

The intersection of art and entrepreneurship

Art has long been a field dominated by men. A painting sold by Georgia O'Keeffe in 2014 set the record for the most amount paid for a female artist at \$45m, but compared to the Leonardo da Vinci 'Salvator Mundi' that sold for \$450m in 2017, it is a drop in the ocean.



Naledi Modupi. Image supplied

The disparity between male and female artists is echoed in research by the Journal of Creative Behavior, and a recent analysis of the cultural and creative industries by the World Bank.

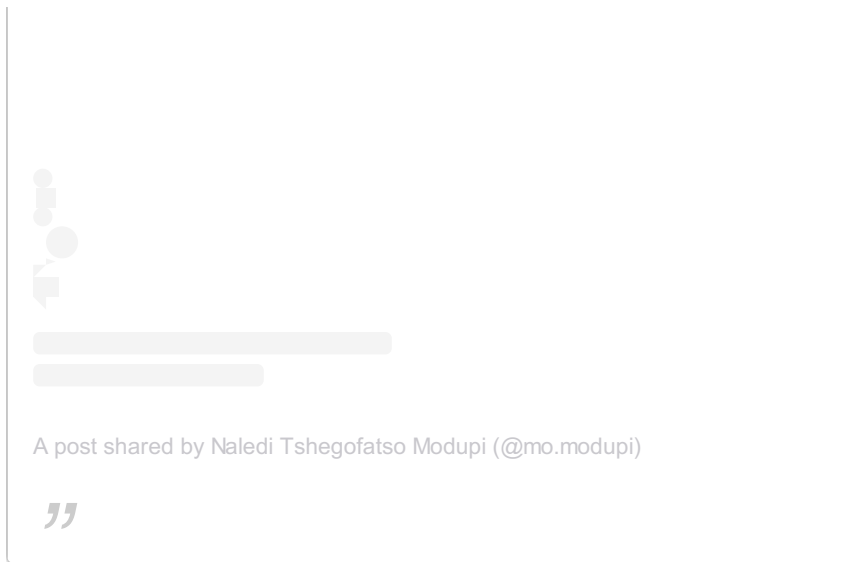
Yet, within this landscape of unequal gender pay and awareness, there are artists like Naledi Modupi bringing fire and femininity to the profession.

"I'm a commercial visual artist and illustrator and I create work that celebrates womanhood, that celebrates the beauty of being black and female," says Modupi. "We don't hear enough of these voices, and this inspires my work – I want to celebrate us in a bold, colourful, and fun way."

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Modupi's art exists in multiple forms. She has an online store with prints and original pieces that sell for a variety of prices, depending on the market and the artwork. Her digital business is structured to allow for usage permission payments and to include her growing range of clothing and home décor. The goal is to create a thriving online business around her talent.

"I want my work to exist in different forms for different spaces," explains Modupi.

Modupi opted to using an integrated payment solution that would allow her art to exist anywhere. By using a digital platform, it made it simpler for her to expand her art business and connect with customers on the go.

This growth in customer base and reach is reflected in how Modupi has expanded her network and customer base. Now able to take her store to markets and events, directly selling to the public with tap-and-go payment capabilities, she is enjoying the experience of discovering new opportunities. It has also changed how her existing customers perceive her.

"Most people thought I was a man, they didn't see the face behind the work," she says. "Now they know there's a Black woman behind the work, it tells the story of my art better. I am networking more efficiently, meeting people in different spaces and finding it easier to share my work. All this because I can now rely on a small digital payment device that makes me mobile and visible."

Thanks to her growing digital presence, Modupi is now expanding beyond the South African market to a global customer base. She has discovered a new purpose as an artist.

"I now have more independence, I am expanding my business, and I feel in control of my future," she concludes. "Women shouldn't be afraid to grow their businesses or discover their passion, I am proof of that. It's not complex, it is an adventure."

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