LOCATION OF EXHIBITIONS:

50% of RESPONDENTS AGREED THAT THE LOCATION OF THE EXHIBITIONS OUTSIDE OF THE MAIN ART CAPITALS (JOBURG/CAPE TOWN) WAS ACCEPTABLE IF THE ART BANK SA'S WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA PROMOTED THEM EXTENSIVELY.

Graph 3.3

VIRTUAL REACH OF THE ART BANK SA



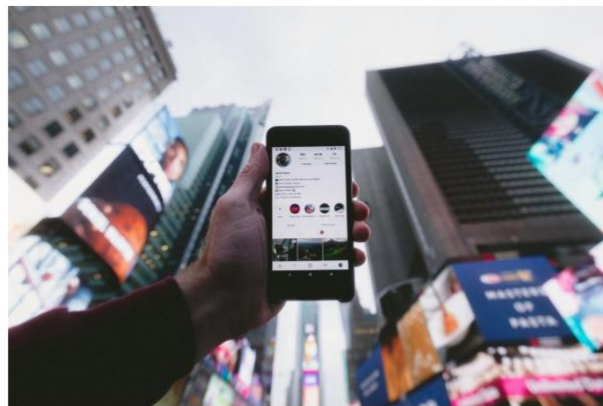
1 246 followers



114 followers



2 112 followers



424 sessions in a month

10. Conclusions and Recommendations

Art Bank SA is indeed assisting 'emerging' artists, as per its primary remit. It is positive that the biggest beneficiaries of the programme are mid-career (over 35 years old) artists and are predominantly black. Given that the collection contains works by artists from around the country, and not just the main art capitals (Johannesburg and Cape Town), it is diverse, representative, and can be called a 'national' collection.

The art collection, however, is not balanced – in terms of the fact that there are no young celebrated (under 35) artists' works in it (whose works are more affordable than the big name artists) nor many celebrated mid-career artists. The glaring absence of artists of this calibre has implications for the various segments of 'emerging' artists that are represented in the collection, as well as for perceptions of Art Bank SA, the status of the collection, and its marketing initiatives. Naturally, as celebrated artists don't need sales in the same way that emerging artists do, the project managers understandably don't want funding to be channelled to artists and galleries who are financially secure and may enjoy government support in other ways. Nevertheless, a very clear collecting strategy seems absent. This is partly due to the fact that decisions about the works are made by a committee appointed by the Museum Council, leaving the current staff feeling that they cannot control or direct the outcome.

The Art Banks SA managers should appoint the committee members, whose profiles need to be more diverse, to include members with business/commercial savvy – independent art consultants, auction specialists, corporate collection managers and private collectors with an innate understanding of collecting tastes and current market values and interests. It is not necessary for a national collection to have committee members from each province.

A clear remit in terms of the percentage of works in the collection by young celebrated figures (before their work is expensive and becomes beyond reach) – perhaps 10% – needs to be accommodated when reviewing works. To ensure that these kinds of works are on the table before a committee, Msomi and Gumede need to pursue a curated approach to acquisitions. A public call-out, while forming part of the process, is clearly not sufficient, and has caused the current imbalance in terms of the quality of the art and artists who are receiving Art Bank SA's support. A public call-out should not necessarily be scrapped, but rather utilised only to acquire a certain percentage (30%) of artworks by young graduates or unknown mid-career artists who are under the radar. Acquisitions of works by artists in this category should also be supported by other programmes – such as receiving mentoring from more senior artists working in the major art capitals.

As it stands, the artworks are primarily sourced directly from artists. This percentage needs to be adjusted if the DSAC is serious about supporting the growth of the art market. Non-profit galleries, young galleries (under 5 years) and a rising group of online dealers and platforms should also be sourced for artworks – as supporting these new entities, which assist a great number of artists, will allow this project to reach emerging artists and those at grass-roots level in a sustained manner.

A clear set of definitions around the groups of emerging artists that should be assisted needs to be identified and a suitable proportion of the budget set aside for each group according to the value they bring to the collection. Maart's idea of isolating artists on the cusp so that Art Bank SA can see their investment in their art grow, is viable but would require a committee with art market savvy. As it stands, while R4,4 million has been spent on the collection, it may not in fact be worth that amount given that so few of the artworks in it might hold their value on the art market.

Most artists and members of the art community seemed supportive of travelling exhibition programmes – to museums outside of the art capitals. However, to date, the focus on exhibitions has not advanced Art Bank SA in terms of its marketing to prospective clients, who are largely based in Pretoria.

Presently, Art Bank SA is not leasing art and does not appear to be close to achieving this, given an absence of a comprehensive catalogue as well as the limited size of the collection. Further, its location in Bloemfontein has proved a massive barrier to effectively marketing and reaching clients. Above all, being embedded in a museum entity has stifled its functions and purpose. It seems unlikely that Art Bank SA will be able to fulfil these as long as it is located in Bloemfontein and is required to abide by protocols that conflict with its main objectives. Covid-19 may well have hampered face-to-face interactions that could have advanced its work as a leasing agency, however, given so little leasing of

art works occurred prior to 2020, it appears that this pandemic didn't put an abrupt halt to existing marketing or leasing plans that were already established. Nor was this 'go-slow' period taken advantage of – with a focus on updating the website and increasing awareness of the collection virtually.

The leasing and sales of artworks need to become the focus of the Art Bank SA. If a percentage of royalties went to artists there would be more chance of this programme sustaining artists, with a continued income stream, working on the peripheries of art capitals.

It is impossible for the current staff to make the Art Bank SA a efficient entity if they are preoccupied with other duties, as has been the case in the last year. As it stands there are not enough staff members to make Art Bank SA functional – its poor visibility, marketing and documentation of the work being done, the collection and events is due to the fact that there is no person in its employ with the technical abilities and know-how to execute these activities. The absence of an artist liaison, curator and a dedicated sales person located near to or in Pretoria has further stymied any efforts towards making this entity operational. This has meant that the value of the acquisitions made so far, and the status they might have added to the artists' practices, has not been exploited.

The Art Bank SA perhaps has only enjoyed a short time of optimal functioning – prior to Covid-19 diverting their staff's attention and since Maart's exit. In this way Msomi and Gumede have had two years to steer this entity. To their credit exhibitions were staged during Covid-19 and acquisitions were still made in 2020.

Staging regular exhibitions in order to communicate to artists and clients is not a cost-effective or practical method of marketing an art bank. This should only be undertaken in a strategic setting – near clients, at an art fair, and with a core collection of works that do credit to Art Bank SA.

Art Bank SA would only be able to fulfill its end goal if it was located near its main client base in Pretoria. The Ditsong Cultural History Museum appears to be a viable setting – Maart, Msomi and Gumede appear in agreement with this prospect – given it has a lot of vacant space not only to house the collection but some of the rooms could be transformed into exhibition areas, which could serve as a permanent interface between the public and prospective clients and artists. Oberholzer feels otherwise, believing that the geographic placement of it in Bloemfontein as being centrally located in the country is of more importance. Ditsong does not have the appropriate facilities, according to Oberholzer.

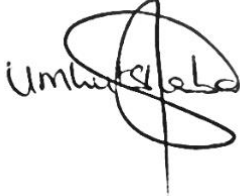
If the Art Bank SA were to be relocated or set up a satellite office to reach clients in Pretoria, two challenges would remain: the bureaucratic protocols incurred from being co-hosted by a museum entity, which have shaped the acquisitions process, leasing of artworks and the embracing of a commercial mindset; as well as other kinds of protocols that might potentially stymie leasing, from government clients' perspective, as outlined in Sack's (2017) explanation for the demise of Art Bank Joburg. Budget cuts following Covid-19 and other shifts in economic policies, might also hamper any immediate commitments from government departments with regards to leasing art – particularly in light of more remote work patterns. Leasing to private businesses might be the most viable option given the above limitations. The Canadian Art Bank concentrate their efforts on this market.

At this early juncture in the Art Bank SA's lifespan, the DSAC would need to discover and clearly outline how some of the above mentioned challenges could be overcome. If the commercial aspect of Art Bank SA is to be fully realised, it would need to be steered by an individual with a keen vision and understanding of the business of art. Given that there are many entities in the South African visual arts landscape motivated to grow art collectors – and are adept at the trading, promotion and sale of art – perhaps a public-private partnership – with the commercial functions (leasing and sales) being steered by a non-profit gallery - should be struck to take the project forward to a more successful place.

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APPROVALS FOR THE SOUTH AFRICAN CULTURAL OBSERVATORY – Reviewing the Impact of the Art Bank – 31 March 2021

	NAME	TITLE	SIGNATURE	DATE
Approved by:	<i>Ms. Unathi Lutshaba</i>	<i>SACO Executive Director</i>		31 March 2021
Approved by:	<i>Ms. Lisa Combrinck</i>	<i>DAC, SACO Project Manager</i>		
Approved by:	<i>Dr Stella (CN) Khumalo</i>	<i>DSAC Deputy Director General: Arts, Culture Promotion and Development</i>		