

**REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**



**MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES**

**SPEECH BY DR KALUMBI SHANGULA, MP, MINISTER OF HEALTH AND  
SOCIAL SERVICES,**

**AT THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL OPENING  
OF THE EXHIBITION TITLED #WHATSYOURSTORY?.**

**9 February 2021**

**WINDHOEK**

*\*Check against Delivery*



Director of Ceremony, Ms. Desiree !Nanuses, Acting Chief Curator, NAGN  
Hon Minister of Education, Arts & Culture, Mrs. Anna Nghipondoka  
Hon Deputy Minister of Education, Arts & Culture, Mrs. Faustina Caley  
Board of Trustees of the National Art Gallery of Namibia  
Executive Directors and Directors  
Chief Executive Officer Ms. Snobia Kaputu  
Distinguished invited guests  
Esteemed Artists  
Media Practitioners

I am pleased to deliver the keynote address at this important exhibition addressing the effect of COVID-19 pandemic, which has since last year put severe economic pressure on the Government and negatively affected the livelihoods of Namibians.

The exhibition that we are witnessing today titled #WhatsYourStory is an outcome of more than two months' hard work by local artists, telling their stories on how they experienced the outbreak of the pandemic. It has been my desire to be with you in person, but due to the fact that this event coincides with the official opening of the Parliament, I can only attend this event virtually.

I was reliably informed that this is a new initiative by the National Art Gallery of Namibia, in partnership with the National Arts Council of Namibia, as the institutions' Covid-19 pandemic response exhibition to find ways to alleviate the situation faced by the creative industries of Namibia and visual artists in particular. The creative process allowed the artists to continue with their production during this challenging time. Today we are experiencing through what they have created, what their stories are.

I have been asking myself what is #WhatsYourStory so many times. I found myself on the internet and I typed in WhatsYourStory and I found movies, video clips of people sharing what has happened to them, what they are going through, some of their success stories and how they have overcome challenges. That the National Art Gallery of Namibia chose a theme, #WhatsYourStory for Namibian visual artists in order for them to share their individual stories is indeed an exceptional feat.

Art is a therapeutic means that aids in coping with difficulties and challenges. In this time that we are hit hard by the pandemic, it is our artists whom have helped us cope. When we went into a lockdown, from all the apps on the cellphone, our couches and mugs in front of the television, including the shows we enjoyed on television are all created by artists in their respective fields.

When I was informed that Public Art is one of the key messages of this #WhatsYourStory, it reminded me of how we appreciated their creative expressions whilst during lockdown. This is the communicative power of art, that transcends many barriers, and helps us cope and exist in challenging times.

This #WhatsYourStory has successfully created artworks throughout Namibia in public spaces like a sculpture of a school boy fully dressed with mask, life size large in scale made from

found material at the new Directorate of Arts & Library in Outapi created by Isai Aindongo and Pavoo Shikongo, a mural on the Fire Brigade Wall at the circle intersection by Robert Mugabe Avenue and Independence Avenue painted by Petrina Matthews, and a white marble sculpture created at the City of Windhoek new wing right opposite the Hilton Hotel visible to the public created by Ngavee, Henry and Winfried from Whuda Marble Art. In addition to public art we have artists exhibiting in the NAGN Galleries, of which I will attempt to pinpoint some of their artworks as follows:

- TityTshilumbu-*FrontlinerWarriers*

In his artwork, he is emphasizing the need to take care of ourselves in order to reduce the burden on the essential workers. View the dangers they are facing daily during lockdown. He feels the importance of these human beings, and therefore he decided to tell the story of the health workers in his artwork. The rough, brutal background shows the red danger they faced and put their unlimited efforts to save lives.

- Paul Kiddo-*Shadow left by Corona*

The artist is telling a story of how COVID-19 is leaving our people with shadows and in chains spreading over the globe without mercy. This painting serves to make people alert of the dangers of Corona and that Corona is wiping out the people without any chance of any improvement.

- Michelle Isaak-*2020 reality: Covid-19*

The artists created this artwork to remind us of this pandemic throughout our lifetimes from now onwards, with both the positive and negative impacts it brought on to the world. This mask also shows how the importance of wearing of masks was essential towards doing something or going somewhere.

- David Amukoto-*Sanitize*

The artwork raises awareness about the contagious nature of the corona virus. It reminds us to always sanitize our hands so that we can prevent the spread of this disease.

- Robson SimataaNashiluwa-*The effect of Covid -19 on Mankind*

The work shows two heads that of a human being and a meerkat. The artist used to make small sculptures of meerkat to sell to the tourists, but since the pandemic swept across the globe and travel became restricted, his income was directly affected by the loss of visitors. When you look at his artwork, the nose and mouth of the human being are covered with a mask. This depicts the regulations which requires all to wear masks, sanitize hands, and observe social distancing to prevent the spread of the virus. The hand holding a cross represents the loss of lives of people who succumbed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

- Johannes Nuungonya-*Stages of safety*

In this work the artist shows the developing stages of the lockdown as a safety precaution by the government to protect the citizens from contracting the virus through interaction.

These creative processes have been documented through photos, video and their autobiographies of concept and how they create their work. I want to see these Namibian makers processes used in curriculum development for schools and tertiary institutions to teach Namibian ways of making. The NationalArt Gallery of Namibia sees this as a way in preserving inherent indigenous knowledge systems and passing on this knowledge generationally especially when broadcast on local and hopefully international television broadcasters and on this YouTube Page we are launching today of each artist's story.

It therefore gives me pleasure to officially declare this exhibition #WhatsYourStory opened.

I thank you.