Social Zoometry
An exhibition of Paintings and Graphics by
Wallen Mapondera

Opened by His Excellency, Mr. Luciano Lavizzari,
Ambassador of Switzerland
on Friday, 23th May, 2014, gallery delta
Sponsored by the Embassy of Switzerland
Foreword

For the second time this year, the Embassy of Switzerland invites the public to discover the exhibition of a young and talented Zimbabwean artist. Wallen Mapondera, born in 1985 in Zimbabwe, is a contemporary and conceptual abstract expressionist who uses mixed media to create works of art.

Wallen Mapondera explores social norms and cultural and industrial practices which exploit and abuse animals. Through his paintings, the artist invites the spectator to imagine himself living the life of an animal, a dog that spends the day on a leash, a pig in a dirty sty, a bull in a slaughterhouse or dogs and cocks in staged fighting. By interrogating the living conditions of animals and our relationship with them, the visual artist explores, by analogy, human society and its form of power structure, sociopolitical norms and social relationships. The ruthlessness and thirst for domination with which human beings treat and abuse animals decried in his paintings, mirror the violence and cruelty which characterizes human society.

The exhibition presents a series of satiric and allegoric paintings which investigate social norms and abuses through the socio-political symbolisms of animals. It also displays a number of figurative assemblage work as well as a number of beautiful "string drawings" made out of fine and colorful cotton threads skilfully arranged. The combination of satirical pieces of art with refined artistic creations leaves the observer caught up in a mixture of feelings ranging from revolt against human cruelty to admiration for aesthetic prowess.

The Embassy of Switzerland is proud to present this exhibition and to support the Delta Gallery. It is through the promotion of local art and talents that artistic creation and creativity will continue to strive in Zimbabwe.

Luciano Lavizzari
Ambassador of Switzerland
May 2014
Introduction

Wallen Mapondera engages the viewer with sensitive, exacting marks that express penetrating observations of the various subjects, which are in most cases presented as domestic animals, rendered without exception with a deep sense of pathos. Through his carefully constructed compositions Mapondera locates the spectator in a variety of roles; in one work actively involved in the desecration of an animal, in another the occupant of a privileged or authoritarian position, witness to some ominous event and in another removed and isolated from the subject, separated by the picture plane, rendered powerless and unable to effect change.

Mapondera challenges the spectator to confront their humanity. At face value, he questions the human/animal relationship and the systems of value or perceived authorities which determine the nature of this relationship; whether being human permits/conditions us to abuse and dominate or nurture and protect our co-species, and what the ramifications of these actions are. More significantly, Mapondera allows the viewer to identify with the subjects of these works as his/her own kind. From this perspective we answer the same questions, revealing as we do, power structures, hierarchies and abuse but also kinship and companionship.

By confronting the viewer with variations of the Other, Mapondera turns the focus to the self. Can we justify our actions toward the Other and to what extent are we prepared to deconstruct the value systems which condition this behaviour? Ultimately, through these works, Mapondera presents us with a far more uncomfortable question: From this starkly human perspective, what action are we obliged to take, how do we respond when we are confronted with behaviour amidst our kin, within our community and country that is so clearly discordant with our own values?

Greg Shaw
5 May, 2014
**Artist’s Statement**

Social zoometry aims, through social-political symbolism of animals and their disposition, to explore human oligarchy and power structures in which power rests with a small number of people. I use zoomorphic and anthropomorphic visual templates to present my case. These suggest human characteristics for animals or inanimate things as well as relating to, or being a deity conceived of in animal form or with animal attributes. The benign power of animals to teach, question and affirm is explored in our daily relationships with them. I juggle sensitive current themes such as the absolute power lust of human beings over their kin and also over animal beings. African cultural psychology in relation to animals is also a dominant thread that weaves these ideas together.

The exploration of this theme possesses another twist as I highlight the tasteless, cheap and shoddy abuse of animals by human beings in our society. We are exposing human folly through the act of deriding and treating these animals with contempt. There are so many disturbing cultural practices that are happening in Zimbabwe and Africa as a whole. Goats are being drowned in drums of locally brewed beer in rural areas and to be eaten without salt, and chickens are being starved for a few days all in the name of culture. In addition, some religious beliefs go to the extent of ritual sacrifices at the expense of these domesticated animals.

I believe if we all have a heart for animals then it will be very easy to love one another. We witness these abuses daily, read and hear about them, yet we do not take time to think and act upon them. The fact is that we are all being affected by it one way or another; socially, spiritually, politically or psychologically. The law is too loose or not effective enough to put an end to this behaviour. Social zoometry is there to replace the roots of cruelty with the seeds of love; love for animals is the beginning of a welcoming and loving nation.

Wallen Mapondera
24 April, 2014
4) **Rope is the Enemy I**, 2014
   String Drawing
   17 x 12 cm

5) **Rope is the Enemy II**, 2014
   String Drawing
   18 x 12 cm

6) **The Rope is the Enemy III**, 2014
   String Drawing
   18 x 12 cm

7) **Tagged**, 2014
   String Drawing
   17 x 12 cm

8) **Gotokoto Free**, 2014
   String Drawing
   17 x 13 cm
ABOVE
Restoration, 2013
Acrylic on paper
70 x 50 cm

BELOW
Untitled Pig, 2013
Acrylic on paper
70 x 50 cm

Zangira Rava Dongo, 2014
Multi Media,
52 x 50 cm
ABOVE
Target II, 2014
Cardboard
45 x 45 x 70 cm

RIGHT
Visionary Animals, 2013
Acrylic on paper
70 x 50 cm
Wallen Mapondera - Biography


EXHIBITIONS

2013 Select Collection, Gallery Delta
2013 Terra – A Landscape Exhibition, Gallery Delta
2013 Redefinitions IV, Gallery Delta
2013 The Annual Summer Exhibition, Gallery Delta
2012 Past and Present – A Retrospective, Gallery Delta
2012 Tradition, Family and Religion, Gallery Delta
2012 The Contenders, Gallery Delta
2012 Between the Sheets – Artists Book, Australia
2012 A Tribute to Kazantzakis – The African Dream Fulfilled, Gallery Delta
2012 The Annual Summer Exhibition, Gallery Delta
2011 Art Zimbabwe Today, Gallery Delta
2011 Freedom Revisited, sponsored by the European Union, Gallery Delta
2011 Colour Africa 2011, Munich Germany
2011 Mutare Contempo, Munich, Germany
2011 Focus on Southern African Art and Craft, Zimbabwe and Swaziland, Denmark
2011 The Annual Summer Exhibition, Gallery Delta
2010 Graphics exhibition, Dzimbanhete Gallery, Norton
2010 Live ‘n Direct, an exhibition and competition sponsored by Culture Fund and Kingdom Bank, National Gallery of Zimbabwe, Harare
2010 African Expressions, D’Avignon University, France
2010 Common People, Solo Exhibition, Verandah Gallery, Harare
2010 Texture By Name, Solo Exhibition, Maputo, Mozambique
2009 F.A.C.T. COTCO, An art exhibition and competition sponsored by the cotton company of Zimbabwe, National Gallery of Zimbabwe, Harare
2009 Unity, An art exhibition and competition sponsored by the European Union, Gallery Delta, Harare

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

2007 Zimbabwean change, St Bavo Church, Netherlands
2007 Alliance Francaise Annual Exhibition, Maputo, Mozambique
2006 HIFA (Hand In Hand) exhibition, National Gallery of Zimbabwe in Harare
2006 Our Thoughts, National Gallery of Zimbabwe in Mutare, Mutare.
2006 Rembrandt: An African Response, an exhibition and art competition sponsored by Embassy of Netherlands, Gallery Delta, Harare
2006 African House, Germany
2009 Anti-mal exhibition, VEO Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
2009 16th Annual exhibition, Verandah Gallery, Harare
2008 COTCO exhibition, An art exhibition and competition sponsored by the cotton company of Zimbabwe, National Gallery of Zimbabwe, Harare
2008 The Young Artist’s Exhibition and Competition, supported by HIVOS Foundation, Gallery Delta, Harare.
2008 Miniature Exhibition 2008, VEO Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
2008 Salon 91 Art Exhibition, Salon 91, Cape Town, South Africa
2008 Enriching Women, an exhibition and art competition for the International Women’s Film Festival, Gallery Delta, Harare
2008 Onai (Do You See When You Look) A Three Man Exhibition, National Art Gallery of Zimbabwe in Mutare, Mutare
2008 Post Election Selection, An art exhibition and competition sponsored by the Embassy of Switzerland, Gallery Delta, Harare
2008 Art and Culture: Africa University Annual Festival of Paintings and Graphics, National Gallery of Zimbabwe, Mutare
2008 The Young Artist Exhibition, Gallery Delta, Harare
2007 Peace Through Unity and Diversity, an exhibition and competition sponsored by the European Commission, Gallery Delta, Harare
2007 The Sixth Sense, an exhibition of paintings and graphics, National Gallery of Zimbabwe, Mutare
2007 Drawings and Graphics: An Overview, Gallery Delta, Harare
2007 Edible Mapepa An exhibition of art pieces from handmade paper, National Art Gallery of Zimbabwe, Harare
2007 Mazuva Ose (Everyday) A dual exhibition at the end of the residency programme, sponsored by the National Gallery of Zimbabwe, Harare
2006 Award of Merit, Painting Category, final year student’s exhibition and competition sponsored by the National Gallery of Zimbabwe, Harare
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COMMISSIONS

2009 Cover book painting for Weaver press Defying The Winds Of Change
2008 One of the panel of Judges for an art competition entitled Life is a journey, Keep it Safe, sponsored by the International Organization of Migration (I.O.M) promoting safe migration. National Gallery of Zimbabwe, Harare
2008 Painting which was used in a cheque book for the Commercial Bank of Zimbabwe (C.B.Z).
2006 Mural Paintings and Decorations, National Gallery of Zimbabwe, Harare

WORKSHOPS

2009 Good Hope Arts Studios mentorship workshop, Cape Town, South Africa
2008 Edible Mapepa, A workshop of making and manipulating handmade paper into an art work, Mapepa Industries, Harare
2007 Young Artists Workshop, Gallery Delta, Harare

PERMANENT COLLECTIONS

A multi-media drawing titled Rega Zvipore (Let It Cool), permanent collection of the Mayor of Kelsterbach, Germany
Painting titled - 29 March 2008 Elections, permanent collection of The National Art Gallery of Zimbabwe
Acknowledgements and Thanks
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‘Robert Paul’s Old House,’
110 Livingstone Avenue/
Ninth Street, Greenwood
Park, Harare, Zimbabwe.
Tel/Fax +263-4-792135
artdelta@mweb.co.zw
www.gallerydelta.com