



**ART MARKET GURU**

TOP COLLECTORS AND KEY PLAYERS  
AFRICA

REPORT | DECEMBER 2017

# THE AFRICAN ART MARKET

## 2017

In recent years, the African art market has expanded, both within Africa itself and the international art market. A 2016 CNN article declared African art “hotter than gold.” Across the world, galleries and museums dedicated to African modern and contemporary African art have risen in both number and value. In some cases, this expansion has been dramatic, with significant potential for future growth, especially among African collectors.

At auctions around the world, sales in African art have risen by a substantial amount. Most notably, works by top African artists such as El Anatsui, Julie Mehretu, William Kentridge, Irma Stern, and Marlene Dumas have sold for seven-figure sums. However, these big names are not alone on the African art scene. Up-and-coming artists include Ghanaian painter Gonfried Donkor and South African photographer Zwelethu Mthethwa. The Africa Art Market Report of 2015 pointed these last two out especially as “undervalued contemporaries.”

Much of the recent expansion in the African art market is credited to the growing numbers of local African millionaires, as well as an increase in middle-class workers, who are willing to spend their money on African art. The number of millionaires in Africa rose by 145% between 2000 and 2014 according to New World Wealth, which has led to higher art sales alongside a higher general demand for luxury goods. This great expansion of wealth is most pronounced in nations such as Nigeria and South Africa, which are experiencing corresponding growth in their art markets.

Major global art auction houses and galleries have raised global awareness of modern and contemporary African art. Auction companies including Sotheby's and Christie's have held auctions specifically dedicated to contemporary African art. Arthouse Contemporary, a Lagos-based auction house founded by Kavita Chellaram, reports a rise in the prices commanded for African art over the past decade. Art auctions both in Europe and Africa successfully introduce new collectors to African art, thus helping expand the collector market for the future. Within Europe, London in particular has emerged as a hub of the African art scene, boasting not only auctions and art fairs, but also numerous galleries such as the Jack Bell Gallery, TAFETA (owned by Ayo Adeyinka), Aabru Art (Anshu Bahanda), and the Tyburn Gallery (Emma Menell). Galleries such as Circle Art Agency in Nairobi (Danda Jaroljmek), the Dei Centre in Accra (Seth Dei), and SIBISI Object of Art in Johannesburg (Thandiwe Sibisi) bring African contemporary art to African connoisseurs and collectors, increasing appreciation for art within its local context.

As part of the expansion of the African art market, new art fairs have arisen to promote and sell African art. Furthermore, well-established art fairs now often include collections of specifically African artwork. These fairs include the Art Africa Fair in Cape Town, Art X Lagos, 1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair, Addis Foto Fest, and Also Known as Africa in Paris. In addition to art fairs, new museums have raised the profile of African art. The new Zeitz Museum of Contemporary African Art in Cape Town, for example, offers a spectacular array of art from all across the continent. This 100,000-square-foot museum documents contemporary art from everywhere in Africa, and help construct a documentary and visual narrative of the diverse history of the continent. In Rabat, the Moroccan king Mohammed VI was instrumental in establishing the Musée Mohammed VI (MMVI), a museum of modern and contemporary art that opened in 2014.

Collectors of contemporary African art come from across the world, but some of the most notable are themselves African. Prince Yemisi Shyllon owns the largest collection of African art in Nigeria, with more than 7000 pieces, and is the founder of Oyasaf, an organization which funds new Nigerian art and artists. Sindika Dokolo, a Congolese businessman, owns over 3000 pieces of contemporary African art and even opened the Sindika Dokolo Collection of African Contemporary Art in Angola to make his works available for public enjoyment. Lionel Zinsou, the former prime minister of Benin, and his daughter Marie-Cécile Zinsou, started the Fondation Zinsou, also with the intent of sponsoring contemporary African artists.

Other collectors hail from Europe. Jochen Zeitz, a wealthy German businessman, has collected contemporary African art for over a decade and is the major patron of Zeitz MOCAA. Italian businessman Jean Pigozzi's collection—comprising around 12,000 pieces—is also rightfully famous for both its quality and its sheer size. These prominent collectors and dozens more have helped push African art into the global spotlight.

African contemporary art is often cited as one of the most dynamic and exciting areas for art collectors. From Morocco and Nigeria to Ethiopia and South Africa, African art has flourished and grown in value. With many wealthy patrons opening their collections and sponsoring new artists, the prospects seem bright for the contemporary African art scene.

**AYO ADEYINKA**

Adeyinka turned to African art after working in finance. He is now an art dealer and gallery owner specializing in 20th-century and contemporary African art, with an emphasis on Nigerian art. He established TAFETA as an art consultancy in 2005 and then converted it into a London art gallery and dealership. TAFETA presents work by the likes of Yinka Shonibare, Ben Enwonwu, Ablade Glover, Susanne Wenger, Muraina Oyelami, and Babajide Olatunji. The gallery also frequently organizes exhibitions abroad, such as at Cape Town Art Fair and Art Dubai Modern.

- ▶ Owner of TAFETA: Gallery of African Arts, London ([www.tafeta.com](http://www.tafeta.com))
- ▶ Primarily sells art to wealthy Nigerian collectors, as well as to institutions ([www.tate.org.uk](http://www.tate.org.uk))
- ▶ Formerly worked in banking and finance
- ▶ Attended the University of Westminster and Obafemi Awolowo University

**SKOTO AGHAHOWA AND ALIX DU SERECH**

Skoto Aghahowa and Alix du Serech are the owners of New York City's Skoto Gallery, specialising in contemporary African art since 1992. Artists displayed at the gallery include Ghanaian artist El Anatsui, Senegalese artist Souleymane Keita, Congolese sculptor Aimé Mpane, and Nigerian artist Uche Okeke.

- ▶ Owners of Skoto Gallery, New York City ([www.skotogallery.com](http://www.skotogallery.com))

**OLUFEMI AKINSANYA**

Akinsanya has acquired a museum-quality collection of historic Nigerian art. His pieces have been catalogued in *Making History*, a book by Dr. Sylvester Ogbechie, professor of Art History at UC Santa Barbara. His collection includes a 20th-century crest mask, a 20th-century beaded cape of a Sango priest, and a 19th-20th-century bronze statue of a female court attendant.

- ▶ Collects historic and traditional Nigerian art
- ▶ Collection featured in Sylvester Ogbechie, *Making History: The Femi Akinsanya African Art Collection*
- ▶ Co-founder of the Nigerian Economic Summit movement
- ▶ Previously served as Honorary Secretary to the Board of Trustees and the Board of Governors of the Musical Society of Nigeria (MUSON)
- ▶ Worked as an accountant for Arthur Andersen and in investment banking at First Merchant City Bank
- ▶ Attended the University of Lagos and Ahmadu Bello University

**DAVID ARMSTRONG-JONES (VISCOUNT LINLEY)**

Linley established his eponymous furniture-making company Linley in 1985. He then joined auction house Christie's in 2006 and became the head of its European, Middle Eastern, Russian, and Indian Departments. He collects a wide variety of art and objects: watches and clocks, books, old records, guitars, illustrations, and artworks he finds on his travels. He is especially enthusiastic about the growing market for African art and has been involved with an exhibition at the 1:54 Contemporary Art Fair and with the launch of the Zeitz MOCAA in Cape Town.



DAVID ARMSTRONG-JONES  
(VISCOUNT LINLEY)

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- ▶ Chairman for Christie's in Europe, the Middle East, Russia, and India
- ▶ Founder of Linley ([www.davidlinley.com](http://www.davidlinley.com))
- ▶ Attended Bedales School

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ANSHU BAHANDA

Founder of Aabru Art in London, Bahanda is an expert on the West African and Indian contemporary art scenes. Aabru Art has presented numerous exhibitions, such as *Transcending Boundaries*, a sizeable display of West African art. The gallery also provides consultation and curation services, as well as hosting educational events with notable experts, for example, Chris Spring (British Museum) and Giles Peppiatt (Bonhams).

- ▶ Founder and Chair of Aabru Art, London ([www.aabru.co.uk](http://www.aabru.co.uk))
- ▶ Founding member of the Pan Asian Women's Association (PAWA)
- ▶ Previously worked for Deutsche Bank, Lehman Brothers of London, and Andersen Consulting of India

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JACK BELL

Bell opened his London gallery in 2010 to present international contemporary art, specializing in sub-Saharan art. Previous exhibitions include *Noir Desir* (by Cameroonian artist Boris Nzebo), *Ubuntu Ngabantu* (by South African artist Bambo Sibiyi), and *Emperor of the Sands* (by Mozambican artist Gonçalo Mabunda). Bell visits West Africa regularly to maintain relationships with artists.

- ▶ Owner of the Jack Bell Gallery, London ([www.jackbellgallery.com](http://www.jackbellgallery.com))
- ▶ Worked for Timothy Taylor Gallery, London
- ▶ Attended the Courtauld Institute of Art

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JEAN-PAUL BLACHÈRE

Blachère's passion for contemporary African art has led him to acquire over 1800 pieces, including sculptures, paintings, photographs, videos, and installations. He established the Fondation Blachère in 2004 to promote African art; a foundation that organizes art exhibitions, hosts artist-in-residency programs, holds workshops, and maintains an impressive collection of its own. Fondation Blachère lent over 70 sculptures by contemporary African artists for display in Avignon, France from 2017 to 2018. Artists featured in the Avignon exhibitions include Senegalese artists Ndary Lo, Moustapha Dimé, and the late Ousmane Sow; South African artists Andries Botha and Wim Botha; and Ghanaian artist El Anatsui.

- ▶ Collects African contemporary art; has over 1800 pieces
- ▶ Founder of Fondation Blachère ([www.fondationblachere.org](http://www.fondationblachere.org))
- ▶ Showcased part of the Fondation's collection in Avignon, France ([www.palais-des-papes.com](http://www.palais-des-papes.com))

**HANS BOGATZKE**

The late German businessman Hans Bogatzke amassed a large collection (over five hundred pieces) of sub-Saharan African art during the 1990s and 2000s. He acquired works by approximately 100 artists, including William Kentridge, Olu Oguibe, and Yinka Shonibare. Bogatzke sold his collection to Sindika Dokolo in 2005 and passed away in 2006.

- ▶ Collected sub-Saharan African art; had over 500 pieces
- ▶ His collection now belongs to Sindika Dokolo

**JOOST BOSLAND**

Bosland is the director of Stevenson Gallery, a contemporary art gallery with locations in Cape Town and Johannesburg. The gallery exhibits works by Odili Odita, Robin Rhode, Nicholas Hlobo, Pieter Hugo, Zander Blom, Guy Tillim, Nandipha Mntambo, and Meschac Gaba. It participates in major art fairs such as Frieze New York, abc (Berlin), Art Basel, and Paris Photo.

- ▶ Director of Stevenson Gallery ([www.stevenson.info](http://www.stevenson.info))
- ▶ Attended Duke University

**BRUCE CAMPBELL SMITH**

The Campbell Smith Collection, one of the largest private art collections in South Africa, features South African art dating from the 1920s up to the present, with an emphasis on modern black artists working during the second half of the 20th century. Artists showcased in the collection include: Simon Mnguni, Irma Stern, Job Kekana, Ernest Mancoba, Gregoire Boonzaier, Eli Kobeli, and Themba Siwela. His vast holdings chart the evolution of South African art over the past century.

- ▶ Collects South African art
- ▶ Maintains the Campbell Smith Collection ([www.revisions.co.za](http://www.revisions.co.za))

**BASSAM CHAITOU**

Senegalese businessman Bassam Chaitou owns a notable collection of Senegalese art, comprising over 200 works. A 2007 exhibition, *Trajectoires: Art Contemporain du Sénégal* in Dakar, presented dozens of works from his collection, featuring artists Iba Ndiaye, Amadou Ba, Diatta Seck, Cherif Thiam, Ibou Diouf, and Boubacar Coulibaly.

- ▶ Collects contemporary Senegalese art

**KAVITA CHELLARAM**

Chellaram founded Arthouse Contemporary, the first auction house in Nigeria, in 2007. This initiative also encompasses the non-profit Arthouse Foundation, which hosts an artists' residency program, and Arthouse—The Space, which holds exhibitions. An avid collector, Chellaram first began acquiring Indian art and then, starting in 1977, Nigerian art. Her first purchases of Nigerian art were pieces created by Jimoh Buraimoh and Twins Seven Seven. Chellaram's collection now includes sculpture by Nnenna Okore, El Anatsui, and Ben Osawe, painting by Ben Enwonwu, and photography by George Osodi. She collects both modern and contemporary art ranging from the 1950s to the present day.

