



Swiss Re's Art Collection in Cape Town

Why we collect art

Why would a global re/insurer like Swiss Re ever engage in art, build a prominent collection and even commission art projects? Re/insurance is first and foremost about enabling risk, encouraging progress and making societies more resilient. That is how economies can develop, how entrepreneurs can thrive, how knowledge is built. Swiss Re is acknowledged for its thought leadership and is one of the most admired companies in its industry. It has a long tradition, a strong identity and extremely loyal employees.

Re/insurance products and services, however, are complex, intangible and require explanation. That is one of the reasons why Swiss Re has always engaged in art and architecture. Both help project the company's ability to face the unknown, to deal with future challenges but more importantly, they help create an emotional profile.

Art and architecture express the core values of the company, support its brand recognition, establish a link to society and offer great identification for employees around the world. Moreover, clients and other stakeholder benefit from the experience of the unique atmosphere and quality of Swiss Re's workplaces and its iconic buildings.

But there is more to it. While art and architecture have become an important visual expression of the company's identity, they also underpin Swiss Re's commitment to offering a stimulating work environment and to bringing cultural responsibility to life – every day.

Art at Swiss Re

The art at Swiss Re's Cape Town office

For the Swiss Re office in Cape Town, we present a diverse selection of artworks by contemporary South African artists. The selection is carefully curated, taking in consideration the artists' age, their background, as well as the materials and media being used.

The backbone of the art concept consists of works by the internationally renowned artist **Moshekwa Langa**. Born in Bakenberg, Limpopo, in 1975, Langa today lives in Amsterdam. He is considered one of the most influential constituents of the contemporary South African art scene. Using painting, drawing, and collage throughout his career, he showcases his ability to skillfully juggle a broad range of media. Langa came of age alongside a remarkable group of artists born in the 1970s, the first generation to reveal in their work a levity and freedom to make whatever they desired, unfettered by conventional expectations of "South African art". Among this pioneering group of artists is **Robin Rhode**, born in Cape Town in 1976 and today living in Berlin. Rhode works with a variety of visual genres including photography, performances, drawings, and stop-motion animation to create engaging and poignant narratives.

Working primarily in the streets of Johannesburg, Rhode uses walls and pavements, in as prime stages for his interventions and performances. Exploring our Cape Town office, viewers will discover another group of artists for whom Moshekwa Langa served as a role model and an example of local artists' achievements in a global art world. **Mawande Ka Zenzile** claims Moshekwa Langa as his mentor, experimenting and working with unconventional materials such as cow dung and earth glued on canvas. Also, **Zander Blom** is a conceptual heir whose total freedom from constraints based on birth or nationality is directly influenced by Langa and his generation of trailblazers. Inspired by the imagery of modernist abstraction, Blom creates patterns with cardboard, paint, tape, and other materials.

The artworks chosen for the Cape Town office reflect a cheerful and colourful slice of contemporary art in South Africa.

Rahel Robert

Head Art, Curating & Collection

Zander Blom

*1982 in Pretoria, South Africa
Lives and works in Cape Town

Blom's paintings exhibit a sculptural quality; large canvasses filled with rectangles or odd shapes, each sitting autonomously, claiming their own space. These abstract forms are viscerally appealing, with crude colours buzzing amidst a repetitive fractal rhythm, a sense of expanding symmetry palpable among the shapes.

In *Untitled [1.847]*, Zander Blom employs a palette knife with fine, tooth-like edges, creating marks that evoke the delicate patterns of scallop shells, their contour lines rising and falling rhythmically. The color palette transitions from deep, earthy tones – rusty oranges, browns, and reds – enhanced by shades of blue, grey, and white. These hues flow like parallel lines on a life support monitor, suddenly giving way to vibrant, acidic bursts of bubblegum pink, canary yellow, and apple green. This stark contrast infuses the canvas with dynamic energy, imbuing Blom's work with a vibrant tension and a sense of vigorous, almost chaotic movement within its sharply defined forms.



Untitled [1.847], 2016

Oil on linen, Triptych, 198 x 65 cm, 198 x 130 cm, 198 x 65 cm

Robin Rhode

*1976 in Cape Town, South Africa
Lives and works in Berlin

Robin Rhode melds a street-based aesthetic drawn from hip-hop, film, and sports with a range of art-historical and contemporary socio-political references. In his work, urban walls become canvases, static images are put into motion, and the artist or – his doppelgänger – becomes a performer and street interventionist. Rhode uses charcoal, chalk, and paint to create imaginary worlds on the sides of buildings and walls, replete with drawn images of bicycles, cars, television sets, and abstract geometric shapes.

Working with a group of young South African collaborators to create his kinetic murals, Rhode, who came of age in the final years of South African apartheid, questions ideas of identity, social hierarchy, and access to art history. About his work *Paradise*, Rhode has stated: “*Paradise* looks at the colour palette of Monet’s garden. My intention is to shift away from the depiction of a cultural object or image and to rather abstract any form of cultural identity so that the narrative becomes even more displaced, almost non-representational of a value system. I would consider my new shift towards ‘colour abstraction’ as quite refreshing within my own practice but also within the context of South Africa that is so geared towards depicting the African experience in impressionistic, figurative, and symbolic forms. My path is towards an African abstraction and my field is the ever-increasing dimension of what drawing can be.”



Paradise, 2016

Series of 8 C-prints, 56 x 70 cm, each

© 2016, Robin Rhode



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Paradise, 2016

Series of 8 C-prints, 56 x 70 cm, each

Athi-Patra Ruga

*1984 in Umtata, South Africa

Lives and works between Cape Town and Johannesburg

Athi-Patra Ruga is a South African artist, who works with a variety of media, using performance, photography, video, textiles, and printmaking to create alternative identities and to use these avatars to parody and critique the existing political and social status quo. His work bursts with eclectic multicultural references, sensuality and an undercurrent of humor, as he explores notions of utopia and dystopia, sexuality, Xhosa culture and the place of queerness within post-apartheid South Africa. Hovering on the border between fashion and contemporary art, he evokes a world in which cultural identity is no longer determined by geographical origin, ancestry or biological disposition, but is an increasingly hybrid construct. At the same time, Ruga's artistic approach of creating myths and alternate realities is in some way an attempt to view the traumas of the last 200 years of colonial history from a place of detachment – at a farsighted distance where wounds can be contemplated outside of personalized grief and subjective defensiveness.



THE NIGHT OF THE LONG KNIVES IV, 2013

Archival ink-jet print on Photorag Baryta, 150 x 192 cm

© 2013, Athi-Patra Ruga

Mawande Ka Zenzile

*1986 in Lady Frere, Eastern Cape
Lives and works in Cape Town

Mawande Ka Zenzile's work delves into themes of memory, historical legacies, ideology, and esotericism, using them as tools for critical resistance and reflection. Through his use of text, materials, and iconography, he challenges dominant norms, unsettling visual and linguistic archetypes to reveal their inherent fragility and biases.

In his artwork *Leviathan*, Ka Zenzile draws inspiration from the coiled sea serpent of the Old Testament, a creature often associated with chaos and destruction. The term "Leviathan" also symbolizes earthly rulers who embody greed, tyranny, and corruption. Ka Zenzile critiques how our understanding of art – and reality itself – is shaped by materialist worldviews, dogmatic ideologies, and archetypes rooted in Western art history. Disillusioned with these dominant perspectives, he works to deconstruct the components of hegemonic thought, paving the way for radical new approaches to understanding perception and power structures.



Sibhala sicima, 2017

Cow dung, earth, gesso and oil on canvas, 133 x 184 cm



Leviathan, 2017

Cow dung and oil on canvas, 62 x 198 cm

Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum

*1980 in Mochudi, Botswana

Lives and works in The Hague, The Netherlands

Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum's work is deeply rooted in the diverse genealogies of her life, shaped by her experiences across Africa, Southeast Asia, and North America. Her art is informed by ongoing research in ethnography, ecology, and quantum physics, allowing her to weave complex narratives that reflect interconnected themes of identity, migration, and knowledge systems.

"My practice centers Black female identity within postcolonial and neocolonial discourse," Sunstrum explains, "shedding light on overlooked historical figures while emphasizing modes of knowledge and communication that challenge the status quo." The figures in her work – often serving as her alter-egos – are situated in undefined landscapes, symbolizing cultural embeddedness within geology while engaging with issues like colonialism, capitalism, and global migration crises.

Using pencil, gouache, and light watercolor, Sunstrum constructs fragmented landscapes that reflect both personal and universal narratives, inviting viewers into her richly layered exploration of identity and belonging.



Thule I, 2016

Pencil, watercolour and gouache on wood panel, 160 x 120 x 4 cm

Moshekwa Langa

*1975 in Bakenburg, South Africa

Lives and works in Amsterdam and Johannesburg

Since the 1990's Langa's work has engaged with psychogeography and wayfinding through experiments across the mediums of painting, drawing, installation, collage and photography. His practice is rooted in his upbringing in the remote town of Bakenberg as well as his experiences of nomadic, diasporic living, reflecting an anthropological approach to his own life.

In his artistic practice, Moshekwa Langa reflects on his past and present and tries "to find a way to capture the various ways in which I had made things, thought through things and tried to make meaning of things and the space I was in ... It became paramount for me to have a studio practice in which I would explore various methods and see where they would lead me. I had no clear way of knowing where the various exercises would go; it was more important to see things before me because maybe then I would discover something about not only myself, but also the work."



Untitled, 2016

Mixed media on paper, 140 x 100 cm

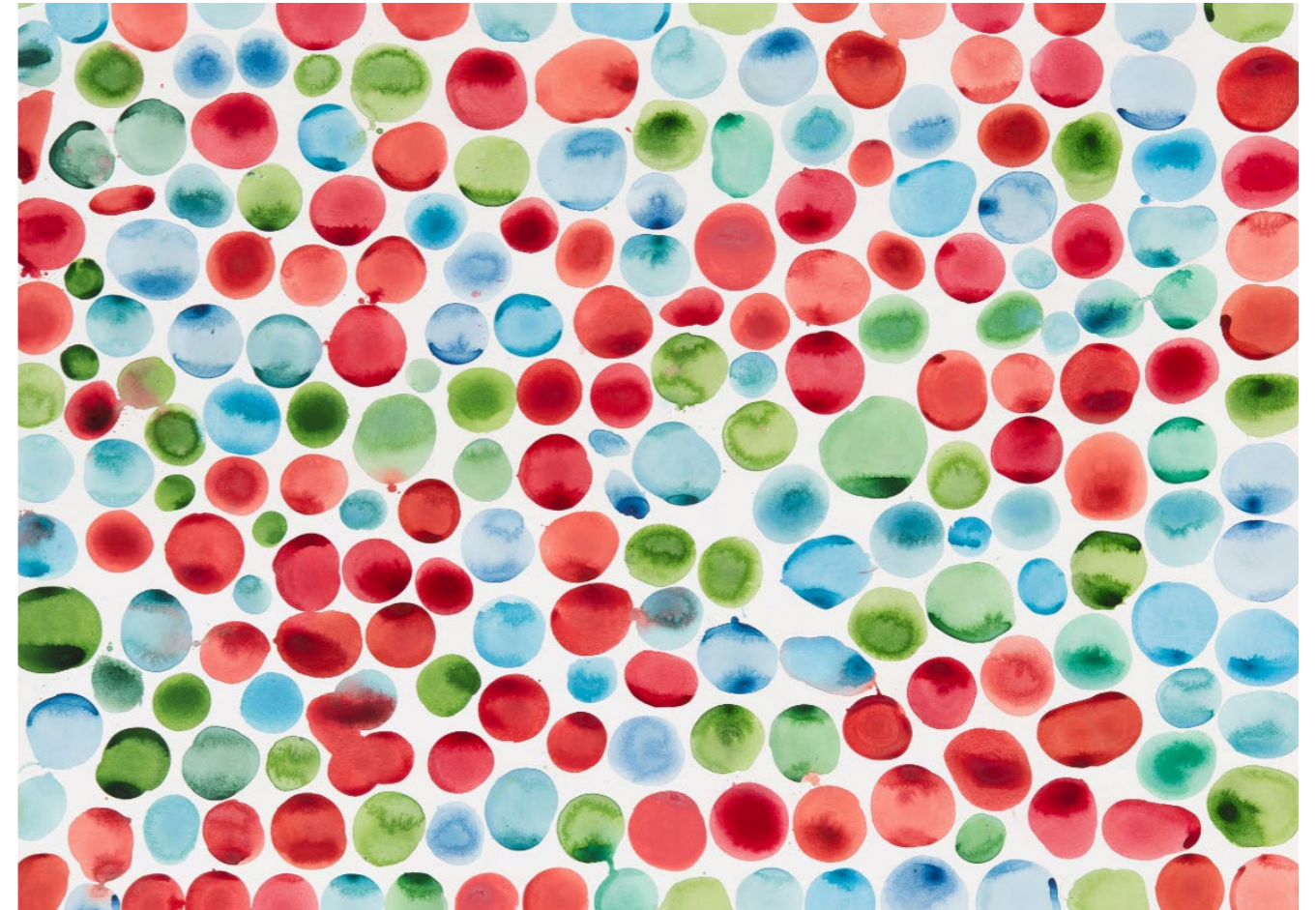
© 2016, Moshekwa Langa



Untitled, 2016

Mixed media on paper, 136 x 175 cm

© 2016, Moshekwa Langa



Mekgotheng II (the streets and passages), 2015

136 x 176 cm

© 2015, Moshekwa Langa

Serge Alain Nitegeka

*1983 in Rwanda

Lives and works in Johannesburg

Serge Alain Nitegeka uses the visual language of minimalism and geometric abstraction to reflect on the personal and political impacts of forced migration, drawing from his own experience as a refugee. His work incorporates barriers, obstacles, and borders – both visual and physical – to evoke the psychological experience of displacement and statelessness. *Structural Configuration III* is part of a series exploring themes of migration and spatial reconfiguration through bold lines, contrasting colours, and simple materials like pre-cut timber, referencing the temporary structures built by displaced individuals. The work challenges viewers to navigate complex spatial arrangements, inviting reflection on movement and belonging.



Structural Configuration III, 2015

Painted wood, 244 x 244 x 8 cm

© 2015, Serge Alain Nitegeka

Dorothee Kreutzfeldt

*1970 in Windhoek, Namibia
Lives and works in Johannesburg

Dorothee Kreutzfeldt's artistic practice involves painting and collaborations, often working across different media and disciplines. The artist has a strong interest in painting and urbanity – how we understand cities and space within globalised economy, mobility and imagination. Most of her work has developed in direct relation to the context of Johannesburg – and South Africa.

“The paintings form an incoherent series of singular moments. They are informed by disparate sites in a lived environment, defined as a house, garden, vacant plot or a suburb, here “mixed income”, there “informal” or “regenerated”. If a site can be understood as the result of a project, or of a series of events and experiences, the paintings are cued by their incidental formations or topologies which invite analysis of the spaces we inhabit that feel continuously unsettled, and policed. How much then are we shaped internally by what is built and adhere to the social contract that calls us citizens and co-habitants?”



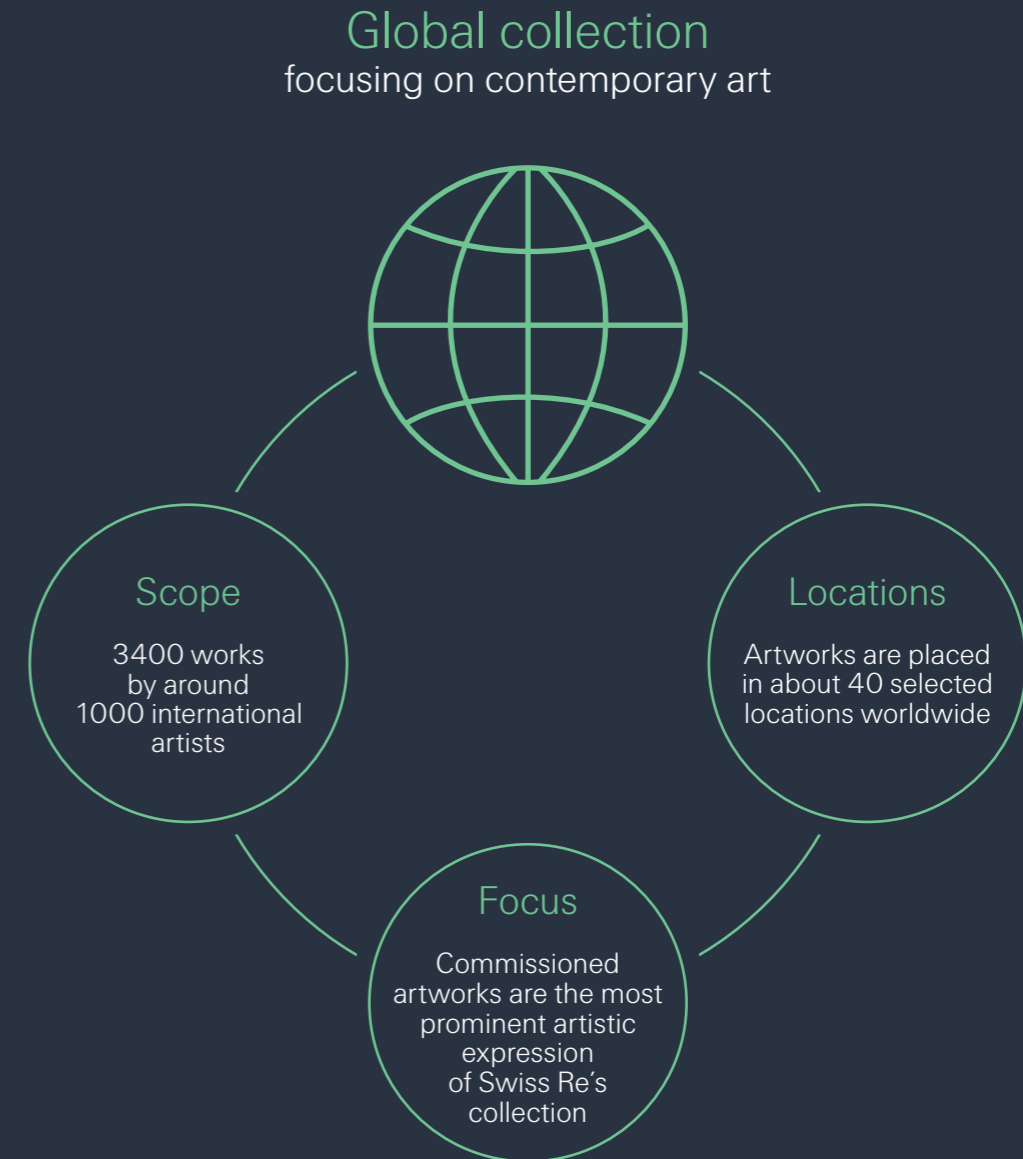
View 1, 2017

Acrylic and mixed media on canvas, 140 x 120 cm



View 1, 2017, detail

Facts & Figures on Swiss Re's Art Collection



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