



**August 3, 2006**

**Dialogue in Stone exhibit open on Centre Island**

Dialogue in Stone - a free exhibit featuring masterpieces of some of Zimbabwe's most renowned sculptors and works by up-and-coming African artists - is now on display at Centre Island until October 31 from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.

The works in this exhibition are carved in the Shona tradition - the name of Zimbabwe's largest tribe. There is evidence that the Shona people of Zimbabwe have practiced the art of sculpting in stone since 1200 AD. Traditionally, African art was created for a specific religious or practical purpose and it took prodding by a number of individuals to convince Shona artists to create art for its own sake.

Frank McEwen, a former art critic and curator of the Rodin Museum in Paris and the first director of the National Gallery in Harare, is largely credited with spearheading this new era of art. At the National Gallery in Harare, McEwen held yearly competitions to encourage local artists. With his connections to western artists like Picasso, Braque, Brancussi and Jacometi, he was able to arrange an exhibit of Shona art at the Rodin Museum. This catapulted Shona sculpture to the international stage, where it remains today.

One of the great advantages that Shona artists have is a ready supply of stone unique to Zimbabwe and a few other parts of the world. The stone comes from the Nyanga Mountains and near the Great Dyke, a 310 mile ridge that is approximately 2.5 million years old.

The Dialogues in Stone exhibit is organized by the Talking Stones Gallery that specializes in hand-carved African sculptures for interiors and outdoor landscapes. The works are on sale and a portion of sales is being donated to HIV/AIDS organizations including the Stephen Lewis Foundation for HIV/AIDS in Africa. Stone-sculpting workshops will also run concurrently with the exhibit.

For more information, visit <http://www.talkingstones.ca> and <http://www.mysterystone.com>.

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