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The Herald

Wednesday, May 27, 2009

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Book on Takawira's works to be launched next month

By *Jonathan Mbiriyamveka*

A book on Lazarus Takawira's sculptures will be launched on June 13 in the Czech Republic at Emil Julis and Antiquariat Fabio, a private gallery in Northern Bohemia.

Titled "The Spirit of Woman: An Exploration of the Sculptures of Lazarus Takawira" and published by Dr Marie Imbrova, former Charge de Affairs of the Czech Republic to Zimbabwe, the book was written by prominent art writer Celia Winter-Irving.

Art lovers including the owner of the gallery Pavel Vejrazka will attend the launch and exhibition sponsored by Dr Imbrova.

Titus Chipangura, former director of the National Arts Council of Zimbabwe wrote the foreword while pictures were taken by renowned photographer Eric Gauss.

In the book Winter-Irving says it is not possible to confine an appreciation of the sculpture of Takawira to his own tradition — even comparing his work with the great sculptors from Zimbabwe in the likes of the late Nicholas Mukomberanwa or Bernard Matemera.

"One must go further to look to the classical archaic sculpture — some of which is dismembered of limb but is powerful through the visually compelling face or torso — the work of Italian sculptor Bernini, the faces of Daphne and St Teresa remaining with us — immortal.

"Lazarus Takawira is recognised in Zimbabwe as a sculptor of older generation bound to the wisdom of his ancestry and traditions . . . yet he speaks out in favour and disfavour of issues surrounding genre, land rights, power in the African sense and leadership.

"He is a Christian who preaches about his faith without dogma or rhetoric.

His view of woman is one of respect, one of veneration. He does not see woman as a vessel or weak but as a thing of strength — working traditionally as counterpart with man in the fields today, working as a counterpart of man in her profession."

This is Winter-Irving's 14th book on the stone sculpture of Zimbabwe.

She first met Takawira when she came to Zimbabwe and

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introduced to him by Tom Blomefield, the then director of the Tengenenge Sculpture Community in 1988.

She then went to his farm in Ruwa where she saw Takawira's sculptures buffeted by wind and the elements — yet withstanding destruction and somehow speaking of the eternal nature of art.

Through Takawira's sculptures Celia says she got guidance and advice on how to live and make sense of life.

". . . Takawira helped me clear my mind and make me who I am today," she said.

She describes Imbrova as "a woman of generosity and compassion for artists who lack what they deserve to have."

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