**TRANSCRIPT**

**Wesley Pepper:** [00:00:00] In the last, in the last episode now I was talking to a gallery, um, based in Swaziland, a Yebo! Gallery, um, about, um, So, um, um, it's sort of like a, uh, I wouldn't say a trend, but like sort of something I wanna, I wanna, I want to keep doing on the podcast, start, keep focusing and like, gaining more, more in depth and talking to more galleries about it.

[00:00:22] So, um, um, let's see. Let's start off with like how you, uh, how, how, um, Obtain Art Gallery came to being, right. So, um, um, You know, what came first was it the business first art first, or, you know, or the idea, or how did they sort of interlink, you know? And, um, yeah, once let's, yeah, let's just start off with that. And then I can flow into these other questions,

[00:00:47] **Happy Mashigo:** [00:00:47] you know, with Obtain Art, uh, before it became Obtain Art. No, um, I was working in a gallery before and, um, I saw how much people are passionate about buying art, you know, so I just wanted. People to, you know, to be able to buy art and not to complain about traffic, you know, or the place is not safe because we were located in Joburg and you know, we're experiencing, you know, um, You know, like they were reading stories about crimes that were happening in Joburg and so they were afraid to come.

[00:01:21] And, you know, when, once they have that courage to come, maybe sometimes they find out that the artwork that they wanted is already sold. You know? So I decided that to know that I really do believe that, you know, if we can take art, you know, to the online markets, then people could have, you know, um, Um, like a simpler way to, to, to, to buy the art that they love.

[00:01:44] However, again is another thing with the online platform is back then it wasn't that popular, you know? Yeah. People felt like if you show prices online and all you're making the artwork, look, you know, like you're devaluing the artwork. So it was that kind of a challenge. And then we started the company called Shouting Art, where our main aim was, we wanted to, to attract activist in art, you know, and to, you know, try to introduce this art market, in like online cause overseas, it was big, but here in South Africa, people were still like, you know, afraid to take this.

[00:02:21] So eventually, uh, obtain art wasn't that successful. Due to, um, you know, we were still young in the game and we didn't understand a lot of the things, you know, so once it failed and I decided that, you know, I just still need to, you know, to, to, to, to push this, I decided to make, you know, Obtain Art where even the word, you know, I just wanted to make a gallery strictly for people who want's to buy, you know, not people who has to just. get the feel and the vibe of being in a gallery and seeing those artworks, but you know what? You want something, you buy it now and then that's it. So that's why I decided to make Obtain Art.

[00:02:56] **Wesley Pepper:** [00:02:56] Okay, man. Okay, man. So I picked up, I picked up on two points there that I want, that I want to talk. And the second one will sort of lead into the, into the, into the next question. Um, um, you're not the first person to complain about like the CBD being, um, what it is, you know, and, and not attracting a very specific demographic. And as you know, Um, which is what I find ironic with like Maboneng and, um, um, um, with, with like, there's just so much money than people, so, yeah, but that's another dynamic, you know, for another, it's just an interesting point.

[00:03:29] Um, um, the second one, this is what I'm leading to so, uh, so this is what I want to, I want to explore, man. Because a bit in more detail is the, is the politics versus the physical space. Right. Um, the physical gallery versus the online gallery and now, um, we've had COVID19, um, and everything is forced. Yeah. You know, has, has, as, has been changed and then, um, um, and so forth.

[00:03:54] So my understanding is that just a bit of a background on my, on, on the physical space. So, um, I mean, I know that the overheads are ridiculous, you know, and if your positioning is not very strategic, you also lose out on there. And that also comes with, uh, with, uh, with the price. Um, um, um, so the, so, so, so now that, um, Um, uh, the, the, the digital world has sort of evolved into what it is.

[00:04:22] And now we have the introduction of 5G, which is just going to open up like virtual reality or augmented reality spaces. Um, um, and that's something interesting. I also want to sort of touch on, um, um, Oh, how did according to you, right? Uh, is there a future for a physical. Um, art gallery in or rather, let's say if we're going to be more specific, let's say in the next, uh, five years, um, um, do you think there'll be more galleries online and, and, and, and, or how do you sort of see that transition?

[00:04:57] **Happy Mashigo:** [00:04:57] Well, I honestly believe that, you know, most of the galleries currently are even like planning on going online, some of them are already operating online, you know? And I feel like there's the them. You know, there won't be a need for people to go to a gallary. You know, most people, they even hate, you know, how sales people or, you know, people who trying to sell them art, you know, just come there and, you know, most people cause I've been interviewing some of the buyers and I asked them, do you prefer a physical gallery?

[00:05:29] Or an online gallery or both? you know, before, um, I went full like a hundred percent online. No, because before I had a gallary space also in Joburg, in Selby. And then, um, you know, but I was seeing that most of our customers were online rather than coming to the gallery. So I needed it to know where we're at, where to from here, and I've understand that, you know, most of the people, they don't like the fact that, you know, they go to a gallery and then someone comes in and while at that time they just wanted to appreciate the art.

[00:05:59] So I'm finding that most people now they prefer museums as opposed to, to, to art galleries. And if they sing that add calories online, so they'd rather buy art online. And then if you want to appreciate added, go to a museum where there's no one trying to sell. Them anything, you know? So I really do believe that, um, in the future in five years time, you know, maybe 80% of the world or the gallaries will be online. That's what I believe.

[00:06:24] **Wesley Pepper:** [00:06:24] Yeah. So like, so like, so like how do you think, I think, um, uh, let me just explore that a bit further, man. So, um, how do you think that's gonna change your focus? Because, because what you're saying is that you focusing solely on selling the art and not giving the, the let's just call them viewers the experience. So, so in other words, my understanding of that would be is that like you have a very specific market, um, you know, what they want. Um, and so on and so on.

[00:06:51] So, uh, uh, is there like sort of a lot of, how can I put it to, um, uh, like, like this, like, uh, are you, are you, are you okay or your gallery that is, are you okay with that sort of niche market or do you want to expand and, you know, and sell art to, to, to, you know, to new markets and, and like, how are you going to use technology? Um, the, the digital space for that.

[00:07:19] **Happy Mashigo:** [00:07:19] can you try to expand that question again?

[00:07:25] **Wesley Pepper:** [00:07:25] Okay. So, so like you were saying early on. Mmm. Mmm, Mmm, Mmm, Mmm. You Obtain art is focusing on the, on selling art directly to people. Correct. And you're not trying to offer them the experience. In other words, like that experience of coming into a gallery and interacting and drinking wine and all of that.

[00:07:46] Right. Okay. So, so, so how I, how I see that is that like you, um, or Obtain art as a very specific market. And, you know, then let's just call it needs or wants, you know, you know, it, you know, like what they consume and you selling directly through to that. So, so, so, um, agh man like, like, like where I'm coming from or other what, I'm, what I, what I'm trying to do with all these projects I do.

[00:08:13] And so forth is also expand my market because I think that, um, especially in South Africa, there's a, you know, if you look at the working class market and so on, So, so, so, so, so having that formula that is clearly working for you or for your gallery, um, are you interested in, um, um, expanding to new markets? You know, and if so, like, how are you going to use, um, um, your gallery or the, or the, or the digital space

[00:08:41] **Happy Mashigo:** [00:08:41] currently at the moment I think I am still, um, you know, like keen on giving them the experience of, however Line is really bad. Uh, um, Um,

[00:08:53] **Wesley Pepper:** [00:08:53] Happy, sorry, sorry. Sorry, my brother, I don't mean to interject but there's a bit of a a, uh, the, the feed is a bit funny, man.

[00:09:02] Um, it's breaking up. Um, so could you, so could you just kind of just, uh, we, uh, repeat the question again, the answer,

[00:09:15] **Happy Mashigo:** [00:09:15] sorry about that. I think, you know, yeah, this is some of the disadvantages of technology, but I do believe, you know, they're making our life easier

[00:09:24] **Wesley Pepper:** [00:09:24] that's because that, because the wind has picked up here by me, so, you know, so I dunno, and like this Telkom thing, trust me, I've been complaining too much about that. And it's a, it's a real problem because most artists use Telkom so it sucks.

[00:09:41] **Happy Mashigo:** [00:09:41] Yeah, I am still, I'm giving them the art experience to some of the, you know, the new buyers, you know, I'm trying to open a new market, especially in the townships. Cause I'm seeing that, uh, especially those places, we have less people who are appreciating art and I can't just introduce online, you know, gallery to them while they don't know how it feels like to be you know next to, to artists or, you know, just to be in an exhibition. So, um, we are currently, we have a space in a township that we are working on that we'll be having an in, um, exhibitions too. Um, due to especially upcoming artists.

[00:10:18] but at the same time, the online platform, as you mentioned that the VR in, are we planning to take it there you know, we also want to have VR , uh, we, you know, there there's a lot of platforms that are actually opening up in a, in a, in, um, in, um, the digital world, you know, and we are trying to make sure that we are up to speed. You know, one thing that I know that there's a problem with, um, their, the online spaces is now the, um, the cybersecurity part where people like they're still reluctant to buy online due to, you know, they do not trust, you know, you know, giving their details, especially online.

[00:10:57] though there are ways to protect them, but I believe that, you know, um, we are trying to make sure that we come up with a system like the most secure system, you know, so that we know that everyone who wants to buy online, you know, can do that without having to worry. You know, because I know recently, you know, even Google has been hacked, you know, one company that has been, you know, so those kinds of stories, they, they, they, they like, they actually dragged us a bit. as us we are trying to pursue this. In an online world.

[00:11:28] **Wesley Pepper:** [00:11:28] Yeah. Yeah. That's um, that's interesting because I, my understanding is that there's a definite, um, um, I would say I'm not, not prejudice, but there's a sort of a naivety. No, no, no. That's was not the right word, but like, yeah, people don't really trust the online and I'm talking specifically the African market, um, because we are just not that heavy, um, um, buyers or consumers for like, for example, like in China, um, So, so, so yeah, I know that there's, there's also other platforms who are selling other products and food and so on and so on.

[00:12:01] That's also dealing with that. But, uh, I think that now that COVID19 has sort of force, um, um, I know that food places in particular and medical supplies, uh, I suppose I've, I've known that I've noticed that sort of, yeah. chain has, you know, as has been working a bit more efficiently, uh, and I'm talking now pre or. Um, now during COVID, so, but now like, you know, know, obviously we don't sell food, we artists, so, so yeah, I mean, I understand that, but I, um, I see the, the, the problem that, uh, you said something about, um, um, VR man, you know, that's super interesting. Uh, tell us a little bit more about that or either what you have envisioned or planned behind that?

[00:12:48]**Happy Mashigo:** [00:12:48] Sure. So I've been browsing through a lot of gallaries, you know, and what I've seen is they taking their own gallery space and, you know, giving that feel to a person, you know? So when you're wearing those glasses, you feel like you are in that space.

[00:13:05] So what I want to do is I want, I want to create something similar to. You know, you know, like what you find in when you're playing, like, let's say X box games, you know, where I want to bring the gallery inside the people's home, for example, um, a person can select a certain artwork and just display it wherever he, or she feels like it should be, you know, like let's say, hang that work and just curate your own house with the art works that we have.

[00:13:31] And if that person likes that, uhm that kind of. Yeah, form then he or she can purchase the art. So I don't want to make like, also giving them that experience of being in a gallery. I want to move away from that, you know, except for the ones who are introducing here, but I just want to make sure that whenever they go to the VR system, you know, they just go to their houses and whenever there's spaces, then they can select each and every artwork. And. Hang it there, you know, and just see how the house look with that on the walls.

[00:14:04] **Wesley Pepper:** [00:14:04] yes, are you guys working on it?

[00:14:06] **Happy Mashigo:** [00:14:06] We are working on it at the moment. Yeah, we are. We actually, um, we we've tested it once and, um, it is working, but however, there's a bit, you know, we still need to make sure that yeah, yeah. So I'm pretty, I'm hoping maybe by next year. Oh, it should be up and running. Yeah, because

[00:14:28] **Wesley Pepper:** [00:14:28] Yeah, I was going to ask that

[00:14:36] **Happy Mashigo:** [00:14:36] [indistinct] art, that gives you wealth. So we are not selling to people who just. You know, um, want to buy art for the sake of decorating, but we want to sell to investors, you know, people who are hoping to, to, to, to earn from, you know, buying that artwork, you know, by doing that, we are both also, um, boosting the artist because of, um, if let's say you as Wesley pepper, someone buys your artwork.

[00:15:03] You know, we want to make sure that they feel secure, that if they would resell your artwork later on. It'll give them, um, like revenue, you know, like it'll give them sort of like returns, you know? So at the same time, um, you as an artist, you know, if you feel like you have created wealth to someone else, You know, I think that will inspire you more as an artist because it will also make your prices to, you know, kind of appreciate as time goes by.

[00:15:31] So we are not just selling to anyone, but our target is those who are investing in art.

[00:15:40] **Wesley Pepper:** [00:15:40] Kind of basically what i'm talking about is are black middle class people buying and investing in art?

[00:15:47] **Happy Mashigo:** [00:15:47] unfortunately, no, uh, most of our customers are from overseas, which is not what we wanted, but hope, but, you know, we getting most orders from, especially, um, Italy and London, you know, those are the most, um, places that we would get orders from. But then, um, when it comes to black people, especially in the township, we don't have a lot of, uh, buyers, you know, and that is something that we are trying to make sure that we educate them.

[00:16:16] You know, we had a workshop last year, I think October, you know, where we invited companies here in the locations and we explained about art. We had some, you know, some few artists that were a bit well established, especially that were coming from whatever, you know, we interviewed them and.

[00:16:33] You know, they get the idea, but they're still not ready to buy, you know, so that's why we decided that we're gonna make exhibitions in a township so that they can understand. So we know that it's going to be an ongoing thing and you know, they want to see, yeah, we are not getting much of them, you know, especially the middle class people that are buying art, but you know, mostly other people that I had relationships with um, in terms of, you know, um, like, especially people frooverseas that, um, because before I started this, you know, I was asking advice from people who are abroad.

[00:17:11] **Wesley Pepper:** [00:17:11] Do you think that there's potential in the black middle class in South Africa?

[00:17:18] **Happy Mashigo:** [00:17:18] Yeah. However, I think there's less knowledge, you know, because of, um, currently, cause I've been looking at people know they're there. People are big spenders here. Like I'm looking at the cars that they driving now.

[00:17:30] **Wesley Pepper:** [00:17:30] what is it that is attractive to international artists about south african art?

[00:17:36] **Happy Mashigo:** [00:17:36] I believe it's our stories, you know, um, because of most of the guys that are selling are those who are actually telling stories about no places where they come from. You know? So I do believe that they are intrigued about our stories and, you know, it's something that is new to them. You know, unlike, you know, what they usually get on the market.

[00:17:57] **Wesley Pepper:** [00:17:57] Does Obtain Art have a strategy on how to work with social media in order to grab more people or to grow?

[00:18:06]**Happy Mashigo:** [00:18:06] When it comes to show social media is, um, I was one person who like, I never liked social media, you know, but then my wife is like, no, she loves that. And then she decided that, you know, I wanna you know, handle the social media part. So she's the one who's busy with the social media. And to be honest with you, I haven't even checked what's going on here.

[00:18:29] How many people do we have? You know. How many people are engaging? She's the one and who's doing it. That at the same time, I know powerful social media is not because of, um, I've been receiving calls from people saying, you know, I saw this image from your Facebook page, you know, is it still available? No. So, um, I think I'm the wrong person to answer that.

[00:18:51] Yeah, it comes like, um, I don't know why I just didn't have time for, for social media, you know? Um, I remember the last time I opened a page. You know, I got a lot of messages, private messages, not from the, you know, from the company page, but you know, when I opened my Facebook, I saw I had plus minus three hundred and something messages.

[00:19:10] And then that's when I decided that I'm going to stop, you know? So I felt like, you know, people will keep on contacting me and I won't have the time to answer them all. So I started to stay away from social media from there.

[00:19:23] **Wesley Pepper:** [00:19:23] coming from your side have you noticed or do you think that COVID19 is going to change people's tastes you know in other words will they be consuming art differently and if so what type of art and or do you think it's going to be business as usual?

[00:19:42] **Happy Mashigo:** [00:19:42] I think, let me just say 50% of people have changed, you know, like, um, nowadays back then they just used to buy art, you know, just, you know, what they liked. You know, and nowadays, especially after this, COVID-19, you know, they're sort of like, uh, I don't know how to put it, you know, like I know there's this artis, um, he's a good artist.

[00:20:04] Um, his concept, he was talking actually about the happy moment, you know, of, of his life and the people that surround him. And eventually after this COVID-19, he started. You know, documenting about, you know, the struggles of what people. So it's sort of like, um, disagreeing with what he was doing before. And he did that because of, you know, that kind of work was in demand, you know, to a point that, um, you know, people now they want to be part of the history that I'm seeing that like the buyers that are buying some artwork, they buy it because of, you know, it is it's leaving a mark in history, you know, Cause this is something that has happened, I think for the first time, you know, whole world and everyone is talking about it.

[00:20:44] So now everyone wants to get a piece of what is happening here. Hoping that, uh, it later on, you know, that thing will have more value because of, you know, um, it was happening at that time of the moment. So I believe that, uh, now most of the buyers, not all of them, that's what I'm saying. 50 percent. um, they're they're they want to.

[00:21:07] You know, get something that is related to COVID-19, you know, and I find out that it changes some of the styles of artists, you know, so I have to believe later on, let's say maybe next year, you know, artists will find it hard for them to get back to what they were talking about, you know, but now there will be.

[00:21:27] You know, rather than sort of like puppets, you know, no longer doing art for the sake of having a voice, but doing art because of someone requested, you know, so that's what I'm seeing. I'm seeing like people are no longer being true to themselves. They just following what sells now, you know, and. You know, buyers always still have needs, you know, and, and you as an artist, you know, you just need to find your right market.

[00:21:50] So what I'm seeing is now, um, people are no longer, most people let me not just say people, most people are no longer concerned about what they stand for. But now they are concerned about what the client wants. Yeah, I know strategically that is good. You know, especially when you want to, you know, make money for yourself, but I do believe, you know, what made us unique as artists was having our own voice now our own unique voice and making a statement, you know, to tell the world that you matter as you are, you know, so I knew you as this and not as what you wanted people

[00:22:24] um, to become, so I don't know how to put it, but yeah, I, yeah. Market has changed and I think it'll change, you know, because of people now will be used to their new styles and, you know, everyone wants to talk about this cOVID-19 everyone like carts now become sort of like the same. No. Yeah. Most of the artworks that I'm seeing, you know, someone wearing a mask.

[00:22:49] and I go outside there's someone wearing the mask, no, there's not. Then, you know, like, you know, like, like before where you can just say. No, I appreciate this artwork, you know, keeps you thinking now you just know it's about COVID-19.

[00:23:01] **Wesley Pepper:** [00:23:01] What is Obtain Art gallery doing for the rest of the year?

[00:23:08] **Happy Mashigo:** [00:23:08] So for now we are actually preparing for one of the exhibition, like a, um, here that will be happening in the township. This will be our first exhibition here in the township. So at the moment we visited with some workshops where we educating, especially, um, businesses that are local. And, you know, educating them about art and, and we are also planning to also host an auction here at the, uh, at the township. So are busy preparing for those two events.

[00:23:39] **Wesley Pepper:** [00:23:39] How did you identify which businesses to call to this workshop?

[00:23:41] **Happy Mashigo:** [00:23:41] Uh, we, we had a team, um, that actually visited most of the businesses here, so we didn't choose. We didn't say, okay, this is our target. We just approached every business. Yeah. And invited them.

[00:23:56] **Wesley Pepper:** [00:23:56] So they're all entrepreneurs?

[00:24:03] **Happy Mashigo:** [00:24:03] yeah. Some franchises some are the business owners, you know, some are just, um, um, You know, people who are just starting their businesses. So we just trying to reach out to, you know, a lot of people whom we know who are really making money, you know, we don't just invite anyone. Who's just, you know, uh, will come to look at art and go back.

[00:24:23] You know, we just want someone who will invest in art because our aim is to make sure that we, we, we, we train a lot of people in the township to actually buy art. yeah.

[00:25:30] **Wesley Pepper:** That's fantastic actually just in closing which township?

[00:28:07] **Happy Mashigo:** currently in Kwa-Thema

[00:29:06] **Wesley Pepper:** uhm my brother thanks so much for being part of this!

[00:32:43] **Happy Mashigo:** Thanks for inviting me, Mr Wesley!

[00:34:41] **Wesley Pepper:** Aweh