

BACKGROUND INFORMATION TO THE EXHIBITION, SYMPOSIUM, AND FESTIVAL OF SOUTH AFRICAN ARTS - GABORONE, 5 - 9 JULY 1982.

The idea of staging an Exhibition of South African Art in Gaborone was conceived initially two years ago among a number of South African artists living in Botswana. The idea developed within the context of a number of individual exhibitions that were held by South African artists at the National Museum and Art Gallery in Gaborone. It was felt among the cultural workers here in Gaborone that it would be of great value to stage a wider exhibition of South African art so as to give many more cultural workers in South Africa a chance of exhibiting here in Botswana. From this initial idea others followed, and in time the idea of bringing cultural workers together with their work, enabling them to meet and exchange ideas emerged. So today, two years later, we have come to the point of a major Exhibition, Symposium and Festival.

The organisation of these events has been based upon voluntary, collective work among cultural workers both in Botswana and South Africa. In South Africa a number of cultural groups and organisations, including Ravan Press, FUBA, CAP and Open School co-operated to set up steering committees to collect together cultural workers and to enable them to contribute their work: paintings, graphics, sculptures, photographs, films, plays, poems and music to these events. In Botswana a Work Committee was established which, in conjunction with the National Museum and Art Gallery, which is host to the exhibition, worked to raise funds and organise the whole event locally. Throughout the organisation of this project, the cultural workers involved have worked on the basis of collective decision making and the final selection of works for the Exhibition was made by a collective of cultural workers who represented the many others who had contributed.

The funding for this project has been an ongoing project in itself and finally we have reached a situation in which seven international donor and volunteer agencies have contributed towards the costs.

The idea of holding a symposium and arts festival developed as a result of the need felt among cultural workers to meet and share ideas. It was realised that the Exhibition, around which many cultural workers would gather, could form the perfect focal point around which cultural workers could share experience and ideas. It was from this starting point that the themes of the Exhibition and Symposium were developed. The theme of the Exhibition is "Art towards Social Development", and it reflects the constant battle among cultural workers to find a place for themselves in society which is not merely that of light entertainers but one of making an important contribution to the development of society. The theme of the symposium developed as a direct result of the needs of cultural workers in South Africa and the position they find themselves faced with, where all around them the society is in conflict. The theme - "Culture and Resistance" - thus incorporates the need of cultural workers to discuss this position that they find themselves in within society.

The organisers of the Exhibition, Symposium and Festival clarified at an early stage of the organisation of these events what their objectives were and what they hope to achieve by their labours. The objectives are:

1. To expose South African cultural workers to a wide range of National cultural work, thus giving an opportunity to them to develop a national perspective on culture in South Africa.
2. To expose South African cultural developments to the people of Southern Africa and eventually to give the work done by South African cultural workers international exposure.
3. To finally produce a book on South African culture as a product of the event. A film of the event will also be produced.

Finally it is hoped that this exposure, experience and effort will lead to greater co-operation and collective work among cultural workers in South Africa in the years ahead, with the aim of heightening the level of culture in South Africa and to encourage cultural workers to be part and parcel of the communities from which they come.

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