Acquisition policy of the Johannesburg Art Gallery with regard to the South African collection, 1909–1987

Jillian Carman
Johannesburg Art Gallery, P.O. Box 23561, Joubert Park 2044, Republic of South Africa

When the nucleus of the Johannesburg Art Gallery collection was first exhibited in November 1910, South African artists barely featured. Today South African artworks constitute the largest of the South African collection and of according black artists their rightful place in the history of South African art.

With the history of adaptation, the policy today displays a new emphasis, that of establishing an historic black South African collection and of according black artists their rightful place in the history of South African art.

No matter how a particular museum may develop it remains essentially shaped by the policies of its founders which successive curators may modify but not change. There is a tangible legacy in a museum, the collection, which gives the museum its particular character. However, there are stages in a museum’s development when the legacy needs to be modified through changes in acquisition policy, display, or other means which alter the old emphases while respecting the inherited collection.

The Johannesburg Art Gallery has a history of modifying its foundation collection through adapting acquisition and display policies to changing needs. When it first opened its doors, for example, South African artists did not warrant their own section, as did British, Dutch, Belgian, French, and Italian artists. In 1987, the works of South African artists preponderant and occupied the largest exhibition space in the Johannesburg Art Gallery.

In order to examine how this development occurred I shall first treat the nature of museums and their acquisition policies. I shall then outline the acquisition policy on which the collection of the Johannesburg Art Gallery was founded, indicating how this has been adapted over the years primarily in response to the needs of the community. Finally, I shall indicate the current direction in which the acquisition policy is moving.

Nature of museums and their acquisition policies

Even though museums may like to think otherwise, they are essentially conservative institutions. Whatever their acquisition policies, methods of display, exhibition programmes or educational activities, museums adhere to the fundamental role of all museums which is to collect, to conserve, and to communicate. To be effective in this role, museums need to ensure that what they collect is worthy of conserving, displaying, and studying. In the case of an art museum, this entails a certain distance in time, a passing of the test of worth. Art museums do take risks, especially if they are in the field of collecting contemporary art. However, although the director’s ideal may be the discovery of an artist before he achieves the fame that makes him prohibitively expensive, practicalities often put a restraint on buying the unknown quantity. Museums generally operate on tight budgets and are answerable for the money they spend, and they cannot afford to load their storage spaces and their curators’ and restorers’ time with second-rate work which is not museum quality.

The principle of controlled deaccessioning, which is generally accepted by the American Association of Museums, would solve the problem of overloaded store-rooms but it presents a potentially more serious problem: a lack of discrimination in the acquisition policy. The proponents of deaccessioning unequivocally state that deaccessioning would be largely obviated by adopting a correct acquisition policy in the first place.

No matter how relevant the art museum would like to make itself it cannot avoid the problem of choice and, thereby, of qualitative decisions. If a director and his advisory committee are uncertain about the quality of a particular artist or about the direction the acquisition policy should take then, ideally, they should delay acquisitions of certain works until a clear policy, or a clear idea about quality, is achieved. I say ‘ideally’ because in practice there are usually a number of other factors involved, such as a bequest of uneven standard, a shortage of funds (or a necessity to spend funds by a certain date or to forfeit them), or recalcitrant but powerful voices amongst the authorities who control the finances of, for example, a municipal art museum.

The art museum, one could argue, has a duty to exercise a certain amount of restraint, or thought, in its acqui-
sition policy. It can be an enormously powerful education tool: It therefore has the responsibility not so much to lead the avant-garde as to lead the assessment of the avant-garde. It does so at the risk of being described as a floundering mammoth, always a few steps behind, buying a particular artist’s work only after he has received a major award or has achieved international acclaim, or entering a new field only after it has been researched by a generation of graduate students. Such criticism sometimes stems from ignorance and is therefore unfair, for example, when we are accused of ignoring artists whose work we have been collecting before it became fashionable. But sometimes criticism may be justified, even when the mammoth is correctly identified as the ruling body of the museum, not the museum itself. However, I do not believe a museum need apologize for a restrained image as far as acquisitions are concerned. It may be as pioneering as it likes in its display or education policies — provided no works are at physical risk — but its process of acquiring works has a right to be controlled both in the governing policy and in the number of committees which have to give approval. The opposition of governing bodies would obviously be met by a clear motivation explaining why certain acquisitions should be made. Such a rationale for acquisition is of paramount importance for the Johannesburg Art Gallery as our acquisitions are there to stay. We have not adopted the practice of deaccessioning, even though the ethical code of the Southern African Museums Association allows for the controlled disposal of objects from collections. The correct choices must be made when works are acquired and the expertise of past directors should be acknowledged and respected.

Acquisition policy of the Johannesburg Art Gallery at its foundation

The first director to acquire artworks for the Johannesburg Art Gallery was Hugh Lane (1875–1915) who operated in an honorary capacity. He collated the nucleus of the collection of the Johannesburg Art Gallery although, as he writes in the ‘Prefatory Notice’ to the 1910 catalogue, he was not responsible for the choice of a few of the pictures in the Gallery ‘the inclusion of which I regret’. He was the founder of the Dublin Municipal Art Gallery (today known as the Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Modern Art) which opened in 1908, and he was appointed Director of the National Gallery of Ireland in 1914. Lane was asked in 1909 to put together a collection by Florence Phillips (1863–1940), whose idea it was to found an Art Gallery for Johannesburg. Her choice of Lane as adviser was inspired. He not only collated a superb nucleus, but he also recommended Edwin Lutyens as the architect of the building to house the collection. The Johannesburg Art Gallery is one of only two museums designed by Lutyens and is the only one that was erected. Ironically, the other museum design, which was never realized, was for Lane’s Dublin Municipal Gallery of Modern Art.

What sort of collection did Hugh Lane, under authority from Florence Phillips, acquire for the new Johannesburg Art Gallery? The catalogue issued at the opening of the nucleus of the collection 29 November 1910 comprises the following sections, all reflecting modern art or the precursors of modern art: British Painters (55 works including 1 on loan and catalogue No. 82a); Dutch and Belgian Painters (7 works); French Painters, Romantic and Barbizon Schools (10 works); French Impressionist School (8 works); Italian Painters (4 works); Portraits, Nucleus of a National Portrait Gallery (6 works); Statuary (15 works); Etchings (4 works); Watercolours and Drawings (21 works); some ‘interesting pictures’ not suitable for the Modern Art Section; and 11 Medici Reproductions. The British School predominates and there is no section for South African artists.

The surprising point about the exclusion of South African painters from the foundation collection is that the founder of the Johannesburg Art Gallery, Florence Phillips, was so active in promoting local artists, both privately and through the South African National Union, which promoted the work of local artists and craftsmen. Six months prior to the opening of the Johannesburg Art Gallery, Florence Phillips had masterminded the Arts and Crafts Exhibition of local artists that was held at the Wanderers Club from 28 March–24 April 1910 under the auspices of the South African National Union. Yet she and Hugh Lane did not consider these local artists important enough to constitute a South African Section in the new Art Gallery.

Apart from two works on paper of Cape subjects by the Australian artist Albert Henry Fullwood (1863/4–1930) and various portraits by foreign artists of well-known South African characters, the only South African artist represented in the nucleus of the collection was Anton van Wouw (1862–1945). He had five works in the statuary section. Van Wouw was patronized by the Phillips family and their acquaintances and his commissions included the fanlights above the doors of the Phillips’ recently completed home, Villa Arcadia. He had the singular honour at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition of having his sculptures displayed on a draped grand piano on the stage. His inclusion in the nucleus of the collection was an exception. The opinion of the day was that South Africa ‘had not yet given birth to a great painter’.

One of the earliest policy statements relating to the collection of the Johannesburg Art Gallery is the Deed of Donatio Inter Vivos of 21 January 1913 which marked the official donation of the collection to Johannesburg. The original donors agreed to ‘unite themselves with other persons connected with the Town of Johannesburg with the object of acquiring pictures, statues and other works of art, including herein old furniture, lace and other articles having an artistic value, to be used and applied for the general purposes of an Art Gallery and Museum of Industrial Art for the behoof and public benefit of the inhabitants of the said town and the neighbourhood thereof and of others resorting thereto …’

Elsewhere in this document the autonomy of the Art Gallery is set out. The Municipal Council of Johannes-
burg was not empowered to remove, exchange or dispose of, or restore, any artworks, or to add to the collection, or appoint or remove curators without first obtaining the advice of the Art Gallery Committee, whose composition of seven members ensured the Municipal Council would never be able to take control of the Art Gallery Committee and thus of the above cardinal points relating to an independent museum.

The salient features of this *Deed of Donatio Inter Vivos* are: the independence in collection and curatorial policies from the otherwise controlling municipal body, the original nature of the museum as an 'Art Gallery and Museum of Industrial Art' (that is, applied or decorative art), and the principle of the museum serving a community.

The first feature — the independence in collection and curatorial policies — is still essentially inviolable although the Art Gallery itself is not independent. It is a Council department whose continued existence depends on Council financing. The Council may exert its influence over the Art Gallery's collection and curatorial policies by not agreeing to expenditure.

The second two features, the Art Gallery incorporating a museum of industrial art and serving the community, are interrelated. The Johannesburg Art Gallery is no longer described as an 'Art Gallery and Museum of Industrial Art' because the 'industrial' or applied art section did not develop as significantly as anticipated. Funds, donations, and past directors' attitudes must obviously have played a part in shaping the development of the collection, but the community the Gallery served probably played the largest part. The successive directors may not necessarily have been aware of this, but they themselves were part of the community and the direction in which they guided the growing collection in their care reflects the changing needs of the community at large.

Initially, the community really had nothing to do with the proposed Art Gallery. The idea for an art gallery did not spring from the community itself, but from its upper echelons. The collection was initiated and imported by Florence Phillips, who spent as much time in England as she did in Johannesburg. Her adviser Hugh Lane was a stranger to the mining town and only visited Johannesburg for the first time in 1910 when he brought out the artworks he had collated using funds provided principally by the Phillipses and other Rand magnates. The foundation of the Johannesburg Art Gallery can only really be called democratic in the sense American museums like to use the term: It was not originally a private collection to be visited by an elite as apparently European museums were in their early days. It was founded specifically for the community and works were bought using funds specifically donated for that purpose.

However, the community does not seem to have been consulted about what they would like although Florence Phillips must have had a shrewd idea of what they really wanted when she hoped to elicit money for the General Subscription Fund in July 1910 by dangling a carrot of future developments if the Gallery were founded:

'We may hope that a South African School of Art will grow up, and the study of the masterpie-

ces, a few of which we have been able to secure for the gallery, should be a help as well as an incentive to local artists. And when our South African School of Art begins to produce work worthy to appear side by side with the best examples of other countries, it is surely desirable that the Trustees of the gallery should be in a position to purchase such work, and so not only encourage rising talent, but form from the beginning a great South African collection.'

The wish to have a South African collection appears to have been widespread. Denys Lefebvre, in a review in *The Star* of 27 December 1915, when the collection was opened in the Lutyens building, writes

'I understand that the question of a South African section has again been mooted' and then he goes on to say that absolute impartiality and a rigid insistence on a high standard of art must be maintained by a committee of selection, even if this would 'make life difficult, if not uncertain, for its members'.

A South African section was not seen as the only need. Many appear to have wanted an earlier Dutch collection as well.

F.V. Engelenburg, one of the founders of the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns in 1909 and a great friend of the Gallery in its early years, probably spoke for a large segment of the community when he raised the question of including Dutch seventeenth-century paintings in the collection. In a letter to friends in Holland he stated that it was essential for the rising generation of the new nation to be inspired by pictures of their Dutch forbears, for the art treasures of the Union not to be unbalanced.

The community, in effect, was offered what Florence Phillips and her associates considered it should have: an intelligent recreation for the large working population on the Rand. The Art Gallery founders' ideals were of the noblest. The Art Gallery's role was to be largely educational, to expose the local population to excellence in art, to bring to the heart of a country that was just recovering from a protracted war the ennobling artistic influence that would save it from materialism. There seems to have been no doubt in the founders' minds that, failing Old Masters (which were too expensive and scarce) the principal excellence in art was to be found in modern British art.

An article in *The Civil and Military Gazette* 26 May 1910, entitled 'Art and Empire', quite blantly advocates the establishment of such institutions as the Johannesburg Art Gallery in order to extend the same ideals of enlightenment and, as far as possible, the same standards of taste as the imperial originators. What anathema this must have been to the average Afrikaner. Did the Gallery avoid what H.J. Hofmeyr had discussed with reference to the Rand Regiments Memorial in a Johannesburg Town Council meeting during April 1910? At that stage, it was proposed that this memorial be combined with the Johannesburg Art Gallery. Hofmeyr appealed for nothing which should have a suspicion of racial aggrandisement as he believed a monument to the British dead would have, and he expressed the hope that...
in 20 years there would be no distinction between British and Dutch. 29 Although the Rand Regiments Memorial and the Johannesburg Art Gallery went their separate ways, the initial proposal to combine them, the use of a British architect (Edwin Lutyens) to design both monuments, 30 and the predominantly British collection of the Gallery may have prejudiced from the start the Town Council. Its reluctance to provide funds and to appoint a permanent director, and its seeming lack of interest, may partly be explained by a decision it made in May 1910 not to give funds to the Rand Regiments Memorial as it was associated with only one section of the community. 31 The Council probably believed that the Johannesburg Art Gallery was also associated with only one section of the community.

The controlling body of the Johannesburg Art Gallery presumably realized quite soon after its foundation that it was appealing primarily to a privileged British-origin section of the community. The acquisition policy had to be adjusted and an effort now had to be made to be relevant to what was the disadvantaged community of the time, the Afrikaans-speaking community of Dutch heritage.

**Adaptation of the acquisition policy with regard to the South African, in particular the Afrikaans-speaking, community**

The only South African artist represented in the 1910 nucleus was Anton van Wouw, who was known for his Boer sympathies in the recently terminated war. He presented to the new gallery his President Kruger in Europe (the other four Van Wouw works in the nucleus were donated by Florence Phillips). The nucleus of the National Portrait Gallery, which contained no leaders of relevance to Boer sympathisers when the collection opened in 1910, soon had portraits of Von Brandis, Botha, and Smuts while the Statuary section soon had its ranks swelled by a small figure of Van Riebeeck and by busts of Smuts and of the Boer generals Botha, De la Rey, and De Wet. 32 In time, the Dutch roots of South Africa were represented when a collection of seventeenth-century Dutch paintings was donated to the Johannesburg Art Gallery by Eduard Houthakker in 1947, coincidentally at about the time the Nationalist Party came to power in 1948. 33

Shortly after the opening of the collection in 1910 the acquisition of South African artworks began in earnest, although in the early days they were evidently considered less important quality-wise than the British and European counterparts acquired at the same time, and rightly so. The 1912 Neumann gift of Pre-Raphaelite art, for example, was sent out to South Africa and placed on display at the time Gwelo Goodman's paintings and watercolours of mines were accepted into the collection. Goodman's works form an important genre, but no-one would claim they are of international interest as the Pre-Raphaelites Collinson, Deverell, and Rossetti are. 34

A survey of oil paintings by South African artists accessioned into the Johannesburg Art Gallery indicates that from 1910–1929 only six paintings were acquired, five gifts and one purchase. In the 1930s, 18 paintings were acquired (13 purchases, 5 gifts or bequests) and in the 1940s, 23 painting were acquired (19 purchases and 4 gifts). The increase in acquisitions of local works coincides with the evolution of the directorship from a picture-minder deferring to an overseas authority, to an independent professional post. 35

Until 1918 the Johannesburg Art Gallery had a London-based director who was required to supervise the acquisition of artworks. The priority works for the new Gallery were evidently seen to be those emanating from outside of South Africa. Hugh Lane was the first London-based director (despite his Irish connections, he was principally based in London). After Lane's resignation at the beginning of 1911 he was succeeded, apparently in 1912, by Robert Ross who held the post until his death, 5 October 1918. 36 Ross is principally remembered for his role in collating, with Henry Tonks, the Neumann gift of Pre-Raphaelite art. Ralph Rowland also appears to have been a London-based director from about December 1912–May 1913. Subsequent to Ross' death the Gallery appears to have used the services of overseas advisers in a fairly informal fashion — such as Mr Ede of the Tate Gallery, who advised on the purchase of Utrillo's *Military Hospital* in 1935. 37

Back home, the curator from 1911–1928 was the artist Albert Gyngell. He appears to have been given no particular powers with regard to recommending acquisitions and to have been considered incompetent, at least by Florence Phillips and perhaps unfairly. 38 This could explain the paucity of South African acquisitions at this time. Austin Winter Moore, who was later Professor of Fine Arts at Rhodes University, was temporary curator from 1928–9 and A.A. Eisenhofer was curator from 1929–1937. This was the period when a marked increase in the acquisition of South African artworks began and when the Gallery received the highly important Howard Pim Bequest in 1934 of 551 prints. Although the Pim collection had only a few prints by South African artists 39 its acceptance into the Gallery's collection marked an important development in the acquisition policy of the Johannesburg Art Gallery. The Print Cabinet today remains the largest of the Gallery's collections and the most representative of the general history of western art and of contemporary movements.

The appointment of P. Anton Hendriks as curator in 1937 marked the beginning of the longest term of office held so far by a curator or director of the Johannesburg Art Gallery. 40 He retired in 1964. During his directorship some of the most significant developments in the acquisition policy of the Johannesburg Art Gallery occurred. Of the 18 South African paintings acquired in the 1930s, 11 were acquired at the end of the decade under Hendriks, setting a trend whereby the western-tradition Southern African collection of paintings, sculpture, drawings, and watercolours would become one of the largest and most representative collections in the Johannesburg Art Gallery. 41 The expansion of the South African collection, however, was not generally seen as adequate. In 1946, for example, *Die Transvaler* published a number of articles alleging that the Johannesburg Art...
The Johannesburg Art Gallery was not interested in South African and, specifically, Afrikaans art. Even though a South African room was opened in 1947, this was not seen as sufficient. Additional permanent exhibition space was excavated from a basement area in the 1970s but again this was not ideal. Not only were conditions cramped but a basement setting without natural light held a suspicion of discrimination. It was only really with the opening of the new extensions to the Johannesburg Art Gallery in October 1986 that the size and importance of the South African collection have been publicly realized. The South African collection at present occupies the east wing and north entrance foyer of the new extensions and South African sculpture dominates the external surroundings.

Despite the gaps that unfortunately do exist in the South African collection, the criticism of Hendriks’ acquisition policy is not entirely justified. Hendriks’ South African acquisitions may have been reticent but they were certainly sound and of the highest quality. They must be seen in the context of his overall acquisitions, which encompassed more than just the South African collection. He was responsible for some highly important new directions. For example, he procured on loan for a period of about 20 years the Hague Collection comprising a Barlach sculpture and paintings by Cézanne, Daille, Van Gogh, Manet, Camille Pissarro, and Renoir.

We are unlikely ever to see such a quality collection of these artists on the Johannesburg Art Gallery premises again. He ‘filled in the gaps’ so to speak by acquiring certain works by artists whom Hugh Lane had mentioned in his 1910 ‘Prefatory Notice’ as essential additions for the future: Daubigny, Degas, Josef, and Isaac Israels. He procured for the Gallery the Houthakker gift of Dutch paintings in 1947 and subsequently added to the new Dutch seventeenth-century section some of the finest acquisitions he made during his term of office. This new direction into seventeenth-century Holland has already been mentioned, as has its importance for the heritage of Dutch-origin South Africans. Contemporary with the development of the Dutch collection were Hendriks’ additions to the ceramics collection, which had been practically dormant since Florence Phillips donated some Chinese storage jars in or about 1910. Hendriks expanded the Oriental ceramics collection so that, in tandem with the seventeenth-century Dutch collection, one could have a representative idea of the artifacts with which the Dutch traded.

Again, this new direction supported the pride in their heritage that a particular part of the community sought.

Adaptation of the acquisition policy with regard to the black community

One of the most isolated but important acquisitions during Hendriks’ directorship was made in 1940 when he purchased Yellow houses: A street in Sophiatown, 1940, by Gerard Sekoto (b. 1913). This was the first work by a black artist acquired by the Johannesburg Art Gallery and for the next 32 years it was the only work. Today this is the area in which it is realized that the most glaring omissions occur. Works by black artists were ignored when the South African collection was being built up in the 1950s and 1960s. The reasons why this was the case are complex and not easily explained, but evidently the socio-political climate of the time was a principal factor. The black artist, even if he painted in the western tradition, appears to have been considered separate from the so-called European artist of the day. One senses this attitude in Geoffrey Long’s introduction to the catalogue Exhibition of contemporary South African paintings, drawings and sculpture, organized by the South African Association of Arts for the Union Government 1948–9, which was displayed at the Tate Gallery, London, and in the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Canada, and the USA, and finally in the South African National Gallery, Cape Town. The Johannesburg Art Gallery’s Sekoto painting was included in this exhibition. Long writes about Sekoto:

‘The position of Gerard Sekoto, a Bantu artist, is difficult to assess as he is divorced by race and environment from the European artists of the country — the most important problem in the sub-continent today.’

It is this so-called problem that is being addressed by the Johannesburg Art Gallery now, in the 1980s, and that is dictating a new approach with regard to acquisitions and the shaping of the future of this museum. Although the achievements of directors during the intervening years were considerable, they will not be discussed here in order to focus on drawing an analogy between two groups of the community who were both excluded at the inception of the Johannesburg Art Gallery.

The first group, the South African of Dutch origin, has now been fully reinstated, so to speak, in the collections of the Johannesburg Art Gallery. It can identify with the historic Dutch heritage and with the local South African art of the late nineteenth century onwards. Anton Hendriks was largely responsible for this development in the acquisition policy. The second group, that of the black South African, has still to be accommodated and this dictates the principal shift in the acquisition policy of the 1980s. The primary goal today is perceived as the establishment of an historic collection of black art, not only the art which until now has been found mainly in ethnographic collections, but also the urban art that was being produced at the time the South African collection was expanding from the 1930s onwards. To this end, the Johannesburg Art Gallery recently acquired the Jaques collection of head-rests (principally Shangaan), formerly on loan to the Africana Museum, and it has secured on loan a major private collection of South African material that was purchased in London. Research for a major historical exhibition, scheduled for 1988, is in progress, in which the works of urban black artists will be reassessed and given their rightful place in the history of South African art.

The Johannesburg Art Gallery is now acquiring and researching traditional artefacts, which were previously excluded from its collections because they were viewed as totally alien to western culture or, at best, uneasy cultural associates. By adjusting its acquisition policy to meet the needs of a wider community, the Johannesburg...
Art Gallery acknowledges that it is part of a Third World country and that the inherited perception of museum-standard work has to be questioned. The criterion of excellence is no longer to be measured against cultural standards based on European examples. The criterion of excellence today has southern Africa as its reference.

While the Johannesburg Art Gallery sees the need to compensate for a previous imbalance by concentrating on establishing its historic South African collection, acquisitions for other parts of the collection will not cease. This would be unnecessary and unwise. However, with the shift of policy that will make this museum more relevant to the black community also comes the realization that resources should be wisely allocated. Just as Hugh Lane remarked in his 'Prefatory Notice' to the 1910 catalogue that the amount spent on the entire nucleus of the collection would not have acquired a really important Old Master, and therefore it was wise not to try and collect Old Masters, we realize in the 1980s that, gifts and loans apart, the possession of the truly important monuments of modern western painting — the Cezannes, Van Goghs, Braques, early Picassos, Matisses — are now completely beyond our grasp and it is pointless to hanker after them. We also realize that important international contemporary art should also be considered beyond our means and that rather than spend the entire interest of the Anglo American trust on one Julian Schnabel, the money would be better invested in a truly representative historic and contemporary print collection (as past directors have done, since the Howard Pim Bequest of 1934), and a truly representative historic and contemporary South African collection.

We need to become more relevant to more people, not only because we are bound, by the terms of the 1913 Deed of Donatio Inter Vivos, to be an Art Gallery in Johannesburg 'for the behoof and public benefit of the inhabitants of the said town and the neighbourhood thereof and of others resorting thereto', but also because we wish to survive in this country. At a recent Southern African Museums Association conference in Pietermaritzburg, which took place ironically during the week of the May 1987 general elections, the whole question of survival in a post-independence South Africa, of 'Museums in a changing and divided society', formed the theme. As one of the invited speakers said during a panel discussion: We museums are lucky, we have to date had too low a profile to be politicized. We still have time to get our houses in order.1 We still have time to give a new perspective to our policies with regard to acquisition, display, and education, to ensure that we survive and continue to be relevant.2

References and Notes

Where no source is given for material such as letters or press cuttings, these are in the archives of the Johannesburg Art Gallery.


2. The growth of the South African collection is indicated by comparing it today with the British collection, which was the largest of all the collections (French, Dutch, etc.) at the inception of the Johannesburg Art Gallery. Today, the South African collection is the largest. The approximate break-down in the South African and British collections of paintings, drawings and watercolours, and sculpture at the end of July 1987 was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>South African</th>
<th>British</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paintings</td>
<td>190</td>
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<td>Drawings and</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>watercolours</td>
<td>155</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sculpture</td>
<td>60</td>
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3. The communication is achieved through display, educational activities, and published research. A Report of the Commission on Museums for a New Century describes the constellation of values that museums represent in American society.

'The commitment to preserving, cherishing and learning from the artifacts and customs of our heritage — a commitment museums were the first to make ...' Museums for a New Century (American Association of Museums: Washington D.C., 1984), p. 17.

4. For the problems and challenges facing the curator of contemporary art, and the necessity to take risks despite limited funds, see Richard B. Woodward's interview with Linda Shearer, Curator in the Department of Painting and Sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. RICHARD B. WOODWARD, 'Absorbing the shock of the new,' ARTnews Volume 85 Number 6, Summer 1986, pp. 15–16.

5. The first recommendation of A Report of the Commission on Museums for a New Century aims at avoiding this sort of situation.

'RECOMMENDATION 1: In planning for the growth of its collection, we urge each museum to set clear, rational and appropriate goals for the contribution it can make to the stewardship of our cultural and natural heritage. It is important that every museum collect both carefully and purposefully. Each must exercise care by collecting within its capacity to house and preserve the objects, artifacts and specimens in its stewardship; each must collect purposefully by continuing its own traditions of quality and diversity. A periodic review of the collections policy will ensure that it is in keeping with current professional standards and the purposes of the institution.' Museums for a New Century (American Association of Museums: Washington D.C., 1984), p. 31.

6. The attitude of the American Association of Museums to deaccessioning is expressed in A Report of the Commission on Museums for a New Century:

'A regular reassessment of collections policies and the deaccessioning of objects that no longer relate to the goals of the museum are absolutely essential if a museum is to contribute with integrity to scholarship and public understanding.' Museums for a New Century (American Association of Museums: Washington D.C., 1984), p. 37.

The American Association of Museums' Code of Ethics
reflects this pragmatism with regard to deaccessioning, in fact it would appear that curators are ethically bound to 'review the objects in their collections periodically to assess their continued relevance to the museum's purposes' and that they 'should not overstock or undersupply the collection'. *Museum News*, February 1983, p. 38. The codes of ethics for the (British) Museums Association (*Museums J.*, Volume 77 Number 3, December 1977, Item 5, pp. 108–109), the Southern African Museums Association (1979, Item 5) and the International Council of Museums (1987, Item 4) take a harder line on the principle of deaccessioning. Both the (British) Museums Association and the International Council of Museums declare that one of the key functions of museums is to acquire objects and keep them for posterity.

'Consequently there must always be a strong presumption against the disposal of specimens to which a museum has assumed formal title.' In exceptional cases material may be disposed of only after due consideration and then it should be offered first 'by exchange, gift or private treaty sale' to other museums, before public auction or other means are considered. Any money accrued should be used solely for the purchase of additions to the museum collections (*ICOM Code of Professional Ethics*, 1987, Item 4). The Southern African Museums Association takes a less stringent ideological stand against deaccessioning, although it by no means goes so far as to suggest that it is a duty of the curator to ensure that a collection is not 'overstocked', as the American Association of Museums Code suggests. For the Johannesburg Art Gallery's attitude to deaccessioning see Note 9. For discussions of deaccessioning practices in American and Canadian museums see: 'Notes and comments: Deaccessioning and disposal policies at the Art Gallery of Ontario', *Int. J. Mus. Managem. Curatorship*, Volume 2 Number 2, June 1983, pp. 204–208; STEVEN MILLER, 'Selecting items from museum collections', *Int. J. Mus. Managem. Curatorship*, Volume 4 Number 3, September 1985, pp. 289–294; STEPHEN E. WEIL, 'Deaccessioning practices in American museums', *Museum News*, February 1987, pp. 44–50.

7. This is the practice in the Johannesburg City Council, whereby funds in a particular vote (such as acquisitions of artworks) that are not spent by the end of the financial year, 30 June, are taken back into the Council's general funds.

8. A recent criticism of museums not collecting the best work of local artists, in particular Norman Catherine and Phatuma Seoka, appeared in JOHN DEWAR's column, 'Ignored in SA, artists a hit abroad', *The Star*, 6 August 1987. Perhaps these artists are not as well represented as the dealer being interviewed would have liked, but their works are adequately covered in public collections, along with the numerous other artists who require to be represented. The Johannesburg Art Gallery, for example, has five representative Cathertines spanning 14 years and ethnographic museums 'discovered' Phatuma Seoka before the art dealers did (On Seoka see PATRICIA DAVISON, 'Ways of seeing African art', Paper delivered at the 81st Annual General Meeting and Conference of the Southern African Museum Association, May 1987).

9. *Code of Ethics of the Southern African Museums Association*, 1979, Item 5. Disposal of collections. See Note 6. The Johannesburg Art Gallery adopts the policy of deaccessioning items which are proved beyond doubt to be fakes, which are damaged beyond repair or which have gone missing or are stolen. A Study Collection, which is not part of the permanent collection, was instituted in the past 10 years to solve the problem of sub-standard work that the Gallery may be obliged to accept, as in the case of a bequest comprising museum quality and sub-standard work. In theory, the Gallery can treat the Study Collection as disposable assets, but has not done so to date.

10. The Dublin Municipal Art Gallery opened to the public 20 January 1908, Lane received the Freedom of the City of Dublin 10 February 1908, and he was knighted in 1909. Patrick O'Connor, 'Preface', *Municipal Art Gallery Dublin* (The Corporation of Dublin, 1958); VIOLA BARROW, 'Hugh Lane', *Dublin Historical Record*, Volume XXVIII Number 4, September 1975, pp. 130–131, 132; *National Gallery of Ireland Illustrated Summary Catalogue of Paintings* (Dublin, 1981), pp. XXV–XXVI. Lady Gregory (Thelma Gutsche's source, see later) gives slightly different dates in *Hugh Lane's Life and Achievement With Some Account of the Dublin Galleries* (London, 1921). Despite the fine choices he made for the Johannesburg Art Gallery, Lane's first love remained the Dublin Municipal Art Gallery. In a letter to Thomas Bodkin 25 December 1910, written while Lane was in South Africa staying at *Villa Arcadia* with Florence and Lionel Phillips, Lane said:

'I find that one cannot buy for two galleries (not the same sort of thing) and I want all the bargains for Dublin!'


12. For these designs see the section 'Public projects' in ARTS COUNCIL OF GREAT BRITAIN, *Lutyns: Work of the English Architect Sir Edwin Lutyns (1869–1944)* (London, 1981–1982). The Corporation of Dublin's refusal to realize Lutyns' designs appears to have been the final straw for Lane. In the 'Prefactory note' to the *Dublin Municipal Art Gallery Catalogue*, 20 January 1908, Lane stated he would deposit his collection of continental pictures with the Art Gallery provided 'the promised permanent building is erected on a suitable site within the next few years.'

The corporation seemed unwilling to fulfil this obligation and rejected a number of ideas for the provisional building. It was after the corporation had rejected Lutyns'
plans that Lane took down his 39 continental pictures in September 1913 and, in a will of October 1913, left them to the National Gallery, London. In an un witnessed codicil of 13 February 1915 he rescinded this decision. He sunk on board the Lusitania 7 May 1915 and thereafter began a bitter battle between London and Dublin, only recently resolved under the terms of the 1979 settlement of the Hugh Lane bequest, whereby the pictures are ‘shuttled from one to the other like children of divorced parents’ (‘Editorial’, The Burlington Magazine, Volume CXVI Number 972, March 1984, p. 131).

Also see THOMAS BODKIN, Hugh Lane and his Pictures (Dublin, 1932); VIOLA BARROW, ‘Hugh Lane’, Dublin Historical Record, Volume XXVIII Number 4, September 1975, pp. 135–136; THOMAS MALLON, ‘A tale of two cities, one collection’, International Herald Tribune, 14 November 1986.

13. The nucleus of the collection was opened by the Duke of Connaught in the Transvaal university College (School of Mines) building. It moved to its present site some time in 1915. There was no official opening of the Lutyens building during November 1915 as it was not completed, primarily because the Council decided to build the Art Gallery in brick ‘at great extra expense, instead of plaster and cement, which was the wish of the eminent architect who designed it.’

The Council’s alteration of Lutyens’ plans, its unwillingness to appoint a permanent curator, and its dilatoriness in bringing out pictures (principally the Neumann gift of Pre-Raphaelite art) which were being temporarily stored at the Tate Gallery in London were the principal reasons why Florence Phillips refused to open the Art Gallery building and why she felt compelled to forward her letter to the Mayor of Johannesburg of 20 October 1915 to the press for publication. For further information see THELMA GUTSCHE, No Ordinary Woman: The Life and Times of Florence Phillips (Cape Town, 1966); MARY-BETH McTEAGUE, ‘The Johannesburg Art Gallery’, Int.J.Mus.Manag. Curatorship, Volume 3 Number 2, June 1984, pp. 139–152.


15. The SANU issued an official statement 16 June 1908 to the effect that it was a non-political organization seeking to promote and publicize South African goods. THELMA GUTSCHE, No Ordinary Woman: The Life and Times of Florence Phillips (Cape Town, 1966), p. 213; SHEREE LISSOOS, Johannesburg Art and Artists: Selections From a Century (Johannesburg Art Gallery, 1986), pp. 6–8.

16. The portraits listed in the 1910 catalogue are:

  1. G. Boldini: Portrait of Mr Lionel Phillips
  3. T. Cole: Portrait of the late Mr Alfred Beit
  4. T.S. Simson: Portrait of the Rt. Hon. the Earl of Selborne (marble bust)

A portrait of Otto Beit by William Orpen is listed although the painting — which was evidently commissioned — did not form part of the nucleus as it had not yet been finished. Portraits by Philip Burne-Jones of Rudyard Kipling and G.F. Watts working on Physical Energy are also listed.

17. 89 President Kruger in Europe
  97 The Sleeping Kaffir — Basuto
  98 Bust of Basuto Boy
  99 Bushman — Hunting
  100 Dagga Smoker — Primitive Manner of Smoking Dagga

18. THELMA GUTSCHE, No Ordinary Woman: The Life and Times of Florence Phillips (Cape Town, 1966), pp. 228 & 238; DENNIS RADFORD, ‘Villa Arcadia’, Parktown Westcliff Heritage, No. 7, no date. Although Van Wouw is generally acknowledged as the designer of the wooden fanlights, it is unlikely that he would have done the actual carving as he is known to have employed artisans to translate his sculptures into wood. D.C. Boonzaier discusses this practice in his diaries, for example, the entry for 19 December 1914 (unpublished, South African Library, Cape Town).


22. A small amount was also collected through a General Subscription Fund. Florence Phillips called for contributions to this fund in a letter to the local press in July 1910. She refers in this letter to donations totalling £33 000 already received in London by Otto Beit. The local donations were started with £500 from Mr and Mrs Schumacher. Excerpts from the letter are quoted in South Africa, 13 August 1910. Also see THELMA GUTSCHE, No Ordinary Woman: The Life and Times of Florence Phillips (Cape Town, 1966), p. 251. Five works are listed in the main body of the 1910 catalogue as being acquired from the General Subscription Fund, but is it not clear whether this is the London or local fund:

  25 The Brenner (sic) Glacier by John S. Sargent
  57 Cabaret à Asnières by Maurice Wageman
  58 Landscape Study, near Noorden by W. Roelofs
  102 Portrait for Mrs McEvoy (marble bust) by Jacob Epstein

122 Sheep-shearing by J.R.K. Duff

The 1913 Deed of Donatio Inter Vivos also lists the following public donations:

  Portrait of Lady Phillips — William Nicholson
  Portrait of Lord Roberts (copy of John Sargent) — Alfred Hayward.

23. Although some works may have been donated from private collections, these constitute only a small part of the nucleus. A Report of the Commission on Museums for a New Century emphasizes the difference between European museums which were usually founded to house the great collections of the nobility and their American counterparts which began with a deliberate appeal to the public. The Report quotes NATHANIEL BURT:
'The American museum was and is an idea. The European museum was a fact.' *Museums for a New Century* (American Association of Museums: Washington D.C., 1984), p. 18.


27. Press articles of the time, in particular *South Africa* 9 April 1910; *Daily Mail* 12 June 1910. Also see HUGH LANE’s ‘Prefatory notice’ to the 1910 catalogue.

28. *THELMA GUTSCHE, No Ordinary Woman: The Life and Times of Florence Phillips* (Cape Town, 1966), p. 227. HUGH LANE wrote in the ‘Prefatory notice’ to the 1910 catalogue: ‘The value of a good collection of Old Masters should not be underestimated; but when it is remembered that the money spent on the whole of the present works would not have been sufficient to acquire a single really valuable example of an Old Master, at the present-day fabulous prices, it will be admitted that the wiser course has been chosen in acquiring the best modern work.’


32. See the supplement to the 1910 catalogue. The artists responsible for these works are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paintings:</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Von Brandis</td>
<td>Fritz Wichgraf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botha</td>
<td>A.E. Gyngell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smuts</td>
<td>William Nicholson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sculpture:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Van Riebeeck</td>
<td>John Tweed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smuts</td>
<td>John Tweed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Generals Botha</td>
<td>Naoum Aronson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De la Rey, and De Wet</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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33. The collection of 15 works was donated in 1947 but only put on public display in 1950. The attributions of a number of the artists have since been reassessed but the essential value of the collection has never been in doubt and it formed an important nucleus to which subsequent acquisitions of Dutch and Flemish art were added. See Note 45 for the importance of a cultural heritage.


35. For the following discussion of early directors the principal sources are: Archives of the Johannesburg Art Gallery (in particular letters from Robert Ross); MARJORIE ROSS (editor); Robert Ross and Friends; Letters of Robert Ross, Art Critic and Writer, Together With Extracts From his Published Articles (London, 1952); *THELMA GUTSCHE, No Ordinary Woman: The Life and Times of Florence Phillips* (Cape Town, 1966); ESME BERMAN, *Art & Artists of South Africa: An Illustrated Biographical Dictionary and Historical Survey of Painters, Sculptors & Graphic Artists Since 1975* (Cape Town, new updated & enlarged edition 1983).

36. Ross offered to resign in 1913 because of a possible scandal concerning the publication of Lord Alfred ‘Bosie’ Douglas’ memoirs, in which details of Ross’ relationship with Oscar Wilde were to be revealed. However, he was dissuaded and continued to hold the advisory post. In a letter of 4 October 1918 to Florence Phillips, the day before his death, Ross mentions the work of Edward Wolfe, ‘who hails from Johannesburg. He is a violent post-impressionist but I believe has talent and shows promise. You might be interested to see his work.’

The Gallery eventually acquired its first Wolfe in the 1930s. See Walter Battiss’ letter to the Rand Daily Mail, 20 March 1936, describing a Wolfe in the collection that was subsequently exchanged in 1938 for Rain over Taxco. Ross’ notorious criticisms of Post-Impressionist art meant, unfortunately, that the Gallery did not benefit from the acquisition of major artists such as Van Gogh. For his critiques see MARION ARNOLD, *The focus and the view*, Focus on Bloomsbury (Cape Town, 1987), p. 6; MARJORIE ROSS, *Robert Ross and Friends* (London, 1952), pp. 187–190.

37. Letter from Mr Ede, Tate Gallery, to Mr Hayman 23 October 1935.


40. During his directorship the position graduated from Curator to the more professional-sounding Director. Hendriks requested this change in a report to the Art Gallery Committee meeting of 13 September 1946.

41. See Note 2 for comparative figures. Hendriks reported to the Acting Town Clerk, who in turn reported to the Art Gallery Committee meeting of 24 January 1947, that

43. The Hague Collection, the property of a German family, was brought out to South Africa in 1939 at the expense of the Johannesburg Art Gallery. Apart from certain pieces which were returned at an earlier date, the collection remained on the premises until 1961.

44. Hendriks made the particularly wise choice of acquiring Swatow ware, the rough ceramic ware that found a market in the colonies, such as the Cape, rather than in the home country of Holland. Today the Johannesburg Art Gallery has the largest and most representative public collection of Swatow ware in the country. C.S. WOODWARD, Oriental Ceramics at the Cape of Good Hope 1652-1795. An Account of the Porcelain Trade of the Dutch East India Company with Particular Reference to Ceramics with the V.O.C. Monogram, the Cape Market, and South African Collections (Cape Town, 1974), p. 215 Note 23.

45. Pride in one's heritage and the correct representation of the heritages of the various parts of the community are fundamental to the role of the museum and the community it serves. This is indicated in the following observations from John Kinard, the American Association of Museums, and the International Council of Museums. John Kinard of the Anacostia Neighbourhood Museum, Washington D.C., commented on the importance of pride in one's heritage at the 51st Annual General Meeting and Conference of the Southern African Museums Association, May 1987. This pride is encouraged through museum displays which show the history and achievements of one's ancestors. Kinard believes the Negro community in the USA is still largely excluded from this type of display and involvement in museums. The Anacostia Neighbourhood Museum was founded by the Smithsonian Institute with the express purpose of addressing this wrong. A Report of the Commission on Museums for a New Century has this to say about 'cultural pluralism' and the preservation of diverse heritages:

'The second major force of change we believe to have implications for museums is our society's evolving sense of it own pluralism. Our population has always been culturally and ethnically diverse, but that diversity has not always been accepted as a good thing. In recent years, however, cultural and ethnic heritages have been recognized as a distinctive element of the American character.

... When it comes to preserving cultural pluralism, museums have an important role to play. They represent cultural diversity in their collections and their exhibitions. The museum community — within its own institutional makeup — exemplifies our cultural pluralism. Institutions dedicated to fostering and preserving particular ethnic heritages will be increasingly important in helping Americans understand their historical experience from different perspectives.'

The Commission concludes by saying that it is essential for cultural pluralism to extend to the internal hierarchies of the museums, that is, to the staff and boards. Museums for a New Century (American Association of Museums: Washington D.C., 1984), pp. 24-25. The International Council of Museums (ICOM) passed a resolution at its 15th General Assembly in Buenos Aires, Argentina, 4 November 1986, with regard to participation of ethnic groups in museum activities (Resolution No. 11). Christopher Till, Director of the Johannesburg Art Gallery, was an official delegate at the General Assembly. The full text of the resolution reads:

'Whereas there are increasing concerns on the part of ethnic groups regarding the ways in which they and their cultures are portrayed in museum exhibitions and programmes,

The 15th General Assembly of ICOM, meeting in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on 4 November 1986, Recommends that:
1. Museums which are engaged in activities relating to living ethnic groups, should, whenever possible, consult with the appropriate members of those groups, and
2. Such museums should avoid using ethnic materials in any way which might be detrimental to the group that produced them; their usage should be in keeping with the spirit of the ICOM Code of Professional Ethics, with particular reference to paragraphs 2.8 and 6.7.'


47. Exhibition of Contemporary South African Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture (Cape Town, 1948), pp. 11-12.

48. Nel Erasmus was acting director 1964-1966 and curator, then director, 1966-1977. Pat Senior was acting director then director July 1977-March 1983. Rochelle Keene was acting director March 1983–December 1983, when the present director, Christopher Till, assumed office. The most noteworthy acquisitions during these years were in the field of contemporary South African and international (in particular North American) painting, sculpture, and prints. Photographs for the first time began to form part of the print collection.

49. The statement of policy and publication of the new purchase and loan were made by CHRISTOPHER TILL in a paper, 'A community aesthetic', delivered at the 51st Annual General Meeting and Conference of the Southern African Museums Association, May 1987.

50. On 6 November 1984 the Anglo American Corporation of South Africa Ltd announced its gift to the Johannesburg Art Gallery of R6 million. Of this amount, R1 700 000 was used to complete the extensions to the Johannesburg Art Gallery and to restore the Lutyens building, R4 million was placed in an endowment fund for the acquisition of artworks, and the balance was used to commission the
winning sculptures of the 1986 Centenary Sculpture Competition (the winning works were by Bruce Arnott, David James Brown, Willem Strydom, and Gavin Younge).

51. Jan Hofmeyer of the Department of Religious Studies, University of Cape Town.

52. This article is based on a paper delivered at the Third Conference and Annual General Meeting of the South African Association of Art Historians, September 1987.