

Thapong Arts Newsletter

ARTS FOR ALL

Volume 1, Issue 5
October/November 2009

Winner of the Thapong Artist of the Year Award 2009: Uhuru Tsheko Kgope



ARTIST: Uhuru Tsheko Kgope
TITLE: Potholes
MEDIUM: Pots, mirrors, road sign

Uhuru studied Fine Art at the University of Johannesburg, majoring in painting and drawing. He has participated in a number of exhibitions locally and in South Africa.

Inside this issue:

<i>Copyright & Painting</i>	2
<i>Writing an Artist's Statement</i>	3
<i>Websites</i>	4
<i>What's On</i>	4
<i>Websites on art</i>	4
<i>Artist's Opportunities</i>	4

On Artist's Statements

An artist statement is an essential part of a good portfolio. Gallery owners respect the professionalism of a good statement. A good statement allows people who love your work to find out more about you, offers your audience more ways to connect with you, and increases their appreciation and perceived value of your work.

Equally important, an artist statement gives you the opportunity to see what you do through the eyes of language, to validate your creations from a new perspective.

- Ariane Goodwin

See more on p3

Copyright and painting from photographs

"A sincere artist is not one who makes a faithful attempt to put onto canvas what is in front of him, but one who tries to create something which is, in itself, a living thing."

- Giorgio Morandi

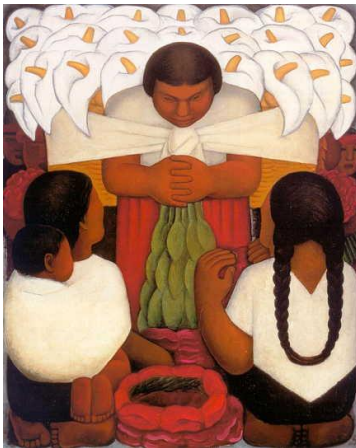
Italian painter and printmaker.

Born Giorgio Morandi - Bologna, Italy - 20th of June, 1890 / Died 18th of June, 1964.

"I dream a lot. I do more painting when I'm not painting. It's in the subconscious."

- Diego Rivera

ARTIST: Diego Rivera
TITLE: Flower Day
DATE: 1925



Question: Can I make a painting from a photograph that isn't my own?

Answer: A painting made from a photograph is known as a [derivative work](#). But that doesn't mean you can simply make a painting from any photo you find -- you need to check the copyright situation of the photo. The creator of the photograph, i.e. the photographer, usually holds the copyright to the photo and, unless they've expressly given permission for its use, making a painting based on a photo would infringe the photographer's copyright. You may be able to obtain permission to use a photo for a derivative work from the photographer, or if you're using a photo library buy the right to use it.

You might argue that the photographer is unlikely ever to find out if you use it, but are you going to keep a record of such paintings to ensure you never put it on display or offer it for sale? Even if you're not going to make commercial use of a photo, just by creating a painting to hang in your home, you're still technically infringing copyright, and you need to be aware of the fact. (Ignorance is not bliss.)

The easiest solution to avoiding copyright issues when painting from photos is to take your own photos, or use the [Artist's Reference Photos](#) on this website, photos from somewhere such as [Morgue File](#), which provides "free image reference material for use in all creative pursuits", or to use several photos for inspiration and reference for your own scene, not copy them directly. Another good source of photos are those labeled with a [Creative Commons Derivatives License](#) in [Flickr](#).

Photos being labeled "royalty-free" in photo libraries does not mean "copyright free". Royalty free means that you can buy the right from the copyright holder to use the photo wherever you want, whenever you want, how many times you want, rather than purchasing the right to use it once for a specific project and then paying an additional fee if you used it for something else.

As for the argument that it's fine to make a painting from a photo provided it doesn't say "do not duplicate" or because 10 different artists would produce 10 different paintings from the same photo, it's a misconception that photos aren't subject to the same stringent copyright rules as paintings. It seems that all too often artists who would scream if someone copied their paintings, don't hesitate to make a painting of someone else's photo, with no thought to the creator's rights.

The absence of a copyright notice on a photo doesn't mean copyright doesn't apply. And if a copyright statement says ©2005, this doesn't mean that copyright expired at the end of 2005; it generally expires several decades after the creator's death.

Derivative art: Art that is based on the work of another artist or school of art, or uses all or part of another artist's work in it, is known as derivative art. (Think: "derived from X or Y".) A painting based on a photograph is also a derivative work because you're adapting and transforming it. Remember, there's a difference between using photos for reference and copying one!

Unless the photographer has expressly given permission for a photograph to be used in its entirety, reference photos (whether on the web or in a book) are there only to provide information and inspiration and should not be copied. Such as the characteristic shape of a particular type of tree, the texture of a rock, the colors on a butterfly's wings. An artist can then use this knowledge in their own compositions and paintings.

<http://painting.about.com>



Writing an Artist's Statement

1

The first question is, What is an artist's statement? And the second question is, Why do you need one? To answer the second question first, perhaps a gallery has requested a statement from you or you're preparing a new brochure or résumé and think such a statement is required. Then you have to tackle the first question--what is it and what should be included in it?

Your artist's statement can be anything you want it to be, but primarily, it should help potential buyers, students or employers to understand what you believe to be the most important aspects of your art and the techniques you use to make it. The statement should summarize these things in as few words as possible.

The time you spend in developing a worthwhile statement is invaluable in helping you define your art for yourself. You may not have given this much thought before. Do some brainstorming or journaling on these questions, as though you were interviewing yourself:

- Why do you like to make art?
- What subjects do you prefer? Why?
- What processes and techniques do you use? Why?
- How is your work different from others?
- What do you see in your artwork?
- What do other people say they see?
- What are your goals and aspirations as an artist?
- Who or what inspires you?

Nita Leland www.nitaleland.com

2

Who are you? What is your background?

Are you a student, a practicing artist, or both? What is your educational background? Is this your first show, or one of many? What are your interests? How did your ideas develop? Are you a collector, an observer, a traveller, an adventurer? Are you curious about other cultures? Are you interested in exploring gender issues, theories, memories, questions of identity, the relationships between form and function, certain shapes, brush strokes, shots, etc ?

How does your background influence your work? Are you haunted by various forms of painting, photography, sculpture, film? What is it you like to explore? What medium do you prefer to work in? What did you initially set out to explore, investigate and discover? How did this perspective change as your work took shape?

www.ecuad.ca/wc/artstate.htm

3

Why did you choose your particular subject matter or imagery? You can mention influences (artistic or otherwise), inspirations, and past experiences that led you to your subject. Some artists often refer to the work of other artists that inspired them. Others might be influenced by media or popular culture. Still others might have been traumatized by clowns... It doesn't really matter how you came to your subject matter, but the viewer will be interested in knowing why you chose it.

Most viewers will want to know something about your materials or your process, especially if the materials or processes are unusual. It's not necessary to write a step-by-step guide to the watercolor process, or list every chemical that you used to process your photographs. You might just mention that you use watercolors and that you were drawn to them for their unpredictable nature and their transparency.

Act like you know what you're doing

Avoid phrases like, "I want to..." or, "I'm trying to..." or, "My intention is..." Just say what you're doing: "I expose the gritty underbelly of urban life..." or, "These paintings explore the wonders of nature and the beauty of our world..." Don't be wishy-washy about it.

Not so much "me," "my," and "I"

It's hard to do, but try to avoid using too many "me, my, and I," words. It's annoying to read a whole page of sentences that start with "I."

<http://artistemerging.blogspot.com>

4

Connect what your art expresses with the medium that you're expressing it in. For example, *if your art is about world peace, and it consists of twigs protruding from pieces of clay, explain the connection.* Arbitrarily stating that twig/clay protrusions represent world peace leaves people wondering. If, of course, the object of your art or your statement is to leave people wondering, then that's ok. In art, everything is ok., but in order to succeed as an artist, someone beside yourself generally has to get the point of what you're doing.

Be specific, not vague. For example, if your art is "inspired by assessments of the fundamentals of the natural world," tell which fundamentals you're assessing and how they inspire you.

www.artbusiness.com



Thapong Visual Arts Centre

Opposite the Village Clinic
P.O. Box 10144
Gaborone
Telefax: 3161771
E-mail: thapong@mega.bw

Arts for All

Website

www.thapongartscentre.org

Useful and interesting websites on art

www.artlex.com (dictionary on art)

www.artbizblog.com (for the business of being an artist, an excellent site with many articles)

www.artbusiness.com (more on the business of art)

www.artnews.com (ARTnewsletter is a timely, topical, biweekly report on the art market)

www.artsjournal.com (visual arts, music, theatre, ideas, issues etc.)

www.artdaily.com (international arts news)

www.artandculture.com (connects art lovers, artists and organizations to make and share recommendations across all the arts)

<http://clintwatson.net/blog> (an interesting art blog)

www.photoarts.com (take a look at the Fine Art, Documentary, and Artists links)

www.photography.com (introduction to the world of all things photographic. Whether you are interested in tips, cameras, digital and darkroom equipment, business aspects, or as an art form).

<http://africanartists.blogspot.com>

www.oil-painting-techniques.com

www.jca-online.com (Journal of Contemporary Art - check out the great in-depth interviews, but sadly no examples of the artists' works, you'd have to search for them on Google Images).

www.arttimes.co.za (South African Art Times)

www.public-domain-image.com (images free of copyright and royalties... great for finding reference photos)

What's On

THAPONG VISUAL ARTS CENTRE

Thursday 15th October:

Westwood International School Final Year
Art Exhibition

16th—28th November:

SADC Creator Artists Workshop Seminar

Opportunities

2010 FINAL DRAW ON 4 December 2009 at the CTICC.

This is opportunity for ALL ARTISTS from emerging to established.

The work does not have to be soccer themed, but they are pushing an African/South African vibe, and they certainly won't choose anything too challenging or outrageous. It's an opportunity for MONDO EXPOSURE: This event has a television audience of 183 MILLION.

Send in images of suitable work to art@vansa.co.za (please put 2010 in the subject line).

SADC Creator Artists Workshop Seminar 2009 at Thapong. APPLY NOW—DEADLINE 30th October.

The workshop is to be held between 16th and 28th November at Thapong Visual Arts Centre, Gaborone. The aim of the workshop is to bring together artists from the SADC region.

To apply please provide a CV, a motivational letter, 5 images of your work in jpeg format, slide or photograph, and profile picture of yourself.

For more information contact Patrick Matlapeng on 3161771 or thapong@mega.bw.