

**Vernissage of Exhibition 40 Years of Salon de Mai organised by M.G.I on  
Friday 5 May 2023 at 17:00 hrs in the Art Gallery, M.G.I**

Mr. Rampertab, Director General MGI & RTI

Ladies and gentlemen

Good afternoon.

Le Salon de Mai blooms anew in the Gallery of Mahatma Gandhi Institute. It is with great pleasure that I am here with you this afternoon to mark the 40th year of the Salon, an event that has become an important rendez-vous in the cultural calendar for the visual arts on the island.

I must commend the efforts of MGI which welcomes Mauritian creations and helps to promote Mauritian culture. It encourages exchanges in the fields of visual arts, theater and music.

Presently, the School of Fine Arts MGI offers a number of full time and part time programmes of studies leading to the award of undergraduate and post graduate degrees in the fields of Painting, Sculpture, Printmaking, Visual Culture Theory, Advertising and Visual Communication and Digital Arts. Besides, the School provides opportunities to local and foreign artists to showcase their artworks through a number of workshops, seminars, conferences and exhibitions such as the annual 'Salon de Mai'.

## **Ladies and Gentlemen**

Imagine a world without art. No music, no movies, no paintings, no drawings, no designs, etc. The world will be a very dull place to live in. Perhaps the only thing you would be seeing is black and white. No laughter, no smiles, practically no emotions at all.

In fact, the world would be a far less interesting place without the beautiful and evocative contributions of visual artists, without whom there is no salon. Whether their medium is drawing, painting, sculpture or architecture, visual artists enrich the human experience. They have played a vital role in society dating back to ancient times when art was created to gain favor with the gods or intimidate enemies.

Visual art is a fundamental component of the human experience reflecting the world and the time in which we live. Art can help us understand our history, our culture, our lives, and the experience of others in a manner that cannot be achieved through other means. It can also be a source of inspiration, reflection, and joy.

Visual art is life in itself. The way we perceive the world and how we appreciate it. That is art and we actually live with it everyday. Art is an outlet of our inner self. A bridge that brings together gaps in our society, it is a bridge between man and nature, between countries, and continents.

Unfortunately, not everyone has the motivation and inspiration to become an artist. In fact, Art is a vocation. Many artists would not do as well in other professions.

In Mauritius, we can boast of having famous Mauritian artists who have unlimited imaginations as well as brushes in their hands. I am thinking, among others, of Hervé Mason, Malcolm de Chazal and Firoz Ghanty, who left us their paintings as a legacy.

And without forgetting Vaco Baissac, one of the most authentic Mauritian painters, who died on February 4 this year and who was the ambassador of our island of a thousand colors, throughout his life, through his many works.

### **Ladies and gentlemen**

Vincent Van Gogh gave this advice **“If you hear a voice within you say, ‘You cannot paint, then by all means paint, and that voice will be silenced’**. And Salvador Dali completed this saying with **“Have no fear of perfection, you’ll never reach it.”**

On the contemporary scene, it is heartening to see a growing interest in fine art and an increase in the number of artists who are writing the future of art through different mediums and in their own different styles. And this Salon de Mai will give us an opportunity to admire the creations of some of them.

Art is innate to many people. **“Every child is an artist; the problem is staying an artist when you grow up”** – said Pablo Picasso. Even at a young age, the artistic side of a person can be discovered. Our role as an adult is to teach, guide, and help our younger generation come out to the open and use their artistic abilities in many ways.

Arts education can increase students' ability to think creatively and critically, which can improve their performance across all other academic areas. Arts classes are one of the few school classes that allow independent thought and creative freedom, which in turn can develop the student's critical thinking skills and confidence in their abilities.

Studies show that there are key links between arts education and a child's learning abilities. Children who are exposed to art education can process information more thoroughly, consider problems and ideas with more in-depth thought, and explain their solutions more clearly.

Things are changing for the better in Mauritius. There are good initiatives. We need more and more regularly, like inviting artists every weekend to public spaces or busy places to exhibit, share, talk about the artistic world.

Art is a unifying factor. It blossoms only when individuals multiply into groups and then one big global community to spread the fragrance of freedom and expression. People come and go but the message of art through its preservers should be immortalised not only in art galleries or archives but in the hearts of all to cherish.

Government is fully conscious that the arts and culture industry brings together our sense of identity, and unites us as one nation. In this context the 2022/23 budget has made provisions for many measures to promote creativity and encourage more artistic projects.

New schemes will be introduced namely: - (a) An Artist Incubator Scheme to nurture emerging talents; (b) A scheme to facilitate the participation of local talents in international award ceremonies; (c) A scheme for local artists to participate in international competitions; and (d) the setting up of a National Arts Centre at Reunion Maurel, Petit Raffray.

**Ladies and gentlemen**

Before ending, I wish to congratulate MGI for promoting visual arts and provide space to artists to showcase their creations. Congratulations to all the artists who have participated in the salon.

With these words, dear guests, I have the honour and the joy of declaring the Salon de Mai 2023 open, while inviting the Mauritian public to come in large numbers to admire the exhibits and at the same time to encourage our artists.