

Siyakhula Michaelis Auction raises millions for disadvantaged art students

Aspire Art Auctions conducted the introductory Siyakhula Michaelis Auction, which was recently held at the Michaelis School of Fine Art at the University of Cape Town's (UCT) Hiddingh Campus. The auction was helmed by South African artists making waves in Europe and the USA.

Kicking off with an extraordinary donation of €100,000 (over R1,6m) from South African-born artist Marlene Dumas, now living in Amsterdam, works of art donated by graduates, associates, and supporters of the initiative raised an unprecedented R3,593,000 for comprehensive scholarships for promising students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds, ensuring greater accessibility and diversity at the University of Cape Town.

“It’s a significant, positive contribution to change on our campus. As it grows in momentum so too will the benefits gleaned by the most deserving students, not only ensuring the next generation of artists but the art industry at large,” said Berni Searle, director of UCT’s Michaelis School of Fine Art.



Berni Searle, Director of the Michaelis School of Fine Art;
Silvana Dantu, co-founder, African Equations

With Aspire Art Auctions’ Ruarc Peffers on the podium, a capacity crowd of enthusiastic art collectors and philanthropists vied for the top lots, which included:

1. William Kentridge, *Eight Figures*
2. Penny Siopis, *Spirit Matter*
3. Moshekwa Langa, *Untitled*
4. Kemang Wa Lehulere, *Two Knots per Second*, 5
5. Simphiwe Ndzube, *The Grave Digger VIII*

The evening started when nine Aspire staff on phones representing bidders from around the globe stood up for Jane Alexander’s photomontages which sold at R65,000, R50,000, and R45,000 respectively. Zanele Muholi’s *Isililo XX* sold for R40,000 over a high estimate of R6,000 and Jake Aikman’s *Chart 1 (South Atlantic)* sold for an impressive R76,000.



“It’s rare and exciting for a fundraising auction to galvanise the local market and simultaneously stimulate international interest - testimony to the global currency of art from this continent. It’s been our great privilege and pleasure to be involved in such a forward-looking and sustainable project. We look forward to being involved in such projects in years to come, increasingly benefiting the youth and working towards a better tomorrow,” says Emma Bedford, director of Aspire Art Auctions, and team leader of its Cape Town office.

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