Writing history through the hammer

an analysis of knowledge production through the South African auction houses

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Declaration

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

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Introduction

Context

Fine-art auctions formally started in London during the 1700s, with the longest standing auction house, Sotheby's, opening in 1744. Art auctions during this early era were dominated by dealers who were able to source and buy art at a relatively cheap price at auction, to then resell it to distinguished private and royal collectors. Today, the auction market has become accessible to any member of the public wanting to sell or buy art, which is important as art becomes more accessible and visible. As Nicola Kritzinger states, "it is only through auctions that historical work is truly accessible to the public outside of the area of the museum or of literature" (Kritzinger 2013: 63). Auction houses form part of what is known as the secondary art market. Simply put, the main function of an auction house is to handle works of art, from well-developed artists, that are in collections that are being liquidated, and then placing them onto an auction for interested collectors or dealers to bid over. Auctions first took place in South Africa in 1970, when the first auction house opened in Johannesburg through association with Sotheby's. Over the past five decades, the secondary art market has become well established in South Africa, with a continuously developing demand for South African art both locally and internationally. International auction houses such as Sotheby's and Bonhams have dedicated South African art sales which affirms the international status and demand. Locally, there are three main auction houses focusing on South African fine art, these being Stephan Welz and Co (founded in 1970), Strauss & Co (founded in 2009) and Aspire (Founded in 2016). There are also a number of smaller auction houses which also trade in South African art and add to the statistics of art sales and these are 5th Avenue Auctioneers, Bernardi's and Russell Kaplan Auctioneers. There a number of general auction houses and with the development of technology and online shopping, there have become new platforms for trading art, however, as these platforms are not always monitored or tracked they are not considered in the data for this study.

The aim of this research is to locate the position of the knowledge produced by major auction houses in South Africa and motivate its place in the South African art historical landscape. Using Pierre Bourdieu's theory on cultural capital to support how powerful the knowledge held by auction houses are, and how this knowledge can contribute and manipulate the market. While contributing to the existing knowledge gap, this research will be extending the limited literature available on the secondary art market in South Africa by analyzing the role and function of auctions, and how - through the needs of the business - art historical knowledge is produced. It is key to acknowledge that the auction house is first and foremost a business. All decisions made are initially for the benefit of the company, which can influence the intended historical knowledge produced and make it biased towards the business. As the knowledge produced is likely biased according to the business's needs, this research will be examining whether it is still valid and can be contributed to the larger landscape of general and specific art historical knowledge production. This study will be focusing on 20th century South African artists over the past five-decade period in which they have been featured in the secondary market. While there are three major auction houses in South Africa (as mentioned above), Strauss & Co. is statistically the leading auction house based on the sum of sold value made annually, as seen in appendix C made by Cur8 Art. This is also achieved by the high volume of high-value artworks handled by the company. As they are the biggest contributor to the South African art market, this auction house will be the primary case study through this research, however, when speaking of the secondary market in general, it can be applied to all the major operating auction houses in South Africa.

Through the initial stages of research and gathering primary research material, it became apparent that there is limited literature available on the secondary art market in South Africa. To date, there have been a few studies done on art auctions from an economics and business studies perspective, that have provided a quantitative view of the economic value of art. This includes research done by: Michael Stevenson, *South African Art Index* (1988) and *The Art Market, its intermediaries and the components of value of art works in an historical perspective* (1992); Peter Walther Baur, *Price setting behavior in the market for 'Fine Art'* (2015); Joseph Gastwirth, *On the Accuracy of Art Auction Estimates* (1999); and Johannes W. Fedderke, *How*

Informed are Sellers of Nonhomogeneous Goods?: Market Structure and Pricing Behavior in the South African Art Auction Market, 2009 – 2013 (2014). These sources make up the majority of the studies relating to the South African art market, and all focus on the economic value of art. This emphasizes the limited available literature and critical analyses about the South African secondary art market from an art historical point of view and indicates the knowledge gap for a qualitative analysis about the secondary art market. Michael Stevenson states in his research paper *South African Art Index* (1988) that, "The art market's function is related to two associated activities – art collecting and art research" (Stevenson 1988:4). By doing a qualitative study on some aspects of South African auctions, I aim to analyse the knowledge production that takes place throughout the different processes in the industry such as valuing artworks and placing them on sale, and finally examining how the results of the sales impact an artist's history. It is understood that all history is biased, as demonstrated by anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot, in his book *Silencing the Past* (1995). Trouillot highlights how history is written by historians and lived events, but often a part of history is silenced as it is written by the victors (Trouillout 1995). Acknowledging that the secondary market operates from a biased perspective, this research aims to analyse the knowledge produced through the secondary market and argue how – despite its biased perspective – it is still able to contribute towards the South African art historical landscape.

During my honours year of BA Fine Art at Wits University, I started looking for an internship to develop an understanding of working in the art world in South Africa. I was fortunate to land an internship with Strauss & Co Fine Art Auctioneers in May 2016. This was my first introduction to the South African auction market. Prior to this internship, I knew very little about the role and placement of the secondary art market. Despite the educational context, my knowledge of auctions was limited to the inclusion of auction scenes in movies and series which displayed the extravagant and elitist façade of the auction room. Working in an auction house from May 2016 to the present day (March 2021) has provided an advantage for this paper. My understanding of how auctions proceed has become substantially developed, which has provided a foundation of knowledge on this topic. In addition to my experience and observation in the field, this research will utilize the secondary data analysis of auction catalogues, auction history and previous research studies. Auction catalogues and auction results are publicly available and easily accessible via online platforms such as ArtNet (www.artnet.com) and AuctionVault (www.auctionvault.co.za), which provide data on auction results across several local and international auction houses. These platforms will be referred to as supporting evidence when needed.

Methodology

As highlighted, there is a knowledge gap in terms of a qualitative analysis on the South African secondary art market. This research will primarily focus on a qualitative analysis of the auction art market, unpacking the position of the South African auction houses, their main objectives and how they operate as a business and finally how they contribute both directly and indirectly to the art historical landscape. This will be done through secondary research of previous research papers, particularly building onto the research of Michael Stevenson, books and articles relating to the secondary market and related supporting theories. Reviewing auction catalogues and results which are publicly available, and finally observing marketing strategies, valuing of artworks and the actual auctions which can be achieved through my employment at Strauss & Co. This research will also touch on a quantitative view through observation of auction results.

Theoretical Framework

This paper highlights art as a commodity as well as the power role of the knowledge produced. A key theory in this regard is Pierre Bourdieu's *The Forms of Capital* (1986). Bourdieu argues that there are different forms of capital other than economic capital that have the potential to produce profits. While he relates these theories to individuals, I will be relating these theories to the auction house as a business. He divides these alternate forms of capital into two large categories: cultural capital and social capital (Bourdieu 1986). Social capital relates to who you know and the network in which you socialize. Each auction has sales within a specific price range which filters society in brackets based on what is affordable to each section. These groups of society form different networks and the higher the network, the greater the social capital. Auction houses can be bias towards people with higher social capital as they are likely to bring in or provide more business. An auction house is part of the art industry network, and it can be argued that they play a vital role in managing the flow of artworks through collections. The cultural capital theory defines cultural knowledge that can be used as a form of currency to gain profit (Bourdieu 1986). Bourdieu divides cultural capital into a further three forms: the embodied state, referring to the knowledge within an individual which is built up from learning; the objectified state which uses material objects to indicate social class and status; and thirdly, the institutionalized state which is the societal standard of indicating a potential for success (Bourdieu 1986). Bourdieu relates this to education saying the higher the qualification a person acquires, the more likely they will be to achieve success financially (Boudieu, 1986: 48). An auction house has the potential to embody each of these forms of cultural capital. Throughout the following chapters, it will be argued that an auction house contains knowledge that provides an embodied state of cultural capital. The art which they handle indicates that they have an objectified state of cultural capital which is used to create art historical knowledge. Finally, the institutionalized state of cultural capital is indicated through society's perception of the auction house as a business. By understanding the forms of capital that the auction house inhabits in relation to Stuart Hall's theories of discourse, power, and knowledge, it can be argued that the knowledge produced by the secondary art market acts as a form of capital that have the power to go towards extending and expanding the art historical landscape.

Chapter Outline

Chapter one will start by providing an overview of the secondary art market in South Africa and go on to identifying the role and placement of the auction houses as well as the terminology used within the industry. This will be relevant for understanding the following chapters. Chapter one will include the literature review of previous research into the local secondary art market which will highlight the knowledge gap which this research aims to fill. Michael Stevenson provided the first in-depth research into the South African auction market through his two research papers, *South African Art Index* (1988) and *The Art Market, its intermediaries and the components of value of art works in an historical perspective* (1992). These will form the beginning of the discussion and be referred to as the literature basis for this research. This chapter will also highlight the role of existing art history in the art market, how history affects what is included in the secondary market, and how history affects the value of art. The necessity and conflicts of South African art history will be highlighted through this section in relation to the role it plays in the secondary art market.

The second chapter will detail the theoretical framework, with particular focus on the theories of Stuart Hall and Pierre Bourdieu. Their theories on power, knowledge, discourse and cultural capital will be used to support the argument that the secondary market holds the means to affect the art historical landscape through the production and objectives of the auction house. The term art history is broad, the art historical knowledge referred to in this section is that of extending the biographical knowledge of artists and their oeuvres. Chapter two argues how the business objectives of auction houses can affect this knowledge. This includes the catalogue production, which art is included in an auction, and the catalogue. The chapter specifically analyses how the artist and artwork are represented in the catalogue and what this does for the artist's representation in the art historical landscape. Media and marketing are powerful tools used by most businesses that influence the public's perception. How auction houses use these tools can affect the art historical landscape by influencing the public's perception of South African art, as it determines what is important and what should be seen. Finally, the chapter discusses the role of auction results in the art historical landscape. The performance of an artist's work at an auction can contribute to their representation. Works on auction can either get a lot of attention and bidding activity, which would result in a work selling very well, or an artwork can struggle to get any attention at all, in which case it does not sell at auction. Alternatively, an artist can maintain a constant market over a period of time. This section will argue that each one of these outcomes can affect the art historical landscape for the artist. This chapter will argue how auction houses skew the art historical landscape based on the power dynamics of the business and their influence over the public.

The final chapter will introduce the possible beneficial ways in which the auction houses in the secondary art market can contribute to the art historical landscape in ways that other parts of the art world cannot. Through their unique business model, auction houses can collect large amounts of data and information when handling artworks. It will be argued that through this data collection auction houses can extend the art historical landscape with new information, particularly when documenting the provenance of an artwork. This information can also help against the growing issue of fakes and forgeries in the art world, an issue that mostly affects the works of deceased artists. Finally, this chapter will look at how deliberate efforts are made by an auction house to extend the art historical landscape.

Chapter One

An Overview of the Secondary Market in South Africa

The 1960s in South Africa saw a boom in the economy which kick-started a new era in the art industry. A wave of new galleries opened and art centres, particularly for black artists, formed. This provided a way for artists of colour to enter the predominantly white art market during the time of apartheid (Van Robbroeck 2011: 5). Another significant expansion of the art market was the opening of the first art auction house in South Africa in 1969 and with the first auction taking place in 1970, this led to the establishment of the local secondary art market. As there is very limited literature about the secondary art market in South Africa, the first aim of this chapter is to contextualize and understand the roles of the local secondary art market as well as how existing art historical knowledge is used to value art in the secondary market. To do this, a literature review assessing the South African secondary art market will be done, with a focus on research written by gallerist Michael Stevenson in his papers *The South African Art Index 1971 – 1988* (1988) and *The Art Market, its intermediaries and the components of value of art works in an historical perspective* (1992). This literature review will highlight the lack of new research done in this field over the past decade and the knowledge gap that this research aims to fill. Another component of this chapter will be to critically understand what art historical knowledge currently exists that the secondary market draws upon, and the issues that this may cause in producing further art historical knowledge. A reference to Lize van Robbroeck's PhD *Writing white on black: modernism as discursive paradigm in South African writing on modern Black art* (2006) will highlight the discrepancies in our current art historical landscape. It will emphasise that art historical literature needs to be read with a critical eye. By contextualizing the secondary art market in South Africa, this chapter aims to answer the larger question being asked: can the knowledge produced by the secondary art market contribute towards the South African art historical landscape?

Auction Jargon

There are specific terminologies used in the secondary art market. While there is no existing academic reference to these terminologies as they are mostly used within the industry, however, there are useful articles written by art journalists analysing the auction market to inform potential auction buyers of this language to help navigate the auctions. These terminologies need to be defined in order to understand the context of which an artwork is being spoken about. The first distinction to be made is the difference between the *primary market* and the *secondary market*. Michael Stevenson defines that "The primary market is the sole domain of commercial galleries and private collectors, whereas in the secondary market auctioneers play a prominent part in directing the flow of art works." (Stevenson 1992: XIV). To further this distinction, the primary market deals with artists directly. It provides the means to build a market for an artist and connect them with collectors while taking a commission from the sales. The secondary market handles artworks of artists which have a well-developed market (that would have been established through the primary market) and passes them on to new collectors through auctions. There have been cases where an artist has gone directly to an auction house, such as in the case of Damien Hirst's *Beautiful Inside My Head Forever* auction at Sotheby's London in 2008 (Thornton 2009:7). Contemporary artists of late have been seen featured in both markets, as an artist gains more attention and a wider marker the demand for the artist's work spreads to be featured on both the primary and secondary market. Another term used in the secondary art market is *pre-sale estimates* or *auction estimates*. Art journalist Martin Gammon explores the topic *What Auction House Estimates Really Mean – and What They Can Tell Us* (2019) for the Art Market blog for Artsy, while this article relates to international auction houses, Christies, Sotheby's and Philips, the information is applied to all major auction houses around the world. Estimates are set by the art specialists of an auction house which is based on what range the auction house believes the work will sell within as well as negotiations with the consignor. The negotiations usually revolve around the *reserve* which is the lowest amount the item can sell for before the deduction of commission, this amount is usually confidential between the auction house and consignor (Gammon 2019). This is the price range estimated for the artwork that the auction house believes it will sell for. This is different to a set price that you would find at a gallery. The secondary market value price is determined by the current market price for the artist, taking into consideration the demand for the particular piece. This valuation process will be discussed further later in this chapter. *Lot numbers* is the term used for the item on auction. Each item is allocated a lot number, starting from one and counting upwards, to number all the items available in the auction. This is the order in which the auction commences and is decided by the auction house. The lots are curated in a way to keep a rhythm in the auction room. Maintaining momentum in the auction room can lead to more excitement in the audience and more willingness to bid. Sellers pay a commission to the auction house, this is known as the *seller's commission* and this varies per auction house, ranging from 12% to 24%. This is significantly less than the galleries charge, which can be 40% or more on an artwork. Auction fees in major auction houses in Europe and the US charge on the higher end of the scale, the exact percentages are not publicly stated, as it is worked our per consignment and the storage and advertising can be added on. Major local auction houses such as Aspire, Strauss & Co and Stephan Welz and Co all (as of March 2021) charge 12% seller's commission for their live auctions which is stated on each company website. As it is a competitive market the commission structure also needs to be competitive in which case it stays similar throughout the country. However, the seller's commission can be negotiated down to finalize a consignment. The buyer pays a separate commission to the auction house known as a *buyer's premium*. This premium is usually non-negotiable. The *hammer price* is the amount that the hammer falls on during the auction. The seller's commission gets deducted from this amount, and the buyer's commission gets added to it.

In the auction room, the auctioneer uses more specific terms. As a bidder or spectator of the auction, it is important to understand the terminology to fully understand what is happening in the room and where the bid is at all times. There are simple terms used to indicate where the bid is currently sitting. The *starting bid* is the bid the auctioneer will open the bidding at. This would be lower than the low estimate and reserve price and invites bidding to start. The auctioneer bids on behalf of the seller until the bids reach the reserve price. To indicate this the auctioneer will take the next bid until a bidder outbids the auctioneer. When the bid reaches the reserve price, the bid will be with the highest paddle number, be it a bidder in the room, on the telephone or an absentee bidder in the auctioneer's book. If the work sells, the auctioneer will state 'sold' and the paddle number that it goes to while knocking down the hammer. If the work does not sell, the auctioneer will not say a paddle number and use the term *pass/passed* to indicate that the lot did not sell. This can be confusing as some auctioneers still knock down the hammer at an unsold lot. *Bought in* is the term used to indicate that the lot did not sell during the auction and is still with the auction house. Understanding the terminology provides the buyers and sellers with an advantage in the auction, this takes the cultural capital form of an embodied state as it is a type of knowledge that will benefit their decision making during the auction.

Identifying the qualitative knowledge gap

There is a relatively small body of literature that is concerned with the South African secondary market, and even less that has been written in the past decade. A considerable amount of literature was written between 1988 – 1996, which included the *Art at Auction* reviews by Stephan Welz and the research papers by Michael Stevenson. While the art market has grown significantly since these publishings, they do form a strong basis for the argument of the research to take place.

The first publications on the auction market are the two volumes written by the late auctioneer and specialist Stephan Welz (1943 – 2015). *Art at Auction in South Africa* was written in 1989, and later *Art at Auction in South Africa: The Art Market Review 1969 to 1995* was published in 1996. These books can both be referred to as the first published reviews/surveys of the South African art market. The first book analyzes the first two decades of art auctions in South Africa from 1969 – 1989. It starts with an introductory history of how auctions came to South Africa in 1969, and continues by reviewing the prices achieved for art, silver, furniture, ceramics and post stamps at auction. The second volume, *Art at Auction in South Africa: The Art Market Review 1969 to 1995* is a continuation of this review which further details the top achieving artists during this period and the growth of the market. This literature is applicable and contributes to art history. It provides insight into the early South African art market; the history of the inception of the auction market which shows the immediate interest in South African art as an asset. It also introduces the white, male artists who dominated the art market. However, it is written as a company review for Stephan Welz and Co in association with Sotheby's and so it must be read critically as the intentions behind the review do have a business motive. As there was no other major art auctioneer in the country at the time, this review represents the public local art market.

The South African Art Index 1971 – 1988 written by Michael Stevenson (1988) was in fulfilment of a Bachelor of Business Science degree. The research revolved around the economic worth of art, particularly South African art. The aim of the paper was to provide an 'Art Index' for South African art, selecting 15 of the top-performing artists in 1975 and allocating points to them accumulating up to 100, according to their market. The point structure was based on the performance of each artist's work from 1971 – 1988, calculating the price per square meter achieved at auction, and ranking the artists from one to fifteen in top-selling order. While the art index he provides can be critiqued, it is not relevant for this particular argument. The importance of reviewing this literature is because of its emphasis on the South African art market which - prior to this research - had not been critically analysed. The literature has indicated the presence of the South African secondary art market and provided an overview of the economic value of art through the valuations provided by the art market as well as the supply and demand model. The secondary art market is known for its ability to sell paintings and other forms of art at extraordinary prices, which has changed the view of art from its aesthetic value to its economic value. Stevenson claims that the art market seldom represents the traditional, spiritual, emotional or intellectual value of art (Stevenson 1988: 5). I challenge this statement as these factors are used, to justify a higher estimate for an artwork. However, the question remains: how much of these other elements are represented accurately? Stevenson highlights how the economic value is placed on an item based on its means of production, which is not the case when it comes to valuing art. The value of art is associated with the utility of its pleasure and aesthetic for which a financial analysis is not as easy to formulate (Stevenson 1988: 5). The value of art is based on the market for the artist, and the market is based on the buyer's behaviour. Stevenson relates this to the supply and demand model in the secondary art market. He summarizes that should the auction house supply a finite oeuvre of a recognizable artist; this will create a high demand and result in higher bids/ prices. Should an artist's work not perform well at auction, the demand for the oeuvre decreases (Stevenson 1988: 8). Since this data, there have been contemporary artists still producing work that has been featured on auction selling for large prices, and so the theory of finite oeuvres can be challenged. There are many factors to consider when valuing an artwork and from personal experience in the field, there are a number of factors to consider in addition to the artist. This includes the medium, the date, the size, the subject matter, the exhibition history, literature, provenance, execution and the condition of the artwork. The details of how an artwork is valued will be elaborated later in this chapter. To summarize, this research put forward by Stevenson is the first analysis of the South African secondary art market from a research perspective. It offers insight into the economic value of art seen in the local secondary market.

Stevenson continued his research into the secondary market in his Master of Philosophy dissertation *The Art Market, its intermediaries and the components of value of art works in an historical perspective* (1992). Stevenson provides a historical overview of the 'western' art market, the roles of the different aspects, or intermediaries, of the art market and institutions. Secondly, he analyses how art is valued in relation to what he calls the 'components of value' which include the different categories that determine the value of an artwork. These components of value include the aesthetic and historic factors, material attributes, supporting documentation and financial factors of the artwork. The 'western' art market refers to Renaissance and Baroque Italy, Low Countries (Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg), the English art market, France art market, and the U.S.A art market. It is key to note here that he does not include the South African art market in his research. This could be due to the recent development of the South African art market which does not contribute to the historical shifts that have taken place in the 'western' art market – which existed from the early fourteenth century up to the twentieth century. This does, however, create a knowledge gap when looking at the South African art market and its relation to art history. This literature is important as it emphasizes the role of the secondary market relative to the local art market. This will assist with framing the secondary market and its function. The second imperative part of this literature is the attention it pays to the components of valuing art which details how the aesthetic and historical factors contribute to the value of art. These factors show how the secondary art market uses art historical knowledge to value an item which then produces further knowledge. When analysing how art historical knowledge is used in the secondary market to produce new knowledge, it can then be determined whether there is a biased perspective. This leads back to the argument of its relevance in adding to the art historical landscape.

Valuing art is one of the main roles of an auction house and is a key tool in their business. Artworks require pre-sale estimates (as discussed earlier in this chapter) before going onto auction and this is a guide for collectors to bid (Gammon 2019). Stevenson identifies four components of value to consider when valuing a piece of art: the aesthetic and historical factors, its supporting documentation, material attributions, and the economic and financial factors (Stevenson 1992: 8). A determining factor in valuing art is by using the existing art historical knowledge. By understanding how art is valued, we will be able to identify how existing art historical knowledge is used by the secondary art market to further produce knowledge through trading art. When purchasing a work of art, one is not only buying the material object but the history that comes along with it (Stevenson 1992:14). What stands out in this section will be the importance of existing art historical knowledge for the secondary market, particularly in South Africa.

Generally, the value of an artwork is only worth what a collector is willing to pay for it. In which case, more demand for a piece will make it more expensive, and likewise, a lack of demand would make a piece cheaper. The performance of an artist's work during the auction is vital to the artists market, should a work meet or exceed their high estimate, it is a sign of a strong and demanding market. However, should the sales fall short by not reaching the reserves or low estimates it can show a downward and negative spiral for the artist. Similarly, the overall auction sales reflect the same pattern, should the overall auction do well, it displays confidence in the art market encouraging more bidders, while the opposite affect would discourage investing in art (Gammon 2019). Stevenson applies the supply and demand model in this case in his first paper. This section will analyse how South African art is valued with pre-sale estimates. While a similar procedure is followed in all auction houses, it does slightly differ based on the information available to the art genre. Using Stevenson's components of value model, he divides the value components into two more general groupings. The first being the tangible materials and the second being information-related aspects (Stevenson 1992: 14). It is through these two general groupings that we will be able to see the difference between valuing the art of European old masters[1] - as discussed by Stevenson in his paper - and valuing South African art. The tangible aspects of an artwork are standardised across the world. This includes the medium of the artwork which holds a hierarchy of quality. Traditionally oil paintings are the most expensive, followed by acrylic paintings, works on paper (water-colour, gouache) and finally prints and multiples. Contemporary art has brought with it a new range of mediums which include installations and mixed media. Valuing contemporary art follows much of the same components. The size of an artwork is the next tangible factor to consider. It can be argued that the larger the work the higher the value as there is more surface area to value. However, this has not been proven. Having an artwork too large can even lower the value as a collector would need a large space to display the work in, which would ultimately reduce the number of interested buyers, therefore, reducing the demand. The subject matter would also fall into this category. The subject matter can range from generic still lives, landscapes and unknown sitters through to abstract expressionism and historically important or political subject matter. Should the subject matter of a work be controversial - such as the Brett Murray *Spear* painting of 2010 - or questionable in history, this can impact the value of a work or even deem the work unmarketable on a public platform. Every artist has, both generally and historically, a specific, desirable subject matter. Artists are known to have a 'golden era', which would include the most sought-after artworks from that artist's oeuvre. This can increase the value of an artwork. These factors are universal when valuing art and apply to all eras of art.

The information-related aspects of art are where the difference in the art market comes in. Starting with what can be considered to be the most important factor of the artwork: the artist. Falling in line with consumerism, society is name-dependent, wanting the most famous or popular artist hanging on their wall. Each movement in art has its top-selling artists, just as the South African market does, with Irma Stern, Jacob Hendrik Pierneef, Alexis Preller and William Kentridge taking the top four positions. This ranking is based on the secondary art market sale value of their art, as the auction houses are the only platform that publicly releases their results making it the only quantitative data to track. Finding a pre-sale estimate for an artwork is

[1] Stevenson analyses and compares the general art market of Renaissance and Baroque Italy, Low Countries (Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg), the English art market, France art market and USA art market.

largely dependent on this data. Tracking the sale trends for an artist and then using the tangible aspects refines the price bracket. This is the basic formula that can be used to determine pre-sale estimates for artworks. Some artists are more standard to value than others. For example, Tinus de Jongh (South African 1885 – 1942) is well-known for his Cape landscape oil paintings. This is an artist which Stevenson defines as having only decorative economic worth, as he does not contribute to artistic heritage (Stevenson 1988:17). To elaborate on this point, Tinus de Jongh was prolific in painting similar landscape scenes. This worked well for the artist and so he continued to produce what sold well. His works are seen as only decorative as opposed to documenting a part of the country's history. In this sense, his works of similar size and aesthetic would carry the same pre-sale estimates, without the need for many other information-related aspects contributing to the value. William Kentridge (South African 1955 –), in comparison, is another prolific artist who has an extensive, varied oeuvre that is well represented in galleries and often comments on the political landscape of South Africa. It is highly likely that a work produced by Kentridge is illustrated in a book or has additional literature to accompany it. Each work is also made relative to a larger body of work that can be referenced. In this sense, many information-related aspects need to be considered when deciding on a pre-sale estimate. These include the provenance, authenticity of the work, and its supporting literature. The importance and role of provenance will be discussed further in chapter three.

South African Art History

South African art history is relatively new in comparison to the Italian renaissance which dates to the fourteenth century. With the exception of rock art, South African art history, or rather the art that is featured in the secondary market, starts circa the mid-nineteenth century with artists such as Hugo Naude, Frans Oerder and Anton van Wouw (Berman 1983: XII). Art produced before this time has not been well enough recorded to add to existing art literature. An unofficial dictionary showing nineteen and twentieth South African artists would be the *Art and Artists of South Africa* written by Esmé Berman in 1970 and revised in 1983. This book provides a dictionary-style layout of the 'top' South African 19th and 20th-century artists, along with a short biography on each. The artists featured in this book make up the majority of the artists featured in the local secondary market today. This literature is flawed as it is a biased selection of artists written by a historian who was part of a particular discourse. This will be explored further in chapter two when examining the literature written by auctions houses. Dr Lize van Robbroeck explores the writing of 20th-century art history in her PhD *Writing White on Black: modernism as discursive paradigm in South African writing on modern Black art* (2006). In this paper, she highlights and examines the problems with art literature written during the 20th century about modern black artists by white art historians. She traces the shifts in art historical writing from the 1930s to the 1990s when South Africa's political views opened to a more diverse cultural landscape (van Robbroeck 2006). In this PhD, von Robbroeck attempts to reflect on the academics and historians before her. She acknowledges in the introduction that only minor attempts have been made to start correcting the art historical landscape and deconstruct the South African racial hierarchies. Van Robbroeck aims to demonstrate how colonial ideas regarding race, culture and 'Africa' persist in the writing and framing of black artists during 20th century South Africa. Art historians were working within a particular discourse. This discourse was moulded by the political system in the country which gave an advantage and privilege to the white race. The artists, historians, academics, and critics all worked from within that discourse, in which there was a particular language used to create and write about art (van Robbroeck 2006). The problem that occurs is that this historical art language was used to write about the 'other', i.e. the black artists in the periphery, which led to generalisations and assumptions about their work (van Robbroeck 2006:2). This literature demonstrates the biased art historical landscape that exists. Van Robbroeck states, "It is imperative that race be dealt with boldly and fearlessly, even at the risk of opening old wounds." (2006:251). She urges historians and academics to be critical when reviewing the literature of the past, recognising the context and particular discourse in which history was written. The solution offered to correct history is to attempt to rewrite history and being more racially inclusive in all forms of culture including advertising, film, music and literature (van Robbroeck, 2006:259). This is relative to the secondary market as existing literature plays a vital role in determining the importance of an artwork or artist. This will be explained in chapter two. It is key to note here that the biased historical landscape that exists is rippled to the secondary market, however, the secondary market must be critical in reviewing 20th Century literature to attempt to rewrite it.

Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, the role and position of the secondary art market in South Africa has been defined. It has identified the clear knowledge gap that exists from a qualitative perspective. There is a lack of existing literature on the South African secondary market and a knowledge gap in terms of the art-historical contribution made by the auction houses. It is also understood that existing art historical knowledge is an imperative factor in valuing artwork. The value placed on artworks determines their relevance in history and importance to collectors, which continues the writing of art history. While highlighting the bias that exists both in the current art historical landscape as well as the secondary market, it is to be argued that the secondary art market can contribute to the 20th-century art historical landscape.

Chapter Two

To question the art historical knowledge produced by auction houses, one must first understand how art history is represented and written within the secondary market. When art is sold, it is not only the artwork being traded but the information produced along with it. When examining the literature and information produced, elements of discourse and the relationship between power & knowledge need to be considered in relation to Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital. These factors influence the production of knowledge. Sociologist Stuart Hall (1932–2014) has deeply explored the representation of culture through language. He particularly draws on and critiques theories by Michel Foucault on power, knowledge and discourse. This will be useful in strengthening the argument being made in this research paper on how history is produced in the secondary art market through these forms. I will be referring to two of Stuart Hall's books in this chapter, the first being *The Formations of Modernity* (1992), particularly chapter six, *The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power*. The second book of Stuart Hall's I will refer to is *Representation: Cultural Representations and signifying Practices* (1997). His ideas of discourse, power and knowledge will be related to the secondary art market and how art history is produced based on the power and knowledge the industry holds. This will take a discursive approach which Hall defines as being concerned with the effects and consequences of how a discourse is represented (Hall 1997: 6). As it has been emphasized throughout this report that an auction house is a business, the information produced can be argued to be for the benefit of that business before any benevolent purposes. In this sense, the knowledge produced is biased towards the business' needs, which begs the question: can it contribute to the art historical landscape despite this? To investigate this question, this chapter will provide an analysis into the theories of cultural capital, discourse, power, and knowledge to understand the different areas of knowledge production featured in the secondary art market. This includes the auction catalogues that are physically produced as an example of its discursive functioning, the media and marketing strategies that are produced and printed, as well as the auction results.

Cultural Capital, Discourse, Power and Knowledge

This research will relate to the theories on discourse, power, and knowledge which are initially discussed by Michel Foucault (1926 – 1984) but critiqued by a Jamaican-British sociologist Stuart Hall. As I agree with Hall's critique on Foucault's theory, I will be using his writing as the theoretical framing upon which this study will be related to. In order to introduce these theories, one first has to understand *representation*. The key theories that will be discussed all relate to *representation*, which is what Hall refers to as the production of culture which brings together meaning and language (Hall, 1997:15). To gauge the production of culture being made, one must first define the language being used. There is the semiotic approach, however, in this case, we will be looking at the role of discourse in the art market. Hall defines discourse as

> "ways of referring to or constructing knowledge about a particular topic of practice: a formation of ideas, images and practices, which provide ways of talking about, forms knowledge and conduct associated with, a particular topic, social activity or institutional site in society" (Hall, 1997, 6).

Hall states that discourse produces knowledge through language. By "language" he did not mean purely linguistic terms but rather the concept between language and practice; what the discourse says and does. However, Foucault was more concerned with the production of knowledge, not through language, but discourse (Hall, 1997: 44). For the purpose of this research, I will be looking at the secondary market in South Africa as a discourse and critically analyzing how this discourse produces knowledge. Bourdieu's theory on cultural capital initially applies to individuals in society accumulating towards economic capital. The concepts of forms of capital will be applied to the secondary market when looking at it as a discourse, to unpack how different types of capital, regarding the knowledge building, accumulates through the business model and thus to the production of knowledge as a form of value. While Foucault states that knowledge produced within a discourse remains inside of the discourse only, Hall disagrees with this statement and suggests that the meaning and language produced within a discourse extends to impact a larger understanding (Hall 1997: 44). I agree with Hall's statement and through analyzing different aspects of the secondary market, it will become apparent as to how the knowledge created within the discourse of the secondary market impacts the larger art historical landscape.

Another key concern for Foucault was the relationship between power and knowledge. Knowledge forms part of the embodied state in Bourdieu's forms of cultural capital which can hold power. In turn, those with power can produce knowledge (Hall 1997: 48). The authority of power implies that the knowledge produced is true, however, it is rather manipulated through the power at play (Hall 1997:49). Each discourse holds the power to produce knowledge, however, it is important to question the knowledge produced to determine the truth to it. According to Bourdieu's theory on the embodied state, having knowledge provides capital that can be converted to economic capital. In this sense, knowledge produces power just as power produces knowledge. The secondary art market as a discourse holds a particular type of power to produce knowledge, and through the knowledge it produces it can create more power. By analysing the ways capital is accumulated through the different business mediums featured in the secondary art market, one is able to determine whether the knowledge produced can be contributed to the art historical landscape.

The Catalogue

The printed auction catalogue is the biggest sales tool for an auction house. This can be related to Bourdieu's objectified state as a material object that is produced in order to achieve more sales leading to more economic capital (Bourdieu 1986:50). These catalogues are produced for the main sales of the auction house that take place during the year, which means not all items that go onto auction are printed into a catalogue. Only the works that the auction house accepts as the main sale lot will be included in the live auction which is accompanied by a printed catalogue. This is the first form of bias that can be seen, as artwork included in a catalogue has an advantage over works that are not. This is largely dependent on the value of the artwork as this determines the extent of knowledge production from within the discourse. Artworks with a higher value hold more power to be included in a printed catalogue, which extends the literature for the artist and artwork. A lower value artwork would not get the same attention. This is a general trend. Exceptions have been made in certain cases per auction house, such as when favourable clients demand a collection be placed together, or for a specific theme within the auction. This section will be investigating the production of the auction catalogues and critically review how the decisions made in the catalogue impact the art historical knowledge of the South African artists included. This directly depicts how the auction house can use the power of the discourse to produce information.

Auction houses produce printed catalogues that are sent to their top clients to entice them into adding to their collection, or to a potential client to start a collection. The expense of the catalogue varies per auction house from simple and slim catalogues to thick and glossy ones. This can depend on the budget available as well as preference within the auction house. These catalogues are used as a sales tool, which is the first and foremost reason for producing them. However, these catalogues have become a useful and archivally important material as they contain a physical record of the items featured in each auction. This becomes historically important, particularly for an artworks' provenance. This means that these catalogues, which can be kept in libraries and collections, become a piece of material to reference and write history. Publishing catalogues and books is an expensive task which art historians and academics often get subsidized funding for. The auction house can self-fund what they print. This serves as a form of power that the secondary art market holds: monetary power to produce knowledge and therefore write history in various ways. Leaving the physical production of the catalogue aside (design and printing), there is a lot of thought and negotiation that goes into the layout of a sales catalogue. The placement of an artwork in a catalogue suggests something about the work: the more prominent the artwork, the more importance is implied. The most prominent place in the catalogue would be the front cover as this is the most viewed image. The following most prominent place would be the back and inside covers of the catalogue. Within the catalogue, the artworks are arranged in ascending lot number order. This order is decided by the auction house and is decided based on the flow they wish to create in the auction room, making sure to spread out the works they are confident will sell to keep a tempo in the room during the auction. Each auction house will have a different strategy and arrange their lots by artist, era, subject matter, or country. The budget and time that each auction house allocates to producing the catalogue determines whether they are able to include more pages, additional supplementary images, and literature from internal and external art historians and specialists. The focus of this discussion is an analysis of an auction catalogue from Strauss & Co, as they have the title of the global leader of South African art, as declared so by the reputable Apollo Magazine in September 2020. The power of the catalogue is dominant in producing knowledge. As this is a discursive analysis, this section will be critiquing the effect and consequence of how each part of the catalogue produces art historical knowledge on the artist and artwork. The catalogue serves its purpose to the business as a sales tool. Additionally, literature is produced and the power of this literature is affected by the decisions made regarding the layout and content of the catalogue. This will go towards the counter-argument that the literature produced is heavily biased towards the business' needs.

The Cover

The artwork used for the cover of the catalogue can be seen as the most prominent aspect of the catalogue. It is this image that is the most seen and it will be the artwork by which the sale is recognized. The image will be used in most of the marketing to recognise and represent the sale. This is called the remarketing strategy which is using one image multiple times for the audience to recognize and remember. Out of the 50 art catalogues produced by Strauss & Co (this excludes the contemporary, charity, wine, decorative arts and special project catalogues) up until September 2020, 21 catalogues have had an Irma Stern feature on the front. This makes up 42% of their catalogue covers. Other artists that have predominately featured on the cover are Alexis Preller, Maggie Laubser and Jacob Hendrik Pierneef. This is not surprising as these are the top-selling artists in the local secondary market and so their work carries high estimates. From a business point of view, the most expensive work will bring in the most commission and so it is made most prominent on the cover of the catalogue. this will allow it to gain the most attention, with the aim of attracting multiple bidders to the lot, to result in a high hammer price. Sellers also demand a prominent spot in the catalogue and the cover is the prime position. Should a seller have an artwork worthy of the cover because of its value, historic importance or aesthetic presence, then its position on the cover can be negotiated. The auction house is then obliged to place the work on the cover to close the consignment or risk losing the consignment to a competitive auction house. This is a reminder that the auction house is a business and the needs of the business come first. How does this attribute to creating historical knowledge? Out of the hundreds of items featured in an auction, a decision of what goes on the cover needs to be made. The artwork used on the cover of the catalogue is perceived by the audience and clients to be a more 'important' artwork. In some cases, this can be true but what constitutes an important artwork?

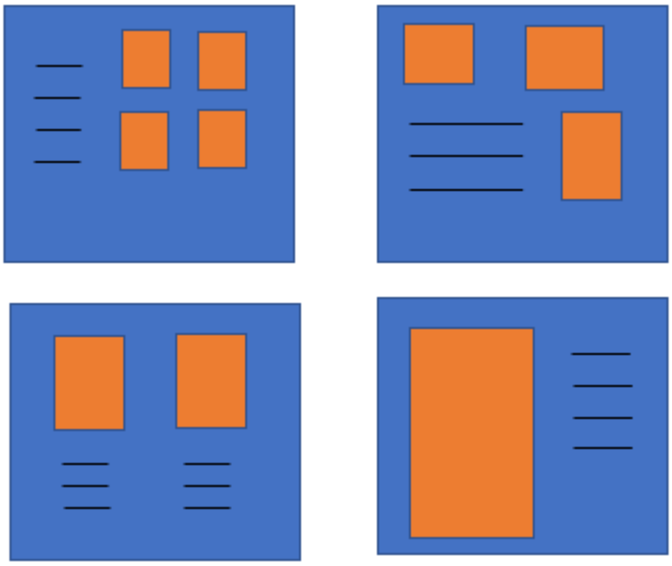
In terms of art historical importance, artwork that plays a vital role in history or represents a part of history can be regarded as important. For example, Penny Siopis *Act I Scene II (see figure 1: Appendix A)* featured in the November 2019 Strauss and Co catalogue is a key work of the artist's oeuvre. It was painted between 1986 and 1987 during her time lecturing at Wits University. This work drew on the 17th-century art genres of history painting and vanitas to depict the privileges and dissimulation of post-apartheid in South Africa (Olivier 2016: 59). It is significant that this work appeared on the secondary market, as works of this genre are most commonly only seen in museum collections instead of being offered to the public. An artwork like this gathers a lot of interest not only from collectors but also from historians and students, and it has been included in the schooling curriculum. In comparison, Jacob Hendrik Pierneef (1886–1957) was a prolific artist, painting extensive landscapes from around South Africa. He too had a golden era of painting, and within his oeuvre there are works that are most sought after by collectors. This can be said to be from the late 1920s to the early 1930s, as this was the period in which the artist completed *The Johannesburg Station Panels* commission, consisting of 32 panels (Freschi 2001:11). The cover of the July 2020 Strauss and Co. catalogue featured a *Bosveld* landscape by JH Pierneef *(see figure 2: Appendix A)*. Completed in 1953, the painting carried a high pre-estimate value of R9 000 000–R12 000 000, even though it was not from Pierneef's desirable era. The work is aesthetically attractive, large scale, and has a clear track of provenance, being bought from Bonhams in 2010 and exhibited at the Standard Bank Gallery, Johannesburg in *A Space for Landscape, The Work of JH Pierneef*, 8 July–12 September 2015 (van Rensburg 2015: 104). This makes it a desirable piece for collectors. Apart from the high price value, what does the placement of this *Bosveld* landscape on the cover of the catalogue mean for the advancement of art historical knowledge in South African art? It is pushing an already high in-demand artist's work into the market which reaffirms their place in history as a top-selling South African artist over and above the other 150 odd artists featured in the catalogue. This is a common pattern that can be seen of works on the cover of auction catalogues and this is one of the ways in which an artist with power keeps their power in history, resulting in a skewing of art historical knowledge.

The inside

It has been established that the front cover of the catalogue is the prime position to show the dominant works of art. The inside of the catalogue and the layout and display of the lots also play a vital role in how each item is perceived and how history is indirectly written through each of the decisions. For this, the July 2020 Strauss and Co. catalogue will be analysed, as this is the most recent catalogue which will provide the most up to date content. This catalogue contains five sessions: one wine session and four art sessions including two private local collections. For the purpose of the research, the wine session will not be observed as this is not relevant to the argument and it covers a minimal number of pages. The inside covers and lead in pages provide an opportunity to highlight artworks, however, these are details and close-ups of certain artworks which provide more decorative value rather than literature. The inside of the catalogue provides all the relevant information about the sale as well as each lot coming up on auction. This includes a high-resolution image of each work, the cataloguing details of each lot (lot number, artist name, nationality and date, title of the artwork, inscriptions, medium, size), the exhibition history, provenance, and literature details of where the piece has been included in. Some works have a piece of text to accompany them which will be analysed later in this chapter.

The four art sessions in the July 2020 auction, are divided over two days with a *Day Sale* and *Evening Sale* on each day. The Day Sale contains artworks that are generally valued under R1 million, and as these are the relatively lower value artworks, they are in some cases clustered together with up to four artworks a page. Using the diagram below to analyse the space allocation of images on the page, it can be deduced that fewer images present on a page gives more dominance to a single artwork as well as more space for text. The more space an image is given the more dominance it holds to the viewer. These decisions are made by the auction house and are based largely on the value of the artwork or by the demand of the vendor.

Figure 14: Demonstration of catalogue layout



This particular auction had 360 art lots, giving each piece a single page would result in a vastly heavy and thick catalogue. Understandably, compromises have to be made to accommodate all the lots. When grouping lots together, there needs to be a sense of curation and flow. The layout of the catalogue can also create a biased representation of the artwork/artist, by either emphasizing the artwork and increasing its importance or collaging it as an 18th-century French art salon. Collaging the works together on a page can increase the chances of a piece being overlooked which decreases the visibility of the artwork. Each of these decisions contributes to the art historical landscape in the way we read the catalogue and view the visual representation of each artwork.

Literature

Over the past 11 years, there has been a significant increase in lots and literature featured in the Strauss & Co auction catalogues. Selected artworks featured in the catalogue get an accompanying text written by a staff member within the company or by an external art historian or specialist. This prompts the question: how are the artworks which get dedicated texts selected, and furthermore, how does this extend the art historical knowledge?

The literature provided in the auction catalogues is often descriptive rather than critical. Its purpose is to provide further context into the work and ultimately assist with the selling of the artwork. As the motive behind the literature is for sale purposes, what consequences does this carry? To explore this, a critique of the writing styles seen in auction catalogues will be analysed. Starting with Lucas Sithole's (1931–1994), *Wounded Buffalo LS7101 (see figure 3: Appendix A)* featured on the Strauss & Co November 2019 live sale in Johannesburg. This is a life-sized bronze cast of a wounded buffalo which was commissioned by Union Corporation Ltd, Johannesburg (known today as Gencor) based on the maquette exhibited at Gallery 101 in 1970. The wounded buffalo represents exploited and oppressed mine workers as strong and enduring, wounded but still not defeated. This is a symbol of their essence and strength through the abominable time. The sculpture was installed outside of the mineworker's recreation hall at Bracken Mines Ltd in Evander. The sculpture was sold privately when the company moved premises and came onto the art market in November 2019 (Strauss & Co 2019). This commission was considered an important moment in history for both miners as well as for South African sculpture, as stated by art historian HEW (Teddy) Winder in the Star newspaper released 17 October 1970 (Winder, 1970). The historical importance of this work makes it worthy of being placed in a museum. Its importance explains the high pre-sale estimates of R1 500 000–R2 000 000. The context of the sculpture was provided together with the lot details. Additionally, art historian Dr Same Mdluli was invited to write a short piece on the work. This collaboration between the auction house and an external, reputable historian turns the auction catalogue into a literary source. The information provided in the catalogue includes all cataloguing details, literary references, provenance, and images, which is all the information necessary for a starting point on the item. The historical significance of the work is vital as it confirms its importance in the art historical landscape, proving context and deeming the work a collector's item. The catalogue can reiterate and even provide further information on an object, which also confirms its authenticity.

An important factor that must be addressed is how art history has previously been written, and how this affects the secondary market. South Africa comes from a deeply politically dysfunctional system of institutionalized racism due to the apartheid regime. The effect of this on art history has been damaging, as the segregation of races also divided the art world in a black versus white binary, oppressing the black people and giving dominance and power to the white people (Jantjies et al. 2011:78). The current literature available for South African artists is limited. The majority of artists have one book or exhibition catalogue that can be referred to. There are a handful of South African artists that have a dedicated catalogue raisonné and there are a few still being written, however funding for a catalogue raisonné is generally required and there are also only a limited number of specialists focusing on 20th-century artists. One of the problems that arose in art history was during the 20th century when the local art world consisted predominantly of white artists, historians, journalists, and critics who wrote about the black artists that were in the periphery of the art world. Due to this, there has been very limited writing done on the black artists who practised during this time. In the literature available, the ideas of race and culture are predetermined by prejudices and assumptions (Jantjies et al. 2011:79). Work produced by black artists were categorised and labelled as 'black art', 'township art', and 'African art' which made it distinctly different and separate from the main stream of artworks being produced by artists in the centre of the stratification. As indicated in chapter one, using existing literature is a key aspect in referencing artworks that come onto auction. Therefore, artists whose work and exhibition histories have been well documented will be sustainably represented in catalogues, while the 20th-century artists that were in the periphery of the art world are less likely to have additional literature featured. For example, writing an additional text on an artist like Irma Stern or William Kentridge can be done fairly quickly as there are several specialists for these artists as well as a substantial amount of literature that can be referred to. The ripple effect of this is that these artists will continuously be written about and their historical literature landscape extended. Artists with less easily accessible literature and knowledge will lag behind. This is also due to the capacity of the auction house. With an auction consisting of 300 or more items, most auction houses do not have the staff capacity nor the time (due to deadline requirements) to research each item in depth. Therefore, the artists which have easily accessible research material will be used more frequently, while artworks or artists without much resource material will be placed with less information - if included in the auction catalogue at all. As stated by Foucault, "power does not 'function in the form of a chain' – it circulates" (Hall 1997 49). This is how the artists who hold power in literature, continue to hold power, while it remains difficult for new research to be done.

This brings up the importance of literature being produced in other parts of the art industry, and how this affects the secondary art market. Considering the opening of the privately founded Norval Foundation, the first exhibition that took place included the works of modern artists Sydney Kumalo, Ezrom Legae and Edoardo Villa. This exhibition was accompanied by the catalogue *Re/discovery and Memory*, edited by Karel Nel and Elizabeth Burroughs (2018). This catalogue provided a catalogue raisonné for each of these artists, becoming the most recent and valid reference material which is now used by auction houses to confirm the cataloguing details and provide exhibition history, provenance and literature for these artists. This assists and furthers the dominance of the artwork in history, which therefore makes the work more desirable for a collector.

The most fundamental reason for auction houses to add context to an artwork is to increase the sale potential of a work. This type of writing is slightly different as it is a persuasive piece of text meant to entice a buyer to purchase the piece. A well-written piece of text alongside an artwork can push interest for a particular item in two ways: firstly, based on the content of the writing, and secondly, by seeing that a work has a dedicated text to it immediately makes it appear to be of higher importance than the items without text. For this example, reference is made to the text on the cover lot JH Pierneef, *Bosveld* (Appendix B). This text is a good example of an iconographic analysis of an artwork that shows the writers admiration for the artist's style and technique. However, it does not provide any academic advancements on the artist's history. JH Pierneef has a controversial history as he has been labelled as an Afrikaner nationalist claiming the South African landscape as Afrikaner soil. Professor Federico Freschi states, "Pierneef's work was thus seen as creating and reinforcing a powerful Afrikaner identification with the land, and the consequent inalienable right to its ownership." (Freschi 2011:11). This topic of discussion has been debated by a number of art historians including Federico Ferschi, Nico Coetzee and Wilhelm van Rensburg. Their debates show Pierneef in both a positive and negative light. The controversy of this artist will of course not be referenced in an auction catalogue as the conflict could result in deterring potential collectors. In this sense, the auction house is seen to turn a blind eye to the problematic parts of history, while focusing on the positive and aesthetic values of an artwork. In this way, there is an information bias that takes place in the production of knowledge by the secondary market. It can be argued that in some cases a work needs to be appreciated outside of its history, however, with regards to how the secondary market adds to the art historical landscape of an artist, this partial view of history - which is not being critically evaluated - will ultimately skew the historical landscape.

Media and Marketing

Media and marketing form part of the objectified state as it is a medium that is used to influence the public both within the discourse and outside of the discourse. Its intention is to gain more sales. The power and influence of media act as a key function of any business as it can hold the power to influence the masses using platforms including print media (newspapers and magazines), digital media (Google) and social media (Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter). While some forms of print media may require a subscription fee, social media is a free global platform for the public to voice their opinion and influence their following. Artists can use these platforms to advertise themselves, show their portfolio, and build a market for their work without the need for a dealer or gallerist. Certain companies encourage and promote the public to post and tag their business to increase visibility, which is in turn results in free indirect advertising that ultimately brings more business in. For auction houses, advertising and the name brand is a vital component. It is the reputation of the auction house that will determine its success in being able to trade art, especially at a high-end monetary level. The most effective posts gain a reaction, and due to the nature of the secondary market which allows the prices to be public knowledge, this often stirs up big reactions. An example includes the questionable Leonardo Da Vinci *Salvator Mundi (see figure 4: Appendix A)*, which broke the world record at Christie's New York in November 2017 as becoming the most expensive painting sold at a public auction. The artwork fetched an exorbitant price of $450.3 million. It is no surprise that this opened a flood gate of media talking about the obscene price, the authenticity of the work and even questioning the commodity of the art market. As of 24 February 2021, there have been over 13 200 posts with the hashtag #SalvatorMundi, and the live auction recording from the Christie's YouTube account holds over 2.5 million views which serves as a small indication of the extent of how far this story has spread in the media on an international level. This is an extreme example of the reach social media has and the power of publishing auction results.

This effect occurs on most high selling artworks both in the international market as well as the local market, but this begs the question: how does this affect the representation of artists in media? Keeping to the artists featured on the local secondary market, artists that hold a high estimate or strong story, which is a key selling point, are more likely to feature in the media. Leading up to an auction there are selected highlights that will be shared in press releases and media to build attention. These are usually of the high valued pieces and most frequently features works of Irma Stern, JH Pierneef and William Kentridge. After the auction, the highest total price results, as well as the highest results that surpassed the pre-sale estimates (which would indicate that competitive bidding took place), are released through the media.

Considering this, it can be seen that the top-performing artists continue to feature in media far more often than the middle or lower-priced artists. Due to this general trend, it would suggest that top-performing artists will continue to gain more exposure and command more attention over the average performing artists. They are therefore represented more on the digital and media platforms, deeming them of more importance. The fact that auction results can influence the media surrounding an artist introduces the next section of how auction results affect an artist's representation.

Auction Results Affecting an Artist's Presence in History

The most researched part of the secondary market is analysing the prices achieved for artwork at auction. This is the drumroll to the business as all efforts in the catalogue and marketing lead to this point of the auction, which determines the success of the business and the market. Artists that perform at the top end of the market are the most noticeable, as seen in the previous sections. With large amounts of money comes power and an influence on history. Stepping away from the predictable top artists, my analysis of the auction results is going to take a different approach, by looking at the large scale of the art market and asking the question: what does the performance of an artist's work at auction do for their representation in history? There are three general outcomes for a work at auction: it can sell exceedingly well, sell within the given estimate, or pass at auction which will result in a bought-in status. Should one of these outcomes repeat continuously for an artist, it can result in a ripple effect and impact how the artist is viewed, therefore affecting their representation and visibility. To elaborate on this point, I will be examining each outcome and how the ripple effect writes art history.

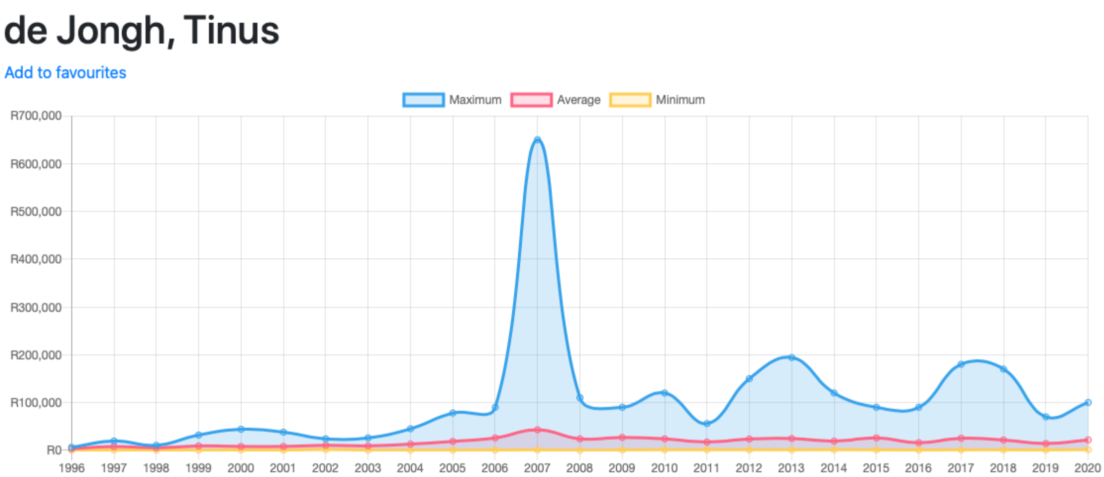
Outcome 1: Selling above the estimate

Moses Tladi (1903–1959), a South African born and self-taught artist made history by becoming the first black artist to exhibit at the South African National Gallery in 1931 and again in 1933 (Falken 2016). However, his presence in 20th-century literature is limited, having not been mentioned in Esmé Berman's *Art and Artist of South Africa* reference book. The artist's oeuvre consists of a small body of work of which the majority is in the artist's estate. Tladi first entered the South African secondary market in November 2017, with two works appearing on auction. The first was *Near the Mill, Kroonstad (OFS)*, followed by *Two Hillocks (see figure 5 & 6: Appendix A).* These works generated a large amount of interest during the auction, which could also be due to the 2016 travelling retrospective of the artist's work. The initial estimates for the works were R70 000–R100 000, and R25 000-R35 000 respectively. The price achieved at auction through competitive bidding resulted at R341 040 and R125 048, including buyer's premium, respectively. The large amounts of interest surrounding the works and exceeding results made the lots the highlight of the auction which in turn made the result feature in the press release and media following the auction. In November 2018 another two works by the artist appeared on auction. With the success of the first lot, the auction house continued the momentum by accompanying the new lots with additional literature which referenced the success of the previous lots as well as extending the literature of the artist. In this way, it can be seen that the success of high results motivates the extension of literature within the auction. A new breaking record was achieved for the artist of R455 200 for the oil painting, *Mountain Landscape (Mont-aux-Sources) (see figure 7: Appendix A)*, an amount which once again surpassed the initial pre-sale estimates of R80 000-R120 000. This particular work was marked as one of the highlights of the auction and was featured in press releases and articles following the success of the auction. An artist that was only lightly featured in the historical landscape was now been featured across multiple platforms which made the artist's name recognizable due to the success of his work at auction. The auction house was able to contribute to the limited art historical landscape with the literature featured in the catalogue, which can be argued to have assisted in the sale result. This further motivated additional literature about the artist in press releases and articles providing more attention to the reputation of the artist.

Outcome 2: Selling consistently within pre-sale estimates

Tinus de Jongh (1885–1942) was born in Amsterdam but became known for his painting career in South Africa. The artist is well known for his Cape landscape paintings *(see figure 9: Appendix A)*. Emsé Berman describes that "they are sumptuous in scale, local in content, descriptive in character, traditional in style and bright in colour" (Berman 1983:111). This description can be applied to all of the artist's paintings as he was prolific with the subject matter and style. As seen from the pink line in the graph below, taken from Auction Vault in February 2021 (www.auctionvault.co.za), which indicates the average of the artist's market, it has remained constant since 1996 up until the present day. The sudden spike in 2007 is an outlier data point as this result was based on a bidding war, which is not a true reflection of the market. The large discrepancy seen between the maximum and minimum is due to the value discrepancy between oil paintings and etchings which are the common mediums used by this artist. The etchings fetch values on the lower end of the scale while oil paintings range throughout the price scale.

Figure 15: Graph showing the prices achieved (y) per year (x) by Tinus de Jongh



Captured: 1 February 2021, www.auctionvault.co.za

In this sense, the artist is an example of a median in the South African art market as his work is continuously featured in the art market due to the prolific oeuvre that has been well-traded amongst collectors, family and friends, fetching an overall consistent average. Relating this back to the question of how their market affects their representation in history, the artist continues to constantly feature in the secondary art market. The enables the artist to have a continuous market-related history which, although limited to the secondary market, still contributes to the artist's name being represented.

Outcome 3: Pass

When an artist's work struggles to sell on auction, it is an indication that there is no demand for the artist's work. This could be for many reasons including limited information on the artist, controversy in the artist's market such as fakes and forgeries, a scandal attached to the artist's name (this topic will be discussed further in chapter three) which would cause uncertainty in the artist's market, or simply that the artist's work is not attractive to collectors. For whichever reason, should an artist's work not sell on the secondary art market the price lowers as the demand lowers. Should the works not sell and bring in any income, auction houses will no longer include the works in auctions which results in a halt to the artists secondary market representation. This will further limit the chances of the artist's work featuring in prominent collections. Majority of the artists featured on auction are either deceased or no longer practicing. Other than permanent collections and possibly a retrospective exhibition, the secondary market is the main platform new works can appear to be seen by the public and for the works to added into collections. Should the inclusion of a non-practicing or deceased artist cease, they can soon become forgotten. For artists that are still practicing, there are alternative opportunities such as gallery shows and art fairs, in which they are generate higher interest in their work.

Through the analysis of the outcomes, it can be stated that the result of an artist's market at auction holds power in contributing information to and withholding it from the art historical landscape. Additionally, auction outcomes determine how an artist will feature and be read about within that landscape.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that auction houses hold the power to produce knowledge through different forms of cultural capital. They can manipulate and control the representation of artists, information and even results, through the production of their catalogues. Their writing and marketing techniques can influence how much attention is paid to a particular work or artist, which ultimately impacts the art history landscape, depending on the business' needs. While this chapter highlights that the contribution made by auction houses to art history can be biased, it can also be motivated that there is a significant contribution made by the secondary art market, particularly the impact of the results of an auction. It now also needs to be argued that there is a constructive contribution to the art history landscape that is made by the secondary market. This will be analysed in chapter three.

Chapter Three

It has been established that the secondary market produces knowledge in the form of capital, using its sources of power, knowledge, and discourse and that the knowledge produced is biased toward the needs of the business. However, the argument remains: can the knowledge produced contribute towards the art historical landscape given its biased nature? This chapter will argue that the secondary market plays an important role in contributing to the art historical landscape in ways that other aspects of the art industry are unable to. While the secondary market is responsible for liquidating large amounts of art and helping collectors build and extend their collections, auction houses are also able to collect large amounts of data that can be publicly accessed. This enables it to contribute to the art historical knowledge beneficially. Another imperative factor is the role of provenance - particularly the new knowledge that comes from the provenance of an artwork. Provenance is the origin of an object; it is the tracing of an object's biography from the current position working backwards to the time of creation (Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary 2005: 1017). This is invaluable information for two main reasons: to authenticate the piece of art and to provide further non-biased historical information. In this manner, auction houses can contribute new information and knowledge about South African artists based on the provenance of the artworks that they handle. This information becomes vitally important when faced with the potential of fakes and forgeries in the market. This chapter will also highlight the role of existing literature and new literature in the infiltration of fakes and forgeries. Specialists within the auction house have a duty to research an artwork by consulting primary research material, contacting particular specialists, and thoroughly examining the work to confirm its authenticity. In this way, the artwork that is featured at a major auction house is assumed to have had all the relevant precautions and research done. If done correctly, this adds to art historical knowledge and helps prevents fakes from entering the market. Finally, this chapter will look at the specific efforts made by auction houses that directly contribute to the art historical landscape.

Data collection as an embodied state of cultural capital

Nicola Kritzinger explores the impact that private collections have on the understanding and writing of art history in her paper *The Public Influence of the Private Collection – A Hand in History* (2013). This research forms a key reference to the role of collections, particularly in South Africa. As highlighted by Kritzinger, "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." (Kritzinger 2013:8). From my experience in valuing collections through my position in the auction house, I would sum up the types of large collections into three general categories: private collections, public collections and corporate collections. Public collections in museums and institutions are usually permanent collections that are managed internally. It is unlikely that works in a public collection will enter the art market (Kritzinger 2013:9). Private and corporate art collections make up the majority of the collections in South Africa, and these collections are largely inaccessible to the public. These collections do, however, need to be insured for theft and damages, in which case an insurance valuation is required which can be provided by an auction house. Other reasons for valuing an art collection include probate valuations and selling the collection. Either an independent art consultant or specialist, or an auction house, can assist with a valuation. While it is a competitive market to get the tender on large collections, auction houses can offer the service for free while independent valuators depend on the income from the service. This gives the auction houses an advantage over independent valuators. When debating to liquidate items from a collection through auction, most collectors will obtain a valuation from the top suitable auction houses and contemplate the best proposal to consign the work or collection. Through the service of providing valuations, auction houses, in particular, can document a considerable amount of private and corporate collections which makes for a vault of valuable data. The collection of this data allows an auction house to keep track of major collections, locate key historical artworks, produce internal data on artist's oeuvres, and view works that have not yet been in the public view. This is a collection of knowledge that accumulates in an auction house and can be referred to as embodied capital which provides an auction house with both economic capital as well as power through the knowledge it incapsulates. Although this knowledge is confidential to the business and cannot add to art historical knowledge in a public sense, it still serves as an imperative aspect of the art world as it is an accumulating stock-list of South African art which is preserved in the auction house database. This becomes valuable information, especially for research purposes within the auction house. It is necessary for authenticating a work, building a provenance record and recording the details of the artwork's existence.

Provenance as an embodied state of cultural capital

Provenance is a key factor in any artwork. With a clear provenance, artwork can be traced back to its time of creation and this confirms the authenticity of the work. It is also tracing the ownership of the artwork and its movements within the art market (Stevenson 1992:183). Gallerists can often be strict with who buys an artist's work to ensure the preservation of the work and to guarantee that it holds a good provenance. This strengthens the artist's market and retains or even increases the value (Bamberger 2007: 203). Should a gallery only sell to high-end collectors, the artworks of artists represented in the gallery are guaranteed to go into a good private collection, which protects the artist oeuvre. When a said work that carries a strong provenance (which is tracible through the gallerist) is offered on the secondary market, the work becomes more desirable as its authenticity is strong (Bamberger 2007: 201). San Francisco based art appraiser and consultant Alan Bamberger states in his book *The Art of Buying Art* (2007) that provenance can come in many forms: a signed certificate, an exhibition or gallery label, an invoice, a record of previous owners, an illustration in a published book or exhibition catalogue, letters or paper discussing the art, video footage of the artwork in the artist's studio or with the artist, or through reputable verbal information (Bamberger 2007:202). As Kritzinger states, the role of the collector is vital as they preserve the work for the future (Kritzinger 2013:68). The owner's names are not always published, for confidential reasons. Terms such as 'from the property of a collector' will be used in place of this to suggest the work comes from a prominent collection. In the cases of previous owners not adding any value to the provenance, no provenance will be mentioned. Stevenson looks at the role of provenance in determining the economic value of an artwork. He suggests that if a work is limited to the commercial value but is placed in a prominent collection, then the provenance of the work being in the collection gives it a higher status and therefore economic worth (Stevenson 1992:183). An example of this is when Oprah Winfrey visited the studio of up and coming South African artist Nelson Makamo (1982 -) in 2019, which was around the same time the artist was featured on the cover of Times magazine. The news quickly spread through social media increasing the demand for the artist's work as his work is featured in the collection of Oprah Winfrey. It also immediately increased the value of the artist's market. Should the work owned by Oprah Winfrey ever go onto the market, it would likely carry a higher pre-sale value than any other work from the artist's oeuvre. As it was in the possession of a world-renowned philanthropist, this added cultural capital to the item. Being able to track the provenance of work clearly through the ownership provides assurance of its authenticity (Bamberger 2007: 202).

A key aspect of tracing the provenance is also documenting history. The provenance of an object becomes part of the object and when the object gets sold on the secondary market it carries with it this particular history (Bamberger 2007: 201). An example of this would be when Alexis Preller's *Adam (see figure 10: Appendix A),* came onto the market. The work is an intaglio made of fibreglass and painted with oil paint, measuring 183 cm in height and 91cm in width (Strauss & Co 2016:180). This artwork was created in 1969 for an exhibition at Lidichi Art Gallery, Johannesburg, where the artist presented a body of intaglio works that created three-dimensional illusions (Strauss & Co 2016:181). The exhibition was a great success, however, the work was not seen after that exhibition until 2017. During research done for the comprehensive *Alexis Preller: Africa, the Sun and Shadows* and *Alexis Preller: Collected Images* by Karel Nel and Esme Berman, the whereabouts of the work could not be found. The most that the researchers discovered was that the work had been relocated to America (Berman & Nel 2009: 281). In 2017, through the general enquiry inbox at Strauss & Co, Mrs Ruth and Mr Jerome Siegel from New York sent through an image of this Preller-piece, wanting a valuation on it. The Siegel's are passionate art collectors who were visiting South Africa in 1969 and attended the Alexis Preller exhibition at Lidchi Art Gallery where they purchased the intaglio *Adam*. The piece lived in their New York apartment for 48 years until 2017 when the work resurfaced and was repatriated back to South Africa to be placed on auction in November (Strauss & Co 2016:181). Prior to contacting Strauss & Co, the Siegel's obtained a valuation from a New York auction house who gave the work a generic insurance value because they were unable to identify the artist. In South Africa, there was a demand for the piece which resulted in a final price of R6 920 800 (including premiums) (Strauss & Co 2021). Auction houses can contribute new knowledge to the historical landscape through the recording of provenance which can bring out new information on the artist's life and work. In some cases, it is not only the ownership that is important but the context of the provenance which can add new information about the artist's life and work. Artists have often traded artworks in lieu of rent or other goods. Pieces of information such as this add new knowledge about the artist's life and work. In this way, auction houses can contribute to the artist's history, therefore providing the auction house with embodied capital. As a counterargument, auction houses can also emphasize the provenance as a marketing tool to focus more attention on a work. Even so, the need for new knowledge in the South African art historical landscape is needed despite the business motives.

Tracing provenance back to a gallery or having documentation such as invoices is the ideal way to verify the provenance of an artwork (Bamberger 2007:201). Should the provenance be unclear or based on the word of the consigner, it becomes difficult to verify the provenance. Due to South Africa's history and the discrepancy in race, black artists rarely featured in prominent galleries or South African literature (Jantjies et al. 2011:3). There were limited publications or exhibition catalogues produced as the opportunities for artists of colour were addressed by missionary and liberal initiatives which established the majority of the art collectives (Jantjies et al. 2011:5). Some artists such as Gerard Sekoto, Azaria Mbatha, Dumile Feni and Ernst Mancoba were exiled from South Africa and moved abroad to continue their art practice. These artists practised successfully, and have been 'rediscovered' by recent literature that atones their life and works as South African artists (Jantjies et al. 2011:6). However, many artists of all races, residing in various countries, are not recorded in history. By specifically considering the discrepancy between the artists of colour and white artists in South Africa, it can be concluded that the limited publications and sources of provenance recorded for artists of colour have impacted the visibity on the secondary art market. These gaps in the literature and provenance also provide opportunities for fakes and forgeries of artists who are being recognised on the art market to enter the secondary market. When one compares artists such as Irma Stern (1894–1966) and Ephraim Ngatane (1938–1971), two South African artists whose careers overlapped, one finds a large discrepancy in the amount of literature, exhibition history and provenance between the artists. Ngatane has one dedicated publication to his life and work, *Ephraim Ngatane: A Setting Apart*, by Professor Rory Bester and written in 2009, and is mentioned minimally in general literature. Irma Stern has a well-documented oeuvre of her works, travels and life with new books and information still being written. These two artists came from vastly different backgrounds, opportunities and privileges in a country that was fighting a war against racism, and it was these factors that affected their placement and representation in history. Should a work by Irma Stern come up for auction, there is a high chance that there is a recorded provenance as well as references to its exhibition history, and featured literature. Ephraim Ngatane, on the other hand, was classified as a 'township artist', mostly restricted to the scenes around him (Bester 2009: 5). He had exhibitions within the art centres Polly Street Art Centre and Jubliee Art Centre which were both successful institutions for black artists, however, the exhibitions were mostly unrecorded. Since the artist's death, the documentation of his history is dependent on the collector's provenance. This chapter has demonstrated the importance of capturing provenance to add to new research, which typically occurs in the auction house.

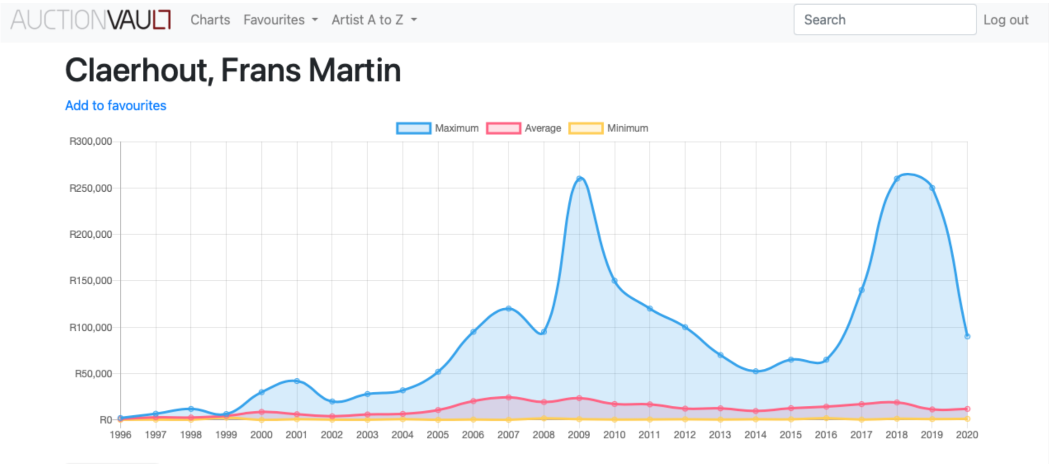
Fakes and Forgeries

An unfortunate reality in the art world is the intrusion of fakes and forgeries. For as long as art is a commodity, this problem will continue to affect the art world globally. Fakes and forgeries commonly enter the market through the secondary market, by private art dealers, online public selling platforms, general auction houses and in some cases even at large auction houses both internationally and locally. These reproductions can range from being very sophisticated and difficult to tell apart from an original, to being very obvious reproductions of an artist's work. In South Africa, the issue around fakes and forgeries is mostly kept discreet within the industry. Should the extent of the problem become publicly known it would discourage buyers and investors to buy into the art market. Art theft is another concerning problem as anything with value is at risk of being stolen. However, stealing art is more complicated than stealing other material goods as it cannot be metaled and remade into something else. Should illegitimate work be bought, there is very little that can be done with it. If it appears on the public market it will be flagged as a stolen work, provided that it was initially reported as stolen. In an article written by journalist Graham Wood, *Fake, Copies and Theft: How Much Art Crime is There and is it a Thing in South Africa?* (2019), he confirms that there is no local police department dedicated to art theft and crime. He states, 'the art market in South Africa is so small that you end up with the slightly contradictory situation where the market is unregulated and hardly policed, and the archives aren't comprehensive but it's still really difficult for thieves to monetize stolen works through legitimate channels' (Wood 2019). There are efforts made from within the industry, such as the art theft registry which is controlled by the art insurance company ITOO Art Insure. Wood also highlights that the biggest threat to theft in the art market is ignorance and greed. The potential prices that art can fetch makes it a target, however, should the work be reported as a stolen work it deems the work untouchable and therefore worthless (Wood 2019). The larger threat to the art market is fakes and forgeries. This is where the expertise of an auction house is imperative. It is a responsibility of an auction house (as well as a dealer and gallery) to have the experience and knowledge to identify a forgery and prevent it from entering the art market. Should fake art and forgeries slip into the market, it can be damaging to the artist's representation and market as a whole.

An example of this would be looking at the market of Frans Claerhout (1919 – 2006), a Belgian-born missionary priest who lived and worked in Bloemfontein, South Africa. His style consisted of landscapes and figures, sunflowers, and donkeys. Claerhout's art was influenced by the village scenes around him, particularly the scenes while he was in Thaba 'Nchu, one of his mission stations (Berman 1993: 96). His main medium was oil, but a prolific amount of his work was on paper using mixed mediums such as oil, charcoal and pastel. This became the area of his market that was most affected. It was confirmed by the artist in 2002 that a close family friend had been forging his work, which was then sold through a well-known Bloemfontein

Gallery after the artist's death in 2006. Several questionable works by Claerhout appeared on the market, mainly through online internet auctions and private sales. This lead to an investigation into his market during which the art insurance company ArtInsure identified more than 30 fakes (Orford, 2011). Further investigation was done by the local investigative journalist team of Carte Blanche, and the story was aired on television in August 2011 confirming the problem and bringing it to the attention of a large number of local collectors and art enthusiasts. This caused a dramatic drop in his secondary market, as indicated by the graph below which shows the average trend in Claerhout's market (AuctionVault).

Figure 16: Graph showing the prices achieved (y) per year (x) by Frans Claerhout



Captured: 9 March 2021, www.auctionvault.co.za

Figure 17: Data relating to above graph depecting the amount of items sold per year to achieve the value amounts

Year	Number of items sold per year
2000	36
2001	180
2002	150
2003	234
2004	246
2005	378
2006	245
2007	707

2008	744
2009	360
2010	474
2011	372
2012	359
2013	515
2014	486
2015	420
2016	288
2017	227
2018	396
2019	294
2020	156

Data taken from AuctionVault (www.auctionvault.co.za) 9 March 2021

Examining the market of Frans Claerhout is a particularly effective study into the effects of fakes and forgeries, as this is an artist with a publicly known controversial market. Over the past two decades, more than 1200 works by Claerhout have been recorded to have sold through auctions. This excludes the works which are traded privately and through galleries, and displays how prolific Claerhout was throughout his lifetime and the controversy that followed when the copies/forgeries were leaked into the market. The above graph displays the annual sell-through results for the artist, and the data table related to the graph. It takes into account all mediums of the artist's work that appeared on the market. There was a clear, general increase in value leading to 2007. However, a clear drop in value occurred in 2008 even though it contained the largest number of items sold annually. In 2009 there were two oil paintings sold amounting to R370 000. While the market appears to have recovered in 2018 and 2019, this was due mainly to the sale of a bronze sculpture selling for R665 000 in 2018, and another bronze sculpture selling for R250 000 in 2019. The number of items offered on the market has significantly dropped since the peak of 2008, and despite the outlying high data points, the market for Claerhout has decreased due to the infiltration of fakes and forgeries. Through this example, the effects of fakes and forgeries in an artist's market are concluded to be damaging to the market performance, even though the artist's works are still being sold through auctions and at times achieving good results. In this way, the auction houses, particularly reputable ones, are seen to be helpful towards saving an artist's market. Auction houses provide the service that ensures the correct research and precausions has been done by the relevant specialists, this includes confirming the artworks provenance. Artists that have works that are at risk of being forged are high selling artists, as those works would be most profitable, but, these artists' works are usually well-documented. Alexis Preller's archive has been well researched by Karel Nel and Esmé Berman while compiling the box set Africa, *The Sun and Shadows* Volumes 1 & 2 (2009) which contains a well-documented raisonné of the artist's oeuvre. All major works are likely to feature in this book and it, therefore, stands as a catalogue raisonné for the artist. In this case, should a work by Alexis Preller be brought to an auction house, there is reference material available to refer to as well as specific specialists in the area to consult. A fake artwork can be identified with the evidence in the same way an original work can be authenticated. Problems arise when there is not a large amount of existing literature, source material or dedicated specialists on an artist. Should an artist's oeuvre not be well-documented, this leaves the potential for fakes and forgeries to enter the market. The weak point in South African art history is that a large portion of the black artists that were practising during the 20th century do not have not had a well-documented catalogue raisonné of their work. This is also partially because a lot of their work was traded privately. The auction houses can contribute to rectifying this problem by finding these works through their obligation-free valuation services which lead to offering items on auction. While the lack of existing literature can make it difficult to verify an artwork, the historic data handled by an auction house builds reference material to contribute towards the art historical landscape and prevents the infiltration of fake works onto the market in future. Legally, there is no protocol in place should a fake work be identified. There is no specific police department, nor can it be impounded. Susie Goodman, director of Strauss & Co states, 'The problem is we can't do anything about a fake if walks through the door" (Wood 2019). For now, the best thing the industry can do is prevent these works from leaking onto the market.

Curated Auctions

Auction houses, just like most businesses, need to be innovative to attract new audiences and build the company. This includes expanding their offers, expanding their geographical reach in terms of both sourcing and offering works, and grouping works together which complement each other and have the potential to build a piece of history. Although auction houses do have a database of collections and continuously value collections, there are always new items that appear on the market for the first time. Major international auction houses such as Christie's and Sotheby's have multiple departments in which they can separate auctions into movements, mediums, countries and collections. This is due to the scale of the business as well as the market. However, in South Africa, the market is still fairly new in comparison and still largely collected within the country. The scope of artworks only dates back to the 19th century. Due to this, there is not enough high-value art on the market to create various dedicated auctions. Art at auction is grouped in large sales which feature as the main event for an auction house. Lower value artworks will go on online sales and high-value artworks will go onto a traditional styled live auction. In this way, each auction has a mix of 19th century, modern, post-war and contemporary art. This also presents the opportunity to curate auctions. The general flow of the auction catalogue and the addition of literature to a work was discussed in chapter two. Works can also be grouped as being part of a specific collection or, in the case of this argument, in a curatorial manner that has the potential to add to the art historical landscape.

An example of this would be looking at the 13 November 2017 Strauss & Co catalogue which featured a corporate collection, artist estate and three themed curatorial selections (Strauss & Co 2017). Each of these curated sections is highlighted at the beginning of the catalogue with short explanatory text which serves the purpose of documenting the collection/curatorial framework. This can be used as a reference starting point for further research. Looking at each one of the sections will demonstrate how an auction house can contribute to the art historical landscape through the curatorial decisions made within the auction and catalogue.

Starting with The Barloworld Collection, a synopsis of the company and the collection is featured on page 15 which states the significance of the collection as being part of one of South Africa's oldest companies (founded in 1902). It still stands as a leading industrial distributor of global brands. The art collection began in1972 when the building of the head office in Sandton started, known as Barlow Park. This land was sold to property developers in 2017. Corporations usually de-acquisition an art collection discretely as it would suggest that a company is in need of funds. However, in this case, it was made public as the reason for the de-acquisition was to transform the collection into a more diverse and inclusive representation of African art by including contemporary art and photography. Additionally, funds were dedicated to the group's cultural programme for developing new talent (Strauss & Co 2017:15). The initial collection included works by mainly South African modern artists such as Irma Stern, Adolph Jenstch, John Meyer, Gordon Vorster and Maud Sumner, to name a few (Strauss & Co 2017:5). The company's statement made it clear that the collection was problematic as it included art from mainly white artists and was not inclusive or diverse. This serves as a key example of the ripple effect of the socio-political issues of the country impacting the art world, and similarly, the collections that were curated during the 20th century. As the auction house handled the collection with an auction while documenting the rationale of the consignment, it created a piece of public historical knowledge that can be further investigated and researched.

The next collection was part of the Estate Late Danie de Jager (1936 – 2003). The South African sculptor is arguably most well-known for the life-size elephant sculpture *Shawu* which stands at the entrance of the Lost City Palace Hotel at Sun City. The collection featured on the auction contained nine lots which included four sketches by Alexis Preller and five sculptures by the artist including a maquette for the famous Shawu *(see figure 11: Appendix A)* (Strauss & Co 2017:124-129). Although it was not a very diverse or curated collection, the decision to write an introduction on the estate was both a marketing technique and provided a platform for the artist to be written about.

Just as museums curate exhibitions based on their collections, auction houses need to work with the items available for the auction. Not all auction houses take this approach. This particular auction featured three themes that were curated based on the items available on the auction. This means that the items had come from various vendors as opposed to a single collection, and they were curated based on common themes. These themes were: A Selection of Artworks from Kwazulu-Natal, Wartime South African Artworks, and Highveld Landscapes. The selection of works from KwaZulu Natal included artists well-known to the secondary market such as Andrew Verster, Hussein Salim, Walter Oltmann and Clement Séneque, while also introducing new artists to the secondary market such as Diamond Bozas, Jack Heath, Bronwen Heath and Norman Dunn. There was a total of 60 lots, including 43 different artists in the selection. The success of grouping these works together in a theme provided context and information on the artists and artworks in a curatorial manner. It showed the influence of

British Modernism adapted with an ‘African’ spirit, the influence of the Admore Ceramic Studio, Rorke’s Drift Arts and Crafts Centre and the Vukani Arts Association as important institutions that have given a platform to artists and produced a number of well-regarded artists (Strauss & Co 2017:17).

The Wartime South African Artworks focused on two key historical conflicts: the Anglo-Boer War (now referred to as the South African war) (1899 – 1902), and World War II (1939 – 1945). Many South African artists were affected by these events and thus it often makes the subject matter of artists’ work. Included in this particular auction was Alexis Preller’s *Fleurs du Mal (see figure 12: Appendix A)* which was painted in 1944 upon his return from serving in the medical corps during World War II (Strauss & Co 2017: 262). Dorothy Kay’s *War News (see figure 13: Appendix A)*, depicting men past the fighting age, intently reading the wartime news, was also included in this auction. Kay is well regarded as a wartime artist. Other artists such as Frans Oerder, Erich Mayer, Frans Krige, Neville Lewis, Terence McCaw, Cecil Skotnes and Robert Hodgins are also included in this group of artists. Most of these artists served in the wars while also, later, relating their work to the subject matter (Strauss & Co 2017:18).

The final theme used in this auction and catalogue is the Highveld Landscapes which is a prominent subject matter for South African artists. This auction highlighted the landscapes done by JH Pierneef, Frans Order, John Koenakeefe Mohl, William Kentridge, Moses Tladi, John Meyer, Walter Meyer, Ernest de Jong, Gerard Sekoto and Cecil Skotnes. Each artist has their own stylistic approach in representing the highveld landscape (Strauss & Co 2017:19).

Each of these themes pulled together lots in the auction that had common ground to create a curated section. This provided the works with further historical context and a possible argument. For this research, the written abstracts for each section will not be critically analysed, but will rather look at how the curated sections contribute to the larger historical landscape. Through these small groupings, works that were unlikely to feature together on any other platform, were combined to bring together a piece of history. This works in the opposite way of putting together an exhibition. For an exhibition, the curator would find works to put together whereas, in this example, the auction house used the items consigned to the auction and formed a theme around the works. This provides a small addition to the art historical landscape that can inspire further research or arguments in the field. Through this example, it can also be seen that the local auction houses have the potential and power to contribute to the art historical landscape through curatorial decisions made within the auction. While these are business and marketing motivated ideas, they can beneficially impact the art historical landscape.

Chapter Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, it has been argued that auction houses have the potential and means to contribute to the art historical landscape in ways other parts of the industry cannot. The four areas discussed concluded that the value of each of these types of knowledge production is vital for the art historical landscape and for the prevention of potential damage to history caused by fakes and forgeries entering the market. Although these factors result from the business' needs and functions, it is undeniable that auction houses have the power, and responsibility, to consciously add to the art historical landscape, because of the information they have the potential to collect. While it cannot be determined whether each local auction house fully takes up the responsibility to preserve and extend the art historical landscape, it is clear that they hold the power and potential to do so.

Conclusion

This research report has addressed the limited research that has been done on the South African secondary art market, whilst contributing research to close the existing knowledge gap. The aim of this research has been to extend the literature on the local secondary art market in South Africa, and further motivate the placement of the secondary art market in the larger art historical landscape. It demonstrates how the secondary art market continues to contribute to the limited existing art historical landscape of South African artists. Through the objectives of this paper, the contextualization of the secondary market has been established by highlighting the role auction houses play in trading art between collectors and mediators. The importance of existing art historical knowledge has also been determined as a key factor in valuing and assessing artworks, and which determines their future representation in the secondary market. Considering the business model of an auction house that analyses the artists they choose to represent, actively demonstrates that auction houses in the secondary art market can be responsible for skewing the historical landscape by either excluding or including an artist in their auction, catalogue production, and media and marketing. Deciding to include artists in the auction results has just as much of an impact on the historical landscape, which was examined in the second chapter. It has also been argued that auction houses have the power and knowledge to contribute to the historical landscape in beneficial ways that other parts of the art industry cannot. It is through data collection and information collection for provenance, which furthers the auction house's contribution to preventing fakes and forgeries from entering the market.

My investigation into the production of knowledge has been largely supported by the theories of representation, discourse, power and knowledge by Pierre Bourdieu and Stuart Hall. These key theories have been used to demonstrate how the business of an auction house has a discourse that can affect the art historical landscape. Hall states that each discourse holds the power to produce knowledge in the same way that the amount of information collected by the auction house provides the business with a wealth of knowledge that can be used as power (Hall 1997: 48). These exchanges of power and knowledge through the auction house affects the representation of the artists in the public. This will ultimately determine which artist has historical importance and can be deemed in the category of 'high art' (Kritzinger 2013:12). In this way, the art historical landscape is skewed based on the power the business objectives have on writing history. Yet, the role of auction houses still plays an important part in contributing to the historical landscape.

While this research has proven the controversial effects of the auction house, it has also argued for the beneficial contribution to the historical landscape. A large contribution that auction houses make to the industry is the prevention of fake art and forgeries. For as long as art is a commodity and the prices of art are made public, it will always be at risk of theft and forgery. This can damage the representation of an artist as seen through the example of Frans Claerhout. The publicised auction house results make it easier for theft and forgeries to occur.

However, the continued research and documentation of artists' oeuvres by the auction houses are imperative tools that can be used to fight against these crimes.

Previous research on the local secondary art market has largely been quantitative research done from an economic perspective of the art market. This research report has provided a qualitative analysis of the art market, demonstrating the function of the auction house from a different perspective. The research of Michael Stevenson in particular, formed a starting point for this research to build onto, as well as the research by Nicole Kritzinger on how private collections contribute to the historical landscape. This research report fits in as an extension of previous research and as a stepping point for further research to be done into the secondary art market in South Africa, which is continuously growing. It also serves to indicate that critically reading an analysis of the secondary market is required from both within the industry as well as from the public.

South African auctions houses have a responsibility to South African heritage to use the knowledge and power that they embody to contribute towards the art historical landscape. While the knowledge produced needs to be read and seen with a critical eye, it should still be recognised as a contribution towards writing art history.

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Accessed: 28/02/2021

Appendix A

Images

Figure 1: Penny Siopis, *Act I Scene II.*
URL: https://www.straussart.co.za/auctions/lot/11-nov-2019/64
Accessed: 4 April 2021

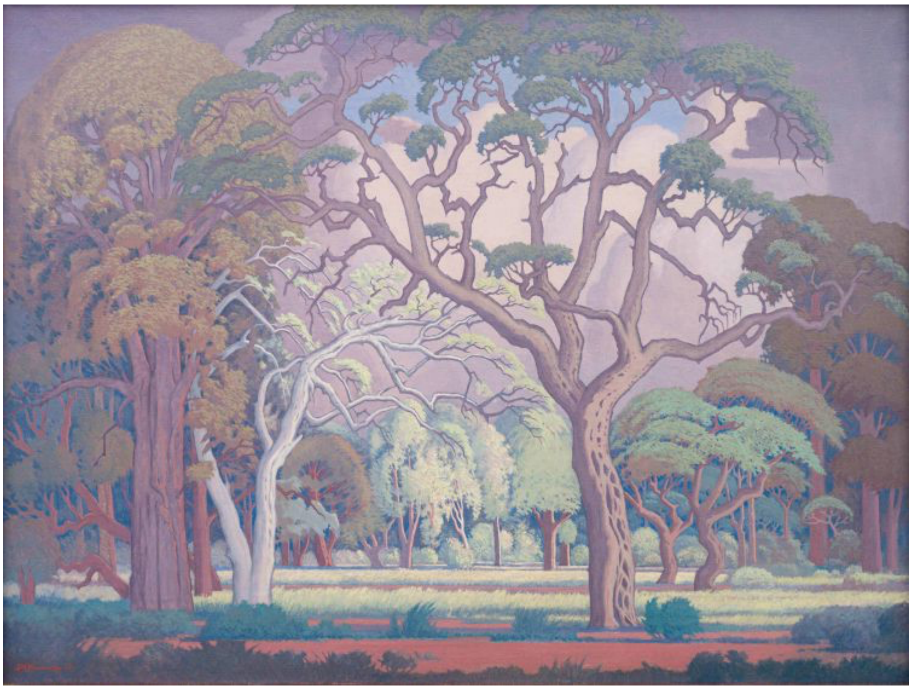

Figure 2: Jacob Hendrik Pierneef, *Bosveld*, 1953, Private Collection.
URL: https://www.straussart.co.za/auctions/lot/26-jul-2020/456
Accessed: 4 April 2021

Figure 3: Lucas Sithole, *Wounded Buffalo, LS7101*, Private Collection
URL: https://www.straussart.co.za/auctions/lot/11-nov-2019/26
Accessed: 4 April 2021

Figure 4: Leonardo da Vinci, *Salvator Mundi*, Lourve Abu Dhabi
URL: https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-6110563
Accessed: 4 April 2021

Figure 5: Moses Tladi, *Near the Mill, Kroonstad (OFS),* Private Collection.
URL: https://www.straussart.co.za/auctions/lot/13-nov-2017/309
Accessed: 4 April 2021

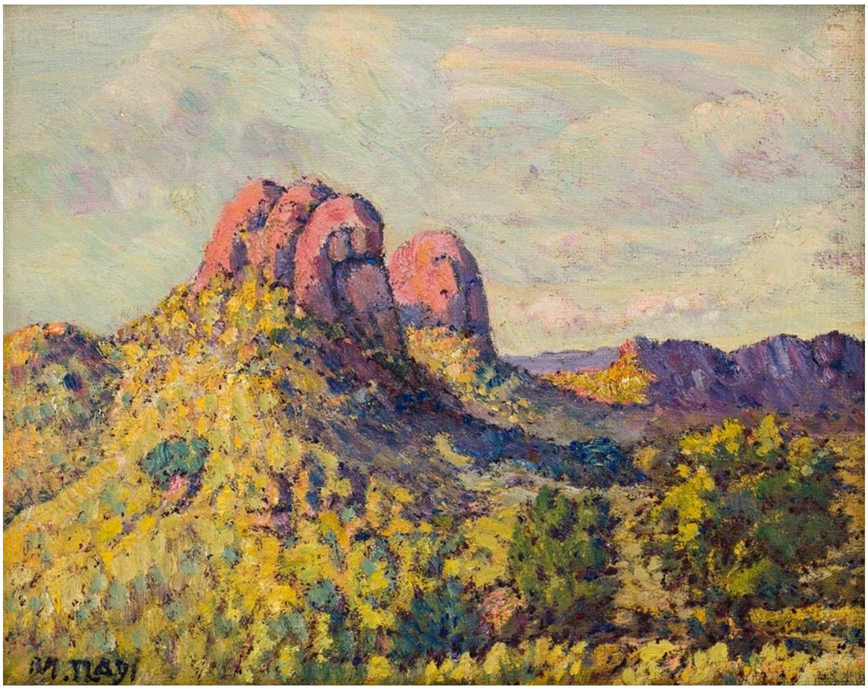

Figure 6: Moses Tladi*, Two Hillocks*, Private Collection.
URL: https://www.straussart.co.za/auctions/lot/13-nov-2017/308
Accessed: 4 April 2021

Figure 7: Moses Tladi, *Mountain Landscape (Mont-aux-Sources),* Private Collection.
URL: https://www.straussart.co.za/auctions/lot/12-nov-2018/264
Accessed: 4 April 2021

Figure 8: Moses Tladi, *Farm Cottage Driefontein, J.H.B.* Private Collection
URL: https://www.straussart.co.za/auctions/lot/12-nov-2018/262
Accessed: 4 April 2021

Figure 9: Tinus de Jongh, *Twelve Apolstles from Camps Bay,* Private Collection.
URL: https://www.straussart.co.za/auctions/lot/9-nov-2015/12
Accessed: 4 April 2021

Figure 10: Alexis Preller, *Adam*, 1969, Private Collection.
URL: https://www.straussart.co.za/auctions/lot/7-nov-2016/239
Accessed: 4 April 2021

Figure 11: Danie de Jager, *Shawu*. 1989, Private Collection.
URL: https://www.straussart.co.za/auctions/lot/8-jun-2019/237
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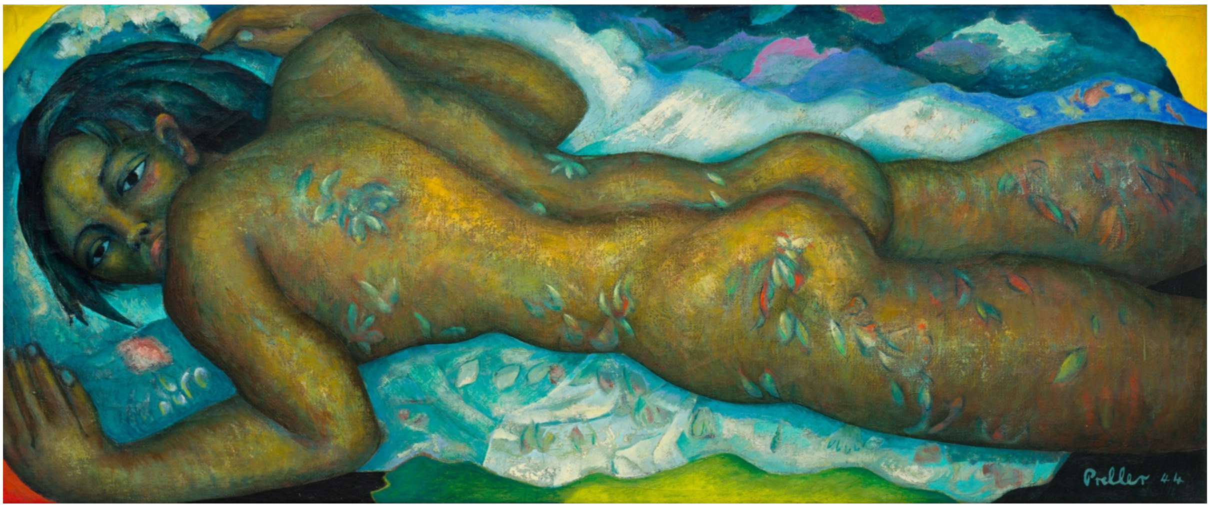


Figure 12: Alexis Preller*, Fleurs du Mal*, 1944, Private Collection.
URL: https://www.straussart.co.za/auctions/lot/13-nov-2017/332
Accessed: 4 April 2021

Figure 13: Dorothy Kay, *War News*, Private Collection.
URL: https://www.straussart.co.za/auctions/lot/13-nov-2017/333
Accessed: 4 April 2021

Appendix B

Jacob Hendrik Pierneef*, Bosvel*, 1953

When facing a picture as monumental, as rewarding, and as magnificent as this, there can be no doubt whatsoever of Henk Pierneef's deep love of the bushveld. No other scene was more inspirational to the artist, and no other subject closer to his heart. Even among Pierneef's exceptional output, rarely in a single picture does one get a sense that he has at once summoned all his powers of compositional design, all his sensitivity for subdued colour harmonies, and all his flair for the grand and the dazzling. Bosveld, this sale's exceptional cover lot, shows Pierneef at his most iconic: the linear clarity and convincing depth is familiar – so too the hush and peace – not to mention the heavy, deeply-rooted trees fanning upwards to the sky, their branches forming a graceful tracery through which can be seen a moody, glowing cloudburst.

Certainly one of Pierneef's mature masterpieces, Bosveld was painted in 1953, with his name long in lights. Over the previous half century, he had developed an ever-recognisable aesthetic, helped establish a local landscape tradition, and achieved enormous popularity and critical success. With all this behind him, little surprise then that the best paintings from his twilight years were suffused with an extra sense of ease, lucidity and confidence.

Inundated with studio visits, embassy and consulate invitations, lecture requests, and exhibition openings, Pierneef's painting time in the early 1950s was often limited. To avoid these obligations, and to clear time to work, he habitually travelled. He regularly visited Vreeland, for instance, the Lion-Cachet farm at Henley-on-Klip, where he would hole-up in a guest rondavel and paint his beloved willow trees. Significantly, he made several trips to the Lowveld in 1952 and 1953, any one of which might have inspired the present lot. Pinpointing the scene is difficult without artist inscriptions, but the flora and terrain suggests a northern territory, perhaps along the Luvuvhu or Limpopo rivers. While always favouring decorative power and divine balance over a straightforward likeness, Pierneef's knowledge of indigenous trees remained obvious. In this wide riparian floodplain, certain species are clear: an ana tree (Faidherbia albida) dominates the foreground; a statuesque mopani (Colophospermum mopane), with its orange-tinged crown, is placed on the left of the composition, just ahead of a silvery-barked leadwood (Combretum imberbe). Whether or not these trees naturally appeared in such a rhythmic formation is moot: Pierneef edited the scene, no doubt, but he painted a magic bushveld view one might conjure from happy memory.

Thanks to Professors Bob and Mary Scholes from the University of the Witwatersrand for their help with the description of this lot.

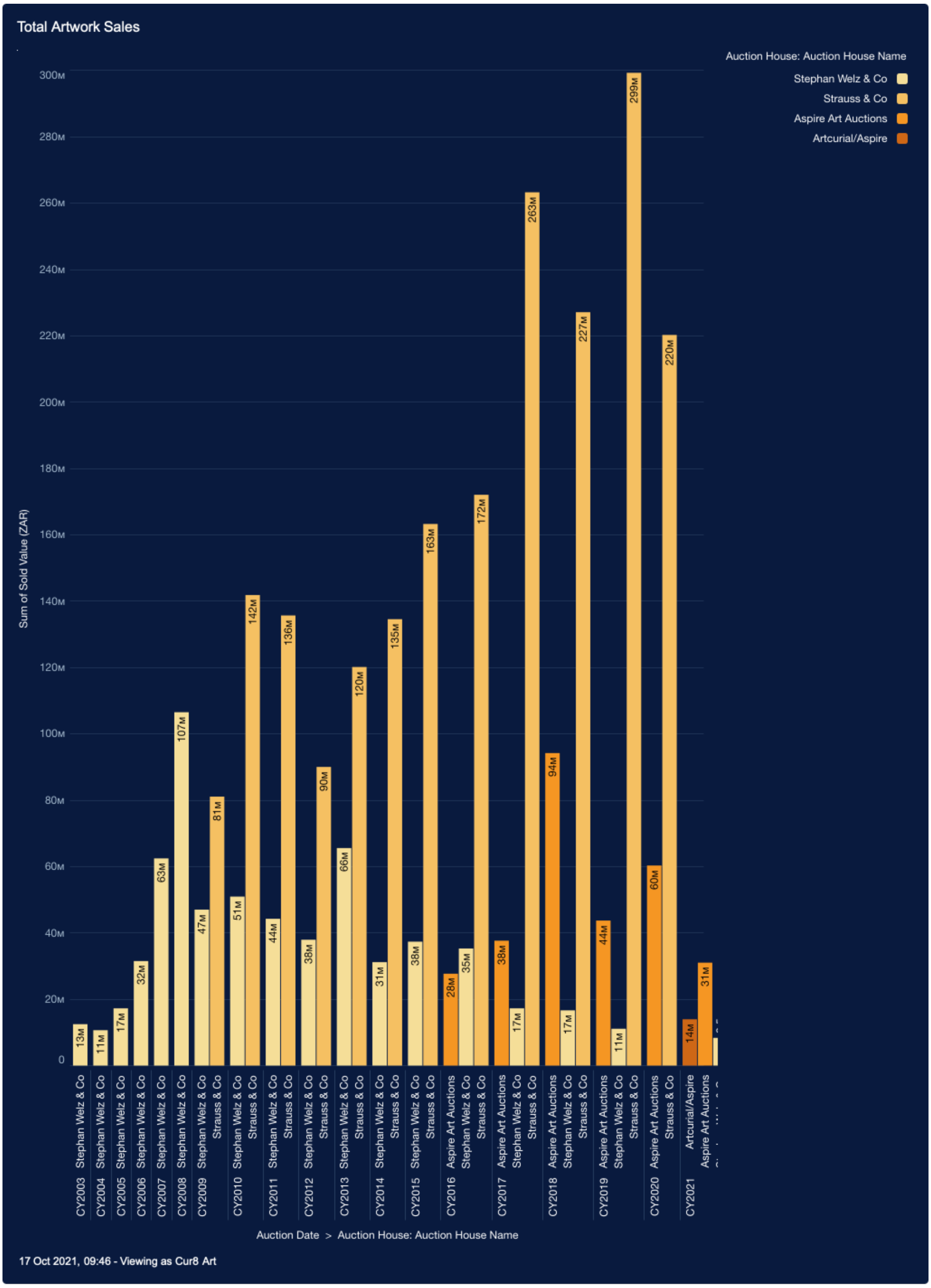
Source:

Strauss & Co. 2020. *Modern, Post-War and Contemporary Art and South African Fine Wine, including Important South African Art from the Property of a Collector*. July 2020. Auction Catalogue.

Online source:

URL: https://www.straussart.co.za/auctions/lot/26-jul-2020/456
Accessed: 4 April 2021

Appendix C



Source:

Cur8 Art. 2021 *cur8.art.* Secondary Art Market Insights. Accessed 17 October 2021. (Paid subscription) https://cur8.art