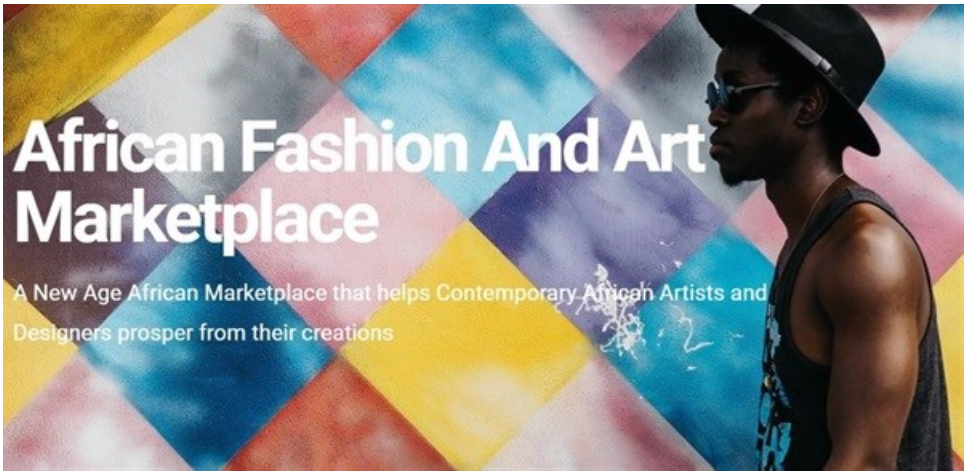
SA's Wezart helps African artists sell to world

By Tom Jackson

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South African art and fashion marketplace Wezart is helping African artists and designers sell to the rest of the world via its e-commerce platform.



Launched in 2016, Wezart focuses solely on new-age African identity in fashion and art, allowing Africans to sell their modern contemporary creations as efficiently as possible.

The startup was formed after managing director Sihle Majola attempted to buy artwork online and found what was available did not resemble the South Africa he saw every day.

“In galleries, artwork was all of jungles and African peoples’ faces. When I asked my fellow artist friends, they told me a story of how the art industry only focuses on selling African art that shows what the world believes is African art. They told me that artists could not make a living as their art is not sold in galleries. There was an African story that was not being shown to the world,” he said.

So Majola set about creating Wezart, focusing on contemporary African art that could not easily be found in galleries.

“African art of townships and cities did not have a place in the arts community, according to curators and galleries. The art industry is very colonised. We also found a close relationship between African art and African fashion. In Africa, fashion and art are one and the same thing. They are both forms of expression of creativity,” he said.

Majola has funded Wezart himself, but has grown the number of users up to 600 per day. This came after a slow start, but some press attention saw a steady climb in traffic. It is currently only operating in the South African market, but plans to expand operations significantly.

“Our plans are to grow our organisation into all major first world countries. This is done through partnerships with the best shipping organisations in order to have an amazing order fulfilling system. Our first plan is to expand to the United Kingdom (UK), the United States (US) and Australia in 2018,” Majola said.

Wezart charges a 10 per cent commission on each sale made via the platform, and also offers services to corporates in Durban to buy or rent artwork for their office. Majola said it is currently breaking even with revenues of over $2,000 per month.

The major challenge, he said, has been finding the right product-market fit.

“One of our biggest difficulties is marketing to the right people, and marketing that brings in sales. We had to develop a clear go-to-market strategy in order to grow our platform properly. As we are new in the technology space, we had to learn by trial and error before we finally found a working business model,” he said.

ABOUT TOM JACKSON

Co-founder @DisruptAfrica. Tech and business journalist in Africa. Passionate about the vibrant tech startups scene in Africa, Tom can usually be found sniffing out the continent's most exciting new companies and entrepreneurs, funding rounds and any other developments within the growing ecosystem.
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