

WHOSE WORK? WHOSE RIGHTS?

Open Calls, Artists and Creative Memory in African Digital Archives



Containment | Flow | Purpose

Bonolo Mokoena

Human Rights Festival

28 March 2026

Why Do Open Calls Matter?

- They are a primary access point for emerging artists into a digitalised cultural history.
- The participation in digital publishing is a significant contribution to how African creativity is documented and archived globally.
- Online archives offer alternative gateways to visibility - even if imperfect.
- They build professional practice: Proposal writing, portfolio building and concept articulation.

OPEN CALL

We're calling on African creatives from anywhere in the world to submit original work in visual art, photography, poetry, fiction, non-fiction and more. Check out our website for more info and submission guidelines!

Phase 1 Deadline
20 October 2025
www.numenofstory.com

NUMEN
Containment | Flow | Purpose

Open Call for Submissions

We welcome original artistic and literary work from African creatives (aged 18 or above) from all geographic locations. Submissions should reflect bold and thoughtful creative expression in any style or subject.

We accept submissions in the following categories:

- **Photography** (3 to 20 images)
- **Visual Art** (3 to 20 images)
- **Digital Art, Zines and Comics**
- **Film and Video** (no longer than 20 minutes)
- **Fiction** (max 5,000 words)
- **Creative Non-Fiction** (max 3,000 words)
- **Poetry** (2 to 5 poems)

We value originality, experimentation and work that blurs boundaries across genres and disciplines. Collaborative and cross-media submissions are welcome. NB: Preference is given to South African youth, especially those from rural and township communities, in line with [NUMXN's](#) core mandate.

Numen of Story Issue 1 Open Call

“Through this issue, we invite you to reflect on the people, moments and communities that quietly shape our cultures and experiences. We aim to celebrate the elegance, resilience and power of the African perspective in art, creating a space to honour the unseen, the overlooked and the forces that quietly reign within our shared landscapes.” – *Reine* words by Tshifhiwa Itai Ratshiungo

Building Professional Practice

- Every application is practice in articulation. How do you position your work within broader discourse?
- Research the platform you are submitting to. Look at previous publications, featured artists, their tone, aesthetic and editorial direction.
- Adapt your submission to the call but DO NOT compromise your voice just to fit in.
- Follow instructions/ criteria as stipulated.
- Submit your strongest, most resolved work (Quality over Quantity)

4. Your Submission:

- **Literary works** must be submitted as PDF or Word documents. (Font requirements: Arial 12pt, 1.5 line spacing.)
- **Visual art, photography, digital art, etc.** must be submitted as **high-resolution JPEG or PNG files via accessible Google Drive shared links only.**
- Zines and comics must be sent as high-quality PDF files.
- Multimedia submissions (i.e., film and video) should include functional links to videos or interactive projects. **We prefer accessible Google Drive shared links.**
- **Ensure that your name is not mentioned anywhere on the submission files. Only the title of your work should appear.**

5. Eligibility Confirmation:

By submitting, you confirm that you are aged 18 or above, and you are of African descent. Joint projects and group applications are allowed.

6. File Format:

Label all files with the title of your work (e.g., TitleOfWork.pdf)

NB: Please ensure your attachments are properly formatted, functional, and do not include your name on the submission files themselves. If you have any questions, contact info@numxn.org.

Practical Examples

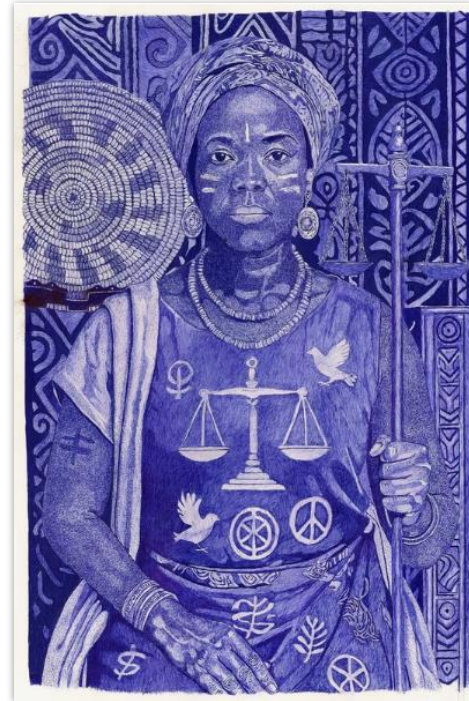
Don't do this



Anonymous



Do this instead



Daughter of the Soil by Obeezy
published in NOS Issue 1

Don't do this

Good day,

Please find attached Bio and paintings for consideration of your upcoming exhibition.

--

Kind Regards

Do this instead

Dear Numen of Story Team,

Please find attached my poetry submission titled [REDACTED]

Name: [REDACTED]

Age: 19

Country of Origin: South Africa

Current Residence: Pretoria, Gauteng

I am a poet whose work explores memory, belonging, and the delicate intersections between personal and collective histories. My creative focus lies in weaving imagery from nature, ancestry, and intimate spaces to evoke the fragility and resilience of human experience. Through poetry, I aim to trace the echoes of silence and song that shape identity and connection.

ACCESS, VISIBILITY, AND THE FUTURE OF CROSS-BORDER COLLABORATION



Containment | Flow | Purpose



Renee Eisen-Khonat

Human Rights Festival

28 March 2026

Do Digital Archives Serve African Artists?

Systems For Archiving?

Who Gets Seen & Left Out? Who Gets to Choose? Who Owns the Work?

What Are Digital Archives?

Collections of historically significant records, documents, or materials preserved for permanent or long-term for research and also as a repository of memory, that have been captured from an analog system into a digital informational form.

Key aspects of digital archives include storage, retrieval, indexing, access controls, and ensuring longevity despite technological changes or vulnerabilities.

What Is Out There?

- African Digital Art
- The African Rock Art Digital Archive
- Iballi, the UCT Libraries Digital Collections building and showcasing digital cultural heritage collections at the University of Cape Town
- The African Archives
- African Digital Heritage
- African Art Digital Archives (Yale University Art Gallery)
- Art Africa Magazine
- Arts Alliance of Africa + the Diaspora
- Museum of Modern African Art
- African Digital Heritage
- African Online Digital Library
- Van Rijn Archive of African Art (YVRA) & Ross Archive of African Images (RAAI)

The Promise of Digital Archives

WHAT SHOULD THEY DO?

As a virtual repository of African heritage, history and cultural narrative, they should decolonialize and de-institutionalize access to African content, and being a part of this content.

Digital archives SHOULD shape circulation of African & diasporic art...

infrastructure, circulation, visibility

They enable connection, visibility, and new publics

- They collapse geography
- They create alternative canons
- They enable new artistic forms and economies
- They build diasporic networks

The Promise of Digital Archives

WHAT SHOULD THEY PRODUCE?

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INCLUSION...

**But they DO also create opportunities
for...**

EXCLUSION and

INEQUALITY

(for African Artists especially!)

CONSTRAINTS OF DIGITAL ECOSYSTEMS

- **Access barriers**
- **Platform inequality**
- **Data extraction & ownership**

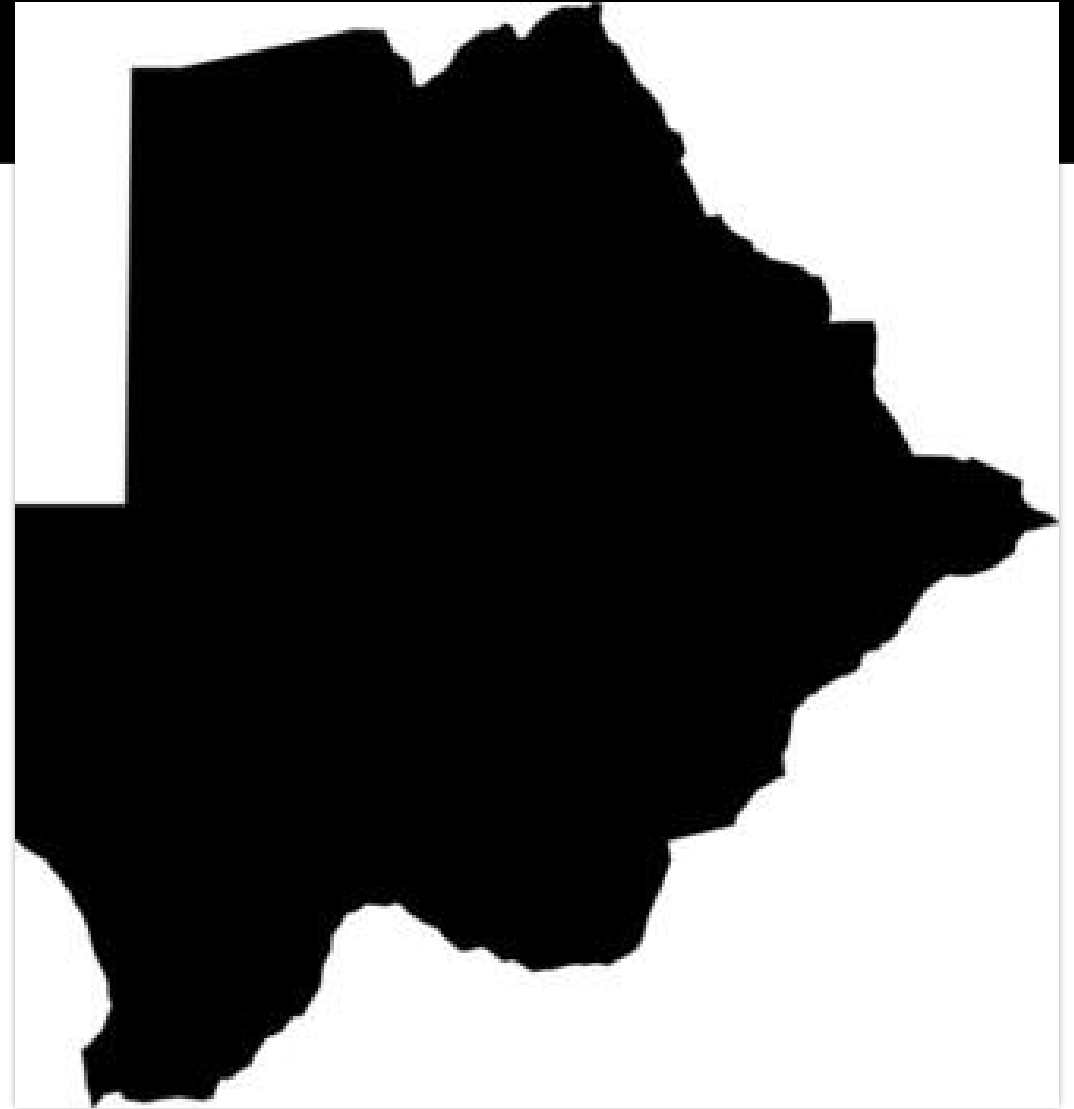


Digital archives are both:

- **Bridges** → connecting artists, audiences, and histories
- **Filters** → shaping what is visible, valuable, and searchable

The Botswana Context

- Small, growing ecosystem
- Limited archival infrastructure
- Reliance on external platforms
- Often peripheral in global narratives
- Limited institutional representation and support
- Limited educational opportunities in the arts



ReCurate

- Digital storytelling and archiving platform
- Focus on local artists and narratives
- Bridging gaps between artists and audiences
- Experimenting with alternative visibility models

Where do we come in? How do we navigate our barriers?

**CROSS-BORDER
COLLABORATION**

**CURRENT REALITIES
VS.
NEW POSSIBILITIES OF
REPRESENTATION & VISIBILITY**

DOES IT GET OUR WORK SEEN BEYOND THE NEW DIGITAL SYSTEMS?

FINAL THOUGHTS

**Visibility is not neutral—it's constructed
Collaboration must be intentional**

The future of cross-border collaboration & the development of truly inclusive digital archives and systems depends on how intentionally we design systems of access and visibility.



☆ IP Survival Guide for Artists



Own Your Magic

IP Survival Guide for Artists

Gomolemo Tau

The content in this section is for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. It is recommended that legal advice be obtained if need be.

🎵 Your song goes viral

💡 Your design is everywhere

🖼️ Your artwork is resold

BUT...

📄 You signed something

🚫 You don't own it



IP is the difference between being visible... and being *paid*.

Creations of the mind — if you made it and it's original, it's probably IP.

Music · Art · Fashion · Content · Branding · Neighbouring Rights



Copyright

Art, music, videos, literary works



Trademarks

Your name, logo, and brand identity



Designs

Fashion, product design, packaging



Patents

Tech and art crossovers, inventions

Your IP is an Asset

💰 License it

🛒 Sell it

★ Build a brand

📺 Earn royalties

The art is just the beginning.



Real World Example Taylor Swift and the Masters

- Artists sign early deals
- Labels own the masters
- She re-recorded to reclaim control

Ownership decides who profits from your success.

South African Law

⚖️ Copyright Act, 1978

⚖️ Trade Marks Act, 1993

⚖️ Designs Act, 1993

⚖️ Performers Protection Act, 1967

⚖️ Copyright Amendment Bill (pending)


Includes resale royalty rights for visual artists

CIPC is the registration body
Copyright is automatic BUT ownership can be transferred

 *Haupt t/a Softcopy v Brewers Marketing Intelligence*

Work created during employment — the employer owned the IP

"Creation does not always equal ownership"

 *Gallo Africa Ltd v Sting Music*

Dispute over music rights — court relied entirely on contract wording

"Your contract speaks louder than your creativity"

✗ **MYTH**

"If I made it, I own it"

✓ **REALITY**

Contracts override ownership
Studios or clients may own it

 **AUDIENCE POLL**

True or False:

"If I post it first, I own it."

TRUE

FALSE

💡 *Laugh It Off v SAB*

You cannot own an idea

You protect how you express it



⚖️ *Moneyweb v Media 24*

Sweat of the Brow Standard

Skill, effort, and judgment — this favours artists

- Your work must be original
- Others must copy your version to infringe



⚠️ DANGER ZONE

- ⚠️ Signing contracts blindly
- ⚠️ "In perpetuity" clauses
- ⚠️ No agreements in place
- ⚠️ No ownership splits agreed

👋 QUICK SHOW OF HANDS

Who here has signed something without fully understanding it?



LICENSE

You keep ownership



ASSIGNMENT

You lose ownership

Collab Gone Wrong

Two artists collaborate with no agreement. Work goes viral — ownership dispute.

The Resale Problem

Artist sells artwork once. Work resold for millions. Artist earns nothing.

The Copy Cat

Designer creates unique work. Retailer copies it. No design registration.

Red Flags in Contracts

- "It is a standard contract"
- "Don't worry about it"
- "No explanation given"

"Real wealth is in licensing — not selling everything."

What to look for in a contract

- Ownership
- Rights granted
- Duration
- Territory
- Usage rights

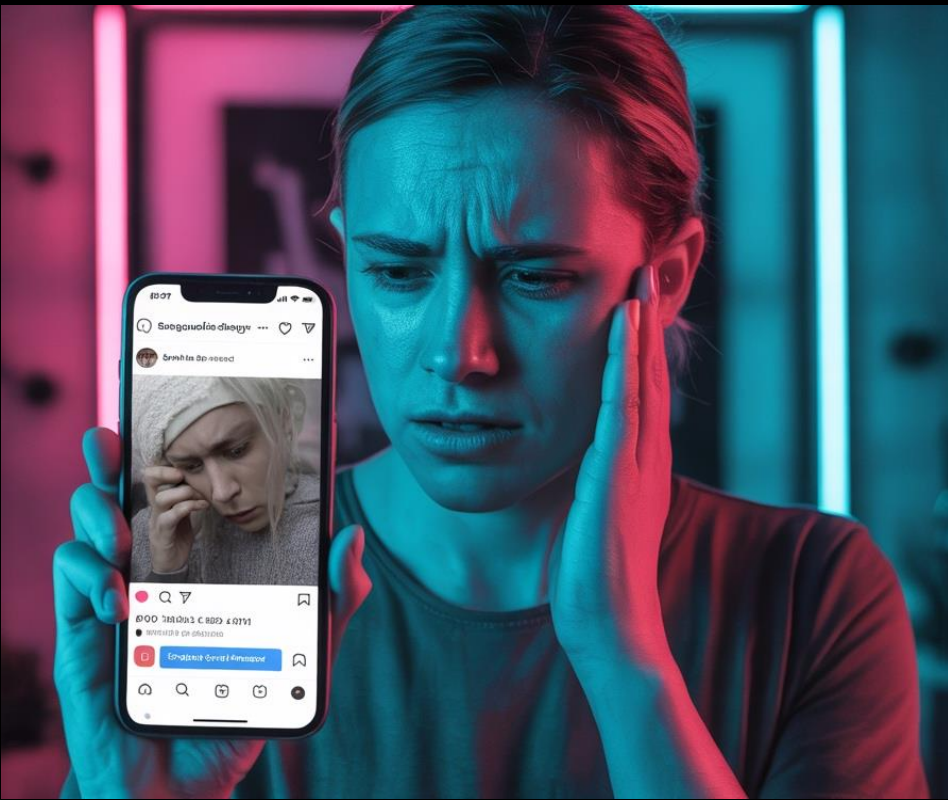


Social Media ≠ Protection

Posting = Exposure

Not protection

Your work can be reused without payment



Proof of Creation

Keep timestamps, drafts, and source files



Timestamp Your Work

Email to yourself or use OpenTimestamps



Watermark Digital Work

Visible watermarks on all online content



Written Agreements

Always. Even with friends.



Split Sheets

Use a split sheet for every collaboration




Register Trademarks

Protect your name and logo via CIPC

You do not have to figure this out alone.


 **CIPC**
IP Registration
cipc.co.za

 **SAMRO**
Music royalties
samro.org.za

 **DALRO**
Literary and artistic rights
dalro.co.za

 **CAPASSO**
Composers and publishers
capasso.co.za

 **Legal Aid SA**
Free legal assistance
legalaid.org.za

 **University IP Clinics**
Wits, UCT, UP
Contact your nearest campus



Help is closer than you think.
Reach out before you sign anything.

**Your creativity is powerful.
Your ownership makes it valuable.**

☆ **Do This Week**

- 1 Document your creative process — keep all files and drafts
- 2 Watermark and timestamp all digital work
- 3 Never sign without reading — ask questions
- 4 Use split sheets for every collaboration
- 5 Register your trademark with CIPC

 **Key SA Contacts**

-  **CIPC** cipc.co.za
-  **SAMRO** samro.org.za
-  **DALRO** dalro.co.za
-  **CAPASSO** capasso.co.za
-  **Legal Aid SA** legalaidsa.org.za

Scan for Full Resource Pack



WHO HOLDS RESPONSIBILITY?

Artists, Communities & Institutions



Containment | Flow | Purpose

Institute for
**CREATIVE
REPAIR**

Ngairé Blankenberg

Human Rights Festival

March 28 2026

Culture is Value

Culture generates economic value

Culture shapes identity

Culture holds knowledge

Culture is not neutral

What is a Cultural Institution?

An organisation that:

- Produces, presents, or preserves culture
- Shapes public understanding and knowledge-through values, rules and norms
- Controls access and visibility

Commercial,
e.g. Galleries,
art fairs:
Market Driven



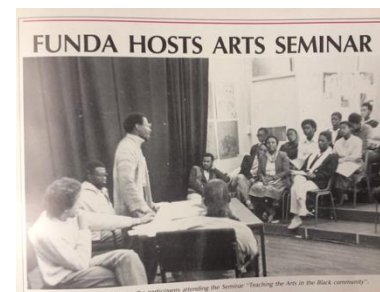
Public, e.g.
Museums,
heritage
agencies:
Public mandate



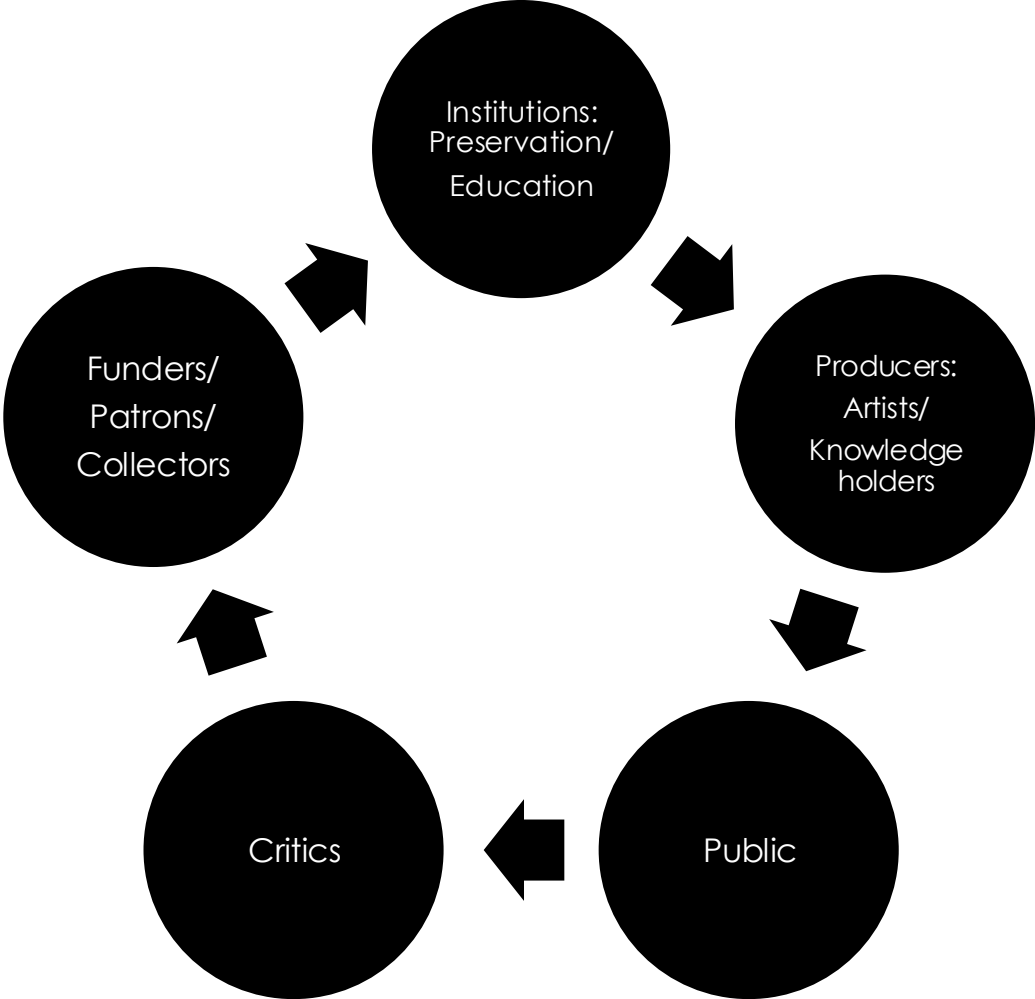
Civil Society
NGOs,
community
spaces
Mission-driven



Academic
University
museums/
archives
Research-led



Cultural Ecosystem



Containment | Flow | Purpose

Institutions shape narratives

They determine visibility

They assign value

They preserve memory

They provide jobs

They control resources



Institute for
**CREATIVE
REPAIR**

Containment | Flow | Purpose

Agency

Power is uneven but agency still exists

Participation is a choice

Responsibility is shared

All actors shape outcomes

Common Pitfalls

Unclear terms accepted

Uneven value exchange

Poor communication

Culture used without context

Avoided accountability

Responsibilities

Institutions

Be transparent about decision-making

Pay fairly and on time / share value

Clear contracts (IP, usage)

Co-create early/consult widely

Credit

Timely communication

Preserve and document

Give access

Artists

Understand/define terms

Deliver or renegotiate

Maintain authorship integrity

Credit- protect authorship

Respond reliably

Be transparent

Organize/preserve your archive

Communities

Be transparent about decision-making

Decide what is shared

Ensure fair benefit

Clear communication channels

Define what is not for use

Protect cultural knowledge

Communication is Responsibility

Clarity prevents harm

Silence creates risk

Delays affect everyone

Communication = accountability

A Simple Test

- What am I giving? (is it mine to give?)
- What am I getting? (is it fair)
- What am I risking? (what is my bottom line)
- What control do I retain? (think of the future)
- Where could this be reused (AI)?

Power shapes the conditions.
Agency shapes the outcome.



Institute for
**CREATIVE
REPAIR**

ON INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY



Containment | Flow | Purpose

Oratile Mosimanekgosi

Visual Art Network of South Africa

1. How can art institutions design open calls that genuinely create opportunities for artists, rather than simply sourcing content for institutional archives?

What happens before and after an open call reaches artists?

- how opportunities are shaped before they appear
- what responsibilities continue after participation

By the time opportunities circulate through art networks like VANSA, decisions about purpose and archive have already been made.

When Is Consent Imagined?

When is consent imagined?

Scenario

An artist submits documentation of a performance to an institutional archive through an open call. At the time, the agreement allows the institution to store and display the images online for research and visibility purposes.

Five years later, the institution launches a new digital platform and republishes the same images to promote a thematic programme about public protest. The artist's work is included because it visually fits the theme but the performance was originally about grief and mourning, not protest. The images now circulate widely in a political context the artist did not intend.

Nothing in the original consent process anticipated this shift.

Accountability in Practice

Artists should be able to identify:

- the archive contact person or
- the collections manager
- the curator responsible
- a public-facing institutional email tied to collections use

What Now?

What should remain negotiable between artists and institutions after the open call is fulfilled?

Thank You!

NUMXN is a youth-led non-profit organisation seeking to address the systemic harm of inequitable access to arts education and creative opportunities, particularly for youths who are from rural and township areas. We recognise that structural barriers limit artistic and intellectual expression for many young people, reinforcing cycles of exclusion within education, the creative and cultural industries, and the broader economy.

Through our initiatives, we strive to create platforms for all types of creatives to develop their craft, showcase their work, and contribute to broader conversations on art, culture, and society. Our work is rooted in the belief that access to creative opportunities is not a privilege, but a necessity for individual and collective growth.

NUMXN is a non-profit company registered in South Africa (Registration Number: 2024/538103/08), and recognised as non-profit organisation by the Department of Social Development (317-980 NPO).



Containment | Flow | Purpose

Email: info@numxn.org
Website: www.numxn.org