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# Quarterly Newsletter

ARTROUTE

May 2025 edition



# ART ROUTE

Dear Art Enthusiasts,

In this edition of our quarterly newsletter, we reflect on a season of both growth and remembrance within the South African art world. As Cape Town and Johannesburg continue to evolve as vibrant creative hubs, we spotlight a selection of new gallery and project spaces contributing to this dynamic shift.

We also share recent experiences that speak to the collaborative and ever-changing nature of working in the arts. Looking ahead, we're excited to celebrate the 2025 Blessing Ngobeni Art Prize winner, Khanyisa Brancon. And as we move forward, we pause to honour the profound legacy of Dada Masilo, whose artistry and spirit continue to leave a lasting imprint.

From the ArtRoute Team.

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## NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK

In recent months, both Cape Town and Johannesburg have welcomed a host of new galleries and art spaces, each contributing uniquely to the cultural landscape. These venues not only showcase innovative works but also foster community engagement and support emerging talents.



## ART FORMES

Art Formes is a gallery and publishing house dedicated to contemporary African sculpture. Founded in 2021 by Sorbonne-trained art historian Olivia Barrell, it champions clay and other earth-based materials—mediums long overlooked yet rich in cultural expression across the continent. In 2023, Art Formes released its inaugural publication, *CLAY FORMES*, focused on contemporary South African ceramics. Though new to the scene, it has quickly become a leading voice in African sculpture, fostering growing appreciation both locally and internationally. Now permanently based at The Old Biscuit Mill in Woodstock, Cape Town, the gallery hosts new exhibitions every six weeks, showcasing top sculptors from across South Africa. The name Art Formes borrows from the French word for “shape” or “art object,” reflecting the gallery’s mission to develop new language and visibility for African sculptural practices—honouring their past while shaping their future.

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## LEMKUS GALLERY

Established in 2024, Lemkus Gallery in Cape Town is home to Residency28, a programme that offers funding, studio space, and exhibition opportunities to emerging local artists. The gallery also hosts group shows and collaborative projects, inviting guest curators to build creative community. Their recent exhibition, Thero Makepe's *We Didn't Choose to be Born Here*, ran from 15 February to 12 April 2025, curated by Jared Leite.



## DWEBART & CAFE

Founded by Thobile Ndarana, Dweba Art & Café aims to uplift the community through art and coffee. Alongside Art Curator and Writer Palesa Segomotso Motsumi, Thobile has created a space where local and international artists engage with contemporary issues through various mediums, including humour, satire, performance, and live art. The café serves as a platform for creative dialogue that challenges societal norms. The current exhibition, Refiloe Mnisi's solo show, opened on 1 May. Through vibrant colours and layered compositions, Mnisi channels raw emotion and ancestral memory, offering a powerful exploration of identity. His work invites viewers into an intimate dialogue between the inner self and the surrounding world.

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## VELA PROJECTS

Vela Projects is a fine art gallery based in a renovated 19th-century building in the heart of Cape Town's East City, dedicated to showcasing contemporary South African and African artists.

Founded in 2022 with a month-long pop-up exhibition in Greenmarket Square, Vela has since evolved into a permanent gallery and office space. The gallery presents a boutique selection of both represented and non-represented artists, offering a program that engages with the global cultural landscape while supporting the development of influential and enduring artistic careers.

In addition to its contemporary program, Vela Projects is also active in the secondary market, promoting the work of modern African artists and highlighting the continent's rich artistic history.

Vela is proud to announce the opening of its new permanent exhibition space in Cape Town in December 2023.

### Worth Watching:

Another space to keep an eye on is FDcontemporary, a newly launched gallery that opened on April 3rd during First Thursdays. Its inaugural exhibition, *The Fibre That Connects Us*, brings together South African contemporary artists exploring themes of connection and materiality.

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## BERYL GALLERY

Beryl is an art house, studio, and museum that houses the private collection of Lindsay Klein, featuring artworks and eclectic curiosities gathered over more than two decades. Serving as both her creative workspace and a public gallery, Beryl opens its doors on select days, offering visitors a chance to experience works by South African artists curated by Klein. Her collection spans a variety of mediums and themes, with a strong focus on artists based in the Western Cape, particularly Cape Town. The space launched with the exhibition *What I Talk About When I Talk About Collecting*.

## JOHANNESBURG HIGHLIGHT:

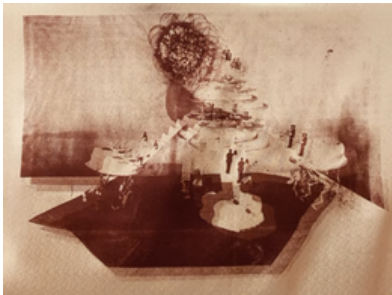
### I PUT MY HAND ON MY CHEST TO FEEL MY HEARTBEAT – GROUP EXHIBITION - OF SOUL AND JOY PHOTO PROJECT

Soul & Joy (OSJ) presented *I Put My Hand On My Chest To Feel My Heartbeat*, a group exhibition held at Constitution Hill from 1 February to 31 March 2025. Curated by Lesole Tauatswala, the show marked 30 years of democracy through the eyes of young photographers from Thokoza, comprising past and present OSJ students. The exhibition offered an intimate look at daily life, identity, spirituality, and heritage, captured through powerful visual narratives that reflected both personal and collective experiences. From family and tradition to belonging and self-expression, these images revealed the heartbeat of a vibrant community.



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## BLESSING NGOBENI ART PRIZE 2025: KHANYISA BRANCON



The Blessing Ngobeni Art Prize continues to support emerging talent with a three-month studio residency and solo exhibition at Everard Read Gallery, made possible by the generous support of the JSE and Everard Read.

We're thrilled to announce Khanyisa Agnes Brancon as the 2025 prize winner. Based in Johannesburg, Brancon is a multidisciplinary artist whose work spans printmaking, photography, installation, and textiles. Her practice explores memory, spirituality, and feminist narratives, centring the Black woman's experience through intimate, material-based storytelling. Themes of labour, leisure, and maternal lineage thread through her work, transforming personal and ancestral history into quiet, tactile offerings.

In addition, Nathaniel Sheppard III has been selected by the JSE for inclusion in their permanent collection. A Johannesburg-based printmaker and collage artist, Sheppard's work engages themes of identity and socio-political reflection.

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## IN HONOUR OF DADA MASILO

We take a moment to honour the late Dada Masilo, an extraordinary South African choreographer and dancer who transformed classical ballet by fusing it with contemporary and African dance. Her signature high-speed style brought new life to traditional works, using movement to tell powerful stories of discrimination, inequality, and identity. Though not overtly political, her work boldly addressed taboos around race, gender, and sexuality. Masilo collaborated with celebrated artists including William Kentridge, Ann Masina, Gregory Maqoma, and Kyle Heinz Rossouw. She passed away unexpectedly on 29 December 2024 at the age of 39.

In the flurry of excitement surrounding the Cape Town International Art Fair, her passing may not have received the attention it so deeply deserved.

Amidst the noise of the art world's calendar, it is essential to pause and reflect on this profound loss. Masilo's legacy lives on in the stories she told and the lives she moved—an enduring force in South African and global dance.







Thank you for reading!

From new spaces energising Cape Town and Johannesburg to the lasting legacy of artists like Dada Masilo, South African art is in a moment of vibrant movement. This edition also celebrates the 2025 Blessing Ngobeni Art Prize winner, Khanyisa Brancon, whose powerful, intimate practice is one to watch. Thank you for joining us in exploring these stories. We look forward to sharing more artists and insights in our next edition - until then, may the art around you inspire curiosity and connection. Stay tuned!

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