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Topic: “ZAMBIA SEEN THROUGH THE VISUAL ARTS”

A contributor to the tourism industry: a presentation of slides and talk on Zambian visual arts

by William Bwalya Miko for TWAYA ART-ZAMBIA

BACKGROUND

In May 2003, The Zambia chapter of the Africa Travel Association (ATA) hosted the ATA Congress at the Intercontinental Lusaka, Zambia where a debut art exhibition of paintings and sculptures from some of the best Zambian artists were displayed. The Intercontinental Lusaka management was overwhelmed by the response from the government, the private sector and the artists themselves. It was felt that the displays should become a permanent feature of the hotel premises as an art display. Since then the gallery displays have stunned many people, firstly was the ATA Conference participants and later hotel residents and other international visitors, especially from America, Europe and local patronage. At the end of that ATA Conference both local and international art collectors had purchased many works of art.

TWAYA ART-ZAMBIA

William Bwalya Miko, one of Zambia's foremost artists supported by a few of his colleagues, founded the Twaya Art-ZAMBIA organisation now running an art gallery at the Intercontinental Lusaka. Since May 2003, the hotel management of Intercontinental Lusaka kindly offered the space pro bona gratis for the use as a means to support the under-privileged artistic and vibrant city communities. It was here that the idea of Twaya Art-Zambia was founded.

THE ART GALLERY AT INTERCONTINENTAL LUSAKA

This gallery, since its establishment has benefited many artists and their families. For instance, orphans and vulnerable children in Zambia have also benefited from community projects coordinated and facilitated by Twaya Art Zambia gallery office. Additionally, many Lusaka residents, school pupils, tourists and the diplomatic community in Lusaka regularly visit the gallery

The Twaya-Art Zambia gallery has exported many paintings and sculptures overseas. This gallery operates with only a small voluntary staff which has proved to be an efficient and viable project. Intercontinental Lusaka has earned a highly profiled name in a competitive tourism industry not only in Lusaka, but the entire Southern African region and overseas.

Over the last two years, the major destinations and markets for art works from this hotel gallery are United States of America, Europe and Scandinavian countries. The sales of the art works overseas have greatly benefited the artists and their families. For example, one of the Zambian artists, the late Friday Tembo managed to build a studio and an informal school in Lusaka's Linda shanty compound from the sales of his artwork attained from this gallery. Up to now his family still benefit from the sales of his work from this gallery.

Although Twaya ART-ZAMBIA gallery is in dire need of capital injection to sustain its operations, it has assumed a role of a professionally run contemporary art gallery and is doing extremely well as a significant contributor to the tourism industry in Zambia.

Summary Resume (CV)

William Bwalya Miko,
(b. Mwense, 1961, Zambia)

EDUCATION

MA Fine Arts Degree, Middlesex University 1999, London, United Kingdom.
BA Fine Arts Degree, Middlesex University 1998, London, United Kingdom.
Arts Teachers Diploma, Evelyn Hone College 1989, Lusaka, Zambia.

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

In 1994, he undertook an Arts Organisation Administrative Study tour focused on public and private sector support programmes. He trained in Community arts and non-profit making organizations fundraising methods and mechanisms in several states of the USA- sponsored by USIS, Lusaka. In 2001, obtained two certificates in European Development Fund (EDF) management of Work Programmes EDF Financial and Procurement Procedures-sponsored by the European Union, Delegation of the European Commission, Lusaka, Zambia.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Zambian artist lives and works in Lusaka. He worked as an elementary Cartographer for the World Health Organisation at the Tropical Diseases Research Centre 1995-6 in Ndola, and taught at Kabulonga Girls High School 1990-3 in Lusaka. Since then, he has been active in the arts community, initiating grassroots and high level projects: founding the Zambia National Visual Arts Council 1989- creating its provincial branches and managing the Henry Tayali Visual Arts Center Funded by Norad 1992-4; proposing 'Imbile' as a name for Mbile International Artists Workshop 1992; establishing regional and international art links. In 1994, he traveled to several parts of the USA on an art administration study tour and came home to establish the Documentation Centre at VAC. Amid his own studio art practice, he has been a curator for national and international art shows, mounted the first contemporary art exhibition for the inauguration of the new Lusaka National Museum 1994-6. He was appointed National Co-ordinator for the European Union-CICIBA-Bantu Regional Cultural Programme 1995-7. Amongst his first prize achievements including his paintings, scrap metal sculptures and graphic designs that have won awards. He participated in the Trade Routes 1997 Johannesburg Biennale, South Africa. He refers to his body of work as '*Echoes of my mind*' and has shown in Africa, Indonesia, Europe and the USA. He held a solo show at the CERN and Athenee Quatre in Geneva in 2000. He has delivered talks and lectures in Zambia, France, Switzerland, Sweden and USA. The Prince Claus Fund of the Netherlands through IVAC Lagos/London sponsored him to give a series of lectures in Nigeria-2001. He was project Co-ordinator for the Lechwe Trust Contemporary art exhibition mounted at the Lusaka National Museum 2000, and a community perspectives project Consultant for UNICEF/ USAID's Regional Conference on Orphans & Vulnerable Children, Lusaka 2000. He has written catalogue essays: *Zambian Women Artists touring in Norway 1999* and contributed to a publication on *Inter-cultural Drawing Practice* at Liverpool University 1999 in the UK. In 2001, Nordic Consulting Group of Denmark employed him as Programme Co-ordinator and Technical Assistant Team Leader for a European Union financed 'Cultural Sector Support Programme in Zambia. NORAD collected some of his major artworks for display in the Head Office in Oslo, Norway - 2002. He is also the current curator of a major contemporary art exhibition of top Zambian visual artists at Hotel Intercontinental in Lusaka and one of the organizers of 'Integrity Art Workshop' sponsored by IRIS of Washington DC, USA. Project Consultant for *Community Perspectives: Orphans, Vulnerable Children and Artists-Workshop and Exhibition* sponsored by UN - World Food Programme (WFP) through Project Concern International (PCI)-2004. Project Consultant for *Women's Empowerment (International Women's Day) celebrations, Students and Artists' Workshop and Exhibition* sponsored by UN - Country Team in Zambia - 2004. He is currently Co-ordinator and Curator of the Lechwe Trust Contemporary art collection exhibition to be mounted at the Lusaka National Museum in January - March, 2005.

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ZAMBIA SEEN THROUGH THE ARTS

Twaya Art Zambia was established in 2003 in Lusaka Zambia with a six fold objective as an organisation:

- a). To foster the development of Zambian community consciousness through various artistic and cultural practices
- b). To educate, train and asset artists as an integral part of viable economic entity in the public and private sector at home and abroad.
- c). To encourage professional development of high quality visual art products and generate income to help artists sustain their lives.
- d). To stimulate and consolidate the various artistic and cultural activities into institutions as vibrant national economic enterprise
- e). To facilitate a multiplier effect approach in development of the arts and culture as an important tool in the promotion of tourism.
- f). To attract both public and private sector support and enhance strong corporate images through public displays of the Zambian arts and culture

THE BACKGROUND

For a long time now the people in Zambia, including the government did not regard the arts as an important sector in national development, especially in the tourism industry. Since Zambia attained her independence 1964, the country has had only one or two art centres and private art galleries; now defunct Mpapa, Zintu and the Former Meridien Bank in the late 80s and 90s. Up to now, this nation has only one college for artists, the Evelyn Hone College in Lusaka which trains music and visual arts teachers. There is no specific Museum for contemporary art or national art Gallery.

It was not until 1987 when Zambian artists started coming together to form nongovernmental pressure groups and organisations to foster art sectoral development. These establishments of display spaces for art accompanied self-developmental initiatives that changed the scenario to the current more vibrant and promising arts and cultural sector. However, these groups, like many NGOs in some parts of underdeveloped Africa lack financial capacity, administrative and professional skills to manage and market both their products and the artists at home and abroad.

THE BIRTH OF TWAYA-ZAMBIA GALLERY

In May 2003, Zambia hosted the chapter of Africa Travel Association (ATA) at the Intercontinental Lusaka where I manage and curate the debut art exhibition of paintings and sculptures from some of the best Zambian artists. The Intercontinental Lusaka was overwhelmed by the response from the government, the private sector and the artists themselves who felt the displays should become a permanent feature. Since inception, the gallery displays have stunned many people, firstly was the ATA Conference participants and delegates, hotel residents and other international visitors, especially from America, Europe and local patronage. At the end of the ATA Conference in 2003 both local and international art collectors had purchased many works of art.

The gallery has since then been visited by schools and many Lusaka residents. In the absence of a professionally run museum of contemporary art, in Zambia, the gallery has assumed that role and is doing extremely well, though it is in dire need of capital injection to sustain its operations to meet international demands.

THE ART GALLERY AT INTERCONTINENTAL LUSAKA

William Bwalya Miko, one of Zambia's foremost artists supported by a few of his colleagues, founded the Art Gallery in 2003. The hotel management of Intercontinental Lusaka kindly offered the space pro bona gratis for the use as a means to support the under-privileged artistic and vibrant city communities.

The Twaya-Art Zambia gallery has exported many paintings and sculptures overseas. This gallery, since its inception, with only a skeleton staff of personnel has proved to be a viable project. Going by the comments made by visitors to this art gallery and the amount of works of art that have been collected so far, the Intercontinental Lusaka has earned a cultural profile highly competitive in the tourism industry in Zambia, which, in turn has earned the country more referral points by many people who have come to Lusaka City.

The major destination and market of art collected from this hotel gallery have been the United States of America, Europe and in particular the Scandinavian countries over the last two years of operation. The benefit to the artists and their families has been quite substantial. For instance, one of the Zambian artists, the late Friday Tembo managed to build a studio and an informal school in Lusaka's Linda shanty compound from the sales of his artwork attained from this gallery. Subsequently, one of the donor agencies supported him as well.

ARTISTS SUSTAIN THEIR LIVES THROUGH ART

Twaya-Art Zambia has since 2003 sold sculptures and paintings to many visitors to Zambia, like Africa-American Television Talk Show Queen, Oprah Winfrey who bought a painting entitled 'Village scene' by Poto Kabwe. Others are World Bank country director for Malawi, Zimbabwe and Zambia Mr Hartwig Schafer and many

diplomatic and other local clients. The money raised from the sales of the artworks goes directly to the artists to sustain their lives who continue to work as full time artists.

SHOE STRING BUDGET

Since 2003 the gallery has only operated on a shoe string budget, and has encountered many logistical problems in its operations, lack of transport, inadequate allowances for its volunteer staff, inability to give small loans to the artists and above all communication equipment like phones, E-mail, telephones is quiet expensive.

Due the logistical and administrative problems to run the gallery and also to assist guest artists at the gallery, Twaya-Art Zambia has now been registered as a company. This will help the gallery to operate like any other private company and probably be in a position to apply for grants.

The gallery has embarked on a vigorous marketing campaign on the local and international art scene: producing flyers and giving media presentations, thanks to the Intercontinental Lusaka which displays some of these materials in the guest rooms. Despite these problems Twaya-Art Zambia has proved to be one of the best organised art gallery in Zambia at the moment.

OUTREACH PROGRAMME BENEFITS VISUAL ARTISTS

As curator of Twaya-Art Gallery, and as a professional practising artist myself I am highly indebted to the hotel management who generously offered the space bon gratis as their outreach programme and input to the support of the local community and the artists. And I wish also to thank the private sector for their support.

CONCLUSION

I am happy that our government has recognised our industry by enacting the cultural policy, but is yet to substantially embark on a serious programme to finance and support our artists by giving them loans to boost the tourism industry. Our government is yet to introduce programmes to establish degree courses at the University of Zambia focused on art and culture.

I have no doubt that this vibrant sector will soon be the biggest foreign exchange earner in the tourism sector in Zambia. It is not a secret but true that everybody gathered here today knows that the arts have always been used as a tool for peace and tourism. I urge all the delegates to start looking at the arts not only as objects to beautify their homes and offices, but as “messages” for mankind’s peace for the entire world. Thank you.

WILLIAM BWALYA MIKO
CURATOR