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ART AND RACE- IS RECONCILIATION POSSIBLE

PRICING CRISIS IN THE ARTS

LIVE 'N' DIRECT ENDS LONG WAIT

ZIMBARWE TO PARTICIPATE IN 2011 VENICE BIENNAL

Contents

INTERNATIONAL JUDGES OF LOCAL ART- HOW EFFECTIVE: **PAGE 3**

ART AND RACE- IS RECONCILIATION POSSIBLE: **PAGE 4**

LIVE 'N' DIRECT ENDS LONG WAIT: **PAGE 5**

JUDGES COMMENTS: **PAGE 7**

ZIM STONE SCULPTURE : **PAGE 8**

PRICING CRISIS IN THE ARTS: **PAGE 7**

ARE ZIMBABWEAN UNIVERSITIES ADDRESSING KNOWLEDGE GAPS IN ART: **PAGE 11**

PHOTOGRAPHY⁶ AN EXCLUSIVE ART FORM: **PAGE 9**
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THE PHILOSOPHY OF FOUND OBJECTS: **PAGE 14**

DYNAMICS BEHIND PRICING OF ARTWORKS: **PAGE 15**

ZIMBABWEAN STONE ART-WHY SO SPECIAL: **PAGE 16**

SPECIAL PLACES TO FIND ART IN ZIMBABWE: **PAGE 18**

Welcome note

By Raphael Chikukwa

Zimbabwe at Venice

Art Its been years of isolation and displacement for the past ten years for contemporary Zimbabwean Artists, but through the National Gallery of Zimbabwe and its Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture, its partners British Council, visibility of Zimbabwe at Venice means a lot. This project will change the visual arts landscape in Zimbabwe. The National Gallery of Zimbabwe Curatorial team lead by Raphael Chikukwa and his assistant Curator Thomas Pasirayi are working hard with their Executive Director Mrs. Doreen Sibanda to get everything in order for their ground breaking project.

I have recently visited London, Monaco and Venice and met with potential partners for the Zimbabwean Pavilion at the 54th Venice Biennale. What does it mean to be at the Venice Biennale? Does it change the lives of people in Zimbabwe?

Why are we doing it and why is the National Gallery of Zimbabwe taking a leading role in this project? Why now? Why Zimbabwe? These are some of the questions that come into my mind day in day out as I look around for potential partners. The answer is simple, Venice Biennale is one of the biggest contemporary art platforms in existence and Zimbabwe needs this platform and we are going to be there. Being at the 54th Venice Biennale will definitely change the visual arts landscape in Zimbabwe and my duty as a Curator is to make sure there is visibility of Zimbabwe contemporary art internationally. The National Gallery of Zimbabwe is carrying out its national duty by providing an International platform for the artists of the country.



Dario Basso-Spanish artist

International judges in local competitions *how effective?*

It is the tradition of the National Gallery of Zimbabwe to invite international artists of note to adjudicate at its local art competitions. Thus over the years, many art luminaries, among them: Malangatana, Henry Tayali, Twins Seven Seven, Vongi Bhengu, Ablade Glover, David Ainslie, Mel Edwards and David Kolowani, have stepped forward and teamed up with local giants to select works for star exhibitions.

The idea of having international judges as adjudicators is primarily to ensure that prizes are awarded without prejudice, while the presence of the local contingent serves as a balancing factor, since there are some frowned-upon art formats such as the infamous Jacaranda paintings and the mass produced curio sculptures which have become the scourge of mainstream sculpture. The other aim is to ensure transparency as well as objective appraisal which questions prevailing art practice while offering new insights on how to break with tradition. It is by design that selection of invited artists covers various disciplines – even new media – to expose local artists to the work of the invitees, thus cross-fertilizing art practices.

Many of the foreign artists have enjoyed Zimbabwe so much that they have returned to hold workshops while working on their own pieces alongside Zimbabwean artists. They have later exhibited that work at the National Gallery and private galleries, notably Gallery Delta and Chapungu Sculpture Park. Many a Zimbabwean artist has benefited from these workshops through exposure to lectures, open discussions, slides, media presentations, and from the experience of having the visiting artist's work take shape before their very eyes. The works of Seven Seven, Malangatana, Glover and Tayali actually grace art collections in Zimbabwe, including the National Collection.

Mel Edwards, a former professor at Howard and Rutgers Universities, used his Fulbright Fellowship to encamp in Zimbabwe and proved of great influence at the BAT workshop held at the time. Attending artists like Locardia Ndararika and Charles Kamangwana obtained insight into metal sculpture fabrication and life in Black America. A further bonus was the presence of Mel's wife, Jayne Cortez, a renowned poet and rapper. During lectures and discussions, he regaled students on the Yoruba pantheon of gods and matters pertaining to contemporary art in America. It has become tradition for artists visiting America to drop in on Mel's house in New York and his studio in New Jersey, where they are greeted in Shona with a passable accent, and made to feel immediately at home.

Other foreign judges have similarly left their mark. Twins Seven-Seven, the musician, performed at a party hosted by Cyril Rodgers, former National Gallery Director, and held workshops with local artists. Ablade Glover became a frequent

visitor, touring the country extensively and donating one of his signature works to the Murehwa Culture House Collection. Until his untimely death, Henry Tayali had built up a good rapport with Zimbabwean artists, imparting his invaluable knowledge in print making – considered one of his major contributions to African art and easily ranking him alongside legends like Bruce Onobrakpeya of Nigeria.

Malangatana too, is a man of many talents. Though better known as a paint master, he is a formidable musician and poet too. As a United Nations Cultural Ambassador and therefore a good communicator, he has used his baritone to charm unwilling folk to the dance floor. A really memorable show was his performance at Ondambo Workshop – one of the star-studded events hosted by the late art collector, Hans Bogatzke. He sang his heart out in the middle of the Namib desert, accompanied by Namibian artist, Joe Modisia on guitar and a chorus of artists who included Hazoume, Anatsui and eEl Loko. It seems then, that the international judges are a veritable conduit of rare knowledge they are all too willing to share with other artistic minds.

Many a judge has participated in Pachipamwe, a workshop network encompassing most of Africa and affiliated to the Triangle Arts Foundation. The workshops acted as a cross-pollination of ideas and gave rise to some intriguing Zimbabwean artists in the eighties and nineties, among them: Berry Bickle, Rashid Jogee, Paul Wade, Edna Zichawo and Steve Williams. It was at a Cyrene Mission workshop that Chris Ofili discovered his passion for elephant dung. David Kolowane came to the first Pachipamwe in Zimbabwe, soon becoming a darling of the Zimbabwean art scene and subsequently judging a number of shows. His lectures were not-to-miss events where he spoke with measured emotion about the then apartheid South Africa and the absurdity of the human condition.

To sum up, the international contingent of judges is important in taking artistic and critical discourse to another level. These men and women bring with them new insights into perceptions of Zimbabwean art. They share their work with local artists and of course, they take away with them new ideas spawned by the experience of art from another country. In general, they are humble folk who are easy to communicate with and they also give the proceedings an air of cool fairness not easily obtainable in an all local jury. So participating artists can rest-assured that their work will be examined and critiqued with detached objectivity. New bridges are thus established between Africa and the rest of the world, enabling local artists to network and travel to far-flung places. The process works vice versa, bringing in artists from outside Zimbabwe who are keen to share their knowledge, artwork and ways of life.

Art and race: Is reconciliation possible?

By TK Pasirayi, Assistant Curator
National Gallery of Zimbabwe

The rift between the white and black artists needs to be critically analysed. Does it have anything to do with the political, economical and social tensions between the races? Perhaps there is need for a platform at which these issues are discussed deeply, plainly and openly among art lovers of Zimbabwe and together with the international community. When the Gallery opened during the colonial period, it was clear that its patrons had high hopes about the future of this country. So it is imperative to look at local history since then, to understand the trends and how the artists interacted. One would have expected that art, being a universal language, would bring individuals, tribes, races, countries, and even continents together just as the sport of soccer has positively demonstrated. The most sensible thing then, would have been for groups of art lovers in Zimbabwe to come together and pave a positive way forward.

The political and economic supremacy of the white sector enabled them to chart the course of art activities in the then Rhodesia. The educational policy was such that art was available as a serious subject in their schools - the previously Group 'A' schools. In the African schools, on the other hand, it was not offered as a serious subject and so it developed haphazardly within the black community. The turn of events in the country, brought on by the war of liberation, impacted negatively on the art scene because the blacks and whites kept aloof, making it more difficult for them to work towards fusing their diverse cultures. However, the war ended and political solutions began to be sought for the betterment of all Zimbabweans. More and more, black students were being accepted into white schools where art had the same importance as any other subject on the curriculum. This in a way has produced cadres who have pursued the subject seriously. At independence, too, the policy of Reconciliation was extended to all Zimbabweans to bring the nation together. Had this policy been taken seriously, we would have had a more conducive platform from which to talk, exchange ideas and generally benefit from our art in a national context.

However, if socially, the races continue to be unable to mix, like oil and water, there is no hope in hell of artists coming together across the racial divide. But I'm inclined to think that they will eventually come together - through some divine intervention.

Perhaps patriotism could work here. But do we as artists feel we all belong to this country to the point that we can congregate at the national institution to create art, have discourse and exchange notes for the common good? That will not happen as long as there is a general consensus that the National Gallery of Zimbabwe is a state institution which therefore dances to the tune of a political party. But I must hasten to say that the situation be as it may, there are a handful of white artists who still collaborate with the Gallery because they love art and will not let politics and other petty issues come in the way.

Black and white patrons, why no unity?

Another issue to consider is why white and black patrons do not unite. The question is: Do they have anything in common? Perhaps we need to look at what they value as their social responsibility. As you know, every organisation or individual has an idiosyncrasy that guides their likes and dislikes. The two camps can only unite if they have something in common, that is an understanding of art and its importance and benefits to the community. Perhaps it's about time that both sets of patrons were made to realise that the art world affects them similarly and it makes business sense to cooperate in investment and thereby inculcate better understanding

among communities.

White painters, black sculptors - separate development. Two sets of artists who could benefit from each other but are working separately and excelling within their diverse styles and cultural backgrounds, are the white painters and black sculptors. For the two to be brought together in a combined effort, a huge national endeavour is required that could possibly start with the National Gallery arranging a forum where painters and sculptors come together to talk about art so that there is a common understanding between them.

Emergence of the black painter

The emergence of black painters has been the result of art being made an important subject at schools, colleges, universities and art centres. This has given the blacks an opportunity to realise they have a future in art and that they can earn a living from it. They have still found it difficult to sell their art work because they need more knowledge in marketing strategies to link them to buyers and market places in the sub region and the global art world at large.

Then there is that category of black artist that is without any formal art training but does have the talent. We only need to visit any of the towns in Zimbabwe to see many artists at work in art production of all types. We also have the artists who work in industry, in textile and graphic design, T-shirt printing, ceramics, craft work, and many other art genres.

The white painters have networked among themselves and because of their affluent background, and good educational background in art, they have managed to set up very good business strategies to help them sell their work successfully. The white painters have art societies that offer membership to budding or emerging painters for the purpose of networking and exchange of ideas so as to improve their styles and approaches.

Is reconciliation possible?

It seems that to reconcile black and white artists, one needs to start with the Zimbabwean educational system because this is where the young are integrated, and where the notion of race may be demystified and children made to understand that different races are able to work together so as to benefit from each other in a positive way. It is much easier to start with the young people since they have not been loaded with prejudice to a great extent. Perhaps the National Gallery could design programmes where the young meet, produce artwork together and appreciate and enjoy the partnership.

However, I must say that it will take some time for a complete reconciliation because the process of social change is filled with complex dynamics and therefore we can only look forward to many years of good effort. system because this is where the young are integrated, and where the notion of race may be demystified and children made to understand that different races are able to work together so as to benefit from each other in a positive way. It is much easier to start with the young people since they have not been loaded with prejudice to a great extent. Perhaps the National Gallery could design programmes where the young meet, produce artwork together and appreciate and enjoy the partnership.

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It was unfortunate that it would be so long before the National Art Gallery of Zimbabwe could organise a fine-art exhibition of the same magnitude and excellence as those of the Annual Zimbabwe Heritage of yesteryear and the Zimbabwe Heritage Biennale, which featured twice at the beginning of the new millennium. Entitled: Live 'n' Direct, this audacious contemporary art show provided a much needed outlet for the creativity of a number of artists who had previously lacked a platform to showcase their abilities and transform their visual perceptions into material expression.

Scheduled to run for more than a sixth of the year, up to 31 July 2010, this province for the sophisticated few which coincided with the FIFA World Cup Soccer showpiece in South Africa, was sponsored by the Culture Fund of the Zimbabwe Trust and Kingdom Financial Holdings Limited, Greenwood Park Eye Care Centre in collaboration with the Spanish Embassy and the National Arts Council of Zimbabwe. Officially opened on 25 May 2010, in celebration of Africa Day, the exhibition, with an inducement of three prizes totalling US\$18 000, had been long in coming for the artists. They had long ago paid their entry fee of US\$5 and had their work adjudicated.

Finally, the big day arrived and as early as 9.00am, thousands were thronging the exhibiting venue. It became a meeting place for long time colleagues who had not seen each other for years. First prize of US\$10 000 went to Gareth Nyandoro; second prize of US\$5 000 to Mischeke Masamvu, and third prize of US\$3 000 to Chenjerai Mutasa. The other artists were far from being disheartened by the outcome. Those who'd managed to get their work exhibited, were glad of the opportunity while the rest hoped for better luck next time.

The material mastery, conceptually perfect pitch and idealistic beauty of the objects displayed at the National Art Gallery Show in Harare, defied resistance.

The show revealed that a crop of young upcoming artists, together with the more established ones, have become connective artists, working in contemporary mode but along an old artistic line stretching back to the bricolage of classic African artifacts. To conventional materials such as wood, metal and stone, they add numerous modern substances such as plastic, rubber, glass and cardboard. Within each material they have moved away from handcrafting - carving, casting and moulding the 'pure' material - to using cast-off objects already fashioned for various purposes. However, handwork remains the basis of the process by which they connect and bind the very disparate elements. Curious

Live 'n' Direct ends long wait

By Stephen Garan'anga

juxtaposition results in complicated and dense, yet simple objects. The basics of the materials - colours, dents, edges, texture, volumes and weights - are used directly with the structuring fully visible. Awkwardness, irregularity and damage are not concealed.

In a concentrated struggle with the chaotic mass they have to choose from, they select, adjust, and improvise to create assemblages which develop lives of their own and contain all the references and allusions that cling to the parts, bringing them into jangling harmony. Weld-art has grown to unsurpassable standards as welded metal sculpture is essentially about freedom - freedom of the imagination and of expression.

The idea of stone sculpture as cultural emissary still prevails today and has largely led to the way the stone sculpture is presented in terms of selection of work, given settings, promotion and write-ups. Thus sculpture remains important because of its cultural content. At the exhibition, pieces by Chikumbirike, A Fata, E Masaya, T Benhura and D Benhura, amply demonstrated why stone sculpture has, since time immemorial, embraced all things known to man.

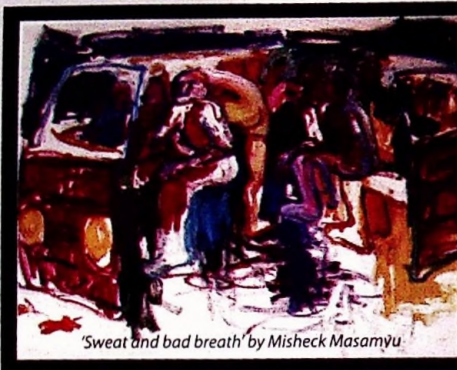
Take Chikumbirike's life-like half nude. The woman, wearing an intricately designed traditional hat, has an extremely detailed crocheted piece hanging from the neck down her back, swerving to the right hand side but avoiding the smooth shining bare buttocks to hang just underneath the right arm. Here it twists to reveal its underside, folding back in amazing detail a few centimetres below the buttocks, round the lower back of the right thigh, then up and around the left leg to the side. Both arms are fashioned with extremely detailed traditional bangles and all sorts of ornaments hang from the biceps, and exquisite handmade traditional necklaces and beads, from the neck and waist respectively.

The entire three quarter figure, sculptured from the knees upward, is carved from a very beautiful multi-coloured burnt-sienna, hard fruit opal stone. Chikumbirike is renowned for his extremely shiny stones, crisscrossed with patterns of patchwork quilts. The beauty of his art is evident in the way he archly and artfully displays the colours of his stones: the gleaming quartz-like tones of lepidolite; the creamy butter in the churn tones of butter jade; the jungle patterns of leopard rock, and the blowy luscious palette of fruit opal and fruit serpentine. There is no doubt that Chikumbirike is master of the beautiful object and in this particular piece, he has twisted and turned the stone as if it were a mere strip of thin, flexible copper wire.

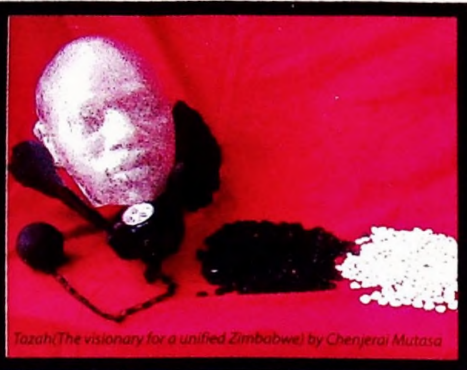
Dominic Benhura, on the other hand, showed a high level of patience when he glued together tonnes of fragments of springstone, and supported them with 12-millimetre metal rods to make the larger than life, Breeding Bull. Hollow inside, the bull is as firm as any other springstone sculpture and is the new face of the Gallery, as it stands imposingly at the main entrance, facing the ever-busy Julius Nyerere Way where pedestrians walk by with cautious interest. The piece has displaced my all time favourite stone sculpture Man Turning into a Hippo, a piece which is part of the National Art Gallery's permanent collection.

Other outstanding metal pieces include sculptures by: S Garan'anga, M Mutasa, Z Magasa, and M Gochera. The genre of mixed media was also represented by innovative and provocative pieces such as the artwork of Gareth Nyandoro and Chenjerai Mutasa which scooped the top two cash awards.

Moves towards initiating Live 'n' Direct began towards the



'Sweat and bad breath' by Misheck Masamvu



Tazoh (The visionary for a unified Zimbabwe) by Chenjerai Mutasa

end of 2009 when the National Art Gallery of Zimbabwe, based in Harare, announced the intended art project. Print as well as electronic media helped disseminate the information nationwide, giving the creative practitioners ample time to research, work and produce to the best of their ability. A strong motivating factor, was the huge cash prizes on offer at the exhibition. The Gallery hoped to reclaim its position as the cradle of sculpture by inviting sculptors nationwide to rebrand and reaffirm our sculptural heritage, not only in stone but in various other media.

The exhibition was also timed to coincide with the World Cup soccer event in a massive show of strength, resilience and measured intellectual posting. On this auspicious occasion, sculptors were specifically called upon to create large definitive works to grace the Gallery's newly renovated garden. The large works were the real focus of the show. While the Gallery celebrated the soccer extravaganza, this seminal exhibition was not about the game, but was a feverish search for the soul of the nation and its sculpture, at a time when Zimbabwe is grappling with the task of mapping out a viable future in all spheres.

No attempt was made to constrict artistic creation through thematic or material specification. The only criteria was excellence. There are artists out in the countryside and other marginalised areas who work largely unrecognised and unaware that their practice amounts to artistic expression. But contact was made with them and they were coaxed to exhibit and to enter the open exhibition too. For ease of transport, initial selection of the work was done at their studios before any work could be brought in for direct placement in the garden. The most outstanding piece was expected to accord its pioneer special privileges extended to celebrated artists the world over.

Success of this sculpture exhibition was vital if this format was to be carried over to other disciplines, especially painting. This was also an opportunity to reconcile the Gallery with the artists so as to give rise to an artist-orientated curatorial team, committed to raising standards at the Gallery and also addressing the needs of the artists - a daunting but possible task.

In concluding, although the artists clearly worked to the best of their ability, many more huge pieces are needed for the sculpture garden. The search is still on.

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The exhibition was also timed to coincide with the World Cup



From left, Calvin Dondo, Dano Basso, Chido Johnson, Andrew Madziszanzira, Thimoko Patel and Kaylon Nkomo

Dario Basso

A contest is always an investment in future, a challenge towards change and evolution. It guarantees the existence of art and the artists. It stands for hope and possibilities. There is no doubt that this exhibition will constitute a milestone of Zimbabwe's contemporary art.

Along with the use of stone, in which they are masters, and, needless to say, the eminent tradition in sculpture, with a formidable movement that has gained world recognition and gets such a good showing in the permanent collection of the well-populated sculpture garden of the National Gallery inhabited by mythological creatures and beasts-humans frozen in mid-transformation. It is the more and more evident the inclusion of recycled materials, with which a new generation of artists is contributing to the renaissance of an

soccer event in a massive show of strength, resilience and measured intellectual posting. On this auspicious occasion, sculptors were specifically called upon to create large definitive works to grace the Gallery's newly renovated garden. The large works were the real focus of the show. While the Gallery celebrated the soccer extravaganza, this seminal exhibition was not about the game, but was a feverish search for the soul of the nation and its sculpture, at a time when Zimbabwe is grappling with the task of mapping out a viable future in all spheres.

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important discovery of XX century art: the ready-made. They are the best when it is to incorporate recycled elements, opportunely integrating them into their works as if they were the very form of creation, coming out from their everyday lives.

They also have large experience in iron treatment, and the re-utilize the objets trouvés while giving them their new message; what we have in front of us is the new generation of the Iron era. We will also find free, direct and fecund paintings in this exhibition. In any case, this exhibition talks about future. Energy and character are elements common to all the selected artists. It signals the controlled strength and the deep courage of those who have the privilege to communicate with the earth, those who know how to listen

to it, who have the spirit to maintain a secret dialogue, and the unique opportunity to turn still matter into life.

Social message can be superficial and prosaic when the artist is insincere, but integrity abounds in this exhibition; no two-faced intentions are found, no strategies or artificial language, but an imperious need to communicate that makes the works more real and the materials they are composed of more alive. This ambitious exhibition is the result of an exhaustive selection of the members of the jury and I anticipate that its continuity will become a reference for the art of the future from the continent of the future: AFRICA.

Calvin Dondo

The entries for the exhibition were overwhelming with the quality of works satisfying. The installations were few but interesting, were as the paintings section was weak. I would want to encourage Zimbabwean sculptors to explore new themes which are not stereotype. There is need for the sculptors to use other materials in their work. Nevertheless, Live and Direct will open a new chapter in Zimbabwean Art.

Andrew Madziwanzira

The works submitted revealed to some extent a high level of creativity, individualism and self expression, although some works lacked in both depth, breath and more inclined to 'Curio Art' which is repetitive and commercial in nature. I envisage a diverse approach to art that represents vast cultural dimensions, economic, socio-political and religious perspectives.

Born in 1968, Andrew is a fine artist majoring in painting and sculpting. He trained for a Diploma in Fine Art at Harare Polytechnic, then a degree in Applied Arts at National University of Technology and lectured at Chinhoyi University of Technology. Andrew Madziwanzira won an award of Painting In 1994. He has exhibited in Harare, Mutare and UK, facilitated several workshops around Zimbabwe.

Thakor Patel

I am grateful for all the works that were submitted. My main

concern is that most artists are copying the works of their masters which has led to poor standards of art making. What I saw from the works is not something I expected especially from the paintings which were poor and some sculptures were not fully molded. Artists require new development and a lot of influence which they can use to reflect their originality.

Born in 1932 in India, Thakor has been working back-and-forth between two cultures and multiple dimensions. His play with lines, shapes and the colour spectrum is infinitely subtle and subversive. At the very least, his work shows a complex intelligence. Thakor Patel, whose works have been collected and exhibited in places as diverse as Zimbabwe, U.S.A, Germany, Jamaica, India, Senegal and Russia, spent most of his young life in a small village in the Sojitra Kaira District, practicing to be a musician. He would play the flute and harmony by himself because there was no music teacher around. In his kindergarten years, Thakor had a leg amputated. Neither this, however, nor the fact that he came from a family of entrepreneurs, stopped him from studying art. He studied at C.N Vidlyvihar, in Ahmedabad, and then went on to Sir JJ School of Art to study Commercial Art for five years. At the school, he majored in drawing, painting, designing and advertising.

Heeten Bhagat

A truly memorable and educative experience. The interstitial space can at once be confusingly open and constrictively close. Extraordinary for sure!

Chido Johnson chidox.com

The works are impressive. The last time I was in Zimbabwe was in 1994 and I have seen a transition in these works from that time to today.

Taylor Nkomo

The exhibition entries were fair although the most visible factor was the absence of big names in the art scene. The exhibits could be better as we cannot say this is the best from Zimbabwean artists. The painting genre needs improvement. I hope next year we see better works.

Mount (1973) agrees that the decline of Zimbabwe stone sculpture as a truly fine art form lies in its rapid commercialisation and consequent dilution by inferior imitations. She comments that art critics have so far failed to draw the line between 'the good, the bad and the mediocre' in stone sculpture, or to distinguish between airport and genuine art.

Commercialisation and subsequent stagnation in Shona stone sculpture has led critics to question the very direction of contemporary Shona stone sculpture since it lacks commentary on current issues. While it is part of the country's heritage and thus needs to be preserved, it is important to comment that the second and third generation Shona stone sculptors need to create works that relate to the present day.

Winter-Irving (2002) concurs when she notes that, "as yet, twentieth-century technology and politics have not been considered by Shona artists as potential source material for artworks. Artists have, however, taken into account Zimbabwe's twentieth century, capitalist economy and to some extent the wish to produce saleable objects has had an influence on content. Artists have been tempted to repeat themes which have been commercially successful. In many instances, the sculpture has been purchased either because it is formally and stylistically pleasing or because the content is explicit. Either or both of these reasons have acted to inhibit thematic exploration".

She stresses that artists draw inspiration from their immediate environment since the sculptor in Zimbabwe is far from a person who sits in a studio with a grant from his government, making nice little excursions into the post-modern. The Zimbabwean sculptor of today is often a man or a woman sculpting in their back yard in Chitungwiza, where the man next door is beating his wife and the child next door is being molested by her uncle. Today's Zimbabwean artist is in the thick of what is happening and that should be portrayed in

their work. She explains that urbanised culture seems to be creeping into the more rural backgrounds, and that while the social problems of Zimbabwe today are not what they were, they are much more prevalent now than, say, 20 or 30 years ago. It is therefore crucial for the artist to portray African culture as it is today.

I should comment at this point that I witnessed the emerging trends and themes in Shona stone sculpture at one of the biggest exhibitions to ever be held at the National Gallery of Zimbabwe - the Live 'n' Direct exhibition where there were a significant number of stone sculptures with social commentary themes on current issues in the life of the Zimbabwean. Outstanding was a stone sculpture commenting on the recently formed 'Government of National Unity' entitled Hope or Resolution by Eddie Masaya. Other sculptures were commentaries on the World Cup soccer showcase while still others comprised works fused with found objects such as tyres and steel - a pointer towards development and growth in Shona stone sculpture. At the Gallery entrance is a big bull, a masterpiece created through methods obviously different to those of the early days of the movement. This giant stone work by Dominic Benhura is a work of sheer expertise and much experimentation thus projecting new trends in Shona stone sculpture.

Arts institutions, whether commercial or national should promote, recognize and encourage young artists who initiate new trends in Shona stone sculpture. Most of these young sculptors have been overshadowed by the Old Masters who have stolen the limelight and have left no space for young sculptors with new ideas on stone sculpture. Most forums prefer to give recognition to these Old Masters and not acknowledge the contribution by the young sculptors thus killing their spirit and sense of motivation. There is a need then, to nurture contemporary Shona stone sculpture if the Shona stone sculpture movement is to have a future.

Zimbabwe stone sculpture: What's gone wrong, where to next?

By Brighton Makuvaza

Zimbabwe stone sculpture or rather, Shona stone sculpture has been described as being in limbo and answers are being sought as to why.

This almost sacred movement, has lost much of the popularity and hype that once surrounded it and it's natural to wonder what went wrong and what new direction, if any, can be taken.

It's always been my contention that the apparent inactivity on the Shona stone sculpture front has been due to the lack of attention given to new trends in what some would call 'contemporary Shona stone sculpture'. This may sound rhetorical to many but I think bringing out these trends is key to unlocking the direction in which the Shona stone sculpture movement is headed.

Basically, Shona stone sculpture has been affected by both internal and external factors, the former being presumably linked to issues to do with the socio-economic and political climate of the past decade. The external factors would be those created by the so called buyers of Shona stone sculpture who have indirectly controlled the themes and trends in the sculpture movement. The survival of Shona stone sculpture as an authentic expression of African culture has been compromised by these factors. One of the most evident

internal factors has been the commercialisation of art which has taken away the sacredness and spirit of innovation from Shona stone sculpture and turned it into a mere profit making craft. Commercialisation has resulted in the propagation of only the themes that are favourites among buyers. This has led to mass production of the same works. The existence of so called airport art is proof of this.

Stanislaus (1992) says this was not always the case. That the 'art for art's sake proposition' was foreign to the Shona artists who once they began to carve sculpture, as opposed to functional objects, accepted a visual but non-utilitarian objective for their work. They were not motivated by the production of artifacts for everyday use or for special situations like rituals. Instead, they were carving stone into forms which would be termed 'art' and would be justified as autonomous and aesthetic objects.

However, the past tumultuous decade in Zimbabwe served to massively redirect trends and slow down growth in Shona stone sculpture to the verge of obliteration as sculptors fell prey to the 'what is selling' syndrome. This led to the mass production of artworks for particular consumers resulting in the repeated production of certain commercially viable themes and to the stunting of originality and innovation and the overall growth of the movement and its authenticity.

Pricing crisis in the arts

By Tapfuma Gutsa

Live'n' Direct certainly set the National Gallery of Zimbabwe ablaze. A vast pool of artists - both, known and previously untapped - submitted work that earned them effusive praise from various informed quarters.

The work on display was diverse and captivating and covered a wide range of media including: electronics, installation, sculpture, painting, photography and print making techniques. There was an air of controversy about the prize-winning works because there were other pieces on show that could have easily won the three prizes available but the winning works offered new insights into new ways of self-expression. The winning work entitled *Recycling*, is a quirky assemblage by master of junk, Gareth Nyandoro. At first glance, it's like looking through a poor man's shopping window but on closer examination, it reveals subtle subversion and intellectual muscle. On the surface, Zimbabwe appears neglected and unattractive but looking more closely, one sees the place of hope and greatness it can be. The second prize entitled: *Sweet Bad Breath*, went to painter, Misheck Masamvu who is well-known for his defiant artistic stance. His work is an emotional - painting statement on the loss of morals signified by the operations of the ever-present Kombis that now serve as public transport. This piece reaches into the very depths of the artist's psyche. The crudely drawn nude figures are unforgiving of each other and do not spare

the viewer either. The third prize entitled: *Visionaries for a United Zimbabwe*, went to sculptor, Chenjerai Mutasa who proffers a philosophical riddle into the workings of the human mind. The focus is thus on the mind, which though a powerful tool that can change the human condition for the better, may also wilfully create untold havoc and suffering for others. The three works are a possible cause for lengthy debate on the various facets of the human condition but they were not alone at this flagship exhibition.

Consider Whycliffe Mundopa's take on the soul-scarring existence of what is clearly Mbare's infamous hostels in his painting: *Where I Live*. It takes a brave heart to digest a painting that unashamedly exposes the hedonistic tendencies of some sections of the society, not just in Mbare, but in other parts of Zimbabwe as well. Then there is the installation by rising star, Virginia Chiota entitled: *Pakabudei* which harshly alludes to the Government of National Unity. The plethora of symbolism inhabiting the assembled children's chairs - from nails to keys to red carpet - is mind-blowing. The only reprieve from this intensity comes from the mirrored map of Zimbabwe that alludes to party politics without the use of inflammatory slogans and paraphernalia. Petronella Chikerwa's stunning piece depicts a pregnancy gone decidedly wrong when all sorts of demons inhabit the hapless woman's belly. The choice of material here - metal - further reinforces the potency of



the work. The other metal piece worth mention is that of Danisile Ncube with its allusions to the many Zimbabweans who took advantage of the economic struggles of the millennium to siphon wealth out of the country.

Three other works use innocence as a cushion for their heavy messages. Calvin Chimutwah, for instance, in his photo-realistic paintings, uses children to depict troubles which are common even to adults around them. Charles Bhebe paints a crowd on a black background dripping with the colour they are painted in, to depict a Nation in Waiting but as though they await the appearance of aliens. This enigmatic painting is ably complimented by Munya Mazarire's: Battle Against Common Sense. Through economy of line and disarming use of perspective, the artist questions the gullibility of subjugated peoples when they blindly acquire new ways of worship at the expense of their old ways. The Bible, the Koran and a humble snuffbox, placed in an ersatz black-taped room hanging from the wall, represent the religions. The common denominator between these works is their very reasonable price tags. Most exhibitors aim to showcase their work, interact with the public and, most importantly, see art patrons express their appreciation of their work by buying it. It goes without saying that the sales are the only way that the National Gallery of Zimbabwe can raise revenue to enable it to act efficiently on behalf of the artists. A large number of practicing artists are the product of the National Gallery of Zimbabwe Visual Art Studio (NGZVAS), formerly known as BAT Workshop that was set up with generous funding from the British American Tobacco Company. It is therefore logical for them to support the National Gallery in its task of nurturing future generations of artists who will fertilise their art practices and propel them to greater heights. These issues need immediate address if both the artists and the national art flagship are to progress in tandem.

The Gallery, by policy, does not display prices but uses a discreet numbering system that allows prospective buyers to assess works without the encumbrance of a pre-estimated value, since the price of art is hypothetical. Its value is in the eye of the beholder, in concurrence with its creator - the artist who cannot risk loss of revenue and economic viability by pricing him or herself out of the competitive market with the resultant effect of this on the home.

Overall, sculptors at the Live'n Direct Exhibition showed a tendency to overprice their work and yet they were the biggest victims of the economic downturn. Not everybody is an Arthur Fata, a Dominic Benhura, or an Agnes Nyanhongo. These prominent artists worked their way up the hard way - through sheer perseverance. So, they deserve the respect due to them. They earned it.

Inflationary influences have had their part to play in the bloated prices. The simple fact is that Zimbabweans, in general, had become used to pricing in large figures and therefore cannot resist applying the same approach when dealing in stronger currencies such as the American dollar or the pound. A rigorous rethink in terms of pricing is called for if artists are to move on and work their way up the ladder of success. Institutions such as the National Gallery of Zimbabwe, with the help of user-friendly organisations like the National Arts Council and the Culture Fund, should therefore organise workshops to rationalise pricing practices if they and their core business, that is, the artists are to eke out a prosperous future through the arts.

Art related activities that students acquire a well rounded understanding of art in its diverse forms. A look around will show that art events such as: Gwanza July Month of Photography; The Cotton Company (COTCO) Annual Arts and Crafts Exhibition and The COTCO Fashion Show exhibitions seem to be the only windows of opportunity for the student artists to showcase their work among that of the established artists. There is need for more of these avenues of expression and interaction because they always provide the needed space to foment exposure and exchange of ideas. The likes of Harare International Festival of the Arts (HIFA), Zimbabwe International Film Festival, and Women Film Makers of Zimbabwe should have ties with universities so that our art students broaden their horizons and grow together with them. Perhaps universities, too, should aggressively reach out and sign a 'memorandum of understanding' with each of these organisations thus building symbiotic relationships that will in turn expose and nurture artistic talent.

Therefore, it is not mischief to say that the exceptional artist is not only the product of a good curriculum, but should have the persona required as well as an enabling environment that has supportive structures and functional operating systems.

Our universities are lacking in terms of infrastructure, computers, equipped studios and the appropriate learning teaching materials - all of these problems compounded by the dearth in qualified personnel. No wonder universities expect communities to be supportive partners in nurturing artists.

A supportive partner is one who is not only financially, materially and morally enabling, but one who is patient though forthright in demanding measurable results; one who is reliable and committed to the cause, and one whose vision includes a desire for societal progress. These partners in the community ideally include, but are not limited to: a critical electronic and print media that highlights all issues of visual art and upholds public debate on issues that artists bring to the audience; galleries that not only focus on sales but also run promotional exhibitions that give support and opportunities to the upstarts in art; a printing and advertising industry that not only sticks to the traditional ways of doing things, but willingly absorbs the creative learners and places them in situations where learning means negotiating between idealism and reality; established artists who are willing to open their equipped studios and expose the art student to the real artistic realm; a corporate world that steers its social responsibility programme towards funding visual art activities in partnership

with individual and or groups of artists, galleries, universities and the wider communities, and an audience that is both tolerant of different views and has the time and 'a little money' to expend for the love of visual art.

It is a well known fact that universities, the students, the artists, the gallery owners, the media houses and the corporate world, as well as the public who patronise our art events, all need to keep the pot boiling. That is, they need money to sustain their routine lives. However, the point being made here is that, a supportive community is one that invests in a visual art life-cycle. When this cycle turns full circle into an established Zimbabwean visual art culture, all and sundry will harvest big time. Remember that harvesting does not happen where nothing is put! A living example of a supportive community investment venture is what in music circles is dubbed the 'urban groves' phenomenon. This is a musical culture to identify with and all things being equal, the harvest will keep getting better. It is this seed planting that the universities, through their visual art curricula, have taken upon themselves in order to raise exceptional artists. But they need a hand from all facets of society to raise exceptional artists.

Will you stand up and be counted in this vision?

Are Zimbabwean universities addressing knowledge gaps in art?

By Biggie Samwanda, a visual artist & lecturer at Chinhoyi University of Technology.

It is a fact that university curricula are important in the imparting of artistic knowledge, be it in the form of practical skills or theory. An exceptional artist is one who can demonstrate his or her mastery of the art discipline(s) by being versatile in the use of practical skills or being diverse in the use of media, apart from having a sensible appreciation of the following constituents: art history, aesthetics and art criticism. But it's important to point out that it is not these aspects alone that make an outstanding artist, nor is it a lack of them that reduces one to the level of 'ordinary' artist. Societies are full of self-taught artists and crafts persons who have excelled in using their media without any tuition at a college or university. A case in point is Zimbabwe's first generation stone sculptors. However, no matter how many arguments you can advance in their favour, there is always an air of inadequacy about these latter artists which some of them will even confess to you should you gain their confidence. How then are university curricula addressing the knowledge gaps evident in the development of a new generation of visual artists?

A survey shows that visual art mostly comes in the form of an appendage to education degrees. This idea was pioneered by the University of Zimbabwe's Department of Teacher Education (DTE) when it introduced the Bachelor of Education in Art and Design in 1994/5 and followed this a few years later with a Master of Teacher Education in Art and Design. All these were ably steered by Phebon Fabion Kangai, a fine artist and art educationist in his own right. The curricula essentially sought then, to address a lack of personnel with degrees in the field of visual art instruction at various levels of Zimbabwe's institutions and society. Therefore, the curricula emphasised such components as: drawing and painting, design, textiles, printmaking, art history, art philosophy and critical theory, and art curriculum design, over and above foundations of art education. Essentially, graduate and post graduate students of the University of Zimbabwe became art teachers and artist tutors in various other learning institutes. These products also began to groom visual artists from primary to high school level, and from tertiary colleges

to the upcoming state universities.

It was the direct result of this initiative of the UZ's Department of Teacher Education that visual art education fast became fashionable at almost all state universities. Both Midlands and Great Zimbabwe state universities offer education degrees with an art component. The National University of Science and Technology went one step further and introduced the Bachelor of Architecture and of Technical Education degrees. However, it was the Chinhoyi University of Technology that went several steps further when in the 2003 to 2004 year, it became the first and only university in the country to offer degrees in visual art disciplines. The Creative Art and Design (CAD) Department, under the chairmanship of Petros Pashapa, himself a product of the UZ's Department of Teacher Education Art and Design programme, has taken visual art education to the highest level ever. CAD successfully introduced three degrees: the Bachelor of Technology in Creative Art and Design, the Bachelor of Technology in Clothing Fashion Design and a block release - the Bachelor of Fine Art, thus revolutionising the way visual artists are nurtured.

We have a taste of these changes at least twice a year, at the end of every semester, as Chinhoyi University of Technology final year students mount exhibitions throughout the length and breadth of the country. Consequently, CAD has created what has fast become an all inclusive visual culture that one cannot fail to notice. It is inclusive in that every year, Zimbabwean society gets a chance to familiarise itself with art work of all sorts: from design for print, to packaging, photography short film and video; from all forms of sculpture and installation, to painting, textile and fashion design, and from theatre design to industrial design and ceramics. Above all, most of these exhibitions allow exhibits by disabled members of society, normally side-lined in other spheres.

These exhibitions are not exclusively visual art in nature. Friends from the performance arts and music industry are also roped in to entertain the audience before and after the

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Photography- an excluded art form

By Stephen Garan'nga



Photographs by Annanias Dago Lekki from Cote d'Ivoire "Muslim woman"

Fine art photography refers to photographs created in accordance with the creative vision of the photographer as artist. Fine art photography stands in contrast to photojournalism, which provides visual support for stories – mainly in the print media – and commercial photography whose primary focus is to sell products or services.

Today in Africa, fine art photography has little appeal for the majority of the continent's artists despite it having the same power of expression as any of the preferred art forms. Consequently, the number of fine art photography practitioners make up an insignificant part of the continent's artistic population. Internationally recognized photography awards, exhibitions and workshops have been staged on the continent but have not impacted on the crisis.

How is it then, that such a powerfully expressive tool as photography remains largely ignored by the continent's many artists who are renowned for their creativity and innovativeness? There is evidence that a sizable number of tertiary educational institutions have included photography in their programmes and yet the majority of the continent's photography artists are not highly educated, most of them being either informally trained or self taught. And yet fine art photography requires schooling which is attained from very few, very expensive private places.

Further, photography involves securing delicate, highly technological full house studio equipment that is often imported or expensive locally, developing chemicals that are scarce and not easily obtainable and securing studio spaces with adequate privacy.

Currently, there is a trend toward a careful staging and lighting of the picture, rather than one simply hoping to 'discover' it ready-made. Additionally, new technological trends in digital photography have opened a new direction in full spectrum photography, where careful filtering choices across the ultraviolet, visible and infrared, lead to new artistic visions. With improved printing technology since around 1980, a photographer's art prints – reproduced in a finely-printed

limited-edition book – have become an area of strong interest to collectors in the world outside Africa. This is because books usually have high production value, a short print run, and a limited market – meaning they are almost never reprinted. Thus the collector's market in photography books by the most sought-after art photographers is developing rapidly. On the other hand, attempts by online art retailers to sell fine photography to the general public alongside prints of paintings, have had mixed results, with strong sales coming only for the traditional 'big names' of photography such as Ansel Adams.

Unlike the widely preferred art forms, photography is a high maintenance medium with a delicacy that many would want to avoid. More often than not, artists are unable to meet all the requirements for utilising the medium. Most of the continent's artists live outside big cities in areas where there are hardly any facilities. The latest technology is unavailable in much of Africa and it will be decades before it is.

For the fortunate few able to handle the necessary conditions this medium requires – all the way to the exhibition stage – there is the bigger challenge of the purchase stage. If one is lucky to even sell their product, they can expect low returns that are inadequate to recover a significant percentage of the costs. This, artists often find discouraging because they frequently go for ages without selling anything and yet they need to earn a living from their profession.

Those dealing in favoured media such as painting, sculpture and mixed media have a better time of it because their pieces fetch higher prizes and adequate funds are available to recover costs and extras. Often art collectors, dealers and gallery owners, travel unimaginable distances around Africa, even across inhospitable terrain, just to purchase masks, sculptures or paintings. But they rarely if ever, enquire about photographic art pieces.

With the abundance of digital cameras, even within cell-phones, many people are taking their own images daily and see no need to buy specific images. For many artists then,



fine art photography sounds very much like a foreign concept. After all, many prefer to work on something that's highly tangible, that they can fully enjoy the feel of, can be reckless with and can reuse again and again.

The unpopularity of fine art photography as a medium was plainly evident at the recent 'Live 'n' Direct' Exhibition. There wasn't a single representation of the medium amongst the hundreds of art pieces on show, and at such an enormous

venue as Zimbabwe's National Art Gallery, at that. Even despite the National Gallery annually hosting Gwanza a month long exhibition of International fine art photography founded and organised by Calvin Dondo, one of the country's internationally decorated photographers. Free photography workshops are conducted during the month and very often other photographic exhibitions such as World Press Photo, are held as a follow up.

The philosophy of found objects

By Masimba Hwati

Around the early 70's, Zimbabwean material culture was transforming radically alongside the economic trade and cultural policies that had already begun to cause a shift in the way people related to the material world. Even before Independence in 1980, several British and American products – from domestic and industrial furniture, to disposables – had begun to invade the market. While feeding into the materialistic fabric of the nation, they also concurrently acted as a subliminal litmus test for the snobbery and cultural advancement of individuals in society. This meant that the more Victorian and exotic the furniture, artwork – imitations of course – cutlery and other items that people had, the more they were seen to reflect how developed those people were in taste and etiquette. A new material culture was invading the system. I remember looking at my father's photos in the early 70's and noting that the pattern of fashion was very impressive – an amazing and timely reflection of the Beatles and Rolling Stones culture. It's interesting to note that it was as if the barrier of time and geography had been dissolved by the swift wind of culture.

Looking at my father's diary and some of his notes, I saw that he referred to himself as Robin 'Ringo deys' or 'Hwati Ringo deys', after the famous Beatles drummer, Ringo Starr. The culture was in the music, fashion and dance and rock stars such as the Beatles, Rolling Stones and Jethro Tull were the prophets of this culture. It was a culture that some individuals, especially the learned of the British education system, had embraced. I believe it is this cultural evangelism that explains why Zimbabweans, more than any other former British colony, have a more refined and lubricated English accent. The philosophy here is that the way you got from your own language, location and lifestyle, the more sophisticated and elitist you had become.

A graphic representation of this ideology is in Tsitsi Dangarembga's book: *Nervous Conditions*. What is apparent is that unlike the Francophone countries in west and parts of north Africa, the Anglophone countries had experienced a form of cultural pause or inertia that was quite evident in the gradual dissolution of their culture and the assimilation

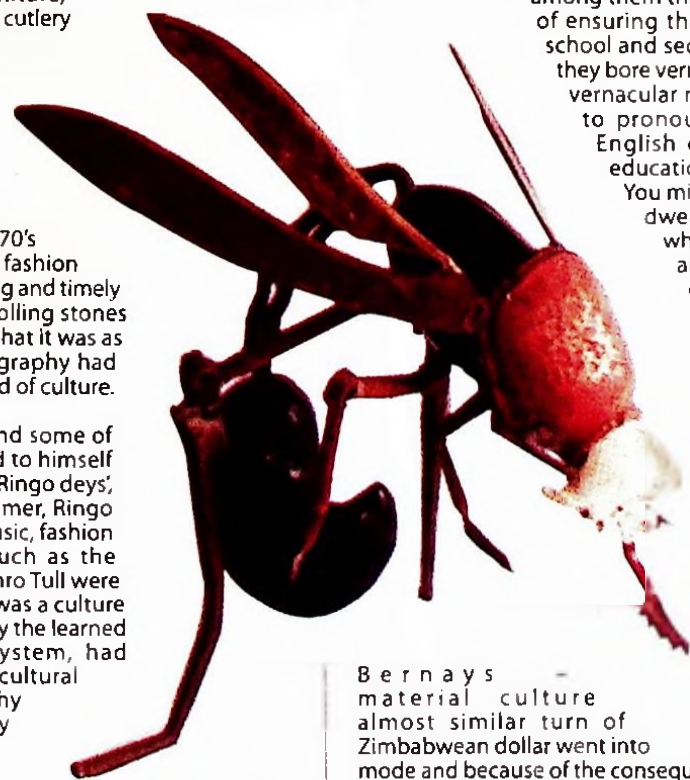
of a tailor-made version of English culture in Zimbabwe. This is evident even in the practices of hordes of Zimbabwean citizens during the pre-independence period, around the 70's, through Independence to the late 90's – the beginnings of consciousness – when they bore English names as their first names and Shona names as their second and less popular names. These English names were called 'Christian' names but I'm not sure whether it was Christianity in its true sense that the colonists were selling to the natives. People would adopt these English names for their children on baptism into the 'Christian' religion for several reasons, among them that this was the easiest way of ensuring that their children got into school and secured employment than if they bore vernacular names. Perhaps the vernacular names were quite difficult to pronounce for the commonly English employers, farmers and educational personnel.

You might be wondering why I'm dwelling so much on this and what it actually has to do with art. But the fact is that you can't talk about people, art and visual culture without looking at what shapes their philosophy. This cultural development is the very bedrock of Zimbabwean aesthetic and material culture.

However, just like the demise of the European materialistic culture – after the time of Edward

Bernays – Zimbabwean material culture almost similar turn of Zimbabwean dollar went into inflationary mode and because of the consequent rise in the cost of living, people could not afford to replace their expensive Victorian furniture and other household items. When these materials had run their course they became part of the myriad of anthropological debris on the many rubbish dumps around cities and towns and they earned themselves the honour of being called 'found objects' and of being at the disposal of those artists who would discern the energies and auras hanging around them.

As Marcel Duchamp said in 1938: "The ready-made is a usual object promoted to the dignity of an artwork by the choice of the artist."



The further kind, in terms of

Pic: Rumamombe by Victor Nyakauru- Mixed Media

Like many African countries, Zimbabwe is a primary commodity producer and this makes it a consumer nation, importing the greater part of its commodities – from cutlery and shoes, to radios, TV's and clothing – so these items ultimately find themselves being included in artworks in the world of found energy.

Having personally been part of a generation of artists that made use of the principle of found energy from 2000 up to the present, I have witnessed a change in the found material now available to the artist. It seems the anthropological and creative journey has taken another twist. Again! This is partly due to economic policy changes. For the past couple of years,

Chinese goods have invaded Zimbabwe which has meant that Chinese materials are making up the greater part of Zimbabwean material culture today instead of old relics of British, Victorian culture. Unfortunately, most of the Chinese goods may not stand the test of time or last long enough to be used in artwork – again a sign of the times. It may become difficult for future artists to access the same found materials as before.

Thus the philosophy behind found energy redefines the role of the artist and presents him as more than just an artist. The artist profession has always been progressive, the artist being variously a social historian, collector of anthropological data

Dynamics behind pricing of artworks

By Stephen Garan'anga

Pricing your artwork is one of the most difficult aspects of being an artist. You must somehow divorce yourself from everything your creations mean to you personally and view them in a cold commercial light. As if that's not enough of an indignity, you must mentally hang them next to all the other art out there and assess their saleability in terms of such considerations as: whether they should cost more or less; what collectors can afford, before you can come up with a sensible pricing structure.

Even when the delicate process of what to charge for a piece of artwork is left to the art galleries, it's still a struggle. The tug of war between the need to have one's work recognised for its worth and the need to make it affordable to collectors is a difficult one to settle. But do the artists themselves know how much their art is worth?

In the beginning, you need to do a great deal of market research to know roughly how much work of a similar genre, size, expertise and material type is currently being sold. As you visit galleries and alternative spaces, you should note the prices for work that seems similar to yours. You have to research the education level of the other artists: whether they are self taught or informally trained; their reputation, and their exhibition history, so you can compare your work with that of artists of a similar stature and education. When you have researched enough to know the range of prices, you then position yourself at the lower end of the range if you are an emerging artist. It's important to exhibit your work, have it seen, discussed and purchased. Early on, these considerations are more important than big profits, but as you become more widely known and your work begins to sell briskly, you can raise your prices.

Being clear and consistent when pricing your art gives you credibility as an artist. Sometimes a good first step in determining the criteria for your art, is to select one or more works of art that you consider typical of your current output and which mimic an average range of your skills. These would be pieces that you consider neither exceptional nor inferior in any way. If you work in more than one medium or style, select at least one piece that is representative of each. Describe these works in writing and in detail, in terms of basic physical characteristics and of variables unique to your art. Basic physical characteristics include: size, subject matter, colour, complexity, weight, detail, cost of materials and time necessary to create. Variables unique to your art might include: the number of dogs in the composition, for instance, frequency of use of the colour orange, theme, texture, direction of the brush strokes, date produced, or degree of abstraction. Avoid using subjective criteria to describe your art such as: what it means to you, what its message is and how it makes you feel. Subjective qualities are important from intellectual and or emotional standpoints, but not necessarily in terms of pricing as they can vary widely from one viewer to the

next. No one, however, can dispute a work of art's size or subject matter. If, over time, you find that some of your art imparts similar feelings or messages to wide audiences, you may eventually be able to quantify those feelings or messages as price points.

Once you've completed your written descriptions, your next task is to set a base price for your chosen typical work or works of art. A good analogy for a base price in the art world is a base price in the car world, or the price of a car with no extras. This may sound crass, but it's how the overwhelming majority of art gets priced. A basic car model with no extras, costs a certain amount; models with 'extras' cost more. How much more depends on the amount and quality of their extras. Artists with gallery experience and a history of consistent sales should already have base prices for their works of art. If you don't have a track record of sales, your base price should approximate what artists in your locale with comparable experience and sales records charge for similar works of art. Keep in mind that even though your art is unique, experienced art people like dealers, advanced collectors, consultants and agents, make price comparisons from artist to artist all the time. Being able to evaluate your art from a detached standpoint when comparing it with the work of others in your area, is necessary in order for your price structure to make sense in the market place. Once you've set your base price, use it as the norm for pricing the rest of your artwork in terms of 'extras' or lack thereof.

'Extras', according to your descriptive criteria, are those characteristics that make certain works of art more significant, in your judgment, than others. If, for example, your typical work of art measures 30 by 40 inches and you base-price it at \$700, but you consider one measuring 50 by 60 inches to be more significant, you might price it at \$2600. Similarly, you might price one measuring 15 by 20 inches at \$500 because you consider it to be less significant, all else being equal. 'Extras' that indicate price increases beyond the base are characteristics such as: more complex compositions, larger sizes, more intricate details, higher levels of technical difficulty, greater production times, and more expensive materials. If certain works of art hold special meaning for you or represent critical moments in your life or career, but are not drastically different from your other art in terms of physical criteria, the best procedure is to keep them off the market because the tendency is to overprice them. Isolated extreme prices may not make sense to viewers, and can even skew an artist's entire price structure in an unrealistic direction. If you can make a case to the art world as to why isolated works of art should be priced well beyond similar looking pieces, and the art world agrees with you, then fine. If not, save emotion, or attachment-based pricing for when you become famous and have greater latitude in how you present your art to the public.

As previously mentioned, your pricing structure should make sense to people who have questions about your art – such questions as why this piece costs more or that one costs less. Be able to explain how and why you set your base price, and how and why you set other prices higher or lower in relation to that base. Having a price structure that people who know art can understand, is essential in order to move art from your studio to 'for sale' settings and ultimately to the private or institutional buyer.

Once you've set your selling prices, don't change them without a reason. Any deviation in price, particularly in the upward direction, has to be justified. In other words, don't raise or lower your prices just because you feel like it. People generally shy away from art that costs a certain amount one week and a different amount the next; they prefer constancy in art prices.

Supposing your price structure turns out to be too high – people who like your art enough to ask how much it costs aren't buying. This means that you have to lower your prices. But by how much? Re-pricing somewhat below what comparable art by artists in your area sells for is a good starting point, but rather than arbitrarily cutting prices either across the board or on a piece-by-piece basis, conduct an informal survey first.

Ask those most interested in your art how much they think it should sell for. Whenever you get the chance, also ask dealers, experienced collectors, consultants, fellow artists, and agents, what they think. Put together as much of a consensus opinion as possible, and then reduce prices accordingly. Your goal is to generate sales with the new lower structure, so make sure reductions are in line with or even slightly greater than consensus opinion. You want to avoid having to reduce prices again, but you don't want to make your art so inexpensive that people won't take it seriously. Supposing your art becomes popular with the public and sales are brisk. That is, when demand reaches a point where a good percentage of your art, at least a third, sells within several months of its appearance on the market, think about raising your prices. A price increase is also in order when demand for your art regularly outstrips demand for art by your contemporaries.

As you become better and better known – a brand name, so to speak – your art begins to merit premium pricing, or pricing beyond that of your contemporaries. Exactly how much that premium should be depends on the significance of your accomplishments – shows, awards, news coverage – and the constant or, better yet, expanding interest in your art. Depending on how well known you get, continue to price

according to what 'the competition' charges, but who that competition is will likely evolve from local artists to regional artists, and possibly even to national or international artists. As you advance in your career, always be aware of the circle of artists you are perceived as belonging to and how much they charge for their art.

Supposing that with the passage of time, or as tastes in art change, one type of your art continues to find favour with collectors while demand for your other art remains modest, what do you do? Simply raise the prices of this in-demand art above that of your other art, and price earlier examples higher than those you're currently working on. For example, if collectors come to like your abstracts much more than your landscapes, raise prices on all past, present and future abstracts, with prices for your earliest abstracts – those in the styles that receive the most attention – being raised the highest.

Raising prices for the earliest examples of your most desirable art is somewhat similar to the pricing of antiques and collectibles – the first edition of a famous book costs more than later editions. The significance of your 'first' or 'earliest' art only becomes apparent as you progress in your career. You have no idea how the public will respond to different styles of art when you first create or show it to them or what the legacy of that art might one day be, but as that legacy becomes clear, price increases are in order.

Continuing with this line of reasoning, supposing, from a historical standpoint, a particular type of your art becomes significant beyond you as an artist – in other words, as part of a movement or school of art project? For example, the large abstracts you could have painted in the late 1980's. Prices for these abstracts will have to be raised, not necessarily according to how your own career has played out, but according to how abstract paintings from the late 1980's have been embraced by collectors. Prices for these abstracts may far outstrip prices for all other art you've created, regardless of the significance that you personally place on those abstracts, just because you painted them in a particular style at a particular point in time.

No matter how old you are or how long you've been creating art, be aware that art prices fluctuate over time for a variety of reasons. Set your initial price structure according to characteristics of your art and of your local or regional art market, but be ready to revise those prices at any time – assuming adequate justification. The more you're aware of market forces in general, and how people respond to your art in particular, the better prepared you are to maintain sensible selling prices and maximize your sales.



Henry Munyaradzi "Black Hen"

They never turned to any other profession after lending their hand to stone sculpturing. Recessions have forced many people to change their professions but real stone artists have stood by their art. In the 1970's it was the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) by Ian Smith that brought sanctions and the war that could have easily forced stone artists to abandon their trade but alas they continued. There was and still is indeed a commitment intermixed with true love for art. Zimbabwe stone artists continue to work the stone during the good and the bad times. It is this kind of commitment that gave birth to this much appreciated trade today. Now the movement is appreciated all over the world and thanks to the Old Masters and those who promoted their works

Originality

What determines originality in Zimbabwe stone art? Should we understand it in the context of what Fanizani of Tengenenge said? Yes we can! He said, **"People look at my work and say this is Fanizani."** Yes indeed style and originality can become the identity of an artist. Art collectors and Gallery owners all over the world simply identify sculptures from Zimbabwe by their artists. Simply put, originality can be the identification of an artist. Today we are able to see a sculpture and say this is the late Bernard Matemera or Henry Munyaradzi because they managed to create something new something that can only be identified with them. This is originality in the true sense of the word because originality leads you to the origin, the one who created the art and the style. Fanizani of Tengenenge plainly puts it this way, **"We worked together side by side Bernard, Henry and I but we never copied each other."** This has proved to be very true because today sculptures by these men and many others have clear identities that distinguish them from each. This formed the foundation for greater things to come because new stone artists today are obliged and compelled to come up with their own style and identity.

Talent

Sometimes talent is never talent unless it is identified. With Zimbabwe stone art it was Frank McEwen the first Director of the then National Gallery of Rhodesia who identified this talent. He had influence in the world of arts because amongst his best friends were Picasso, Matisse, Braque and many others and had studied history of art at the Sorbonne. He saw more than just works of stone; he saw the talent that would one day become world art. Now the question would be; what he identified as talent was it really talent? There is enough evidence to date to support and prove him correct. But what is this talent? The Oxford Dictionary describes it as 'high mental ability'. This simply means we can have many stone sculptors, but those who are talented will always stand above the rest. A good example is Dominic Benhura et al. He is a stone artist with talent and his talent is much recognisable because his sculptures are eye catching and thrilling. They have movement, theme and amazing balance. They have the power to live long on the mind and this power that compels the mind to capture and record such images of stone is nothing but talent. This is indeed the type of talent that can easily find its way into the Nelson Mandela Foundation. This talent of his has actually enabled him to capture in stone images that some of us never thought they can be sculpted on stone. His master pieces like 'Swing me mama', 'Helping our HIV friend' and many more others have really changed the world of arts. He has taken the bull by its horns and this together with his talent has helped him to stand above the rest. His is a talent intermixed with the love for stone and life. He truly brings to light the words of Henry Moore (1898-1986), "To be an artist is to believe in life."

The role of the raw stone

Zimbabwe is the only country that has vast deposits of raw materials that are used in stone sculpturing. Some parts of

Zim Stone Art- Why so special?

By Timothy Akuda

After the death of Henry Moore in 1986, the much respected chief critic of the London *Sunday Telegraph* Michael Shepherd asked this rhetorical question: **"Now that Henry Moore is dead, who is the greatest stone sculptor in the world? In my experience, there are three outstanding contenders. All three come from Zimbabwe!"** Many art and art analyst stand with Michael in his opinion. This is much so because stone art from Zimbabwe is found in classical museums like The New York Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) and displayed alongside works by Matisse, Picasso and Henry Moore. Zimbabwe is just but a small country in Southern Africa, but talk of its stone art anywhere in the world and you will indeed cause quite a sensation.

What makes Zimbabwe stone art a world class? If you are a follower of Zimbabwe stone art you might think of different

aspects. Amongst these you might think of commitment, originality, talent and the raw material. Yes indeed these are some of the aspects that have immensely shouldered our stone art to world heights. But what is commitment to stone artists? What measures talent and what is originality? What role does the raw stone play? This article will try to address and discuss such questions.

Commitment

The late Nicholas Mukomberanwa helps us understand commitment in stone art. He once said, **"Put me in prison and I will die. But put me in prison and give me tools I will survive."** This is a true example of commitment. Nicholas died while still working. Most of other First Generation artists have now died and likewise they died whilst still working.

the world do have their own raw stones like granite, dolomite, marble and soapstone but it is here in Zimbabwe that you can find the much attractive black and brown serpentine, saprolite, leopard rock, opal, verdite, spring stone and many more others. Moreover those who work on granite and marble do need to have good machines to work on these stones because of their hardness and harsh qualities. What about Zimbabwean stones? Simply put, they are user friendly. They remain the mainstay in the world of stone sculpting because they bring variety and colour. The greatest advantage of all is that these raw materials are found in vast deposits. The Great Dyke remains the mainstream that supplies Zimbabwe stone artists with these much needed raw materials. This has contributed much to the growth of Zimbabwe stone art in the International world because stone artists can experiment in either way they wish. They can practice and practice until

they identify their own style because the availability of raw materials makes this possible. From the 1950s when these raw materials started to be extracted there has never been a shortage and never shall it be because they can supply us for millions of years to come. Many a stone artists have come, thrilled us and gone but the raw stone remains forever.

The Future

Zimbabwe stone sculpture will continue to dominate the world market because of its splendour and the factors we have discussed above. Lest we forget, not all stone sculptors are artists and not all artists have the talent!! Till next time I still remain Timothy Akuda.

Special Places to find collectable art pieces in Zimbabwe

Art collecting is one of the most popular and vital practices in the world since time immemorial.

Art has provided therapeutic, nostalgic and love services to many people because of its distinguishable

make. In Zimbabwe we take pride in some recommendable places that possess the best and

aesthetic art pieces to adorn your surroundings. What makes these places special is that you will

find stone, wooden, metal sculptures, paintings, mixed mediums, drawings, traditional artifacts,

printed clothes, jewellery and literature. So the question is where do you start collecting these

beautiful manifestations of creativity and artistic ability? Here are some places you can visit to help

you get started collecting art of your choice.

- National Gallery of Zimbabwe Sales Shop
- Gallery Delta
- Lucky Bean Art Gallery
- Dendera Gallery
- Ubuntu Gallery



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