

INTERNATIONAL

Smithsonian showing peaceful Africa

WASHINGTON—News reports from Africa often depict images of war, disease and poverty, but the National Museum of African Art sees another picture — a nude surrounded by flowers, religious symbols, a motorized, life-size metal girl who claps her steel hands every half-hour for a festival.

A unit of the Smithsonian Institution that deals with traditional African art, the museum strikes out in a new direction Sunday. It opens "Encounters with the Contemporary," a show of new work by Africans at home, in America and Europe.

Valente Malangatana painted the nude in 1962 in Mozambique, then torn by guerrilla revolt against Portuguese colonial forces. The

museum says he is known for pictures that "poignantly depict the trauma of armed conflict and revolution." But there's no violence in the painting or in the love poem he wrote on the back of the canvas.

"His works also address the myths and customs of his youth," the museum says in describing the picture, "the small pleasures of daily life and the triumph of the human spirit."

Symbols of faith are prominent in the show. Alexander Boghossian, who now teaches at Washington's Howard University, presents his own brightly decorative version of the parchment scrolls that devout people wear as talismans in his native Ethiopia.

Mmakgabo Mmpula Sebidi, a South African who studied in the United States as a Fulbright scholar, is represented by a colorful drawing that celebrates the survival of the spirit over death.

Elizabeth Harney, the museum's new curator of today's art, said the show also will include accounts of Africa's troubled recent history. "There are going to be images of the Biafran war — not yet, but there will be in the next rotation," she said.

The Biafran war in Nigeria killed thousands and created at least 750,000 refugees between 1967 and 1970.

The show of 62 works will continue through Jan. 6, 2002, rotating some of the exhibits every four months.

Harney noted that some

of the work from South Africa, represented by 12 of the 32 artists in the show, speak of violence and repression.

"South African artists have had to deal with that history every day, have had to show what it means to create a new identity and a new nation given the ravages of apartheid," she said in an interview.

Sokari Douglas Camp's mechanical "Clapping Girl" was "inspired by the sounds, movements and colors of (Nigerian) masquerades, funerals, plays, initiation ceremonies, regattas and festivals," the museum says.

Roslyn Walker, director of the museum, explained that she claps only on the half-hour to save wear on the motor.

Kufour

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Ghana and appealed to them to continue to assist the country overcome the current economic challenges, particularly in the relief of debts.

He said presently Ghana spends one-fourth of her revenue annually on debt servicing.

The new leader pledged hard work and sacrifice by his administration in order to cut down waste and corruption.

"There will be, under this administration, zero tolerance of corruption," he declared, adding that he would personally set the example.

"We shall also cut our coat according to the size of our cloth and utilise whatever help we get in the most appropriate manner," he said.

Kufuor paid tribute to his supporters saying they have worked so hard to bring victory.

He gave the assurance that multi-party will thrive in Ghana and invited Ghanaians living outside the country to return home and help rebuild the nation.

"I pledge that it will not be a case of one set of Ghanaians coming back from exile to be replaced by another set of Ghanaians going to exile. Multi-party democracy is here to stay.

"There is room for differences of opinion, our political opponents haven't their honoured roles to play and I urge all of us to extend the same tolerance to each other that we want for ourselves."

The president paid glowing tribute to Ghanaian women for their "remark-



Ghana's new President, John Kufuor (left), takes the national salute in Independence Square, Accra, January 7, after being sworn in as president. Kufuor, whose election has ended the 19-year rule of former military ruler and twice-elected President Jerry Rawlings, called on the international community to extend debt relief and Ghanaians abroad to return to help the country.

Photo special to Sentinel-Voice

able" contributions to the economy.

He announced that his government would establish a Ministry of Women Affairs to harness policies affecting their interest.

He condemned the murder of women that has plagued the nation and promised to do his best to ensure that the police give the highest priority to solving it and bringing the perpetrators to book.

Kufuor also paid tribute to "those who led the struggle for a return to constitutional rule in the past 20 years." He did not elaborate.

He further pledged his commitment to democratic principles, especially the rule of law and fair justice, irrespective of tribe, religion or political affiliations.

He particularly challenged

the judiciary to work "to renew and restore the faith of our people in the administration of justice" in order to win investor confidence, saying his government would support every feasible business venture.

"Ghana is open for business," he declared, in an apparent invitation to foreign investors.

He charged Ghanaian farmers to accept the challenges of new work ethics, embrace new methods and constantly update their skills to make Ghana an integral part of the global economy.

He made a special plea to the various branches of government to join in nation building, adding that the nation cannot afford to waste anymore time and energy.

"Our people have been very patient but they will not

forgive us if we do not start work immediately," he added.

Conspicuously absent at the ceremony were ex-president Jerry John Rawlings and ex-vice president John Atta Mills.

They had attended the inaugural ceremony two hours earlier.

Ghana has changed dramatically since Rawlings staged his first coup, in 1979. Originally a brutal military dictator who ravaged Ghana's economy with nationalizations, the charismatic former fighter pilot evolved through the 1980s, embracing democratic and free-market ideals in the 1990s and becoming a darling of Western donors. He was prohibited from seeking another four-year term by the constitution.

WORLD BRIEFS

U.N. MISSION PROBES ATROCITIES IN ABIDJAN

ABIDJAN, Cote d'Ivoire (PANA) - A three-member U.N. mission of enquiry is in Abidjan to probe post-election atrocities in Cote d'Ivoire on the request of Secretary General Kofi Annan. Headed by Colin Granderson, the ambassador of Trinidad and Tobago at the UN, the panel has already met with President Laurent Gbagbo, who promised government's cooperation. The panel would do in-depth investigations in order to shed light on the bloody events of 24-26 October which caused the death of 171 people and several hundred wounded; according to official sources. The investigators plan to meet with government officials, the leaders of political parties and civil society associations. According to Granderson, the delegation will also collect testimonies of the victims, perhaps including those of the two escapees of the massacres, which led to the Yopougon mass grave where 77 bodies were discovered. Official sources confirmed that Gbagbo promised the envoys that government would facilitate their task by enabling them to gain access to all witnesses, victims and actors of the tragedy. Abidjan and its outskirts were scenes of bloody clashes 24-26 Oct. between bodyguards of the ex-head of state, Gen. Robert Guei and supporters of Gbagbo. The security forces attempted to prevent sympathizers of Gbagbo's Ivorian Popular Front (FPI) from demonstrating to protest Guei's attempt to claim victory in the 22 October presidential election.

DRC BANS 112 NEWS ORGANIZATIONS

KINSHASA, DR Congo (PANA) - Authorities in Kinshasa have banned 112 newspapers and news agencies from publishing for non-compliance with the law governing the press in the Democratic Republic of Congo, official sources said. A ministerial order issued Thursday in Kinshasa said that 76 of the banned publications were not registered as stipulated by the law, while 36 others had not completed registration procedures. Only 51 press organizations were fully registered in the country. Most of the banned news organizations were already confronted with high cost of production and sales that hamper operation. The spiraling prices have affected the reading public in Gabon, where foreign exchange rate on Friday stood at 125 Congolese Francs to one US dollar as against 50CF to the greenback at the official rate. One affected publisher told PANA the fact is that the Congolese State is "the main enemy of the press."

KENYA GETS LIBYAN HUMANITARIAN RELIEF

TRIPOLI, Libya (PANA) - A Libyan cargo plane has departed Tripoli with several tons of food and drug supplies for drought victims in Kenya, Libyan officials said Friday. The Libyan Red Crescent and several other Libyan organizations are participating in the humanitarian operation. Officials say the first consignment of supplies, which departed Thursday, is to be followed by other flights in the coming days. They explained that the assistance is under the framework of Libya's African solidarity.

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