



REMARKS

BY

**THE PRESIDENT, HIS EXCELLENCY,
DR E. D. MNANGAGWA**

AT THE

**OCCASION OF THE PRIVATE PREVIEW OF THE
STARS ARE BRIGHT EXHIBITION**

NATIONAL ART GALLERY

18 JULY 2022

Director of Ceremonies;

Vice President and Minister of Health and Child Care,
Hon. Gen. (Rtd) Dr. C. G. D. N. Chiwenga;

Chairman of ZANU PF and Minister of Defence and War
Veterans Affairs, Hon. O. C. Z. Muchinguri-Kashiri;

Minister of State for Harare Metropolitan Province,
Hon. Eng. Sen. O. Chidawu;

Minister of Youth, Sport, Arts and Recreation;
Hon. Dr. K. Coventry;

Other Honourable Ministers here present;

Chairperson of the Board of Trustees for the National
Gallery of Zimbabwe; Dr. S. Guramatunhu;

Senior Government Officials;

Director of the Stars Are Bright Exhibition,
Ms Lisa Masterson;

Representative of Honde Valley Hydro Electric Power,
Mr McKersie;

Deputy Chief Secretary, Dr. Rev P. B. Damasane and
Family, representing Mathias Damasane;

Leander Kandihero, representing Caxton Kandihero;

Gift and Tafadzwa Sango-Moyo representing Livingstone Sango;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my singular honour and privilege to be part of this preview of the Stars Are Bright Exhibition here at the National Art Gallery. Today, we welcome the return of one of Zimbabwe's amazing artwork collections, created by young students from the Cyrene Mission in the 1940s.

This artwork collection being show-cased at this Exhibition is a testimony that the Arts, Culture and Creative Industries have long been part of the daily life of the people of Zimbabwe, connecting us to our indigenous landscapes and communicating the obtaining socio-economic realities at different development epochs of our history.

My Government, under the Second Republic, recognises the need to create an environment for wholistic national development. Beyond a modern and industrialised economy, it is critically important to invest in sectors that feed and drive the soul and give our communities, and the nation as a whole, identity and character. Worldwide, Creative Cultural Industries are considered one of the top five largest economic sectors in terms of turnover after financial services, information technology, pharmaceuticals and biotechnology as well as tourism. Hence, as an Administration, we remain committed to supporting and promoting the Creative Cultural Industries.

Against this background, I am extremely pleased to have had this opportunity to view this art collection, which dates back to 1953. I am informed that after a successful tour of Europe and the final exhibition of Cyrene Students' Work in London, the artworks were carefully

packed and stored at St Michael's and All Angels Church in Shoreditch.

The art lay neglected for a period of 25 years, undamaged at the Church. It was only in 1978, when the Church was formally de-consecrated, that the abandoned boxes were discovered. Due to sheer coincidence and fate, an employee of London Architectural Salvage and Supply Company (LASSCO), the organisation which was charged with inspecting the boxes, was a Zimbabwean. He recognised the name Cyrene and the significance of the treasure trove he had stumbled upon.

Today, after having spent 70 years away from their homeland, these astonishing works of art are finally back home to be viewed, as well as fully appreciated, first and foremost by Zimbabwean and African audiences and thereafter, those from beyond.

I want to commend the Curtain Foundation, represented by the Honde Valley Hydro Electric Power Trust for their work towards ensuring that this collection of art was preserved and safeguarded. I equally congratulate the National Gallery of Zimbabwe and all the stakeholders, who have made it possible for this amazing artwork and cultural heritage to be re-united with members of the family of artists who created it.

The works, which draw on an unusual decorative style, translate Christian themes into distinctive African imagery. This stems from the young indigenous artists' creative style of forging a deep understanding and spiritual connection with our landscapes in their works by re-imagining local realities and biblical narratives.

Meanwhile, it is also important to note that the Cyrene Mission Chapel, with all its original murals made by many of the same African artists whose work is on

display today, is still in existence. It is easily accessible along the Bulawayo-Plumtree Road.

Drawing from the lessons we learn from the journey of these artworks, I exhort the Church to continue partnering, complementing and supporting initiatives which advance Zimbabwe's national development narrative in close liaison with Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies. The Church and the State are indispensable partners in our quest for a higher quality of life for our people and a more prosperous nation.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Invited Guests;

The true story of our country has not yet been fully told. I, thus, challenge artists and researchers to unravel and tell the uncorrupted Zimbabwean story, including through creative works, across various fields. I further call upon artists, across all genres within the industry, to understand their power, value and worth.

Do not allow yourselves to be manipulated by some western entities for their own dubious agenda. Some of them may offer you short term gains which will curtail and defile your artistic potential and creative independence.

Yet others may attempt to use you to subvert your own country as well as deprive present and future generations of hearing and seeing the world through the reflections of your artworks. I, therefore, challenge artists and those in the Creative Cultural Industries in general, to continue being patriotic and using their talent and gifts to advance unity, peace and our country's national development agenda.

Meanwhile, I want to take the opportunity of this occasion to reiterate our call for the unconditional return of our country's symbols of heritage, artifacts and creative works.

As it was with our land, the people of Zimbabwe deserve to be re-united with all that which belongs to them, in whatever form.

In conclusion, I want to express my gratitude to the Ministry of Youth, Sport, Arts and Recreation, the National Gallery of Zimbabwe, the Curtain Foundation, Honde Valley Hydro Electric Power Trust, and our artists for this insightful Exhibition. This Exhibition must continue to ensure that such and other forms of arts produced by our own people and communities remain part of our rich heritage, as well as shape the narrative of the art and heritage of our motherland, Zimbabwe.

I wish also to invite our citizenry to interest themselves and participate as well as enjoy the Stars Are Bright Exhibition during the public open days.

With these remarks, it is my honour and privilege to declare the Stars Are Bright Public Exhibition officially open.

God bless you all.

God bless Zimbabwe.

I thank you.