



Bruce Haigh, left, a former Australian diplomat to South Africa, was honoured for his contribution to repatriating South African art at a function hosted by Dr Anna Mokgokong, acting chairwoman of the Ifa Lethu Foundation, and its CEO, Dr Narissa Ramdhani, right. With them is artist David Phoshoko.

Haigh's helping hand in returning art is honoured

ARTISTS play an important part in telling the story of society and it was thanks to an eclectic group of activists that much of the work of many black South African artists during apartheid survived to be part of the tale.

Among this group was Bruce Haigh, an Australian diplomat serving as second secretary in Pretoria during the late 1970s.

Through his appreciation of township art and spirited action in defiance of the government of the time, Haigh supported, exhibited, collected and eventually helped bring back home to South Africa, as promised, his own collection of 17 South African works.

Haigh, who counted among his friends during his stint in South Africa activists and journalists, including Steve Biko and Donald Woods – whom he famously helped to

escape from South Africa – was instrumental in setting up the Ifa Lethu Foundation which has successfully found and repatriated more than 400 art works taken out of the country during apartheid.

Speaking at an event in Pretoria to honour Haigh and celebrate the success of the foundation, its acting chairwoman Dr Anna Mokgokong said the collection had been exhibited widely, most recently at the Saison South Africa in France.

Ifa Lethu has also been successful in using the arts to train and create jobs, especially in rural areas.

From a small start with a development project in Mamelodi, Ifa Lethu was today the largest development organisation in the heritage sector, having trained more than 2 000 young people as creative entrepreneurs, she said. – Staff Reporter