

# Quarterly Newsletter



ART

ROUTE

## Greetings, art lovers!

October has been a month of powerful openings, creative dialogue, and inspiring collaborations across South Africa's art landscape. From museum exhibitions and gallery walkabouts to festival showcases, the art community continues to thrive - exploring themes of identity, belonging, and connection in ever-evolving ways.

At ArtRoute, we're proud to spotlight the moments that bring artists, curators, and audiences together. Last month's highlights include thought-provoking exhibitions at Zeitz MOCAA, the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, and the Toyota Stellenbosch Woordfees — each offering a distinct lens on South African creativity past and present.

From the Artroute team.

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## **EXHIBITION SPOTLIGHT: A PROTEA IS NOT A FLOWER AT ZEITZ MOCAA**

At Zeitz MOCAA, the museum's latest exhibition, *A Protea Is Not a Flower* by Lerato Shadi and Robin Rhode, is an unmissable exploration of identity, belonging, and the shifting landscapes of exile. Curated by Khanyi Mawhayi, this remarkable show unfolds as a multigenerational conversation between contemporary artists and South African cultural icons Gerard Sekoto, Bessie Head, and Don Mattera.

Drawing inspiration from Mattera's poem *Protea...*, the exhibition shows resilience - on how artists continue to create and remember from afar. Much like the protea, whose roots adapt and thrive across continents, the featured works speak to the strength of those who transform displacement into dialogue and distance into creative communion.

Through Sekoto's modernist paintings, Shadi's immersive installations and film, and Rhode's dynamic murals, *A Protea Is Not a Flower* moves fluidly between personal memory and collective history. It examines how exile, whether internal or external, shapes artistic vision, asking what it means to build a sense of home when home itself has become an idea carried within.

This exhibition is a reflection on exile; but it is also an act of connection. It gathers voices across generations and geographies, tracing the unseen threads that bind artists, writers, and histories together. In doing so, it reminds us that even when uprooted, creativity continues to bloom fiercely.

**If a Protea is not a flower, then what is it?**

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# OCTOBER: BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH WE PROCEED IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE SUNLIGHT

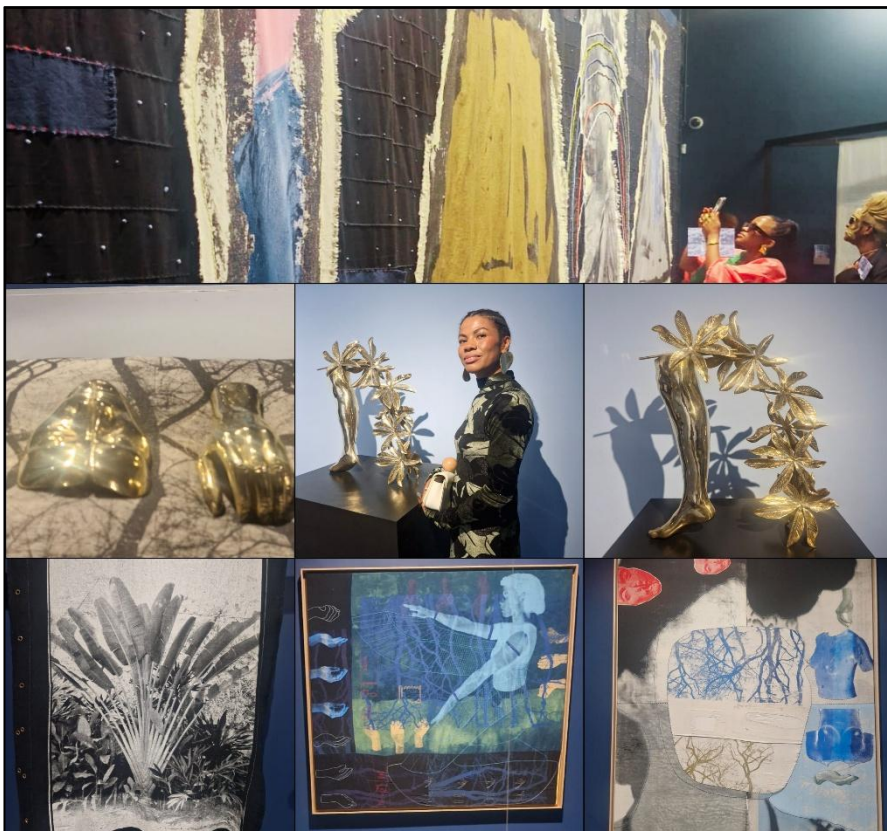
BY ZOHRA OPOKU AT ZEITZ MOCAA

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month - a time to honour strength, resilience, and recovery. In this spirit, we spotlight Zohra Opoku, whose hauntingly beautiful works draw from her personal journey through breast cancer.

Through fabric, photography, and self-portraiture, Opoku transforms vulnerability into radiant strength. Her solo exhibition, *We Proceed in the Footsteps of the Sunlight*, is now on view at Zeitz MOCAA (11 September 2025 – 4 October 2026).

Curated by Beata America and Dr Phokeng Setai, this exhibition traces a decade of Opoku's practice - an exploration of identity, memory, and cultural inheritance. Born in East Germany and based in Accra, Ghana, Opoku bridges geographies and generations, using cloth and imagery as vessels of selfhood and ancestral connection.

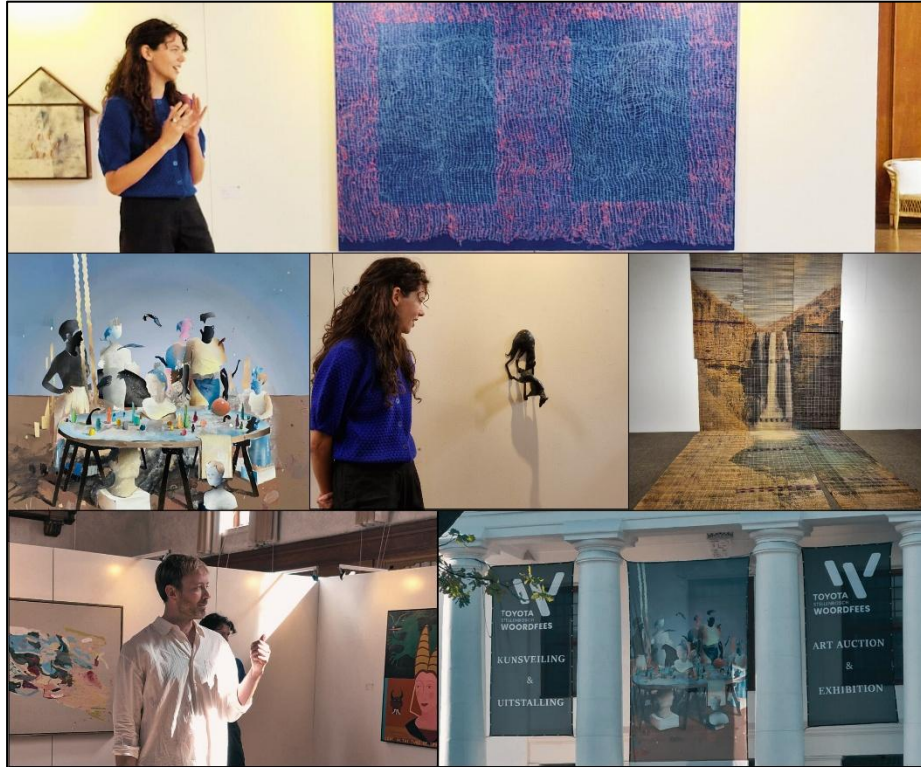
Anchored by recurring motifs of water, breath, and ground, her works explore the fluidity of life, the sanctity of spirit, and the grounding force of belonging. The exhibition's title, drawn from the Book of the Dead, becomes a quiet declaration of survival: a passage through darkness toward light.



“IN MY WORK I  
TRACE THE  
BODY’S ECHOES,  
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STORY OF  
BECOMING.”

— ZOHRA OPOKU

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## TOYOTA STELLENBOSCH WOORDFEES 2025

The Toyota Stellenbosch Woordfees 2025 marked a milestone 25th anniversary from 11-19 October, with Strauss & Co, proud silver sponsor, presenting an inspiring programme of exhibitions, talks, and the Benefit Art Auction.

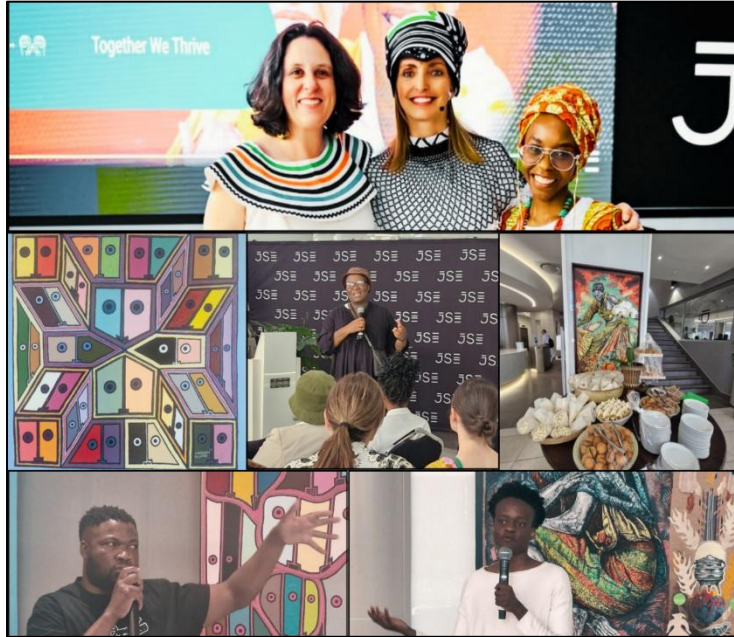
Curated by RESERVOIR, the auction featured 108 lots by 96 contemporary Southern African artists, with 70% of proceeds going directly to the artists and the remainder supporting the Woordfees Art Outreach Initiative.

Two major exhibitions formed the visual core of Strauss & Co's participation. *Seeing Ourselves: South African Portraits Past and Present*, held at the Oude Leeskamer, explored the evolution of portraiture in South Africa - from early 20th-century works by Irma Stern and Gerard Sekoto to contemporary voices such as Zanele Muholi, Marlene Steyn, and Georgina Gratrix. Together, these artists traced the shifting ways identity, memory, and social change are reflected through portraiture.

At the Stellenbosch Town Hall, *Origins & Legacy of Art Jewellery in South Africa* celebrated the country's rich history and contemporary innovation in art jewellery. Presented in collaboration with Stellenbosch University's Creative Jewellery and Metal Design Division, the exhibition complemented a two-part online auction running from 6-22 October 2025.

Through this dynamic programme, Strauss & Co highlighted the intersections of art, heritage, and contemporary expression - continuing its commitment to supporting artists and expanding the conversation around South African creativity.

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**FINE LINES:  
HOSTED BY THE JOHANNESBURG STOCK EXCHANGE & ELLIS  
ART HOUSE**

It was a privilege to celebrate the opening of *Fine Lines* - an exhibition presented by the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) in collaboration with Ellis Art House, and thoughtfully curated by Refilwe Nkomo.

Exploring how boundaries are defined, blurred, and reimagined, *Fine Lines* brings together a dynamic group of contemporary artists: Senzeni Marasela, Phumzile Buthelezi, Given Muronga, Kwandiwa Dlwati, Belmiro Jemusse, and Siyabonga Mlambi. Each artist examines the delicate interplay between precision and vulnerability, form and feeling, presence and absence.

A highlight of the opening was the intimate walkabout with Refilwe Nkomo and Senzeni Marasela, whose conversation on mentorship, artistic practice, and the invisible lines that connect us all offered a moment of reflection and inspiration. Presented under the JSE Art Share Initiative, *Fine Lines* continues the exchange between art, business, and society - creating space for dialogue where creativity meets collaboration. Through a range of mediums, the exhibition celebrates the nuance of artistic expression and the power of connection across disciplines and communities.

Our sincere thanks to everyone who attended the opening and contributed to the thoughtful discussions around art, context, and connection.

*Fine Lines* is hosted by the Johannesburg Stock Exchange & Ellis Art House and is on view until 30 November 2025 at the JSE Building, Sandton.

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See you next time!

As we look toward the final stretch of the year, we're reminded of how art continually deepens our understanding of ourselves and one another. Through shared experiences and creative exchange, South African art remains a living, breathing conversation.

Thank you for joining us on this journey - for walking through exhibitions, engaging in dialogue, and supporting the artists who shape our cultural landscape.

