

THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

November 6, 2019



South African Heritage Resources Agency  
Department of Arts and Culture  
Republic of South Africa  
111 Harrington Street  
Cape Town, 8001  
South Africa

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in support of the application for permanent export of *Composition* (1951) by Ernest Mancoba (1904-2002) for purchase by the Art Institute of Chicago. This painting is a significant early piece from the artist's time with the influential CoBrA group in Denmark and would be a remarkable addition to our collection.

As a leading international encyclopedic museum with a commitment to representing global modernism, the Art Institute is eager to add *Composition* to its collection. This would be the first major work by Ernest Mancoba to be acquired by a U.S. institution. The Art Institute is deeply invested in sharing the cultural contributions of South Africa to modern and contemporary art. In 2016, the Art Institute presented a solo exhibition by Kemang Wa Lehulere (b.1984), and acquired a group of drawings by the artist. These projects joined works by William Kentridge (b. 1955), Robin Rhode (b.1976), and Moshekwa Langa (b. 1975), who, together represent a breath of South African Contemporary artistic production. This year alone we acquired a series of thirteen paintings by Penny Siopis (b. 1953), a large-scale tapestry work by Igshaan Adams (b. 1982), and a key assemblage painting by Cristo Coetzee (1929-2000). I am currently preparing for a solo exhibition of Igshaan Adams (the first presentation of the artist's work in a U.S. museum) scheduled for Spring 2022. This dedication to South African cultural production, both historically and in the contemporary moment would provide an ideal context in which *Composition* could be exhibited and researched.

For your understanding, this painting is a planned purchase by the Art Institute of Chicago for Spring 2020 and, per our institutional requirements, it would need to be on site prior to completion of the sale. Our acquisitions process is as follows: based on recommendations by our curatorial staff, the object is presented to the Modern and Contemporary Acquisitions Advisory Committee on March 20, 2020, for approval. Following that, the motion is finalized at the museum's Board of Trustees meeting in April 2020. Upon Board approval, the acquisition is finalized and payment can be made to the seller. The length of the acquisition process is standard for large museums in the United States such as ours and should not imply anything other than our complete commitment to this purchase.

Finally, the Art Institute hosts 1.7 million visitors from around the world to our campus annually, as well as supporting an active outgoing loan program, regularly lending and supporting our partner museums in the United States and abroad. Our welcoming galleries, our recently upgraded collections website and our commitment to lending will enable *Composition* to truly be present and accessible within a global history of modern and contemporary art.

Thank you for your consideration in granting a permanent export permit for Ernest Mancoba's *Composition*, 1951. We look forward to a positive response. Please do not hesitate to contact me if anything else is needed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H Folkerts", written over a horizontal line.

Hendrik Folkerts  
Dittmer Curator of Contemporary Art  
Department of Modern and Contemporary Art  
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