University of Cape Town
Universiteit van Kaapstad
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Report by the Artworks Task Team
(a Task Team of the Council of the University of Cape Town)
February 2017

Members

Associate Professor Shadreck Chirikure (Chair)
Associate Professor Adam Haupt
Dr Nomusa Makhubu
Associate Professor Barbaro Martinez
Mr Rorisang Moseli
Ms Noxolo Ntaka
Associate Professor Jay Pather

1.1   Introduction

Events associated with the Rhodes Must Fall Movement in 2015 prompted the Council of the University of Cape Town to constitute an Artworks Task Team to evaluate the institution's symbols with a view to enhancing transformation and inclusivity. The Council Artworks Task Team, comprised of members recommended by the Vice-Chancellor and the SRC and appointed by the Council, started its work in October 2015. This report summarises the activities of the Task team and presents recommendations to the Council of the University of Cape Town.

1.2   Terms of Reference

The terms of reference for the Artworks Task Team are:

- to conduct or commission an audit, assessment, and analysis of statues, plaques and artworks on campus that may be seen to recognise or celebrate colonial oppressors and/or which may be offensive or controversial;

- to seek comment and opinion from members of the University and other interested and affected parties on these issues (statues, plaques, and artworks); and

- to formulate proposals for new statues, plaques and artworks.

The recommendations of the Artworks Task Team will be considered by the Works of Art Committee before being submitted to Council for its consideration.

1.3   Composition of the Task Team

1.3.1   Initial Composition

Associate Professor Shadreck Chirikure (Chair)
Professor Carolyn Hamilton
Mr Keenan Hendrickse
Dr Nomusa Makhubu
Ms Khanyisa Pinini
Associate Professor Berni Searle

1.3.2   Current Composition

Associate Professor Shadreck Chirikure (Chair)
Associate Professor Adam Haupt
Dr Nomusa Makhubu
Associate Professor Barbaro Martinez
Mr Rorisang Moseli
Ms Noxolo Ntaka
Associate Professor Jay Pather

1.4   Activities of the Task Team

From its inception the Task Team met frequently to fulfil the requirements set out in its terms of reference. After debating the terms of references, implementation strategies were developed but these were adaptable depending on the ever-changing situation on the ground. Below is a list of some of the key activities performed by the Task Team:

i.   The task team debated the terms of reference and sought guidance from the Registrar in cases where clarification was required.

ii.   It was agreed, as dictated by the prevailing conditions at the time, that it was prudent to seek input from the University community regarding artworks that were known to have "generated controversy" and to make recommendations regarding those. This was to be followed by processes related to the full art collection.

iii. The initial student representatives on the Task Team identified a list of 19 works in 2015 that were deemed to be controversial. Before recommendations could be made, however, the #FeesMustFall protests began, resulting in the closure of the University.

iv.   The Task Team was unable to meet again until February 2016.

v.   In the intervening period an audit of statues and plaques on campuses was performed.

vi.   On 16 February 2016, twenty-three artworks were destroyed on Upper Campus during the Shackville Protests.

vii. In response to the destroyed artworks and what at the time were continuing protests, a decision was made by the Works of Art Committee to remove artworks in selected places for safe keeping.

viii. The Task Team organised a joint meeting with the Works of Art Committee where it supported this initiative but advised that the motives for the removals should be made clear. For example, there needed to be public communication about whether the removals were only a measure for securing assets or if they were part of the transformation agenda. The lack of public communication by the Works of Art Committee incited widespread public speculation that removals amounted to censorship by the Council Artworks Task Team.

ix.   The Task Team published an Interim Statement highlighting the problems caused by the unintended cumulative impact of the University's artwork collection and the way in which they are currently displayed at UCT. The absence of a considered and contextually sensitive curatorial policy was also seen as a point of concern. Furthermore, it was noted that UCT does not have an art museum where it can exhibit artworks and where people may decide whether to see artworks or not.

x.   The Task Team opened a call for public response with the aim of soliticing different views from different stakeholders. Some complained that the University was censoring artworks while others believed that it was sacrificing academic freedom

to please a few groups of students. The other view emphasised the need for a considered approach that took into account issues of transformation and the reasons why students were objecting to some of the artworks.

xi. The Executive published a statement explaining developments with artworks. However, this stimulated very emotionally-charged and sometimes hostile debate in some online news platforms.

xii. There was misrepresentation and confusion regarding what the Task Team had or had not done. It was the Works of Art Committee that had the power to take down artworks, for custodial reasons. The Task Team was only mandated to make recommendations and thus had no power to make decisions regarding re-curation or removal of artworks.

xiii. Amidst all this miscommunication two members of the Task Team, Professor Carolyn Hamilton and Associate Professor Berni Searle, resigned.

xiv. In their place Council appointed Associate Professor Jay Pather, Associate Professor Barbaro Martinez and Associate Professor Adam Haupt.

xv. An audit of artworks other than plaques and statues was finalised.

xvi. The terms of reference of the Works of Art Committee were revised to align them with the transformation and other strategic objectives of the University.

1.5 Audit of Artworks and Plaques

An audit of artworks, plaques and statues on UCT's different campuses was performed, building by building and street by street. The work was performed by student volunteers. Before auditing, a data capture sheet with all the required fields was developed and all the fields were completed to create a database which was then interrogated to generate basic descriptive statistics. Tables 1 and 2 present the results of the audit.

Table 1: Gender and Race Representations in the UCT art collection (excluding statues and plaques)

Gender			Race		
Male	350	53.%	White	520	79.1%
Female	267	41.%	Black	99	15%
Unknown	40	6%	Coloured	12	2%
Total	657	100%	Asian	4	1%
			Unknown	22	3.%
			Total	657	100%

Table 2: Summary statistics of UCT statues and plaques

Art Type	Pre-1994 Statues and Plaques	Post-1994 Statues and Plaques	Indeterminable	Total
Plaques	61	9	-	70
Statues	28	5	3	36

Group Representations

Art Type	Black History and Achievements	White History and Achievements	Both Black and White History and achievements	World History and Events	Science and Nature	Indeterminable	Total
Plaques	6	53	3	5	3	-	70
Statues	6	15	1	3	6	5	36

Gender Representations

Art Type	Women History and Achievements	Men History and Achievements	Both Women and Men History and Achievements	Science and Nature	Indeterminable	Total
Plaques	3	24	8	19	16	70
Statues	7	17	7	4	1	36

The data relating to the different types of artworks can be interrogated further but it is clear that there are more white artists and artworks produced by white artists than there are those by black people as broadly defined. This must be understood within the context of the Works of Art Committee's artworks acquisition processes. Until recently it was an official University policy that one percent of the construction cost for a new building would be reserved for the purchase of artworks. The Works of Art Committee, however, was mandated by policy to preferentially acquire works either by UCT artists or artists affiliated with UCT. The result was that the acquisition pattern and profile reflected the racial composition of the art school and its graduates. Statues and plaques are dominated by white males. There are comparatively fewer statues and plaques for white women and black people.

1.6 Review of Works of Art Terms of reference

The Works of Art Committee played an important role in creating and shaping UCT's symbolic landscape by being the sole acquirer of artworks. Some of the complaints raised by students during consultative processes were that it was a conservative body that required transformation. It was therefore essential to review the terms of reference of the Works of Art Committee and the accompanying artworks acquisition policy. The Task Team and a few members of the Works of Art Committee performed a review of the terms of reference. It was recommended that transformation must guide the activities of

the Works of Art Committee. It was also recognised that there was need to safeguard academic freedom but within a transformative context. To improve on governance it was recommended that the Works of Art Committee be a joint committee of Senate and Council. Furthermore, the acquisition and de-accessioning policies were adjusted to achieve redress and inclusivity.

1.7   Limitations and challenges

The Task Team encountered a number of limitations and challenges engendered by the fact that events often unfolded faster than the Task Team could make decisions. This resulted, at times, in the Task Team being reactive rather than proactive.

1.8   Conclusions

Based on the audit and consultative processes performed as part of its deliberations the Task Team reached the following conclusions:

1. Artworks, statues and plaques at UCT are dominated by those of white people, in particular those of white males. While the policy of acquiring works by UCT and UCT-affiliated artists is a good one, it reproduced the racial composition of staff and students of the art school, who were and are still, mostly white.

2. The Task Team amended the Terms of Reference for the Works of Art Committee. As part of the same process, a new and inclusive acquisition policy and new membership structure for the WOAC were developed and approved by Council at its last meeting in 2016.

3. In our deliberations we found that while there may not be a problem with individual artworks, their cumulative effect, coupled with the lack of a considered curatorial policy, creates a negative feeling amongst some students and staff. We found that currently, UCT does not have a curatorial policy and would need to develop one that is transformation sensitive.

4. There is a great deal of conflict of interest and vested interests around artworks created in part by the fact that acquisition, curation, and major decisions have for a long time been associated with 'experts' at the exclusion of others.

5. Artworks are products of scholarly and intellectual engagement and, as such, they must not be censored but be seen as an educational resource. However, the acquisition and curation must be contextually relevant and sensitive to the broader objectives of the university.

6. The Task Team established that there is need for continuous and inclusive debate on artworks and symbols to ensure that their value as repositories of cultural, educational, scientific and research information is well appreciated by members of the university community.

1.9   Recommendations

A number of short- and medium- to long-term recommendations were developed based on the outcomes of the audit of artworks, statues and plaques.

Short term recommendations (to be implemented in one year)

1. The University of Cape Town must keep artworks that were removed from the walls in storage pending a broader consultative process. This consultation may take the form of displays of some of the contested artworks, (in dedicated spaces such as the CAS Gallery), debates and discussions around specific artworks and/or themes. Seminars that may involve artists of 'contested' works may also be hosted by the WOAC and other departments in the university around different artworks and symbols.

2. The Works of Art Committee must re-open constructive public debates regarding the artworks that were removed, damaged or destroyed during the Shackville protests, pending broader consultation. This critical engagement must also extend to the entire collection.

3. As part of the review of institutional culture, the University may include debates on artworks and symbols in the discussions around the Shackville TRC and IRTC processes.

4. The Works of Art Committee may invite proposals for new artworks aimed at achieving redress and balance. This is because artworks and symbols must play an essential role in the transformation of the University

5. The Task Team recommends the establishment of a high level heritage committee responsible for the integrated management of the University of Cape Town's heritage that includes but is not limited to buildings, collections, archives, photos, and symbolic spaces (e.g. Slave Burial Ground).

Medium to long term recommendations (2 to 4 years)

1. The University must consider building an art museum with a curatorial team for exhibiting artworks. This may also act as a space for different discourses around all forms of art – "problematic" and "non-problematic".

2. There are currently at least two galleries (Michaelis Galleries and CAS Gallery) as well as a museum (the Irma Stern Museum). Within the context of adaptive use, we recommend that these spaces and their resources (human, financial, etc.) when available, be re-aligned as spaces to begin debates around UCT artworks.

3. The Works of Art Committee must develop a curatorial policy, through broad consultation with relevant stakeholders.

4. The Works of Art Committee in periodically reviewing the acquisition policy may consider widening and broadening the range from which it acquires artworks. For example, it may reserve 50 % of the acquisition budget for UCT related artists and

use the remainder to buy artworks from across the country and the African continent as it sees fit. This is essential for achieving diversity and inclusivity.

5. The University may, through the WOAC, commission artworks, symbols and portraits that celebrate important events in its history. This may form part of the institution's broader heritage strategy. However, this must not take away the rights of individual departments and faculties in making their own acquisitions and commissions of the same.

6. The University must develop a heritage policy that integrates not just approaches but also decisions about conservation and use of its heritage resources. This is important because the National Heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999 mandates that institutions and individuals must actively manage heritage resources in their custody.

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