

# South Africa

The Quarterly Journal for Trade Partners and Investors

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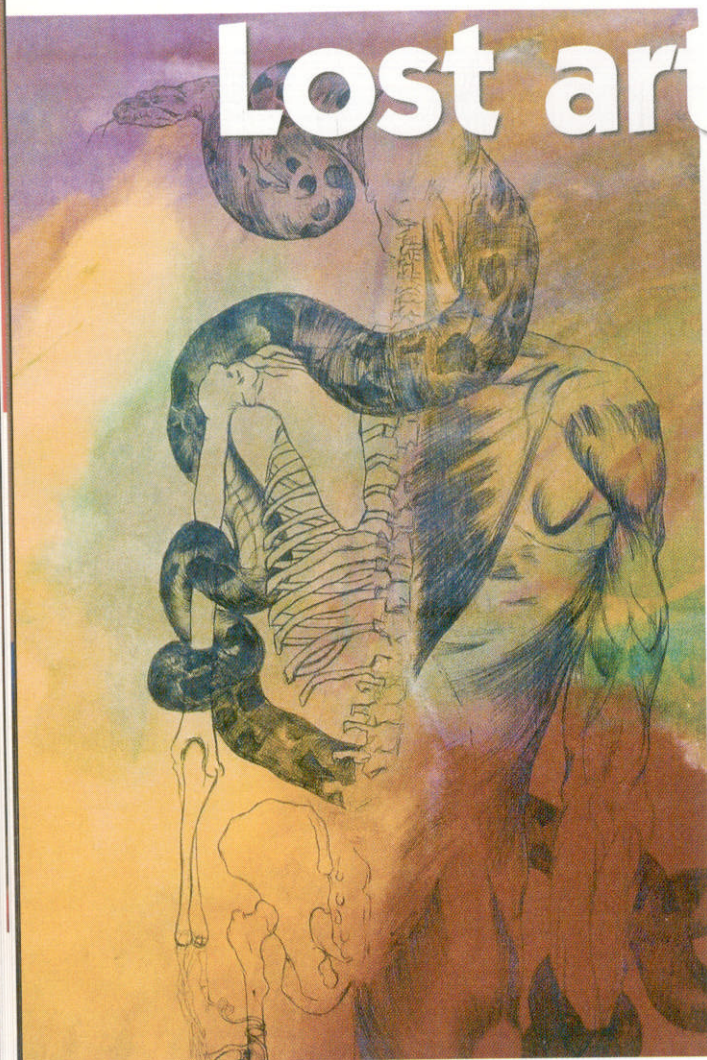
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# Lost art of the apartheid era

Art works of black fine artists produced during the apartheid era – and lost to returning diplomats and foreign visitors – is being returned to South Africa via the efforts of the Ifa Lethu (our heritage) Foundation.



Benedict Martins



Fikele Magagledla

During the early '70s and late '80s, described as some of the darkest days of apartheid, hundreds of black South African artists recorded life around them in the townships, contributing their skills to the political struggle through protest art that is described as both graphic in its impact and poignant in its nuance. And, while trapped in prison-like locations on the edges of white cities, artists produced some of South Africa's most compelling works that today carry the message of that time. In the words of veteran artist David Phoshoko: "Only Africa truly understood what we were saying in our art. It communicated anger, sadness and even joy that an end to apartheid would surely come."

With just the passion of their convictions and the most basic of materials, artists developed high quality oeuvres, yet at the time few South Africans were buying township art because it was perceived as having little artistic worth. While unsung at home, much of this art was recognised and bought by diplomats, foreign businessmen and tourists and then taken back home with them. "But not," says Dr Phelekezela Mamphele, South African Minister of Arts and Culture, "as an act of plunder, but an act of altruism in the purest sense. In buying the works of black artists, diplomats helped fund and sustain the painters and sculptors in the townships, especially around Pretoria, allowing them to continue."

Today, the Ifa Lethu Foundation aims to fill this void in South Africa's art heritage. Explains Mamphele, chairman of the Ifa Lethu Foundation: "Where once culture was employed as a weapon by all sides during the apartheid years – as a weapon of oppression by the apartheid state and as a weapon of resistance by the liberation movements – the Ifa Lethu Foundation has seized the initiative to employ it as a weapon again, but this time to inform, to empower all South Africans, to break down those cultural barriers that have caused so much pain and finally to teach South Africans how to transcend adversity and heal the nation." The Ifa Lethu collection is our only glimpse of life in the townships during those hard years. "



Ezekiel Madiba

township resident Jeff Mpakati. Overwhelmed by the energy, vibrancy and sheer creative talent of the musicians, together with Jim Baker (the first black American diplomat in SA) they resolved to bring the musicians to a wider audience, beginning with jam sessions in the auditorium of the American embassy in Pretoria. Each musical showcase was packed to the rafters with other foreign diplomats, visiting business people and some South African. "The art connection happened because we discovered the musicians were not creatively one-dimensional, some were also excellent artists and made extra cash by selling their drawings and sculptures," says Covey. "We encouraged them to bring their art to the gigs at the embassy. So we held township art exhibitions with the music performances and they were terrifically successful – everything was sold at every session." And with them, Mpakati became the unofficial agent of the artists, organising the exhibition and transportation of various pieces. Diane Johnstone, an Australian Diplomat in SA during that time and the first to donate her collection of 17 fine pieces to the Pretoria Art Museum in 2003, recalls her experience: "When .

## Clandestine beginnings

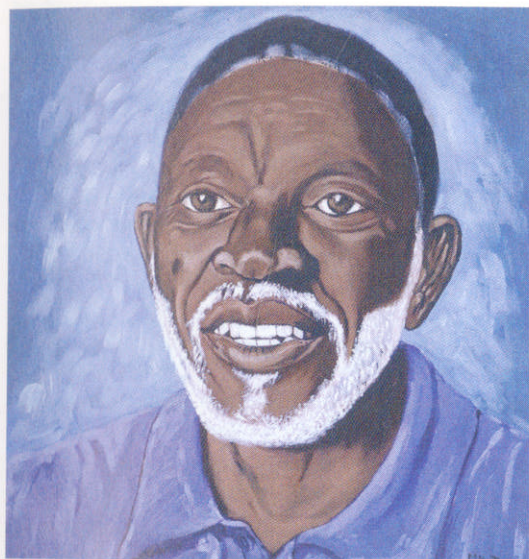
introduced me to the work of the artists what I saw was good art with a strong anti-apartheid message – political art. It struck a very personal chord. My initial contact with the black artists was an opportunity for me to find out what was really happening in the townships – to talk to black South Africans frankly, in their homes, about politics and other issues of concern to them – and to produce reporting about black South African perspectives that would better inform Australia's policy on South Africa." Once involved with the artists, her interest

collectors of that time. It took Nevin a year to gather enough evidence of the existence of such art around the world to approach chief curator of Pretoria Art Museum, Dirkie Offringa for help.

Another Australian diplomat collector Bruce Haigh has returned his collection, which includes pencil drawings, woodcuts, lino prints and ink sketches by artists such as Lucky Sibiyi and Michael Maapola, who lived in townships such as Atteridgeville, Garankuwa, Mamelodi and Soweto. Canadian diplomat David Gillett



Fikele Magagledla



Jeff Mpakati by M. Mutle



Ezekiel Madiba, Michael Mmutle, Tom Nevin, David Poshoko and Michael Maapola: United in art.

deepened to include the nature of the art, the way artists were using it to get out strong anti-apartheid messages, as well as the artists themselves – their passion, talent and courage. Diane was instrumental in providing support and access to diplomatic venues and by buying their work and encouraging her colleagues to do the same she encouraged broad support of local artists.

Says Diane: "The very first piece I collected was a work called 'Woman'. It was a wooden sculpture carved from a railway sleeper. It was contemporary, planes juxtaposed with curved surfaces, a beautiful and expressive representation of the female form – truly an 'everywoman'. The artist Ezekiel Madiba turned up at my door asking for money to cover his rent and offered the piece in return."

The baton to retrieve art was then taken up by philanthropist and journalist Tom Nevin, who realised the implication that there might be thousands of pieces of forgotten township art scattered around the world. He set about the formidable task of tracking them down with contact names from Diane or other diplomat

says he can't bear to "part with my beautiful art" but has bequeathed it to Ifa Lethu. Other US, Canadian, Nordic and Australian diplomats who have cared for these works over a number of years are now willing to return them to South Africa so that they can be exhibited locally.

Concludes Ramphele: "For me this collection, as embryonic as it is right now, symbolises the work that lies ahead in assembling a portfolio of 'lost' art works created throughout the struggle for freedom, the number of which can only be guessed."

### Corporate support

Ifa Lethu has received R4-million seed funding for the next three years from the Department of Arts and Culture, the proviso being that this is matched with private sector contributions. BHP Billiton has donated R1-million, making it a founding member and corporate patron of the foundation, and Ifa Lethu continues to seek further support from the private sector. Collections will be introduced to the people of South Africa through educational and other outreach activities. ❖



Unknown

**For more information about the collection contact Usman Aly of Predictive Communications on +27 (0)11 608 1700, or e-mail [usman@predictive.co.za](mailto:usman@predictive.co.za).**

# Car guards

## Uniquely South African

*Sculptor-turned car guard Nelson Moyo has had a gun pointed at him while guarding cars.*

By Jenni O'Grady

Every shopping centre, mall and public parking venue in South Africa is home to luminous-bibbed car guards who spend hours in the blazing sun looking after cars for a donation. Part of an informal entrepreneurship, these happy individuals work without salary, leave, sick pay or medical aid.

**H**e waves his arms theatrically like a conductor bringing in the wind instruments, then dashes to the back of the car, wedging himself between the beautiful Mercedes-Benz and your own pride and joy. He draws you back, back, back with dramatic hand signals then suddenly lets out a piercing whistle, pushing his palms out to make you stop, just as you're about to squash him.

"Okay mama. Sharp!" he says as he wiggles out of his bumper sandwich to introduce himself. He's the street car guard and for a small fee will make sure your car is still there when you come back.

"My name is Nimrod mama and I'll look nicely for you," he says as he digs into his luminous safety bib and produces a small slip of paper bearing his name, which he slips under your windscreen wiper.

When you return he plants himself next to your car and says, "Everything is okay mama. No problem," as you root around for a few rand for his tip. He guides you out of the space, one eye on your bumper and the other on that blue car cruising for parking.

Car guards are an entrenched feature of South African life. They can be found guarding cars everywhere in every town and city. Shopping centres, nightclubs, the neighbour's christening party, medical centres, the local dog-walking spot -- in South Africa where there is a clump of cars you can count on a man or a woman in an orange bib to be standing under a shady tree keeping an eye on them.

They receive no salary, no sick leave, no holiday pay. No medical or dental. Yet, when a thunderstorm explodes overhead and you're covering under an awning waiting for it to pass, a car guard will appear with an outsized Kaizer Chiefs umbrella and hold it over your head while together you skip through puddles to your car.

### Supporting entrepreneurship

Some people love car guards, saying they bring a feeling of security at the vulnerable moment of getting in and out of a car. Others hate them, feeling resentful at having to hand over money for the protection of a car which is already covered by hefty monthly insurance premiums. And then, of course, there is the delicate 'driver ego' that makes a sensitive

soul see the ushering as a most unhelpful slight on their driving ability. Says 47-year-old car guard Beauty Lukhele: "There are people who, if I ask them to straighten up their car slightly, roll down their windows and say to me, 'hey, have you got a licence? Why are you telling me how to drive? And of course I then have to say, 'no, you are right, I don't have a licence,'" she says dryly.

Lukhele is among the large group of mostly men mustering in the dark underground warren of the service tunnels below the Cresta Centre -- one of Johannesburg's largest shopping malls. It's 7:00 am on a public holiday and about 30 car guards are blinking autumn dust out of their eyes as they wait for the supervisor to arrive. They take turns to go into a small changing area where they trade their home clothes for more suitable work attire -- khaki chinos and a white shirt, colours known to help keep body temperature down in hot climates.

The old hands like Lukhele, who has been car guarding since 1998 when she gave up being a domestic worker, will get the lanes closest the mall entrance. These are the lanes that everyone wants to park in and where car turnover is good. So, on a good day, at tips ranging between R2 to R5, about R150 can be made.

The shifts are long, with hours standing in the beating sun or pouring rain. Lukhele explains that her day ends when the last car in her lane leaves. Says Johanna Maswanganyi: "It's okay work. It's better than staying at home and it helps me to keep my son in school."

### Crime levels

Controversially, although they contribute to the perception of safety that is like gold to a shopping centre, car guards have to pay for the right to earn their donations. The amount varies, but at Cresta it is R37 a day. This covers the salary of two supervisors, membership fees for the Security Industry Regulatory Authority (SIRA), the loan of a luminous numbered bib, and insurance for the two-way radios that the senior car guards are issued with.

George Bezuidenhout is security manager at Cresta Centre and without hesitation he says that car guards "definitely" contribute to keeping



*Car guard Johanna Maswanganyi earns enough tips to keep her young son in school.*

crime at the centre down. "In December 1.4 million people walked through our doors and only one car was stolen," says Bezuidenhout. "They are our first line of defence."

Pointing to a bank of closed circuit television screens he explains that the car guards, who must have completed basic security training with SIRA, notice signs of a potential theft or robbery. They radio details through to a control room and once the suspect has entered the mall, hidden cameras hone in on them, and an indoor guard picks up on their trail.

The car guards are treated as private contractors and the centre keeps a close watch on them. The centre also has permanent uniformed security guards. According to Bezuidenhout, although the car guards are popular, they are not always seen as being vested with authority. So when there's a difficult situation he can radio for the uniformed guard for back up. Even though they don't get paid to do so, the car guards are known to chase fleeing thieves for as long as it takes to catch up with them and apprehend them.

Last week car thieves tried to make off with a shopper's Golf, relates Bezuidenhout. One of the thieves was already in the driver's seat but his accomplice was still trying to open the passenger door when they were spotted by the car guard. Unable to climb into the car, the thief clung to the outside of the passenger window as the driver drove away. According to Bezuidenhout, the nearest car guard picked up a brick and threw it at the window, forcing the glass to shatter and leaving the thief rolling on the road.

Nelson Moyo used to be a stone carver. After watching how much money his car guard friends were bringing home, he decided to hang up his crafting tools and join them. Moyo was patrolling his strip on a quiet Tuesday afternoon when he saw a group of thieves trying to steal a car. "When I disturbed them, they pulled out a pistol," says Moyo. The firearm was held to his head to make him back off. "I feared they would shoot me, I was so traumatised, I was so haunted. I have never been pointed with a gun," he says.

But, says Moyo, for him the job gives him a chance to interact with people and make friends. He says that sometimes, but not always, the money he earns is enough for himself, his wife and their three children. Bezuidenhout explains that car guards at Cresta Shopping Centre are not allowed to have a criminal record, nor must they be sought in a police investigation. Random fingerprinting is also done whenever they check in.

### The other side of the coin

Not all car guards are popular, some in Cape Town are known to harass motorists who don't tip them. In Melville, Johannesburg's student heartland, car guards became the bane of the local residents' association who believed they were doubling as drug dealers. Customers also fear that if they don't tip the guards their cars will mysteriously develop a deep scratch in the paintwork.

According to two large insurers, the presence of a car guard makes absolutely no difference to whether a claim is processed or not. Although, if fraud is suspected, the car guard may be one of the people interviewed during the investigation.

The popular Oriental Plaza in Johannesburg recently fenced off its parking area and has had the car guards replaced with ticketed boomed parking. Centre Assistant Manager Ashraf Sackoor says that the previous car guards were "more interested" in directing traffic and earning tips than chasing away thieves. He believes that the fence and the boom gates have improved security at the centre.

"We have no car problems, no hawkers," he said, adding that the car guards would also turn a blind eye to the hawkers trawling the parking lots, in exchange for payment.

### An informal economy

Car guards began as a product of a society battling high unemployment and crime rates, with many people having little prospect of finding a job in the formal sector. Along with the enterprising street fruit vendors, taxi washers and professional queuers trying to eke out a modest living, car guards have formed a large part of the country's burgeoning informal economy.

Bezuidenhout says that the older car guards have developed the ability to know instantly which car belongs to whom, a skill that impresses customers, and is especially appreciated by the insurance brokers who regularly visit the centre to investigate possible insurance fraud. He explains that it's an old insurance trick to falsely claim that a car was stolen from a vast shopping centre.

"We had one lady who said that she had left her car parked outside Edgars and that it had been stolen. The guard insisted that she had not left her car there," he said. When she realised that the net was closing in on her (the centre is also able to draw on footage taken from hidden cameras) she suddenly claimed to remember that her sister had actually dropped her off and that her car was at home.

The lazy-lunch lost-car syndrome can also send customers into a spin as they stagger around the parking lot trying to remember after too much wine where they left their car, with word passing down the car guard line until the car is located.

Car guards have also developed their own micro-industries. The better earning guards offer a money lending interest-generating service to their colleagues. The guards also take turns to collect everybody's coins and to exchange them for notes in busy shops to avoid the fees that banks charge for doing this.

The company is also prepared to issue letters of reference for car guards wishing to open accounts, enabling people who would otherwise not have the opportunity to enter the banking and credit system. And when there is a vacancy among the formal security guards, experienced car guards are allowed to apply, and they then take their first steps into the formal employment sector. ✪