

DISCUSSION PAPER 3:

VISUAL ARTS & CRAFT SECTOR (FINE ARTS, PHOTOGRAPHY, CRAFT)

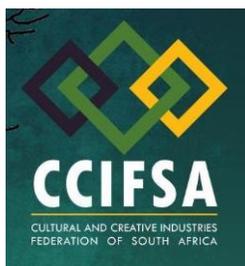
The visual arts industry would include individual artists such as painters, sculptors, new media artists, book illustrators, cartoonists and printmakers, galleries that exhibit and sell art, framers, educators (public institutions and private), awards and competitions, festivals that exhibit art, suppliers of art materials, publications, photographic studios, corporate art collections and local and international art collectors. Secondary impact of the sector includes studio rentals, restorers, reproduction houses, packaging and transportation of art.

The Visual Arts, Crafts and Design sector is made up of **non-performing artists** who create standalone artistic products, alongside those in graphic, product, interior or industrial design and illustration. The Visual Arts, Crafts and Design workforce are often sole operators and contractors. However, those in design may be employed by design companies or organisations with in-house design services, but many of these workers also operate as freelance contractors.

Visual artists are generally self-effacing, and are reliant on galleries and agents to sell their work. Few artists have the entrepreneurial desire or skills to market their own work, and prefer to engage in creativity rather than the selling part. Most artists are self-employed, with relatively low levels of annual income directly related to sales of their work through galleries representing them or the odd exhibition. Many artists work in an arts-related job to earn more regular income, with the most common being education, whether as teachers at school level, lecturers at tertiary institutions or private art schools. A few are lucky to find work as consultants on corporate collections and there are those who have cracked the international market and are able to live from their art work.

For visual artists, income is highly irregular. It takes time and large investments of time and resources to work towards an exhibition at which the works may be sold. Depending on the profile of the artist, there are likely to be one-off sales between exhibitions via the gallery or agent representing the artist, or in some cases, actual commissions from private or corporate collectors. Many artists depend on grant funding from various agencies to cover their costs while working towards an exhibition or a major opportunity to sell their work. For more established artists, their representative galleries may provide them with funding while they work towards an exhibition, with this deducted from the overall sales of the work at the end of the exhibition.

The craft industry includes a broad range of utilitarian and decorative items, media, materials and functions ranging from glass, textiles, ceramics and jewellery to curios, industrial appliances and everyday utility objects. It embraces art and culture through



the production of traditional and contemporary handmade artefacts, workshop production of one-off designs, and forms of batch production manufacturing using a range of synthetic and natural materials.

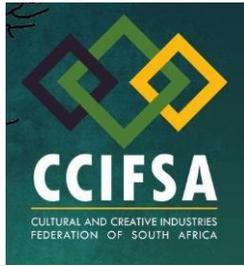
Five broad categories within the **craft** industry:

- 1) **Traditional Art** constitutes culturally specific products, whose meaning and significance is generated and shared by members of a specific community. Such goods are often produced for the domestic market, for example clay beer pots in KwaZulu-Natal.
- 2) **Designer Goods** result out of the deliberate adaptation of Traditional Art to satisfy the tastes of the high-income market and are often decorative in nature. For example, Ndebele patterned beaded headbands or Swazi Christmas ornaments.
- 3) **Craftart** overlaps significantly with Traditional Art and has been defined as products that are produced entirely by hand, by skilled producers but which are not considered 'fine art'.
- 4) **Functional wares** are mass-produced handmade goods that are produced in small batch production processes, either in small workshops or factories. Examples include pottery, furniture and utility objects such as crockery and cutlery.
- 5) **Souvenirs** are "inexpensive, universal trinkets or simplified crafts" which often sell the memories of a particular location.

Characteristics of the market:

Our craft is not a large player in the global craft industry and unfortunately has a poor reputation in the formal international business sector due to the lack of quality and unreliable supply. Local exporting success has been experienced by those agencies (white controlled) focusing solely on crafts and which deal with a limited selection of crafters, influencing their product lines and operating with much smaller volumes than the more commercial export agencies.

Low barriers to entry into the industry have allowed women entrepreneurs to become involved, often adapting traditional skills such as sewing and beading to generate a source of income. Craft production is often home-based meaning that women can integrate it with household or agricultural work. Craft production is recognised as playing a key role in product and process innovation. Products initially produced in the craft industry are often later manufactured on a larger scale. The process of innovation mirrors the nature of craft production through an adaptive approach towards materials and a close relationship between designer and production, customer and manufacturer. The craft sector is closely linked with a number of other industries such as the tourist industry and the formal manufacturing and retail sectors. This



happens through joint supply and distribution chains, product development and marketing strategies.

Sector Insights:

Historically, this sector has largely chosen to self-manage their career rather than depend on galleries or other third parties to assist with management and promotion. This does, however, expose these workers to working conditions which causes them to forego benefits such as sick leave, maternity leave, superannuation contributions and holiday pay.

Due to the ongoing pandemic artists and arts workers have an increased need for skills relating to career management; small business and contract management; online engagement, digital production and marketing, sales, and brand management; and personal resilience and mental health management. Digital transformation is also underpinning the need for visual arts workers to be flexible and adaptable, and there is a growing range of digital production methods for artists to master as well as an increasing need for rigorous knowledge around intellectual property, public engagement, curation, conservation, and funding.

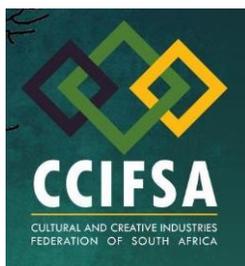
Emerging opportunities in this industry now include online marketplace, allowing visual artists direct access to a global audience; and public art, where artists receive commissions to produce artworks for the public-facing walls of buildings.

4IR Influence

Effective use of technology can enhance regional access by growing audience reach, as well as supporting collaboration with international markets.

How are our designers confronting waste and recycling issues, and the need to step-up with improved performance, good design and greater innovation? Designers are key to shaping a sustainable future that includes paying greater attention to benign and renewable materials, waste avoidance, re-use, repair and recycling. There is a need therefore for enhanced R&D initiatives involving circular design expertise and knowledge, reduced environmental impacts as a result of designing-out waste and pollution from the outset, and meeting expectations of the design education sector and graduate designers.

Lack of access to markets in urban centres is another big obstacle for rural crafters. Transportation to market is essential if the right product is to be supplied at the right time to the right market outlets. The transportation needs of rural crafters should therefore be considered as part of the infrastructure planning process in rural areas.



The link between craft businesses and tourism bodies is a very important component of marketing and should therefore be strengthened.

Key obstacles to successful development are linked to:

- a) a lack of access to credit facilities and micro-finance services;
- b) inadequate access to appropriate communication, transport and utilities infrastructure;
- c) problems related to production processes, volumes and deadlines, product quality and product development;
- d) irregular and inappropriate marketing strategies;
- e) a lack of galleries for exhibitions (especially in communities), and
- f) difficulty in obtaining materials for production.

DISCUSSION POINTS:

At present the craft industry in South Africa (KZN dominated) is undeveloped and uncoordinated. It is important that a market for craft products be identified before work is done to promote new craft production. Craft and Visual Art can be promoted as part of our cultural heritage, if it is presented along with appropriate music and visual effects it can be used as a very effective marketing tool for the country as a whole.

Is there a provincial or nationally recognized training for the Visual Arts, Crafts and Design sector to assist the further growth of this sector and eliminate exploitations especially in the distribution and marketing of products? (Crafters in particular, the distribution and export chain is white dominated and yet producers are mainly rural women and men).

Are the products developed innovative enough to attract international export market? (Other African countries are making serious money internationally with craft and visual art).

Is every hotel, lodge, B&B decorated with local crafts of diverse forms?

Shall Mobile Exhibitions be considered for this sector?

Are there photography training labs in Durban (just like Market Theatre Photography Lab)? Where do aspirant photographers go for quality vocational and short term training in Durban?