

**Exhibition organised by MGI on the occasion of the World Art Day on  
15 April 2022 at 18:00 at Hennessy Park Hotel**

On this celebration of the World Art Day, I shall start by paying tribute to Tristan Bréville who passed away very recently. Founder and Director of the Museum of Photography, Mr. Bréville has left behind a rich cultural heritage.

Art nurtures creativity, innovation and cultural diversity for all peoples across the globe and plays an important role in sharing knowledge and encouraging curiosity and dialogue. These are qualities that art has always had, and will always have if we continue to support environments where artists and artistic freedom are promoted and protected. This is why the 15th of April is observed as the World Art Day to reinforce the links between artistic creations and society.

This date was chosen in honour of Leonardo da Vinci's birthday. Da Vinci himself is a testament to the influence of fine arts on other fields and is regarded as a symbol of peace, freedom of expression and brotherhood.

This World Art Day is a timely reminder that art can unite and connect us even in the most difficult of circumstances. Indeed, the power of art to bring people together, to inspire, heal and share, has become increasingly clear during recent conflicts and crises, including COVID-19. Though the COVID-19 crisis has had a severe emotional and economic impact on the artistic community, artists are regrouping and reinventing themselves for this new normal.

World Art Day aims to “promote the development, dissemination and enjoyment of art”. It must contribute to strengthening the links between artistic creation and society and allow better visibility for artists. The objective is to encourage the general public to meet works and artists. Independent artists can also showcase their work, encouraging visitors to support artistic creation. This is what the MGI School of Fine Arts is proposing to us today with an exhibition showcasing the creations of 23 local artists and students.

The School of Fine Arts (MGI) is one of the few institutions in Mauritius offering courses in performing and fine arts. Besides, the School provides opportunities to local and foreign artists to showcase their artworks through a number of workshops, seminars, conferences and exhibitions.

However, we must admit that the Mauritian society is not one conducive to a proper artistic and cultural growth. Our education system favours the fields of science and economy over the arts.

The arts must be considered an essential element of education. Perhaps at primary level, the curriculum could include a little of the theoretical part of art so that the kids could understand what exactly art is. Fine arts improve and encourage kids’ creativity, confidence, and perseverance which are essential to a child’s growth. Athletes find their place and peace in sports, while artists and creators find their peace in art.

In 2021, 3336 candidates offered Art and Design as a subject at SC with a pass rate of nearly 100%; and for HSC there were 431 candidates offering it at principal level with a pass rate of 93%.

## **Ladies and Gentlemen**

Not everybody has the drive and inspiration to become an artist. In fact Art is a vocation. Many artists would not do that well in other occupations. But at least we must create opportunities to encourage people to appreciate the works of artists.

Fortunately we have some young artists who have unlimited imagination as well as brushes in their hands. They are writing the future of art through different mediums and in their own, different styles. A few decades ago, art was an exclusive place only for the elite.

The National Art Gallery, founded in May 2001 and operating under the aegis of the Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage, has played a considerable role in the promotion of visual arts in Mauritius. This institution has contributed to the understanding and appreciation of the visual arts as well as to public awareness of artistic expression.

The National Art Gallery has gathered, since its creation, a National Collection of around a hundred works acquired in the form of donations and purchases. Last year, the Gallery diversified and enriched its collection with photographs, engravings, and sculptures.

To support artists who have been hard hit by the covid-19 pandemic, Government has adopted exceptional financial measures. Eight support plans for artists from various fields of artistic expression have been put in place.

The National Arts Fund has been instrumental in giving support to artists and enhancing the level of artistic productions. The Fund is offering a special grant to take on board digital innovative projects to enable artists adapt to the new environment and take up advantage of new technologies to make their works more accessible.

The government of Mauritius acknowledges that career opportunities for artists need to be expanded if we want to transform and bring a new dynamism to its creative and cultural sector. The Status of Artist Bill will soon see the light of day. This new law will professionalize the status of artists in Mauritius.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen**

You will in a few minutes be invited for a tour of the exhibition of the school of Fine Arts of MGI and you will see for yourself as peaceful and serene it is by walking through.

Finally I must share with you that buying a piece of art can boost your mood and make you feel good knowing that you are making a meaningful purchase. You will feel rewarded knowing that you are supporting an artist and placing an important artifact that they created into your home to enjoy for years to come.

I shall conclude by extending my sincere congratulations to the organisers and the artists. I hope this exhibition will attract many visitors.