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UCT commemorates a year since the Table Mountain fire

As the university commemorates one year since the Table Mountain fire, Vice-Chancellor Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng has reflected on the past 12 months and shared an invite to a special Jagger Library memorial exhibition.

Phakeng has also provided an update on the work that has been carried out since the devastating fire that affected campus in April 2021.

- [Read the full communication by Professor Phakeng.](#)

“Just 12 months ago, we were reeling from the disaster of the Table Mountain fire and the damage it caused to UCT. We remain grateful, always, that no staff member or student was harmed by the fire or the evacuation process. But that does not mean we were not affected by what we experienced.

“It has been a long journey of recovery for all in the UCT community, and we remain appreciative of every internal and external role player in response to and post the tragedy that befall us,” said Phakeng.

This week, 12 months since that fateful day, the university commemorates the fire and its effect on UCT Libraries, with the formal opening of a special Jagger Library memorial exhibition.

“Of Smoke and Ash” was curated by Dr Duane Jethro and Ms Jade Nair of the Centre for Curating the Archive, based in the Michaelis School of Fine Art. It opened to the public from Wednesday, 20 April. This exhibition is not just about what the fire did to UCT and the Jagger Library last year.

“It is also about our responses to the fire, as an institution; as librarians and curators and knowledge specialists who have the skills and responsibility to make this treasure known to the wider world; and as individuals who are committed to building, learning from and cherishing African knowledge and its place in the knowledge bank of the world,” Phakeng explained.

Phakeng also provided an update on the repair and rebuilding work on buildings affected by the fire.

The actual rebuilding of the Jagger Library space may take a couple of years, including applying for planning permission and Heritage Western Cape authorisation. Meanwhile, a temporary roof has been installed over the reading room to protect the heritage structure.

UCT is also assessing the destruction of Cadbol House and La Grotta and considering the future of these spaces. Most of the other buildings that were damaged by the fire were returned to full operation in May 2021. The remaining work includes repairs to the HW Pearson Biological Sciences Building and the mapping and replanting of damaged landscape areas.

ENDS

Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department

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