

FAQ:

The FAQ are compiled from the public consultation held on 13 November 2025 at the Nedbank Clocktower Building, V&A Waterfront, CAPE TOWN.

Background:

Full registered name: The Irma Prinz (born Stern) Will Trust.

The Trust is a testamentary trust created in the Will of Irma Stern.

The Trust is registered as a Public Benefit Organisation

Irma Stern's Will was signed on **29 June 1960**. She passed away on **23 August 1966**.

The preservation of the Irma Stern Museum ("The Firs") was not a result of Irma's wishes in terms of her Will. It was due to the foresight of the Trustees and UCT at the time. The two parties entered into a Memorandum of Agreement that ensured the preservation of Irma Stern's home as a museum.

The Memorandum of Agreement was signed by the parties, three years after the death of Irma Stern, on **17 June 1969**. The Irma Stern Museum opened its doors during **1971** after it was refurbished to accommodate museum operations.

The Memorandum of Agreement was mutually cancelled on **20 October 2025**.

Question 1.

[How are major decisions regarding the collection made, and what oversight mechanisms ensure accountability in the Trust's operations?](#)

Answer.

There are three components to this question:

a) Governance of The Trust.

The Trustees:

In terms of the Will of Irma Stern (clause viii), SYFRETS TRUST COMPANY LIMITED has been appointed as the sole Executor and Administrator of her estate. Syfrets Trust Company Ltd has over the years changed to the current NEDGROUP TRUST (PTY) LTD ("NGT").

NGT is wholly owned by Nedgroup Private Wealth (Pty) Ltd, which forms part of the broader Nedbank Group. NGT (previously Syfrets) administered the deceased estate of Irma Stern, and now administers the Irma Prinz (born Stern) Will Trust.

The Trust is furthermore accountable as any such Trust is, to the fiduciary, regulatory and legal parameters that govern their operations.

Because section 6(4) of the Trust Property Control Act, 57 of 1988 (as amended) requires a Corporate Trustee (NGT) to have named “nominee trustees” to be recorded on the Letters of Authority, the following persons act as trustees of the trust and will be recorded on the updated Letter of Authority.

- Belinda Van Dyk – as nominee trustee of NGT, and
- Louis van Rooyen – Legal Advisor NGT, in personal capacity to ensure continuity.

b) Governance regarding the Irma Stern Art Collection (“the Collection”) and The Firs

Dr Kathy Wheeler is the appointed full- time Curator of the Collection and in charge of the preservation and curation of the Collection. All decisions regarding the Collection are made in consultation with Dr Wheeler and historically in consultation with UCT and The Irma Stern Museum committee.

Care is taken to ensure that decisions are taken with the aim of protecting the Irma Stern Collection / Legacy and in alignment with the provisions in her Will.

c) Future governance.

i) Irma Stern Management Committee (“ISM”): A Management Committee has been formed and will be staffed by industry specialists, this team will plan and manage the future development and expansion of Irma Stern’s legacy. Each member will be appointed according to a specific skill required for the position and portfolio on the ISM.

ii) Irma Stern Advisory Board (“ISAB”): The ISM will be advised by elected members of an Advisory Board. The function of the ISAB will be to provide guidance to the ISM and the Trust. It will also take the lead on the creation of an endowment to support refurbishment and running of the Irma Stern Museum.

The members of the ISAB will be announced in December 2025.

Question 2.

What are the details about the facility which will house the Irma Stern Collection to keep it safe and secure after its removal from The Firs ?

Answer.

The relocation of the artworks is underway but not yet complete. It may take several months to decommission the museum. The new storage facility is in the Nedbank Clocktower Building in the V&A Waterfront, CAPE TOWN. The facility is bespoke and was specifically developed and built for purposes of housing the Collection. This facility has a full set of museum-standard storage, safety, security and conservation measures in place, including archival storage facilities, fire safety systems and full temperature, humidity and lighting control.

While the finishing touches to the facility are being made, The Norval Foundation has graciously offered to temporarily provide storage for a portion of the Collection at their facility in Steenberg, CAPE TOWN.

Access protocols for scholars and researchers will be put in place in consultation with the Curator of the Collection when the relocation is complete. Details will be provided once settled on request.

Question 3.

Given that portions of Irma Stern's collection are currently inaccessible to the public, what is the timeline for The Firs' refurbishment and reopening?

Answer.

The refurbishment of the Irma Stern Museum will commence in 2026. The reopening is dependent on the finalisation of the refurbishment and will be pre-announced in advance as soon as timelines are more certain.

Question 4.

What specific interim arrangements have been made to ensure continued public access to Stern's works during this period?

Answer.

A programme of exhibitions of Irma Stern's Collection is being drawn up, many of them collaborative, which will be announced when they are finalised. These will ensure the public still has regular access to Irma Stern's work.

Question 5.

The auction sale of works from the Irma Stern Collection in 2022 raised around R22 million after costs. How has this money been used to protect and continue Stern's legacy as per her stipulations in her will, and what financial oversight is there regarding these funds?

Answer.

The proceeds of the auction sale in 2022 have been invested. The income generated by the investment is and will be utilised for; transfer of the property back to The Trust, managing and maintaining The Firs property, normal expenses such as property rates and taxes, utilities and services fees and all associated costs to manage a property and Collection of this nature and size. This requires significant resources, particularly as the museum was not operated as a for profit endeavour.

Over and above the costs associated to the preservation of the property, there are significant costs associated to the restoration and preservation of the Collection, together with insurance, storage and logistics costs. The day-to-day management, exhibition and marketing plans for the Irma Stern Collection requires proper funding.

In terms of financial oversight, the Trust is governed by fiduciary, legal and regulatory parameters which ensures financial responsibility and oversight at all times. Refer to Q 1 above.

The abbreviated financial position of the Irma Stern Trust as at the end of February 2025 is published on the Trust's website.

Question 6.

What specific factors led to the decision to end the 56-year partnership with the University of Cape Town?

Answer.

The University of Cape Town decided, as was their right within the terms of the original Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with the Trust signed in 1969; to exit the arrangement whereby they managed and staffed the Irma Stern Museum. Shortly after this MoA was reached it was decided to establish The Firs as a dedicated single artist Museum, designed to display Irma Stern's artwork and objects from her collection, in the environment of her own home and garden. The establishment of the Museum in The Firs was not a stipulation in Irma Stern's Will. UCT has decided not to continue to be the custodians of The Firs, and ownership of the property will revert solely to the Irma Stern Trust, which already manages the Irma Stern Collection.

This was primarily an administrative and business decision on UCT's part, but it has provided the Trust with the opportunity to renovate and modernise The Firs, and to bring Irma Stern's legacy and work into the 21st Century in exciting ways.

Question 7.

How will the Trust ensure continuity of the scholarly research and educational programs that were facilitated through this partnership ?

Answer.

The Trust is planning an expanded and much more widely accessible programme of talks, educational programmes, media, and other partnerships, including scholarly research from around the world. Much of this will remain located at The Firs when it reopens and will include digital and other media interaction with Irma Stern's work and legacy. Irma Stern will return to her home and the public will have access to the enjoyment of her legacy.

Question 8.

What is planned by the Trust for the medium-term future of the Collection and the Firs?

Answer.

The Irma Stern Collection, and The Firs, will continue in a rejuvenated guise; new exhibition and branding partnerships, and new plans for how The Firs will live on, are all currently developed and will be announced when the necessary arrangements and agreements are in place. It is important to note that Irma Stern's legacy is being expanded and modernised with the ongoing planning process. Her work and her life will be accessible to more people than ever. The Firs will always be her house and will remain a part of that legacy.

Question 9.

[What was behind the decision to move the collection to an archival facility?](#)

Answer.

A professional architectural condition report, commissioned by the Irma Stern Trust in 2023, warned that The Firs was not recommended as a space for the permanent display, storage and conservation of such an important and fragile art collection. This was mainly due to the deteriorating infrastructure of the house and the storage facilities that had been added on over the years, and the extent and deep-seated nature of the rising damp and mould in the roof and walls. The decision to move to a modern and custom-built storage facility at the Clocktower in the V&A Waterfront, with archival racking and shelving, temperature and lighting controls and fire safety systems, was taken to safeguard the Irma Stern Collection from further damage and enable restoration for her artwork.

Question 10.

[Which specific artworks or pieces were classified as “most vulnerable”? What conservation challenges does the collection currently face?](#)

Answer.

A proper re-assessment of all the artwork will be conducted in consultation with the curator. There are various valuable pieces in the collection and a core collection will be identified that will cover all aspects of her vast array of painted and associated expressions.

The Firs is simply a converted residence and was never intended as a museum-standard facility. The main problem is that the house is over a century old, in a low-lying suburb with

rising damp and mould. Piecemeal repairs to the house over the years have in many cases exacerbated the damp issues. This means that most of the work is at risk – since it's work on paper, oil paintings (many of which are almost a century old), and ancient wooden objects d'art. Most vulnerable obviously is all the work on paper. The conservation challenge is protecting an extensive collection of this nature from damage and assessing and restoring the building.

Question 11.

[What are the plans for the Firs? Will it be preserved as a museum?](#)

Answer.

The short-term plan is to safely secure the Collection by removing it off site. We will then begin the refurbishment of the Museum, starting in 2026.

Question 12.

[How will Stern's work be presented next year? What can supporters of her work expect?](#)

Answer.

A programme of Irma Stern events and exhibitions is in the planning stages and will be announced in due course. Refer to answers in Q 4, 7 and 8.
