

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA MUSEUMS

e-NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2025 ○ ISSUE 14



HOD's Message

Winter is not just a season, it's a celebration of reflection, renewal, and rejuvenation. The UP Museums are delighted to bring you this winter newsletter edition, brimming with a few updates and a peek at some remarkable new acquisitions and donations that continue to strengthen our collections.

At the UP Museums, we firmly believe that great universities are defined by great museums and all staff are proud to uphold that legacy with passion and purpose. Within the first five months of this year, we had the privilege of welcoming nearly 20,000 visitors, a testament to the growing demand for engagement with our collections, archives and exhibitions.

The month of May marked yet another annual success of International Museums Month, further strengthening our role within the global museum community. In June, we turned our focus to International Archives Week, celebrating this important global call with a thought-provoking webinar in partnership with FCTEC on the intersection of AI, archives, and accessibility. Titled "AI Innovations Towards Inclusive Access to Archives," the online session explored how emerging technologies are transforming the way we engage with and preserve historical records, ensuring that archives are more inclusive and accessible.

Our latest exhibition, *Bokgabo ba Mašela: Art of Textiles exhibition*, celebrates more than just fabric. It uplifts the powerful voices of women whose stories are intricately woven into every thread. Our outreach to our partner, the Mogalakwena Art Craft Development Foundation, became a truly moving chapter in this exhibition journey. We had the privilege of meeting the remarkable women behind the story cloths, who have elevated the art of embroidery, not just as a craft, but as a living narrative of their histories, culture, and resilience.

We also proudly installed *Unclaying South African Ceramics*, a bold and expansive new permanent exhibition. Featuring over 200 ceramics brought from storage into the public eye. This ambitious installation redefines our engagement with South Africa's rich ceramic art. As a work in progress, this gallery stands as a testament to the vision, effort, and ongoing commitment of our entire museum team to showcasing the University of Pretoria's expansive and diverse collections.

Together, the university museums and exhibitions do more than fill walls. They illuminate our present society, honour history, and celebrate the often-unsung contributions of women who shape our cultural landscape with grace and boundless creativity. The UP Museums continue to shine as an academic cornerstone, fostering transdisciplinary partnerships that elevate both scholarship and creativity. Together, we reaffirm our dedication to making the UP Museums indispensable to the academic and cultural fabric of our community.

Happy reading and stay warm.

Dr Sian Tiley-Nel

Curatorial Programming and Outreach in Action

Site Visit and Screening at the Mogalakwena Art & Craft Research Centre

The ***Bokgabo ba Mašela: Art of Textiles*** exhibition, currently on show at the Bridge Gallery until 17 October 2025, has sought to highlight the importance of textile art and art-making within the broader contemporary art practice. More importantly, the exhibition put into sharp focus how scholars have long argued that textiles can be seen as a critical resource for the excavation of histories and narratives that have been overlooked by mainstream and institutional narratives. The inclusion of the Mogalakwena women's 'story cloths' in the exhibition is therefore critical as one of the key women's collectives that are providing safe spaces for women to tell their stories and those of their community. The exhibition seeks to highlight the interconnectedness of the experiences of women across time and place through the artworks on exhibition.

As part of the curatorial programming and outreach, and in partnership with the UP Department of History, Heritage and Tourism, the UP Museums facilitated a screening of the MA graduate and PhD candidate Ms. Motlatjo Mogoboya's 2024 film, *Crafting a Living Heritage*. Her documentary centres around the stories of the Mogalakwena Art Centre women and provides a historical context for the emergence of these women's collectives more broadly. The screening at the **Mogalakwena Art Centre** in Limpopo was the first time the women had the opportunity to see the film and themselves on film. The screening was simultaneously educational, uplifting, and heartwarming and was a great opportunity for connection.

UP Museum staff had the opportunity to tour the Art Centre and meet the women, international students based at the Research Centre and community members. This site visit demonstrates in action the objective of UP Museums, to extend the footprint of our curatorial programmes into the community and provide more access to our exhibitions in real and tangible ways.



Left to right: Uthando Baduza (UP Museums Curator), Dr Nisa Paleker (UP lecturer and supervisor DHHT), Motlatjo Mogoboya (PHD Candidate - DHHT), Craig McClenaghan (Architect and Consultant), Steven Motena (UP Museums Interpretative Officer), Christiaan Coetsee (Manager - Mogalakwena River Lodge), Dr Sian Tiley-Nel (HOD - UP Museums), Dr Gregg Jansen Van Rensburg (Mogalakwena Research Centre Manager)

International Museum Day 2025

The Future of Museums in Rapidly Changing Communities

12-16 May 2025



The University of Pretoria (UP) Museums partnered with the UP Campus Tours to join the global commemoration of the **International Museum Day (IMD)**. The UP Museums celebrated with an engaging week-long event from 12 May to 16 May as aligned with the 2025 theme, "*The Future of Museums in Rapidly Changing Communities*."

The event featured specialised free guided tours through the university's extensive institutional collections and provided the visitors with the opportunity to view the latest exhibitions, including the chance to win valuable museum prizes. The UP Museums welcomed nearly 130 guests for IMD (UP Staff: 54%, UP Students: 24% and 21% External Guests). Congratulations were shared with Hely Tuorila, Ejtango Joubert and Petronel Fourie, the three lucky draw winners.

International Archives Week 2025

AI Innovations Towards Inclusive Access to Archives

9 - 13 June 2025



In celebration of the **ICA's International Archives Week 2025**, the UP Museums Archive and Mapungubwe Archive, in partnership with UP Archives (UPA), hosted its first webinar. The keynote speaker, Niklas Zimmer (FCTEC), presented on the topic "*AI Innovations Towards Inclusive Access to Archives*." This theme was an ideal fit into the global ICA's theme for 2025, Archives are Accessible—Archives for All. The webinar was well attended, with over 70 participants from institutions and universities all over the world. These include attendees from various South African universities and libraries, Makerere University in Uganda and the Yale University Library in the United States. The UP Museums are proud institutional members of the International Council on Archives and look forward to hosting similar events in the future.

New museum acquisitions

SANAVA Collection

The University of Pretoria Art Archive has for many years been the custodian of the South African National Association for Visual Arts's (SANAVA) archive, founded in 1945. Since 2012, the UP Museums have been the custodians and curators of the SANAVA Collection as an extension of the institutional art collection.

In March this year, the UP Art Committee and SANAVA collectively agreed for the University of Pretoria to permanently acquire this significant collection. The SANAVA art collection spans over 50 years of collecting and includes artists like Diek Grobler, Jeremy Wafer, Aleta Michaletos, Francois van Reenen, Carla Crafford, Thami Jali and Henk Serfontein, among many other notable South African artists.



Two artists and UP staff members, Prof. Johan Thom and Prof. Jenni Lauwrens, have kindly donated the **Grasp Sculpture Kit** to the University of Pretoria. This work is a tactile artwork primarily meant for teaching, learning, and or simply exploring the value of negative space and touch in sculpture and art. It is best applied and used to teach these concepts to visually impaired visitors.

Johan Thom (b. 1976)

The Grasp Sculpture Kit 2024

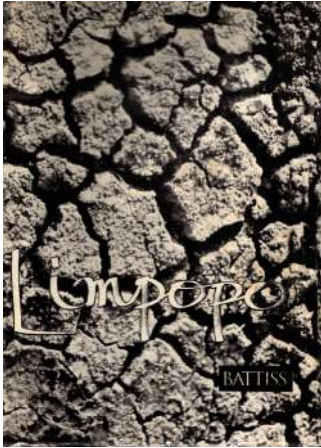
Clay, pressed wood and mixed media

195 mm x 10mm x 1190mm

Edition 2/50

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New Mapungubwe Archive Acquisition



The Mapungubwe Archive at the University of Pretoria is elated to acquire yet another rare book for the Mapungubwe Libraria, adding to its valuable reference section.

The highly regarded South African artist Walter Whall Battiss (1906-1982) conceived this book, with ink drawings and poems from his camp on the Limpopo River. His only known painting titled, *Mapungubwe* is a vibrant and colourful oil on canvas inspired by his first visit on 7 July 1952 and is found in the Johannesburg Art Gallery Collection. Battiss was known to use Limpopo and be inspired by this landscape in his oeuvre and also painted an artwork titled *Limpopo*.

Battiss, W. 1965. *Limpopo*. Pretoria: J.L. van Schaik.

Staff News



Congratulations to **Dr. Gerard de Kamper**, the University of Pretoria Museum's Curator of Collections for his conferred PhD. He recently obtained his PhD in History, titled, *Proving Provenance: The case of J.A. van Tilburg and his collection at the University of Pretoria*.

De Kamper's research assessed the accusations, arguments, claims and counter-arguments in the case made against the Dutch art collector Jacob Abraham van Tilburg after he donated his art collection to the University of Pretoria in 1976. When word of the donation became known, a storm erupted in the media in both South Africa and The Netherlands, presenting the donor as a 'Nazi collaborator' and the collection as 'looted art'. De Kamper examined the four key aspects regarding the Van Tilburg Collection to determine the validity of the accusations. The study included a biographical study of Van Tilburg, his legal difficulties after the Second World War (1939–1945), the media debacle, and the provenance of the collection. Through a detailed determination of the provenance of over 7,000 objects, his thesis concludes that the collection was not looted during the Second World War and puts nearly 50 years of allegations and contestation to rest.

DONATE AND SUPPORT

The University of Pretoria Museums relies on support from those who enjoy the collections and treasure the contents of our diverse galleries. Please make a donation today to support our continued digital strategy, maintain marketing visibility, support art conservation efforts, and care for our high-quality exhibitions and new gallery upgrades. In 2025, we aim to roll out the Fund-a-Frame initiative for the acclaimed Rorkes Drift collection, a recent donation and bequest of over 300 other important artworks that require conservation and framing in order to be exhibited. The University of Pretoria has several convenient ways in which you can support the UP Museums and benefit. All manners of giving are secure and only take a few minutes. Click here to [Donate to UP Museums](#).



The University of Pretoria Museums

Open Monday to Friday, 08:00 - 16:00

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