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Compiled by the Government Communication and Information System

Date: 20 Nov 2005

Title: Campaign to recover lost artwork

By Themba Gadebe, tel: (012) 314 2267

A global hunt to recover South Africa artworks that played a pivotal role in the fight against apartheid regime is underway.

This drive has been initiated by the Ifa Lethu (our heritage) Foundation that Arts and Culture Minister Pallo Jordan launched yesterday.

The foundation seeks to recover, safeguard and make available the "township artwork" crafted during the 70s and the 80s - the time described as the darkest days during apartheid.

It will be working with embassies in the country in an effort to locate many of the artworks.

According to the foundation, many of these could be recognised by the embassies and visitors to the country but eventually disappeared from the country's shores.

Foundation chairperson, Mamphela Ramphele said the collection that had been found so far symbolised the work that lied ahead in assembling a portfolio of "lost" art works created throughout the struggle of the freedom.

It is not known how many have been lost but some have been found, with the belief that there is still more lying out there.

Yesterday at the launch, guests were greeted by some of these finest and well-crafted paintings and sculptures: African artworks made out of wood, oil, clay and metal.

Some of the works in display include that of Matsemela Mkoana whose work has exhibited in Germany, Sweden, United States and Canada.

Clad in a maroon African regalia, his head covered with long dreadlocks, Mr Mkoana tells BuaNews he started art at the tender age of 14 in 1962.

The Soshanguve-based father of three has been making a living from his uncle-inherited-talent his entire life.

He says the highlight of his career was in the 70s when people in the township "started understanding how artwork plays a role in the fight against racism" and when former President Nelson Mandela received his woodwork during his 80th birthday.

Mr Mkoana welcomed the initiative by the Ifa Lethu Foundation.

Speaking at the launch, Mr Jordan said the event was a celebration of South Africa's talent in visual arts.

He said racism could not silence artists.

"Artists grabbed opportunities to give a voice and played a role in the realisation of

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