

Diplomats and Executives Gather to Support Repatriated Heritage Art

Ifa Lethu Foundation receives R1 million from the BHP Billiton Development Trust (BBDT)

Pretoria, 3 November 2006: At a breakfast attended by diplomats from more than 18 embassies and commissions, the Ifa Lethu Foundation received a second contribution of R1 million from the BHP Billiton Development Trust (BBDT).

Handing over the cheque, Vincent Maphai, chairperson of BHP Billiton said it gave him great pleasure to continue to support the repatriation work of Ifa Lethu. "This is the second year of patronage for BBDT and we are thrilled that they have stayed with us on our journey to bring home South Africa's lost heritage," says Ifa Lethu Foundation CEO Narissa Ramdhani.



Ifa Lethu, chaired by Dr Mamphela Ramphela, chair of Circle Capital Ventures (Pty) Ltd and former managing director of the World Bank, is a Section 21 company that retrieves township art and artefacts which were lost to South Africa during the apartheid era. Hundreds of artworks were bought in the townships by diplomats based in South Africa

between the early 1970s and the late 1980s, at a time when few South Africans were buying township art.

Since launching 12 months ago, Ifa Lethu has brought home nearly 100 works of painting, drawing, sculpture and carvings, many of which will be seen next year as the Ifa Lethu Mobile Heritage Gallery, sponsored by Goodyear, takes to the road around the country in "365 Days of South African Heritage Tour".

Speaking before the distinguished gathering of ambassadors, cultural attaches and high commissioners from more than 18 countries and many corporate executives, Dr Ramphela urged the guests to encourage the return of South Africa's lost heritage. "We lost more than our souls during the apartheid era – we lost the output of some of our most talented and creative people. This includes film, writings, art and music. Ifa Lethu wants to bring it home to share it with our youth so they can witness how artistic creativity transcended adversity and can be used to heal the nation, and in so doing, contribute to the nation building agenda. Corporate patronage such as that of BBDT and Goodyear, as well as the support shown to us by the Department of Arts and Culture, are immeasurable. For those South Africans who are currently benefiting from our transformation, it is time to give back."

