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The Public Influence of the Private Collector: A Hand in History

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18 April 2013

Supervised by Prof. Federico Freschi

A research report submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts in History of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

ABSTRACT

This report examines the collecting practices of the private collector of South African art, situated in South Africa, and considers the way in which the act of collecting influences both the contemporary market and the construction of the art historical canon. The report questions the contribution made to the South African art world by collecting practices and considers what is involved in the collecting of fine art. I discuss the collector in relation to Sylvester Ogbechie's (2010) notion of cultural brokerage; I examine notions of both public and private through the writings of Michael Warner (2002); and I consider what makes into one a collector, with reference to Thomas G. Tanselle's (1998) text *A Rationale of Collecting*, while engaging several other sources. The report continues with a comparison between international collectors, with a focus on the ways in which they contribute to what becomes and remains relevant, as well as discussing some local collectors. I conclude with an examination of the way in which auction houses have played a seminal role in the establishment of the canon in South Africa, and the role of the collector in relation to this system. In summary, this paper examines the ways in which the private collector of South African art has a great influence on what is perceived as relevant to the canon, to culture and to art history.

(Keywords: private collector; collecting; South African Art; Sylvester Ogbechie; culture broker; Michael Warner; South African Canon; public; auction)

DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Masters in History of Art in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

Nicola Kritzinger

Signed on this, the 18th day of April 2013

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

> "When a canon emerges – a list of great writers, artists
> or composers – although it may fluctuate, it
> encapsulates what becomes increasingly regarded,
> without further question, as of high value."
>
> (Nairne 2011: 175)

In this research report I examine the extent of the influence of private art collectors on the writing of South African art history. Extrapolating from Sylvester Ogbechie's notion of the 'culture broker' (Ogbechie, 2010:2) and extending it to incorporate the private collector, I intend to explore the direct impact that private collectors have on the understanding and writing of art history through the act of collecting, and the resulting public contributions of some of those collections, in various forms. In examining the closed-loop, inter-connected art market in South Africa one gains insight into how a small number of local private collectors have had a hand in what becomes relevant and what, in effect, comes to constitute the art historical canon. With reference to international private collectors who have had a comparable influence, I would like to examine the extent to which South African art collectors contribute to the public circulation of art and in what capacity they do so.

I suspect that private art collectors in South Africa play a role in establishing the canon of South African art through their collection practices. Through my experience of working in a well-established South African commercial art gallery, the great relevance that private art collectors have to the art market has become increasingly clear to me, and this report examines the dynamics of this phenomenon in some detail. There is little written about South African private collections and there is even less public knowledge about the works in these collections because of their private nature. I think that it is important to the understanding of South African art history that these collections are not overlooked, even though they remain mostly hidden from the public eye, and in certain cases only become known after the collector's death. I am not interested in any individual collection per se, but in evidence of the contribution to art history that private collectors have made through the act of collecting and through their participation in the art world more broadly.

This study documents the ways in which the private domain has made its way into what is considered 'public'. There is a rich history of private art collecting in South Africa, and its influences on the market as well as the discourse of art in the country remain largely unknown. It is of historical relevance to discover the effect that the private realm of collecting has in the public, as it is likely to be a substantial one. It is necessary to establish the extent of this influence so that there may be an increased awareness of the way in which the private collector is not a passive participant – but an active agent – in determining what becomes relevant to history. In these terms it is imperative to explore the notion that these collectors have a hand in what becomes part of collective knowledge, cultural heritage and an understanding of history.

I wish to establish that not only do the collectors have agency informing the writing of art history, but posit that they also have great responsibility that accompanies it. It is argued here that South African collectors are not as publicly active, and do not feel as great a need to grant public access to their work as international collectors do. I will substantiate this statement, and why it is indeed a necessity to share collections, with evidence in this report. Within all art collecting societies, and therefore in South African society, artworks seem to be viewed as objects that one owns, and that ownership belies connotations relating to the private and to entitlement of such privacy of personal possession. In the text *Art Theft,* Sandy Nairne (2011) previously the Director of Programmes at the Tate Britain, writes not only about the theft of two of Tate Britain's Turners, but also critically examines what theft means to the art public. She writes, "while relating only to societies in which property ownership is itself a central principle, stealing represents selfishness – the opposite of sharing. Stealing is bad in the deprivation it causes, and wrong in its disregard for ownership" (Nairne, 2011: 170). This highlights that ownership is necessarily accompanied by an ethos. I do not mean to insinuate that South African private collectors are stealing from South African cultural heritage, but that they tend to purchase art and facilitate its public in/accessibility. It is necessary to address private collecting with criticality and to problematize what is an accepted practice. Art objects that are regarded as personal property can have cultural and historical meaning to many, and we must consider how public access to relevant artwork can be encouraged. In chapter three I will examine the way in which artworks are given greater public accessibility internationally which will provide a platform for comparison to South African affairs relating to art ownership. It is not a romantic notion of property as theft but a question of providing accessibility, whether enabling publics to view the works of art in person, in print or on the Internet.

There is a large, if not dominant, proportion of works of art in South Africa rendered invisible by their hanging in private homes or inaccessible corporate collections. This may be the case in many other countries as well, especially those which do not have many public institutions, it may even be true to those that do benefit from these institutions, if access is restricted in any way. It is probable that sections of the publics suffer public inaccessibility in the same ways, whether due to institutions situated out of reach in metropolitan areas, museums that are financially

inaccessible, educationally or culturally inaccessible, or inaccessible through storage or through loss[1]. This disparity, amongst many other incentives, should encourage collectors to give (or to loan) accessible institutions works of art from their personal collections, so that those who cannot see these works otherwise may have access to them. The relationship of financial restrictions to the privilege of viewing art in this country begs to be examined, and it is inextricable from an analysis of the collecting and the viewing of fine art. It is argued here that there is much greater potential for accessibility to the public where institutions are better funded. This is simply due to the fact that there is more art on public display at any given time when there are more institutions and therefore more access, however in South Africa there are a limited number of institutions and thus limited accessibility to collections. More institutions are a necessary if not sufficient condition, and it must be acknowledged that one can lead people to an art exhibition, but they may not form an art public.

Cobi Labuscagne is one of the directors at Artlogic, the small but influential company that runs the annual FNB Joburg Art Fair, and recently published a doctoral thesis about this fair. Labuscagne makes the point, which has great relevance here, that the art public seems to be limited mainly to academics and a very small group of collectors (2010: 116). South Africans, even those who are financially able to collect art, are more interested in curtains and flashy cars.[2] Julian Stallabrass (2006) notes that it is something about the nature of art as an investment with a very variable rate of return that discourages many wealthy people from collecting it. This is also reflected by the lack of public support of the art museums in South Africa on a scale incomparable to the support of the various Tate museums,[3] or indeed many other art institutions outside of South Africa. In an attempt to guess how many people may constitute a South African art buying public, Artlogic's financial director, Kevin Fleischer responds to Labuscagne's query in this regard (2010: 110) thus: "that it is very small, [perhaps] 20,000 people… smaller than the

[1] As in the case of Charles Saatchi's burned down warehouse or the many works stolen from institutions.

[2] Labuscagne's writes, "…it is an obvious fact that the vast majority of South Africans of all races are more interested in luxury cars and curtains than they are in the buying of art, yet this is the only group with whom conspicuous consumption is routinely associated. Ruark Peffers… in his role as director of the painting department at a local auction house, has economic incentives for expressing an exasperation at the slow rate of 'conversion' between new 'black' money and art buying: "You get Tokyo Sexwale, he is just not interested and Cyril Ramaphosa, yes who is worth gagillions [sic], he is just not really interested. And have we tried? They are called the black diamonds, and there was this huge BEE black diamond everybody getting so excited, we must get them, we must get them, but you get them to a cocktail party, you show them the stuff, you are like this is Gerard Sekoto, he left the country out of political exile for you know, it is like surely you relate to this, and you try without sounding like a complete elitist, racist kind of snob and say fool why are you not buying this; you can afford it? But it is like you can't make somebody appreciate something, you are like dude this is your heritage." Peffers' characterisations of the art buying interests of this group of rich black South Africans are crude but, I found, reflects a sentiment that is surprisingly commonly shared amongst people I interviewed for this study" (Labuscagne, 2010: 108).

[3] "With more than 4 million visitors a year, the Tate Modern is the most popular tourist attraction in London and the most visited modern art museum in the world. Tate Britain's almost 2 million visitors ensure that it also takes a respectable position in worldwide ranks. (in 2005-6 New York's MoMA had 2.67 million visitors, Paris' Centre de Pompidou had 2.5 million and the Guggenheim Museums in New York and Bilbao received 900 000 each)" (Thornton, 2009: 117).

DSTV (Digital Satellite Television) market, it is smaller than the BMW and Mercedes market, it is a tiny market." Labuscagne (2010: 110) continues to quote gallerist Gavin Rooke who expressed without any reservation that he believes "that there are under 500 people in this country that on any meaningful and ongoing basis purchase art above R50 000". Labuscagne (2010: 110) deduces from this that "regardless of how accurate these estimates might be, what is noticeable is the gap between the committed buyer base and the potentially interested base of people."

Labuscagne goes on to cite Ross Douglas, the CEO of ArtLogic, "first, Douglas casts [the art viewing public] as simply 'interested in contemporary culture' and second, add[ing] details of how they view art generally, not as intimidating or scary, but as one element in a larger understanding of culture and living in South Africa" (2010: 117). This public seems to be a little different to the buying public, according to Douglas. He believes that they

> are a lot of academics and they are clever people, but they are not necessarily BMW buyers, Grolsch drinkers, FNB Private bankers; they are people who grew up with art in their families, who went to university and possibly studied history of art, who are into the whole art narrative… the gallery openings talk to the art audience and they get 50 to 250 people a night, the Art Fair gets 10,000 (cited in Labuscagne, 2010: 116).

Douglas also remarks upon the number of families coming to the art fair and how this was something he hadn't quite expected. "[Ross] Douglas believes that this was because this audience wants to 'introduce their kids to culture because there is so little of that in the town" (Labuscagne, 2010: 116).[4] Children form a very important part of the art viewing public as by creating a love of fine art and beautiful objects in children serves as a starting point for future collectors and patrons of the arts. Teaching children to appreciate art is fundamental to future art patrons and cultural support. My father, a collector of historical and contemporary South African art, used to go to the Pretoria Art Museum monthly, looking at the paintings in their permanent collection when he was a youth. He developed his own interest in South African art in this

[4] "Douglas believes that this was because this audience wants to "introduce their kids to culture because there is so little of that in the town. And even if there were some naked penises drawn here and there, they were prepared to take that risk and push their kids through an art environment, I mean all of those people who came through with kids could afford baby sitters, had they thought this was inappropriate for their kids they would have left them at home, with baby sitters. But they wanted to say, "look kids this is what art is about", this is the start'. Picking up on a similar point, Jaco van Sckalkwyk quoted above cast his experience of the public at the Fair in the following light: "My favourite museum in the world is the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The reason I enjoy that museum so much is because you go there on a Saturday and Sunday and it is strollers and families and they are going through the museum and they are having coffee or whatever, it is an 'outing' in a sense, you know, so I was very happy to see an art public at the Joburg Art Fair which had to do with families and had to do with strollers, and it wasn't about I don't know... it wasn't about sort of an informed art scene, people who have read up and can tell you everything about everything, this is so hot this year, and so... it wasn't that." Both these observations bring to light a new characteristic of the presumed art public for the Fair. First, Douglas casts them as simply 'interested in contemporary culture' and second, added details of how they view art generally, not as intimidating or scary, but as one element in a larger understanding of culture and living in South Africa" (Labuscagne, 2010: 116).

manner, with the Pretoria Art Museum facilitating his ability to see works of historical and contemporary art.

Art can be very expensive to purchase, especially the fine art that has an established historical importance to South African heritage or embodies cultural relevance. This is not to negate the historical relevance of craft or heritage items, but the focus of such an evaluation is on fine or 'high' art specifically. 'High art' is taken here to be art that is produced by those that are highly experienced and learned in whichever institution of cultural production they practice. These manifestations or ideas are products of higher learning, or philosophical engagement rather than relying simply on an acquired skill. An example of craft as opposed to high art would be the adequate playing of an instrument when contrasted to the composing of a beautifully melodic symphony. High art is something that is often only accessible to a privileged population of people, whether access is restricted physically, financially or intellectually. The reinforcing of great monetary value of artworks is very important to establishing their cultural value. I think that possession and the way in which we interact with our possessions has a vastly different meaning in a world, and more locally in a country, where so many people have so few possessions. It is necessary to consider not only what this means to us culturally and historically, but what it means about our artists and the value we place on their product, and to ask whether collectors might be shutting down the artist's line of communication to their intended public by keeping works in private collections. Artworks may lose their intended meaning, their intended audience, and with it, their cultural value, when they are taken out of public circulation. Conversely, they also gain new levels of critical meaning and relevance through being hidden.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

This research report is informed primarily by the ideas discussed in *The Curator as Culture Broker* by Sylvester Ogbechie (2010). Ogbechie uses the term 'culture broker' with reference to the way in which culture is influenced by the decisions made by curators; that is, how a curator can designate relevance through display and arrangement. Ogbechie shows interest in how it is also important to look at what has not been included in the displays of curators, as through their exclusion of certain artists or works, they can render something irrelevant. I extrapolate from his notion of the 'culture broker' to include private art collectors, as I think that they similarly influence the art world and dictate what is considered valuable – in cultural or monetary terms. Ogbechie's text was one of my major starting points in formulating the theme of this research, and sparked the questions pertaining to the influence of the private art collector on the markets, culture and art history. In Chapter Two, I deal with this text in greater depth, examining the premise for Ogbechie's argument and the way in which it is integral to my own examination of South African private art collectors.

I have been exposed to art and collectors all my life, so I had a flurry of mixed ideas and personal points of view regarding the definition of a collector. *A Rationale of Collecting* by Thomas G. Tanselle (1998) is a text I reference as a framework for defining the collector in anthropological terms. Tanselle argues that everyone is a collector of some sort, whether one collects the tangible (objects) or the intangible (experiences), and whether one defines oneself as a collector or not, it is unlikely that any one person collects nothing. According to Tanselle (1998: 7), "every collection is inspired by the same basic factors: fear of boredom, desire for immortality, aesthetic sensibility, vanity, and speculation." Tanselle (1998: 8) also believes that "the human need to find order should be considered a fundamental explanation of collecting." In her introduction to *Seven Days in the Art World* Sarah Thornton (2009: xiv) states that "contemporary art has become a kind of alternative religion for atheists," while many other texts refer to collecting as an obsession (Labuscagne, 2010:109) and almost all the texts call it an 'addiction'. Thornton quotes collector Sofia Ricci[5] who states, "I'm an atheist, but I believe in art. I go to galleries like my mother went to church. It helps me understand the way I live. We're so passionate about it that it has become a bigger part of our financial portfolio than we intended. Art collecting is an addiction" (2009: 93). Lindemann (2006: 168) interviews Viennese collector Francesca Van Hapsburg, who claims that "for years, I tried very hard to resist becoming an art collector, but it's an inherited gene." It is evident that collecting is a veritably uncontrollable force to some, a welcomed and cherished 'problem'. Lindemann (2006: 80) also quotes New York art dealer Marc Glimcher on the matter, where he states that "a great collector is invariably someone who has this disease, and it is a disease."

It is of great importance to establish the degree to which these collectors are avid about collecting, showing passion for their collecting and how particular they can be. Collectors often have a specific focus or direction in their collections, the objects they amass gain relevance through their being inserted into a collection with similar objects. It is through the passion and 'madness' of collectors that historical objects can become contextualized, or associated with other objects that may otherwise have been overlooked. Most significantly, collectors provide a basis of preservation of objects that may otherwise have been lost. This is a very important point when considering the influence of collectors on the writing of history, which I will discuss in further detail. The role of private collections is also extremely significant in museums. The passion that collectors have for their objects also drives them, inevitably, to an irrepressible need to share the results of what is often a lifetime of accumulation. The collectors become experts in the field in which they 'obsess', as they study their objects and seek knowledge of their individual histories, through the accumulation of texts and bodies of information about their chosen focus. Collectors have the potential to be great contributors to the writing of art history through pursuing their passion for their field of focus.

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[5] "Another collector with a pseudonym – referred to as Sofia Ricci, [is] a full-time collector" (Thornton 2009: 92).

In Chapter Two, I use *Publics and Counterpublics* by Michael Warner (2002) as a platform to assist my definitions of private and public, since an understanding of the notion of the 'public' and the 'private', and their ambivalent relationship with one another, are important to understanding the premise of my text. It is also necessary to look at how publics come into being and to discuss Warner's problematization of the terms 'private' and 'public' to really understand what the implications are of artwork being in the private and the public domains, and the connotations associated with these definitions as of spheres of belonging.

I refer to Randal Johnson's introduction to the 1993 edition of *The Field of Cultural Production* by Pierre Bourdieu, as well as Bourdieu's work itself. According to Johnson (1993: 7-8), Bourdieu problematizes value and separates his definitions into the subtexts of cultural value, symbolic value, economic value and the capital, relevant to these various definitions. Through participation in the ascribing of value to capital, whether by the artist or the patron, these different parties reinforce or challenge one another's understandings of what is valuable. There is an exchange of values that occurs where a patron of the arts garners cultural and symbolic value through his exchange with an artist, and the artist receives literal currency in exchange for the critical currency she has produced. It is this exchange of value that makes art collecting mutually beneficial for both the artist and the art collector. In this research report, I examine this exchange of value in a local context, as well as what it means for the ways in which cultural, symbolic and economic value are influenced and sustained by private collectors.

> Philosopher George Dickie's definition is: 'A work of art in the classificatory sense is an evaluable artefact of a kind created to be presented to an art-world public.' Such a definition sounds circular, involving a specialist audience that can make judgements, but embraces the idea that art might have both an intrinsic value and an instrumental value. The first – intrinsic value – includes all the elements that are values 'for their own sake', while the second – instrumental value – refers to all those elements that cause other things to happen, whether personal or social. However, philosopher Robert Stecker proposes that 'intrinsic value' is itself a form of 'instrumental value'. 'There are many features of works of art that we admire, but this admiration is contingent upon and bound up with the valuable experiences and other valuable things that we get from these features. This makes the value of these features instrumental rather than intrinsic' (Nairne 2011: 174).

Bourdieu's notions of the symbolic capital have informed similar studies, including Labuscagne's doctoral thesis discussed above. Her work focuses on a very similar context to that which I have

examined, but with an entirely different emphasis. Her research has been invaluable in informing the body of my text as she explores the relationships within the South African art world. She has presented a great deal of relevant information from which to discuss South African art collecting and the politics of value. Labuscagne spends a large part of the first section of her text analyzing South African art collectors and their habits of collecting in relation to galleries and the Joburg Art Fair. She attempts, through empirical research, to define the number of collectors that exist in the country as well as what it is that they collect. She interviews several key players in the South African art market, drawing several conclusions from their answers, and her survey results from the Joburg Art Fair patrons and other accessible market information. Hers is one of the most relevant and most contemporary texts about South African art that I will make reference to throughout this report.

Chapter Three draws together information about collectors and art-related institutions outside of South Africa, with a focus on Europe and the United States of America. I consider this to be relevant comparative reference material to my topic, as it provides examples from which to draw conclusions that are comparable to the South African collectors, about whom little has been written. A key text in this regard is Sarah Thornton's *Seven Days in the Art World* (2009), a text that reads like an Agatha Christie murder mystery, in which the author plays Poirot, examining all the 'usual suspects' for clues to what is really going on in the art world. It is clear that there are a number of relevant similarities and differences worth noting between the international and local art markets. Situating the art market and the collectors within a global context aids the understanding of the state of South African fine art collecting. Her text, and *Collecting Contemporary* by Adam Lindemann (2006), are extremely useful as comparative texts. Adam Lindemann takes a completely different approach to Thornton, but the book is also a documentation of interviews with a number of people who play different roles in the art market. Like Thornton, he interviews gallery owners, curators, collectors, magazine editors and auctioneers, but while she has approached her text from an anthropological angle through which she creates a narrative, Lindemann's is more of a showcase of the opinions and experiences of his subjects. The author merely reveals their statements, offering very little of his own perspective.

The catalogue *RADAR: Selections from the Collection of Vicki and Kent Logan* is a documentation of the exhibition of a collection that has been gifted to the Denver Art Museum by American collectors of contemporary art, Vicki and Kent Logan. There are many contributors, collectors, exhibitions or collections that could have been examined for purposes of comparison, but this was chosen as being of most interest here. The variety of contemporary artists present in this text and the Logans' passion as pioneers attracted me to this example, but their generosity as private collectors (who do not yet run their own institution), is exemplary. Most, if not all, of the artists present in this exhibition, and many more in their collection, have had their work become greatly sought after by other collectors, have become famous, and their works are coveted acquisitions both at exhibitions and at auctions. Some examples of artists present in the

collection are Takashi Murakami, Marlene Dumas, Jenny Saville, Damien Hirst, Tracey Emin, Yinka Shonibare and Felix Gonzalez-Torres, to mention a few.

Diane Vanderlip (2006) discusses the nature of the Logan collection and their tendency to collect some of the most relevant artists of their time and asserts, "while they are participating in history, the Logans have not assumed that they are prescient enough to predict the future" (2006: 41). Through their generous donations of contemporary art of international origin to American museums, they define the content that a large audience has access to and has come to understand as relevant. The exposure these artists receive by being on display in important institutions, along with the subsequent exhibitions and the publications they in which they are represented, cement their perceived relevance, both historically and culturally. Considering that many of the works in the Logans' collection are by international artists, it provides Americans with an opportunity to see contemporaneous international artworks that may otherwise only have been accessible through travel. It is exposure and accessibility that ensures the work not only becomes sought after by other collectors, but part of popular culture. This exposure may also bring the viewing public that is formed around this collection a broader understanding of various global contemporary cultures. Much of the work in the collection is politically and culturally motivated, such as that by Fang Lijun or by the Luo Brothers, who produce political commentary on contemporary life modern China. Kent Logan (2006: 63) argues, "Consequently, it has always been our feeling that for art to fulfill the purpose of its creation, it must be seen, discussed and critiqued in the times in which it is created." It is vital that the West gains a better understanding of China, which is becoming an economic superpower, rivaled by few to none, and it is notable that the Logans as collectors draw interest to these matters by exposing the public to China's contemporary art.

Charles Saatchi is another international collector worth noting, as he is a pioneer that has been collecting art since the 1960s (While, 2003: 285) and a collector that is particularly passionate about sharing his art collection with the public. *My Name is Charles Saatchi and I am an Artoholic* by Charles Saatchi (2009), is an unconventional book in which he answers questions from members of the public. What I find more interesting than his answers per se is the public that has formed around Charles Saatchi and his endeavours. There is a large enough public curiosity to result in two volumes of these 'Q&A style' texts published to date, and there are presumably volumes more questions that he could have answered. In his book, the invitation reads, simply, "if you have questions on any subject you would like Charles Saatchi to answer, send them to pkapublishing@googlemail.com" (2009: 176). Saatchi has repeatedly been referred to as a "Supercollector"[6] (While 2003: 258), and it is the specific dynamics of a phenomenon such as this that are of interest in this study.

A public has been 'imagined' around Charles Saatchi and his art collecting habits that is large enough to produce something one can only describe as a manner of celebrity. To attain the status of celebrity indicates great prominence in popular culture. This gives me reason to believe that the public that has formed around Saatchi and his art is a very large one, possibly even one of the biggest publics that exists around contemporary art to date. The book to which I have referred (Saatchi, 2009: 59) has called forward members of this public and made them active and visible. One of the questions posed to him by an enquiring member of this public is "Perhaps your greatest legacy will be that you, more than any other, have been responsible for pitching modern and contemporary art into the UK's cultural mainstream. Contemporary art is now discussed in taxis and government think tanks. Did you set out to achieve this from the start?" for which the collector claims credit by simply responding in the affirmative (Saatchi, 2009: 59). That a solitary collector has inspired people who previously may not have spoken about or considered art as important and for it to reach beyond a typical art public is certainly a great victory for the broader field of contemporary art. Saatchi has popularized contemporary art by providing access to art and a narrative in the media that can at times read like a soap opera. Exhibitions like 'New York Now' in the late 1980s or 'Sensation' in the late 1990s exposed contemporary art to hundreds of thousands of people. Saatchi also coined the term 'YBA' (Thornton, 2009: 128) or 'YBa' (While, 2003: 258), an acronym for 'young British artists', in reference to the wave of late 80s early 90s British artists that Saatchi effectively branded by inclusion in his exhibitions and collections.[7]

Chapter Three also considers South African Art Collectors and those South African collections that have emerged in the public sphere. This chapter examines the South African art collector, drawing comparisons to the collectors discussed in the previous chapters. I will consider with greater depth South African art related publications and give analyses of auction houses and their relationship with South African collecting. I will examine art galleries and their relationship with collectors, as well as their combined influence on the art market and contemplate what it means for art institutions, artists, collectors, and the public. I will discuss museums and their important exhibitions, while referring to contemporary museum culture and art viewing practices.

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[6] While (2003: 258) writes, "the defining characteristics of Supercollectors are: their wealth derives from multi-million dollar family businesses that are also international; they buy art where it is cheap and sell where it is expensive - usually the US; they buy in bulk and work hard at their hobby; they use dealers as scouts but generally make their own selections; they establish art collections and hire curators to run them; they exert a significant influence on the art market. (Hatton and Walker 2000: 9)."

[7] Beginning with the first Young British art show in 1992, and running to Young British art VI in 1996, it was the Saatchi Gallery that cemented the YBa label and defined the movement's parameters. (While 2003: 259)

Revisions – Expanding the Narrative of South African Art, (2006) a documentation of the Bruce Campbell-Smith Collection edited by Hayden Proud, is a publication that I will consider in some depth, as it is one of the best documentations of a private art collection in South Africa that is not an auction catalogue. I will compare the works in this collection to those in auction catalogues, and to the auction results, as this will offer some evidence of the influence that collectors have over the market, as well as over what appears in publications. I will discuss the more recent auctions in particular, including the Bonhams South Africa sales. I will discuss the auction catalogues: *Art for AIDS Orphans, 18 October 2004*; *The Highly Important Auction of the Prestigious Art Collection of the Late Roger Brett Kebble* by Graham's Fine Art; various editions of Bonhams' *The South African Sale* catalogues and the catalogue for the auction of *The Collection of the Late Jack and Helene Kahn* by Stephan Welz & Co.

Exhibition catalogues and other publications about South African art, like those by Esmé Berman or Sue Williamson, are likewise important to draw into the discussion. These texts not only inform the art-interested public, but they inform collectors about what is relevant, or valuable. Among these texts will be *Art and Artists of South Africa* by Esmé Berman (1970), *Resistance Art in South Africa* by Sue Williamson (1989), *South African Art Now* by Sue Williamson (2009), *Art in South Africa – The Future Present* by Sue Williamson and Ashraf Jamal (1996), the *Celebrating 20 Artists* Catalogue, *Angaza Afrika – African Art Now* by Chris Spring, Michael Stevenson's several publications on art in South Africa between 1800 and 2010, *Aspects of South African Art I 1903 – 1999* by Johans Borman and Warren Siebrits, the more recently published *Aspects of South African Art II 1910 – 2010* by Warren Siebrits, *The Brett Kebble Art Awards* (2004) and the *National Treasures* exhibition catalogue by Johannesburg Art Gallery (2010). *National Treasures,* an exhibition by the Johannesburg Art Gallery (JAG) was held at Hollard's Villa Arcadia in Parktown in 2010. It is vital to discuss the importance of the exhibition being held offsite, comparing accessibility between Villa Arcadia, hardly an ideal exhibition space in terms of hanging and display and the JAG in Joubert Park, which is a gallery ideal for the display of their own art collection. It is in no way irrelevant to have held the exhibition at the Villa Arcadia, considering it was the home of the founders of the JAG, but I intend to problematize the accessibility of the JAG and the comparative accessibility of Villa Arcadia today. *Art and Aspirations* by Michael Stevenson is a text that deals with the Randlords and the other early collectors of art in South Africa, which I will also refer to in passing with regards to the founding of institutions and the largely instigating the activity of art collecting in South Africa.

Chapter four draws together all the research presented to support my conclusions about the impact that South African private collectors have on the informing of art history. I will draw together a number of different aspects of art collecting that have been researched and the results will explicate the influence of the South African private collector. Drawing from the comparison made with international art collectors, I speculate in my conclusion as to the influence that South African collectors are yet to experience as the market grows, and as interest in collecting South

African art grows with it. The South African art market is growing, and although the pace of investment growth either accelerates or declines, depending on the strength of the economy, the amount of interest in the arts does not seem to wane. Collectors of fine art undoubtedly have a great influence on the market itself, including the value of work. By discovering the extent of the South African art collector's influence on the market and the relevance of an artist, we will be able to determine not only what they are already doing, but also what it is that can be done in the future to contribute to public access, understanding and interest in the arts.

CHAPTER TWO

Key Texts

> "What they [museum curators] did not foresee, initially, was that collecting would continue as knowledge, education, entertainment, social politics, fashion and so on, [which demanded the] museums' disciplinary interests diversified. Cultural change thus added to the diversity of collectibles while the emergence of a pervasive museum culture instilled in society a new need for public giving. Any finitude in the collecting project was surely an illusion."
>
> - Simon J. Knell *Museums and the Future of Collecting* (2004: 3)

In an essay entitled *The Curator as Culture Broker*, Sylvester Ogbechie (2010) discusses the role of the modern curator and the creation of meaning in bodies of work by means of their display arrangement and the works associations with one another. Ogbechie describes the power of the creation of meaning through association, and how curating is seen as an art form in itself, and as a means of deciding what becomes culturally relevant. By placing these objects in the public domain in the manner in which they have decided to place them – perhaps an unknown artist adjacent to a priceless piece of cultural heritage – curators (or 'culture brokers' as Ogbechie terms them) create a dialogue which may determine the way in which craft, an artwork, an exhibition, a movement or even history is perceived by a viewer. I believe that the term 'culture broker' may be applied equally to serious art collectors, as, by rendering a piece visible or absent, by donating to museums, by bidding at auction, by buying from dealers or artists themselves, these collectors are, sometimes silently, determining art history.

I propose that one could extrapolate Ogbechie's ideas to include South African private art collectors in particular, as they themselves, according to Tansell's (1998) criteria, are 'curating' their own collections through methods of inclusion and exclusion. It is within this process that they are not only making meaning, but also validating certain artists and rejecting others by culturally and/or financially supporting or hindering them. Ogbechie (2010: 2) first mentions the idea of 'cultural brokerage' early into his essay, stating that it

> grew out of [his] recent focus on the economics of cultural production as it impacts on the value of African arts and culture in the context of globalization. Specifically, it evaluates how value is

> created for cultural commodities and the role of cultural brokerage in determining which objects gain value and which do not.

This thought process applies directly to the question posed by this study, regarding the way in which private collectors contribute to the value of South African arts and culture, in a local, historical context. Collectors impute value to certain objects and not to others, sometimes ascribing astounding monetary value to particular pieces of interest. I believe that in doing so publicly, as collectors do at auctions, that they are determining what is relevant to South African artistic and a part of cultural heritage.

According to Ogbechie (2010: 2), curators undertake "a process of establishing connections for objects from a wide variety of sources". There is a similar mode of creating connections in putting together a collection, a mode of agency in assigning significance to certain objects and creating a narrative. Tanselle argues that

> however coherent or formless a group of possessions may appear, it inevitably offers juxtapositions that would not have existed without the collector's intervention in the fates of those objects […] Whatever understanding we create for ourselves is different from what it would have been if the material world, including other people's accumulations, had been different. This situation is the basis for what we call the advancement of knowledge (1998: 20).

In so doing, they endeavor to create meaning and a form of cultural importance is created or extended – not only by curators but also art collectors – albeit it in an ostensibly private realm. It is this 'advancement of knowledge' (Tanselle, 1998: 20) that I am referring to when I say that South African private collectors of high art are contributing to the understanding of, and exercising a tacit influence over, what becomes art history. Tanselle (1998: 20) goes further to state that "a particular conjunction of objects can bring out a specific meaning that may not have previously existed, and this meaning may be the same for many people, or allow many to come to the same conclusion from the narrative presented."

Ogbechie uses an analogy about the way in which curators decide what is important and what is not, according to what can only be a personal and subjective manner of deciding, or assigning value. According to what a collector is prepared to pay for a work of art and how much of that artist's work he is motivated to place in his collection, the collector in turn also determines the value of art and an artist's cultural importance, through their subjective decision. As Grampp puts it:

> …if a collector spends $10,000 on a painting instead of buying bonds that yield 7 percent, he is giving up $700 a year. If he believes the painting is worth what he gave up in order to get it, as he must if he buys it, the yield from the painting is at least $700 (cited in Nairne, 2011: 173).

This fairly reductive argument negates the efforts of those pioneering and visionary collectors who actively build an artists' recognition in the same way a gallerist might. It must be recognized that collecting art is an activity that relies heavily on what other collectors are collecting, how the market is performing financially, as much as on societal and cultural trends. One cannot understate the complicated and convoluted way in which collectors settle upon certain artists.

Ogbechie likens curators to a "powerful search engine that ranks artists and artworks according to rather opaque algorithms and in the process rendering specific forms of cultural practice visible, or invisible according to its self-referential autonomous logic" (Ogbechie, 2010: 3). By this, he means that these curators are essentially putting works of art together that form meaning for which the process is in no way objective or public knowledge. Through a process of inclusion and exclusion, the art world may blindly accept their decisions as valid, as many indeed did with the views of infamous critics such as Clement Greenberg. What the curator decides to exclude may very well be invalidating or discrediting other artists in the exhibition's periphery, and not very different to work that was selectively ignored in art critical discussions during the periods in art history where critics were taken to be *the* authority on art appreciation. Not unlike the influence of connoisseurship of dealers like Joseph Duveen, Ogbechie is saying that there is still a small group of people validating art for the majority. This validation has an impact on a much larger scale today than it would have a hundred and fifty years ago, considering the contemporary audience extends beyond what Duveen may have envisioned. Sandy Nairne (2011: 170) also tackles this theme and deliberates on the way that value is assigned to cultural objects, stating that

> the degree to which the arts are perceived not just as good but also as having wider cultural value is related to how they are assessed by specific groups of people. The quality of a particular work of art, piece of writings, performance or film – in the sense of how much it is valued, culturally or financially – will be judged against criteria (such as levels of aesthetic pleasure, skill or originality) that are collectively determined, and change over time.

The art world has expanded exponentially in the last hundred and fifty years and with it, the amount of money that is invested in art and to be made from selling art. Lindemann (2006: 64)

quotes Gagosian Gallery owner Larry Gagosian who says that "a greater percentage of the people who have the means to do it seem to be interested in collecting art than at any time since I've been in business." There are more people involved in the business of art now than there have ever been and along with it there are more responsibilities that are resting with curatorship than there were in a bygone era where it may have been enough just to be a connoisseur. Curators are engaged not only with the placement of works of art in a 'white cube', but in the placement of those works in a site-specific intervention, and within a conceptual cultural framework. Exhibitions are not isolated incidents, but narratives and a means of transferring information. Curatorial practice is a critical process, as opposed to connoisseurs of art that were merely evaluating artistic skill and enjoying their own aesthetic preferences. The decisions made by a curator are also potentially devastating for an artist's career and for their degree of cultural currency. This is applicable to the South African private collector, as it is through a similar process of inclusion and exclusion that an artist's work gains fungibility and cultural relevance. In effect, both curator and collector are imbued with social responsibility in dealing with cultural capital and are not solely engaged with the selection and placement of works of art as may have been the case with connoisseurs of old. Julia Peyton-Jones, Director Serpentine Gallery London claims that

> collectors are certainly as well informed as us, if not better informed than, some of the professionals in the art world; they've seen shows all over the world, they're travelling [...] In [...] the U.K., there is a dearth of collectors out of the virtual circle that we have called the art world here. It's still relatively new, the interest in Contemporary Art; and the embracing of the contemporary is also relatively new. In America, particularly, the wealth of collectors – I don't mean the richness of them, I mean the *number* of collectors – is absolutely phenomenal. It's fantastic and remarkable, and we don't have that here (Lindemann 2006: 270).

Comparing curators to hedge fund managers, Ogbechie (2010: 3) says that, "the hype and star quality of most contemporary curators factor into a reorganization of cultural production as a process of brokerage and management. Curators fit into the new economy as culture brokers who mediate the value of artworks in economic and critical discourse." Collectors with that kind of public 'star quality and hype' (Ogbechie, 2010: 3) on a global scale rarely emerge, with Charles Saatchi being a prime example. As a collector of contemporary art and as one that has opened his own museum, he has moved his collection (and with it, his taste in art) into the public realm. He has yielded a vast influence over the British art scene and what has become known as relevant contemporary work over the last two decades. The Young British Artists such as Damien Hirst and Jenny Saville partly have Saatchi to thank for their renown. Along with their recognition that he may have contributed to, they have gained great critical acclaim and – more to my point – are

fashionable and prestigious to have in one's collection. While (2003: 259) discusses Saatchi's position as a trendsetter in taste as one which causes unease, quoting Jardine (1997: 44), who points out the "direct influence of wealthy private collectors over the formation of taste becomes an issue when price and preference are brought into proximity with one another." There are also claims against Saatchi, some by artists (While, 2003:259), that by selling off all the works he owned by a certain artist, he permanently damaged the artist's market and cultural value. Saatchi is a very public and influential example of a collector that is, through the act of collecting and what he does with his collection, a culture broker. While states that

> although most major collectors have bought and sold in large quantities, Jardine argues that the tendency has been to return work to the gallery of origin, usually as discretely and anonymously as possible. Saatchi is different in drawing attention to his collection and in selling off various parts of his collection at regular stages. While this may be a necessary part of freeing up capital for reinvestment, Saatchi's actions have left him open to criticism from artists who argue that the off-loading of their work has reduced their status in the art world (2003: 259).

Another example of a Supercollector that has this magnitude of influence is the owner of the auction house Christie's, François Pinault. "As both the owner of Christie's and a leading collector, [Pinault] wields a double-edged sword in the art market. When Pinault guarantees a work for Christie's, he either makes money on the sale or, if it is bought in, adds another piece to his collection" (Thornton, 2009: 9). In an interview with Thornton (2009: 9), Philippe Ségalot states that "any piece of art acquired by Pinault receives the value-added stamp of his provenance. The artist is the most important origin of the work, but the hands through which it passes are essential to the way in which it accrues value." This 'value-added' provenance is probably part of the reason Saatchi sells his works periodically, as there could be collectors clamoring for a 'Saatchi' piece.

It is worth pursuing the question as to what degree this extends to the private realm of the collector, and how much of this same cultural influence relies on public contribution or visibility. Saatchi and Pinault are examples that are not comparable to any South African collectors when it comes to the scale, or the focus, of their collections. The Rupert family has a private, yet publicly accessible museum in which they display some of their collection of works by South African historical artists. This is different to Saatchi, as his is largely a contemporary collection that is always in flux, unlike the permanent collection of the Ruperts. "Saatchi is different […] in selling off various parts of his collection at regular stages" (While 2003: 259). Saatchi's focus is contemporary art, and he is curating a collection that is an active in what will become relevant or remains relevant. This is not entirely unlike the Rupert collection that contains works that they

may have endowed with the same degree of relevance at the time of purchase. Saatchi, due to his celebrity status and the climate of the art market is more visible to a larger group of interested people, however, than the Ruperts have ever been. This increases the extent of the influence of his decisions dramatically and internationally. The Rupert collection exhibits works that are already a part of the established art historical canon, as does Saatchi's, but their display is merely reiterating what is deemed historically relevant, instead of breaking ground the way that Charles Saatchi's collection does.

The closest South Africa has to a contemporary art collector visible in the public eye is someone like Gordon Schachat, hardly what one would call a public figure or an accessible collection, when compared to Saatchi.[8] According to Labuscagne, (2010: 110) "many [South African] interview respondents who buy art seem to do so across a wide spectrum of 'tastes' and hierarchies of style, with the possible exception of the very focused 'Supercollector' (Hatton & Walker, 2005) who sees himself as somewhat of a museum for contemporary art, of which, in this country, Gordon Schachat is probably the best and only example." We have previously also had collectors publish texts containing a documentation of their collections such as that of Bruce Campbell-Smith, or the documentation of the late Brett Kebble's art collection in the Graham Britz auction catalogue. There is not one publicly known in South Africa, however, that compares to the scale or renown of Charles Saatchi's collection. Saatchi is but one very popular and controversial example of a 'Supercollector' (2005), of which there are very few internationally.

Ogbechie indicates very clearly the relevance of works of art that appear in the public sphere and the value that they gain from being visible. He states that "known object(s) accumulate greater value merely by being known, while other objects of equal value, rendered unknown by selective curatorial dismissal, find it difficult to gain traction" (Ogbechie, 2010:3). Of course the process cannot be reliant simply on the curators, who play a role amongst all the other influential actors, but it is important to consider the impact that visibility has on collective memory. 'Repeated viewings' (Tanselle, 1998: 20) of the work are also key to the formation of fact and information – whether in person or in publication. Thus it is supremely important for the information surrounding collections – a documentation of the objects, or the objects themselves - to be accessible. I believe that South African private collectors, though not as high profile as Saatchi, nonetheless have considerable influence through their decisions concerning which contemporary works are worth collecting as well as their placement of works outside of public access. Applicable not only to curators and art critics, but also to collectors, Ogbechie further states that "questions about the economic value of art and cultural production are even more relevant in the contemporary era since cultural objects have to be mediated for them to become artworks, just like money has to be made fungible in order to create wealth" (2010: 3). Collectors

[8] Since this research was conducted, the Cape Town-based collector Piet Viljoen has opened a private gallery showcasing his collection. SMAC Gallery in Stellenbosch, run by Baylon Sandri, stems from a family of art collectors and a history of collecting South African Art. These have taken an active role in promoting the work of artists in South Africa and abroad. There are also many publications about South African art and artists associated with the SMAC gallery.

are an important checkpoint for artists and for the cultural acceptance of their position as creators of objects of value. The market becomes an adjudicating space in which some participants are winners and others are losers that fall away, with little public value associated to their products.

Ogbechie (2010: 3) quotes O'Doherty (1976: 110) as follows: "The cult of originality, the determination of value, the economics of scarcity, of supply and demand, apply themselves with particular poignancy to the visual arts," where he goes on to argue that "there is a direct correlation between the discursive visibility of an artwork and its financial/cultural value. This direct correlation sustains the business of auction houses such as Sotheby's as well as also sustaining the cultural value of artworks in museums and related institutions" (Ogbechie 2010: 3). This statement creates an interesting paradox between the works of a private collector being hidden from view, yet nonetheless gaining cultural relevance and value as time passes. The value of art is greatly trend-based, thus leaving some artists that disappear into private homes to disappear from the cultural landscape altogether. In considering what Ogbechie (2010) says about the correlation between visibility and sustained value, one can only assume that collectors must in some way share their work with the public for it to assert its relevance. In this report, I will examine to what extent privately owned artworks appear in public, and in which forms they do so, inside South Africa as well as abroad.

Ogbechie's analogy of "the curator as culture broker" (Ogbechie 2010: 7) is applied in a very particular manner in his text. I extrapolate the term to suit my own meaning and to include not only private collectors and their practice, but for the term 'culture broker' to allow a broader application than merely as a manner of 'hedge-fund manager'. The term, I feel, is more complex than his analogy allows for, as the intentions and agency in the act of collecting encapsulate far more than "short-term focus and self-referential exegesis" (Ogbechie, 2010: 7).

To embark on the topic at hand, one must define the private collector, and in doing so, define what it means for something to fall under the definition of 'private'. A text that discusses the act of collecting in significant detail is that of Thomas Tanselle, *A Rationale on Collecting* (1998), in which the author explores the nature and motives of the collector. Werner Muensterberger, in *Collecting: An Unruly Passion* (1994), defines collecting as "the selecting, gathering, and keeping of objects of subjective value" (1998: 4). Tanselle dismisses this description as incomplete and he thinks that Muensterberger's definition does not allow for the instances of unconscious selections in collecting. The definition also speaks of objects, which infers a tangible thing of permanence, which it may very well not be in terms of its material substance. He also states that "Muensterberger's reference to 'subjective value' is meant to make the point that the desirability of an object to a collector is independent of the market price it would fetch (now or in the future). But why should those who collect for investment (at least in part) or take some pride in the

monetary value of what they possess be denied a place in the universe of collecting?" (Tanselle, 1998: 5 – 6).

According to several theorists cited by Tanselle (1998: 15), collecting satisfies the primal urge to make meaning of one's own life. Objects "and their relationship to the thread of memory which they help to constitute sustains our sense of ourselves as meaningful people passing through time" (Tanselle, 1998: 16). The collector has, in some ways, a responsibility in owning something, which not only brings meaning to one's own life, but also can potentially have meaning to others. One may feel a responsibility to share an owned work of art with perceived importance and often collectors assume the responsibility of promoting and supporting an artist or community that produces the objects that the collector then accumulates. There is a great thrill for the collector in sharing in an artist's success if you are one of the pioneering collectors of the artist's work. It is also very useful to the value of one's collection to forward and support the careers of the artists in which one invests. There is something very attractive about not only collecting items which have an independent existence from the collector him/herself, but of collecting things that yield their own importance in the world, regardless of their place within a specific collection or their role as something that fills a gap in a collection. Owning and sharing a space with an acclaimed heritage item or relevant historical article can both elevate the value of the collection and a collector's perception of his or her own importance in the world.

The popular television show 'Antiques Roadshow' can be used as an example of a documentation of people who own objects that they may or may not perceive to be of value, or know to be valuable that they not only want to have evaluated, but also that which they wish to share with others. It is quite possible to go to an auction house, or a scholarly institution with one's precious item to have it valued, but thousands of people line up at every Antiques Roadshow episode to show off their ostensibly desirable and sometimes highly prized objects. Many of those who line up at the Antiques Roadshow are not collectors, but they illustrate the desire to share valued objects with others. Most collectors have an urge to share that which they have collected with great love and care, as their objects of accumulation are meaningful to them, and they want to share that sense of meaning with others. This programme is also a place that one can see different types of collectors and hear their reasons for collecting. Tanselle says that

> for some people, the pleasure of amassing objects is increased by knowing that the activity supports scholarship, science, and art; for others the satisfactions are entirely personal, but the results are nevertheless of public benefit. Collecting is a prime example of behaviour in which private desire and social gain are mutually supportive (1998: 25).

I think that many collectors of South African art may not be aware of the way in which their activity supports scholarship and that their 'entirely personal satisfactions' can have greater public benefit. It is this 'social gain' that I think is underwritten in South Africa by works of art being all but invisible for the greatest periods of their existence.

Focus and Preservation

On the subject of choosing a focus within a collection, Tanselle (1998: 18) endeavors to define what it is that attracts the collector to something in particular. "It may be true that aesthetic satisfaction – which itself may come from the ordering power of the artistry – is what draws them to one group of objects rather than another; but the desire to possess the objects, and the pleasure that comes from such possession, stem from the more inclusive urge to achieve a measure of dominance over the environment." Collectors collect thematically bringing together objects that fit into a collective group that creates a narrative that is meaningful to them. There is a focus and there are trends evident in collections, things are often put together over a lifetime of searching and pursuing specific items. Within this extensive period, collectors become very knowledgeable about their items of choice. "People sometimes think of taste and judgement as the primary traits of a connoisseur, but those qualities must be integrated with solid learning, and that combination is essential for all sound scholarship" (Tanselle 1998: 11). Collectors are often aware of the value of their collections, not only as isolated items of value within the collection itself, but of the collection as a whole. The narrative that has been fashioned for it has been a process of linking objects and making meaning of them. It is in sharing the process, as well as the items within the collection, that this knowledge is advanced and relevance is acknowledged. "The only way that 'facts' become established is through taste and judgement (which could also be called sensitive and balanced evaluation) applied to evidence… facts are hypotheses that have not (yet) been convincingly refuted. Collectors, to one degree or another, all engage in this process, the same as (others) whose search for understanding is a search for order" (Tanselle, 1998: 11 – 12). In this fashion, collectors, through what knowledge they have of South African art and through the act of putting together chosen objects and placing importance on any particular work of art, create value and through that value, imbue the works with historical relevance. "No collecting is trivial, on either a personal or public level, because there is no limit to what may have significance for a given individual or within a given milieu" (Tanselle, 1998: 21). Nabokov is likewise quoted on his "understanding that collecting and rigorous thinking go hand in hand" and states in his work *Speak, Memory*: "Their solicitude for the 'average collector who should not be made to dissect' is comparable to the way nervous publishers of popular novels pamper the 'average reader' – who should not be made to think" (Tanselle, 1998: 21).

According to Tanselle, (1998: 20) "The role of private collecting in the evolution of museum displays points directly to a more fundamental contribution that collecting makes to public life: it

affects the way one sees the world. One person's set of possessions, whether glimpsed by a few neighbours or more widely shared in a private or institutional setting, is part of the external chaos faced by other people and thus plays a part in their experience of life." Hence, the shared experience aids the formation of cultural history. Private collections entering the public sphere in whatever format: museum display, publication, temporary exhibition, auction, etc. provides a basis for this formation. Private collecting is a means of preservation of art in the same way as the collections of museums, and what is preserved and what survives to be seen over time is what remains accessible; thereby becoming remembered and historically important. If one looks at the very few paintings in existence by Leonardo da Vinci, for example, one is left to wonder how many of his works were actually painted but subsequently damaged or destroyed. British figurative painter Francis Bacon is a recent example of an artist who destroyed a great deal of his own work. Most of what survives of his work is thanks to the intervention of his gallerist Erica Brausen, who insisted on preserving what she could.

Sandy Nairne (2011: 9) discusses the preservation of works in the context of art theft, which is indeed relevant to the preservation of works in general.

> More art gets lost [rather] than stolen. Of the many works produced in any year, only a small number will survive. Most such 'losses' are not caused by willful damage, but because the great majority of art is not acquired by private collectors or added to the holdings of a museum. Art is graded through comparative judgments, and much of it will be discarded (Nairne, 2011: 9).

It must be underscored that private collectors are a driving force behind the preservation of artworks. *Antiques Roadshow* is a great example of a space in which we can see the remnants of collections that have been passed down as heirlooms through multiple generations and have ended up as one item on a mantelpiece. The preservation of these objects relied on the maintenance of personal value and relevance. These heirlooms are often passed on to those who do not even know what exactly it is, but who only have a vague idea that it held value, if even privately for the collector. Likewise, it leaves one to wonder about all the great works that have been lost when undervalued. The portrait of *Flaming June*, a painting of a sleeping woman in orange dress by the Victorian artist Lord Frederick Leighton, is famous for being found in a Battersea junk shop in 1962. Today, worth millions of dollars, it hangs in Puerto Rico's Museo de Arte de Ponce. There are even people who professionally search for lost or forgotten pictures such as Philip Mould, author of *Sleuth* (2011) and a regular expert on the British television series *Antiques Roadshow*. Tanselle refers to an author who writes about 'undervalued luxury goods' and says that: "…he [Belk] does usefully recognize that individual collectors of independent mind, who are not swayed in their interests by market trends, can eventually influence institutional collecting and public exhibitions. And, one might add, this influence in turn affects market prices,

which are a powerful force for preservation." (Tanselle 1998: 19) The value of art is then, to an extent, a self-perpetuating system. Nairne (2011: 167) quotes Robert Wraight, author of *The Art Game* (1966) who argues that, "a painting has no intrinsic value. It is a luxury commodity for which a market is deliberately created and maintained by financially interested parties who are neither more nor less noble than the operators of any other legal sort of market."

The market tends to draw value from objects that fetch great prices, and as previously mentioned, it is the collector that influences the market price, and therefore the perceived value of an object. "'Art is only worth what someone is willing to pay for it', is the operating cliché" (Thornton 2009: 11). Collectors may argue that works of art are priceless, or that they have not invested in a work of art because of its fungibility, but as Nairne (2011: 167) quotes Steven Connor thus, when he states that "value is inescapable. This is not to be taken as a claim for the objective existence or categorical force of any values or imperatives in particular; but rather as a claim that the processes of estimating, ascribing, modifying, affirming and even denying value, in short, the process of evaluation can never be avoided." The production of value along with the collecting of art is unavoidable. Merely by existing, an artwork holds forms of value, even though a work is only valued by a small number of people. Along with gallerists and museums, collectors have a hand in determining the number of people who are exposed to a work of art, and therefore the value that is ascribed to it, whether this is financial or cultural.

> The activity of making art – like an art object itself - is generally regarded as positive and creative, the product of unalienated labour, giving pleasure and having social value, whether aesthetic or educational. The degree to which a particular work of art is esteemed is a very subjective process, since art is not consistently valued, and sometimes valued only by minority interests within society (Nairne, 2011: 170).

Wallace Stevens calls collecting a "rage for order" (Tanselle 1998: 25), something that embodies the passion of collectors as well as their inherent need to create order out of the mess around them. Tanselle (1998) ends his insightful text with the following: "The collecting we all do, with its varying repercussions, private and public, is our way of venting that rage, of finding ourselves" (Tanselle, 1998: 25). In Dylan Thomas's poem, *Do not go gentle into that good night*, in which a line reads "Rage, rage against the dying of the light" (Barber 2007: 298). Stevens' 'rage for order' is but only the very beginning of understanding the impulse to collect objects. In some way, it is also a way in which one immortalizes the self – as the collector leaves behind a legacy, and a collection in which the narrative was constructed by them: their own mark on history and culture.

In formulating an understanding the term that I use repeatedly, 'private collector', it is necessary to define the usage of the word private. It is important to problematize this term, one which is ambiguous in relation to the concept of the public. I have repeatedly contrasted the two in my writing thus far, comparing between a private realm and a public realm, and I will refer to the writing of Michael Warner for a greater understanding of what it means for something the be either private or public, or for something to fall within both realms. There are many levels of application of the terms, and especially with the comparisons, I have to make between international 'private' and public collections, and South African collections. The mere fact that there is information on and access to that information about 'private' international collections leads one to conclude that those collections are in some form already in the public sphere, and in some sense a form of accessible knowledge. What is 'private' or what is 'public' is descriptive of whether something is accessible or not. My working definition of a 'private' collector is one that collects for enjoyment and value of art objects in her own environment. This collection may be seen by guests or people that visit the environment in which these objects are situated, but the viewing is accessible only to a small and select group of people. These people are more often than not a group too limited to be defined as a public.

Michael Warner (2002) elucidates the difference between the public and private spheres in a clear, concise list in his essay *Public and Private*. The definitions of 'public' that he outlines are those that are important for the privately owned artwork to enter into in order to be taken as accessible. All of these definitions or placements have a corresponding sense of the private, but are not important to my meaning, as it is the movement from the private – a rather self explanatory term – to the public, which is a much more complex concept. This motion from private to public is my focus, placing much greater importance on the latter, as it is that which would make the difference in access to art and in understanding history in new ways.

Warner defines what is public thus: "open to everyone, accessible [in exchange for] for money, political, national or popular, international or universal, in physical view of others, outside of the home, circulated in print or electronic media, known widely, acknowledged and explicit" (Warner 2002: 29). In any number of these contexts, it is possible and, I believe necessary, for private collectors to frame their works, providing accessibility. According to Warner (2002: 67), a public "exists *by virtue of being addressed*" [Warner's emphasis] which would mean for our 'art public' that if there is no access to art, there will be no art public, as the public is not being addressed. Aside from ascribing to and belonging to certain publics themselves, do collectors create publics for certain texts, by simply acknowledging them? Thornton (2009: xiv) agrees that "art fosters quick-forming imagined communities." A public "must first of all have some way of organizing itself as a body and of being addressed in discourse, and not just any way of defining the totality will do, "it must be organized by something other than the state" (Warner, 2002: 68). Private collectors fill this definition of a self-organized public but they do not necessarily constitute a coherent body, or a collective body, as they operate on an individual basis. By addressing private

collectors in this text, I am addressing this imagined public in discourse, and I am thereby imagining the distinctions that define this collecting public into being. When one speaks of a public, it seems like an unquantifiable entity: of whom does one speak when one refers to 'the public' or 'the public sphere'? The 'public' that I refer to is one that already exists as Labuscagne has defined it, but also refers to a public that could potentially be called into being through the actions of the art collectors and other actors in the already constituted art public. The public that I would like to be called into being is one similar to the publics that exist around institutions like the Tate Britain, or the MoMA in New York – publics that cannot necessary be defined as a group other than that they are interested in and support the arts. If there were a bigger culture of art in this country, and institutions better supported it, it would be entirely possible that greater art publics would constitute themselves. It is a pre-supposition that South African art collectors could have a great hand in imagining this public by, amongst other things, making the works in their collections more accessible.

The idea that a greater accessibility and presence of fine art would make more people gain interest in the sphere is captured by Warner's (2002: 134-135) discussion of popular culture as follows:

> People know what they want because they know what other people want. In other words, they embrace the idiom that in its social currency promises them the widest possible belonging. Commodity culture intensifies this desire and distorts it [...] he sees the way the expansiveness of mass circulation affects and distorts a desire for social membership [...] Ideas of the good – and, in this case, the beautiful as well – are distorted in ways that escape nearly everyone's attention, because they have been silently adjusted to conform to an image of the mass (Warner 2002:135).

These ideas infer what it means to 'write history', namely that this process is a normalization, and an acceptance of style that makes something relevant to mass culture and therefore relevant to history. It is much the same with art, as that which gains most exposure embeds itself most firmly in the 'mass consciousness' and therefore becomes cultural artefact. Warner (2002: 135) refers to the writing of Adorno and his take on the way in which something becomes part of popular culture in the following paragraph:

> Evaluation depends on distribution; the wider it circulates, the better it must be. The false aesthetic of transparency, in other words, has a powerful social effect. One result is that it will naturally privilege the majority over less familiar views. Equally

> important to Adorno is that it will distort the judgement of the majority itself, precisely qua majority. The tastes and ideas that become those of the majority do so because people need to believe that their tastes and ideas will be widely shared. The result is a kind of invisible power for dominant forms, even though people who make these normalizing judgments of taste do so not to exercise power, but simply to fit in. Adorno implies, with pathos, that people rely on expressions that are pre-certified for them as common currency out of a kind of defensiveness; they are alienated from the labor of judgement.

This way of thinking does not necessarily apply to the collectors of art themselves, although in many cases it may, but perhaps in some ways to the acceptance of artworks or to an artist's work into mass culture that is reproduced in books, the media, other works of art, etc. It does however have some form of truth and legitimacy in the way which collectors influence one another and the market through buying certain works and popularizing the artists who made them, by creating a consequent social and economic demand for their work.

It is also important to the way in which collectors influence the writing of history. In being pioneers, buying new artists' works, and bringing the work into the public sphere or into the cultural and economic phenomenon of the art market, they manifest those artists as important and reinforce their importance through continued support. When considering Adorno's argument in context, the more exposure an artist gets, the more he becomes a part of cultural significance and it's a self-reinforcing popularization. This is due to the fact that as collectors amass a body of work, so they will offer it to museums for display or place works in auctions, and so the work becomes a part of the public consciousness and part of cultural heritage or importance. When something gains value, it can remain something of value and therefore it carries the possibility to remain historically relevant. This is one of the reasons public access to the art produced and collected in South Africa is imperative, as the inaccessibility perhaps limits the growth of the market substantially.

To determine the impact that collectors have on the art public and the art market, it is important to take a look at highly visible collectors. The following chapter deals extensively with international collectors and their influence in their own countries and abroad. It also looks at the role of art fairs, galleries and other international institutions and the way in which they are inextricable from an examination of art collectors.

CHAPTER 3

"The best situation in the art world – by far – is to be a collector."

Philippe Ségalot (Thornton, 2009: 10)

In this chapter, I will elucidate the role that collectors and institutions play in the formation art history by comparing South African players to international ones. Key texts in the discussion include *Seven Days in the Art World* by Sarah Thornton (2009), *Collecting Contemporary* by Adam Lindemann (2006), texts about collections, such as the RADAR exhibition catalogue, and about collectors, such as *My Name is Charles Saatchi and I am an Artoholic* by Charles Saatchi (2002). I will address several themes that I have found to be prevalent in the discussion of art collectors, which include amongst others, the role that *taste* plays in collecting, different 'types' of collectors, the variety of motivations for collecting and the way in which these factors can ultimately play a role in determining the value of these items within the marketplace, and historically in discourse.

Sarah Thornton's *Seven Days in the Art World* (2009) discusses different types of collectors, their reasons for collecting, forms of ascribing value, contributions and visibility extensively, as does Adam Lindemann in his work *Collecting Contemporary Art* (2006). Lindemann interviews a number of international participants from different areas of the art world, asking them many questions relevant for use as comparison in the South African art market. I will quote from these two volumes extensively as I find examples of contributions that collectors are making or have made for comparison to the ways in which South African collectors contribute to the public sphere. My use of the term 'public sphere' is taken to mean any manner in which works of art have become accessible: publications, exhibitions, donations, blogs, loans, *etc*. Collectors are somewhat overlooked in many of the texts that discuss the art market, but there is a great amount of evidence indicating that collectors are the gravitational centre of what remains relevant in the art world over the years. I argue here that circulation is beyond the mere influence of the critics and curators visible in the determinations of value, and that a huge factor influencing the tides of value – financially and culturally – is that of the private art collector.. This chapter will discuss the way in which collectors determine access and visibility of the art they collect.

The texts that I discuss here concern contemporary art, and contemporary collections abroad. These texts, although they do not discuss many works that are already part of the art historical canon, are an indication of what work is relevant today and in the last ten or twenty years. These texts are themselves evidence of how art becomes inserted into history, and are comparable to the way in which South African contemporary collectors are written about, or conversely,

ignored by the literature. When even the most prominent contemporary art collector in the country, Gordon Schachat, has not yet published material about his collection, it is obvious that contemporary South African collections are not moving into the public in the same ways that international contemporary collections are. The depth of contribution that international collectors make, and that has been made, is incomparable to a country with as small a collecting base as South Africa, and it may be unfair to assume that there should be the same scale of contribution from South African collectors. South African collectors work on a completely different financial scale to many of the international collectors that have opened their own institutions or donated entire collections to public archives. Through the use of comparison, I intend rather to draw attention to what South African collectors can and already do to promote art's visibility and accessibility in the country, in the absence of even a dedicated museum of contemporary art.

Defining Characteristics of the Art Collector

Collectors of art are not an isolated factor in the production of what is canonized as relevant. The different elements of the art market are so inextricably entwined that one cannot discuss any of the elements in complete isolation. The other players in the art market are very important and influential as well. One must understand collectors and the way in which they fit into the art market to understand what their role is, and the impact that they have. Art collectors are influenced by one another's decisions as much as they are influenced by the opinions of the gallerists that they buy work from habitually. Such is a delicate game played between the collector and the dealer. The endgame is a delicate procedure of coming to an agreement that settles the parties involved on a particular work. It is not as simple for a dealer as walking through an exhibition exclaiming that every picture is magnificent, and most South African gallerists are hanging works that they aren't always particularly enamoured with, but know that they will be able 'to move'. Collectors trust dealers as deeply as they distrust them, and they can develop deep friendships over the years – something that is in favour of both parties. Sometimes it simply takes reference to another client to swing a deal. This hook is not just successful because of the competitive collecting environment, or because collectors attempt to outdo one another, but because the collector in negotiations admires another's collection and trusts his opinion. Of course, the gallerist has to maintain discretion in this regard. The role that collectors and gallerists play in a simultaneous formation of the canon is undeniable – especially considering how few contemporary art galleries existed until quite recently. It may not even be as complicated as that, as simply by stocking certain works and not others, gallerists are determining, through a process of their own selection and curatorship, what enters into the public domain. Thornton (2009: 155) asks Tim Griffin, *Artforum*'s editor in chief how he would describe the influence of *Artforum*. He answers, "There's an argument out there that once upon a time the critic led the dealers led the collector, whereas now, supposedly, the collector leads the dealer leads the critic. You'd be a fool to argue that the landscape hasn't changed…" Griffin,

among others, believes that it is the collector that is the determining factor in what becomes relevant.

Taste is one of the foremost markers in what distinguishes a serious collector to dealers. Taste is one of the first contributors to which art will become relevant because taste determines what is supported and what is remembered. Although ostensibly a subjective or personal thing, there are accepted standards that determine what is considered 'tasteful'. It is difficult to define exactly what 'taste' is, but the idea emerges in several instances in Thornton's interviews. Bourdieu is also a theorist that has dealt with taste and aesthetic distinctions that people make and how it is based on perceived class differences in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1987). This snobbery in every decision is made by people, especially that of the middle classes, according to Bourdieu, is a determining factor in trends and all of our choices. In the art world 'good taste' is referred to as 'having a good eye'. "For Bourdieu (1993: 9), the specific economy of the cultural field is based on a particular form of *belief* concerning what constitutes a cultural (e.g. literary, artistic) work and its aesthetic or social value." Some believe it is something that is naturally occurring and can be trained but can't be developed, whereas others believe it is something that one can learn. Thornton cites Poe, who states that "you have to have an eye – a savantish ability to recognize work that is symptomatic of an artist with real intelligence, originality and drive" (cited in Thornton, 2009: 97). I believe that an 'eye' is something that is instinctive, but that it is also something supported by a lifetime of art education, art viewing, and museum visits, in other words, something that is based on exposure to convention. Thornton (2009: 97) not only quotes Jeff Poe of Blum & Poe commercial art gallery, but also claims that "dealers and collectors usually revere a 'good eye'". This concept of the 'good eye' and taste are determining factors in what art survives, and what flourishes. Dealers, critics, auctioneers, academics and collectors are all arbiters of taste, and they base it on their bodies of acquired knowledge, their social standing (as experts) and they are exerting superiority. Perhaps they do, but their taste is as much based on tastemakers before them and contemporary taste-makers around them as it is based on their education or experience.

Sarah Thornton (2009: xiii) writes in the introduction to her text that the contemporary art world is "structured around nebulous and often contradictory hierarchies of fame, credibility, imagined historical importance, institutional affiliation, education, perceived intelligence, wealth, and attributes such as the size of one's collection." Thornton furthermore quotes Josh Baer on the subject, where he claims that "art makes people feel important. One feels very privileged, is made to feel privileged to be included in the 'inner-sanctum' in the art world. It is seemingly impenetrable. There is no way to 'buy' oneself into the social group – it is only when your collection is deemed relevant or good enough that one is included, it seems" (Thornton, 2009: 15). It is also when one's knowledge is deemed sufficient or one's taste seems 'correct' that there is possibility of penetration – but even so, the general snobbery in the art-world may prevent one from entering the inner circles. Thornton refers to a couple of collectors called Don and Mera

Rubell several times who are unaffectionately "referred to as 'the Rubbels'" (2009: 82) by dealers and other collectors because of their "unostentatious" (2009: 82) appearance. Mera says, "Sometimes [she's] embarrassed to identify [herself] as a collector. It's about being rich, privileged, and powerful." Lindemann (2006: 142) quotes Philippe Ségalot on this same matter, who on the other hand states that "when you collect contemporary art you don't only *buy* [author's emphasis] works, you buy a way of life, you buy your way into all of these events. When you buy a contemporary artwork, you *belong* [author's emphasis]; you become part of a club. It's a lifestyle."

Collectors do not always tend to see their activities as taste making or necessarily consider themselves to have a 'good eye'. I argue that for them, it is ultimately about fulfilling a primal urge that they cannot repress, and fulfilling a personal vision. Artist David Muller (Thornton 2009: 97) says, "I prefer the expression stink eye, which is when someone always picks the wrong thing. I am skeptical of the tastemaker stance. It is fortune telling, trying to recognize what will be significant before it is." People are constantly ascribing value to objects that have not yet accrued value in any traditional sense, but it does not mean that it is in any way a method of fortune telling. People hope that what they invest in, whether financially or emotionally, will accrue value in the form of cultural capital and as a fungible asset, but having an 'eye' is something that is much more complex than simply an attempt to predict the future. Even those with an 'eye' can collect objects that do not accrue value in any way over time, but because those objects have not become important, they do not necessarily surface and the majority of people do not find out about. For example, Saatchi's hypothetical 'stink eye' moments may never become known in any public forums. In an interview with Lindemann (2006: 263), Glen Lowry, the Director of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, offers a perspective on taste or the vision of a collector he says "it just depends what you want to focus on, on whether your insight is greater than anybody else's, because building a collection is highly competitive. You're competing not only with other collectors, but you're competing with other possible choices you could have made." But the Rubells, on the other hand state that "'when you first start collecting, you're intensely competitive, but eventually you learn two things,' explains Don. 'First, if an artist is only going to make one good work then there is no sense in fighting over it. Second, a collection is a personal vision. No one can steal your vision'" (Thornton, 2009: 83).

Although, some collectors do have an uncanny way of finding artists that are absolutely phenomenal, and this must be attributed to something, even if a 'good eye' is a very simple manner of saying educated and informed decision-making. Jeffrey Deitch, a major New York art dealer, answers Adam Lindemann's (2006: 57) question about what makes a great collector by saying that "it's a confidence created when your eye and your background converge, and you say, 'That's it!'" Deitch also says, in relation to both the 'good eye' and otherwise that

> some collectors approach it in a very intuitive, un-intellectual way. If they like something and don't even get into the analysis, they can have a great collection just because they bring their emotion and their intuition into it. Others are really analytical, and they want to get every record and book and analyze thing backwards and forwards, and that can also be a great collection. Of course, both of those approaches can end up with a terrible collection (Lindemann, 2006: 57).

Peter Brandt, a pioneer collector, has an adverse reaction to what is acknowledged as tasteful and pulls in the opposite direction to the critics. Lindemann (2006: 156-157) quotes Brandt thus:

> I pay attention (to art reviews and media): If people are critically against somebody, that's a sign to me that there's some interest there, that there's an interesting statement there. If I hear somebody's getting really bad reviews, that sometimes attracts me because historically, many artists have gotten very bad reviews. I talk to a lot of artists and I pay a lot of attention to them, I always have.

That's one way to do it. Brandt has bought works like Maurizio Cattelan's horse, *The Ballad of Trotsky,* 1996 that he couldn't actually hang anywhere (Lindemann, 2006: 157). The logistics that inform taste or at least purchases can be thus inhibited by logistics. Contemporary mediums that are not part of the traditional art canon, like new media or installation for instance, are mediums that have found little traction in the South African market, as the collectors here are mostly collecting works to place in their houses. About painters, Thornton (2009: 64) attributes "their success […] to […] the market's rapacious appetite for the two-dimensional, easily domesticated medium." There are few investors for different types of projects or mediums that are difficult to house, install or transport. Few collectors that do not have several immediate conveniences in place to handle large scale work or non-traditional medium work collect such types of art. Conveniences include space, institutions at hand, be it their own or willing recipients, which allow for the collection of large land-art or installation works that have a complicated installation process or may do something detrimental to the value of the work, such as decompose over time. The ease of owning a small painting or sculpture is a pertinent determining factor in market success. Even reasonably small scale collectors, assuming that these are people in the middle to high income brackets, are privileged in South Africa to have space, gardens, often more than one property, so it is a question as to why the market for very large works is so small in South Africa, considering the logistical feasibilities of display. South African Contemporary Art gallerist Michael Stevenson is highly concerned with the accessibility of work to the public beyond the patron and has been known to say that he has turned down the sale of certain works because of

their perceived cultural importance, and because he did not want the work to disappear from public access. Thornton (2009: 104) notes "for artists who don't make easily retailed commodities – because they're ephemeral, invisible, or purely conceptual – public institutions are often the most important patrons." The more investment there is in the local institution, the more powerful and stable the institution is, and the more likely the institution is to spend money on art.

Lindemann (2006: 194) describes Bernardo Paz as "a leading Latin American collector and creator of the Contemporary Art Centre Inhotim (CACI), a continuously evolving garden/art space in Brazil, where Contemporary Art exists in an intimate relationship with nature." In answer to Lindemann's (2006: 195) question about how to choose artists to buy, Paz responds,

> I am specifically interested in artists who have ideas that go beyond what a usual private or institutional collection can contain. I am interested in providing an environment where artists can dream their biggest dreams, and have the opportunity of juxtaposing their work within a natural environment – where they can experience art under a stimulus that is different from the context of a museum, or gallery, or home.

A similar South African initiative is the Nirox Foundation run by Benji Liebmann. This property has been dedicated to the creation and display of art in an architecturally constructed landscape of rolling knolls, bodies of water and indigenous plantation. This space is used for exhibitions of large sculptural works that require space. The space is situated in the Cradle of Humankind, approximately an hour north west of Johannesburg, and is only open to the public very selectively. Although the degree of public access is extremely limited, and the installations are not all permanent features as would be characteristic of an institution like CACI, it is a promising initiative, creating an opportunity for large-scale works to be exhibited in a large, open space locally.

A public space that facilitates the exhibition of art is the large Pieter Roos Park in Parktown, Johannesburg across from the Wits School of Education Campus (formerly known as the Johannesburg College of Education). It contains several Edoardo Villa sculptures that have called the park home for decades. In Cape Town the gardens adjacent to the Iziko National Gallery also exhibit larger sculptural works permanently. Saatchi writes on this subject that

> installation art like Richard Wilson's oil room is only buyable if you've got somewhere to exhibit it. I was always in awe of Dia[9] for making so many earth works and site-specific installations possible; that is the exception – a collector whose significance survives. In short, sometimes you have to buy art that will have no value to anyone but you, because you like it and believe in it. The collector I have always admired most, Count Panza di Biumo, was commissioning large installations by Carl Andre, Donald Judd and Dan Flavin at a time when nobody but a few other oddballs like me were interested (Saatchi, 2002: 28).

One may imagine that these difficulties and prejudices are limited to 'new media' but photography also seemed to suffer from being undervalued. "Michael Wilson, a producer of the James Bond films, owns one of the largest private collections of photography in the world. He says that museums such as Tate, which for years excluded photography from contemporary art exhibits, have now validated it. Gapper writes, "'Art is basically what a bunch of collectors and curators say it is, there is no getting around that,' he says with a chuckle" (2010: 2).

My favourite statement that I have encountered on the topic of taste is what New York art consultant Sanford Heller tells Adam Lindemann (2006: 138). "There's got to be an attitude of 'what the fuck' in the collection: I like it; I don't care what anyone else thinks. I like to see the identity of the collector, the sense of humour, the wit, the characteristics – that's what separates the good from the great." This carefree element is something that characterizes many pioneer contemporary collectors like Charles Saatchi who seems to be able to assemble some of the most interesting, most recently emerged artists with the greatest potential. Saatchi (2002: 52) states that, "For me, and for people with good eyes who actually enjoy looking at art, nothing is as uplifting as standing before a great painting, whether it was painted in 1505 or last Tuesday." A question posed to Saatchi (2002: 22) in his Q&A *My name is Charles Saatchi and I am an Artoholic*, "Are you ever concerned about your influence on taste, when it comes to contemporary British art? Does it worry you that your purchases (or sales) have an impact on the market? Or is this something you enjoy?" he answers by saying, "I never think too much about the market. I don't mind paying three or four times the market value of a work I really want. Just ask the auction houses. As far as taste is concerned, I primarily buy art in order to show it off. So it's important for me that the public respond to it and contemporary art in general." As someone who has been so clearly influential on the taste of contemporary galleries, art prizes, museums, collectors, auction houses and the general public, he can be seen to evade the question about taste here. It is

[9] "Established in 1974, Dia Art Foundation is internationally recognized as one of the world's most influential contemporary art institutions. Dia's founders, Heiner Friedrich and Philippa de Menil, wished to extend the boundaries of the traditional museum to respond to the needs of the generation of artists whose work matured and became prominent during the 1960s and 1970s. Ever since, Dia's mission has been to commission, support, and present site-specific long-term installations and single-artists exhibitions to the public." (diaart.org.)

clear that this is a question that he does not want to answer, as, it seems, it might be detrimental to the currency of his own perceived taste. It is imperative to understand the way in which taste informs collecting,[10] as "great works do not just arise; They are made – not just by artists and their assistants but also by the dealers, curators, critics, and collectors who 'support' the work" (Thornton 2009: xiv).

There is a renewed attempt to define the collectors and to anticipate the type of work it is they are interested in, and although many of them do have very specific trends in their collections, they are impossible to assess fully as a group. Nonetheless, I will attempt to examine the different types of collectors that one finds in the art world. A question posed to Charles Saatchi that links to the previous paragraph concerning his taste speaks volumes about the attempt that is made to define the collector as a one-dimensional creature. Someone asks Saatchi (2002: 49) about how his being an advertising executive has influenced his method of collecting. The conversation proceeds as recorded below:

> The concerns of an advertising executive centre upon novelty, immediacy of impact, and relevance to the target market… these are qualities that have charecterised your collection. The concerns of the serious collector centre upon quality, the capacity to transcend time, high levels of skill and historical significance. To what degree do you feel these apparently divergent criteria to be in conflict?" To this he responds, "The 'adman' theory is very appealing, very popular with commentators. But the snobbery of those who think an interest in art is the province of gentle souls of rarefied sensibility never fails to entertain. Lord forbid that anyone in 'trade' should enter the hallowed portals of the aesthete. I liked working in advertising, but don't believe my taste in art, such as it is, was entirely formed by TV commercials. And I don't feel especially conflicted enjoying a Mantegna one day, a Carl Andre the next day and a student work the next.

Saatchi also aptly frames the art world's take on taste and its snobbery and what a collector is expected to be. There is old-world assumption that collectors of fine art are of the upper echelons of taste and stature in society, as perhaps the British class system would exemplify. Bourdieu has this to say on the subject:

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[10] Tretchikoff is a valid example, where his images that are constantly in the public sphere, and therefore an artist that has, regardless of its lack of being considered 'high art' or 'historically/stylistically important', been cemented in the public understanding and appreciation of art.

> By the same token, aesthetic value, itself socially constituted, is radically contingent on a very complex and constantly changing set of circumstances involving multiple social and institutional factors. Literature, art and their respective producers do not exist independently of a complex institutional framework, which authorizes, enables, empowers and legitimizes them. This framework must be incorporated into any analysis that pretends to provide a thorough understanding of cultural goods and practices (1993: 10).

Anyone can be an art collector today, and especially in the market that supports art as a reasonably reliable investment, one gets all sorts of collectors in the market ranging from the super-wealthy to the struggling collector that pays off a piece over months or years. One gets collectors that are purely speculators, to the opposite end of the spectrum, there are collectors that don't care what something is worth for the most part, and will pay ridiculous amounts of money that they may never see a return on purely for the sake of owning the picture to look at and love every day. The question to Saatchi frames quite nicely the traditional expectations and stigma surrounding what is deemed a 'serious collector'. He has turned the tables on the expectation to a large degree, as instead of collecting historically significant pieces, he has collected pieces that have become historically significant as a result of his purchases. Events or objects become important signifiers when the same event or object affects many people's lives in some way. Art becomes of historical value when it has a public presence, and subsequently gains importance due to its supposed cultural value, which it has accrued partly through exposure. One must venture to ask: In the act of displaying a private collection in public, does the collector lend greater significance to artworks? It is quite evident that Saatchi, through the act of public display, has given great importance and significantly influenced the market value of work in a way otherwise not possible. When one considers the figures and the number of people who view work in museums like the Tate Britain or the MoMA it substantiates the concept that art becomes part of a collective experience and a part of public memory, therefore becomes imbued with layers of cultural and personal meaning. Could pieces, inversely, be rendered meaningless if they remain private?

Julia Peyton-Jones, the Director of the Serpentine Gallery in London, a publicly funded institution, has a completely different view to that of Saatchi's, and many other collectors. Lindemann (2006: 270) quotes her: "I'm fascinated particularly because as I've said, here it's less usual. I'm fascinated by people who buy to own, and that whole idea of ownership. I don't have that. I think it's a special gene, this desire for ownership. I'm fascinated by it as a principal, because it's foreign to me." Saatchi (2002: 101) is questioned extensively about his reasons for collecting and habits, and is asked whether it was a means of decoration when he first started collecting, to

which he responds: "Yes and No. I had a few bits and pieces and hung them on the walls, but once you have bought something that doesn't fit in your home, and has to be stored in an art depot, you're officially an art collector." Jeffrey Deitch (Lindemann, 2006: 54) considers the issue differently to Saatchi. In reference to the speculators of the 1980s, where art was going straight into storage, a pertinent comparison to the art bubble that was at its height in the mid 2000s, he states with conviction that "when [art] goes on the walls of people's homes, that's a solid market." It's a sustainable market with a sustainable value system, something quite unlike the value system that comes into being during a 'bubble'. As is evident, when the economy collapsed in 2008 as it did in the 1980s, the investment portfolio-driven value bubbles do not last. Art does not lose its value entirely when the market collapses, prices remain reasonably stable, but artworks do not universally maintain their ability to fetch the same prices. People do not stop buying art during economic trouble, as it is still a solid investment, but fewer people have the money to spend on art and drive prices up, and thus the market stabilizes.

Ownership of Artwork

The philosophy and connotations concerning ownership are pertinent here. One imagines ownership a luxury of privilege. Art, in its physical manifestation, can be owned, possessed, hung on one's wall, but an idea is something that cannot be owned. It can be paid for, but should one share that idea, there is no way of exerting ownership over it. An idea can travel immeasurable distances in the form of publication or verbally, and be shared repeatedly once it has entered the public domain. Lindemann (2006: 258) quotes Alanna Heiss, the founder and director or the MoMA affiliate P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Centre, who discusses ownership of art. Her point of view is a fresh contrast to the way in which Saatchi, other collectors and most of the art world players view ownership. She states:

> At no point in my life have I ever bought a piece of work, at no point have I ever sold a piece of art. I'm a hard case, because for me, money and art have never matched up in a significant way. I don't regard money for art as immoral I just have never been able to make these two quality-of-judgement assessments line up. I have no register in my mind that equates the cost of the work with the value of the work […] That's a dangerous thing for collectors. Because then you're thinking quantitatively – to me that destroys the purpose of why you would own something. You own something because you're protecting it, or because it is mysterious. You own a piece of your culture, you own a piece of your heart, and you own a piece of your generation or society. You own something that means something to you in an indefinable way. So the very fact of ownership is usually not really possible.

Heiss touches upon many of the reasons that collectors do accumulate works, but expresses that ownership is a lot more puzzling than might be assumed. Art is something that transcends merely being an object and often encapsulates ideas or emotions that are transferred to the viewer, and give them a share in that work of art, regardless of whether they 'own' it. Although Saatchi has a completely different take to that of Heiss, he also doesn't view art merely as a financial investment, but displays a true love for art. "The more you like art, the more art you like. So I find it easy to buy lots of it, and seeing art as an investment would take away all the fun" (Saatchi, 2002: 24 – 25).

Ownership of art is a basis from which to distribute and to share art. Because there are so many more members of the general public that are unable to collect art, I argue that the small contingent that are able to do so, should also feel some sense of responsibility to share their accumulations. Take Gordon Schachat, for example: although he has not placed his collection in publicly accessible places, he has placed a number of Edoardo Villa works on the premises of St. John's College in Johannesburg for a number of years, so that the youth attending the school are exposed to the sculptures. He clearly intends to share his collection selectively with the public. This exposure is not a full transferal into the public domain, however, as St John's College is a private school accessible only to a very small group of people. It may constitute an imagined public of scholars attending the school, alumni, parents and otherwise affiliated individuals, but it is not open to the general public as defined here. St John's have published, in their private capacity, a document[11] relating to the exhibition with a short essay written about the artist by South African artist Karel Nel and Jeannine Howse, one of Schachat's permanently employed curators. This means that indeed a small number of works from his collection have been published with his permission, but not by him. What is important from the point of view if an imagined public is that this document is accessible to anyone who can access a computer with an internet connection. Schachat also facilitated an exhibition of Edoardo Villa sculptures at Hoërskool Helpmekaar, once again to a very small and limited number of people for which a very limited number of catalogues were issued.

The Villa retrospective publication *Villa at 90* (2005) that is widely available in this country is a much better example of access to that information, and there are many Schachat owned works in the book. It is a keen example of private works in South Africa entering the public domain and becoming accessible. This book is one that should be accessible to almost anyone in the greater Johannesburg area, because the Johannesburg Art Gallery and several other galleries including The Goodman Gallery, The Everard Read Gallery, The Stevenson Gallery, Gallery MOMO, David Krut, SMAC Gallery and Johans Borman, have copies in their personal libraries. Some of them also have copies of the book for sale should one wish to purchase it.

[11]Retrieved from: http://www.stjohnscollege.co.za/pdfs/events/2011-06_edoardoVilla.pdf (Accessed November, 2011)

Saatchi (2002: 27) ventures to say that his home collection is nothing like that of his displayed collection because his "house is a mess, but any day now we'll get round to hanging some of the stacks of pictures sitting on the floor." Running out of wall space is something I know well from my father's own collection, and stacks of pictures or boxes containing antiques slowly accumulating in the less-frequented passages of the house are a common feature in houses my family has owned. Serious collectors are hoarders by nature, whether they hoard systematically or with focus, it is still a form of hoarding, and lack of display space or lack of money will hardly stop a 'true' collector. It is probably a valuable lesson that if you love something enough that you have to have it, there is always a way to make room for it in your financial portfolio. From my personal experience over the years, most artists or galleries are very happy for a purchased work to be paid off over a mutually agreed period. Galleries and artists would rather gain a regular client who pays small sums regularly, than not gain the client at all. Perhaps this is something that stops people, particularly South Africans who are interested in art but cannot pay lump sums of R50 000 or more for a piece, from collecting in earnest. Artists, in their personal capacity and often behind a gallery's back, will sell works to collectors who visit them privately for a greatly discounted price and will allow more lenient periods of repayments than galleries. I cannot mention any examples, for fear of jeopardizing any artist's relationship with their supporting galleries, but I have not met one yet that does not do this for a friend or a special client. It is safe to say that this is a standard practice in the art world. Philippe Ségalot promotes the purchase of works beyond one's means, or work that is difficult to acquire, as he

> believes that the really great collectors are the ones who suffer when they buy a work that is expensive for them, and it strikes any level, whether you are Mr. Pinault or whether you are a young guy who has just finished school and started collecting. I think that the most challenging, demanding purchases turn out very often to be the best ones (Lindemann, 2006: 144).

Collectors love to have special relationships with the artists who they support. A personal relationship seems to bring greater meaning to the collection of the work, as well as a much greater love and understanding of how the work is developed. Buying work from an artist that one knows can affirm whether one really enjoys or understands the artist's vision, and whether it matches your own vision as a collector. Thornton (2009: 83-84) writes about the way that serious collectors like the Rubells go about collecting and elucidates their process, thus:

> Although their collection includes work from the 1960s, the family is particularly passionate about 'emergent' art, a term that is indicative of changing times […] For the Rubells nothing gives more pleasure than being there first. They enjoy being the first

> collectors to visit an artist's studio, the first to buy work, and the first to exhibit it. As Mera explains earnestly, 'With young artists, you find the greatest purity. When you buy from the first or second show, you're inside the confidence-building, the identity-building of an artist. It's not just about buying a piece. It's about buying into someone's life and where they are going with it. It's a mutual commitment, which is pretty intense'.

Everyone in the art game wants to be able to claim the discovery of a great artist. Everyone wants to find the 'next' Michel Basquiat or Damien Hirst. Pioneering collectors are pivotal to the emergence of artists, as their financial, and at times emotional support of the artist, can be vital in guaranteeing success or recognition. Often galleries play the role of the patron, supporting an artist financially or otherwise, but sometimes pioneering collectors get there before the galleries do, often during a the period of most uncertainty for an artist who has no formal gallery affiliation and is in between training and establishing a career. Thornton (2009: 88) further cites Don Rubell, who explains, "We meet the vast majority of the artists, because when you're acquiring young work, you can't just judge it by the art alone. You have to judge it by the character of the person making it." His wife, Mera adds that, "occasionally meeting an artist destroys the art. You almost don't trust it. You think that what you're seeing in the work is an accident." Don concludes, "What we're looking for is integrity." Collectors that have focus are considered to have a more respectable way of collecting than the speculator or the trawler's methods collection. The collections of the latter collectors tend to exhibit no more than a single piece from every artist, and can have a chaotic, unrefined feel. Serious collectors that are in it for the love of art tend to have favourite artists and will often have a large body of work from a particular artist. This also shows evidence of 'falling in love', as the Rubells (Thornton, 2009: 88) say, of commitment, and of believing that the artist's work is worth adding to one's collection.

Fred Scott, a South African collector of historical and contemporary art, is an example of a collector who crosses over from merely accumulating to aiding the advancement of his artists. Samson Mnisi's exhibition at the University of Johannesburg Art Gallery, which was sponsored by Scott, is an example of a collector funding and curating a solo exhibition, from the materials used for the works themselves, to covering all the other costs. Scott seems to promote artists that he believes in, and commits himself in every capacity he is able. Scott curated the Braam Kruger retrospective, also at the University of Johannesburg Art Gallery, as well as being involved in the curating of several group shows over the years. He is a collector that initially became involved in the valuation of work for South African auction house Stephan Welz & Co., and has now become a director at the company. He has written several art-related articles for print as well as passages for catalogues.

Saatchi (2002: 67) chats about international collectors, and his description sounds quite like the contingent of people in South Africa who can afford it but, in contrast, do not buy art but buy flashy cars and splash out on curtains from interior decorators instead (Labuscagne, 2010: 83). Saatchi writes:

> However suspect their motivation, however social-climbing their agenda, however vacuous their interest in decorating their walls, I am beguiled by the fact that rich folk everywhere now choose to collect contemporary art rather than racehorses, vintage cars, jewellery or yachts. Without them, the art world would be run by the State, in a utopian world of apparatchik-approved, Culture Ministry-sanctioned art. So if I had to choose between Mr. and Mrs. Goldfarb's choice of art or some bureaucrat who would otherwise be producing VAT forms, I'll take the Goldfarbs. Anyway, some collectors I've met are just plain delightful, bounding with enough energy and enthusiasm to brighten your day (2002: 67).

Saatchi, who is far from a purist or a collector that deals in snobbery, defends the prerogative of those collectors who collects only for investment purposes.

Much of the art world tends to despise collectors, claiming that they think are speculators who are just going to participate in what is known as the 'flipping' phenomenon, which is when works are bought from a gallery, and sold on an auction very soon afterwards to make a profit. This angers and frustrates art world players, as they are trying to keep transactions transparent and to avoid the art market operating like the stock market, as they are dealing with artists' careers and cultural capital, not merely stocks or bonds. This 'flipping' is less likely to be able to happen in a primary market. Primary markets are those in which the artists have a direct relationship with the gallery taking in or exhibiting their work as it is being produced. Works of art are less expensive on the primary market, so there is great potential for high returns, as well as the chance of discounts to loyal customers. It is almost always possible to organize a discount from a gallery, as they often include the potential for discount in their prices. Galleries of the sort also expect a certain conduct from clients, and during the bubble would refuse to sell work to collectors whose collections were not deemed important enough for an artist's career, or would not sell to collectors who did not promise the work to institutions. It was a sellers' market in the mid-2000s, as the demand greatly exceeded the supply of work. Galleries also try to establish 'buy-back' policies in which the client agrees, whether verbally or by contract, to offer a work back to the gallery before selling it anywhere else. All of these measures guard against the 'flipping' phenomenon that happens frequently in the secondary market.

I discuss the flipping phenomenon because of the damage it can do to an artist's market, and a work's relevance to the canon. Collectors, or more often speculators, buy in the secondary market and soon afterwards place the works on auction hoping to make a quick profit. When a work appears in the market too frequently it can end up with a reputation of being an unpopular or bad piece, a stigma that can be attached to a piece permanently. This can devalue a work considerably, and if this happens to a large body of an artist's work, the artist can be rendered valueless, in a worst-case scenario. I've seen this happen to several works that fall into the South African historical canon. This happened to a Pierneef landscape that I sold from the commercial gallery at which I worked, as no more than two months after the sale it was up for auction. It is disappointing, and the work did not sell at the auction because the collector was trying to make a profit on a work bought at market value, which had been on display for months, and with a considerable discount. The collector clearly did not sell a work that many Pierneef collectors would have seen hanging in the gallery in question, as the collector had most likely been asking more than anyone was willing to pay for it on auction, in addition to the other contributing factors. The market for this particular work may have been damaged somewhat, regardless of its reputable provenance. Philip Mould's (2011: 69) opening paragraph of his second chapter in *Sleuth* rather dramatically, but aptly, illustrates my point:

> A number of the lots from the Los Angeles art sale looked grimly familiar. Call it trade snobbery or self-preservation, but when a portrait that has previously failed to sell returns to the saleroom it starts to look sickly in the eyes of the art trade. And it does not just happen to faces. As if sapped of their self-esteem, otherwise noble still lifes start to decompose, religious pictures go gloomy, and even upbeat, sunny landscapes will turn overcast.

With insight, Thornton (2009: 83) writes, "Art world insiders take a hard line on collecting for the 'right' reasons. Acceptable motives include the love of art and a philanthropic desire to support artists. While it seems that everyone, including dealers, hate speculators, established collectors most loathe conspicuous social climbers." Thornton (2009: 91) quotes Nicholas Logsdail, owner of London's Lisson Gallery, who also chats about the "less credible types" of collectors, but has an opinion that allows for their existence and their necessity. He is not entirely damning, and although he is critical, he decidedly feels like they have their place in the art world. Logsdail says to Thornton (2009: 91) that

> 'speculators are like gambling addicts. They study the form, they read the magazines, they listen to the word on the street, they have hunches,' he asserts. 'We complain, but the art world couldn't function without them.' Then there are the trawlers. 'It's like the fishing industry,' he explains as he wrinkles his nose.

> 'They are out there with a big net, so they don't miss a thing and they can always say, 'I was there, I have one, I bought that in 1986.' By contrast, 'buying in depth,' or the practice of acquiring many works by the same artist, is often cited as a very respectable way to collect. 'A collection is more than a sum of its parts. It creates something unique,' says Logsdail. The worst collections are scrambled, disjointed and fickle. The best have 'a driving force.'

It is this driving force that is important to everyone that has been quoted about what they consider to be inherent in a serious art collector. These speculators or trawlers have their place in the art-world, but they are not the collectors that end up contributing to history and to the public. They generally don't have the driving force that inspires them to share their work with others, as they cannot possibly imagine keeping the works to themselves. In answer to a question about selling work off, Saatchi responds to Lindemann (2006: 215) thus, "if I had kept all the work I had ever bought, it would feel like Kane sitting in Xanadu surrounded by his loot. It's enough to know that I have owned and shown so many masterpieces of modern times." Speculators or trawlers that stockpile work are very much like Kane sitting on his pile of treasure, isolated from the world, and thus detracting from any meaning or value that the loot may have had historically or culturally. Of course, the most horrifying scene in Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* (1941) is the closing scene in which all his treasures are burned. This finale must be poignant to Saatchi, who lost a great chunk of his collection when one of his storage facilities burned to the ground, which makes his quote about Kane all the more relevant.

According to Barbara Gladstone, responding to Thornton (2009: 86), the pre-2008 art bubble produced so many new collectors that it was impossible to tell who was a serious art collector and who was a speculator. "'I used to know everybody,' says Gladstone matter-of-factly. 'If I didn't know them as clients, then I knew their names. But now there are new people constantly'" (Thornton, 2009: 86). This was a great concern for dealers and it resulted in the 'hard buy'. Too many potential clients causes a market in which dealers can choose to whom they sell work, and in that way, determine how visible the work will be within the public domain. Thornton (2009: 86) continues to quote Gladstone, who says that,

> At Art Basel, one rarely witnesses a hard sell, but one increasingly overhears something I've come to recognize as a 'hard buy'. This takes the form of the collector describing his own 'unique selling points,' including notable works in his collection, the museum acquisition committees on which he sits, the way he is committed to loaning works, and that he often underwrites exhibition and catalogue costs.

Institutions and Donation

Thornton (2009: 92) also quotes a collector to say that she and her husband would have to set up an institution to gain access to the art that they want to buy, as only then are the galleries likely to preference them above others. According to Thornton (2009) and Lindemann's (2006) texts it seems like an international rule of thumb that only the collectors that make the greatest public contribution have access to the best works, although both these authors were writing before the 2000s art bubble burst, so it may well be quite different today. Dealers may not have the pick of which collector is buying from them, or how prestigious or public a collection is that they are selling to, but they are very likely still enticing collectors to promise works to institutions.

Many international collectors, over the past two hundred years, have made grand scale contributions to the visibility of art globally and consequently to public knowledge about art history and its participants. Joseph Duveen (Behrman 2003), for example, encouraged his collectors (quite forcibly at times) to open their own museums and open their houses to display their masterpieces to the public. Duveen's client list (Behrman 2003: 81) included immensely wealthy collectors Frick, Carnegie, Morgan, P.A.B Widener, Rockefeller, H. E. Huntington, Bache, Lehman, Mellon and Kress are merely a handful among the names of American collectors that have contributed by providing access to their works either during their lifetimes, or posthumously. The latter two, Mellon and Kress, respectively, founded and made great contributions to the National Gallery in Washington D.C. (Behrman 2003: 99). Frick is an example of a collector that is historically better known for his art collection than for the work he produced in his lifetime. "The article on Frick in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* runs twenty-three lines. Ten are devoted to his career as an industrialist, and thirteen to his collecting of art" (Behrman 2003: 159). Sarah Thornton mentions contribution often throughout her anthropological study of the art market. She (Thornton, 2009: 93) notes that

> More and more collectors are opening their own exhibition spaces. Their official reasons are philanthropic, but their covert motives have more to do with marketing. The work of living artists needs to be promoted it is to generate consensus. Moreover, collectors of contemporary art have to be proactive about developing the aura of their collection. In our cluttered multimedia culture, a significant collection does not just arise; it is made.

Meanwhile, Vanderlip argues that

> American art museums can often be defined by the collections given to them. A few institutions, like the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, the Frick Collection, the Morgan Library and the Phillips Collection, were formed by a single collector. The Majority of American art museums, however, have evolved from multiple collections gifted by individuals. This process is largely responsible for the great depth and quality of American art museums across the country" (2006: 23)

The majority of institutions in South Africa in which historical and contemporary art is on display but that are not commercial galleries, have been founded or greatly supplemented by South African collectors of fine art. The Johannesburg Art Gallery was partly founded by art collector Lady Florence Phillips, who was also a key player in the donation of 17th Century Dutch and Flemish paintings by Sir Max Michaelis to the city of Cape Town, which provide the basis of the Michaelis Collection at the Old Town House. Similarly, the Rupert family has founded several museums including the Rupert Museum in Stellenbosch, the H. Rupert Museum in Graaff Reinet, and The Pierneef Museum at La Motte in Franschoek. Cecil John Rhodes donated his art collection and homes in their entirety to the country of South Africa and most of the collection is held at his former residence, Groote Schuur in Cape Town. A Cape Town based collector, Mr. Poro, made a grand bequest of Irma Stern paintings to the University of Cape Town, which formed the collection of the Irma Stern Museum there. Collectors Schweikerdt and Van Tilburgh are both contributors to the University of Pretoria Art collection, the former donating his entire Pierneef collection to the University. Edoardo Villa donated a grand body of his work to the University of Pretoria as well, which is housed in the Edoardo Villa Museum in what was formerly the Merensky Library. The Oliewenhuis Museum in Bloemfontein was founded by the donation of 26 oil paintings of the Bloemfontein Group gifted by Doctor Fred Scott Senior, who also donated his library to the University of the Free State. Other museums such as the Kimberley Art Museum, The Iziko National Gallery, and the Pretoria Art Museum have also received donations and bequests over the past century that have formed the backbone of their respective collections.

Gary Garrels' (2006) essay about RADAR and the Logan collection in general highlights the importance and influence of these collectors in the understanding and public exposure of internationally relevant pieces of art. "American museum collections often reflect the interests and generosity of private collectors, whose gifts have built and transformed those collections. The Philadelphia Museum of Art's collection of Modern art is shaped in a fundamental way by the gift of Walter and Louise Arensberg's collection of work" (Vanderlip 2006: 39). Vanderlip (2006: 39) similarly gives examples of collectors that have made great contributions to institutions and to the public.

> Albert Gallatin's collection similarly brought a core group of great cubist and school of Paris masterpieces and a breadth of modern work to the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The Baltimore museum of art's modern collection, with its extraordinary holdings of the work of Matisse, almost wholly comes from the gift of the Cone sisters Claribel and Etta. Yale University Art Gallery's Modern collection is identified in large part by the Société Anonyme Collection, given by Katherine Dreiser, who assembled the collection in collaboration with the Artist Marcel Duchamp. More recently, the Museum of Contemporary Art in LA acquired through gift and purchase, the abstract expressionist & pop art collections of Count Giuseppe Panza di Biumo as a foundation for that new museum's contemporary collection. The National Gallery in Washington D.C., has been given the fractional and promised gift of the Jane and Robert Meyerhoff collection. One could go on and on with other examples, but I believe my point is clear: *the focus and generosity of great collectors is instrumental in shaping the character of a museum's collection* [emphasis added].

Taxes and tax breaks are a great incentive for American collectors' public contributions. Even for Duveen "the rising income and inheritance taxes" (Behrman, 2003: 162) were beneficial, as his patrons would sell their works through him instead of passing it on to their children, or build museums to house his carefully curated collections. The author writes that

> The era of big houses was ending and as the artistic appetites of Duveen's clients increased, a new problem developed for them – a critical shortage of wall space – and that, too, Duveen turned to his advantage [...] The pressure of space made it inadvisable for Duveen's customers to keep buying pictures for their homes; the pressure of inheritance taxes made it unattractive for them to leave valuable collections of pictures in their estates. Duveen had pegged the market so high that no man was now right enough to live with Duveens or to die with them. Duveen [...] was keenly sensitive to social change (and realized that) [...] the public bequest, impervious to taxation, was the way out (Behrman, 2003: 162).

South Africa doesn't offer the same tax breaks for the donation of work to publicly accessible institutions, and although it would prove a great incentive for donation, it may also prove to be another reason for collectors not to invest in South African art. Sandy Nairne affirms that

> Works of art are subject to social intervention. Over many generations there have been mechanisms in place, in the form of support to public museums and galleries, and through tax incentives, that offer encouragement to the public to enjoy them and an incentive for donations of important works from private to public ownership (Nairne, 2011: 172).

Collectors contribute for many reasons, but collections can also be a form of *memento mori*. There is a human instinct that drives people to leave something of importance to be remembered by, something that renders their lives consequential and influential. Donating an art collection to a prestigious institution is a keen way in which one can achieve immortality and fame, no matter how transient, in contemporary society.

Collector [David] Teiger describes his collection as 'life-affirming,' then displays extreme modesty when he says, "I don't know if I have a collection. I have a load of stuff." (Thornton, 2009: 99) His self-effacing humour betrays a deep-seated anxiety shared by many collectors. More people than ever are buying contemporary art, and there is the possibility that most of it is historically insignificant. It may be personally meaningful, intelligent, even edifying, but in the long term many of these collections will end up looking like the tattered silks of an age gone by or the archeological remains of an ancient garbage heap. They won't be definitive or influential. They will not have changed the way we look at art (Thornton, 2009: 99).

Lindemann (2006:10) writes about his own experience as a collector that what makes owning art exciting, inviting and sexy is the real thrill, amongst other things, of making an aesthetic decision which defines your own individuality within the *entire context of art history*. Lindemann's great contribution however, is that he has published an fascinating text about the collecting habits of his contemporaries, and in so doing he has also defined the individuality of others in the context of art history. Collectors seem to be acutely aware of the influence that their passion can have on the world around them, and it is evident that many of them strive to have their influence in one way or another. In reference to collector David Teiger, having a phone conversation with a museum director, Thornton (2009: 100) says, "He obviously loves these relationships. He enjoys being a player in the power game of art, particularly at this level, where patronage can have an impact on public consciousness."

Art dealer Marc Glimcher (2006: 82) meanwhile points out that "what we all call museums are really just personal collections that have grown so big that the patron gives them to the public." The existence and contemporaneity of museums relies on the generosity of private art collectors, especially in times of economic difficulty, as that in which we currently find ourselves. Government funding is instantly stretched in the creative sectors as money goes towards things

considered to be of more immediate importance. Dealer Barbara Gladstone (2006: 73) quite rightly points out that, "museums are vitally interested in the next generation of people who will support them". The Johannesburg Art Gallery has a loyal set of supporters in many forms[12], but they still struggle to run, and their recent need to appeal for donations for their basic running costs has only underscored the concerns that led to this study. The gallery is currently in a state of disrepair.

In South Africa, the art public seems to imagine that the commercial galleries are exceptionally lucrative and the perception seems to be that these institutions should be financially healthy. This is hardly ever the case, especially not in the current economic climate. Privately owned, commercial galleries have closed all over the world, and South Africa since 2008 – it became financially impossible for many galleries to stay open or stage exhibitions. Francesca Van Hapsburg (2006: 172) supports this by saying that recently "museums have had to reduce their acquisitions and commissioning budgets. It is all the more relevant that collectors become more committed to supporting special commissions […] I do not invest in art as a financial tool. Art is an investment in the quality of life." Collectors internationally seem to be much more liberal with their money and donations than South African collectors, making large gifts toward the production of catalogues or exhibitions. There are institutions that do donate sums of money to the arts and have large budget allocations for art in South Africa, of which the major banks and insurance companies are notable examples. Hollard and Rand Merchant Bank have both been very generous supporting Johannesburg Art Gallery initiatives as well as private gallery initiatives, like *The Horse* exhibition at the Everard Read Gallery in 2011. The production of exhibitions of that scale is just not possible for a gallery to host without funding aid, even for one as long established as the Everard Read. Francesca Van Hapsburg (2006: 172) is correct when she says that "…remaining philanthropic is primary" and that (2006: 173) "a great collector defined is someone who comes up with a new and innovative strategy to share his collection". I would argue for the extension of this idea to incorporate sharing in every way that is possible, whether financial or through a system of support or fundraising.

Art Dealer Marianne Boesky (2006: 35) says, "The reason we want [a work] to go to a museum is because it's like building fundamentals in an undervalued company: it raises the profile and prestige of the artist, and it will be taken care of and exhibited to the public on and off, for eternity, hopefully." The Rubells are the types of collectors that make a great contribution to public knowledge through providing access to their collection. Passion drives them and they have committed themselves to collecting wholeheartedly – financially and emotionally. According to Mera Rubell, quoted by Thornton (2009: 83),

[12] Supporters assist the Johannesburg art gallery through either donating money, time or resources as possible.

> 'Collector should be an earned category.[13] An artist doesn't become an artist in a day, so a collector shouldn't become a collector in a day. It's a lifetime process.' The Rubells have a twenty-seven-room museum where they rotate displays of their family collection. They also have a research library containing over 30,000 volumes. 'We read, we look, we hear, we travel we commit, we talk, we sleep art. At the end of the day, we commit virtually every penny we make – all our resources - to it,' Mera declares with a half-raised fist. 'But it's not a sacrifice. It's a real privilege.'

With the same amount of passion, and a fraction of the money, some South African art collectors could quite easily contribute in this way should they wish to do so.

American, Los Angeles-based collector Eli Broad, is engaged in a most admirable public endeavour. An entrepreneur with two companies on the Fortune 500 list (Lindemann, 2006: 160) Broad has access to the funds to make a great contribution and started by Eli Broad in 1984,

> the Broad Art Foundation has operated an active 'lending library' to over 400 museums and galleries worldwide. He serves on the boards if the MOCA, MOMA and LA County Museum of Art, where he announced a major $60 million gift to build the Broad Contemporary Art Museum. He is known to accumulate trophy pieces for significant sums and his holdings include some of the best works of the past 20 years.

Nothing of a similar scale exists in South Africa, but art collectors are known to be generous in lending their works to retrospectives and other types of exhibitions when it is necessary. Retrospective exhibitions in South Africa, and presumably elsewhere, rely heavily on the supply of works by collectors. If one browses through any South African retrospective catalogue from the past it is easy to find evidence of the great contributions made by collectors facilitating the process.

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[13] Bourdieu writes that "to enter a field, to play the game, one must possess the habitus which predisposes one to enter the field, of that game, and not another. One must also possess at least the minimum amount of knowledge, or skill, or 'talent' to be accepted as a legitimate player. Entering the game, furthermore, means attempting to use that knowledge, or skill, or 'talent' in the most advantageous way possible. It means, in short, 'investing' one's (academic, cultural, symbolic) capital in such a way as to derive maximum benefit or 'profit' from participation" (1993: 8).

With regards to the process that led to the formation of his institution, Eli Broad (2006: 160) explains:

> about twenty years ago, after building up a personal collection of contemporary art, and seeing that museums did not have the resources to buy Contemporary Art, we said, 'How do we continue collecting?' So we created the Broad Art Foundation, which became a lending library to museums throughout the world. Between our private collection and our collection at the Broad Art Foundation, and not counting the corporate collections, there are about 1100 works now and we are proud that we lend to about four hundred museums worldwide, both from the foundation and our personal collection.

Broad (2006: 163) says that he and his wife see themselves as "guardians of this work over [their] lifetime, and it's going to end up in one or several public institutions when we're no longer here." The fact that these works travel locally and internationally is an undertaking pivotal in the formation of art history. In relation to my understanding of the role that exposure and collective memory play in the process of creating value and construction of objects as cultural capital, the travel of works for physical accessibility worldwide is about as large scale as it gets, without entering into print or computer based access. One can see a work of art on a computer screen, or in print, but one cannot possibly glean the same impression that one gets of actually seeing a work of art in front of you and engaging with its medium, scale and emotive quality first hand. This does not always provide a means for a 'good' experience, but an experience of reality is what renders the object valuable to people.

Access

If one takes, for example, canonical works like Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa,* and compare it to Picasso's *Guernica*, I consider the former is possibly one of the greatest viewing disappointments that exists in the art world and the latter potentially being one of the most moving. An experience in realization occurs, as to why a work like Jackson Pollock's *Lavender Mist* is indeed so moving, when one has real life access to art. In a textbook, a photograph of a Pollock can be easily reduced to a version of splashed paint – but there is no way to mistake the reason for his artistic acclaim when placed in front of one of his works at the MoMA. I do not mean to negate the access that the internet or publications can provide, and Thornton (2009: xv) also mentions with regard to greater access that "our culture is now thoroughly televisualized or YouTubed. Although some lament this 'secondary orality,' others might point to an increase in visual literacy and, with it, more widespread intellectual pleasure in the life of the eye." The visual stimulus and the access to these visual media provide a new level of public access and interaction. Not only for

exhibitions to be held online where anybody, anywhere in the world can access and view works of art.

Max Hetzler (2006: 116) reiterates the necessity of collectors undertaking projects like the Broad Art Foundation to provide public access, and says, "I think a great collector is someone who has a sense of responsibility towards the work that he or she buys. A great collector is essentially a facilitator, someone who can ensure that artwork actually has a life after it has been sold, and that it will be loaned and that it will be respected." I believe that it is only by seeing an artwork in person that one can truly find the life changing feeling of awe that it is attributed to the viewing of art. One of the great things about art galleries in South Africa is that almost anyone can come view the art, if they are able to get to one of the galleries. The Everard Read Gallery has thousands of visitors every year, that include anyone from collectors of art to office workers having a take-away lunch on one of the viewing benches. The postman also makes his way through the gallery every time that he delivers mail, looking at what is on display. The local newspaper vendor walks through the Everard Read Gallery daily, glancing at the works on display. There are other locals that frequent the gallery often beyond its buying public. There is a broader interest in experiencing the visual arts, albeit in simply an aesthetic capacity and galleries like the Everard Read Gallery that are not enclosed by fences and gates not only allow access, but are inviting to anyone who is interested in the arts. I have never asked as much, but I feel assured that the Everard Read ensured that the original gallery was designed to be inviting to all, and that the same was the aim when it opened the adjacent CIRCA gallery in 2009.

The Johannesburg Art Gallery (JAG), the Iziko National Gallery in Cape Town and the Pretoria Art Museum are all very accessible and moderately priced to encourage a wide viewership. The JAG and the Iziko both have fences, but their gates are always open during opening hours of the institutions. The placement of all these institutions in areas that is not restricted to the middle class, which is something that is vital to access for all South African citizens. The JAG is within walking distance of a great variety of public transport – the Johannesburg train station, the Rea Vaya system is in operation nearby, as well as the Smit Street taxi rank, with the Smit Street Gautrain station to be in use in the not too distant future. These forms of transport provide access to everyone ranging from pedestrians to car owners.

The Johannesburg Art Gallery's decision to host the National Treasures exhibition at Hollard in Parktown was a strange decision regarding accessibility, if one considers how it would restrict access by hosting it in a private institution accessible mainly by car. Moreover, Villa Arcadia is not equipped as an exhibition space that accentuates and properly displays the work. The lighting is poor, the walls are inconsistent, and works of art were squeezed into rooms and corridors and it was generally an incoherent display. The exhibition proved to be more of a treasure hunt than a display of 'national treasures'. I am problematizing the choice of venue for several reasons, particularly due to the recent polemic about the location of the JAG in an area of

the inner city that many of its patrons consider unsafe to visit. Its perceived lack of accessibility has more to do with white, middle class concerns than with the nature of the institution, and I argue that a retrospective exhibition of their most important South African works in storage should be displayed on site.

Diane Vanderlip (2006), curator of the RADAR exhibition of Vicki & Kent Logan's bequest to a Denver Art Museum, discusses the nature of their collection and its curatorial statement as well as their way of collecting some of the most relevant artists of their time. Through their generous donations of contemporary international pieces to American museums, they define that which a large audience will come to see and come to understand as relevant contemporary artists. The exposure these artists receive through being on display in important institutions, the subsequent exhibitions and their publications, cement their relevance historically and culturally in the art world and public sphere.

> In 1997 they (Kent and Vicki Logan), made a significant gift of more than 250 works of art to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (followed by a subsequent gift which brought the total works donated to 330.) In 2001 they made a gift of 213 objects to the Denver Art Museum and another 165 works in 2006, equaling 378 works gifted in total to that institution (Vanderlip, 2006: 23).

Considering that many of the artists in the Logans' collection are international, and not from the US, also means that US visitors to the museums have an opportunity to see the most contemporaneous international artwork in person, which is a great privilege and opportunity that may otherwise only be made possible if one travels to foreign galleries and museums. It brings to the public a broader cultural understanding of foreign cultures and their history, political struggles, national or personal identities, etc.

> For the Logans, the line between "private" and "public" is blurred. They decided early on that they wanted their collection to be more than a private pleasure. Unlike so many collectors who amass huge collections and let them languish in storage, the Logans wanted people to see the works they had collected close to the time they were created because they believed so strongly that they were building a collection that would represent the times we were living in and should be seen in those times to fully understand and appreciate what the artists were doing (Vanderlip, 2006: 32).

This ambiguity of the public and the private is a recurring theme in the discussion of large collections.

> Equally important, the Logans have understood that the role of Patron is also that of caretaker and catalyst. The works in the collection are carefully housed and stored, recorded and preserved. They lend generously to exhibitions at galleries and museums all over the world in support of artists and curators and to make the works they have acquired available to a broad public. They have supported scholarship, documentation, and publication of works in the collection. The collection now approaches one thousand works, owned in partnerships with museums where the works are integral to those museums' collections and exhibition programs (Vanderlip 2006: 40).

Kent Logan is a highly knowledgeable and very well read collector, and consequently well informed about the work, artists and cultural relevance of his collected works of art. His in-depth study of and journey to understanding the cultural nuances that give meaning to the work in his collection is evident. Vanderlip (2006: 25) writes that "they take scholarship about their collection very seriously and have themselves written numerous essays about the history of the artists they have collected, the cultures that spawned those artists, the artistic precedents of the works, and the significance of the works themselves."

The more I read about the collectors that are giving back and showing their private collections, the more obvious it becomes how informed, scholarly, obsessive and active they are in participating within the contemporary 'scene', not only the market. There is an overall passion to make the work available to the public, so that the work not only hangs on a wall in a private home, but is seen by people who can gain a greater understanding of their own cultural satiation, contemporary feeling and philosophy, so that one the most relevant forms visual communication is accessible. They feel that these contemporary works are relevant *now* and therefore must be accessible *now*. They are a barometer indicative of the condition the world is in – politically, philosophically, with regard to humour, purely as an observational tool, as well as culturally. It is important that contemporary works, for example, about current cultural identity, are seen now, as the subject matter may be irrelevant or misunderstood in a number of years. The comments made by many artists, and especially those from China and smaller South-East Asian countries such as South Korea, portray the global feeling of cultural misidentity - of fitting in everywhere, yet not belonging anywhere in particular, which is a matter most relevant at this moment in time.

The visual communication that comes from art can form ideas, a sense of identity, or affiliation. Popular culture is highly informed by art, but this is only through public access. The collectors

that are spending their hard-earned money and valuable time not only digging for new artists and works, but making sure that the artworks are accessible to the largest possible public as is financially and humanly possible, are invaluable to the informing of art history. This is all-important to our self-understanding in relation to visual communication, and eventually makes accessible works that are informing the new art historical canons and historical documentation itself. These collectors are informing the writing of art history – the access to these cultural items secure their images in the public consciousness – publications, postcards, visual media of all sorts. The work that is unseen and generally inaccessible may fade into the background. Kent Logan (cited in Vanderlip 2006: 63) writes, "almost from the outset of our collecting careers, we envisioned 'returning' our private holdings to a public institution, reflecting our view of the importance of visual arts in the historical documentation of society… Consequently, it has always been our feeling that *for art to fulfill the purpose of its creation, it must be seen, discussed and critiqued in the times in which it is created"* [emphasis added].

Contributions to museums aren't always welcomed though, and one can imagine that museums can become flooded with offers during a time like the art bubble of the mid 2000s. Even earlier than that though in 1978, Philippe Ségalot (2006: 158) says that he offered MoMA "a 15-foot Mao painting, which was painted in 1972, as a gift. They said they had two pictures of Andy Warhol and that was enough in their collection." He ended up donating the work to the Metropolitan Museum instead along with a collection of Art Deco furniture and glass. "I knew Henry Geldzahler over at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. He persuaded them to accept this gift The Met has not shown this in their galleries in the past 12 years, even though it's one of the greatest contemporary pictures they have." It is a sad example of a gift that has been unappreciated by the institution, but understandably, the institutions also suffer from lack of time or space allocation for certain works.

Glen Lowry (2006: 264), Director of the MoMA, says the way in which galleries force promised gifts "is a real shift, this notion that almost every work that an artist now makes needs to be promised to a museum." Lowry continues to elucidate that it "is troubling, because it puts collectors, at a very early stage in an artist's career, already in negotiations with a museum over whether or not the museum wants the work of art – perhaps before we've had a chance to really decide whether or not that's an artist we want to follow or whether that's the right work." Lowry (2006:264) opines that "it's wonderful when they come to museums, but that's not the only place a work of art is necessarily happy or should be."

Below are several examples of international collectors, interviewed by Adam Lindemann, who are making great contributions. Without entering into too much detail on each one, I would like to accentuate what it is that they have done and indicate that it is prospectively entirely possible for similar undertakings to be initiated by South African art collectors. Francesca von Habsburg (2006: 168), Swiss curator and collector, created a foundation that funds contemporary artists'

ambitious projects. She is the chairman of Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary (T-B A21), and her foundation, which collects works by important and challenging artists, offers artists-in-residence support, and produces unique artist designed projects throughout the world. Van Hapsburg tells Lindemann (2006: 172) that she believes collectors of art should "be prepared to spend money […] on projects, publications, co-productions etc." Another notable contributor is Greek collector Dakis Joannou (2006: 174), who relates:

> I started the Deste Foundation in 1983 to organize exhibitions, events and publications, which engage in a dialogue with contemporary art and the cultural community in Athens and abroad. The foundation offers me a special opportunity to share my collection with the public and to open up a dialogue that might not be possible with a private collection in one's home. It is important for me to maintain that openness and communication rather than keeping the works in my home for only myself, my family and friends to see.

Dakis Joannou (2006: 179) believes that "it is important that the art world escapes from the insular bubble and relates to a larger public". Joannou has been the instigator of several grand scale exhibitions, including one prominent exhibition curated by artist Jeff Koons. Eugenio López is Mexico's largest contemporary patron, who opened a warehouse space in Mexico City to exhibit his collection. He also opened an art library in Mexico City containing over 6000 titles dealing with Modern and Contemporary Art (2006: 190 – 191) The Mexican art patron claims:

> art can certainly be perceived as an economic investment, but also as a sound investment on a human level. For example, if you develop a collection and you give people access to these works of art, whether by lending them to museums or showing them in your own exhibition space, this goes way beyond an investment of money. That's how I like to do things (2006: 192).

López was inspired by a visit to London, during which time he visited the Saatchi Gallery and realized, "My God, we have nothing like this kind of alternative space in Latin America!" (2006: 192). This is evidence of how providing public access can be a great contributor and facilitator to the understanding or art, and the instigator for further public accessibility. What Saatchi had achieved drove López to want the same access for the people in his own country and he says that it's not just about collecting art and displaying it. "Rather, what we've tried to do is create a network that allows us to bring curators to Mexico and send artists abroad, and to promote specialization for curators and critics. At times, this means that if a young artist needs $4000 to create a project, we'll finance it" (2006: 193).

François Pinault had planned to build his own museum in Paris, designed by the renowned Japanese architect Tadao Ando. However, soon after his interview in May 2005, he scrapped these plans due to multiple delays instigated by the local municipality. He now exhibits at the refurbished Palazzo Grassi in Venice, Italy. Pinault says that he wanted the collection he had been building

> to be housed in a meaningful space, and to allow it to be shared with as many people as possible. I feel the obligation to share my passion for art. I want the artists to be recognized, the works of art to be appreciated, and for the public to further develop a passion for the art of today (2006: 202).

Charles Saatchi, who I have used as an example often in this report, has had his collection on public display for almost 30 years, and has been collecting for 40, "giving British audiences unprecedented exposure to this work" (2006: 212). On the impact of exhibitions, Saatchi (2006: 238) states that "some of the shows organized by these museum directors and curators will change the course of an artist's career, and museum activity will ultimately stimulate the artist's market." Saatchi cites an example of this effect in "the Paul McCarthy retrospective organized by Lisa Phillips and Dan Cameron a few years ago at the New Museum [that] helped confirm that this seminal but long under-appreciated artist was finally going to develop a real commercial market" (2006: 238). Saatchi (2006: 238-239) remembers "the moment when I walked into the Cartier Foundation's Murakami show in Paris, I could feel the energy that would propel his prices into the seven-figure range." He (2006: 239) concludes by citing Matthew Barney's *The Cremaster Cycle* at the Guggenheim, which "cemented his position as the American artist of the Nineties."

To end this chapter, I briefly examine South African publications, auction houses, and their influence on South African collecting, art galleries, the art market and what collecting means for these institutions, artists, collectors, and the public at large. There is something in particular about the seeming universality of collecting, or the experiencing of art in general, which piques my interest. Sandy Nairne's (2011) discussion of applause at the breaking of auction records or the exceeding of expectation in the auction house sale, exemplifies the element of performance that is intrinsic to all auction experience. It also highlights the fact that collectors deem their purchase to be an achievement, an action of grand merit or consequence. It is this feeling of achievement and of claiming ownership over something expensive, culturally valuable, coveted by others - of winning the fight – which ultimately drives the market value and by extension what is taken to be the intrinsic value of an object. One cannot define all collectors in the manner that Adorno (Warner, 2003: 134-135) discusses that popularity is transcribed. Many private art collectors are pioneers, but what is relevant in Adorno's argument is the understanding that by reinforcing certain texts that are already popular or valued, this will only give those texts greater

importance, and in so doing make them more valuable and sought after, and may create a scarcity in the market. Many collectors in South Africa tend to notice upward market trends for the work of a particular artist. In times such as these in the midst of economic downturn, these visible trends can cause a flood in the market of works by these artists. The flooding of the market has mostly negative results for the value of an artist's work, but if there aren't too many works – a difficult balance to anticipate – the exposure can equally result in a positive outcome. The flooding is a negative thing when the works entering the market all at once tend to be mostly of poor quality, or a body of the less important or popular works of an artist. This flooding can, however, on a scale beyond that of the collecting world, augment the cultural presence in the public domain of a previously low profile artist.

Auctions are important in the discussion of access and visibility, as it is only through auctions that historical work is truly accessible to the public outside of the arena of the museum or of literature. Forms of art circulation in South Africa and their various degrees of accessibility are important in understanding the greater accessibility of art in South Africa in general. The most accessible format would be via media or recurring publications of which examples include *Art South Africa*, The *South African Art Times* (a free magazine available at galleries and hotels), internet-based art criticism and art history portal *ArtThrob*, art reviews in newspapers and the *AVA* in Cape Town, which has a regular publication. Many people will have access to the Internet if they are situated in populated urban areas, but it is still mostly a thing of privilege.

Books and catalogues represent the mid-level access. Places that one may have access to these are galleries, sell rather than lend their books. University libraries provide access that is limited to the university community. Libraries are an option, but the quality of the books or the contemporaneity of the selection may be questionable. Would a local library have available important recently published volumes like the *Visual Century*, or any of Sue Williamson's seminal publications? Would they include the indispensable David Krut publications from the last twenty years? Would they be able to afford out-of-print publications like Esmé Berman's critical work? With whom does the responsibility of the donation of books lie? How does one prevent the theft of these books to ensure future accessibility? The Johannesburg Art Gallery has perhaps the greatest range of reference books and catalogues available to the public in its extensive library, as does the Iziko National Gallery in Cape Town. One could certainly invest in the growing number of art books that are becoming available in this country, but they are always expensive and beyond the average person's budget, so it is vital that there is access to texts in other forms.

Auction catalogues can be both the least and the most accessible form of circulation for an artwork. Auction houses are member-specific, which greatly limits the access to their holdings. The auctions are well documented on the Internet, in the press and elsewhere, however, and may paradoxically be the most publicly accessible form of historical, canonical South African art.

Art Market

I return to the way in which many artworks by sought-after artists tend to come onto the market in great numbers, following a great amount of public exposure and sales success. As has been evident at auctions, the mediocre pieces that have flooded the market and that bounce between different institutions over several months can cause prices attained for works to drop significantly. But the auction reserve prices and speculated margins of value seem to still be set at the prices reached during the strong economic circumstances that lead to the flooding of the markets in the first place. By holding onto these price ideals, the market seems to stagnate as nobody can afford or is willing to pay the projected amounts for these pieces of art. This is all evident from the way in which the market has been flooded with works by South African masters Stern and Pierneef in the last ten years. The auction houses artificially maintain the high prices, even when they are dissimilar to market worth, due to hopes to rectify the drop in value.

But even in the economic downturn, the very high prices maintained from yesteryear do not seem unreasonable in lights of the auction results for an institution like Bonhams, which has created an entirely new price bracket for the works of South African markets by having immensely successful sales in London, outside of the local market for South African art. Bonhams as a price indicator froze the South African market for a considerable period, as two things occurred: first, South African historical masters were finally completely beyond the average South African collector's price-range. Second, the unrealistic prices achieved created an artificial market and unrealistic expectations that in turn inflated the auction prices back in South Africa, which could in no way be fulfilled. This had a doubly negative effect, as evident in the Bonhams auction several months later, in which many of the works went unsold. The negative markets locally had adverse effects on the market internationally as the same pieces from South African auctions (unsold) appeared on the Bonhams auction. This attached a stigma of unwanted or overpriced goods to buyers in the international sector, rendering the previous successes of South African historical works null and void. Of course, this did not happen overnight, and the South African market seems far from being in limbo, but the great flux in supply, demand, perception and its resulting flux in value was a great blow to an already suffering market over the 2010 to 2011 period. The auction results set new standards for the competitive value of artists and their artworks, with artists like Gerard Sekoto and other historical black artists receiving as much attention as white historical, and fractionally more expensive artists.

Cementing certain artists in the canon and placing new artists into the realm of what is relevant is facilitated by auctions, including for contemporary work with an established market, in an auction of predominantly canonical artists. The Rose-Innes works at a 2011 Strauss & Co. auction, for example, changed the artist's market somewhat because of the sudden evidence of an increase in demand and a preparedness to pay higher prices to secure a work by Rose-Innes. This has resulted in a much greater demand for the artist's work. South African artists that are

frequently sold on auction, such as Irma Stern, Maggie Laubser, J.H. Pierneef, Alexis Preller, Gerard Sekoto and Maud Sumner, are a few major examples of the influence that auctions have on value, and therefore on their exposure and subsequent relevance. Established and successful contemporary artists could also make their way into the art historical canon through auction exposure in South Africa, as is evident from auctions abroad, but because of the availability of South African contemporary work on the market, often with the offer of a discount, contemporary auctions don't seem to be particularly popular at South African auction houses. Bourdieu (1993: 7) describes in the following quote the effect that auctions and the accompanying media hype have on the art market:

> Two forms of capital are particularly important in the field of cultural production. Symbolic capital refers to degree of accumulated prestige, celebrity, consecration or honour and is founded on dialectic of knowledge (*connaissance*) and recognition (*reconnaissance*). Cultural capital concerns forms of knowledge, competences or dispositions. In *Distinction*, the work in which he elaborates the concept most fully, Bourdieu defines cultural capital as a form of knowledge, as internalized code or a cognitive acquisition which equips the social agent in deciphering cultural relations and cultural artefacts.

Competitive collecting and machismo at auctions can greatly influence the hammer price of a work sold at auction, and consequently exercise a great influence on the value of an artist's market. Collectors fight over works that have the most fashionable traits. These fashionable elements can include the years that the work was created in - 1963/4 for Warhol, 1982/3 for Basquiat - a certain theme or colour, and so on. These elements present in a work can push up the market value if the collectors at the auction fight over it at auction. In the South African context, this often happens with beautiful portraits by the canonical artists, and a great Stern portrait can fetch a much larger price that a great still life can. Thornton (2009: 23) writes that "Although one finds many powerful women dealers and curators, the bulk of the big-spending collectors are male – a fact that no doubt contributes to the complex dynamic of undervaluation that befalls women's artwork." The undervaluing of women artists is a trend that is noticeable in the South African market as well, although, Irma Stern and Maggie Laubser are examples of artists that surpass many of their male contemporaries in the prices that they fetch on auction.

I once again quote Thornton's (2009: 8) statement that, "many perceive auctions as the barometer of the art market". There is truth in this statement, but it can also be an artificial barometer if one considers the example of the Bonhams South African Sale auctions that caused prices to escalate dramatically in a seemingly unsustainable manner. South Africans are essentially being financially excluded from the historical art market by the aggrandizement of

hammer prices. This is a completely unrealistic reading of this market 'barometer', because prices will return to the value that the main body of interested collectors can realistically afford to pay. Thornton (2009: 17) is correct to quote an unnamed collector who claims, "An auction is an instant evaluation." This instant valuation provided by the auction can either increase the value of another collection merely by the fact that the monetary value has increased, or in the convoluted art world, the value may decrease if there was a vast overbid by a group of over-enthusiastic collectors that are not part of an illustrious 'inner-sanctum'.

Thornton (2009: 26) quotes journalist Josh Baer who claims that, "Without auctions, the art world wouldn't have the financial value it has. They give the illusion of liquidity." The hype at an auction can also drive prices beyond the expected results. The effect that bidding has on the collector, or any bidder presumably is described not unlike the effects of amphetamines. It is no wonder auctions fuel the collecting addiction. Thornton writes of this that,

> People who buy at auction say that there is nothing like it: 'Your heart beats faster. The adrenaline surges through you. Even the coolest buyers break out in a sweat.' If you bid in the room, you are part of the show, and if you buy, it's a public victory. In auction house parlance, you actually 'win' works. Ségalot says he never gets nervous, but he does acknowledge a sense of sexual conquest: 'Buying is very easy. It is much more difficult to resist the temptation to buy. You have to be very selective and demanding, because buying is an extremely satisfying, macho act' (2009: 11).

CHAPTER 4
CONCLUSION

"Art is what makes life worth living."

Keith Tyson (Thornton, 2009: 37)

In this research report, I have attempted to establish that not only do the collectors have agency informing the writing of art history, but that they also have great responsibility that accompanies it. The way in which collectors determine value for works of art has a great impact on the way that those works manifest themselves as stand-alone objects within history.

Collectors, from what we have seen, not only have a great influence on the market prices of art but they also have a great influence on what becomes art of relevance through their support of certain artists. It is however quite clear that South African private collectors today do not participate nearly enough in the public sphere, whether it is by loaning works, spearheading exhibitions, subsidizing catalogues, being active board members on the museum boards, donating works to museums or opening art institutions. Historically, South African collectors were much more active than they are today in donating work and forming institutions. The activity in the art world in this regard is, as discussed, instrumental to the survival and thriving of the art museums, institutions, and to the subsequent understanding of what art is by the public at large.

Art Galleries and related institutions rely greatly on the finances of the private collectors and in that sense, the private collectors are supporting institutions that provide access to both contemporary and historical artworks. The providing of access is imperative, especially because "like economic capital, the other forms of capital are unequally distributed among social classes and class fractions" (Bourdieu, 1993: 7). South African art collectors have, like international collectors, the capacity and the means to assist the granting of access to works that may yield historical relevance for those who do not traditionally have access as well as those who do have access, but may be restricted by other means. In placing works in accessible institutions the collectors and patrons are promoting education and granting access to culturally relevant objects or ideas. Collectors contribute to art history through the sharing of their knowledge of the field through their process of selection that is a result of their passion for the objects they collect. They enable the rendering of objects and movements into 'cultural capital'.

> Bourdieu (1993: 7) suggests that 'a work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is the code, into which it is encoded.' The possession of this code, or cultural capital, is accumulated through a long process of acquisition or inculcation which includes the pedagogical action of the family or group members (family education), educated members of the social formation (diffuse education) and social institutions (institutionalized education).

Collectors can provide the means to acquiring this cultural competence through the granting of access that is within their power. Bourdieu argues for the role that institutions can play in facilitating education, and it through a collector's informed selection process that determines historical relevance, that the relevance is culturally reproduced. Sandy Nairne (2011: 154) discusses the relevance of museums, elucidating the relevance that there is in making even a small contribution to a museum, thus: "museums serve not just the citizens of one nation but the people of every nation. Museums are agents in the development of culture, whose mission is to foster knowledge by a continuous process of reinterpretation. Each object contributes to that process." Bourdieu's (1993: 22) ideas are supportive of what Nairne says, and he writes that "…regular museum attendance increases with increasing levels of education, to the point where although theoretically open to all, art museums become 'almost the exclusive domain of cultivated classes.'" South African collectors have the potential to provide the opportunity for greater access to museums and in doing so increasing the cultural value as well as the economic value of our art market.

The movement from the private to the public is in some ways inevitable, as art collectors seem, in many cases, to collect much more art than their homes can hang, or that they seem to be able to store. This dilemma leaves the collectors with little choice but to donate the work, to sell the work, to exhibit the work or to open their own institution. This doesn't occur in South Africa as frequently it does in Europe and the United States of America, as seen in cases presented in Chapter Three. Tanselle (1998: 20) writes about the importance of collections to the informing of art history that "when people repeatedly find the same patterns, they form the consensus necessary to justify calling what they have found a fact. In this way, collections advance knowledge."

The role of the private collector is largely to facilitate the preservation of works of art for future generations to be able to access and appreciate them. Collectors achieve this preservation by hanging the works of art in their home, or donating them to institutions where they are cared for and sometimes much loved by the public. The preservation of artworks assures their availability for future viewing, whether in ten years or millennia. In *Art Theft* by Sandy Nairne (2011), the previous Assistant Director at the Tate Britain in London writes about the theft of two of their

most culturally valuable works, two J.M.W. Turners, while on loan to an exhibition in Germany. The text establishes the great importance of these two works, which were part of the Turner bequest to the public, as items of cultural heritage. Nairne discusses not only the theft of these two works but also the loss of work from the public in general. "More art gets lost than stolen. Of the many works produced in any year, only a small number will survive. Most such 'losses' are not caused by willful damage but because the great majority of art is not acquired by private collectors or added to the holdings of a museum. Art is graded through comparative judgments, and much of it will be discarded" (Nairne, 2011: 9). In this simple statement, the consequence of the role that the private collector plays in determining not only what becomes relevant to history, but in deciding what is important enough to be preserved. What may seem like a simple aesthetic decision based on arbitrary factors that constitute taste, may be a cornerstone for the placement of a work of art in the history books. Collective memory and its role in establishing cultural heritage is also important to consider. Artwork is itself a form of preservation of fact and memory, of history as it is understood by an artist, symptomatic of the contemporary moment, and it is important for there the be multiple versions of history on display for those finding their own understanding and identity with regards to a history as complex as is to be found in South Africa. We have seen evidence throughout this paper that supports the argument that collectors are highly influential in choosing artists of importance in the contemporary moment, but also play a pivotal role in reinforcing the importance of artists to the market place and the general public. Through the continuation of buying artists' works on auction and through the donation of works to museums, there is a consistent exposure and therefore ensured validity of an artist's standing.

> At stake in the literary field, and more specifically in the field of criticism is, among other things, the authority to determine the legitimate definition of the literary work and, by extension, the authority to define those works which guarantee the configurations of the literary canon. Such definition is both positive, through selection of certain literary values, and the negative, through its exclusion of others. The establishment of a canon in the guise of a universally valued cultural inheritance, or patrimony constitutes an act of "symbolic violence" as Bourdieu defines the term, in that it gains legitimacy by misrecognizing the underlying power relations which serve, in part, to guarantee the continual reproduction of the legitimacy of those who produce or defend the canon (Bourdieu, 1993: 20).

One can say that this applies directly to private collectors and the affirmation of legitimacy of a work of art, by it being placed in a collection, in an important collection, and in amongst other works legitimized in the same way or by other institutions. It is quite evident that collectors do

have a hand in history from all the examples presented, and we are yet to be able to really understand the way in which South African collectors are contributing today, as there is so little tangible evidence of their activities compared to that in the United States or Europe. It is clear however that there is always more that a collector of fine art can do to move their private collection into the public realm.

I quote from Sandy Nairne's (2011: 149) book by Lee Bollinger, President of Columbia University:

> Whether private art owners or public officials, we are also stewards and trustees with higher obligations than simply the fulfillment of our own preferences. This is a mentality with many roots: a respect for genius and a sense that its creations transcend ownership; a caring about our history and a wish that everyone share in its meaning.

South African collectors of high art show a deep passion for collecting art, but their works mostly remain within the original collections, perhaps divided between children or sold privately, instead of entering institutions. There is great room for growth with South African collectors of art and the various contributions they can make by sharing their passion publicly. In conclusion, South African collectors of art do contribute to the way in which South African art is perceived, understood and sometimes whether it is seen at all. I would like to speculate that the South African collectors are yet to experience recognition of their influence as the market grows, and as interest in collecting South African art grows with it. The South African art market is growing, and although the pace of investment growth either accelerates or declines, depending on the strength of the economy, the amount of interest in the arts does not seem to wane, it grows annually judging by the growth of crowds attending exhibitions and participating in the art world in various ways. Collectors of fine art undoubtedly have a great influence on the market itself, including the value of work. By discovering the extent of the South African art collector's influence on the market and the relevance of an artist, we will be able to determine not only what they are already doing, but also what it is that can be done in the future to contribute to public access, understanding and interest in the arts.

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