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**PRESS RELEASE**

**10 July 2018**

**Bridging the divide between Arts and Science**

The University of Pretoria (UP) has launched a new Master’s in Social Science programme focusing on Tangible Heritage Conservation, which is the first degree of its kind in South Africa. The degree is made possible by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (AWMF), which has been involved in South African higher education for the last 30 years. The first cohort of students will enter the programme in 2019. The degree will provide scarce skills to the field of arts conservation which is a multidisciplinary, applied science.

The master’s programme draws on the humanities, social sciences and the natural sciences and will develop a new generation of highly skilled and professional heritage conservators to serve the needs of the southern African region.

Prof Cheryl de la Rey, UP Vice-Chancellor and Principal says the support from the AWMF to UP over the past 20 years has helped to foster creativity, promote social justice and catalyse social mobility for the transformation of active learning communities. "This funding has helped ignite innovative intellectual and creative work that has bolstered public confidence in the role of the Arts and Humanities, in sustaining and strengthening our society."

The launch of the programme took place at the newly built Javett Arts Centre at UP’s bridge gallery that spans Lynnwood Road. The Centre is set to be a landmark creative laboratory which will showcase the art of Africa, culture and heritage and serve as a conservatory and gallery space for future generations of artists.

Dr Mariët Westermann, Executive Vice-President: Programmes and Research at AWMF says they are excited to be partnered with UP on this project and that this initiative will not only help to make art accessible, but also provide a platform for the decolonialisation of art and the promotion and preservation of uniquely African art and heritage. Dr Westermann says that “in 10 years a new cohort of arts conservators will be representative of South Africa’s diversity and the world. They will embody and integrate art, science, history and South African and African arts conservation initiatives and skills will the envy of collections across the world.”

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