

University of Cape Town
Universiteit van Kaapstad
iDyunivesithi yaseKapa



The withdrawal of a limited number of artworks from University buildings

On the 16 February a number of artworks, totalling 23, in the University's Collection, were burnt or otherwise damaged by protesters. The major portion of these works were portraits from Jameson Hall (4), Fuller Hall(8) and Smuts Hall (3). The Works of Art Committee, in consultation with the University leadership and the Chair of the Artworks Task Team established by Council last year, has since then removed 75 works from the campuses of the University on the grounds of their vulnerability to potential damage or because they are loan works for which we have a multiple and complicated responsibility.

Assessing the situation has been - and continues to be - necessarily complex. Some works were considered vulnerable because isolated and accessible, others because they are contentious. The Works of Art Committee shares in and supports Council's concerns about the literal and figurative 'space' of the Collection in the University, but also shares the stated belief in a thorough process of accountability and consultation in identifying and managing contentious works and contentious curation. The present removals do not signify a wholesale withdrawal of the University's art on the part of the Works of Art Committee, but they do signal the Committee's awareness of the issues at stake, and its receptiveness to the deliberations of the Artworks Task Team, which are intended to emerge as a report for comment and consultation before Council signals its will in the matter.

The affected works have been catalogued and are in storage for the time being. The Works of Art Committee is ongoingly concerned about the reception of the Collection, and with the Collection itself. The present storage of the works is in line with both concerns, and the Committee would wish to stress that the curation of any collection is always a

dynamic and creative exercise, and can no more be undertaken oblivious to the context of time than it can ignore the space in which it must be hung or otherwise sited.

Peter Anderson

Chairman: Works of Art Committee

10 March 2016