

THE ARTS OF AFRICA

While significant work is being produced by artists and scholars on the continent it tends not to be recognised by the global art market and the dominant art discourse unless it is shaped and 'consumed' by scholars, curators and collectors based in the 'north'.

As part of addressing this, Prof Simbao, one of the consortium editors of *African Arts*, a prestigious quarterly produced by UCLA and published by MIT Press, is putting together an issue produced entirely by scholars based on the continent, due for publication in May 2017.

"While the journal does, in general, publish some high quality work on the arts of Africa, it is problematic that, overall, merely 4% of the authors are based in institutions on the African continent, and only 1% are in African countries excluding South Africa," says Prof Simbao. "Through the establishment of the Arts and Culture: Writers in Africa (ACWA) network, I'm working on redressing this, and, as an editor of *African Arts* I aim to include a balance of authors from throughout Africa."

The Chair has a strong emphasis on building collaborations with scholars and visual and performing artists in other African countries. In July an ACWA workshop was hosted at Rhodes, where a network of

scholars and artists from Uganda, Zimbabwe and South Africa came together to develop or refine articles for publication.

Artists who attended the workshop from Uganda include Eria Nsubuga, who engages with issues of power and politics through his work, and artist and activist or *activist*, Aidah Nalubowa from *Artivists 4 Life* in Kampala. From Zimbabwe there was Fadzai Muchemwa, the co-curator of the National Gallery of Zimbabwe in Harare. They are opening up new areas of decolonised learning, and are inviting new and more critical ways of thinking and writing about Africa through the visual and performing arts.

Collaboration is a key goal of the Chair, and in February this year Prof Simbao curated the Cape Town Art Fair special project and competition, *Consuming Us*, with co-curator Azu Nwagbogu, Director of the Lagos Photo Festival. The exhibition featured eight up-and-coming African artists and the winner was Masimba Hwati from Harare, Zimbabwe. Later this year Hwati will participate in the Residencies for Artists and Writers (RAW) programme run by the Prof Simbao, and he plans to pursue his MFA in the Fine Art Department next year.

African art is an internationally recognised discourse that has, in the main, been written by non-African scholars from Europe and North America. Professor Ruth Simbao is focusing on changing this through a new DST/NRF SARCHI Chair in Geopolitics and the Arts of Africa, launched in January this year.

