

UBUNTU – “I AM BECAUSE WE ARE”

*Nurturing Social Practices as a New
Way of Encountering Contemporary
Art in South Africa*

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Ubuntu – “I Am Because We Are”

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the societal role of Contemporary art and the potential of nurturing Social Practices in South Africa to address the complexity of contemporary art and people’s capabilities of understanding. Social Practices' potential role within the South African context is determined by the notion of Ubuntu, a relational philosophy essential to the transition to democracy in 1994 to reform a multicultural society. The research adopts a qualitative methodology, comprehending an exploratory phase of literature review and informal conversations, followed by an empirical phase of collecting data through semi-structured interviews with South African creative practitioners.

The results highlight that despite the positive changes, South Africa is plagued by high inequity across the country, especially between urbanized and unurbanized spaces; geographical position generates hierarchies that play a significant role. Within this extremely diverse social texture, there are communities that are still fighting to legitimise their cultures. Potentially, contemporary art plays a significant role as it is considered a tool for uplifting marginalised communities. However, nowadays, the contemporary art world mirrors the societal issues of inequity, prioritising commercial activities whose audience is limited to an elitist niche of people. It raises the need for a new way of encountering contemporary art, shifting the centre from the urbanized space to the rural areas and townships, going through and towards marginalized communities. The study identified that the main challenge is financial because

the amount available and the number of requests are significantly unbalanced. In addition, there are obstacles concerning geographical position, cultural diversity, resource mobilisation and evaluation process. Eventually, the research emphasizes that the condition for the transformative potential of Social Practices is avoiding a top-down perspective and adopting a mutual learning approach, facilitating initiatives that resonate with the community entered and are based on mutual learning rather than teaching.

Keywords: Social Practices, Contemporary Art, South Africa, Ubuntu, Community

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1 Introduction

Ubuntu, from the Zulu/Xhosa language, is a relational philosophy diffused across the African continent. It is often translated as *"I Am Because We Are"*, according to which a sense of being an individual cannot be detached from the social context he belongs to (Bolden, 2014). Ubuntu is a concept that supports the South African transition to democracy in 1994 to reform a multicultural society (Bolden, 2014). This study is based on the idea that Ubuntu is the core of Social Practices, representing a relational way of encountering contemporary art (Bourriaud, 2002; Hammersley, 2015) when people act within socially and culturally shaped contexts (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Leake, 2012). Social Practices serve as a bridge to contemporary art, breaking down the barriers people face to access (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Leake, 2012). Therefore, approaching and understanding contemporary art is hurdled by its conceptual and material complexity; contemporary art prioritises the creation of ideas over aesthetics and, in doing so, has significantly broadened the range of media and forms used (Kuiying, 2022).

It is crucial to reach people who currently would not engage with contemporary art, as the ideas raised by artists are often related to social, political and economic matters, aiming to lead people to take action and be responsible instead of staying passively apart from what happens in the world (Hooks, 1995; Bailey & Desai, 2005). Taking Social Responsibility is part of a process of decolonisation (Esche, 2017), which has started in South Africa since the *"African Renaissance"* after eras of colonialism and Apartheid (Bolden, 2014). In addition, during South African political, economic, and cultural isolation, contemporary art has had an even more significant role in creating collective memory and reflecting South African multi-identity social texture (Mosely, 2007; Barnes, 2008; Pawłowska, 2013).

The thesis investigates the role of contemporary art in South Africa and its audience's current state of engagement among museums, galleries, universities and independent creative practitioners. It seeks to discover the relevance of Social Practices in South Africa to facilitate the societal role of contemporary art. In trying to understand the impact of the South African historical background on the actual challenges faced by the country, the thesis analyses whether there is fertile soil to nurture relational ways of engaging with

contemporary art.

It is not a matter of merely liking or disliking contemporary art and looking at the South African contemporary art market either. The research is motivated by recognising that South Africa needs global attention and acknowledging that contemporary art potentially activates people to tackle social, political, and cultural issues (Hooks, 1995; Bailey & Desai, 2005). Furthermore, the research on Social Practices is mainly sociological (Giddens, 1984; Guattari & Deleuze, 1987; Wilson, 2003; Davis & Sumara, 2006; Coffee, 2007; Johnson, 2011; Castro, 2023), it is missing research on how to design and tailor Social Practices that mirror specific contextual aspects and needs. This study expects a positive response regarding the potential of fostering Social Practices in South Africa, primarily because of the highly performative nature of African culture (Fanon, 1963; Pather & Boulle, 2019) and the rooted Ubuntu relational philosophy of living (Kuiying, 2022). On the other hand, the study probably raises challenges and obstacles that have not yet been considered in the theoretical framework due to the specificity of the context that only South Africans can bring to the surface.

After analysing academic literature to explain the main concepts of the research, I did further research to highlight why Social Practices are so important in contemporary society. For this reason, I considered Ruangrupa, an Indonesian art collective that held the artistic direction of Documenta Fifteen, an exhibition of contemporary art held every five years in Kassel, Germany, since 1995. Documenta is explicatory for the latest topics and processes contemporary art deals with, and Ruangrupa realised it on the concept of Lumbung. Lumbung is the Indonesian correspondence of South African Ubuntu, *"I Am Because We Are"*. Therefore, it is crucial to analyse the main challenges faced while implementing Social Practices within a traditional and institutional environment, such as Document Fifteen (Kaiza, 2022; Kent, 2022; Brown et al., 2022). Moreover, the theoretical framework comprehends the analyses of Charles Esche's Decolonial Thinking, whose position has inspired me in approaching the research. Indeed, Charles' agency transcends his identity as a European white man and contributes to the emancipation, effectiveness, and richness of art and the expressivity of culture. He also strongly advocates for connecting the contemporary with the past through art to give meaning to history and lead to a better future (Esche, 2017). In parallel to my literature review, I have analysed the Congress entitled Reimagining Heritage, Archives and Museums: Today/Tomorrow, organised by the French Institute of

South Africa and the Embassy of France, in February 2024 in Cape Town. It contributes to understanding the challenges and needs that South Africa and other African countries have identified and expressed collectively. Eventually, having informal conversations represents a precious tool for building comprehensive knowledge and approaching research (Swaraj, 2010); for this reason, I had an informal conversation with a South African architect who lectures at the Department of Architecture at the University of Pretoria who helped me to understand the South African context from a local perspective (Katz, 1953; Swaraj, 2010).

The first exploratory phase of the research, described above, includes analysing the academic literature, extra material, and informal conversations. It is essential for building awareness and creating the basis for the empirical phase. The empirical part of the research consists of qualitative data collection through semi-structured interviews (Bryman, 2012). It explores the role played by contemporary art in South Africa, considering the whole country and not only the urbanised areas, expecting to highlight the inequity among different zones. Then, questioning the main challenges faced in interacting with contemporary art, the research investigates the potential of Social Practices to make it more accessible. The interviews also highlight how South Africans need to design Social Practices according to their needs and which communities should receive attention the most (Denzin et al., 1994; Jones, 1995).

Analysing my position in running this research, it needs to be mentioned that I have never been to South Africa, and this can be seen from different angles. I asked the participants their opinions about the research and how it has been run. One person said it is a very limiting position because I am unfamiliar with the context, and it is too hard to understand without being there. All the other participants answered that it is a good position to be in because I am not affected by the social, political, and historical context. I could act as a blank page to be written by people's stories. The research has been approached with a spiritual effort: forgetting everything I know, trying not to underestimate anything, and deeply listening to the people I interact with.

2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework first analyses Contemporary Art and the obstacles people face due to its conceptual and material complexity. It then explores the sociological theory of Social Practices and how they affect social structures. Thirdly, it investigates the role played by contemporary art in society in the form of Socially Engaged Art and how it is translated into museum and cultural organisations, incurring the risk of being a utopian dimension detached from reality. Eventually, the literature review explores the South African context. Considering the historical background and the role of Contemporary Art in its society, it explores the characteristics of South African cultural organisations and institutions and the challenges they are currently facing.

2.1 Contemporary Art in the *Everyday*

The research considers contemporary art as a tool within society. Since primitive societies, art has represented an essential form of expression of humans' emotions and fears, providing an intangible value to the community (Anderson, 1961; Mohammed, 2021). Indeed, art is conceived as the medium to examine the world from numerous critical perspectives and to make people responsible and active towards reality (Bailey & Desai, 2005). Artists uniquely approach those issues through creative practices, offering distinctive and frequently critical ideas and perspectives (Whitham & Pooke, 2010).

This study focuses on contemporary art because it comprehends a broad range of forms and mediums involved in the artistic creative process and interdisciplinary approaches (Kuiying, 2022). Contemporary art has broken boundaries by blending different creative forms, unconventional materials, production methods, and techniques. Painting and sculpture, formerly considered the primary art discipline, gave way to a broader and more experimental spectrum of art forms (Krauss, 1986; Whitham & Pooke, 2010). Morris Weitz, an American philosopher and aesthetics, was already aware that the "*contention that art is amenable to real, or any kind of true definition is false*" (Weitz, 1959, p. 435; Kindler, 1999).

Indeed, recent years have expanded the collective notion of what art is and what is not even further (Gross, 2016), and this research embraces every form of contemporary art, not privileging any field over the other.

Contemporary art is rooted in the *everyday* (Johnstone, 2008), comprehending social, political, and economic issues people deal with in their daily lives. It can be interpreted in many ways (Whitham & Pooke, 2010). As Johnstone (2008) highlights, contemporary art offers different perspectives and ways of looking at what is always underneath our eyes with such regularity that we have started not to consider it anymore: some think it is to give value to the ordinary, which is underestimated or taken for granted, while others recognise it has the political scope of providing a voice to people who tend to be ignored (Johnstone, 2008). It has been researched that engaging with contemporary art and interpreting it implies a negotiation of meanings from different voices (Barrett, 2002; Mayer, 2008; Taylor, 2008; Villeneuve & Erickson, 2008; Leake, 2014).

2.1.1 The Complexity of Contemporary Art

"Art is demanding, especially contemporary art with its often unconventional and unfamiliar forms" (Whitham & Pooke, 2010, p. 11). Contemporary art challenges people's ability to understand it for the following reasons. Firstly, it emphasises the role of ideas and the creation of new concepts, acting towards the "*de-materialisation*" of art. This does not mean that contemporary art removes material, but it tends to de-prioritise visual aesthetics, impacting the artistic creative process in the choices of media and forms involved (Kuiying, 2022). Secondly, contemporary art often expresses concepts related to socio-political and historical matters, which might make people uncomfortable (Bailey & Desai, 2005; Villeneuve & Erickson, 2008). In addition, these aspects require a wider range of mediums and forms compared to the ones people are familiar with (Whitham & Pooke, 2010). Consequently, contemporary art fights to obtain legitimacy and engage an audience because of its intrinsic complexity of understanding. It has become the subject of many stereotypes; some define it as meaningless; others point out its simplicity, and they are more comfortable with representational and attractive art (Villeneuve & Erickson, 2008).

Eventually, the complexity of contemporary art makes it intimidating to interact with

it but doing it on a personal level is important in breaking down barriers (Leake, 2014). The research aims to investigate how museums, galleries, universities and independent creative practitioners responded to the need for new ways of encountering contemporary art to break down barriers and foster engagement.

2.2 The Theory of Social Practices

This study investigates if Social Practices can be fostered to address the obstacles individuals encounter in accessing contemporary art and facilitate the process of understanding, hence enhancing the audience's state of engagement. Before examining the notion of Social Practices in the art world, the theory of Social Practices needs to be clarified.

Social Practices have been defined as situations where human actions and thoughts are not devised in isolation but are enacted in response to and within sociocultural contexts as components of various social relationships (Geertz, 1973; Wertsch, 1985; Coffee, 2007). According to the theory of Social Practices, thinking, knowing, and learning processes occur when people act in socially and culturally shaped contexts (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Leake, 2012). Similarly, a Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky (1978), emphasises that Social Practices generate a higher mental process, as individual learning and knowledge acquisition “presupposes a specific social nature” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 88; Coffee, 2007).

The sociologist Anthony Giddens (1984) developed the Structuration Theory, which constitutes the ontological framework for understanding Social Practices. Giddens addresses agency, individual voluntary action, structure, resources, and rules, as well as establishing boundaries for the agency. According to Giddens’ theory, neither agency nor structure occurs apart from each other (Hardcastle et al., 2005; Delormier et al., 2009). Social Practices are defined as contextual activities of social actors that happen in the everyday context and merge the notions of agency and social structure. The actors are the elements that enable the creation of the structure, which constrains or enables human action (Giddens, 1984). Giddens’ theory is relevant for its value in everyday life, which is characterised by an increasing level of complexity requiring solutions that acknowledge it. The theory highlights how Social Practices are rooted in space-time dimensions that dynamically change the social structure. It provides

a comprehensive perspective on society for examining the complexity of human interactions and social changes.

To investigate how Social Practices can be adapted in the specific context of South Africa, another crucial academic theory for the research is the following. Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze (1987) created the concept of the rhizome as a metaphor to explain all the “*complex non-hierarchical systems*”, where every point relates to any other point, precisely as the society we live in (Wilson, 2003; Castro, 2023). In other words, the learning process developed in society represents a complex and dynamic system where humans build interconnecting relations; these relations are not established but continually changing, adapting and specifying (Davis & Sumara, 2006; Castro, 2023). It constitutes a process of emergence in complexity, an unconventional way of learning only possible through social participation; it is defined as a new set of possible actions, abilities, and knowledge arising from the interaction between individuals (Johnson, 2011; Castro, 2023). Eventually, in a socially constituted world, participation is associated with a “*negotiation and renegotiation of meaning*” through a dialogic that drives new perspectives. This means that Social Practices generate socially constructed meaning resulting from humans’ interactions and engagement within a certain context (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 51; Coffee, 2007). Considering this, the research aims to investigate Social Practices as a new way of encountering contemporary art; the following section will highlight how contemporary art has become increasingly relational (Bourriaud, 2002).

2.2.1 Social Practices within Cultural Organisations

Social Practices have a legacy within cultural organisations’ learning and understanding systems (McCarthy & Wright, 2005; Valdecasas et al., 2006; Reich et al., 2007; Rodari & Merzagora, 2007; McCarthy & Ciolfi, 2008; Misu et al., 2012; Martins, 2013; Venieri, 2022). Cameron (1971) presents the notion of a museum as a “*Forum*” from the Latin word *ferre*, which signifies *to bring*. The forum, formerly known as the public square in ancient Rome, served as a gathering place for citizens to discuss cultural, social, and political topics. Additionally, it functioned as a centre for economic activities, including the market (Treccani, n. d.). The concept of the museum as a forum, rather than a temple, has also been used to introduce the importance of dialogues within curatorial practices in the process of

democratisation and inclusivity of cultural organisations (Sandell, 2002; Venieri, 2022). Venieri (2022) explains how museums are not anymore only places for knowledge representation but “*places of mediation between knowledge and society*” (Rodari & Merzagora, 2007; p. 2); for this reason, there is the need to develop new practices to address fully the role cultural organisations have (Venieri, 2022). Visitors accessing exhibitions or cultural initiatives desire to share and appreciate the community feeling in a public and open environment with other people (Chen, 2009). Engaging in exhibitions with other people from different backgrounds creates opportunities for a shared learning process, which drives unpredictable outcomes due to its social nature (Leake, 2012)¹.

2.3 Societal Role of Contemporary Art

This section discusses the evolving role of contemporary art, which has become more relational and emphasises social interactions. Yet, it faces criticism for its potential utopian nature and detachment from reality.

2.3.1 Socially Engaged Art and Its Critics

As Tom Finkelpearl writes in *What We Made: Conversations on Art and Social Cooperation* (2013), Social Practices are “*art that’s socially engaged, where the social interaction is at some level the art*” (Miranda, 2019). On this account, the London Tate Modern (n. d.) website elaborates that Socially Engaged Art encompasses any form of art that engages individuals and communities in discussion, collaboration, or interaction with one another. Social Practice is frequently associated with a form of Participatory Art, described participatory art as art derived from a creative process in which participants shape the creative inquiry. The social interactions define the artwork, which the group co-authors through an ongoing negotiation of content and direction of the creative process (Kester, 2004;

¹ For instance, facilitated dialogue has been defined as a structured conversation among individuals, guided by a neutral facilitator, whose role is to assist the participants in addressing communication barriers and fostering a constructive exchange of thoughts. Facilitated dialogue has been implemented in history museums by the initiative of The International Coalition of Sites of Conscience and in science museums by the National Informal STEM Education Network (Venieri, 2022).

2011). Tate Modern (n. d.) defines Socially Engaged Art as an explicit sociological and political nature, usually functioning as an opportunity to highlight social issues and circumstances. Occasionally, such efforts aim to stimulate empowerment or inspire transformation within a community.

In the evolution of contemporary art, around 1960, art became increasingly relational, with a growing emphasis on social engagement and everyday life. Bourriaud (2002), in his book *“Relational Aesthetics”*, highlighted a shift in the focus of art, introducing a relational perspective, emphasising inter-subjective relations centrality in both the context and the contemporary art practices (Hammersley, 2015). To explain this role of contemporary art in the overall economic system which governs contemporary society, Bourriaud (2002) borrows the *“social interstice”* (p. 16) from Karl Marx. The interstice has been defined as *“a space in human relations which fits more or less harmoniously and openly into the overall system but suggests other trading possibilities than those in effect within this system”*. This means that contemporary art opens new perspectives that deviate from common sense and structure the system in which people live. In other words, the interstice *“encourages an inter-human commerce that differs from the “communication zones” that are imposed upon us”* (p. 16). Bourriaud values social spaces within an era when relations tend to be limited to certain timeframes and places. According to Bourriaud (2002), contemporary art represents something exceeding the norms and routines that society imposes on individuals’ *everyday*, which normally drives them in their interactions. Therefore, the exhibition has the potential to gather people together in groups, depending on the level of participation established through the art and the sociability represented through it. He defines an exhibition as an *“arena of exchanges”* characterised by the consistency of the form it assumes, the meaning it brings, and the human relational model reflected. Unlike other forms of art, contemporary art includes a model of behaviour to be implemented in the social structure (Bourriaud, 2002).

The concepts expressed in *Relational Aesthetics* (2002) are highly criticised by the British art historian Claire Bishop (2004) for not mirroring the complexity of reality, as they drive to art lacking antagonism and tension. Bishop (2004) considers Bourriaud’s vision utopian and excessively optimistic, incurring the risk of abstracting the art from the everyday matters and issues it is about (Hammersley, 2015). Bishop also thinks that those dialogical practices put the artist in the position of potentially becoming a political manipulator.

According to Bishop (2004), the emphasis on dialogical practices does not seem to question the quality of those relations established and the power system generated through it (Bishop, 2004; Did, 2013). Claire Bishop in *Radical Museology* (2013), published in London at the end of 2013, explores a new conception of contemporary art museums, significantly contributing to the international museology debate. Bishop theorised the concept of contemporary as dialectical, indicating not a spread of time but rather a methodology, a “*politicised project with a more radical understanding of temporality*” (p. 6). Dialectical refers to the dynamisation of a collection of artworks, connecting sensitive points of our time and creating virtuous relations (Huber et al., 2022). In his analysis, Bishop highlights the need for institutions encouraged through their curatorial practices to critically rethink contemporary art concerning the historical, political and societal context and consider the affective impact of specific national trauma.

Decolonial Thinking of Charles Esche

Charles Esche, Director of the Van Abbenmuseum of Eindhoven, is cited as one of the best practitioners in Claire Bishop's *Radical Museology* (2013). Despite the museum being a case detached from the South African context, Esche's Decolonial Thinking is relevant in defining the approach of this research and giving recommendations based on the empirical data. As Director, Charles Esche has made significant changes in strategy and policy, specifically regarding revising the collection, which the public sees as cultural memories, and building new narratives. Charles Esche's experimental approach to the exhibition space is based on de-modernization, which implies reclaiming the synesthetic experience weakened throughout modernity, emphasising vision over other sensorial traits. In de-modernization, the museum is no longer seen solely as a place for passive observation, where the body loses vitality. Instead, it is considered a tool that can inspire an understanding of the *everyday* as just one of many possible interpretations. It involves questioning the established methods of learning about art prevalent in modern times to explore alternative approaches that activate multiple senses (Huber et al., 2022). Charles Esche's approach emphasises that experiencing an artwork is not limited to a frontal encounter. This exhibition, which began in 2021 and will end in 2024, includes multi-sensorial instruments demonstrating that retaining the meaning of art goes beyond a single point of view and is not constrained by viewing (Huber et al., 2022).

Charles Esche (2017) affirms the need to radically change the way of standing in the 21st-century world rather than ignore the world's condition, reaffirming imbalance and inequity. He criticises museums and exhibitions based on perfectionism and detachment, where art is displayed only to be contemplated to fulfil an aesthetic desire. For this dynamic nature of Social Practices, people need to be passive, in his words, to adopt a “zombie” modality: *“You simply have to choose willfully to ignore what you know that you know – about the way the money was acquired to construct the place; about the barriers to access for so many of the people on this planet; about the tax avoidance that led to all this excess income; about the exploitation of resources to build and maintain the new, extravagant building; about the market manipulation behind the selection of familiar, mostly European and US male, (but still good) contemporary artists”* (Esche, 2017, p. 2).

Charles Esche (2017) highlights the concept of social responsibility and the transformative potential of art and its institutions. He emphasises how institutions are currently making the art world inefficient, focusing on commercial activities that cater to the interests of the elite, constituting 1% of the population, rather than serving as platforms for addressing social, ethical, and aesthetic contemporary issues. Despite the art world's disengagement from economics, politics and social change, within culture, culture still provides a space for art to be autonomous, prioritising public interest and debate.

Furthermore, Charles (2017) introduces the concept of decolonial thinking, first mentioned by Walter Mignolo and others, as essential for challenging the enduring dominance of Eurocentric paradigms. To do so, a cultural and chronological reevaluation that acknowledges different historical narratives and perspectives is needed to reconstruct a new kind of knowledge that embraces diversity and does not allow any narrative to dominate others. From Charles's perspective, museums and art spaces play a crucial role in decolonial engagement because of their dual nature of history's conservators and narrative creators: museums are places where different narratives can cohabit, promoting a multifaceted understanding of history, culture and society. Esche's Decolonial Thinking is crucial within the South African context: the colonialism and Apartheid eras have formed a highly diverse social texture in which communities belonging to different areas are still fighting to own their narratives (Mosely, 2007).

2.4 South African Context

This section introduces the historical and cultural background of South Africa in which cultural organisations operate. Moreover, it investigates contemporary art's potential role and soil fertility for nurturing Social Practices within the cultural scene.

2.4.1 Contemporary Art Role in South Africa

Due to a long period of colonisation, South Africa has experienced political, economic, and cultural isolation (Barnes, 2008). After 1994, when the transition to democracy started, cultural organisations needed to shape themselves to reflect the multiracial nature of South African society (Mosely, 2007). Despite the former cultural isolation of South Africa, the country has not left itself behind but has actively and increasingly taken part in the international market, drawing attention to the post-Apartheid reality (Pawłowska, 2013). The quest for traditional roots has contributed to the formation of African identity, fostering cohesion among citizens and fueling a sense of resentment against Apartheid (Haute, 2011)

Artists have long imagined a uniquely South African national culture for a post-Apartheid future (Peffer, 2009; Haute, 2011). Contemporary art, particularly, has played a crucial role in fostering political and philosophical debate, with the support of some online art critical platforms facilitating people's understanding (Pawłowska, 2013). Indeed, the traditional concept of art for art's sake is not as relevant as in other contexts. This is because art understanding primarily refers to social and political concerns (Pawłowska, 2013). On the one hand, with the transition to democracy, South African contemporary art started to grow, contributing to the creation of a *"significant visual culture that seeks to grapple with and make meaning out of the legacy of Apartheid"* (Mosely, 2007, p. 99). On the other hand, artists often allude to the concepts of nationhood and nationalism related to the framework of disconnection and contradiction. While the government claims an improvement in people's quality of life since democracy, especially for the ones who had been oppressed, and spreads messages of tolerance and solidarity, people protest against the numerous xenophobic acts of violence that are still happening (Gule, 2019).

The idea of a homogenous *Africanness* needs to be critically approached, considering that ancient South African practices are numerous, uniquely specific, and belong to different

South African ethnic groups (Pather & Boulle, 2019). Each community, such as Zulu, Venda, Suthu, and Xhosa, has its traditions and Indigenous Knowledge Systems. Thus, conceiving a South African cultural identity on an imagined common past would be erroneous. So, the multi-tribal society represents an obstacle to the creation of national identity, and there is the need to consider that the social texture is highly differentiated. Multiculturalism also challenges the production of cultural policies, which becomes more complex than within a homogenous society. Cultural policies in South Africa are meant to focus on social cohesion and strengthen the national government's transformation and reconciliation objectives (Ebewo, 2022). However, in contemporary art, the concern about fostering a South African united national culture in the post-Apartheid future has been central (Peffer, 2009; Van Haute, 2011). Culture resonates with the specificity of the different tribes, and the audience members belonging to one of those ethnic groups can relate to that and appreciate how it has been validated and valorised (Ekpo, 1999; Van Haute, 2011).

Contemporary art has increased the level of performativity due to the cross-medium approach. Performative art is conceived as a reality-making action, constituting a meaningful dimension with what it delivers to the receiver audience (Shannon, 2014). Fanon (1963) emphasises the performativity and radicalism characterising the African costumes: *"In the colonial world, the emotional sensitivity of the native is kept on the surface of his skin like an open sore which flinches from the caustic agent; and the psyche shrinks back, obliterates itself and finds an outlet in muscular demonstrations which have caused certain very wise men to say that the native is a hysterical type ... we see the native's emotional sensibility exhausting itself in dances which are more or less ecstatic. This is why any study of the colonial world should take into consideration the phenomena of the dance"* (Fanon, 1963, pp. 55–56; Pather & Boulle, 2019). South Africa's cultural scene has increased its performativity within protests during Apartheid, but even before, it has always included site-specific rituals linked to healing, spirituality, celebration, and initiation (Pather & Boulle, 2019). The active role played by the audience within contemporary art and its performativity has contributed to the creation of collective memory about the South African past, which is a potential key factor in the therapeutic process of black South Africans (Mosely, 2007; Peffer, 2009; Van Haute, 2011). The literature has not found any agreement with the definition of collective memory; Gibson (2004) defines it as a selective process socially executed that establishes what must be

remembered and what is willing to be forgotten. This process relates to the educational role played by contemporary art in addressing social and political concerns (Eppert, 2000; Mosely, 2007). The literature points out that the power of art resides in its usual detachment from political projects; art has the *“unique capacity to navigate the difficult subjective and emotional dimensions of such experiences”* (Mosely, 2007, p. 106). Coombes (2003), in his book *History after Apartheid: Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa*, highlights the privilege of artists to express sensitive topics and inconsistencies with unique and unexplored perspectives (Mosely, 2007).

2.4.2 South African Cultural Organisations

Colonialism has irremediably altered how Africa and Europe participate in the world (Blankenberg, 2024). Post-Apartheid South Africans are bonded by a contradictory sensibility described as a *“site of affirmation, where speaking begins and silencing ends”* (Gqola, 2000, p. 94; Dee Marco, 2019, p. 159). South Africa's society is still affected by a huge inequity constraining most people from living below the poverty line and facing daily struggles. The main target is to undo what Apartheid meant to do: if you were not European, you were limited in how far you could develop yourself. Consequently, nowadays, most white people have much experience; black people have only started to participate at an equal level since democracy in 1994 (February 2024, Personal Communication).

Within South African history, culture and heritage have acted *“as both weapons of oppression and tools of resistance is something ingrained in all of us”* (Blankenberg, 2024). This means that cultural organisations, which were not accessible to everyone during the colonisation and Apartheid eras, contributed to generating inequity and exclusion, but at the same time, they attempted to change this narrative, whether successfully or not. Many institutions have transformed themselves to ensure that everybody has equal access to the institutions, resources, and support needed in any field (Personal Communication, 2024). Despite these changes, Professor Carolyn Hamilton affirms that *“thinking about the institutions that are charged with the responsibility of South Africa, particularly history and culture, I think we are in deep trouble”*, explaining that the collections seem to be mired and trapped in the colonial curatorial work without managing to spring that trap (Hamilton, 2024). In response, Esche's *Decolonial Thinking* (2017) suggests breaking the Eurocentric curatorial

paradigms and leftovers of colonialism.

Historically, before and after the end of Apartheid, cultural institutions served as community art centres, which gave people a voice to address historical, cultural and educational (Lochner, 2019). The relevance of art communities is highlighted by Gerhard Hagg (1989), who depicts them as self-expression spaces that facilitate the development of a new culture made of new symbols and provide educational and economic networks. *“centres allow people to participate at the grassroots level, with an emphasis on the workshop process rather than end-products. Ordinary people can become participants in efforts to redefine culture and bridge the gap between the First and Third Worlds. Participation in the arts breaks down barriers, thus making the art centre an important means of inter-community communication”* (Gerhard Hagg, 1989, n.p.; Lochner, 2019). Starting around 1989, some of those community centres were done away with horrible deaths (Makola, 2024). For this reason, those independent art centres that were not included in government funding or development plans continued to struggle, and they also lacked strong, passion-driven leadership. Consequently, many of these centres changed functions or shut down (Hagg, 2004; Joseph Gaylard, 2004; Lochner, 2019).

South Africa is plagued by a systemic disinvestment of all their infrastructure. Arts, culture, and heritage have been deprioritised, increasing the racial and economic disparities manifest in the private versus public cultural ecosystem. It is a time of polarisation, upheaval, gross inequality, corruption, censorship, climate emergency and war (Blankenberg, 2024). Furthermore, there are completely ignored and forgotten spaces, and African people have been excluded from this process for a long time. The need to connect African people to these spaces is on the cultural organisations' agenda (Mokwen, 2024). Given the complexity and depth of South Africa's history and the need to reverse this cultural and historical narrative of inequity, considerable work remains to make these cultural and historical narratives accessible and engaging to all South Africans (February 2024, Personal Communication). In urban areas, such as Cape Town and Johannesburg, next to abandoned or empty spaces, numerous locations are designated for tourists. Yet South Africans lack interest in visiting these sites to learn about their history. This reflects a broader issue concerning how the diverse narratives of various groups are represented within cultural spaces. The challenge lies in fostering a greater domestic interest in these historical sites and ensuring that the

multifaceted layers of the nation's history are comprehensively and accurately portrayed.

Nowadays, cultural spaces can break the silence of complicity and foster relations. For this reason, they are seen as potential places for healing and resilience-building (Blankenberg, 2024). Hamilton (2024) highlights how essential it would be for any African cultural organisation to have the desire and the capacity to link the deep past and inherited ethics to the possible future: *“It is something that we keep neglecting, we have some sense of what an inherited ethic is, but it is an inherited ethic that most of us know through the last 100 years of how it is impacted on that ethic”* (Hamilton, 2024). On this account, Steve Kwena Mokwen, Curator of Robben Island Museum, affirms, *“Cultural organisations have to be judged not by the extent to which they have connected with African folk who have been excluded but by the extent to which they are helping us recover and rebuild and find other languages of explaining ourselves to other people”* (2024).

Relevance of Social Practices – Ruangrupa

Ruangrupa, a collective of artists and creatives from Jakarta, Indonesia, which was the artistic director of Documenta fifteen in 2022, has also proven the relevance of Social Practices within contemporary art. Ruangrupa generates and strengthens the legacy of collectiveness, representing an attempt to give legitimacy in the global art world to unexplored and unseen ways of production and exhibiting art (Brown et al., 2022; Kaiza, 2022). The collective developed the exhibition based on the concept of *Lumbung*, meaning *collective sharing*. *Lumbung* is an agrarian and urban communitarian approach in Indonesia, referring to the collective as a form of social organisation (Kaiza, 2022; Kent, 2022). It embraces transparency, connectedness to place, generosity and independence, which resonate in the South African notion of *Ubuntu*. Even if the terms differ for origins, etymological roots and developmental histories (and even their current uses), they express ideas of communal being, ancestral as in belonging (Brown et al., 2022). In South Africa, *Ubuntu* is connected to the fact that history built a broader awareness of others, as explained: “*If I have amassed enough, how do I create opportunities for others? How do I, when I get empowered, empower others? When I learn, how do I teach others?*” (February 2024, Personal Communication).

The MADEYOULOOK², an interdisciplinary South African Collective based in Johannesburg, took part in Documenta fifteen. Its participation included hosting a series of discussions, film screenings, and listening sessions in a garden and farming area in Kassel, as illustrated in Figure 1. These activities form part of MADEYOULOOK’s research into the relationship with the land: “*We are concerned with the deep and enduring relationships with the land that remain, despite the long durée of South Africa’s turbulent and destabilising existence. What we take from the particular history of this place is the potential to seek intimacy, spiritual security, and interdependence with the land and more-than-human life. Through it, we encounter how we might repair ourselves and the lands from which we find sustenance*” (Mafofolo | Documenta fifteen, MADEYOULOOK, n.d.). The encounters

² MADEYOULOOK’s Website: <https://www.made-you-look.net/>

occurred before the start of Documenta fifteen with the aim of connecting with the Kassel-based community that works the land (MADEYOULOOK, n.d.).



Fig. 1 MADEYOULOOK, n.d.

Within Documenta fifteen, Social Practices can be seen as consequential to the innovative and unusual media and techniques adopted within contemporary art (Whitham & Pooke, 2010): *“Different ways of producing art will create different works, which, in turn, will ask for other ways of being read and understood: artworks that are functioning in real lives in their respective contexts, no longer pursuing mere individual expression, no longer needing to be exhibited as standalone objects or sold to individual collectors and hegemonic state-funded museums”* (Kaiza, 2022). Ruangrupa (2022) defines their approach as *“nonsystematic, not crystalline or exhaustive. It is dynamic, and changes according to conversations between people and their needs, rather than based on one static line of conceptual thinking”* (p. 31). These modalities were not inserted in what already existed but are conceived as a *“series of exercises for reshaping and sowing seeds for more changes in the future”* (Kaiza, 2022, p.17).

Ruangrupa, after being the subject of polemics for some of their artistic decisions, affirms they faced difficulties in building trust and affinities to constitute Lumbung because the time was not enough. Ruangrupa’s artistic decisions were risky, and they did not receive positive responses within the German context despite their intentions. Cultural institutions

are typically hesitant to embrace changes because they are risk-averse and want to prevent reputation damage (Kent, 2022). *"In Documenta fifteen, Lumbung is still approaching the economy using old paradigms. If we are supporting different types of art production, then the artworks and their forms, their positions and agencies, the way they are being made public and understood, the infrastructures built around them, and how ownerships are fostered should also be made differently. Changes in both their production and economic construction need to be further rethought. Documenta fifteen still uses the language of - and can be understood as - a conventional artistic mega-event, despite the attempts to approach it in a more bottom-up, organic, and accessible way"* (p. 40).

2.5 Summary Literature Review

The theoretical framework starts highlighting the contradictory nature of contemporary art. On the one hand, it has a natural tendency to approach everyday subjects relevant to society, and on the other hand, it is intrinsically complex due to the high level of conceptuality and the wide range of mediums and forms (Johnstone, 2008; Whitham & Pooke, 2010).

According to Bourriaud (2002), contemporary art has become increasingly relational, creating an “*arena of exchanges*” for people to engage in dialogues. The notion of Relational Aesthetics (Bourriaud, 2002) is highly criticised by Claire Bishop (2004) as an excessively optimistic view since the quality of the relations established is not questioned (Bishop, 2004; Did, 2013). Secondly, it presents the Theory of Social Practices, situations defined by human interactions within a sociocultural context (Geertz, 1973; Wertsch, 1985; Coffee, 2007), manifest within the art world as Socially Engaged Art. It encompasses any form of art that engages individuals and communities in discussion, collaboration, or interaction with one another (Tate Modern, n.d.). Eventually, contemporary art is seen as a voice for people who are usually ignored (Johnstone, 2008), and the research was run expecting this to be highly relevant to South Africa, which has been dealing with social, cultural, and political challenges for a long time. Within the highly diverse social texture, each community, especially if located far from the urban centres, is still fighting to value its own culture and traditions. Nowadays, cultural organisations that have contributed to South African historical narratives of exclusion are seen as potential places for healing and resilience-building (Blankenberg, 2024).

3 Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach that involves an interpretive and naturalistic perspective on the subject matter (Bryman, 2012). Adopting a qualitative approach is a choice driven by embracing multiple interpretations and perspectives from many people, emphasising the broad spectrum of meaning-making (Denzin et al., 1994; Jones, 1995). This section describes the research's exploratory and empirical phases and how the data collected have been analysed.

3.1 Exploratory Phase

The complexity of the South Africa context required an initial exploratory phase to gain an overview of what is going on rather than to forecast the links that will be discovered; nonetheless, it is structured in such a way that it provides the most accurate data possible for a specific set of study objectives (Daniel Katz, 1953; Swaraj, 2010).

The exploratory phase of the research provides a deeper understanding of Social Practices and how they have been implemented in the art world to foster the impact of contemporary art and to facilitate its learning and understanding process. I started analysing articles and studies on the topic of contemporary art and its barriers to access, Social Practices, and Social Practices within contemporary art; later, I started to investigate literature about the South African context, privileging South African literature to explore the South African contemporary art scene, cultural organisation management and curatorial practices. I also analysed some cases, such as the Decolonial Thinking of Charles Esche and Ruagrupa in Document Fifteen, working towards a better understanding of the potential of Social Practices in light of what South Africa needs; indeed, qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials, to give proof of evidence and hoping always to get a better fix on the subject matter at hand (Denzin et al., 1994).

The exploratory phase continues in parallel to the analysis of the theoretical framework with the analysis of the Congress entitled Reimagining Heritage, Archives and Museums: Today/Tomorrow, organised by the French Institute of South Africa and the Embassy of France, in February 2024 in Cape Town. Indeed, the Embassy of France has

supported South Africa since they signed a memorandum of understanding in 2016. The agreement aims to develop South African creative ecosystems by valuing cultural diversity and exchange between South Africa, France, and the rest of the African continent's arts and creative industries (French Institute of South Africa, n.d.).

In addition, I conducted Informal Conversations with experts in the field of study, which helped me gain insights into the subject from multiple perspectives (Swaraj, 2010). I had an informal conversation with the director of the Van Abbemuseum of Eindhoven, Charles Esche, cited as one of the best practitioners in Claire Bishop's *Radical Museology* (2013), who helped me define my approach to the research. Particularly, Esche (2024) emphasised the varying definitions of Social Practices across different areas of the world. This led me to explore what Social Practices mean in South Africa and how to foster them in their authentic forms without imposing foreign models. Consequently, I tried to understand how South Africans conceive Social Practices and how to foster them in their original form without trying to import structures that may not belong to their system of meanings. In addition, to have a greater awareness of the South African context, I engaged in an informal dialogue with a South African architect who lectures at the Department of Architecture at the University of Pretoria. He offered me the perspective of someone not directly involved in the contemporary art environment, giving me an in-depth knowledge of the environment and advising me on the stance to adopt in my research.

3.2 Empirical Phase

During the empirical phase of the research, I collect data through 13 semi-structured interviews (approximately 50-60 minutes) with people originally from South Africa. There is an exception of one interviewee who is from Italy but has been living in South Africa for ten years, considering she could give meaningful insights into my research. The people interviewed are listed in Table 1; they are creative workers, mostly curators, involved in different kinds of creative environments (museums, galleries, artist management, universities); consequently, the research analyses Social Practices within contemporary art, merging and comparing different angles. Table 1 provides information about the city they operate in, age indications (younger than 35, between 35 and 50, or older than 50 years old)

and an overall description of their creative practice. In Appendix A, it is provided the same table with more detailed descriptions.

Resp.	City they operate in	(≈) Age	Description
1	Johannesburg	35-50	She is an art historian, curator, and designer. Currently she is Director of an art gallery located in Johannesburg and New York, exploring interdisciplinary between art, literature and media.
2	Pretoria	> 50	He is an artist manager, legal advisor, curator, and photographer. He is the artist manager of one of the most renowned South Africans photographer.
3	Johannesburg	> 50	She is specialised in the fashion industry, as maker, lecturer, curator, writer. She founded the African Fashion Research Institute.
4	Pretoria	< 35	She is a creative practitioner working with installation, curatorship, sales and management. Currently conducting research into the intersection of art and digital.
5	Johannesburg	< 35	She is an artist and curator. Currently working at Johannesburg Contemporary Art Foundation.
6	Eastern Cape (for 11 years). She is originally from Italy.	35-50	She is an architect and associate professor at the School of Architecture at Nelson Mandela University. Researcher at the Coastal and Marine Institute of Finance and she an architect.

7	Johannesburg	35-50	She is a visual artist, researcher, consultant, visual arts lecturer at the University of Johannesburg. Currently, she is doing her doctorate on systems thinking to go to the creative economy of the City of Johannesburg. She run for six years a creative hub that closed down during COVID.
8	Eastern Cape	35-50	She has a background in design from Stellenbosch University and has worked in the craft industry. She also has experience in film and curatorial practices. She currently manages a community project in the Eastern Cape.
9	Cape Town	> 50	He is currently retired, before was director of collections and digitalization at the Museums of South Africa. Before he was a curator of the Seacoast Slave Lodge Museum.
10	Johannesburg	< 35	He is currently senior manager for Heritage Asset and Preservation associated within a company. Before he used to look after the university gallery and collection. And he had been Head of Heritage Research at Robben Island.
11	Easter Cape	35 - 50	He is an artist, who worked in Academia, both in the private and the public sector. He run a small commercial gallery and then he explored curatorial practices. He is currently living in Gqeberha in the Eastern Cape, where he is running a project focused on developing a community.
12	Johannesburg	35 - 50	She studied art history and sociology. She has been working in different kinds of project spaces, and art studio hubs. She has worked in a contemporary museum and now working independently, teaching and developing curatorial projects and research projects.

13	Pretoria	35 - 50	She has a Masters in Fine Art at the University of Witwatersrand. She is curator of Education Mediation at the Javette Arts Center at the University of Pretoria. She is also the founder of a non-profit company responsible for community education.
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The interview draft is divided into four sections (Appendix B):

1. The first is related to Social Practices and their relevance to the participants' practices. Before I gave the interviewees the definition of Social Practices framed in the literature review, I asked them to define Social Practices according to their ideas and practices. Afterwards, it was clarified that Social Practices within contemporary art have been defined as any form of art that engages individuals and communities in discussion, collaboration, or interaction with one another. In other words, Social Practices comprehend activities developed within an education program or outreach, but they can also be part of art artworks themselves in the case of participatory art.
2. The second section investigates the role contemporary art plays in South Africa. It aims to understand the state of engagement of contemporary art and how it is distributed across countries, exploring the challenges people may face in interacting with contemporary art, especially from an emotional point of view. It also considers how the historical and socio-political factors in South Africa influence contemporary art practice from both creative and audience perspectives.
3. The third section analyses the capacity to implement Social Practices, asking for examples of South African or international projects to see if they are considered replicable or limitedly site-specific. It also investigates the main challenges faced in implementing Social Practices and how projects can be tailored, for instance, in terms of interdisciplinary and diversity, to address those obstacles.

4. The last section explores the legacy and impact of Social Practices in South Africa. It includes how to measure the success of Social Practices in enhancing the understanding of contemporary art in the country and which is the future potential for fostering a relational way of encountering contemporary art.

3.2.1 Coding and Analyses

The data collected through the interviews have been analysed by coding the transcripts with ATLAS.ti, a systematic process of categorising meanings (Kvale, 1996). The Codebook is included in Appendix C. The codes were developed according to the topics in the theoretical framework and further developed in the interview drafts (Appendix C). In addition, textual and visual evidence from websites and social media was used to analyse the interviews and fully understand the topics and examples mentioned by the interviewees (Drake, 2003). For instance, I refer to the text and the images of *The Spirit of Water*³ by the Italian Magda Minguzzi (2022), the practice of cultural reappropriation done by the Khoisan people living in the Eastern Cape. It exemplifies Social Practice relevant to the context and the communities. This work has been instrumental in comprehending the approach to working with communities from rural areas, particularly sitting in a foreign position, as Magda does.

3.3 Limitations and Boundaries of the Research

The data collected through qualitative research are derived from social interactions, which are consequently constructed or interpreted. There are no raw and uncontaminated human thoughts and actions, and the relevance of data is determined by its alignment with other supporting facts (Freeman, 2007).

The research adopted has not been fixed but changed according to people's reactions and the knowledge acquired. Researching South Africa and relating to South Africans without having ever been there has been a tricky position. To sustain and give legitimacy to my position as a researcher, I asked participants their thoughts about how the research has been

³ The Spirit of Water Documentary: <https://vimeo.com/534102794>

run and the approach used during the interviews. Except for one person who warned me about the Eurocentric lens that I cannot avoid as a European, the other interviewees have seen it as a plus because I am not affected by the social, political, and historical context. To use Esche's words (2017), I adopted a zombie modality: *"You simply have to choose willfully to ignore what you know that you know"* (Esche, 2017, p. 2).

4 Findings and Discussion

This study, *Ubuntu – “I Am Because We Are”* aims to understand contemporary art's functions in South Africa, considering its historical background. According to the country's needs, it investigates how to foster Social Practices as a bridge for people to access contemporary art and engage with it. The following section presents and discusses the collected data according to the main themes raised within the interviews.

- It analyses South Africa's overarching context, highlighting how history is very much present in people's lives and still influences how they live in society.
- It discusses the different opinions about contemporary art's role in South Africa and its societal potential. The research further dives into critical views about the elitist dimension of commercial galleries, impacting artistic practices and audience engagement. Despite the inequity of contemporary art in South Africa, it is discussed that cultural organisations have attempted to break the barriers to access.
- The findings delve into the core of Social Practices, analysing whether there is a potential for nurturing relational ways of encountering art. It emerges that there is a need to shift the centre of contemporary art and initiate a directional change towards communities to enhance their exposure to contemporary art and uplift their life standards. This section also discusses which approach to adopt while entering a community. Eventually, regarding the replicability of Social Practices, South Africa needs to look at the rest of the world or is the rest of the world that South Africa should inspire.
- The challenges to implementing Social Practices are listed in the following categories: geographical limitations, cultural diversity, mobilisation of resources, and evaluation process.

4.1 Uniqueness of the South African Context

It is essential to provide a brief overview of the information obtained about the structure of South African society and its geographical composition across the country. These

considerations, expressed by all interviewees, form a common ground on which the rest of the discussion is based, and they are essential for understanding the rest of the evidence and further discussion.

As expected, the historical and socio-political context hugely influence South Africans' way of living and thinking: *"Being from South Africa, being a generation that went through Apartheid. We are conscious of our whiteness, our blackness, our wealth, our privilege, and our poverty daily. Moreover, it is not a theoretical thing for South Africans. Facing white privilege facing racism is a daily reality. Moreover, that is because Apartheid is 30 years old, and I think South Africa has a huge amount to teach the world about living through such a dramatic change in society. Thus, as a person, as a practitioner, being white influences everything I do"* (Respondent 7). South Africans are still fighting some of the battles faced during Apartheid to gain ownership over their narrative as a country.

Noticeably, the collective trauma experienced by South Africans has diversely influenced mentalities among its population. Certain individuals exhibit a lack of sensitivity and detachment, displaying less concern for their surroundings. In contrast, others appear to be emotionally affected and have a strong desire to make a meaningful contribution. This discrepancy reveals an absence of balance in emotional reactions within society, especially in interacting with contemporary art touching socially relevant subjects: *"We live in a society that is very desensitised to severe issues such as murder, rape and crime because there are areas where it is very highly prevalent. As a result, when you are finding works that are created that evoke a sense of trauma, there is a sense of people not understanding what it is"* (Respondent 10).

After considering history's impact on South African society, it is evident that the geographical aspect is the most relevant. South Africa is geographically problematic due to its isolated location; additionally, the country's significant activities are concentrated in two cities, Cape Town and Johannesburg, which are 15 hours' drive or 2 hours' flight apart. This gives an idea of how significant the distances are. The geographical dislocation is reflected in the development of different areas and societies: *"South Africa is a Third World and a First World country in one"* (Respondent 10). This perfectly describes the contradictory South African landscape that presents a considerable divergence between modernised urban spaces and townships or rural areas. The hierarchies that still play a role in South Africa are not only related to race, as could be expected but they are also connected with *"proximity to certain*

things" (Respondent 12), whether a community lives on the land or the coast. Even if they are not totalising, they are relevant; for instance, being in one of three provinces corresponds to more visibility than peripheral areas. Rural areas throughout the country are inhabited by various communities, who often lack access to the same resources as people in urban areas due to economic constraints, educational limitations, and physical accessibility obstacles. Additionally, two respondents have expressed that, in and outside the cities, there are specific areas with a high level of crime, and people do not feel safe going there: "*South Africa is still economically very divided, with a high crime rate*" (Respondent 3).

4.2 Contemporary Art Role in South Africa

Overall, the research shows that the contemporary art world mirrors the unequal geographical and cultural development among different areas of South Africa. Commercial galleries and renowned cultural institutions populate modernised urban spaces, while people in townships or rural areas are considerably underexposed to contemporary art. Regarding the role played by contemporary art within society, there are two main categories of opinions: creative practitioners who believe it plays a highly relevant role and a few who are very critical about it. This section includes an analysis of both points of view to examine how contemporary art could develop engagement through Social Practices in South Africa.

Some recognise the importance of contemporary art within the South African historical and socio-political context, conceiving it as a medium of cross-cultural communication. Since South Africa is characterised by a highly diverse social texture, where each community has a different way of expressing itself, it constitutes "*a bridge between different cultures*" (Respondent 1), a way to cross boundaries and "*to break down barriers in getting people to understand one another*" (Respondent 9). Contemporary art is considered fundamental for people to express themselves with a creative medium collecting local histories and narratives. Furthermore, contemporary art is depicted by a significant number of respondents as a space for people to talk about the *everyday*, as proof of the fact that contemporary art is rooted in the ordinary (Johnstone, 2008).

In discussing the impact of contemporary art on shaping the concept of *Africanness* (Peffer, 2009; Van Haute, 2011), a respondent highlighted that contemporary art not only

communicates South Africans' perspectives on their own country but also influences how the rest of the world perceives South Africa. Contemporary art creates awareness about diversity and fosters social cohesion, playing a significant role in nation-building and giving *“an appreciation of what it is that makes up South Africans”* (Respondent 9). The literature highlights that contemporary artists are keen to address social, political, and economic issues by raising different perspectives (Whitham & Pooke, 2010). A significant number of respondents highlight that contemporary artists actively contribute to shifting the South African historical narrative made of injustices and heavy political messages. Contemporary art has played a *“healing role”* (Respondent 9) since the Apartheid era, particularly music has always been a medium of resistance to challenge the system and create a sense of hope; as Fanon (1963) emphasises, African culture has always been highly performative in its artistic and traditional practices: *“It has been a form of challenge and on top of that, it is also very much been a thing of hope. You do not need to know much about music to get involved with music. Anyone can start singing. Anyone can start playing an instrument. You can pick up an old drum and start banging it, and all of a sudden, you are achieving something. You are engaging with people”* (Respondent 4). South African culture is highly performative and multi-sensorial; for instance, for *The Spirit of Water*, the community considers performance art as the medium for the collective act of expression. It constitutes the *“opportunity for encounter and exchange between the Indigenous Khoisan culture and the public in which each person was required to actively participate in creating a sense of cohesion around the theme and the place”* (Minguzzi, 2021, p. 49). Figure 2 depicts the site visit at Cape Recife with the KhoiSan Chiefs, their community members, staff and students of Nelson Mandela University. The Chiefs are tracing in the sand the positions of the elements to be built for the performance rituals (Minguzzi, 2017, p. 45).



Fig. 2 The Spirit of Water by Magda Minguzzi, 2017

In a context such as South Africa, where education has not been granted to everyone, contemporary art and cultural venues play a crucial educational role in sharing histories and in terms of apprenticeship within the art field. For instance, conceptual art is also conceived as a platform for emerging and mid-career artists to be able to express themselves. Consequently, the contemporary art world contributes to job creation since many creatives cannot afford to study art. Still, they were able to learn about art making and start their artistic production. Despite this potentiality of the contemporary art world to become a professional job for people, it is pointed out by a few interviewees that most artists struggle with experimenting with new things because finding materials is hugely difficult, and there is no support after school.

Considering what Bishop (2004; Did, 2013) affirms about the importance of evaluating the quality of the engagement created by contemporary art and relational aesthetics (Bourriaud, 2002), some people already involved in community projects in both urbanised and unurbanised areas, object that contemporary art plays a very small role. It also diminished after the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused a drastic decrease in the amount of art spaces.

The viewpoint is that contemporary art does not directly influence society; rather, artists are often detached and isolated, producing works that may be potentially historically and academically impactful only in the long term. Their artworks depict society, offering a highly intimate perspective on living in a specific societal setting. In the future, when the essence of art belonging to a certain time is unified, people will be able to examine artworks to gain a narrative insight into that era, which cannot be read from historical books (Respondent 7). Moreover, regarding contemporary art's content and mediums (Bailey & Desai, 2005; Villeneuve & Erickson, 2008), the gathered data confirm that people find it challenging to engage with due to the complexity of its conceptual forms whose meanings risk getting lost or misunderstood. Indeed, it often goes "*out of the normal flow of things*" (Respondent 3); in other words, it is something unfamiliar and limited to a niche of people.

4.2.1 Equity of Contemporary Art

The terms equity and equality are often used similarly, but this consciously differentiates them according to the following distinction: Equality corresponds to a situation in which each individual or community dispose of the same resources or opportunities. On the other hand, Equity comprehends that individuals stand in different access positions, so it allocates resources and opportunities equally (Juda, 2022).

South African contemporary art world is plagued by a remarkable inequity exacerbated by hierarchies, which determine the disposition of resources and opportunities according to race, geographical position, and proximity to certain things (Respondent 12). Contemporary art is mainly present in commercial galleries in affluent areas, appealing to a niche exclusive audience. At the same time, it is almost absent in townships where most South Africans live in poor conditions. Consequently, attracting different audiences highly depends on how contemporary art spaces are physically accessible to them.

South Africa's contemporary art world is an emblematic example of Esche's (2017) notion of serving only 1% of the population, prioritising commercial activities rather than serving as platforms for addressing social, ethical, and aesthetic contemporary issues. The elitist game played by commercial activities within the contemporary art world, whether consciously or not, impacts both the audience engaged and the artistic practices: "*Artists are struggling to generate an income, and they are being plagued with this highly exclusive game trying to sell their art at ridiculous prices*" (Respondent 7). According to Respondent 2, who

has been an artist manager for 25 years, people tend to be indoctrinated on what kind of art they should like and not like. For this reason, artists are keen to realise works that may generate income, which often does not correspond to dealing with socially relevant subjects. It also explains why the *“vast majority of South Africans have no interest, idea, or income even to consider it”* (Respondent 7) if they do not mirror themselves in the artworks they are seeing. Contemporary art often seems detached from reality, an incurring risk highlighted by Bishop (2004) in the theoretical framework. It is not a case that gallery ownership is predominantly white, and the venues are used to exhibit mainly visual arts, which are distant from the traditional African cultural narrative. Moreover, the ownership is mirrored in the engaged audience, which, as stated by Respondent 8, is limited to *“white middle-class people, slightly older people who have time and students”*. In addition, the peak of this elitist approach seems to be reached during the three main art fairs, where all the galleries play their commercial games: the International Cape Town Art Fair, the International Johannesburg Art Fair, and the Latitudes Art Fair.

It is also noteworthy to consider the other side of the coin, diving into the perspective of a commercial gallery representative in the selected sample. Internally, audience engagement is considered positive, attracting many young people who visit galleries to see and learn about the art. *“The arts are in a way elitist because you are promoting a product that people do not need...there are initiatives to bring it to communities that are outside of the gallery space”* (Respondent 1). The artwork sold in art galleries is not essential for sustaining the buyer’s living, which may be why artists struggle to generate income. However, considering the Theory of Social Practices, this study aims to highlight that contemporary art delivered and developed through Social Practices has the potential to impact society and support people’s lives.

4.2.2 Initiatives to Foster Engagement and Break Barriers

Concerning the commercial gallery, walkabouts seem to be a popular method of engaging new audiences, especially the younger generation: *“We are seeing more younger people getting more involved and getting more engaged in sort of more contemporary open exhibit galleries and stuff away from the academics and away from the big institutions”* (Respondent 4).

Looking at other venues, some institutions are trying to cross boundaries and improve their overall level of engagement with the general public, even at a very slow and steady pace. In addition, universities and schools have made great progress in fostering exchange among different cultures and promoting an understanding of what is happening in the country. Even if many contemporary art galleries do talks and walkabouts, gallery spaces do not seem to be adapted to implement Social Practices. Respondent 1, the manager of an art gallery in Johannesburg, also declares that Social Practices are something for off-beat spaces, such as project spaces or organisations aiming to educate. She also declares that even if the gallery space guarantees access to everyone, people do not always feel comfortable there to engage in workshops. The White Cube is considered intimidating for the average person unless they seek "*a sense of upward mobility or class*" (Respondent 12). Consequently, Social Practices are unlikely to be developed within commercial galleries, which are representative of this elitist niche.

Museums seem to be perceived as irrelevant because they serve only 1% of the population, so they cannot respond to the broader issue of fostering accessibility, and they do not seem to be the spaces to adapt to realise Social Practices. However, there is no complete agreement on museums' functions because someone said they should be the places to look at because of their educational feature and sense of "*public responsibility*" (Respondent 11). These results perfectly align with Esche's (2017) reflections, even if developed in a European context, about institutions' "*social responsibility*", which is hurdled by focusing on commercial activities and sticking to traditional approaches. From a museum's perspective, "*it has taken a long time for museums to really understand the importance of working closely with community opinion and community voices*" (Respondent 9). For instance, Respondent 8 reveals that museums rarely host artists from the township to help them develop their artistic practices, but the financial resources are often insufficient to realise it. Within museums, also through curatorial work, it is possible to foster and improve engagement. It is essential, but only a few people in South Africa study to become curators. So often, from a curatorial point of view, a "*constant critiquing*" approach is missing and "*in most cases, there is not the element of social practice or engaging or doing any form of educational programs at all*" (Respondent 10).

In response to three main art fairs, Contra Fair⁴ is a Social Practice initiative that challenges the notion of the elite within the contemporary art world. Contra Fair consists of opening creative hubs in the inner City of Johannesburg, which is considered “*a very challenging location, it's dangerous, it's dirty*” (Respondent 7). There are buildings there that seem abandoned; in this way, people can see that creatives are doing amazing things there. The aim is to shift the mechanism of the art world prioritising the artists first, rather than the market, trying to make the art ecosystem sustainable by giving more space to artists staying in the inner city of Johannesburg, focusing on programming and market development (Hallatt, 2024; Between 10and5 Magazine, 2004).

4.3 Social Practices Definition

This section analyses the definition of Social Practices that unanimously emerged from the data collected. Social Practices are defined as a way of engaging with people in a particular context, including forms of exchange and dialogues to reach a common goal together. This definition is based on thoughts and considerations expressed first-hand by all the research participants. Then, delving more in-depth with each interviewee, they added details and examples specific to their work context and practices.

According to the data, Social Practices are often related to “*everyday practices that are formed from habits, and what people find meaningful in the context of the group they find themselves in*” (Respondent 2). Indeed, they reflect “*the written and unwritten rules of engaging with and relating to each other as a society and as individuals as well*” (Respondent 10). It is related to the way South Africans perform their living and express their cultural identities and spirituality: “*How we engage with society as a concept, as our reality and our set of intersecting identity politics. There is a kind of question of how I belong in there and the things that identify or make us feel like we belong*” (Respondent 12).

From the data, it arises that the concept of Social Practices involves “*negotiation and renegotiation of meaning*”, creating new forms of knowledge through interactions, as introduced in the theoretical framework (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 51; Coffee, 2007). As a result of the research, constant consultation within Social Practices creates a safe space

⁴ ContraFair Website: <https://www.contrafair.joburg/>

where everyone's opinions matter. This concept is highly related to the Marxist "*social interstice*", a mean-making space beyond the communicational spaces imposed on people by the system (Bourriaud, 2002). In other words, Social Practices create dialogues and conversations that activate a space, building the dimension of the social interstice. This approach puts individuals in a more conscious position than merely encountering something in a space and moving on without considering its impact. While commercial galleries tend to indoctrinate people into what they should like or dislike, ideally, curatorial practices should allow people to get to their own narrative without being guided too much: "*You want it to be broader, for people to see themselves in different ways without being too fixed, which is what curation sometimes does*" (Respondent 5).

4.3.1 Fertile Soil to Cultivate Social Practices in South Africa

The idea of togetherness is rooted in the traditional concept of Ubuntu, discussed concerning Ruangrupa's Documents fifteen in the theoretical framework (Kaiza, 2022; Kent, 2022; Brown et al., 2022). Within the research, Ubuntu is explained by Respondent 8 with the idea, "*I cannot succeed alone if I am experiencing any level of success. I have to share it. I have to grow others. I have to spread that success*". As mentioned by Respondent 8, the community dimension is more empowered than the individual one: a woman hardly has an independent voice, while a group of women can speak up against anything threatening their survival. Therefore, Social Practices are highly relevant within the South African context because they challenge the isolation marginalised communities experience due to economic and geographical reasons.

Despite South African history generating a unique and peculiar sense of togetherness, nowadays, the society seems also affected by a high level of uncertainty and relevant social issues to deal with, such as gender-based violence, racism, corruption, and youth unemployment rates. This affects society and how people feel towards the country: "*There is not this sense of belonging or fighting for a specific cause, so during the Apartheid, there was the same issue with belonging and being heard, but people and artists stood together against politics. They had a common cause to fight against. Nowadays, there is not a clear cause that we are all fighting against*" (Respondent 7).

This feeling seems to prevent people from action and create a sort of paralysis among South Africans: "*There's a lot of stuff that we want to tackle in South Africa, but people are nervous*

about tackling it. People do not want to talk about stuff, and they do not want to always tackle things right in the face and approach them too directly. It gets a bit much. And yeah, I think that does scare a lot of people, to be honest. And that does hold back musicians, performers, visual artists, curators, and academics. These are small things that very much influence how and what we approach” (Respondent 4).

There is a need for a change within the system to foster Social Practices aiming to revive the sense of unity and belonging which drove South Africans during Apartheid. Within a highly divided society, as Mosely (2007) emphasises the relevance of contemporary art in building collective memory, the data highlights the educational role played by Social Practices within art, as they constitute a medium of reminding history and documentation of any social issue, bringing people together and creating a sense of unity.

Upon analysing the data, interviewees describe a generational conflict, even though within the research this is not evidenced by inconsistencies among answers from individuals of different age groups; therefore, among 13 interviewees, only one person has a remarkably pessimistic opinion of the potential of Social Practices and the role played by contemporary art (mainly referring to the art galleries world), as she explains: *“It's the nature of artists to connect and engage with their society. But contemporary art in my view, has become quite removed from that reality. Contemporary art is seen in very wealthy galleries and in exclusive art fairs; it's not seen as much on the streets of the township and the poverty that the majority of South Africans face. And so to me personally, contemporary art has lost its place”* (Respondent 7).

According to the responses, there is an older generation holding back and a very optimistic younger generation that is increasingly receptive to everything new and less resistant to unconventional ideas. A very young interviewee uses hopeful and positive words: *“Through one, you learn about another, and it motivates others to try and create their own projects instead of waiting for things to happen. So, I think it is really motivating people to create their own opportunities and, again, to create the world that we want to see and want to live in...I think it creates a system; eventually, this will be the norm”* (Respondent 5). Analysing the potential for fostering Social Practices, this generational shift is highly relevant because it seems that the younger generation is taking over in defining the country's direction. It is primarily very much focused on human rights and political identities. It has started this action of reclaiming spaces and making spaces safer for certain people to exist in:

"How we reclaim our cities and make our cities work for us, instead of these corporations that come in and buy many spaces, making things more expensive" (Respondent 5).

Social Practices are characterised by a *"transformational agency"* (Respondent 11), which means they are potentially impactful: *"Something that also hopefully has this ability to transform, even if it is in a very small and narrow way, initially, planting a seed, for example, that it would grow into more connectivity and through that connectivity more capacity as well"* (Respondent 11). For instance, a few participants considered participatory art a significant communication tool during Apartheid, when protest was a big deal. On this account, Respondent 13 made an insightful comparison between Brazil and South Africa, highlighting the student protests in both countries. In South Africa, there was the Feesmustfall movement, which took place between 2015 and 2016 and turned into a movement for decolonisation (Booyesen, 2016). Even if protests may not be artistic, the interviewee recognises Social Practices in *"how students responded, in a way that speaks to these social, political, ways of doing"* (Respondent 13). Protests also play a crucial informative and educational role, as Respondent 13 stated: *"One could argue that protests are a means of educational practice"* (Respondent 13). Additionally, Respondent 2 also mentioned the educational role played by the Feesmustfall movement (Booyesen, 2016), drawing similarities with the Soweto uprising in 1976⁵ through Peter Magubane's pictures (Ndlovu, 2007). Indeed, Social Practices are *"where education can take form. So, it is not a subjective thing where somebody puts their opinion on one good artist in a group of people. It is a person looking at art, not being educated, taking something out of it, and being inspired"* (Respondent 2).

4.3.2 Space Reactivation and Communities Engagement

Decolonisation *"undermines some of the deep-rooted assumptions about the foundations of modernity when it comes to development, transgression and advancement"* (Esche, 2017, p. 8). Social Practices are considered part of the process of de-elitism of art within a broader decolonisation action that has accelerated in recent years. South Africans were used to underestimating their own country: *"The idea was that anything within the*

⁵ At the beginning of the South African Union, even if most South Africans did not speak Dutch and English, those were declared official languages to accomplish the white minority. In 1976, the imposition of Afrikaans and English as languages of education on an even level in selected schools led to the Soweto uprising of 16 June 1976 (Ndlovu, 2007).

colonial project, anything that came from outside, was better than the others" (Respondent 3). This narrative is shifting, but the impact appears to be limited.

Reactivating spaces is *"really about decolonising the language around the elitism of art, the elitism of art spaces and creating art spaces where you would have never thought they would exist"* (Respondent 5). Social Practices may initiate a bottom-up decision-making process towards increasing community control, embracing creativity within spaces usually not used for artistic practices: *"It is something that needs to come in from schools. It is something that needs to come in from home, and it is something that needs to happen in the community itself, not just as this vague distance thing away in the city that rural people do not have access to, that rural people cannot get to"* (Respondent 4).

Furthermore, in South Africa, some spaces that saw atrocities during the colonisation period and Apartheid have nowadays been reclaimed to build new memories: *"You bring joy into these new spaces as a way of reactivating them beyond what they were intended to do"* (Respondent 5). A crucial example mentioned is Constitution Hill of Johannesburg⁶, which used to be a prison, but now it represents where justice takes place. It has an art collection and is depicted as a space where people enter and feel comfortable engaging with art: *"I think that creates transparency, and it really creates a sense of community; it makes people feel good. What happens in that space has not only an effect on them, but they also have a role to play in what decisions are made there"* (Respondent 5). Another significant example of reactivating spaces is The Black Power Station⁷, a creative hub based in Makanda, which represents another space where Social Practices are happening in South Africa. It is located in an old power station that became a space for people to engage through art and express themselves (Figure 2).

⁶ Constitution Hill Website: <https://www.constitutionhill.org.za/home>

⁷ Black Power Station Website: <https://www.theblackpowerstation.site/>



Fig. 3 The Black Power Station, 2022

It does not matter which space it is but how it is activated. Activating the space is connected to its capability of welcoming people, depending on their needs. The idea of reactivating spaces is very much connected with shifting the centre of contemporary art: most respondents agree that the traditional practice of individuals physically going to galleries or museums to view art should be reversed. In other words, some areas mostly need art to foster their development and both cultural organisations of any kind and artists themselves should actively go towards these people.

Social Practices are a highly relevant instrument for ensuring that society's diversity is reflected and that different communities feel comfortable entering the space: *"I have heard such incredible things about how wonderful it is. So, if contemporary arts social practice wants to have a real impact on people, it needs to go through people, not expect people to come to it"* (Respondent 8).

The idea behind going to the people is to incorporate art practices into their everyday lives and shift the diffused perception, particularly regarding contemporary art, of *"this is not for me"*, favouring a new way of encountering art. Even going to the people presents some

limitations because engagement needs consistency. If the initiative is driven by an organisation with an actual space, people will eventually want to enter it. For instance, Magda Minguzzi's *"The Spirit of Water"* represents practices of cultural reappropriation done by the Khoisan people living in the Eastern Cape to value who they are. Their culture *"has been mistreated and repressed for a long time, like many other archaic cultures of hunter-gatherers which have been replaced by the prevailing agricultural sedentary cultures"* (Minguzzi, 2021, p.11).

4.3.3 Learning rather than Teaching

Initiatives in townships often try to impose values not necessarily aligned with the communities. Existing Social Practices eventually do not benefit the community they work with and are only used for commercial or other reasons. Others try to control people's behaviours according to expected results, forcing outcomes and assuming they receive something from the community instead of giving them something.

There is clear evidence that Social Practices should be developed by avoiding a top-down approach and following a democratic model, which requires humility and dialogue. Community involvement requires time, so deeply understanding the community and building trust cannot happen instantly. Respondent 8 mentions the shortness of the average attention span and the temporariness of most of the projects, which need some activation to make people think about their longevity. On the other hand, Respondent 3, who works in the fashion industry, considers it not necessarily a good choice to involve the community in the decision-making process, as it can be counterproductive. Still, she considers it fundamental to have the intention of benefiting the community since the beginning. A question arises: Is it ethically correct and even possible to benefit the community without asking them?

Within the South African context, Social Practice needs to be conceived by the practitioners not as a way of teaching but as a way of learning, *"having a deep connection with the community and the people you are attempting to learn from"* (Respondent 7). For a social practice to be relevant and significant to the community you are engaging with, it needs to speak to the context and allow people to engage their current needs; indeed, co-creation comes when people feel comfortable enough to be critical and express their opinions. Co-creation means the agents *"are willing to deform and distort and operate in their terms"* (Respondent 11); in other words, the community is engaged when its members are actively

part of the practice.

In South Africa, as in the rest of the world, there is a growing number of collaborations within different artistic practices, such as music and visual arts, especially among the younger generation. The lines between different disciplines are getting blurring. There is an overall agreement on how interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary work is contextual to Social Practices to ensure a social impact that affects a broad range of the population: "*I really think that architects, engineers and doctors really need to come to the table to consider how creative or contemporary art can blend into these spaces that are more clinical, that are very bureaucratic the way that they are structured, and it does not have space for people to come in to make certain decisions, to shift things, in a way that it does have a direct impact on people immediately*" (Respondent 5).

Practitioners from different fields have different capabilities, which can foster the working and brainstorming process, allowing them to approach reality from different angles and understand its complexity. Interdisciplinary work, such as partnerships with businesses or other non-creative organisations, also enlarges the level of exposure of creatives and increases their legitimacy within everyday life practices. Furthermore, interdisciplinarity is a way of "*breaking art away from being a niche*" (Respondent 11). Through collaborations, art obtains legitimacy not only to serve an elite group of people but also to be spread within different communities. Respondent 12 affirms that South Africans are keen to be separatist due to the Apartheid legacy and separate development. However, she recognised the potential and space to foster collaborations as a new approach to doing things. Collaborations provide different access points for different people with different needs, and they can shift some social dynamics; for instance, Respondent 7 exemplifies a woman who is 45 and has two jobs who needs to find a way to access the art world.

4.3.4 Challenges to Implement Social Practices

The data analysis evidences that many challenges prevent cultural institutions, universities, and individual practitioners from implementing Social Practices. These challenges are categorised as geographical limitations, cultural diversity, mobilisations of resources and evaluation process.

- Geographical Limitations

There is an evident geographical limitation considering the position, the size and the distribution of South Africa. The position is described as a limit to the exposure to international discourse, which is very much based on a Westernised perspective and does not listen to the South African scene. The distance between places makes it hard to access even things happening in the rest of the country: *"The codes of society are written through your geography"* (Respondent 12). The flip side of this isolation is creating something unique and rooted in the community, considering that culture is also highly performative (Fanon, 1963; Pather & Boulle, 2019)

- Cultural Diversity

South African cultural diversity, which has been mentioned in the theoretical framework, represents an obstacle to the nation-building process (Peffer, 2009; Van Haute, 2011) and occasionally creates *"friction between different cultural groups"* (Respondent 4). South Africa has 11 official languages, and according to all the interviewees, multilingualism is one of the most relevant and complex topics when discussing access and engagement. Its importance is often underestimated to the extent that when artists use local languages in their practices, it is seen as a radical choice. Developing Social Practices results in essential, even if hardly challenging, to put everyone in a condition to understand.

According to the data collected, to address those cultural challenges, working in a highly diverse team increases the probability of reflecting the community the team is working with and facilitates building a sense of trust and connection with the community. The generational conflict evidenced in the previous section is characterised by a diffused holding back, feeling nurtured among the population by the fear and hesitation to tackle certain things: *"That is a*

challenge that we need to take up instead of always trying to do what is easy" (Respondent 5). There is evidence that the high uncertainty in everyday life is an obstacle to experimental approaches, such as implementing Social Practices: *"This is not a world that respects or appreciates difference, as much as it rings a bell to the idea that it does foster heterogeneity, it does not appreciate it very much, to be honest"* (Respondent 11).

Safety is a challenge when implementing Social Practices. A few respondents said that not everyone feels comfortable entering every community. Another one highlighted cultural differences among South Africans to consider when entering a community: *"As a Caucasian curator, I cannot walk into the middle of a Township and start presenting a course to the local kids there. It is a safety issue. They are not going to trust me. They are not going to listen to what I have to say. I do not speak their local language"* (Respondent 4).

- **Mobilisation of Resources**

Mobilisation of resources is highly challenging and dependent on geographical positions and wealth, discriminating who has access and who does not. For example, urban residents highlight the potential of social media in fostering access, as it enables the creation of new communities and offers flexibility. Some projects in rural areas also benefit from social media, allowing self-authoring, *"seeing how these spaces are being cultivated or curated to suit their own needs"* (Respondent 3). However, it is contradictory because the project manager based in the Eastern Cape said that the most problematic resource to gain is data to navigate on the Internet. People living in historically segregated communities often lack resources. It does not mean nothing happens there, but it is not framed as in urban spaces. There have been significant budgetary cuts in museums; resources are often the first element needed to make a project happen. Despite the crucial role of curatorial and educational aspects of projects, it is also a struggle to obtain subsidies that allow people to make a living out of creative practices.

Being part of a university puts creative practitioners in a privileged position, as it implies having easier access to funding, even if it is still subject to ethical and financial supervision by the institution. This is not valid for every position; for instance, Respondent 8, who is lecturing at the university only part-time, does not have access to those financial sources. Other opportunities to apply for funding include the Goethe-Institut, the National

Arts Council, the Mzansi Golden Economy, and the A14 Finance Foundation. For instance, the Goethe-Institut was also part of the ACP-EU Culture Programme⁸ from 2019 to 2016; it was funded by the European Union and implemented by the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States. It aims to encourage entrepreneurship and cultural innovation, creating job opportunities for artists and cultural professionals, with the belief that creativity needs to be locally stimulated, and artists require local support on the ground, backed up by financial encouragement (ACP-EU, 2021). However, the amount available is usually insufficient for all the requests received. Funding also needs to cover transport and recognition of all the people involved in the project, which is very hard to reach. Eventually, only certain central areas have access to funding.

- Evaluation Process

One of the main obstacles to realising social practice results is the lack of standards to measure the impact produced. Indeed, Social Practices deviate from the traditional model, and there is no standard evaluation process to adopt. The research does not provide clear indicators of impact; the interviews agree that analysing people's engagement and feelings is impossible to put a monetary value on or measure strictly numerically, but it is more insightful to hear people's opinions and thoughts. There is agreement that the primary criteria to measure impact is not only the audience's dimension but also the continuity in the audience engagement. If people return to the cultural organisation, *"That means you have been successful in the sense that you have cultivated the audience, and you have people who want to come create with you"* (Respondent 10). Respondent 11 considers the network of people built around a particular practice as something to look at to understand the level of success it produced. It is also possible to look at the audience composition because it means you have enlarged the audience and brought together different communities.

Overall, an indicator of success would be verifying whether a kind of sensitivity developed within the community through Social Practices, such as if the community internalised some of the tools used in the process or shows interest in continuing to engage with art. For instance, looking at the project *"The Spirit of Water"* by Minguzzi, the impact is

⁸ Brochure: <https://www.acp-ue-culture.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Brochure-210x210-Mécanisme-régional-EN-final.pdf>

seen as something measurable in the long term, mainly when the community starts adopting the developed Social Practices within its traditions: *"So they started to be influenced but what we were doing together that is a huge success. They use that instrument, and they make it useful for them, so it is something that you have passed. That is a good way of impacting society, not just the art field"* (Minguzzi, 2024).

Another interviewee said something very similar: *"I think when people maybe with no formal education in the arts can talk about something they have seen or was something that moved them, or it becomes like an internalised reference, I think that is incredible...It is like that has become part of that person's map of the world where people begin to be able to relate"* (Respondent 8).

Lastly, the writing of critics and peer reviews of a project are considered relevant indicators to measure the impact of Social Practices. If no one writes about a project or a creative practice, it means it has not been archived, and eventually, it will not be remembered.

Keiskamma Project

A case study that emerged as a best practice with the research is the Keiskamma Project, which involves a community of 45 embroiderers and artists (Figure 3) based in a rural village in the Eastern Cape, which is known as one of the poorest areas of South Africa. The decision to define a best practice is due to the alignment between what the project manager declared and what other interviewees spontaneously said about it.



Fig. 4 Keiskamma Project, 2022

As the project manager said, Keiskamma is built on social cohesion and acceptance, fostered by a shared vision and goal: *"You have got to accept that people are different, but that can be a strength"* (Respondent 8). Respondent 7 describes the Keiskamma Project as a complete project, considering it has an economic impact because women are paid for their work, alongside cultural and social impact. It fosters development and enforces traditional and cultural practices, improving people's standards of life.

The Keiskamma project is part of the universities' syllabus because it represents an

example of a project born and based in a rural area, usually underexposed to art, as has already been mentioned. The diversity of the people involved in the Keiskamma project represents its strongest point: *“It is creating the architecture that's going to allow several human beings, all with different strings, to work on aspects of the project”* (Respondent 8). From an interdisciplinary point of view, the Keiskamma group often collaborated with different departments of universities, such as theology at the University of Rhodes. In addition, one of their most well-known projects has been Guernica, which has been developed as a modern key to increasing awareness about HIV.

The Keiskamma Project has often also been the protagonist of the exhibition at the National Arts Festival, which celebrates its 50th anniversary (National Arts Festival, 2024). Indeed, festival settings seem to be explicatory of the importance of interdisciplinary work.

5 Recommendation

Based on the data, South Africa emerges as a highly contradictory country, reflected in the contemporary art world, which is quite unequal across the country.

The recommendation that I am giving aims to address the inequity of contemporary art and foster its societal role, primarily in rural areas and townships, which results in underexposed to contemporary art, despite being the ones where it is more needed. Social Practices appear to have a significant legacy within South Africa because the fight against colonialism and Apartheid has created the notion of Ubuntu, which also constituted the base for the “*African Renaissance*”.

- Regarding where and by whom Social Practices should be nurtured, they are unlikely to be developed within commercial galleries, which are representative of this elitist niche. Museums are perceived as irrelevant because they serve only 1% of the population. Therefore, they cannot respond to the broader issue of fostering accessibility and do not seem to be the spaces to adapt to realise Social Practices. The data analysis shows that the spaces that are more suitable for implementing Social Practices are public or community spaces.
- Within the decolonisation process, there is a need to decentralise the art world, creating initiatives and spaces to bridge the gap between urban and rural areas. To facilitate the development of those areas, artists or cultural organisations are recommended to go towards the community, activating spaces in rural areas and townships to address the geographical challenge. These spaces do not need to be highly furnished and equipped but instead welcoming and accommodating to the community’s needs. Since it emerges that artists are struggling to make a living out of their practices, it is recommended that funding organisations encourage artists to centre their practices on marginalised communities.
- The findings suggest that obtaining financial resources is the most challenging aspect for cultural practitioners; the difficulty level varies based on the type of organisation they operate with, and which position they cover. There is a need to find inexpensive ways of creating engagement because, for instance, lower-income households are worried about putting food on the table.

- It might be very complicated to enter a community, but it mostly depends on the approach adopted. Social Practice must avoid a top-down approach based on the assumption that people, for instance, from rural areas, need to learn something. For a Social Practice initiative to be relevant to the context and the community it is built for, it must be based on a democratic model, including constant consultation and flexibility to facilitate active participation and co-creation. To do so, interdisciplinary collaborations and building a diverse team to facilitate the encounter with the community are highly recommended.

5.1 Limitations and Further Research

My position as a white European researcher can be limiting as I have never been to South Africa and have no lived experience of the country. For this reason, the research has been driven by the purpose of being a blank page for people familiar with the context to write their histories and narratives. According to my respondents, it is interesting that *“having not been to a place and relying very much on what people share with you, I think it is actually a great position to be in”* (Respondent 8).

Due to time constraints, the research was done on a limited sample of people located in different areas of South Africa. This gives us an overview of the context needs, highlighting which areas need Social Practices the most and how they should be implemented. However, focusing on a specific location could provide guidelines for engaging the communities. Indeed, as explained further, South Africa is a conglomerate of different communities with different traditions, languages, and values.

Looking ahead, since this study highlighted a consistent inequality between urban and rural areas, it would represent a significant step forward to investigate specifically rural areas with a focused glance on how to support their development with practices relevant to their way of living. Furthermore, this study showed that South Africans are still fighting to obtain ownership over their narrative. Therefore, a question that potentially opens further research within creatives in South Africa: considering that galleries and museums have original meaning only in the Western world, are they seen by the people originally from South Africa, especially the ones from not urbanised areas, as the places where can share their culture?

In addition, within the challenges South Africa is facing, it would be interesting to open a further discussion about the role that people who move from abroad to South Africa and tourists play. Do they positively impact the context and the creative sector, or do they represent an obstacle to the uplifting process of local communities?

6 Conclusion

Ubuntu - "I Am Because We Are" is a study initiated to value the South African sense of togetherness. This made me think that Social Practices may be the medium through which the country addresses the social issues it deals with in its everyday life. South Africa still bears the echoes of colonialism and Apartheid, which influence people's mentalities and way of life: the high inequity among different communities needs to be acknowledged and addressed.

The research aimed to fill the gap in understanding the current role of contemporary art in South Africa and the legacy of Social Practice in bridging people's capability of understanding contemporary art's societal potential impact. It further investigates how to design and tailor Social Practices that mirror specific South African contextual aspects and needs.

The study was conducted with a qualitative research method, including an exploratory phase, an extensive literature review and informal conversations, and an empirical phase, collecting data through semi-structured interviews with South African creative practitioners.

What South Africans need may be related to the heaviness of its historical and socio-political messages, but *"In Africa, the younger guys of today, we're fighting, but we're not fighting that same battle"* (Respondent 4). This means it is crucial to highlight the actual challenges people need to give responsive solutions. On this account, contemporary art is also considered a tool for unheard voices to speak up, and it should be disposable for communities living in unurbanised spaces as much as it is for people living in the main centres.

The study reveals that despite contemporary art potentially playing a significant role in legitimising multiculturalism and building a collective memory, it is highly elitist and concentrated in urbanised areas. Indeed, cultural organisations, especially commercial galleries, prioritise commercial activities without considering their social responsibility. The audience engaged is limited and appears indoctrinated on which art they should appreciate;

in the same way, artists are keen to realise commercially appealing works. Consequently, contemporary art seems to have lost its place in South Africa and be significantly detached from reality.

To address the inequity plaguing the contemporary art world, its centre needs to shift from urban areas to rural areas and townships, going towards communities and through them. In trying to understand the impact of the South African historical background on the actual challenges faced by the country, the thesis analyses whether there is fertile soil to nurture relational ways of engaging with contemporary art.

The South African framework is not only made of injustice and oppression but also comprehends the resilience that built democracy. This constitutes the legacy for Social Practices as a bridge to contemporary art and having a societal impact. Further research should be done to address the challenges that emerged from this research.

Looking at the future, according to the main findings of the research and considering the motivation this study is initiated with, there is the need to go towards the community and not expect them to come to the cultural organisation venue, which is probably outside of their physical reach. Moreover, it is necessary to delve into rural areas to gain more knowledge of the communities and how to reach them. This may facilitate the realisation of Social Practices relevant to the context and the people.

7 Appendix

7.1 Appendix A. Respondents

Resp.	City they operate in	Age (\approx)	Description
1	Johannesburg	35-50	<p>The gallery has a print workshop facility, where artists are invited to realise their works and to sell them. The organisation also has a publishing activity, publishing mainly about South African artists books and their projects.</p> <p>She is responsible for the directorship of production and distribution in South Africa, New York and for other satellite projects. The gallery in New York is used as launchpad to both spread South African art and import art from the rest of the world. The gallery facilitates artists in realising works they would not necessarily do in their own studios. It also manages the distribution of their works in various spaces, like art spaces, gallery shows, in different areas of South Africa and abroad.</p> <p>She is responsible for the directorship of production and distribution in South Africa, New York and for other satellite projects.</p>
2	Pretoria	> 50	<p>He is an artist manager, legal advisor, curator, and photographer. He has been for over 25 years the artist manager, curator and archivist of Peter Magubaney, one of the most renowned South Africans photographers.</p> <p><i>"I try to use Peter Magubaney's work, which is the history of South Africa, as a transformation tool, as an educational tool, as a weapon. And I use the word weapon to bring cultures together, within the South African context, a very divided, very divided on cultural lines and colour lines. And I've used his photographs to educate people and hopefully bring us together"</i> (Respondent 2).</p>

3	Johannesburg	> 50	<p>She is specialised in the fashion industry, as maker, lecturer, curator, writer.</p> <p>She conceives fashion as a social practice. She based her work as a lecturer and maker on the following stream of thinking: <i>“At the end of Apartheid, and with the new democracy, fashion was starting to play a very interesting role in how people were engaging in society and positioning themselves in society”</i>.</p> <p>After doing her PhD, in 2019, she founded the African Fashion Research Institute with the aim of fostering social engagement through fashion. <i>“We consider to be the urgent and overdue need to remember, rethink and rewrite fashion histories that speak to effort-centric ways of wearing, knowing, making and styling. And how much of this is absent from fashion books, exhibitions, and imaginations”</i> So our work is aimed at doing that social engagement through fashion” (Respondent 3).</p>
4	Pretoria	< 35	<p>She is a creative practitioner working with installation, curatorship, sales and management. The last three years, she was at the University of Pretoria managing the student gallery full time, doing anything from 10 to 25 art exhibitions a year. At the moment, she left the university to finish her masters in curation, specifically looking at digital art and how we can use technology to improve engagement within art spaces.</p>
5	Johannesburg	< 35	<p>She is an artist and curator. Currently working at Johannesburg Contemporary Art Foundation, that opened in 2020, trying to bridge the gap between the global North and the global South.</p> <p>After graduating with an honour’s degree, she did curatorial studies at the University of Cape Town, that connects students with the Center for Curating the Archive and the National Museums of South Africa. She did an internship at the Constitutional Court of South Africa.</p>
6	Eastern Cape (for 11 years). She is	35-50	<p>She is an architect and associate professor at the School of Architecture at Nelson Mandela University. Researcher at the Coastal and Marine Institute of Finance and she an architect. Since she arrived in South</p>

	originally from Italy.		Africa in 2013, she has been working with a group of 10/12 people, which is changing depending on the project. They do community engagement projects unpacked with a creative instrument.
7	Johannesburg	35-50	<p>She is a visual artist, researcher, consultant, visual arts lecturer at the University of Johannesburg in Creative Entrepreneurship and Professional practice. Currently, she is doing her doctorate on systems thinking to go to the creative economy of the City of Johannesburg. She run for six years a creative hub that closed down during COVID. It did a range of projects that intended social engagement, mainly about creative entrepreneurship, placemaking, creative solutions to problems, design thinking, and creative thinking.</p> <p><i>“My artwork is quite removed from social practice. I create a paper-cutting art, I work in a solitary studio. I produce work often I have commentary on my work. I have just created a body of work about Palestine and Gaza but I rarely use my art in social practice. It's quite intentional, I'm a white South African artist and that comes with a certain narrative of my place within the society. I don't think it is my role to go and teach others, but it is my role to learn from others and to ignite opportunities” (Respondent 7).</i></p>
8	Eastern Cape	35-50	<p>She has a background in design from Stellenbosch University and has worked in the craft industry. She also has experience in film and curatorial practices.</p> <p>She currently manages a community project in the Eastern Cape, considered the poorest area of South Africa. She works as the bridge, really, between the community in Hamburg and the rest of the world.</p>
9	Cape Town	> 50	<p>He is currently retired, before was director of collections and digitalization at the Museums of South Africa. He was responsible for taking care of the art collections, the social history collections, and the natural history collections. Before he was a curator of the Seacoast Slave Lodge Museum.</p>

10	Johannesburg	< 35	<p>He is currently senior manager for Heritage Asset and Preservation associated within a company; he looks after two museums, in two different provinces and he looks after the corporate art collection. He manages archives and the historical library, being in charge of reimagining and recontextualizing of what heritage means to South Africa.</p> <p>Before he used to look after the university gallery and collection. And he had been Head of Heritage Research at Robben Island.</p>
11	Easter Cape	35 - 50	<p>He is an artist, who worked in academia, both in the private and the public sector. He run a small commercial gallery and then he explored curatorial practices. He is currently living in Gqeberha in the Eastern Cape, where he opened Labyrinth Project, with a focus on developing a community.</p>
12	Johannesburg	35 - 50	<p>She studied art history and sociology “<i>this was just another way of looking at the world through art</i>” (Respondent 12). She has been working in different kinds of project spaces, and art studio hubs. She has worked in a contemporary museum and now working independently, teaching and developing curatorial projects and research projects.</p> <p>She was mentored by Portia Malati, who curated the last South African Pavillion at the Venice Biennale 2024.</p>
13	Tahwane / Pretoria	35 - 50	<p>She has a Masters in Fine Art at the University of Witwatersrand. She is curator of Education Mediation at the Javette Arts Center at the University of Pretoria, curating educational programs and exhibitions.</p> <p>She is also the founder of a non-profit company responsible for community education. She is interested in Social Practices within the South African context and how they create social impact.</p>

7.2 Appendix B. Interview Draft

Before we begin the interview, I would like to go over the main topic of my research.

With a strong belief in contemporary art's social, political and cultural role and its transformative capabilities, the motivation for this research stems from recognising the stereotypes that prevent people from accessing and understanding contemporary art. The question driving my research is how Social Practices foster the learning and understanding of contemporary art within South African cultural organisations. I investigate the potential of Social Practices to bridge the gap between contemporary art's intrinsic complexities and the audience's understanding and engagement in South Africa. Given the socio-political and historical South African background, the research addresses the theoretical and practical dimensions of implementing Social Practices in cultural organisations or by cultural practitioners and wants to consider the complexities within South Africa's context.

Introduction	<u>Interviewee Background</u>	Could you introduce yourself and your position within the creative sector?
	<u>Definition</u>	How would you define Social Practices? Which is the main mean of communication involved in Social Practices?
	<i>I have defined Social Practices within contemporary art as any form of art that engages individuals and communities in discussion, collaboration, or interaction with one another. In other words, Social Practices comprehend activities developed within an education program or outreach, but they can also be part of art artworks themselves</i>	
	<u>How he/she is relevant for my research</u>	To what extent Social Practices

		are part of your practice (as curator or his role)?
Context Needs	<u>Contemporary Art</u>	<p>What role do you believe contemporary art plays within South Africa today?</p> <p>How would you describe the current state of engagement between the audience and contemporary art in South Africa?</p> <p>Are there any challenges in interacting with contemporary art? (from a conceptual emotional also point of view)</p>
		How do historical and socio-political factors in South Africa influence contemporary art practice? (practitioner/audience perspective)
Capacity to Implement Social Practices	<u>Examples</u>	<p>Have you experienced (not necessarily in South Africa) Social Practices to engage audiences with contemporary art? Could you give me an example?</p> <p>If not in South Africa, how could these be adapted to the South African context?</p>

		<p>If in South Africa, is there any Social Practices from somewhere else in the world in contemporary art that inspires you? If yes, how could these be adapted to the South African context?</p>
	<p><u>Collaboration</u></p>	<p>What potential do you see for collaborations with other cultural organisations, communities, or artists in implementing Social Practices?</p>
	<p><u>Challenges</u></p>	<p>What are the most significant challenges to implement Social Practices in South Africa (such as financial constraints, lack of interest, or cultural barriers)?</p> <p>How do you tailor Social Practices concerning the diversity of the social texture in South Africa?</p>
		<p>How would you imagine the space for Social Practices with as South African audience? Is it a traditional space (such as museums, and galleries) or is it different?</p>

	<u>Resources</u>	<p>What resources (human, financial, material) are available within your position/organisation for implementing Social Practices?</p>
Impact / Legacy	<u>Success / Risks</u>	<p>What are the key factors to make a social practice successful? Which is the risk for being unsuccessful?</p>
	<u>Measure</u>	<p>How would you measure the success of Social Practices in enhancing the understanding and appreciation of contemporary art? What indicators would be most important?</p>
	<u>Future</u>	<p>Looking ahead, do you see a potential for implementing or increasing Social Practices in the South African context of contemporary art curation and engagement?</p>

7.3 Appendix C. Codebook

<p><u>South African Context</u></p>	<p>Analysing of the overarching context.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“South Africa is a Third World and a First World country in one” (Respondent 10).</i>
<p><u>Contemporary Art</u></p>	<p>Role in South Africa</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“It's the nature of artists to connect and engage with their society. But contemporary art in my view, has become quite removed from that reality. Contemporary art is seen in very wealthy galleries and in exclusive art fairs; it's not seen as much on the streets of the township and the poverty that the majority of South Africans face. And so to me personally, contemporary art has lost its place” (Respondent 7).</i> • <i>“In a kind of a political context, communicating personal narratives, contemporary artists had a huge role in telling stories and trying to bridge the gaps between different cultural differences. It's with us, understanding each other in a place which is so culturally diverse” (Respondent 1).</i>

	<p>Historical and socio-political factors in South Africa influence from a practitioner and an audience perspective</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Being from South Africa, being a generation that went through Apartheid. We are conscious of our whiteness, our blackness, our wealth, our privilege, and our poverty daily. Moreover, it is not a theoretical thing for South Africans. Facing white privilege facing racism is a daily reality. Moreover, that is because Apartheid is 30 years old, and I think South Africa has a huge amount to teach the world about living through such a dramatic change in society. Thus, as a person, as a practitioner, being white influences everything I do” (Respondent 7).</i>
	<p>Description of the current State of audience engagement in South Africa</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“We are seeing more younger people getting more involved and getting more engaged in sort of more contemporary open exhibit galleries and stuff away from the academics and away from the big institutions” (Respondent 4).</i> • <i>“The arts are in a way elitist because you are promoting a product that people do not need...there are initiatives to bring it to communities that are outside of the gallery space” (Respondent 1).</i>
	<p>Challenges in interacting with contemporary art from a conceptual</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The vast majority of South Africans have no interest, idea, or income even to consider it” (Respondent 7).</i>

	emotional also point of view	
<u>Social Practices</u>	Definition of Social Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“How we engage with society as a concept, as our reality and our set of intersecting identity politics. There is a kind of question of how I belong in there and the things that identify or make us feel like we belong” (Respondent 12).</i>
	Relevance in South Africa: To what extent Social Practices are part of the creative practice?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“I cannot succeed alone if I am experiencing any level of success. I have to share it. I have to grow others. I have to spread that success” (Respondent 8).</i>
	Examples in South Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Keiskamma works with rural woman. I think it's in the Eastern Cape. Developing their skill and telling their stories through these beautiful huge tapestries. You'll see those tapestries and lots of important buildings around the world. So it's generating income for these ladies while telling their stories and while having a social impact. I'll end it there, that's.... When I think of contemporary art. I think of the visual arts sector. And I think of galleries and visual artists. And I would never consider Kaiskamma as part of that bubble. They're outside the bubble, they're having a real social impact on the ground” (Respondent 7).</i>

	<p>Examples outside South Africa</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“I find it quite interesting how, Brazil and South Africa from a social, and political perspective. I'm actually going to take it back to 2016, how we were going through Feesmustfall movements here in South Africa, but also Brazil was experiencing quite a lot of student protests, and I found that very informative because I attended the, you know, and it was interesting to see what was happening around the same time as South Africa and how students were responding in a way that may not be artistic, but in a way that kind of speaks to these social, political, ways of doing. One could actually argue that protest posters are a means of educational practice” (Respondent 13).</i>
<p><u>Capacity to Implement Social Practices</u></p>	<p>Reflecting Society: tailoring Social Practices concerning the social texture in South Africa</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“It is creating the architecture that's going to allow several human beings, all with different strings, to work on aspects of the project” (Respondent 8).</i>

	<p>Resources (human, financial, material) available for implementing Social Practices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“There's the Goethe Institute, which is really a great resource, for South African practitioners. They really allow you to connect, they have funding resources, they have an expansive library, so that you're able to have a space to go to do research, to find out who you can meet. There are certain sites that try to motivate access to resources. There's the Visual Arts Network of South Africa, which just reopened and went virtual” (Respondent 5).</i>
	<p>Potential for Collaborations with other cultural organisations, communities, or artists in implementing Social Practices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"I really think that architects, engineers and doctors really need to come to the table to consider how creative or contemporary art can blend into these spaces that are more clinical, that are very bureaucratic the way that they are structured, and it does not have space for people to come in to make certain decisions, to shift things, in a way that it does have a direct impact on people immediately" (Respondent 5).</i>

	<p>Space to realise Social Practices: is it a traditional space (such as museums, and galleries) or is it different?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The major aspect that we need to think about is that those are institutions that have been enforced as universities, as other institutions, have been enforced by the colonialists. There was nothing in Africa or Southern Africa called galleries or whatever. Now what you are asking is actually a crucial aspect because now a gallery or a museum is something that makes sense for the western eyes world. But what is the place where the locals, people that are originally from Africa and southern Africa, all see as a place where to share their culture?” (Respondent 6).</i>
	<p>Structure: what are the key factors to make a social practice successful and, on the other hand, should be avoided?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“You need to do interviews with them. You need to go grab a coffee in in their local pub. Go have lunch in their local restaurants and stuff like that see what the people are doing, see what the people are getting up to, see how people engage with things, like get involved with the community. If you know your community. If you know your audience. And you're tailoring your experience or your your concept to their needs. And you're good” (Respondent 4).</i>

	<p>Challenges faced to implement Social Practices in South Africa.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The codes of society are written through your geography” (Respondent 12).</i> • <i>“This is not a world that respects or appreciates difference, as much as it rings a bell to the idea that it does foster heterogeneity, it really does not appreciate it very much, to be honest” (Respondent 11).</i> • <i>“it has taken a long time for museums to really understand the importance of working closely with community opinion and community voices” (Respondent 9).</i>
	<p>Adaptability: possibility of implementing Social Practices realised in another country in South Africa</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“I don't think any content or every art practice should be replicated. OK. I don't think that's the nature of contemporary art. So to me, there is no work, no matter how wonderful, from anywhere in the world that is done within a specific context as professional practice. That should in any way be replicated in another place. Context, history, and culture should influence creativity, and the outcomes will be different just by nature” (Respondent 7).</i>

<p><u>Impact and Legacy of Social Practices</u></p>	<p>Impact of Social Practices: measurement the success of Social Practices in enhancing the understanding and appreciation of contemporary art.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“What is what is needed for social impact to thrive in the arts? For art interventions that have social impact is an enabling of the arts. You have to see the artist as fundamental to the growth of society, and through that, you enable the artists to do what they need to do and place less pressure on the artist to have to tick these economic boxes” (Respondent 7).</i>
<p><u>Opinions on the research</u></p>	<p>Questioning my position as European researcher, not having been in South Africa</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“I think it's, very interesting that that you decided to focus on unsolved Africa. And, I don't think it's a problem. I think sometimes, looking in from the outside, open perspectives, and working from the inside. Sometimes it's, you kind of overcome spring view and you're kind of a little blinkered, but, when you're looking in from outside, you put, I think you've got a broader view” (Respondent 9).</i>

	Potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>“From an institutional level, I'm not particularly hopeful. I'm worried, to be honest. Looking at the, you know, what I could only describe as a kind of denigration of the cultural sphere, in the hands of the more commercially inclined and even the spaces that aren't generally associated with a commercial kind of intent. You know, obviously working on that side of the world for a while as well. I mean, I believe that many of the practices are centred around kind of commercial”</i> (Respondent 11).
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