

# **The Integration of Contemporary African Art into Western Auction Houses**

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Bachelor Thesis for Obtaining the Degree

International Management

Submitted to Maria Lord

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Vienna, 31 May 2023

## **Affidavit**

I hereby affirm that this Bachelor's Thesis represents my own written work and that I have used no sources and aids other than those indicated. All passages quoted from publications or paraphrased from these sources are properly cited and attributed.

The thesis was not submitted in the same or in a substantially similar version, not even partially, to another examination board and was not published elsewhere.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis critically analyzes the integration of contemporary African art into Western auction houses. It examines the history of Africa and a focus on the United Kingdom's past in exploiting African countries is analyzed using the existing literature. The art market and the impact of globalization and social media on African art will be analyzed to further gain knowledge about the increased attention from auction houses on incorporating African art. Lastly it will provide art market insights through expert interviews conducted to find issues and opportunities for western collectors collecting African art and auction houses having more African art in their sales. The analysis of the interviews shows an increased interest in African art from Western collectors, and that their interest is strengthened by the art works having a skillfully narrative. Furthermore, it showed that globalization is a big contributor, and that the African art market has a big potential in the future. The auction house expert interviews revealed that the main motivation for auction houses to incorporate niche art is to be financially successful, however it is important also to educate and start the conversation, hold events, and visit African countries to gain more knowledge.

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## List of Abbreviations

BLM - Black Lives Matter

ICPRCP - Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or Return in Case of Illicit Appropriation

CRAH - Critical Race Art History

Fig - Figure

MoMA - Museum of Modern Art

UGCC – United Gold Coast Convention

UK - United Kingdom

UN - United Nations

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

US/USA - United States of America

## Terminology

African Artist – can designate artists from Africa and its diaspora, and for clarity, the term African artist will be used throughout the thesis.

## 1 Introduction

The art market differs from the financial market because investing in art typically necessitates deep expertise and familiarity with well-known artists. Furthermore, the art market is characterized by the existence of only a few major auction houses, each of which exhibits only a few artists throughout the year (Velthuis & Curioni, 2015). Although the art market appears to be an institution with many different surfaces, to simplify the categorization of all players enclosed in the industry as well as their duties and responsibilities, the market is divided into two critical parts, the primary art market, and the secondary art market (Raiffe, 2019). The primary art market is the sector in the art market where an artwork first enters the market, the transaction takes place largely in galleries, internet galleries, or museums that sell their paintings through private sales (Artland Editors, 2020). The secondary market is the segment of the art market where art gets resold, and the transactions are mainly conducted through private sales or auction houses (Expert, 2014).

There are multiple artistic styles, which continue to influence and define contemporary African art. The hybridization of traditional African art inspired by Western culture inside current methods is a common element of contemporary African art. Today's African artists approach their works in various ways, some use exclusively Western-driven art techniques and have sacrificed their cultural identity in their art, whereas others integrate their traditional African identity into their current artistic styles to create a hybrid with African cultures and Western influences embedded and others solely rely on their culture and ethnicity found in the artworks (Akpang, 2013). However, African art has undergone several power struggles to gain the recognition it now enjoys, with conflicts over quality perception, racial discrimination, and style conformity having long impeded its success in Western auction houses (Gunsch, 2013).

Recently, the contemporary African art scene has been gaining more attention from the Western world and auctions dedicated to contemporary African art have become increasingly more popular (Banks, 2018). In response, many Western auction houses

have begun to display contemporary African art to meet the rising demand. This is especially evident in London's auction houses, where three of the most prominent auction houses, Christie's, Bonhams, and Sotheby's, have each established designated sections for contemporary African art (Ken Art, 2018). Moreover, reflecting this trend, the most recent ArtTactic Art Market Outlook Report 2021 shows that auction sales of African art increased by 44% from 50 million dollars in 2020 to 72 million dollars in 2021 (Harris, 2022). Controversial to the history of the United Kingdom's impact on Africa and the impact the country had on African art, the country now hosts art fairs dedicated to contemporary African art, London auction houses are expanding their presence, and museums and galleries are displaying an increasing number of artworks by African artists (Shurvell, 2020).

Despite the change that is happening now in the West, in especially European countries and the US, it remains that these countries profit the most from the success of these new discovered artists (Branderello, 2022). Furthermore, several historical events have led to such change, including the 20th-century black art movements led by Afro-Americans aimed to promote aspects of black culture, like music, theater, and the visual arts, being particularly significant (Crawford, 2017). More recently, the Black Lives Matter movement also continues to address the socioeconomic problem of black prejudice and is attempting to create a greater representation of the black community in the art industry (Katz & Reisman, 2020). In 2020, ArtReview, a contemporary art review journal based in London, named Black Lives Matter the most significant influence in modern and contemporary art, citing the increased visibility of black contemporary artists receiving awards and gallery appointments (ArtReview, 2020). Furthermore, the impact of globalization has played an important role in the rising interest in African art (Enwezor, 2008).

Regardless of the change and the increased interest of Western art collectors in African art, the industry remains heavily influenced by white supremacy, systemic racism, and other power struggles (Aldridge, 2020). The relationship between the Western art industry and its engagement with African art raises several concerns that must be addressed, including hosting art events dedicated to contemporary African

art, often presented from a Western perspective, with Western curators shaping the narrative of the artists. Beyond that, Western collectors and institutions' growing interest in African art presents its own challenges (Chikukwa, 2011).

This thesis will seek to fill the research gap in analyzing emerging issues with Western interest in contemporary African art and investigate how this attention is helping the artists and if there are ways to collect and integrate African art respectfully for African artists.

### **Purpose and Relevance**

This bachelor thesis analyzes the integration of contemporary African art into Western auction houses with an emphasis on the existing issues brought on by the growing Western interest in African art. Since the UK still withholds artifacts acquired during the colonial era, special focus will be given to the UK's role in this integration. The thesis will also investigate whether it is beneficial for African artists to have the Western world admire their work, as well as how African art could be properly collected without promoting systematic racism and white supremacy. The thesis continues to examine business procedures and search for solutions to these problems.

Researching the problems emerging from integrating African art into Western auction houses and filling the research gap on how to find culturally appropriate ways to collect African art is essential for understanding the complexities of the art market. Furthermore, recognizing the importance of cultural sensitivity when dealing with artists who have recently been underrepresented and discriminated against. By better understanding these issues and challenges that come with the acquisition and sale of African art at Western auction houses and from art collectors, the thesis will provide valuable insights into how art can be collected and sold in a way that respects and preserves the cultural integrity of African art. Moreover, this research can help inform the development of more effective and respectful policies and practices for art collecting and auctioning in the future.

Three main objectives define the bachelor thesis to observe the integration of contemporary African art in Western auction houses.

First, the bachelor thesis explores the history of African art in Western institutions and the impact of colonialism on African art and culture. A focus is placed on the British colonial past in African nations and cultures. Investigating Africa's past helps to analyze how it has shaped the narrative, how African art is appreciated in Western institutions, and how Western auction houses have presented and perceived the art and its creators.

Second, an examination of racism and discrimination in the past as well as in today's art market will be conducted, with a focus on the power struggles that African artists have faced as well as how their art is recognized and valued in current Western art institutions. Additionally, the thesis will analyze how globalization and social media have played an important role in the increased appreciation for African art.

The third objective is to evaluate how far the sales of contemporary African art have changed in Western auction houses, and when the change started to be seen. Additionally, the research will look at how Western auction houses have incorporated the works of African artists, as well as how they can educate the public and encourage knowledge of African art, culture, and history.

Finally, the bachelor thesis aims to provide potential recommendations for improving the representation and experience of contemporary African art in Western auction houses, by also analyzing the current strategies of auction houses and Western collectors to support African artists. The research will list suggestions for how Western auction houses can better support and represent African artists and promote the appreciation of African art.

### **Research Questions**

The research will seek to analyze the appropriate and respectful ways to collect African art from a cultural perspective and to explore its financial and future potential. Furthermore, it will analyze the methods and reasons of auction houses that have

integrated African art into their auctions. Therefore, the research questions of this thesis are formulated accordingly:

RQ1: What factors have contributed to the increased integration of contemporary African art in Western auction houses and how does this integration reflect the changing attitudes towards contemporary African art in the West?

RQ2: What are the motivations of Western art collectors when acquiring contemporary African art, and how do these motivations shape the perception of African culture and ethnicity?

RQ3: What are the prospects for contemporary African art in the future, and how do auction houses contribute to the artist's representation?

RQ4: What are the ethical implications of increased interest in contemporary African art in London-based Western auction houses, given the UK's colonial past?

## **1.1 Structure**

This bachelor thesis will use secondary literature to examine the current status of contemporary African artists in the Western art industry, with a focus on London-based auction houses. First, the thesis will investigate the numerous factors that have shaped the African culture and art including an examination of the history and events that have contributed to the increasing interest in African art and will then investigate the problems that African artists have faced in the past. Additionally, the thesis will research the UK's colonial past and examine practices and approaches of London-based auction houses with regards to acquiring art. Finally, the thesis will analyze the benefits that these approaches have for African artists.

The methodology section of the thesis will then be described, including details on the research design, data collection methods, and analysis methods used to address the research goals. Lastly, the conclusion of the thesis will provide interesting insights, findings including recommendations for the industry.

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Culture and Art

Cultural heritage is a vital component of human existence that distinguishes one person from the other. It includes shared values, beliefs, traditions, and practices, as well as manners, language, style, art, religion, and economic models (Solo-Anaeto & Jacobs, 2015). Researchers however, only started focusing on the importance of cultural identity in the art industry back in the 1980s. Some also mistakenly believe that cultural identity is an inherent element of artworks. Instead, cultural identity should be considered as a conscious expression that artists can use to reflect upon themselves through contemporary art and their abilities and creativity (Petersen, 2012). Furthermore, culture, like aesthetics, is a dynamic and evolving process that is closely linked to art, as a curator's aesthetic evaluation of artwork is influenced by human values and ideas (Furniss, 2015). Postcolonial theories, globalization, and migration have transformed the originally Western-dominated art world into an institution of multiculturalism that includes non-Western and migrant artists, reinforcing the study of cultural identity and its relationship to art history (Petersen, 2012).

African cultures include the continent's beliefs, values, traditions, however Africa is a continent made up of not only countries but also many different tribes. One component that is widespread around the continent is the high value placed in interacting with different people, learning from ethnic cultures that are varying from country to country (Solo-Anaeto & Jacobs, 2015). Since the mid-twentieth century, there has been significant interest in the study of African cultural survivals during and after slavery. This research has progressed from individual efforts to uncover African cultural survivors to a more complex examination of maintaining an "African spirit" throughout the transfer or replication of African civilizations when relocating (Akyeampong, 2000).

### **2.1.1 African Art and its Diaspora**

Contemporary African art and the diaspora have become increasingly visible and recognized in the early twenty-first century and are now more integrated into the study of African art history (Farrell, 2008). Diaspora is an essential concept in African art because it defines current African artists that are descended from their place of birth and strive to reconnect with the original area or cultural narrative (Francis, 2013). Diaspora, a term that was first invented in the third century to describe Jewish dispersion, was reintroduced in the twentieth century, due to late capitalism, as a theoretical framework to identify individuals, communities, cultures and even art objects that have spread globally (Wofford, 2016). It is important to note that diasporas often occur within political and economic contexts, as Ruth Simms Hamilton, director of the African Diaspora Research Program at Michigan State University stated in 1991, one of the key factors that accounts for Africans to continue their geo-social relocation, is the increasing demand for labor in the Western world. Additionally, Africans utilize the relocation as a vital economic and political resource, as well as a chance for redefining their social identity (Akyeampong, 2000).

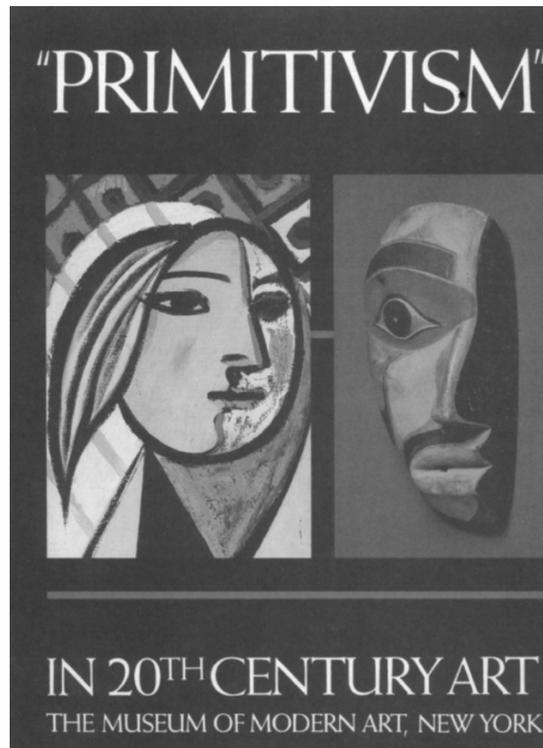
The study of diaspora art history teaches how artists represent and bring their artworks in a global art market that requires such representation, as well as explores and analyzes the connection of art and culture beyond the limitations of the art industry, such as holding the narratives of a homeland when relocating to another part of the world (Wofford, 2016). Diasporas are transitional, and African Art Diaspora is a term used to characterize modern and contemporary art created by African artists as a social development and a construct used to value the cultural consciousness that exceeds other robust identifications (Francis, 2013).

### **2.1.2 Racism and Discrimination in the Art Industry**

Early in the nineteenth century, most artworks showing black personas portrayed them as enslaved people in a glorified version, as nobody desired a visual image of a person being beaten up placed on their walls, and the term negro was invented as a synonym for slave. The art in demand was still romantic and classical in form, as it represented nobility and physical beauty devoted to the European ideal, which meant

that black art and black artists were excluded from the so-called high art (McDowell, 1991). South Africa, under British colonial rule, began to establish museums toward the end of the nineteenth century, but they primarily displayed European pieces and were managed by Europeans who had no interest in local indigenous art. Most of the indigenous art was exhibited solely at anthropological or ethnological establishments. It was not until the 1960s that the first black artist was allowed to be part of the permanent collections in Johannesburg at the Durban Art Gallery, the Johannesburg Art Gallery, and the National Gallery (Brown, 2007). The first museum exhibition in the West to feature African art was at the Met Museum in 1913, with the World Exhibition of Modern Art, which is regarded as a turning point in the recognition of the African art scene and the exhibition called 'African Negro Art' at the Museum of Modern Art in 1935 was widely regarded as New York's first exposure to African art (Biro, 2013).

Primitive art refers to cultural artifacts of "primitive" peoples, such as African, oceanic, and aboriginal culture groups, that have remained untouched by Western civilization or history (Errington, 1994). From 1884 to 1885, an exhibition titled "'Primitivism' in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: Affinity of the tribal and the modern art" was held at one of New York's most important art institutions, the MoMA, short for the museum of modern art, displaying approximately 150 works by modern artists such as Pablo Picasso, Paul Gauguin, and Constantin Brancusi, as well as over 200 objects from indigenous cultures of Africa, Oceania, and North America, causing a lot of controversy (Butler Palmer, 2008). Objects were placed together because they were recognized as inspirations for modern artists or because they indicated supposed parallels (Karp, 1991).



(Butler Palmer, 2008, p. 189)

Fig 1: Cover of exhibition catalogue of MoMa's exhibition called Primitivism.

The cover of the exhibition catalog called "Primitivism' in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: Affinity of the tribal and the modern art" held at the MoMA, shown above, compares Picasso's "Girl before a Mirror" with an unidentified Kwakwaka'wakw mask to illustrate the impact of tribal art on modern art. However, the catalog focused more on Picasso's life and interest in non-Western art, neglecting mostly the tribal artwork, and primarily showed the Western art and how it got influenced by non-Western art. Most of the "tribal" art was treated with little to no respect by the curators of the exhibitions, as many of these artifacts were not identified by their culture or origin, few were dated, and the patron, clan, or maker was rarely identified on the item. (Butler Palmer, 2008).

Moreover, the absence of representation of contemporary African artists is visible not only in museums, galleries, and other cultural institutions, but also in scholarly art history, university curricula, the media, and other forums (Enwezor, 1994). Critical Race Art History (CRAH) is a discourse that considers how race shapes culture. CRAH further examines how racism has shaped how we perceive creation and what we

humans find beautiful and analyzes how race is a factor in receiving artistic education, finding venues as an artist, collectors acquiring the artist's works, and what artworks get chosen for display (Holloway, 2016). According to an empirical study researching race and gender-based underrepresentation of creative contributors (Topaz et al., 2022), 39% of America's population are ethnic groups. However, only 22% are represented in the contemporary art industry. Furthermore, only 7.7% of commercial galleries held exhibitions between 2008 to 2018 focused on African artworks (Topaz et al., 2022). Even though, the artworld has become more and more inclusive in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there are still restrictions for non-Western and female artists (Petersen, 2012).

## **2.2 History of Exploitation in Africa**

In 1880, Europe, particularly England, France, Belgium, and Portugal, saw great opportunities in Africa because they considered it to be primitive and inferior, allowing them to exploit the land and resources as theirs to take (Jayna, 2017). Throughout the colonial era, colonized people were not considered citizens but subjects with limited rights. Europeans and Americans framed their pride, greed, and control over natives as assisting the African nations in civilizing outside their borders and helping them to economic growth. The paradox was that the most dominant colonial powers were also the ones that had the most advanced democracies at the time (Conklin, 1998).

Because of the exploitation done by Europe and North America, the ex-colony's presence is still replete with different politico-cultural consequences (Adebanwi, 2016). During colonialism, African art was taken back to America and Europe as a means of conquest and defeat, and objects from Africa and their demand were primarily controlled by Europeans. Throughout the early twentieth century, prominent Western artists such as Picasso, Matisse, and Klee began to incorporate African elements into their work, increasing Western interest in and the value of African art (Scruggs, 1991).

An estimated 60% of the art traded and acquired in today's art market is stolen or illegally removed from developing countries such as Asia, South America, or Africa (Scruggs, 1991). In 1982, the Museum of Mankind in London, held an exhibition displaying mainly artifacts taken away by the British Empire from Ghana (Coronel, 1989). Furthermore, most of the traditional African art that is exhibited in today's museums has been removed from its original location during colonialism from 1880 to 1960. However, these artworks are still referred to as pre-colonial art, and the museum labels the art pieces with either no date or a vague date, such as the 17th-19th century, or inserts a non-existent ethnic group for that time (Peffer, 2005).

### **2.2.1 United Kingdom's Colonial Past**

Colonialism refers to using dominance and power over individuals, groups, and or territory, with the intention of exploiting economic products and values from these regions (Horvath, 1972). The majority of British colonialism took place in the mid-18th century, when Britain was regarded as a liberal economy that supported open trade while also promising to assist the conquered countries in creating law and order for them (Lange et al., 2006). On the way to India, Britain made a detour through Africa and saw great potential to use the people as slaves (Rashid, 2014). They began to deploy private corporations to Africa to construct slave trafficking centres. During the nineteenth century, Britain ruled most of East Africa, changing the people's beliefs, values class, ethnicity, and nationality, believing they had created the world's most promising civilization including British administrators believing that colonialism was a type of social reformation (Rashid, 2014).

There were four approaches to colonialism in the United Kingdom. Settler colonialism, in which diverse British institutions were formed in countries without precolonial agreements (Lange et al., 2006). Indirect colonialism in the form of Precolonial officials retaining power and influence over their subjects; however, they were obliged to pay taxes and report to Britain's leaders (the Norm in Africa and parts of Asia) (Lange et al., 2006). Direct colonialism was a unified, bureaucratically controlled territory that was widely reached but lacked large-scale and permanent features and was used in trade-focused areas (Hongkong and Singapore) (Lange et al., 2006). Lastly, hybrid

colonialism which combines indirect and settler colonialism (South Africa and India) (Lange et al., 2006).

### **2.2.2 End of Colonialism in Africa**

Following World War II, the major two colonial powers, France and the British Empire, lost confidence in their role as leading powers in their colonized countries and realized that there might be consequences to their doing, yet they continued to refuse to hand over their power as they still believed that African nations were unable to employ self-governance. The United Cost Gold Convention (UGCC), which encouraged African decolonization, and promoted self-governance took place in 1947 (Howe, 2005). In addition, the United Nations (UN), was established in 1948, creating an organization fighting for human rights and the end of colonial powers (Howe, 2005). By 1965, the United Nations had 117 different countries joining the organization (Smith & Jeppesen, 2017, p. 32).

In the late 1950s, the colonial authorities that the European powers had placed in Africa were confronted with an increasing number of natives fighting for racial and political equality (Smith & Jeppesen, 2017, p. 5). The Pan-Africanist and nationalist Kwame Nkrumah was the general secretary of the UGCC, hired as he previously traveled 12 years through Europe and the U.S. to study and meet with different political activists, for example, W.E.B du Bois, a prominent Pan-African activist. His learnings and messages to end colonialism were presented before the UGCC to proceed with this plan. This eventually led to the Gold Cost colony, now Republic of Ghana, being the first country to be granted independence in 1957 (Babou, 2010). Most African nations achieved independence in 1966, and new nation-states increased the demand for independence (Smith & Jeppesen, 2017, p. 1). In 1990, Namibia was the last African country to gain independence from the British, and apartheid in South Africa ended (Smith & Jeppesen, 2017, p. 3).

### **2.2.3 United Kingdom's Colonial Past and its Impact on African Art**

Western art historians examine art within theoretical frameworks, viewing it as cultural signifiers of certain chronological and spatial settings. Formal analysis,

iconology, and critical theory are among the approaches employed to unveil the multifaceted meanings of artworks. However, in cultures with a colonial past, art studies aim to recover pre-colonial or national identities by restoring obscured cultural traditions and visual expressions that have been impacted by colonialism, leading to connections with issues of identity politics and nation-building (Capistrano-Baker, 2015).

During the British Punitive Expeditions in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, to Benin and Kumasi, the British Empire erased the art historic heritage of two nations (Coronel, 1989). In the past traders, ethnographers, and missionaries collected most African art over some time, however, most of Benin's art objects became commercially traded as a conquest by the British Empire due to a signed contract by the king of Benin in 1892 (Gunsch, 2013). That agreement allowed all of Benin's artworks to be traded only by the British Empire (Gunsch, 2013). Throughout the colonial era, the British Empire, and other colonial powers, hosted an event called the Empire Day, which celebrated the success of the nations in their colonial territories and their collective identity (English, 2006). Furthermore, the British Empire hosted multiple exhibitions called the British empire exhibitions that took place at Wembley in the early twentieth century, which exhibited insights into African living and focused on how trade was economically efficient with an emphasis on the British empire's involvement in African civilization, and indeed the country was portrayed as a primitive environment (Woodham, 1989).

Despoliation of cultural artifacts was a widespread and systematic practice during colonial times, not just in war and military occupation scenarios. The colonisation of African lands has led to a general dispersion of this cultural heritage into Western collections (Temudo, 2021). As a result, colonization left an imprint on African art, darkness as a part of the narrative and an element of the artwork. African art is incomplete without the darkness because it mirrors the impact the Western colonial powers had on the nations. Many observers would not consider colonialism's impact on contemporary African art to be a positive result, yet due to the embedded nature

of colonialism in African history, removing the colonial imprint would be removing a component of its meaning (Jayna,2017).

### **2.3 Racism and Discrimination in the Current Art Market**

A contemporary artist's success is judged by how well the artist does in the global art market, and the global art market aims to promote and appreciate cultural diversity (Archer, 2003). In recent years, the global art market has shown a strong interest in emerging art markets from previously unrepresented countries. Nevertheless, considerable disparities and hierarchies persist in the cultural industries, with Europe and North America leading the ranks of artistically and economically ordained art market stakeholders (Brandellero, 2022). Despite the West's xenophobic climate of anti-immigrant legislation, border restrictions to the West, and complete indifference to the lives of African and non-Western people, there has been a growing interest placed on African artists and African art diaspora in Western museums and collections (Hassan, 2020). In recent years, the works of contemporary African and African-born artists have become more visible to museums, organizations, and art collectors who have broadened their collections by adding African and African-born artists due to their expositions at major international events such as museums and art fairs (Ehrmann, 2022). Furthermore, museums have altered their discourse in response to the postcolonial era of art, claiming, as Joaquin Barriendos states, "to rewrite the geopolitical debts between Western and non-Western regions" (Barriendos 2009, p. 98).

However, even if the representation at art fairs and museums has increased, Western cultural, political, and commercial forces continue dominating the art industry. Non-Western artists, such as contemporary African artists residing in the West, are marginalized by Western ideals. As a result, contemporary African artists remain on the periphery of the global art market, and upper-class white male artists still receive the greatest social and economic rewards out of this development (Archer, 2003). Furthermore, the establishment of the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary African Art in Cape Town, regarded as the continent's largest museum dedicated to contemporary African art and its diaspora, is a noteworthy example of the role of private investment

in filling gaps left by inadequate public museum support. The museum was founded with a major financial investment by a white man of German origin, Jochen Zeitz, and acts as a point of inquiry for these efforts that also have been influenced by socio-political and historical considerations, including questions of race and cultural ownership (Salemink et al., 2023).

### **2.3.1 Impact of Globalization and Migration on the Art Industry**

The art industry, which had historically struggled to be inclusive, started changing in the 1980s, when the combined pressures of migration and globalization became so strong that the institutional framework could no longer ignore the criticisms of systemic prejudice against non-Western artists (Petersen, 2012). National borders, as well as the spatial and temporal barriers that historically divided them and their cultures, have been broken down as a result of globalization. (Crane et al., 2002). It is much more common nowadays to find African artists participating in shows that explore contemporary art worldwide, particularly in the context of globalization. There have been global developments in the art world concerning the location of contemporary art. As a result of these shifts, the production of art for African artists and the expansion of their artistic network have been internationalized. (Enzewor & Okeke-Agulu, 2009).

The rising interest in African art and culture can be attributed to globalization, as international art fairs, exhibitions, and biennales have included artists from all over the world (Enzewor & Okeke-Agulu, 2009). Furthermore, art fairs play a significant part in the globalization and transfer of knowledge about current trends in the art world, as well as providing a fantastic view of competition, fixed pricing, and reputation building, and art events, such as the Biennale happening every two years in Venice, bring together important art players and artists from more than 100 countries (Brandellero, 2022). Okuwi Enzewor, a Nigerian curator, stated in his journal article for the University of Pittsburgh titled 'The Postcolonial Constellation: Contemporary Art in a State of Permanent Transition' that the success of contemporary art has been closely linked to the history of its exhibitions, as it could be said that if it were not for the public controversies that occurred as a result of

exhibitions, no real change would have occurred (Enwezor, 2008). The Danish art historian Lotte Philipsen underlines this statement by analyzing the exhibition Documenta, regarded as one of the most important international art events in which many countries participate, by the number of Western and non-Western artists included. The first Documenta, in 1955, included only Western countries, and of the 158 artists, only five percent were non-Western born, and in 2007 out of the 113 participating artists, 64.56% of the total number of participants were born outside the West, and 53% of those living outside the West (Petersen, 2012).

However, according to an article written by Blier, there are nine contradictions going hand in hand with the effect of globalization on contemporary African art that all address the question of how Africa is defined in this golden age of contemporary African art: identity, locality, artistic models, the market, exhibitions, gender, banishing the past, political ideology and global engagement, and promotion of culture (Blier, 2002).

### **2.3.2 Changes in the Art Industry for African Artists**

Various historical and contemporary activities have led to a broader appreciation of African art. For instance, the Pan-Africanism is an ideology that encourages individuals from all African nations, both on the continent and in the diaspora, to share the same views and that unity is essential for achieving economic, social, and political strength (Adi, 2021). The Pan-African Movement, led by civil rights pioneer W.E.B du Bois, was critical in offering a forum for addressing black global modernity in the context of modern-day racism and colonialism in Africa (Okeke-Agulu, 2013). The black arts and the black power movement became another form of cultivating and promoting black culture and aesthetics, primarily for Afro-Americans, in the 1960s, by creating multiple spaces and institutions for African artists to transform their cultural, economic, and political conditions (Sell, 2013).

It was not until the 1980s that things started to improve for African artists. It was previously difficult for non-Western artists to enter the art market and become a part of the large global art world in order to acquire attention for their work and create a

career in the West, much as it had been for women artists until the 1960s (Petersen, 2012).

The 1989 Triennial Symposium on African Art was one of the earliest exhibitions showing and highlighting African art. The exhibition sparked curators' interest in contemporary African art, but it also raised a number of issues, such as where contemporary African art should be displayed in museums, whether in regional locations or in the contemporary art section (Kasfir, 2002) After Apartheid ended in South Africa, artists from the country could travel and display their work at international exhibitions, such as the 1993 Venice Biennale, which showcased the South African artist William Kentridge. Furthermore, the Johannesburg Biennale, which was held from 1995 to 1997, curated by the Nigerian-born curator Okwui Enwezor, caught the interest of curators and art critics for South African artists and brought important art players to Johannesburg, which played a significant role in the growth of interest in African art (Banks, 2018).

Okwui Enwezor, who died in 2019, was prominent in promoting and representing contemporary African art. He was not only one of the most influential theorists, critics, and curators for contemporary African art, but he additionally founded the first magazine with an emphasis on contemporary African art called *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African art* and has long been an essential role model for doing cultural work, particularly in addressing Eurocentrism in art history (Davidson & Patel, 2021). Moreover, Enwezor was the leading curator of the exhibition "The Short Century," which was displayed at the MoMA in New York in 2002 and discussed art and politics in Africa from 1945 to 1994. It has garnered extensive media coverage, bringing contemporary African art to the attention of Western museums and galleries while also provoking vigorous debate among Africanist art specialists as the show gained more than the usual amount of interest (Blier, 2002). Enwezor's art exhibitions were a significant movement in demonstrating that artists from African, Asian, and Latin American countries were making just as significant contributions as those from the United States and Europe, and that the field of art history was something adjustable and, by definition, imperfect (Maximiliano Durón, 2021).

Another notable development in the art market for African artists was the progress from having only collective shows and being put together under one label, to global art events embracing an African artist's individual work. This visibility of African artists in key art events such as the Biennale not only adds to the global acknowledgment of their work, but also opens a dialogue that goes further than praising the work of the artist (Enzewor & Okeke-Agulu, 2009).

### **2.3.3 Art Restitution**

Art restitution refers to the return of improperly traded cultural property, such as art, to its rightful owner (Thompson, 2003). The debate about European museum's returning the colonial treasures to Africa was started in the 1980s, however the discussion was effectively quietened down and Africa still fights to reconnect with the art objects placed in museums stolen during colonialism (Savoy & Meyer-Abich, 2022). In the twenty-first century art restitution became an important part of the art industry again, due to ownership claims as the industry increased its transparency through the development of databases that can find, detect, and register stolen or lost art objects (Reed, 2023).

A debate was started, based on a report, published by the French Government in 2018, about African heritage restitution, countries such as France, the Netherlands and the UK began engaging more in art restitution and started to create projects to give back art that has been unrightfully acquired (Temudo, 2021). Adding to that, the public continues to hold museums, galleries, and auction houses accountable for returning art that was unjustly removed from its original setting, during colonial areas (Reed, 2023). In 2020 The Arts Council of England began advising museums in England to develop procedures and regulations for restituting and repatriating cultural objects, especially those obtained during their colonial history (Hickley, 2020). In addition, UNESCO strongly supports efforts to preserve cultural assets. In 1978 UNESCO established the Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or Return in Case of Illicit Appropriation (ICPRCP) to advocate for nations seeking the return of culturally significant objects

they have lost and hold fundamental importance (Temudo, 2021). However, despite UNESCO's efforts to support these nations to have their cultural assets returned, some governments continue to claim ownership of acquired cultural artifacts and use them to promote their own individual cultures (Cuno, 2014).

Furthermore, many art historians continue to state that Western museums, through their ways of collecting and exhibiting artifacts, promote wrong beliefs about colonialism and imperialist times. They frequently erase and or change the narrative of the cultures that existed during colonialism, glorifying the past for the observers. However, several of these artefacts were removed from their original locations, adding to the devastation caused by colonization. To change the way Western museums present colonial history, museums need to consciously move away from promoting colonialism by censoring the narrative and to promote equitable cultural representation (Dixon, 2021).

#### **2.3.4 Contemporary African Art in the current Art Market**

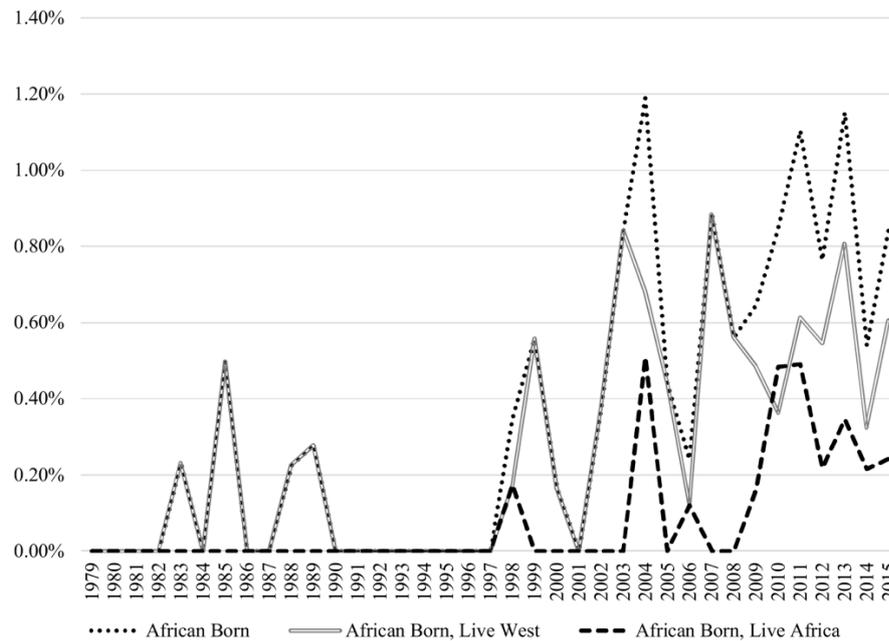
Several trends have influenced the contemporary African art scene in recent years. "Afropolitans" refers to enthusiastic diasporic African artists characterized by their free spirit. It is a prominent trend and has been becoming increasingly popular in the art industry. They are known for their work's energy, depth, and breadth, including imagined architecture, photography, video, large sculpture, figurative painting, and location-specific installation (Hassan, 2020). In 2009, Okwui Enwezor defined Afropolitanism as a type of culture in which the space of cosmopolitan African identity exists between identification categories: ethnicity, religion, and nation, and is global, crosses cultural boundaries and puts into question long-held beliefs about cultural, national, or religious identity (Adusei-Poku, 2021).

In 2011, two major events highlighted contemporary African art and its diaspora in major Western art and cultural institutions. "Africans in America: The New Beat of Afropolitans", held in September 2011 at the Museum of African American Culture in Houston to celebrate new cultural influences in America, and "Friday Late: Afropolitans", held at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and showcased

photography, fashion, style, and identity from Africa (Hassan, 2020). Yet, the quality of an artist's work is more essential than whether the artist identifies as an Afropolitan, cosmopolitan, regional, global, or hybrid persona (Wendt, 2020).

The first exhibition of 1-54, an international art fair dedicated only to contemporary African art and its diaspora, presenting different African artists and galleries, took place in 2013. The name 1-54 reflects on the 54 countries that comprise the African continent and is the first and only international art fair dedicated to only contemporary African art (1-54, 2023). In an interview with Forbes Magazine in 2022, Touria El Glaoui, the Founding Director of the Art Fair, stated that the prices of artworks by African artists sold at the art fair have significantly increased since their first exhibition in 2013 and that it is essential for the founder that collectors buy the artworks for a connection and engagement between collector and artist, rather than the investment opportunity (Mun-Delsalle, 2022).

When studying the integration of African art into the global market, it is crucial to consider elements such as the artist's location and whether the artist is still living and working in their birthplace or has relocated to the West. For instance, in a research paper analysing the auction house Christie's evening and day sales, African artists who moved to Western countries were incorporated significantly earlier in the global art scene than artists who remained in their country of birth (Banks, 2018).



(Banks, 2018). Fig 2: Work by African Born Artists in the May/November Day Sales, 1979-2015.

Figure 2 (Banks, 2018) shows an analysis of the artwork created by African-born artists that were integrated into the May/November day sales at Christie's New York from 1979-2015. The data was differentiated based on three categories: African born, African born and living in the West, and African born and living in Africa. The graph illustrates that while there has been an increase in the appreciation of African born artists who still reside in Africa, they continue to receive the least recognition and integration in Western auction houses. On the other hand, African born artists who live in the West have experienced a noteworthy growth in the recognition of their artwork (Banks, 2018).

### 2.3.5 Role of Social Media in Promoting African Art

In the twenty-first century, social media has become a simple, time-saving tool for promoting and spreading conversations and information to a global audience. Some Africans fear that social media and its reach will negatively influence Africa's youth since it contains a considerable amount of Western content that spreads Western cultural views. However, social media has been and continues to be an extremely influential tool than can be used for sharing and promoting African cultures, including the culture's values, lifestyle, fashion, and arts, and because of social media, the world

can have easy access to view and enjoy the numerous parts of African nations and increase the attention around their culture (Solo-Anaeto & Jacobs, 2015).

Through the Black Lives Matter movement, which was started in 2013 in the US by three radical black activists in response to the fatal shooting of a black teenager called Trayvon Martin, in 2012, there was much new engagement on social media, spreading anti-racism thoughts all over the globe. Even though the movement has been going on for almost ten years, it was not until George Floyd's murder by a police officer in 2020 that it got the deserved recognition. Numerous demonstrations were held across the world in response to this tragedy, and the hashtags #BLM and #BlackLivesMatter quickly trended on social media (Smith, 2017). With the use of social media, Black Lives Matter took on an important role in promoting blackness and shedding light on black artists that have been recently underrepresented, as such channels encouraged involvement and discussion around problems of race and policing (Mundt et al., 2018). A quantitative research study conducted by Mundt et al., on 362 social media accounts by searching for the term Black Lives Matter or BLM, as well as on accounts that utilized the hashtag #blacklivesmatter, found out that digital spaces, such as social media, provide new opportunities for collective movement identity building. Additionally, social media can be utilized as a narrative tool to assist activists in telling their story in its raw and unfiltered form (Mundt et al., 2018). The impact of the Black Lives Matter Movement on the art industry was especially evident in the US. According to a 2020 Cambridge University research article analyzing the impact of the Black Lives Matter movement on the arts and culture in the United States (Katz & Reisman, 2020), many cultural organizations, such as museums and other cultural institutions in the United States of America, made commitments to rethink and change their organizational racial inequities, including more art by artists of color (Katz & Reisman, 2020). In 2020 according to ArtReview, an important globally art review journal, the Black Lives Matter Movement is the most significant art movement in 2020, having redefined and transformed the international art world within its cultural environment (ArtReview, 2020).

## **2.4 Auction Houses as Major Players in the Art Market**

The auction house industry, as part of the art market, has a history dating back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when it was established in London. However, the auction house industry is shaped by a few major players that generate the most profit every year, such as Christie's, Bonhams and Sotheby's (McAndrew, 2019). In the art market, finding sellers and decreasing the risk of illegal copies of art works involves transactions that have considerable costs. This often necessitates the involvement of auction houses, which charge fees for their services to analyze the originality of a piece (Solimano, 2019).

An auction held at an auction house can be seen as a social process rather than an event, with an auction house actively striving to establish a community of buyers, sellers, and other relevant art players, including scholarly and professional art specialists. However, most importantly, auction houses aim to regenerate revenue and act as commercial agents, to create profit for their shareholders and owners (Geismar 2001). There are numerous motivations for collecting art, not only the aesthetic value is a motivation, but also seeing the value in the creation of a human and the financial gain that relates to collecting artwork and incorporating them in portfolios. Studies that analyze historical data of achieved prices of art works at auction and compare it to the changes of valuation concluded that trading and collecting artworks for a financial purpose does not differ significantly from the stock market's average rate of return (Solimano, 2019).

### **2.4.1 Auction House's Integration of Contemporary African Art**

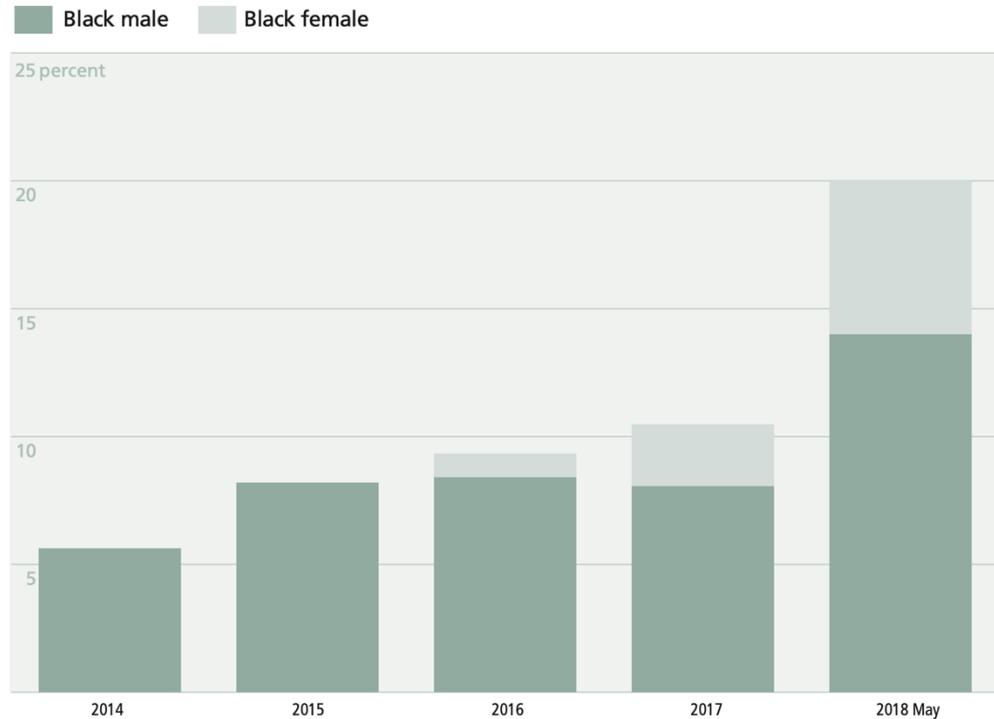
The rising prominence of Black artist's work in contemporary auctions shows that sociological theories are correctly predicting a shift towards the preferred forms and genres of cultural consumption among intellectuals. Specifically, these theories suggest that the emphasis has shifted from exclusivity to inclusion including a broad spectrum of art forms. The promotion of cultural artifacts linked to ethnic and racial minorities is an illustration of this cosmopolitanism (Banks, 2019). As a result of cultural globalization, major Western auction houses are showing an increasing interest in modern African art. Sotheby's in London began its modern and

contemporary African Art sale in 2017, responding to the rising globalization of the art industry (Banks, 2018). Further to that, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, in-house auction house specialists strategically scheduled their African art auctions and pre-sale viewings to align with their modern and contemporary art auctions, leveraging their well-known art history knowledge of the connection of European and African art forms to attract established art collectors from modern and contemporary art to African and oceanic art. Furthermore, they utilized international art fair exposure to acquire global attention from high-end collectors and arrange their sales according to their timeline, which resulted in modern and contemporary art collectors becoming interested in acquiring contemporary African art (Schild, 2019).

According to the art market report from Imo Dara in 2022, the main channel for buying African art is through online auctions (Imo Dara, 2022). Moreover, auction houses including Christie's, Sotheby's, and Bonhams have actively promoted works by African and African-born artists, with artists like Njideka Akunyili Crosby and Amoako Bofo accomplishing five of the top ten results for contemporary works by African-born artists in 2021 (Ehrmann, 2022). According to artprice.com, the world leader in art market information, artworks by contemporary artists born in Africa grossed 47 million US dollars in 2021 and a record-breaking 67 million dollars in 2022 at auctions, which is three times higher than the value generated back in 2012 (Ehrmann, 2023).

Nevertheless, the extent to which contemporary African art is exhibited in "mainstream" contemporary auctions outside of Africa is one of the most crucial factors for proving the internationalization of contemporary African art in the auction market. Furthermore, to determine the extent to which the trend has affected the integration of contemporary African art in auction houses, the outcomes of prior auctions that contained contemporary African art must be evaluated (Banks, 2018).

Work by Black, Black male, and Black female artists in the Sotheby's New York May-November evening sales, 2014-2018



(Banks, 2019, p. 64) Fig 3: Work by Black, Black male and Black female artists in Sotheby's New York Evening Sale.

The bar chart above displays a 2019 analysis by Banks of the integration of African artists, both male and female, into Sotheby's New York evening sales from 2014 to 2018. It demonstrates that there has been a significant change, since no female black artists were found in the auction sales in 2014, and even though black men's works were constantly present in these auctions over this period, there is an increase from 2014 to 2018. Banks continues by pointing out that, although elite preferences have become more inclusive, they are not indiscriminate, since lower status groups, such as black women, have been less integrated into elite preferences (Banks, 2019).

#### 2.4.2 London-based Auction Houses Supporting African Artists

Despite the integration of African art into Western auction houses and the increased global reach and recognition of these art works and artists, there is still no evidence of this becoming a long-term trend (Banks, 2018). Furthermore, non-Western artists continue to account for the smallest share of the global art market, with Chinese

artists being the most integrated non-Western art nation in the global art industry (Velthuis & Curioni, 2015).

However, London auction houses have increased their representation of African artists, as the biggest auction houses, Sotheby's, Christies and Bonhams, have imbedded their own contemporary African art department responding to current trends (Banks, 2019). Furthermore, Christies London is a co-host of the first international Art Fair 1-54, dedicated to contemporary African art and its diaspora, including educational talks and a private membership program to promote insights into a more diverse art scene and art market. The art fairs stand for promoting not only established African artists but also promotes emerging younger artists from this generation (Shurvell, 2020). In a survey conducted by the British Council and the Royal African Society, 2000 participants were asked about their perceptions of contemporary African art and their knowledge of African culture. The results of the survey revealed that many participants were familiar with the 1-54 contemporary African art fair, suggesting that prominent art events can have a long-lasting effect on the public's perception of contemporary African art (Royal African Society, 2019).

Furthermore, the integration of African artist's work into auction sales has been promoted by Helene Love-Attoley, Head of Sales and specialist for Contemporary African Art at Bonhams in London. Love-Attoley has moved on from Bonham's standard practice of featuring the most expensive artwork on the cover of the sale catalogue, instead providing a platform for underrepresented artists including them on the cover of the sales catalogue. Additionally, she created an Instagram account called African Art History, recognizing the lack of accessibility to education on African art history and aiming to increase accessibility through social media (Hamel, 2022).

Moreover, Hanna O'Leary, the head of modern and contemporary art at Sotheby's London, acknowledges that, while demand and discourse surrounding contemporary African art have grown significantly during the past decade, and international art collectors are increasingly drawn to it due to its exciting, innovative, and important

work, there remains a significant gap in the representation of African artists (Sharp, 2016).

### **2.4.3 Auction House Practices for African Artists**

According to Bourdieu's social theory of cultural production, auction houses value art through examining the interactions of various cultural field mediators, indicating that the construction of value is a social process of different art field participants interacting with one another (Bourdieu, 1993). In Sotheby's business practice it is stated that the auction houses hire their own experts, including researchers from universities and museums, as well as independent conservators and restorers, to guarantee that the items they sell are not stolen or mistreated. These professionals are paid as consultants and are involved in various aspects of the marketing process, such as writing catalogue entries for previously unknown objects with uncertain origins and serving as intermediaries between the auction house and potential buyers (Brodie, 2019). Furthermore, according to Sotheby's 2014 annual report, the company's specialists conduct a comprehensive due diligence in order to verify and determine the prior owners of the asset that is being offered for sale (Sotheby's, 2014, p. 3). Yet, since other auction houses do not disclose such reports, it is difficult to examine the techniques used by firms to establish the provenance of the item included in the sales, even though they are likely to be comparable (Brodie, 2019).

However, In June 2020, Christie's Paris auctioned a pair of sacred sculptures of the Igbo people of Nigeria acquired by Jaques Kerchache, a renowned art collector who acquired the objects in 1968 or 1969 through an African dealer. Several critics of the sale claimed that the item was brought to Europe during the Biafran War, which raised the possibility of looting, but Christies rejected the allegations and sold the sculptures for €212,500 plus fees (Crichton-Miller, 2022).

### **2.4.4 Strategies for Increasing an African Art Presence in London-based Auction Houses**

Auction houses have adopted an upper-market approach to contemporary African art to meet their sales expectations, similar to the strategies they employ in other departments. This approach involves selling a smaller number of objects but at a

higher price, carefully selecting works to be showcased at auctions, prioritizing the acquisition and sale of collections that are already known in the market, and developing effective marketing campaigns utilizing both print and digital media. Auction houses also host exclusive events to promote prestige and exclusivity, ultimately attracting modern and contemporary art collectors to African and oceanic art (Schild, 2019). However, not so long-ago Christies depended on tribal art specialists such as William Fagg, who performed fieldwork in West Africa during the colonial period and served as the director of the British Museum's anthropology department (Schild, 2019). Sotheby's and Christie's have just begun to hire a new generation of art specialists, including art historians, philosophers, and business specialists, to build their new department focusing on African and Oceanic art. This new generation of art experts promote a different perspective on African art, one that recognizes its artistic value as equal with other kinds of art. Additionally, they promote African art utilizing the digital era and online marketing tactics, to further change the old European thoughts on colonialism by confronting the problematic cultural legacy in the art world rather than avoiding it (Schild, 2019).

#### **2.4.5 Challenges Faced by African Artists in Securing Auction House Representation**

The promotion of African artists has been met with numerous challenges. A report by the British Council and the Royal African Society highlights several reasons why African artists continue to be underrepresented despite the growing interest in their work. Among these reasons are the need to establish marketing strategies that appeal to diverse audiences beyond the white middle-class demographic, increased awareness and understanding of the history and nature of African culture and its struggles, and leadership by individuals in creating more spaces and events to showcase African art. These challenges present significant obstacles in promoting African art and require a multifaceted approach to address the issue effectively (Royal African Society, 2019). Furthermore, one of the difficulties that African artists are confronted with in the auction house industry is the motivation of collectors who acquire their works. According to the Imo Dara Report 2022, roughly 36% of collectors feel that artefacts of historical and cultural importance should be returned to their places of origin.

Furthermore, just 13% of the 250 survey respondents for the report stated that they collect African art to assist African artists, whereas 54% do it for its cultural significance. Importantly, 75% of those questioned responded that they collect African art for its aesthetic appeal (Imo Dara, 2022).

The art market's constant change necessitates innovation and expansion to attract new audiences, particularly in the field of African and Oceanic art, as renowned auction houses Christie's and Sotheby's face the problem of broadening their approaches to promote the recognition of such art forms, rather than relying solely on their connection with European modern art to establish their value. Furthermore, it is important to rethink how these art departments should transform to adapt on these changes, and further expand their marketing tactics, taking into consideration a changed perspective on European colonization. (Schild, 2019).

### **3 Methodology**

This section of the bachelor thesis will examine how the data was gathered and analyzed and what purpose it had for the thesis, in addition to providing the research model that formed the foundation of the research. To begin, this section will provide a detailed outline of the research design that was chosen for this bachelor thesis. Furthermore, other research designs will be briefly discussed and reasons will be given as to why they were not used in this study. Next, the formulation of the questionnaire and interview questions will be briefly explained, as well as their relevance to the research objectives. Following this, the data collection process will be described, with an emphasis on how it was carefully planned and executed. Lastly, the limitations and ethical considerations of the research will be addressed.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

According to Creswell (2014), three different research methods can be used. These methods include qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods, which is an approach of combining qualitative and quantitative research. Creswell (2014) describes choosing the right research approach for the researcher's thesis as based on multiple factors such as personal experience, the main research question of the study, and the audience selected for the study. A qualitative research approach includes interviews, experiments, and case studies, whereas quantitative research uses open-ended questions and mainly focuses on data collection.

To ensure that the thesis achieves its desired outcome, a qualitative research design has been selected. Despite the sacrifice of the thesis's generalizability, this design will enable the researcher to gain an extensive understanding of the studied sample (Creswell, 2014). In-depth interviews are the preferred method for this research, as they have several advantages. The main advantage is that in-depth interviews can retrieve a significant amount of detailed information and are better perceived by participants due to the personal touch involved. Individuals find it more enjoyable to speak to a person than to fill out a survey (Boyce & Neale, 2006).

However, there are some disadvantages to the successful execution of in-depth interviews. The interviewer should be well prepared before conducting an interview. Furthermore, it is essential to apply effective interview techniques to make the respondent comfortable and receive the most valuable information. The interviewer should exclude their personal opinions, and appropriate body language should be used for credibility (Creswell, 2014).

### **3.1.1 Expert Interview and Questionnaire**

With the help of qualitative research, the method will be used to generate appropriate answers to the research questions of the study. The qualitative analysis of the thesis includes interviews with 8 experts of the art industry, divided into two expert groups: contemporary African art collectors and auction house representatives.

The interview and questionnaire consisted of 10 – 12 open questions per expert group and the participants were carefully selected based on their expertise in the subject matter and their willingness to participate in the study. The questions focused on the participant's perceptions of the integration of contemporary African art in Western auction houses, the view on the demand of contemporary African art, thoughts about the upcoming future for contemporary African art and the role of auction houses in promoting diversity and inclusivity in the art industry and were conducted to gain insight knowledge of the integration of contemporary African art.

The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed to identify common themes and patterns in the responses. Moreover, the interviews were either carried out face-to-face or over Zoom, based on the interviewee's location. Overall, the expert interview method provided valuable insights into the research topic and helped to achieve the research objectives.

The questionnaire, which was provided as an alternative option for participants who preferred this approach, consisted of the same set of questions as the interview, including a summary and explanation of the topic, guidelines for completing the questionnaire and a consent to participate in the research. A questionnaire is a useful alternative to an interview for qualitative research, as the respondents may feel

uncomfortable being recorded or doing an interview (Creswell, 2014). The questionnaire was delivered and sent back through email.

### **3.1.2 Limitations and Ethical Considerations**

In conducting the interview, ethical considerations were taken into account. The researcher first gave a brief summary of the research topic as well as a consent fact sheet was provided to ensure that the participants were fully aware of their participation and provided their consent. Anonymity was also given as an option for the participants to ensure their privacy. The interview guidelines were also provided to the participants to ensure that they were aware of what was expected of them during the interview.

In terms of the questions asked, they were carefully chosen to avoid any harm or offense to the respondents. The questions were also asked in an objective and neutral manner to avoid any bias in the responses. The interviewer also remained neutral throughout the interview to avoid any subjectivity.

However, there are still limitations to the interview. The participants may not have been completely honest or open in their responses, which could lead to inaccurate results. The second limitation is the availability of interview partners for the research field. Additionally, even though the questions were carefully crafted, the sensitive nature of the topic for this study could also result in inaccurate responses and the lack of participants was a limitation because of the researcher's location, which made it difficult to gather many candidates for the interviews. Overall, ethical considerations were taken into account during the interview, but there are still limitations to think about.

## 4 Results

This section of the bachelor thesis examines the interviews and questionnaires utilized to obtain a better understanding of the research subject. The section on the results is categorized into the two expert groups – contemporary African art collectors and auction house representatives – because the questions asked differed for the two expert groups to gain insights from both the collectors and the sellers side to further acquire different perspectives and analyze the different estimations of the market for the contemporary African market and the integration of contemporary African art into auction houses with regards to the ethical considerations. Furthermore, the interviewee’s responses have been evaluated using the research questions developed for the bachelor thesis.

### 4.1 Contemporary African Art Collectors

The expert group interviews for contemporary African art collectors focused on analyzing the drivers of motivation for collecting contemporary African art, the role of collectors in promoting diversity in the art industry, an assessment of the opportunities for African artists, future perspectives for the contemporary African art market, and the difficulties and ethical considerations when collecting contemporary African art as a Western art collector. The contemporary art collectors were all based in Vienna, the majority of whom only collected contemporary art, and all said that their interest in purchasing contemporary African art began in the last 10–20 years, but some began collecting art in general earlier.

#### 4.1.1 Western Collector’s Reasons for Collecting Contemporary African Art

The art collector (**Interview A1**) indicated that he began collecting art approximately 40 years ago, when he was about 14 years old, but he just began collecting African art around 15 years ago, when he met the artist Amoako Bofo in Vienna. He also claims that the qualities that make contemporary African art appealing to Western collections consist of differing from European art in the way that African artists use different techniques for their art, use a lot of color, and incorporate objects that may be influenced by tribal art. **Respondent A2** also stated that he has recently begun

collecting contemporary African art and finds portraits with tribal art patterns particularly appealing, and further highlighted how the influence of historical patterns and painting styles is very appealing to Western eyes and perfectly matches current art market trends. Similar, to **Respondent A2**, **Respondent A3** discussed an exhibition called "In the Black Fantastic," stating how appealing the visuals are with deep meanings about black histories and black futures.

**Respondent A3** also discussed how having a connection to Africa, visiting African countries, and having former family members based in Zimbabwe has influenced the appreciation of African visual culture, as well as learning about the "Primitivism" exhibition held at MoMa New York, and the controversy surrounding the exhibition, and how important it is to "reviewing these unequal histories with a critical eye" which "will allow for more effective discourses surrounding the issues and hopefully more positive outcomes.". And **Respondent A5**, mentioned how his interest for the history of African states in general sparked his interest in collecting African art.

#### **4.1.2 Collector's Perspectives on the Potential of the African Art Market**

The interviews were asked about how they perceive the potential for the African art market. The expert from **Interviewee A1** responded to the question "*How do you see the market for African art evolving in the next 5-10 years*" by saying that he believes that more people will collect African art, particularly contemporary portraiture, but that if any market receives too much attention, demand will fall, and markets that have yet to be discovered will increase in value as they are still new and interesting, however eventually the market will level off. He also claims that there has been an increase in the value of African art pieces due to supply-demand, as African art has only recently been discovered as a medium and collector's interest in the market has grown, however, there are only a few really good African artists, and they are unable to create after the demand, so prices increase.

**Respondent A2** responded, "While it seems to be a lasting one, African art is a trend. Just like in any market, there are trends in the art market, which currently places its focus on minority groups and social/political activism" and also believes that, while the trend is seen as having high potential, the focus on African art that is currently

placed will die down in the next ten years, whereas **Respondent A3** expects a steady increase in the art market in the next 5–10 years and mentions the unique quality contemporary African art has in the “thought of a globalized world”. Similarly, **Respondent A3**, believes it will develop further, since there is now a strong platform developed for movements promoting African artists, which has given them support and motivation.

**Respondent A2** stated that the "phenomenon is particularly striking when comparing auction results of African artists now versus 10 years ago," additionally all the respondents answered that they have seen a very large increase in the value of African art in recent years.

The interviewees all mentioned the increased attention given to African art, as well as how much potential is still to be discovered.

#### **4.1.3 Role of the Collector in Promoting Diversity and Representation**

**Interviewee A1** replied to the question, *"What do you believe is the role of collectors in promoting diversity and representation in the art world, particularly for African artists?"* That is depending on what type of collector you are, as it differs on where you set your values on collecting, whether it is for pride or to educate. **Respondent A2** and **A3** both believe that it is the collector's responsibility to support artists by purchasing their work. However, **Respondent A3** also wrote about the importance for collectors not to support artists based on gender, race, or nationality, and strongly believes that promoting diversity is beneficial in all its aspects because it goes hand in hand with having a strong admiration for contemporary African art, and one also wants to promote its representation. Furthermore, the answer from **Respondent A4** emphasizes the value of diversity in the art market, which leads to how important collectors are to support African art by acquiring it.

**Respondent A5** also noted the importance of returning colonial-era looted art to African nations in order to restore their culture and give them back a piece of their stolen history, however, rightfully acquired art by museums and collections helps to educate the culture and promote artists internationally.

On the contrary the responses of the experts revealed that not everyone had purchased African art from an African artist or through an African gallery.

#### **4.1.4 Challenges to Western Collectors Collecting African Art**

When asked whether they believe there are any unique challenges or opportunities with selling and collecting contemporary African art, **Respondent A3** responded that there may be challenges due to educating oneself about the complexities of African histories, nevertheless the opportunities are unique and exciting, with much to learn about the continent and its people. **Respondent A5**, said, "The opportunities are that one engages more intensively with foreign cultures and, as a result, better understands the ways of thinking and social structures of these cultures."

**Interviewee A1** and **Respondent A2** indicated that they do not think there are any problems, except for artists who are not yet well established.

#### **4.1.5 Contemporary African Art in Western Art Institutions**

When asked, "*Do you believe African art should be displayed separately from Western art in museums and galleries?*" the respondents had similar opinions as they all answered with that African art should not be displayed separately, however it depended on the situation, and the institution on how to portray ethnicity and if it makes sense to exhibition. **Respondent A3** emphasized the need for education and getting the necessary understanding before displaying African art alongside Western art in museums or galleries. **Respondent A4** stated that he prefers not to use the term "African Art" as it should be employed for all art forms, and that "the Quai Branly Museum in Paris, the Rietberg Museum in Zurich, and the Weltmuseum in Vienna, as well as numerous private galleries, have the task of presenting non-European art and cultures to us," to highlight it as an important part of the art industry to further raise interest in non-Western artists such as contemporary artists.

Only **Interviewee A1** stated that there is no difficulty and that the artworks should be displayed together, as the artworks in his collection are also placed together and mixed throughout.

## 4.2 Auction House Representatives

The expert group interviews with auction house representatives focused on asking how auction houses value African art, any constraints, and the ethical considerations associated with including African art in their auctions. Additionally, concerns such as what motivates an auction house to include contemporary African art, potential strategies for incorporating and promoting African artists, an assessment of the African art market in the future, and how cultural relevance affects auction houses are addressed. The auction house representatives were based in London and Vienna.

### 4.2.1 African Art's Value as Determined by Auction Houses

According to **Interviewee B1**, the financial aspects of African art are more important for auction houses than the cultural value, even though it plays some part in valuing art, an auction house is a business, not a museum, and the main motivation for an auction house for incorporating an artwork is to be financially successful. The respondent continues by outlining how, although having a high cultural value, works of art may not be very valuable financially. To determine the value of a picture, auction houses look at what makes it unique, whether it has a unique color scheme, whether it is an interesting or attractive picture, whether it portrays a young woman or an older man, and most importantly how much it might be worth to collectors. In addition, the **Interviewee B1** discussed how an auction house examines historical auction prices to determine the value of an artist's work.

Conversely, **Interviewee B2**, talked about how auction houses must invest considerable time in learning about the traditions and cultures of African art in order to examine it from angles other than the Western tradition and gain enough knowledge about the form of art. However, when a new and younger artist is discovered, you first must try it out quite a bit and see how the market will react to the work and if the response is positive, auction houses can then increase the prices. **Respondent B3** stated “that our main focus is not the cultural worth of an art piece, rather the monetary worth, which may go hand in hand”.

#### **4.2.2 Western Auction Houses Integrating African Art**

**Interviewee B1** mentioned that since international auction houses first began to incorporate African art in their schedule and sales calendar approximately 27 years ago, the integration and representation of African art into auctions had significantly increased. However, it is also a market with recessions, and according to the response, there have been 2 recessions in the last 27 years from which African art has come back. Collectors and museums are becoming more and more interested, and the respondent does not expect this trend will stop. Furthermore, the respondent mentioned that their sales of contemporary African art have increased in sizes and that they have achieved another two world records with sales that they have hosted three weeks ago. This was also highlighted by **Respondent B3**, stating that African art is a great contribution to the European art market.

Likewise, **Interviewee B2** believes that less well-known and younger African artists may continue to fall out of the market, yet each market for art works in a comparable way.

The trend was pointed out by all three auction house representatives as being long-lasting and **Interviewee B1** and **Interviewee B2** compared it to Chinese or Russian art, both of which were discovered at a late stage by the Western art market, and now experience a significant amount of appreciation by the West and are a fixed part of the global artwork and auction sales.

Furthermore, as stated in **Interviewee B2**, the incorporation of contemporary African art into Western auction houses occurred very late, and they are now gradually entering the normal contemporary auction sales, despite the fact that it must still be labeled as African art. They also mentioned that there is still much to discover because Africa is such a large continent with so much potential.

The participants were also asked if they think that African artists are represented fairly in Western auction houses, to which **Interviewee B2** respondent, “I mean, it can't be enough. It's the same with the female artist”. **Interviewee B1** pointed out, on the other hand, that they are not done by so poorly, but because Africa is a huge continent

with 54 countries, some will always be missing from sales and be represented less fairly than others. Presenting African art as a whole and not making individual sales for each country is easier, and Bonhams does not sell by country, but rather in groups. **Respondent B3** stated that at this moment the auction houses are doing a fair job of incorporating African art into Western auction houses.

#### 4.2.3 Responsibilities of Auction Houses when Integrating African Art

When asked about *"How do you see the role of auction houses in shaping public perception of African art and culture?"*, the perception of the role of auction houses differed for the two auction house representatives.

"I don't think we have a role; I don't think that's our role at all," answered **Interviewee B1**, "I mean, our role is our duties to our clients, our clients, and vendors. I mean, we're not a museum. We're, we're not a public body" However, the interviewee also mentioned that auction houses participate in activities that promote the market and thus bring collectors awareness to different categories, such as contemporary African art, yet the motivation behind this is to expand the market.

**Interviewee B2** indicated that the role of auction houses is to cultivate knowledge and bring attention to this new market, however in the end, what is included in the sale is what is going to sell.

In response to the second question, *"Do you believe that Western auction houses have a responsible responsibility to address racism and discrimination and also address the legacy of colonialism?"*, **Interviewee B2**, emphasized the importance of addressing racism, in addition to auction houses hosting auctions that address the issue, such as Sotheby's doing an auction called "Black Lives Matter," however it is sometimes critical to sell African art and even more should be done by auction houses to support the voice of the artists. **Interviewee B1** and **Respondent B3** both indicated that auction houses have a different objective.

A third question was asked if auction house representatives had witnessed any instances of cultural appropriation, to which they implied that they had not witnessed any cultural appropriation in the sales of African art, but **Interviewee B1** went on to

explain that it is a free market, so auction houses do not regulate who buys an artwork.

#### **4.2.4 Strategies for Increasing the Representation of African Artists**

The participants were both asked about the strategies used by auction houses when integrating African art into their sales. **Interviewee B1** stated that they want to stand out from the competition, thus they attempt to do things differently from other auction houses. The interviewee added that having the best sales records for contemporary African art is a good indicator that Bonhams is doing something right with their approaches. An important objective for an auction house is to retain its performance and position as the market leader, and one way of accomplishing this is by analyzing the prices achieved during the sales.

According to **Interviewee B2**, if an established artist is part of one of the auctions, they emphasize that in their marketing strategies. Furthermore, the participant stated that holding special events for their contemporary African art sales and inviting only Africans would not be respectful. However, it was also mentioned that Sotheby's holds art fairs or events in Africa to promote not only the art market in Western countries. The participant further mentioned Hannah O'Leary, the head of modern African art at Sotheby's London, who travels to Africa frequently to learn more about the culture and to visit the artists.

**Respondent B3** mentioned that the auction house the respondent works at does not do anything different for African art, yet some auction houses that empathize African art in their marketing strategies may gain a positive outcome.

## 5 Discussion

The data collected through the interviews and questionnaires for the thesis provided the researcher with valuable insights on the potential, existing state, and challenges and limits of African art in Western institutions.

The findings in the existing literature were additionally emphasized by collectors and auction house representatives as all of them pointed out a growth in appreciation for contemporary African art, and nearly everyone believes that this is a long-term trend. However, one of the respondents mentioned that the art market currently focuses on minorities and underrepresented artists, indicating that this is a trend now, though the current focus on African artists will be less strong and begin to decrease in the next 5 to 10 years. Given that two of the collectors stated that it is the collector's responsibility to support African artists by purchasing their work, it was clear that the collectors did not purchase art works just for the monetary value of the piece. Yet controversially only a few of the collectors have purchased African art through African galleries or African artists. This may raise concerns about how much Africans profit if buyers buy the work through Western distributors, which may be addressed by directly supporting African galleries and African artists.

Among the responses, just one collector underlined the importance of institutions in returning looted art artifacts to their rightful owner, area, or nation. Furthermore, the collectors' claims for a greater concentration on contemporary African art were consistent with those found in the literature research and referenced a globalized world with new opportunities now available to African artists. The results of the interviews conducted, and the literature gathered for the thesis, show that globalization has impacted on the integration of contemporary African art into Western institutions greatly.

All the collectors cited the interesting, historical, and yet new narrative of the art pieces as the motivation for acquiring African art, in addition to a few mentioning that they find pleasure in learning more about African culture through collecting and engaging with contemporary African art and one collector stating that having a family

connection to Africa was another influential factor. Under present circumstances, it appears that the objectives of Western collectors to purchase African art are gaining knowledge about culture and history, as well as seeing the aesthetic worth of the work, rather than profit.

Most collectors had the same perspective on African art in Western institutions, mentioning that it depended on the exhibition and institutions, nevertheless, one respondent underlined the need for education and gaining an essential understanding of the works before presenting African art alongside Western art. Another collector emphasized the need for Western museums to showcase African art to educate the West about the culture and history of Africa, while another collector even claimed that they should not be displayed separately because they have been combined in his collection as well. From this standpoint, placing African art in a Western institution necessitates a lot of conversation and education.

Even though the collectors all shared the same beliefs that they have seen an increase in Western art institutions including contemporary African art, with the majority of them believing that this will be a sustainable long-term trend, only one Western collector discussed the influence of colonialism on Africa and the art works that European museums still hold, whereas the importance of education and knowledge about African culture and history was mentioned multiple times. Furthermore, controversially for the idea of supporting African artists, not all the collectors have bought art from African galleries or African artists, but rather from Western institutions.

Furthermore, while market representation of African artists has increased in recent years, one of the auction house representatives stated that it is difficult for a continent of 54 countries to be fairly represented in auction houses. It is notable that the auction house representatives all shared the same opinion, that the primary goal of auction houses is financial success because they are businesses rather than educational and cultural institutions, and while cultivating knowledge and bringing attention to a market is important, what is included in the sales is what will sell. There were also some important differences as one of the auction house representatives underlined

the necessity of learning about Africa, visiting the countries, and getting to know about their culture.

Nevertheless, the interviews revealed that there are no special regulations governing the incorporation of African art into sales, and one respondent stated that their marketing strategies for promoting art works by African artists include highlighting a well-established African artist in their promotion to generate more attraction, and for younger newer artists who are relatively new to the market, auction houses must experiment quite a bit. Sotheby's has held events cultivating African art to raise awareness, one of which was called Black Lives Matter.

However, the extent to which it is possible for auction houses to intergrade policies to safeguard the ethical implications for contemporary African art in the West cannot be stated, since auction houses operate in a free market and are profit driven businesses.

## **6 Conclusion**

The purpose of this bachelor thesis was to examine the integration of contemporary African art in Western auction houses. In more depth, the research objective was to examine the issues concerning the incorporation of African art into Western auction houses, with a particular emphasis on London auction houses while taking into consideration the UK's colonial history. Furthermore, in order to achieve this goal, the researcher gathered literature on the critical relationship between culture and art, examined the history of colonialism in Africa in relation to the UK, the current status of African art in the art market, and finally examined the role and strategies of auction houses when integrating contemporary African art into their sales and collections. To understand more about the research issue, interviews were conducted, and questionnaires were filled out with experts on the topic.

The literature gathered to answer the research questions revealed that one of the main reasons for the increase in interest for African art is globalization. Globalization has contributed greatly to the representation of African artists in Western institutions,

as international art fairs have been established, hosted all over the world spreading more awareness globally. Furthermore, social media, and the feeling of being connected globally is another factor in the increased attention.

When including contemporary African art in the regular contemporary art sales of auction houses, is important to achieve more recognition and representation for underrepresented artists. The literature has shown, that in recent years contemporary African art has gained more representation in the day and evening sales of international auction houses. Auction houses that started including contemporary African art and started introducing their own African art sales, have seen great rewards, as they have set records in their sales. This was also addressed in the thesis interviews, as the auction house Bonhams set two global records with their sale of contemporary African art. Interviews with auction house representatives revealed that, although the primary purpose of auction houses is to maximize their profits, they regard African art and the attention it is receiving right now as a long-term component of the art market with much more to come and discover. The demand for African art also leads to an increased interest in educating oneself about Africa's history and culture.

The research further investigated the motivations of Western art collectors to acquire contemporary African art and the issues that arise from Western collectors collecting African art. The literature and interviews to support the thesis research objective, revealed that one of the main reasons for Western collectors to be interested in African art is because it is something new, something vibrant and something that has a deep meaning with a lot of history embedded in the art. Furthermore, collecting African art can also educate people more about a culture that has long been repressed by Western ideals and Western regimes. This also underlined the relationship between culture and art, and even though Africa and its people have been victimized by many terrible events, the history and narrative of colonialism presented in art works is one of the main reasons people buy African art. The art reflects social history and expresses it eloquently.

The research however showed that limitations of the research topic include the challenges of implementing specific policies for the sale of contemporary African art, as an auction house is a business participating in a free market. Even though the increase in interest helped to spread awareness about incorporating African art in Western auction houses and increased awareness and knowledge about Africa's history and African culture, the literature and the interviews showed that there are no special regulations for integrating African artists in western auction houses as it is a profit-driven industry.

One way to ensure that African art maintains and gains more representation in Western art institutions is by collectors participating in art events that educate them about the history of Africa, as well as being more aware and supporting artists that have received less recognition in the past as an important step when collecting contemporary African art in an appropriate way. Additionally, holding art institutions accountable for looted colonial-artifacts and refusing to support museums that exhibit such art gathered through criminal activity is an important step.

Furthermore, the research aims to emphasize the duty and importance of taking action in educating oneself about the history and culture that African nations have to offer the world.

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## Appendices

### Appendix Collectors Group A

**Interviewee A1:** Amir Shariat (Contemporary African art collector based in Vienna)

**How has your interest in African art evolved and what sparked your passion for collecting African art?**

I collected the first African artist maybe 15 years ago, but then I didn't really buy anyone else. Um, it was a painting by Sherry Samba. And then in 2019 I met Amoako Bafoa in Vienna and I started buying his works. And, um, of course I met other people via him, other artists. And um, then in 2020 I met Alexandre Diop, uh, both of them at the university of applied arts in Vienna and I bought his work and I started collecting him. But I've been collecting art since I was 14 years. 14 years old. So it's a long time. It's like almost 40 years of collecting.

**In your opinion, what are the unique qualities of contemporary African art and what makes it appealing to Western collections?**

I think African portraiture is different to, um, European or let's say American portraiture because they use a lot of, um, found objects in the paintings often. Mm-hmm if you look at the works of Amoako Bafoa or um, uh, Alexander Diop, um, they work not only with oil, but they also work with objects in the paintings. So it has a sculptural element, which might come from the background of a lot of African art that we know that we classify as traditional, which is sculpture. Um, so it is different. And of course, who do they paint, they paint themselves, which is obvious to me. So you would have more, um, portraits of Africans as opposed to portraits of Europeans or, or Americans. So the portrait are even in color, looks different. And, uh, I think that they, they're great with colors. They love colors.

**How do you see the market for African art evolving in the next five to 10 years?**

Um, the market in terms of, um, people collecting, I think more people will collect African art, contemporary portraiture, um, in terms of value. I mean, it's like every other market, anything that's true hot will come down and anything that's to be discovered will still go up in value and it wouldn't all find its correct level at the end of the day.

**What do you believe is the role of collectors in promoting diversity and representation in the art world, particularly for African artists?**

I mean, the role of collectors depends on what kind of collector you are. If you are a museum, then you know, you have a duty to educate. If you're a private collector, you either have your private museum, which is one option, and you exhibit the works or you support maybe, um, if you're a smaller collector, you support, uh, museum resume exhibitions by lending your works to institutional shows, or you can co-finance institutional exhibitions. It, it depends on what kind of collector you are.

**Do you primarily collect traditional or contemporary African art?**

No, only contemporary.

**Have you seen an increase in the value of African art in recent years?**

Yeah, it's been huge because it goes hand in hand with the interest in African art. So yeah, massive increase.

**What do you think are the reasons for this increase?**

Um, I think in general, um, African contemporary painting was not really discovered as a medium and once gets discovered, like everything else, you know, collectors want to, uh, own the works or, you know, it's a supply demand issue. Um, there are just not that many great, um, painters in any field. And the same applies to, um, African artists. There are a lot of artists, but always only a handful are truly great. And, um, they just cannot produce what the art market demands and, and, um, hence prices grow up in value. Um, and they don't overproduce. They're very, um, selective from what I've seen, and, uh, very thoughtful. And so prices, they tend to go up.

**Do you believe African art should be displayed separately from Western art in museums or galleries?**

No. No. Should be together. I don't think that there is a separation. I don't see a separation myself. Even my own collection, no. I mix it with everything else.

**Do you believe there are any unique challenges or opportunities with selling and collecting contemporary African art?**

With selling and collecting? What do you mean for collectors to sell or for the artists to sell?

**Like with, how do you collect with, um, how do you say it? When you collect African art, do you kind of find it more difficult for you as a non-African to collect African art?**

No. Okay. No. Um, no, that, that's, I've never witnessed that problem. Okay. Uh, no, no challenges in my opinion. No. They're, they're very open minded. I mean, the African artists are open minded, the galleries are open minded. No, no problem.

**Have you purchased any African art from African artists or galleries?**

Yeah, a lot. Most of it, I think all of it even came either from the artist or from African galleries or Africa centric galleries.

**Oh, because that's rare.**

Actually. Yeah. Very rare. Oh yeah. Um, yeah, no, I've always bought from, uh, either the artists or their, or their galleries.

**And finally, is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with contemporary African art and the auction industry in the West?**

The, the, I think that the, the, the artists have to be careful who they sell works through. And, um, if they place the works correctly, then there's no issue with auction. Um, and if they'll replace them well, or people will, you know, as I said, there are different types of collectors, like guys who collect because they truly love the works and are passionate, and then the collectors who are not really collectors who just want, you know, to view it as an investment. So they would definitely try to flip it.

**And if I can ask you, uh, collect it because you like value, see the value behind the Works?**

No, I, I only collect works that I love. I would never buy work that I don't love. I'm not interested in that. So you have to collect with your eyes, not with your ears. And, uh, often I collect things and people say, oh, I don't understand it, but that's okay with me because I, I like, I get it. Um, so yeah, no, I think it's a mistake to buy with your ears. You can get it right, but often you will get it wrong. You have to like it, like everything in life.

**Perfect.Thank you so much.**

**Respondent A2:** anonymous collector

**How has your interest in African art evolved, and what sparked your passion for collecting?**

My passion for collecting stems from my initial passion for art. I have loved art since a young age and decided to materialize this passion by starting to collect myself. African Art has seen an all-time high when talking about public interest as well as prices, especially at auctions. I personally only started looking into African art very recently, but I do enjoy it very much especially when portraits are combined with tribal patterns.

**In your opinion, what are the unique qualities of contemporary African art that make it appealing to Western collectors?**

While it seems to be a lasting one, African art is definitely a trend. Just like in any market, there are trends in the art market, which currently places its focus on minority groups and social/political activism. Apart from the latter qualities, I would say that the incorporation of traditional patterns and painting forms from African cultures is very appealing to the western eye and complements the current trends in the art market very well.

**How do you see the market for African art evolving in the next 5-10 years?**

It definitely seems like a trend with high potential to last within this market. While I honestly believe that the focus on African art will die down within the next 10 years, as trends come and go, I do believe that established artists will continue to sell and will adapt their aesthetics to market forces and demand.

**What do you believe is the role of collectors in promoting diversity and representation in the art world, particularly for African artists?**

I believe that collectors play a significant role in influencing demand and raising awareness on specific topics and minority groups within the art world. Collectors

collect out of passion, but they cannot neglect the impact they hold on the market they operate in and therefore be aware of the pieces to place in their collection.

**Do you primarily collect traditional or contemporary African art?**

Contemporary African art, as it speaks more to me. While I do appreciate traditional African art, I believe that from a western point of view and when judging from a western eye with western taste, contemporary African art speaks more into western aesthetics as it combines contemporary western principles with traditional craftsmanship and elements.

**Have you seen an increase in the value of African art in recent years?**

Definitely, it is undeniable that African art has seen a sharp increase in value, appreciation and market awareness in recent years. This phenomenon is particularly striking when comparing auction results of African artists now versus 10 years ago.

**Do you believe African art should be displayed separately from Western art in museums and galleries?**

I believe it is the job of the curator to place art depending on the idea/concept they would like to convey. Generally, I believe African art should not be displayed separately from western art, as it works with western principles and often the line of thought or concept on which a curation is based, is often unrelated to the cultural background or ethnicity of the artist. So, I think that it `could` be displayed separately but definitely not that it `should`.

**Do you believe there are any unique challenges or opportunities with selling and collecting contemporary African art?**

The only unique challenge I can imagine is that the trend might die down in the future, affecting its value, especially of African artists which are not established yet.

**Have you purchased any African art from African artists or galleries?**

Yes

**Finally, is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences with contemporary African art and the auction industry in the West?**

From what I could observe, I can see that there is a big hype about artists like Amoako Bofo, Isshaq Ismael etc. which have increased substantially in value and sell very well at auctions and in galleries.

**Respondent A3:** anonymous collector

**How has your interest in African art evolved, and what sparked your passion for collecting?**

I have family who were formerly based in Zimbabwe and moved to South Africa ten years ago. Having visited them a lot and other parts of Africa, my appreciation for the African visual culture grew. I am fascinated about the complexity of the relationships between European and African art. For instance, I learnt of the MOMA's 1984 exhibition called "Primitivism". With a postcolonial outlook, we begin to understand how problematic this exhibition was. European artists have used African aesthetics and it is not a simple black-or-white answer to whether this is acceptable or not, but instead, reviewing these unequal histories with a critical eye will allow for more effective discourses surrounding the issues and hopefully more positive outcomes.

**In your opinion, what are the unique qualities of contemporary African art that make it appealing to Western collectors?**

A show recently held at the Hayward Gallery was "In the Black Fantastic", exhibiting works by artists such as Lina Iris Viktor, Wangechi Mutu and Nick Cave. The works are daring and emotive, showcasing themes of Afrofuturism. The unique qualities of these aesthetics are how expansive and creative they are. The artists are not restricted by boundaries in what they envisage. This exhibition was even said by New York Times to

have gone beyond Afrofuturism. The works are visually very attractive but have deeply woven messages about Black History and Black Futures.

**How do you see the market for African art evolving in the next 5-10 years?**

I honestly see it growing. The strong platform of Afrofuturism and other movements and inspirations that African artists are following have been developing over years now. There have been recent events, which have given momentum and direction to these artists.

**What do you believe is the role of collectors in promoting diversity and representation in the art world, particularly for African artists?**

The responsibility of a collector is to support artists through purchase of their works, however I do not feel that I should choose this based on an artist's background, gender, nationality, or race. I feel strongly that promoting diversity is beneficial in all aspects. I have both a fascination and admiration for contemporary African art and by promoting the works and artists that I like, I would also be promoting representation for African artists.

**Do you primarily collect traditional or contemporary African art?**

I am interested in both traditional and contemporary African art, especially where these aesthetics from history lap over.

**Have you seen an increase in the value of African art in recent years?**

Yes, the market is growing, and collectors' awareness is also growing.

**Do you believe African art should be displayed separately from Western art in museums and galleries?**

This is a complex question that must be thought out carefully in all different instances. For example, it depends on the institution and their collecting practices, history and what works they hold. I believe, with the right level of information and communication

to gallery and museum visitors, all works of art can be exhibited together because they have developed from human endeavor.

**Do you believe there are any unique challenges or opportunities with selling and collecting contemporary African art?**

In terms of challenges with selling and collecting contemporary African art, it is important to have an holistic understanding of African histories. I am still learning these complexities. The opportunities that come with contemporary African art are unique and exciting; it is a growing field of research and representation of a continent and more of people.

**Have you purchased any African art from African artists or galleries?**

No, not yet.

**Finally, is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences with contemporary African art and the auction industry in the West?**

Thank you for your questionnaire and I wish you all the best for your research and bachelor's thesis.

**Respondent A4:** anonymous collector

**How has your interest in African art evolved, and what sparked your passion for collecting?**

The main interest has involved because of the fact that it is something different compared to European/western art. It is mainly a new twist in the art world that one hasn't really seen in Europe.

**In your opinion, what are the unique qualities of contemporary African art that make it appealing to Western collectors?**

A thought of a globalized art world, where the background of an artist isn't a main criterion, the quality of the art itself should be the main interest. But it is for sure interesting to see new ideas and concepts coming from African artists.

**How do you see the market for African art evolving in the next 5-10 years?**

I expect a steady increase. I think speaking of auctions, when African artist sell their paintings for a high value, the overall art market will react, and interest will grow.

**What do you believe is the role of collectors in promoting diversity and representation in the art world, particularly for African artists?**

Diversity is still a very important topic in the art world. Therefore, the role of collectors collecting African art is an important one.

**Do you primarily collect traditional or contemporary African art?**

Contemporary, as traditional art can be very complicated due to its provenance and often colonial background.

**Have you seen an increase in the value of African art in recent years?**

Not in a specific way

**Do you believe African art should be displayed separately from Western art in museums and galleries?**

It can be labeled as African art, and it depends on the institution. Provenance surely is interesting, but I don't see a problem in displaying it together with western art

**Do you believe there are any unique challenges or opportunities with selling and collecting contemporary African art?**

It is a still not super popular part of the art world that I expect to grow, so therefore it is great to start collecting early on.

**Have you purchased any African art from African artists or galleries?**

Not yet

**Finally, is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences with contemporary African art and the auction industry in the West?**

I think it surely got more attention in the last years and it is interesting how it will grow.

**Respondent A5:** anonymous collector

**How has your interest in African art evolved, and what sparked your passion for collecting?**

As a visual artist and set designer, I have always been interested in all kinds of art, and my passion for collecting specifically African masks developed in conversations with some reputable African dealers (here, the set designer is in the foreground). But also, my interest in history in general and the history of African ethnic states and regions before and during colonialism played a crucial role.

**In your opinion, what are the unique qualities of contemporary African art that make it appealing to Western collectors?**

Perhaps it is the originality that is largely palpable in contemporary African art. It is a return to one's own culture and its origins. A similar phenomenon I observed in the Baltic states after the collapse of the Soviet Union, where the artists also used contemporary art trends in the Soviet era, but a regional identity was still noticeable. In part, globalization in these countries has made it less prominent in the art sector. A development that will eventually affect African art in the future.

**How do you see the market for African art evolving in the next 5-10 years?**

I cannot say. But at the moment, the market is booming.

**What do you believe is the role of collectors in promoting diversity and representation in the art world, particularly for African artists?**

Any collecting of art is a promotion of artists. In this context, I also find it essential to return actual colonial-era looted art to the respective states to promote their self-esteem in their own culture and give them back part of their own past. But real art

and artifacts acquired in collections and museums serve representation and make culture and artists known internationally.

**Do you primarily collect traditional or contemporary African art?**

For our collection of contemporary art, regional origin is not a criterion, but other factors play a role.

**Have you seen an increase in the value of African art in recent years?**

I cannot judge that. I have not looked into it.

**Do you believe African art should be displayed separately from Western art in museums and galleries?**

That depends on the concept of the museums and exhibitions. A comparison of different art regions - I deliberately avoid using "African art" because it concerns all art forms - is quite interesting to present contrasts but also similarities. On the other hand, museums such as the Quai Branly Museum in Paris, the Rietberg Museum in Zurich, and the Weltmuseum in Vienna, as well as numerous private galleries, have the task of presenting non-European art and cultures to us. This awakens interest in contemporary African art and artists.

**Do you believe there are any unique challenges or opportunities with selling and collecting contemporary African art?**

The opportunities are that one engages more intensively with foreign cultures and, as a result, better understands the ways of thinking and social structures of these cultures. An understanding that is particularly important in dealing with migrants and in international aid on site.

**Have you purchased any African art from African artists or galleries?**

From both African artists and galleries.

**Finally, is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences with contemporary African art and the auction industry in the West?**

I have no experience with auction houses and, therefore, cannot say anything about it. But since auctions ultimately only have a brokerage role, I think that special galleries or dealers who specialize in African art are more appropriate for these purposes.

## **Appendix Auction House Representatives Group B**

**Interviewee B1:** Giles Peppiatt (Head of contemporary African art Bonhams London)

### **What challenges do you face when integrating contemporary African art into Western auction houses, and how do you address them?**

Hmm. Um, so I, I, last question I'm afraid to ask you. What do you mean by integrate? Um, I mean, certainly we hold sales of modern and contemporary African artists, part of our regular sales calendar. So, there is no issue. I mean, we could hold sales of, of any type of art or any subject or title or genre without assuming they were going to be financially successful. And that is the crucial thing. I mean, we are a, a business, not a museum.

So, I'm afraid our motivation is financial success, not necessarily any other aesthetic reasons, but, um, no, if they are, uh, commercially viable, we would hold sales, um, very happily of, of, of modern contemporary African art as we do or any other, uh, category, I say, there is no issue.

### **And how do you assess the value of African art, both in terms of monetary worth and cultural significance?**

So I suppose as an auction house, I'm afraid our focus is very much on the first part of that, and that is financial worth, cultural significance plays a part in that. But ultimately, the, the pecuniary worth of any picture is, is just that. And some pictures don't have a huge value but may maybe culturally more significant. But, um, how do we assess the value? Well, I mean, it's the way we assess the value of any work of art. We look at, we look at the individual. I mean, not talking about a painting, individual painting, uh, and say is it an attractive picture?

Is it an interesting picture? Is it, um, does it have strong color schemes? Will it appeal to collectors today? Is it a picture of a, a pretty young girl or an old man?

I mean, not on surprisingly, pictures of pretty young ladies will always pitch more than pictures of, you know, old 60 year old men. Um, and that's just the market. So we have to look at how commercially viable it is in the market in that regard. And the subject that we have, we have to look at the, the artist's precedential, uh, achievements at auction. So if an artist has been fetching regularly, I don't know, 50, 80,000 pounds for still lifes that are, let's say, a meter by two meters, and we get a still life in, there's a meter by two meters, we know that that picture is probably going to be worth between about 50 to 80,000 pounds.

So the precedential pricing is, is, is important. Um, you couldn't put an estimate on a picture of, I don't know, one to one half million if, uh, and that artist work has no fetch more than a hundred thousand pounds.

It would be laughable. No one will pay it. And, and it just wouldn't, wouldn't work. So you have to look at an artist's presidential pricing to gauge the, the, the value of the, the work you're looking at. And I suppose the, the third thing is you look at how the market is, is the market very strong at the moment? Which it's in general terms for modern, contemporary African market is quite strong. So, you know, that means you can perhaps be a little bit more ambitious with some of your estimations on, on works than if you're in a market that's, that's pretty weak that that's falling.

And certainly, some markets are quite weak. And an example would be, I don't know, 19th century British watercolors. That's a very weak market at the moment. Prices have fallen constantly for the past 10, 15 years, and it doesn't look like there's any stopping that.

So no, I mean, those are the three main, and actually the third, fourth one would be in the condition of the work. Obviously, if work is in all condition's damaged, it's being restored, that will also affect the valuation. So, there's quite a lot of factors you take into account when valuing the work. But they are largely, as I say, financial. Um, and you think, well, what will collectors pay for this? And, and, and that is that the main

thing of when we value things. I mean, obviously cultural significance comes into that and plays its part, but it certainly is not the main reason, as I said, we do have pictures or works that may be culturally significant, but for whatever reason are not a great value.

**And how do you see the role of auction houses in shaping public perception of African art and culture?**

I mean, our role is our duties to our clients, our clients, and vendors. I mean, we're not a museum. We're, we're not a public body. Let's say, you, um, inherit painting from a relative and you don't know what it is, or you want to know the value, you bring it to us we tell you what it is, we value it for you. And you may say, well, look, it's worth a million pounds. I'll sell it. Um, and you are our client now.

We have no role; we have no public role at all in that. Um, yes, as part of marketing a sale category. So, for example cotemporary African art, as part of increasing the awareness of that category and therefore bringing in collectors to come and participate in our auctions, we might engage in activities that promote that market. But certainly, it is very much led by, um, the market and us trying to expand and develop that market.

I'm afraid it's not led by any public, uh, any drive to, uh, increase perception of market, per se. It is because we want to get more collectors involved in the auctions.

**And do you believe the increased integration of contemporary African art and Western auction houses is a passing trend or a lasting shift in the art market?**

I think, I think, um, I mean the, the, so the holding auctions of modern contemporary African artists, they've been held in, in an auction house, international auction houses now since about 20, 27. I think we were the first to do it mm-hmm. um, in fact, I was about in in about 26, 7, something like that I thought, can't seem whenever it was. Um, and since then, it has grown hugely. And you see many, many auction houses, uh,

doing it once in France, uh, here in London, other business started up and, um, other, other auction houses, uh, try to do it in some way.

I don't think it's, I don't think it's a trend I mean, it's, when you call it a trend, I don't think it's something that's going to stop. I think it is now a very viable, uh, market. It stands on its own two feet.

The sales are, you know, certainly increasing in size. Our sale three weeks ago, we set another two world records. It was a, a big and strong sale. Yeah. So, no, I think it'll continue. I mean, every market goes up and down. I mean, I've been in this business for 25 years, and I've seen two recessions in the art market, and they go up, they go down. It's a market. Um, no escalator can go up forever. So, um, there is always times when a market will pause, Market, will fall. I don't think I see anything like that for the contemporary African market.

Um, I think it's, it's very strong as collectors coming in, a lot of museums getting more interested in it. So, no, I think it looks pretty rosy.

**Do you think that African artists are fairly represented in Western auction houses?**

Um, I think, I don't think, I think they're badly done by, I mean, the very fact that we have Pacific sales of modern and contemporary African art shows that they are getting representation um, now you could say fine, Africa is a continent of 52 nations of, sorry, 54 nations. So why is, um, you know, why they come together? Well, that just ease, isn't it? I mean, you couldn't have a sale just of Ugandan or, uh, I don't know, Maita artists.

It wouldn't work. There wouldn't be enough. So, I think African artists do get relatively good representation. Um, uh, I mean, I'm trying to think of, we don't hold many other auctions or specifically one country. One of the exceptions would be Russia. In fact, we're not holding Russian sales at the moment for very obvious reasons because of the sanctions, all the obviously Ukraine war. But certainly, up until, uh, a year and a half ago before that, we did hold Russian sales. And they're a very successful, so other countries do have individual reputation, very few.

So, I think Africa doesn't do too badly to having these sales.

**And have you personally witnessed any in instances of cultural appropriation in the sale of African art?**

No, I don't think so. Um, I mean when you say cultural appropriation, I think, um, by that do you mean? Well, what, what would you actually mean by that? Do you mean? Yeah, sorry. Could you explain what you mean by that?

**I mean by that, about how the artwork is portrayed and who buys it. And also, are there any regulations on who buys the artwork?**

There's no, there's no, there's no regulations. So, it's a free market. I mean, you could buy anything. Uh, anyone could buy anything. Um, and, and, um, and why should there be any regulation? There's no regulation. This is art. This is, uh, a freedom of expression. There should be no regulation at all. And just the same for artists. I mean, artists, I mean, if you're talking about cultural appropriation from the artist side, I mean, artists have been copying each other's work for, for, for a millennium. So, you know, that's nothing different. Um, and why shouldn't anyone buy an African artwork? It doesn't matter. Or any artwork.

It doesn't matter what the racial color they are. Yeah.

**And are there any specific marketing strategies for contemporary African art at Bonhams? Do you do anything different?**

Yes. Well, we try to, um, we try to, it's obviously, you know, in any market, in any business, yeah, you're trying to differentiate yourself from your competitors, from the other people out there. And I think by the fact that we have, um, been in this market for the longest, we started the sales, um, and have done it longer than anyone, gives us a great advantage because our, our roots go that much deeper.

And we know many more collectors, uh, and many more buyers and sellers than anyone else. So, our, our list of, uh, collectors are, is much longer than anyone else's. So that does give us, uh, an added advantage. And I think certainly, uh, we, we, we do

stress that, uh, to, to our clients and to people who wanted to use our services. Um, but I think ultimately the, the proof is in it. Well, how you're judged in this business is the prices you achieve for the works.

So, if you are getting the highest prices, and we hold the world records for most of the artists coming from Africa, um, that tells its own story. And, and, and that will, uh, mean that, you know, as a business, you will hopefully succeed and maintain your market's position as market leader, which we are.

**Very well. And finally, is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with contemporary African art in the auction industry in the West?**

Uh, no, I didn't think so. Nothing, nothing. That won't take a few hours. So, I think um, I mean, I think it's probably, I mean, I could, which on hours if you want, but you don't want that. So, I mean, no, I mean, I'm, if you want, if there's anything else you want to follow up on, do just, just gimme me an email and I'm happy. I mean, say taking 15 minutes. So, um, I'll be very happy to, yeah, to follow up. There are any other questions that come to you.

**Interviewee B2:** Andrea Jungmann (Managing Director for Sotheby's Austria and Hungary)

**Okay. The first question is, what challenges do you face when integrating contemporary African art into Western auction houses? And how do you address them?**

Uh, I mean, this is now already not, uh, a challenge anymore because the, the interest is given Yeah. For African contemporary art. So, uh, um, that would have been a question for about 3, 4, 5 years ago. Uh, when it started all, um, that's when we started to have African contemporary auctions, special auctions for that. Um, since then, they have been quite successful. And they, the interesting thing is now, which happens always when something is, when there is demand for it, is that, um, now African contemporary art is in the main cells, like in the general contemporary, so that it, it included itself more or less, um, or maybe you can say the experts for the Western

contemporary art got interested into the African and then they brought it into the normal. Yeah. So, in the general contemporary art sales, so you find, um, like, um, Baoka and, you know, all these people suddenly because they now make money, so they are now in the big sales as well.

Yeah. So, uh, so that's, that's, that happens. And then of course, it's also with African contemporary art. There, there is, it's, it's a new, like, it was like what, 10, 15 years ago with Chinese contemporary art. Yeah. So, there's suddenly there is this interest in new things Yeah. And or Russian contemporary art or whatever. And, and so that happened with the African, I think far too late, but at least it happened. And, uh, because, uh, and I think it's an ongoing thing because Africa is such a large continent.

Uh, so you don't have, I mean, a South African artist is something completely different than the Kenyan or Nigerian or whatever. Yeah. So, there is plenty to discover. Yeah. And so, I think it's going to go on, uh, and uh, for the auction houses for Sotheby's, I can only say that we still have the contemporary African, where I think, uh, that's the entrance into the auction market. And then if they do well in the, these auctions, because of course all contemporary collectors look at these auctions as well.

Yeah. And then some might slide into the normal ones, but I think, uh, from the exhibitions, so I think that, uh, that they have arrived more or less. Yeah. So, there will be more coming, but they are getting integrated slowly into the Western canon. Yeah. But, uh, they're still, they still have to label African mm-hmm but that's what it is,

**Thank you. And how do you assess the value of African art, both in terms of monetary work and cultural significance? Is it Different?**

Okay. That's, that's, that's for me not really to answer that Hannah, or you have to answer it, but I think, I think that, um, what she does, because I've once spent a day with her looking at something and, um, I think what she does, she looks at it a little bit. She knows a lot about all African art. Yeah. But also, she knows, and she, she can, because if you only look at it from like the Western per perspective, which you have to do to kind of include it on the market, um, you also have to get a step away from that.

Yeah. You have to get into the African culture and mm-hmm for each country. So, I think that's what it does. And then of course, uh, prices are in fact made by the market. Yeah. So, you try if there's a new artist, you try quite low. That's in general the case. And then if it does very well the auction, then you can go up. So that's what it is. So There's no Difference. There's, there's no difference to any other, yeah. In fact, the collectors make the market. Yeah.

**And how would you describe the Viennese art market for contemporary African art? And how would you compare it to other cities? Are there any differences?**

I think Vienna is not like the big African art market. Yeah. I mean, what we have here, which is interesting, we have a few people from Nigeria or Africa starting here at the universities mm-hmm. So that's quite interesting. Yeah. So, because I mean, Barco started in Vienna. Yeah. And then he's now making a career everywhere. Uh, so, uh, I think that's, um, that's interesting. But that's, and we have of course, um, some, someone like Amish who's really interested in it. And I think there was a girl, and unfortunately, I don't remember the name, who did a, also a show with young, uh, African artists.

I forgot the name, but I'm sure you will find, because she also, I think they also showed the op mm-hmm. So, if you Google CLE or No, no, no, that was the show, but it was a gallery in Vienna who showed African art was last year. Okay. You have to look up, they had like three or five, I can't remember, young African artists. uh, one of them was quite well known. The others were completely unknown. So, there are, uh, you know, things pop up.

Yeah. Uh, at some like charity sales, sometimes people who live here, they, you know, but I wouldn't say it's the big market. Yeah. I mean, I would definitely say that Paris and London and New York are the ones Yeah. Where you have to look for that.

**And how do you see the role of auction houses in shaping public perceptions of African art and culture?**

I mean, with the, with this African sale, the African contemporary sale, there's definitely, um, there's sure shaping the knowledge or bringing attention to this new market. Yeah. But I mean, we were not the first ones. Bonhams started first and I do think Christies doesn't even have them. I don't know.

**No, they do.**

They do. They do. Okay. You see, I don't even know. So, uh, don't watch their auctions a lot. I should probably more. Um, so, uh, I think, uh, you can do that, but in the end, as I said, the connector is deciding what's going to sell really.

Yeah. So, you can, you can make an offer on the market mm-hmm. and then see how it goes. And you can present new things in that, in that area. You cannot, in a lot of other areas at auction, you can't I mean, usually we are secondary markets, so we, we bring things in which have been sold already. Yeah. Yeah.

**And how do you ensure that the acquisition on sale of African Art is ethical and respectful? And is this even an auction house? Duty?**

It's a duty. Yeah, it's a duty. So, it's not only with African art, with every piece of, uh, how do you say, piece of art, which can be, you know, if there is a rhino horn or, you know, and things. So, so that's, we have a duty, there are rules we have to follow.

**Do you believe the increased integration of contemporary African art and Western auction houses is a passing trend or a lasting shift in the art market?**

I think it's, it's not a, a short trend. I think it's something, um, uh, which is long lasting. I think they will be included. Like, like, like it happened with Chinese and Russian and whatever. Uh, they come and then they get included and the good ones, they stay. Yeah. Mm-hmm. it may, might not be such a fresh market anymore. Yeah. You will probably the younger artists or not so well known will fall out again. Yeah. but it's with every art, art market.

**And do you believe that Western auction houses have a responsible responsibility to address racism and discrimination?**

Yeah, definitely. We do. We have, uh, yeah. We, I think we even had a, an auction called Black Life Matters, something like that. Yeah. I think. No, no, it was, that was sometime during the pandemic, so I we would do, yeah. Yes. We definitely, there is a responsibility.

**and also address legacy of colonialism?**

Colonialism. Yes, definitely. Definitely. Okay. So yeah, I mean, it's the same, not the same, but more is, uh, and I think, uh, it's also, uh, allowed to sell critical art. Yeah. And I think a lot of the, the African contemporary art, not a lot, but quite a, quite a bit is very critical. Yeah. So, um, I think, yes. And, and that's, that's the, the voice of the, the artists. Yeah. We have to support that.

**Um, have you personally witnessed any in instances of cultural appropriation in the sale of African art?**

No.

**And do you think that African artists are fairly rep represented in Western auction houses?**

Fairly? What do you mean? With fairly, you mean like that it's fair. Yeah. Yeah. I mean, it can't be enough. It's the same with the female artist. Yeah. I think now, there are more and more and, uh, well presented, but not well enough it's the same thing. So, but I think that that could happen. You know, it could be more, um, I think they are far from what we know at the moment in a sense that we don't know everything yet.

Yeah. And I think they have a good chance to be as important as the others. I mean, there's still a lot to find probably. I'm sure while Warhol was working in, in the US there were some African artists, which we don't know about. Yeah. So, time will show, I would say.

**Perfect. And how do you think Western Auction Houses can better integrate contemporary African art into their sales and marketing strategies? Does Sotheby so anything specific or different to other auction houses?**

I don't. I mean, we, the, the main, uh, marketing we do is the, the African Contemporary Sale and then go in, and then of course, if there is a bakoa or one of these big ones in the sale, it's being marketed. Yeah. So, uh, I'm not sure if we do special events, but I think that that would not be proper if you would like, uh, you know, just invite African people. That's not what you do. Yeah. So really, uh, I think, I think the main thing is to support it.

That's, that happens. Yeah. That happens. And we do also events in Africa, so that's what we do. We do events in Africa or at the fairs and, you know, and our, I mean, Hannah is on, on the road all the time. Yeah. everywhere. Wow. Yeah. So, and she talks, she, she visits a lot of artists herself. Mm-hmm. she goes to Africa. quite a bit. That's great. Interesting job. I would do it immediately.

**And finally, is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with contemporary African art and the auction industry in the West?**

No, I, I mean, I like African contemporary art a lot. Mm-hmm. Yeah. And, um, I also, uh, I mean, when I, I go to the Biennale in Venice, uh, I think I'm, I'm one of the, not everybody I think not everyone goes to the South African pavilion and the Nigerian one, and I go there all the time because I, I really, but I, I went there before we even had African contemporary sales. Oh, yeah. Because my interest was there already. Yeah. So, um, and, and there was, there was very good art 10 years ago when no one was really looking at it. Yeah So, um, that's, that's, that's my personal interest because I, I'm quite attached to Africa.

**Perfect. Thank you so much.**

You're welcome.

**Respondent B3:** anonymous auction house representative

**What challenges do you face when integrating contemporary African art into Western auction houses, and how do you address them?**

On the one hand, African art has greatly increased in value and presence in the Western world in recent years. Thus, it is also clear for an auction house that this art will eventually reach us via collectors and be auctioned.

**How do you assess the value of African art, both in terms of its monetary worth and cultural significance?**

I consider the cultural significance to be extremely important. I am also very glad that this art has come to us in Europe over the course of time. This form of art has not only greatly increased in value in recent years but has also had a major impact on the art market, however I must emphasize that our main focus is not the cultural worth of an art piece, rather the monetary worth, which may go hand in hand.

**How do you see the role of auction houses in shaping public perceptions of African art and culture?**

As a European-based auction house, we are naturally committed to presenting every form of art, no matter its origin, in the best and most unadulterated way possible. We are of course aware of the role in the population, and we serve as a figurehead for the presentation of art.

**How do you ensure that the acquisition and sale of African art are ethical and respectful, (For example: given the UK's colonial past and ongoing issues of systemic racism in the art industry?)**

I think that in this matter we should leave the past in the past. Provided that the cultural heritage is not damaged, it is basically no problem to sell this art. If I think of Gottfried Helnwein, who paints pictures of Adolf Hitler, it will also be no problem to sell African art.

**Do you believe the increased integration of contemporary African art in Western auction houses is a passing trend or a lasting shift in the art market?**

I think that it will also be present with us in the long term, but I can't give an exact forecast.

**Do you believe that Western auction houses have a responsibility to address the legacy of colonialism and racism in the art market?**

I believe that anyone who distributes an art with such a background should do it. But I don't think it's our responsibility per se.

**Have you personally witnessed any instances of cultural appropriation in the sale of African art?**

No

**Do you think that African artists are fairly represented in Western auction houses?**

I think so, especially at this moment of time I do believe that they have a great representation, at least I would not have noticed anything else in our auction house and what happens in the rest of the world I cannot say exactly.

**How do you think western auction houses can better integrate contemporary African art into their sales and marketing strategies?**

Of course, bringing a focus in African art could be a positive for many auction houses. But this is up to each auction house. For us, for example, there is no emphasis on it.

**Finally, is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences with contemporary African art and the auction industry in the West?**

No