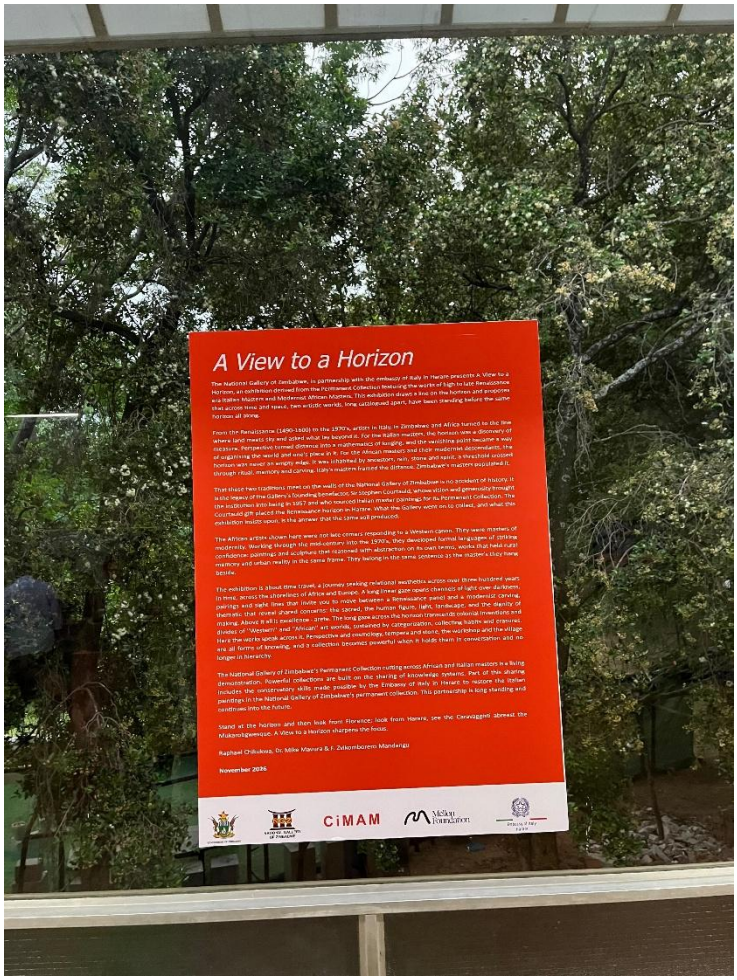
A View to a Horizon
The National Gallery of Zimbabwe, in partnership with the embassy of Italy in Harare presents A View to a Horizon, an exhibition derived from the Permanent Collection featuring the works of high to late Renaissance era Italian Masters and Modernist African Masters. This exhibition shows a link on the horizon and explores that across time and space, two artistic worlds, long catalogued apart, have been standing before the same horizon all along.
From the Renaissance (1400-1600) to the 1970's, artists in Italy in Zimbabwe and Africa turned to the line where land meets sky and asked what lies beyond it. For the Italian masters, the horizon was a discovery of nature. Perspective turned distance into a mathematics of longing, and the vanishing point became a way of organising the world and one's place in it. For the African makers and their modernist descendants, the horizon was never an empty edge. It was inhabited by ancestors, rain, stone and spirit, a threshold accessed through ritual, memory and carving. Italy's masters painted the distance, Zimbabwe's masters populated it.
That these two traditions meet on the walls of the National Gallery of Zimbabwe is no accident of history. It is the legacy of the Gallery's founding benefactor, Sir Stephen Courtauld, whose vision and generosity brought the institution into being in 1957 and who sourced Italian master paintings for its Permanent Collection. The Courtauld gift placed the Renaissance horizon in Harare. What the Gallery went on to collect, and what this exhibition exists to say, is the answer that the same will pretended.
The African artists shown here were not late comers responding to a Western canon. They were makers of modernity. Working through the mid-century into the 1970's, they developed formal languages of lifetime confidence: paintings and sculptures that engaged with abstraction on its own terms, works that held rural memory and urban reality in the same frame. They belong in the same sentence as the master's they have been.
The exhibition is about time travel, a journey seeking relational aesthetics across over three hundred years in time, across the shorelines of Africa and Europe. A long linear gaze opens channels of light over darkness, pairings and rapt lines that invite you to move between a Renaissance pencil and a modernist carving, thematic that reveal shared concerns: the carved, the human figure, light, landscape, and the identity of making. Above it all is awareness - time. The long gaze across the horizon transcends colonial timetables and divides of "Western" and "African" art worlds, sustained by categorization, collecting habits and agencies. Here the work speak across it. Perspective and emotology, tempera and stone, the workshop and the village are all forms of knowing, and a collection becomes powerful when it holds them in conversation and no longer in hierarchy.
The National Gallery of Zimbabwe's Permanent Collection cutting across African and Italian masters is a living demonstration. Powerful collections are built on the sharing of knowledge systems. Part of this sharing includes the conservatory skills made possible by the Embassy of Italy in Harare to restore the Italian paintings in the National Gallery of Zimbabwe's permanent collection. This partnership is long standing and continues into the future.
Stand at the horizon and then look back. Florence, look from Harare, see the Canvaggio abreast the Mukorotigweregwe. A View to a Horizon sharpens the focus.
Raphael Chikukwa, Dr. Mike Mawora & F. Zvikomborero Manderiali
November 2026
CiMAM
Mellon Foundation


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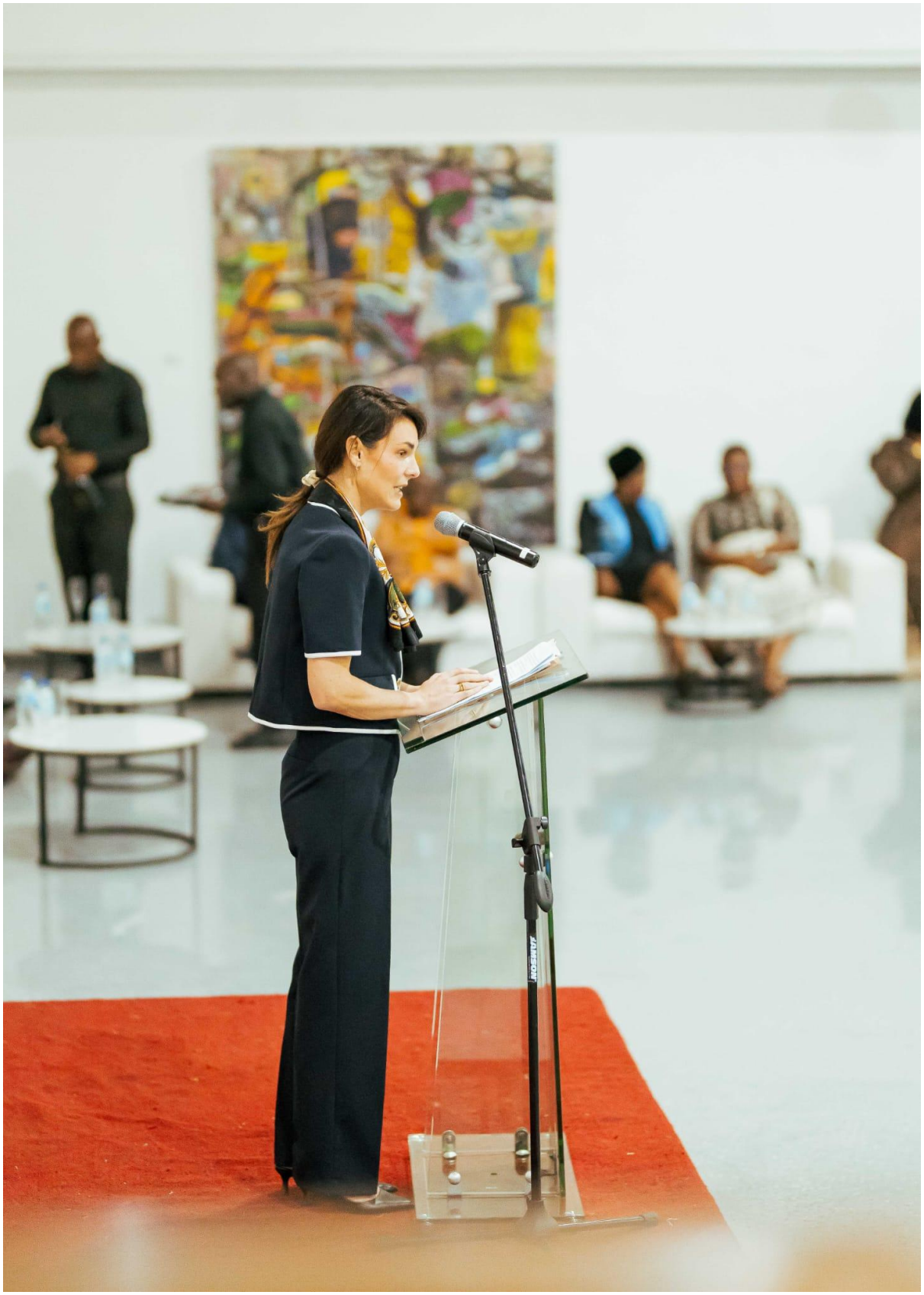


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NATIONAL GALLERY OF ZIMBABWE - HARARE 21ST NOVEMBER 2026
ITALIAN COCKTAIL NIGHT
"A VIEW TO A HORIZON"
PRESENTATION OF THE RESTORED MASTERS PAINTINGS
COURTESY OF THE EMBASSY OF ITALY




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