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Jochen Zeitz (left) and Mark Coetzee at the Zeitz Mocaa Pavilion, Cape Town, with Ikhuba from Michele Mathison's *Harvest* installation. Portrait by Per-Anders Pettersson

FINDERS KEEPERS

African Art

A new museum details a duo's quest to build an unrivalled collection of contemporary art from Africa and its diaspora.

When Jochen Zeitz first visited Kenya in 1989, he fell in love with Africa, entranced by the continent's diversity and creativity. Alongside homes in London, Switzerland and Santa Fe, the former Puma CEO and current board director (overseeing sustainability) of French luxury house Kering was inspired to buy a 50,000-acre retreat in the Laikipia plateau, one of Kenya's most densely populated wildlife areas. Once settled, Zeitz (pictured above left) started buying African art, beginning with a selection of work by photographer Peter Beard. "I initially bought from artists who dealt with Africa from a more or less 'outside in' view," he explains. "But I wanted to look at it 'inside out'."

In 2008, Puma supported 30 Americans at the Rubell Family Collection, an exhibition looking at African-American artists curated by Mark Coetzee (pictured above right), a South African living in Miami and working for the Rubells. "When we met in 2008 we had a commonality of vision," says Coetzee.

“Jochen was committed to Africa, I wanted to do something important in Africa in terms of culture and we found a shared mission and started this journey together. We identified an area where we could make a difference.”

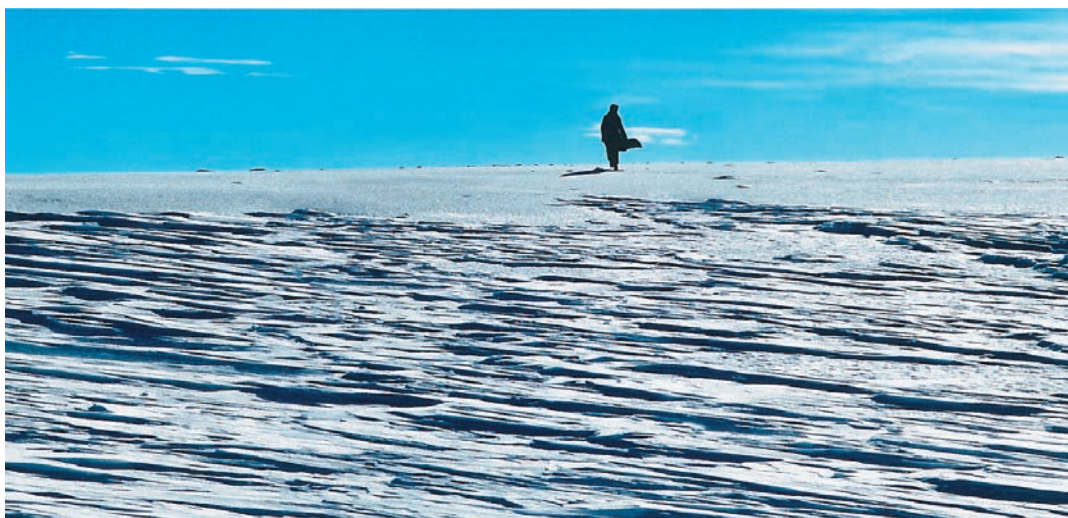
This mission is not only to create the most representative collection of contemporary art from Africa and its diaspora - the Jochen Zeitz Collection - but to display it to the public as part of the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (Zeitz Mocaa), of which Zeitz is co-founder. Designed by Thomas Heatherwick, Zeitz Mocaa is currently taking shape in the former grain silos of Cape Town’s V&A Waterfront.

The project is set for completion at the end of 2017, and the first four shows have been mapped out. In the interim, the duo have set up a satellite pavilion 400m away, across the canals. Recently, South African artist Michele Mathison’s 2013 Venice Biennale installation *Harvest* (Ikhuba pictured above) was on show, which Coetzee bought along with another 85 acquisitions from the Biennale.

Mathison’s *Uproot* exhibition was on display shortly after in London’s Tyburn Gallery (with prices from £5,000 to £20,000). A standout piece symbolising the show’s relation to migration turned the gallery into a cornfield; *Plot* deals with personal and political themes similar to *Harvest*. ‘Art from Africa has become a real focus for the international art world,’ says Coetzee. “It’s highly competitive for the seminal works; MoMA, Tate, the Pompidou and others need to add contemporary pieces of African art to keep their collections relevant. We have to commit quickly, sometimes before an artwork is realised.”



Impundulu Zonke Ziyandilandela, 2011, by Nicholas Hlobo.



True North Series, Ice Project No. 9, 2006, by Isaac Julien

The duo are reticent to talk about the exact size of the collection or its value. They do, however, postulate on the need for it to be as representative of the continent as possible. Star names include photographers Zanele Muholi and Andrew Putter, young luminaries on the scene who deal with pertinent identity issues, and multidisciplinary artist AthiPatra Ruga (Uzuko pictured right). Zeitz also concedes he has Nicholas Hlobo's "dragon" (pictured above) in his house in Switzerland. With the official title *Iimpundulu Zonke Ziyandilandela* (meaning "all the lightning birds are after me" in Nguni language Xhosa), the dragon is a gigantic flying monster made from bicycle-tyre inner tubes with streams of red ribbons trailing behind. Following Hlobo's raised profile in the international art market, it was bought in 2011 for around R1.5m (£81,300).

The dragon is well over 30ft, and having a large museum space (nine floors, of which 6,000sq m will be galleries) certainly helps when it comes to buying pieces of considerable size - it means huge installation pieces, video and photography no longer have to be discounted due to dimensions or format. "A lot of the pieces I now have I would never have bought when I didn't have the space," says Zeitz.

While all artists that form the core of the collection have strong ties to Africa, not all are African-born, such as London-born Yinka Shonibare, Manchester-born Chris Ofili, African-American Glenn Ligon and Brit Isaac Julien (*True North Series, Ice Project No 9*, pictured above).

Zeitz claims not to have lost sleep over any works that have eluded him. "I'm not addicted to collecting - if your definition

is that you can't have days or weeks without your fix. I might say - in a fun way- 'I should have bought this,' but it's not something I can't let go of. And once I've decided not to buy, I may go back given the opportunity, but it's not a must."

But Coetzee is confident the collection "is quite complete in representing this moment in time. That's our aim." But he's keen to point out that a rigorous focus on quality and scope is not a given. "Many collections that go on to start museums are idiosyncratic, and the museum has to fill in holes. By having each other as sounding boards, it means that one of us can fall in love with something, but the other can say, "Yes, but don't we have too much of that? Should we not be looking at east African artists right now?"

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Uzuko, 2013, by Athi-Patra Ruga

As Coetzee has recently relocated to Cape Town and Zeitz moves between his houses, they'll talk on Skype and meet at the main fairs - the Biennale or Frieze. And while Coetzee's role involves "sussing out the lay of the land": their camaraderie, informality and ease with one another suggest theirs is a relationship of equals.

"We always decide together," says Zeitz. "It's always both of us saying yes - if one says no, we just don't buy."

"I think that comes from our shared vision," says Coetzee "We know why we're doing this. This collection was not created to decorate Jochen's house. It was not made so he could 'play' collector. It was not made for the prestige. It was made as a collection that will preserve African art for Africans."

Zeitz Moca and Pavilion, V&A Waterfront, Cape Town 8002 (+2721-418 7855).