

New app changing how South Africans buy and sell art

Exhibid, a new mobile app which uses GPS technology to serve up all the artworks that are available in a user's immediate geographic area, is changing the way South Africans buy and sell art. The app draws on the same principles as location-based dating apps to connect art lovers and artists.



The “art in your pocket” app enables users to browse and bid on pieces that catch their eye, within the comfort of their own home. A simple “swipe left” on the online gallery permanently removes an artwork from view, while a “swipe right” adds the piece to the user’s favourites.

The app’s built-in bidding system allows the potential buyer to make an offer, which the artist is at liberty to accept or reject. Once a bid is accepted, payment is made via a secure payment gateway and buyer and artist are connected via the app to arrange collection.

Finding the perfect match

Explaining the idea behind Exhibid, creator and artist Cedric Vanderlinden said the art world faced many of the same problems as the dating world when it came to finding the perfect match.

“I’ve always believed that finding the right artwork is like falling in love, in that it is incredibly difficult,” explained Vanderlinden.

“In both instances, you have to meet the right person at the right time in the right circumstances, which is almost impossible,” he said, adding that South Africa’s vast geographic area compounded the problem.

Vanderlinden said many working visual artists struggled to make sales because they had neither the means nor opportunity to exhibit their work formally, with the result that potential buyers saw only a very limited selection of what was available on the local art scene.

"Galleries act as tastemakers and gatekeepers"

“Galleries act as tastemakers and gatekeepers and they wield an enormous amount of power. If you’re going to a gallery, you are seeing only a few selected artists, and from those artists, you’re only seeing a few selected works. Even if you like the artist, there’s nothing to say that what he or she has on show is exactly what you are looking for.”

As both a working artist and gallerist, Vanderlinden said he could see the problem from both sides, which had inspired the creation of the “art in your pocket” app, which launched in November after two years in development.

Artists can also apply for the Exhibit Exhibition Fund, which gives them R1,500 towards hosting a physical exhibition in return for promoting the app via their marketing materials and social media.

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