

CURATOR/EDUCATOR

Volunteer in the Arts United States Peace Corps

Tom R. Chambers joined the United States Peace Corps as a Volunteer in the Arts in 1992. He had wanted to join the organization while in college in the 1960s, but life took him in another direction. At the age of 45, he was able to fulfill his desire of representing his country as he made contributions to the local environs of another country. He was the oldest in the second group of volunteers – “Zim 2” - to travel to Zimbabwe.

Because Chambers had extensive experience in photography and the Arts, he was chosen for a special assignment at the National Gallery of Zimbabwe to: establish an information data base for the gallery's Permanent Collection; begin developing a collection catalogue; and work with the staff in curatorial preparation. He had the title of guest curator.

Chambers is seen (left) below being sworn in by David Bellama, Zimbabwe Country Director.



According to his Peace Corps Description of Service:

Country of Service: Zimbabwe

Dates of Service: December 6, 1992 - December 31, 1995

Tom R. Chambers began Peace Corps Training on October 19, 1992 at the Peace Corps Training Center in Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe, and completed an intensive six-week program. The training included Cross Cultural Studies, Shona Language and Personal Health. He continued two more weeks of personal training/familiarization on-site at cultural institutions throughout Zimbabwe, and he began his Primary Assignment on December 15, 1992.

Chambers was enrolled as a Peace Corps Volunteer on December 6, 1992. Assigned to the Ministry of Recreation, Sports and Culture, he was posted as a curator at the National Gallery of Zimbabwe to produce a Permanent Collection Catalogue. His responsibilities included research/classification; computerization (he wrote a grant proposal to computerize the Permanent Collection information for which he received US\$9000.00 from the Social Science Research Council/African Archives and Museums Project, New York City); in-house layout/design of the Catalogue (via Aldus Pagemaker); and computerization/curatorial training of National Gallery staff with regard to the Permanent Collection.

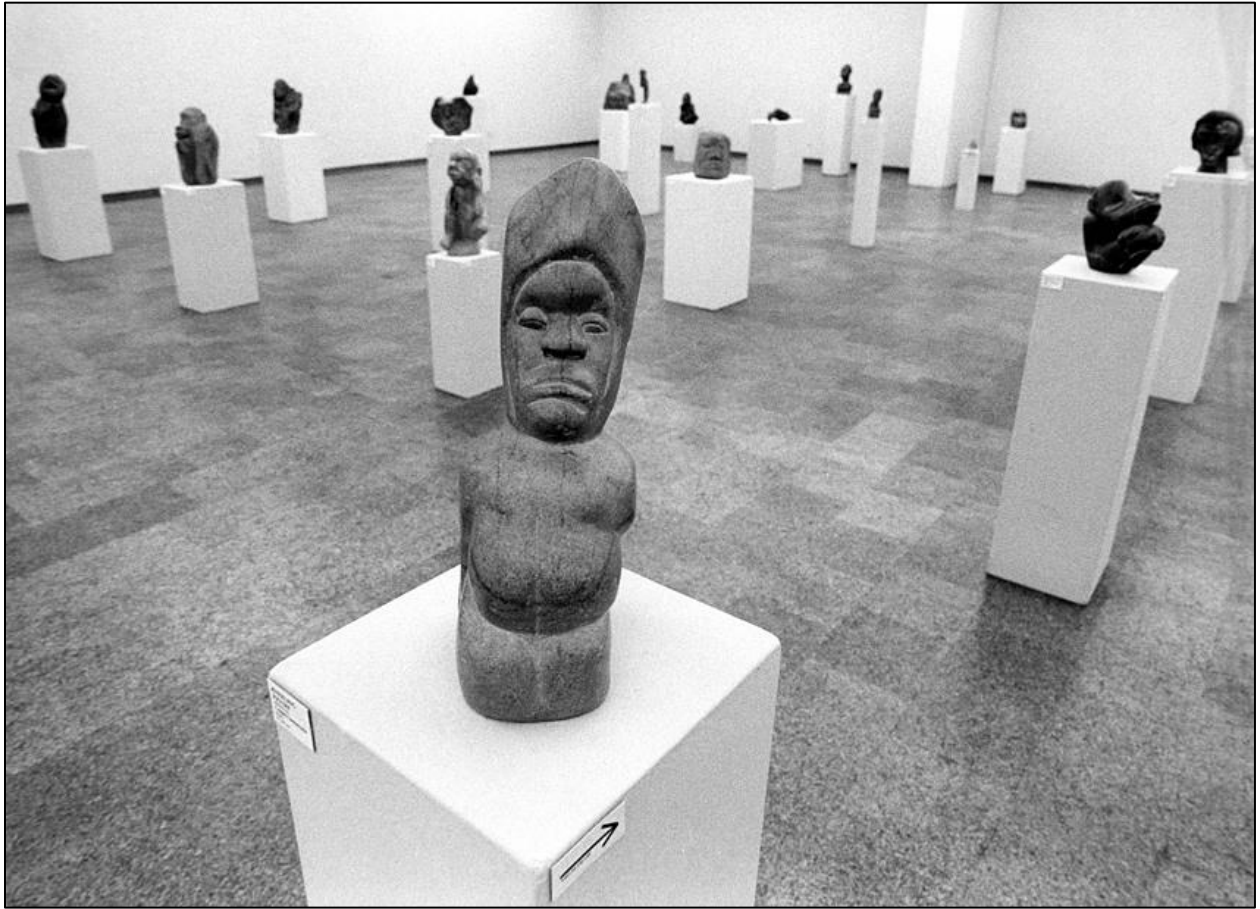
He also prepared/curated numerous exhibitions from the Permanent Collection for public cultural enhancement and education; researched/re-configured the Traditional African Permanent Display Gallery; and generated National Gallery involvement with ICOM/AFRICOM to standardize the computerization of the Permanent Collection information to conform with computerized collections information throughout Africa for cultural exchange and protection of African Heritage.

Examples of his curatorial activities follow.



Zimbabwean Traditional Artifacts

In pre-colonial Zimbabwe, technology and the arts were successfully combined to produce the material requirements of a culture dating back a millenium. The people of Zimbabwe had developed technology appropriate for the manufacture of tools, implements, weapons, vessels, musical instruments and ornaments of all kinds which demonstrate ingenuity and originality, a sophisticated understanding of the natural environment and above all, a quality of life in which cultural values were fully appreciated. They developed a fine sense of aesthetic understanding and examples of this (and can still be found) comprise the Zimbabwean display. (Material Goods of Zimbabwe)



Zimbabwean Contemporary Stone Sculpture

These stone sculptures are the early works ... 1950s - 1970s ... by Zimbabwean sculptors as a result of the workshops held at the National Gallery of Zimbabwe by Frank McEwen (first director).

McEwen (April 19, 1907 - January, 15 1994) was an English artist, teacher, and museum administrator. He is best remembered for his efforts to bring attention to the work of Shona artists in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), and for helping to found the National Gallery of Zimbabwe. (Wp)



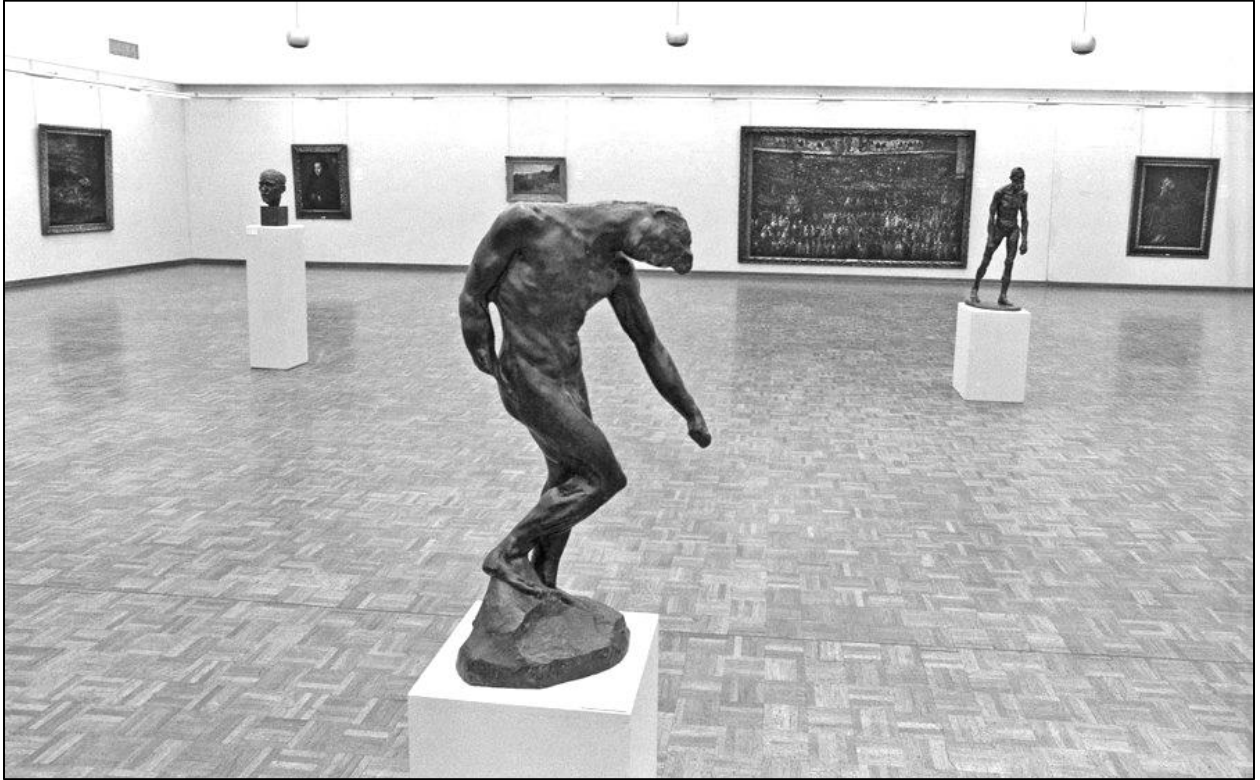
Zimbabwean Abstractionism/Abstract Expressionism

Abstractionism:

Unrelated to world appearances, it poses difficulties of understanding and judgment, and calls into question the very nature of art. It apparently refers only to invisible, inner states or simply to itself. (Abstract Art, Anna Moszynska, 1990, Thames and Hudson Ltd., London)

Abstract Expressionism:

There is a larger life outside the frame, of events and climaxes either just past or about to happen. Furthermore, an emphasis on surfaces implies that much remains beneath the surface, especially since an erstwhile public realm has been turned into an existential space. ((Abstract Expressionism, David Anfram, 1990, Thames and Hudson Ltd., London)



The Old Masters

The paintings span 250 years (mid-16th Century - late 18th Century) of Art History by the Old Masters from Paolo Caliari Veronese's Astronomer and Patriarch to Thomas Gainsborough's Portrait of Francis Browne. The sculptures are by Auguste Rodin.

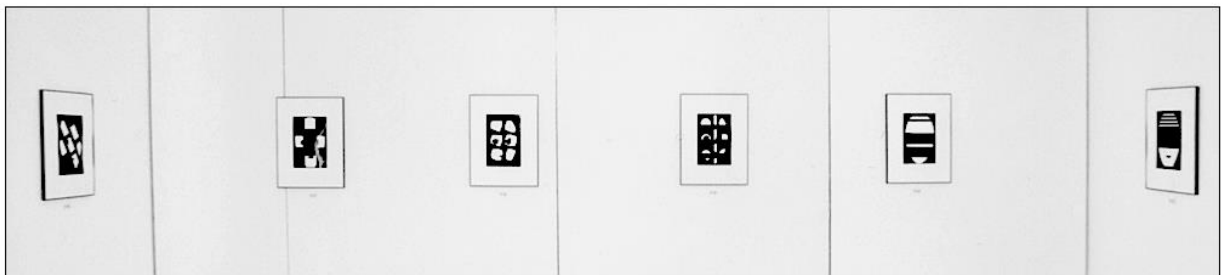
In art history, "Old Master" refers to any painter of skill who worked in Europe before about 1800, or a painting by such an artist. In theory, "Old Master" applies only to artists who were fully trained, were Masters of their local artists' guild, and worked independently, but in practice, paintings produced by pupils or workshops are often included in the scope of the term. (Wp)

As a visual artist, Chambers was invited by the National Gallery to exhibit a series of conceptual photographic images, "Variations on the Dan Mask", to offer his interpretation of the Traditional African mask form; and the exhibition was officially opened in December 1995 by the United States Ambassador to Zimbabwe. Note: Mr. Chambers extended his Service for a third year to complete the Permanent Collection Project to produce the Catalogue.

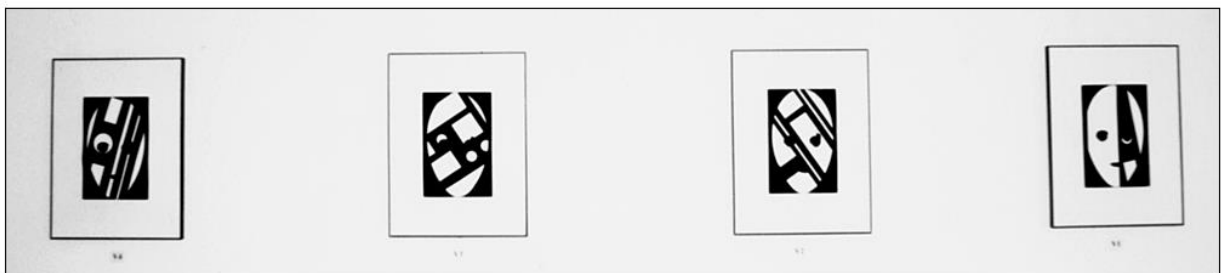
Installation at the National Gallery of Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe, Africa (December 12 - 31, 1995):



Chambers used an African Traditional mask from the Dan Tribe in Eastern Liberia (a piece from the National Gallery of Zimbabwe Permanent Collection: PC - 6400 - 0147) as the object for the photogram, then manipulated the non-exposed area generated from this original mask form to vary the look. There's a transference from a traditional form to a contemporary one, or in other words, this contemporary treatment remains within the confines of the traditional form (through direct contact), and borders on Abstract Art that reduces natural appearances to simplified forms.



Manipulated Photograms



Review: "Interesting Photograms By Chambers On Display", The Sunday Mail Magazine, Harare, Zimbabwe (December 17, 1995):

"After missing a couple of Tom R. Chambers' photographic exhibitions, I finally caught up with his work at the National Gallery of Zimbabwe where he is showing some interesting photograms based on a African Traditional mask form from the Dan Tribe in Eastern Liberia. Titled, 'Variations on the Dan Mask', Chambers offers his interpretations of the mask form depicting different shapes and symbols from which the viewer can also give his/her own interpretations.

Though based on a Traditional mask, the different images have a much more contemporary appeal with graphical designs that have both humor and symbolic meaning. The artist's approach is said to border on abstract art as it reduces natural appearances to simplified forms. He says the first is the depiction of the essential or generic forms of things by elimination of particular and accidental variations. The other is the working away from the individual and particular with a view to creating an independent construct of shapes which will have aesthetic appeal in its own right. In some instances, the images reflect the moon and darkness while others depict a face hiding behind bars of different shapes." (Pikirayi Deketeke - Art Critic)

Comments left in the guest book at the opening:

"Great Concept - very modern. Economic, yet powerful. Congratulations, Tom!" (Tony Mhonda, Art Critic)

"Wonderful, engaging work!" (Stephen Williams, Regional Director, National Gallery in Bulawayo)

"The strength and impact of the image comes from 'pushing' the static information. There's a nice sense of play that also respects the formality of the image. Masks transform and transcend the wearer and these photograms alter the mask in the same way. Congratulations, Tom, and good luck!" (Sylvia Bews-Wright)

"What a fabulous idea. I wasn't able to stay on opening night, but have thoroughly enjoyed it today. V6, V7 and V8 are my favorites. Best wishes!"
(Lucy Hall, Director, United States Information Service (Harare))

"I could see a very deep and creative work. I realized that foreign people who choose to live on this continent are really searching something higher than ordinary life. Congratulations and success!" (Alexandra Almeida, Global Government of Humanity, Brazil)

"A unique form of art!"

"The Work is beyond humanity!" (Smart)

"Well done Tom. Keep up the beautiful work!" (Molly)

"Tom, congratulations on your very interesting work - good stuff!" (Ean)

"Congratulations, makorokoto, amhlope - our son and all the best for the future!" (The Chakanyuka Family)

"The exhibition has been well done and with respect. Let it be like this!"

"The art is very beautiful and very creative. Keep it up!"

"Your art is quite different, but very beautiful!"

As a Secondary Project, Chambers initiated and then served as the Instructor for "The McEwen Photographic Studio". The namesake was selected as a tribute to Frank McEwen, the first Director of the National Gallery (1957-1973), and in recognition of his Workshop School activities for African artists during the 1950s and 1960s. His (McEwen's) insight to nurture (then) exceptional talent through a rediscovered medium - sculpting in stone - is now reflected through international recognition of this contemporary art form.

The introduction of the medium of photography into the Gallery's Art School (sponsored by BAT Ltd.) nurtured - over a three-year period (1993-1995) - the exceptional talent by African artists (school leavers) to grasp the medium and possibly, again, have a significant impact for the visual arts of Zimbabwe at the international level. Chambers taught this seven-month photographic workshop each year (1993, 1994 and 1995) of his Peace Corps Service, and the process culminated in an annual exhibition at the National Gallery, respectively: "Moments In Time" (1993); "Moments In Time II" (1994); and "Moments In Time III" (1995). The United States Ambassador to Zimbabwe officially opened the first two exhibitions; the Country Director of Peace Corps Zimbabwe officially opened the last one; and the United States Peace Corps was a partial sponsor of all three openings.

"Moments in Time" (1993):



Tanyaradzwa Chiota



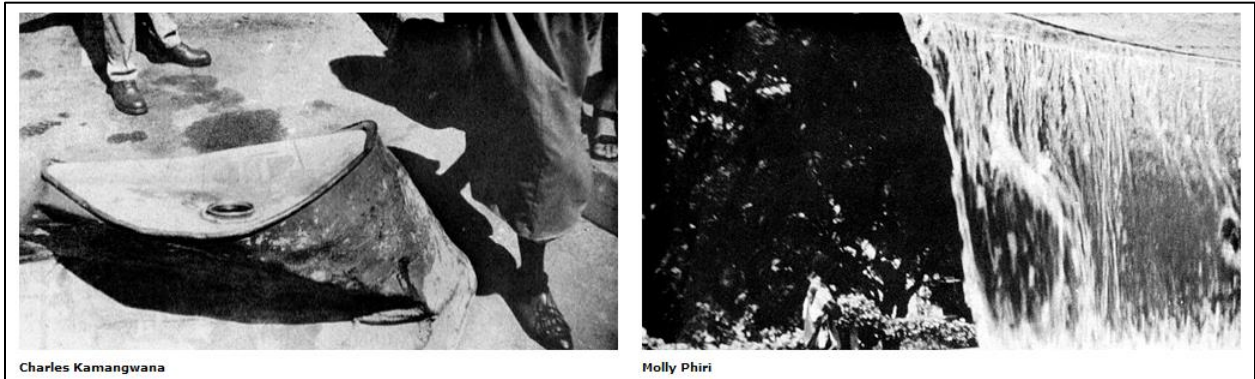
Tapiwa Vambe



Hillary Kashiri



Clive Zhira



“Moments in Time II” (1994):



Exhibition (National Gallery of Zimbabwe) photographs for this workshop follow:



"Moments in Time III" (1995):



Chambers also succeeded in obtaining funding to support the photographic workshop process including Kodak Zimbabwe Ltd. (materials grants totaling US\$3000.00), Caltex Oil Zimbabwe Ltd. (US\$1000.00), Johnson and Johnson Zimbabwe Ltd. (US\$400.00), Randalls Holdings (Pvt.) Ltd. (US\$150.00), Meikles Consolidated Holdings (Pvt.) Ltd. (US\$250.00), BAT Zimbabwe Ltd. (US\$200.00) and Crown Cork Company Ltd. (US\$60.00) - total: US\$5060.00.

News coverage: "Photography added to curriculum", The Herald, Harare, Zimbabwe, May 17, 1993:

"A U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer, Mr. Tom R. Chambers, has introduced photography as part of the 1993 curriculum for the BAT (Art) Workshop School. The workshop is an affiliate of the National Gallery of Zimbabwe. Mr. Chambers said that this is the first time the medium of photography has been introduced into the Workshop School curriculum as a serious tool for self-expression."

He said that the fine arts/documentary photography program was named The McEwen Photographic Studio after the first director of the National Gallery and in recognition of his workshop activities for artists during the 1950s and 1960s. Mr. Chambers is currently teaching twelve second-year A-level art students at the workshop."

Newsletter: "Moments In Time", National Gallery of Zimbabwe Newsletter, Harare, Zimbabwe, September 7, 1993:

"This photographic exhibition is the first to be held by students of the BAT Workshop School. The McEwen Photographic Studio was recently formed by Mr. Tom R. Chambers, a U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer, who is at present assisting in the compilation of our Permanent Collection Catalogue. Through generous sponsorship, Mr. Chambers, a professional photographer, was enabled to hold classes in photography at the BAT Workshop premises. Photography is a fine art which, to date has not had much encouragement or promotion in Zimbabwe. We are confident that this fine exhibition will be the beginning of a new era in the field of visual arts. The exhibition is by courtesy of the United States Peace Corps and BAT Zimbabwe."

Art review: "Glimpse of daily realities", The Herald, Harare, Zimbabwe, September 28, 1993:

"A photographic exhibition by BAT art students at the National Gallery of Zimbabwe. The black-and-white photographic exhibition on the upper deck of the National Gallery offers us a glimpse of the daily realities of city and suburban life. The display was organized and curated by Tom R. Chambers, a U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer and multi-media artist who is currently on attachment to the conservation department of the National Gallery. This social documentary exhibition is a result of an eight-month photography course designed by Mr. Chambers for the BAT advanced-level art students. According to Chambers, the medium of photography is an important tool for self-expression and critical social inquiry within the visual arts of Zimbabwe.

Unlike many other art forms, the photographs on display reach a wider audience through cognition and familiarity. The works project an academic fine arts dimension, and the social content is nothing short of captivating. Contrasts between extreme poverty and ostentatious wealth are depicted in the pictures with subtle implications. Some architectural shots reveal the struggle between metropolice and nature, while others simply capture the socio-economic pace of Harare. Images of hope and aspiration in the high-density suburbs are juxtaposed with depression and a stoic acceptance of the plights. Technically, the students show a flair for conceptual composition, selection, mood, tonal progression and transcription. Given that photographic literacy, beyond the narrative, still requires greater appreciation in Zimbabwe, this educational display should go a long way in redressing the status of photography as an art form." (Tony Mhonda, Art Critic)

The Herald

Incorporating The Nation
HARARE, TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 28 1993
P.O. Box 396, Harare Phone 795771 Telex No. 26196 ZMNEWS ZW Fax 791311

ART REVIEW — TONY MHONDA



A SCENE from the outskirts of the high-density suburbs.
(Picture by Tamasandwa Chitsa (BAT art student).)

Glimpse of daily realities

A Photographic Exhibition by BAT art students at the National Gallery of Zimbabwe.

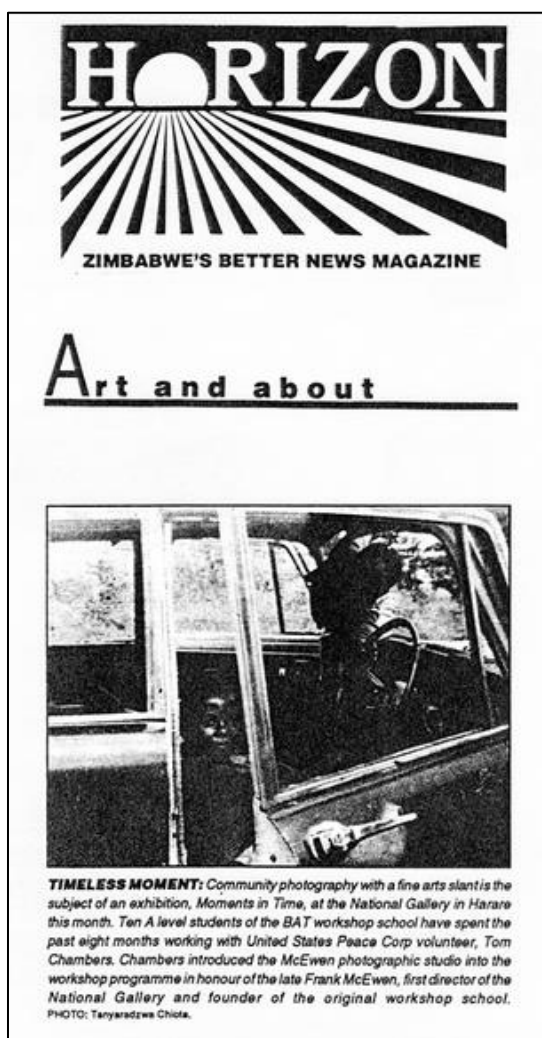
THE black and white photographic exhibition on the Upper Deck of the National Gallery offers us a glimpse of the daily realities of city and suburban life. The display was organised and curated by Tom Chambers, a US Peace Corps volunteer and multi-media artist who is currently on attachment to the educational and conservation departments of the National Gallery.

This social documentary exhibition is a result of an eight-month photography course designed by Mr Chambers for the BAT Advanced Level art students. According to Chambers "the medium of photography is an important tool for self-expression and critical social inquiry within the visual arts of Zimbabwe". Unlike many other art forms the photographs on display reach a wider audience through cognition and familiarity.

The works project an academic Fine Arts dimension and the social content is nothing short of captivating. Contrasts between extreme poverty and ostentatious wealth are depicted in the pictures — with subtle implications. Some architectural shots reveal the struggle between metropolice and nature, while others simply capture the socio-economic pace of Harare. Images of hope and aspiration in the high-density suburbs are juxtaposed with depression and a stoic acceptance of the plights. Technically, the students show a flair for conceptual composition, selection, mood, tonal progression and transcription. Given that photographic literacy, beyond the narrative — still requires greater appreciation in Zimbabwe, this educational display should go a long way in redressing the status of photography as an art form.

News coverage: "Timeless Moment", "Art and About", Horizon Magazine, Harare, Zimbabwe, September, 1993:

"Community photography with a fine arts slant is the subject of an exhibition, *Moments In Time*, at the National Gallery in Harare this month. Ten A-level students of the BAT Workshop School have spent the past eight months working with U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer, Tom R. Chambers. Chambers introduced The McEwen Photographic Studio into the workshop program in honor of the late Frank McEwen, first director of the National Gallery and founder of the original workshop school."



Art review: "Artful eyes behind a camera: how BATmen and women see Zimbabwe", The Northern News, Harare, Zimbabwe, December 1993-January 1994:

"As exhibitions at the National Gallery of Zimbabwe go, this one was quiet and unassuming, a collection of fifty small black-and-white photographs by senior students in the BAT Art Workshop. But Moments In Time represents respectable breakthroughs on several fronts. The exhibition showcases the products of the first photography course in the BAT curriculum. "The McEwen Photographic Studio", named in homage to Frank McEwen, the first director of the National Gallery, offers a rare opportunity for black African art students to explore an expensive, technical medium of artistic expression. And if instructor, Tom R. Chambers, has his way, the new program will become a permanent part of the BAT curriculum.

Displayed first at the National Gallery in September, the photos were selected by Chambers, a U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer, for their artistic and documentary qualities. Chambers said in an interview that the fact that all of the students are artists gave them an advantage in using the medium creatively, and because of that, they generated wonderful fine arts images based on composition, shape and form. The students were weaker, however, in photojournalism. This was the first time they went out to document Zimbabwean society. There's a timidity there. You have to learn to be aggressive, polite of course, but aggressive in order to capture the good and the bad.

The eight-month course started with several weeks of classroom study of camera techniques, composition and the use of light and shadow. Following this introduction, the students then went out as a team to shoot the environs (subjects, objects and situations) all the while becoming conscious of the mind's eye. And later, they began shooting on their own.

Chambers launched the course because he thinks that it is an underutilized medium in Zimbabwe's visual arts. He said that he had to start from scratch. With entrees from the wife of the American Ambassador, June Kronholz, he canvassed five Zimbabwe corporations for grants to buy cameras and equipment. He persuaded Kodak Zimbabwe Ltd., the biggest donor to the project, to give film, paper and chemicals. Chambers is trying to find fellowships in the United States for some of the students who want to continue their photographic studies."

THE NORTHERN NEWS

SEPTEMBER 1993 \$1.50 INCLUDING TAX

ZIMBABWE

WHAT'S ON IN HARARE

GALLERIES

National Gallery of Zimbabwe
 "Contemporary Visual Arts by Zimbabwean Women Artists" is on display in the Courthouse Gallery. The exhibition includes paintings, graphics, sculpture and textiles. Closes early September.

"Knots and Nets," a textile exhibition of woven and knotted *objets d'art*. Works dating from 1200 to 1992 range from colourful masks, capes, baskets, garments and figurines to modern art forms such as torsos and murals. Closes early September.

The first solo exhibition by **Daniel Karavhina**, BAT instructor and painter, in the PG Gallery. Prints and paintings based on a theme of traditional dances. Closes mid-September.

An exhibition of black and white photographs from the **McEwen Photographic Workshop**. South Gallery from September 8 to early October.

Obert Muringani and **Martin Mushonga** display mixed-media sculpture and abstract Afro-centric paintings. PG Gallery from September 14 to early October.

Gallery Delta
 A one-man exhibition of paintings and drawings by **Luis Meque**. September 7-25.

Arthur Azevedo is holding



Tanyaradzwa Chiota's photo highlights the McEwen Studio,
 an exhibition of sculpture and drawings on September 28 to October 16.

THEATRE

The REPS Theatre
 I'm Not Rappaport, a comedy by Herb Gardener, directed by Gloria Prentice, with Floyd Tuzo and Brian Cooper. Closes September 4.

MUSIC

Warrick Smith's Farewell Concert. Featuring pianist **Jeanette Mikhlem**. The Zimbabwe College of Music, 8pm.

Anna Stoddard (harpichord) and **Melanie Coleman** (soprano) will perform at the Zimbabwe College of Music, 8pm.

Lectures in musical appreciation will be presented every second Wednesday, starting September 15 and ending December 8.

The Zimbabwe College of Music, from 7:30pm to 8:30pm. The series will be repeated Thursday mornings, September 16 to December 9, from 11am to 12pm.

Ellis Robins School will be holding the annual **Combined Schools Concert** at the University Great Hall on September 17 at 7:30pm.

More than 500 singers and 100 musicians from 12 schools perform. Tickets for adults are \$10, and students in uniform \$2.

OUTDOOR EVENTS

The **La Rocheille Craft Fayre** will be held at La Rocheille Botanical Gardens Imbeza Valley, Penhalonga, September 25 (11am to 5pm) and Sunday, September 26 (9am to 3pm).

News coverage: "Moments In Time", Kodak Region Review (News from around the European, African and Middle Eastern Region), April, 1994:

"Kodak (Zimbabwe) Limited were the biggest donors to an exhibition called 'Moments In Time' held in the National Gallery of Zimbabwe late last year. They will be sponsoring the exhibition again this year. The exhibition comprised a collection of fifty black-and-white photographs taken by senior students in the BAT Art Workshop. The exhibition showcases the products of the first photographic course in the BAT curriculum. Instructor, Tom R. Chambers believes that photography is an underutilized medium in Zimbabwe's visual arts, and through his professional and personal network, he hopes to find several American venues for exhibiting Moments In Time."

APRIL 1994




NEWS FROM AROUND THE EUROPEAN,
AFRICAN AND MIDDLE EASTERN REGION

“Moments in Time”

KODAK (Zimbabwe) Limited were the biggest donors to an exhibition called “Moments in Time” held in the National Gallery of Zimbabwe late last year. They will be sponsoring the exhibition again this year.

The exhibition comprised a collection of 50 small black and white photographs taken by senior students in the BAT Art Workshop. Bound for the United States this year, the exhibition showcases the products of the first photographic course in the BAT curriculum, and if instructor, Tom Chambers of the National Gallery, has his way, the new programme will become a permanent part of the curriculum.

The seven-month course started with several weeks of classroom study of camera techniques, composition and the use of light and shadow. After this, the team went out to shoot the environs – subjects, objects, situations – all the while becoming conscious of the mind’s eye when you are behind the camera. Then the students began shooting on their own. Tom Chambers believes that photography is an under utilised medium in Zimbabwe’s visual arts, but through his professional and personal network, he hopes to find several American venues for exhibiting “Moments in Time”.

Art review: "Workshop features art images captured through the camera lens", The Sunday Mail, Harare, Zimbabwe, September 11, 1994:

"A child sprawled on a pavement looking haggard with feet resting on a post; the shadow of a man on a scaffold structure; a woman donating coins to beggars under a bridge and other subjects, form part of the images captured through the camera lens being exhibited at the National Gallery. Dubbed 'Moments In Time II', this photographic exhibition marks the second year of 'The McEwen Photographic Studio' at the BAT Art Workshop and features the work of ten second-year art students and a third-year art student who was studio assistant. According to Tom R. Chambers, a visual artist, documentary photographer and the instructor for the studio, the exhibition stresses camera/darkroom technique and composition (light-play, shadow-play, juxtaposition, perspective, angularity, foreground-background interest, movement and timing).

The pictures reveal the wide spectrum of talent that exists in this medium with some really outstanding and imaginative work while the other photographs were average. I found particularly captivating Charles Kamangawana's human form photographed on a building structure all in shadow to depict an abstract image that is omnipresent. He explores this subject further by capturing just the leg of a man stepping on a scaffolding structure high above the ground. The picture was taken from a top-down perspective to create anxiety and anticipation. Given Sitandi creates an illusion by picturing a straight-forward documentary image through backlighting and shadow-play of human forms taken behind a curtain. Also interesting is his picture of a young girl child taken from above with the child's eyes looking forlornly into the camera while standing on a dusty road with no shoes on. The same feeling of compassion for the underprivileged is brought out by Givemore Huvasa's image of another child lying resignedly on a street pavement with feet resting on a post. Lighting is cleverly used to enhance the power of this picture. Russell Chawatama rotates his camera lens and juxtaposes a curtain versus a window to abstract the image of an otherwise straight-forward picture to evoke different interpretations and feelings from his image.

In this exhibition, Chambers said that documentary/fine arts images convey personal experiences of the serious photographer and offer a unique vision of the world through a combination of camera technique and the mind's eye." (Pikirayi Deketeke, Art Critic)

The Sunday Mail

**ZIMBABWE'S
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER**
PRICE \$1,40 (including sales tax)

P.O. Box 396, Harare
ESTABLISHED 1935
Registered at the GPO as a newspaper

Telex No. 26196 ZMNEWS ZW Fax 791311
Phone 795771
HARARE, SEPTEMBER 11 1994

ART



Workshop features art images captured through the camera lens

By Pikirayi Deketeke
A CHILD sprawled on a pavement looking haggard with feet resting on a post; the shadow of a man on a scaffold structure; a woman donating coins to beggars under a bridge and other subjects, form part of the images captured through the camera lens being exhibited at the National Gallery.

Dubbed "Moments In Time II", this photographic exhibition marks the second year of The McEwen Photographic Studio at the BAT Art Workshop and features the work of ten second year art students and a third year art student who was studio assistant.

According to Tom Chambers, a visual artist, documentary photographer and instructor at the McEwen Photographic Studio, the exhibition stresses camera/darkroom technique and composition (light-play, shadowplay, juxtaposition, perspective, angularity, foreground-background interest, movement and timing).

The pictures reveal the wide spectrum of talent that exists in this medium with some really outstanding and imaginative work while the other photographs were average.

I found particularly captivating Charles Kamangwena's human form photographed on a building structure all in shadow to depict an abstract image that is omnipresent. He explores this subject further by capturing just the leg of a man stepping on a scaffolding structure high above the ground. The picture was taken from a top-down perspective to create anxiety and anticipation.




Given Sitandi creates an illusion by picturing a straight-forward documentary image through backlighting and shadowplay of human forms taken behind a curtain. Also interesting is his picture of a young girl child taken from above with the child's eyes looking forlornly into the camera while standing on a dusty road with no shoes on.

The same feeling of compassion for the under privileged is brought out by Givemore Huvasa's image of another child lying resignedly on a street pavement with feet resting on a post. Lighting is cleverly used to enhance the power of the picture.

Russel Chawatama rotates his camera lens and juxtaposes a curtain versus a window to abstract the image of an otherwise straight-forward picture to evoke different interpretations and feelings from his image.


In this exhibition, "documentary/fine arts images convey personal experiences of the serious photographer and offer a unique vision of the world through a combination of camera technique and the mind's eye", says Tom Chamber.

Exhibition announcements showing the sponsorship logos of the National Gallery of Zimbabwe, United States Peace Corps and BAT, Ltd.:






THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ZIMBABWE
 THE UNITED STATES PEACE CORPS AND B.A.T. ZIMBABWE
 invite you to the preview of
MOMENTS IN TIME
 THE McEWEN PHOTOGRAPHIC STUDIO
 by
B.A.T. WORKSHOP STUDENTS
 to be opened by
HIS EXCELLENCY, MR. E. GIBSON LANPHER
 AMBASSADOR OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
 5.15 p.m. Tuesday 7 September 1993

THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ZIMBABWE
 THE UNITED STATES PEACE CORPS AND BAT ZIMBABWE
 invite you to the preview of




MOMENTS IN TIME II
 THE McEWEN PHOTOGRAPHIC STUDIO




by
BAT WORKSHOP STUDENTS
 to be opened by
HIS EXCELLENCY, MR. E. GIBSON LANPHER
 AMBASSADOR OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
 5.15 p.m. Tuesday 6 September 1994

THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ZIMBABWE
THE UNITED STATES PEACE CORPS AND BAT ZIMBABWE Ltd.

invite you to the preview of



MOMENTS IN TIME III
THE McEWEN PHOTOGRAPHIC STUDIO




by
BAT VISUAL ARTS STUDIOS STUDENTS

to be opened by
MR. DAVID BELLAMA, COUNTRY DIRECTOR - ZIMBABWE
UNITED STATES PEACE CORPS

5.15 p.m. Tuesday 5 September 1995

National Gallery of Zimbabwe
20 Julius Nyerere Way, Harare



By invitation only
Please bring this card with you

Chambers was interviewed by Development Dialogue in Harare, Zimbabwe about his feelings and activities re: the medium of photography in Zimbabwe.

"Arts & Culture: Photography Under-Utilised In Zimbabwe", Development Dialogue (Record Of Change In Southern Africa).

Copies of the article follow:

DEVELOPMENT DIALOGUE

The Record of Change In Southern Africa

Registered at the GPO as a newspaper

• HARARE (MAIN OFFICE) • GABORONE • LILONGWE • LUANDA • LUSAKA • MAPUTO • MASERU • MBABANE • WINDHOEK • DAR ES SALAAM • JOHANNESBURG VOL 5 - NO 15 • MAY/JUNE 1995

ARTS & CULTURE

Photography Under-Utilised In Zimbabwe

BY AUSTIN TAPFUMA

HARARE - Photography can be used as a medium through which one can make personal and societal statements and yet very few people are aware of that.

Photographs - like paintings, drawings, sculpture or even writing - can be used to express what one feels about one's self and about society in general.

Tom Chambers, a visual artist and documentary photographer, noticed this discrepancy and set out to change it.

"Photography is an underutilised medium in Zimbabwe," he said.

"There are not many people who are aware that photography is a part of the visual arts. Not many people are aware that there are photographers out there using the medium as visual artists or documentary photographers.

"This is because up until now people in Zimbabwe have not really been exposed to the medium of photography. And those people who are interested in the medium have lacked the kind of nurturing needed for them to fully realise what photography can do for them as people and artists."

In 1993, in a bid to provide the kind of nurturing needed by people interested in photography, Chambers initiated and introduced a photography course into the BAT Art Workshop curriculum.

"I had to start from scratch. I canvassed five Zimbabwean corporations for grants to buy cameras and equipment. I also managed to persuade Kodak, the biggest donor to the project, to give film, chemicals and paper," Chambers said.

In September of the same year, an exhibition of the students' work, "Moments In Time, was held at the National Gallery."

The exhibition was made up of a collection of 50 small black and white photographs and was the end result of a seven-month course that had started with several weeks of classroom study of camera techniques, composition and the use of light and shadow.

Then the students went out as a team to shoot the environs - subjects, objects, situations - all the while conscious of the mind's eye when they were behind the camera.

After that the students began shooting on their own.

"The fact that all the students are artists gave them an advantage in using the medium creatively. Because of that they generated wonderful fine art images based on composition, shape and form."

"But they were weaker in photojournalism. This was the first time

they went out to document Zimbabwean society. There's a timidity there. You have to learn to be aggressive - polite, of course, but aggressive - in order to capture the good and the bad," he said.

Chambers believes that documentary photography is important in that it provides a record of the human condition. It provides an understanding of humanity, connects and brings people from different cultures together.

"Documentary photography is a serious, straight-forward and sincere look at society. When I say that I mean humankind in situations that develop because of human nature."

"Activities, situations that occur because of human interaction which culminate in grief, misery, elation, joy, pride, need etc. That human condition which results from interaction or lack of interaction in society makes this kind of photographic documentation meaningful," he said.

In September 1994, a second exhibition, *Moments In Time II*, was held, again at the National Gallery in Harare. This exhibition featured the works of 10 second-year art students and a third-year art student who was studio assistant.

The exhibition stressed camera/darkroom technique and composition (lightplay, shadowplay, juxtaposition, perspective, angularity, foreground-background interest, movement and timing.)



Tom Chambers

"Documentary/fine arts images convey personal experiences of the serious photographer and offer a unique vision of the world through a combination of camera technique and the mind's eye," Chambers said of the exhibition.

He also said that after two years the workshop had been successful in putting the medium in the hands of students and it had been reasonably successful in promoting the medium of photography within the visual arts of Zimbabwe.

Beginning in February this year, Chambers continued the photo workshop which will again culminate in another exhibition, *Moments In Time III*. Kodak will continue as the workshop's major sponsor.

"When I return to the States in January 1996 it doesn't mean it's

over. I'll be taking back the negatives with me to market what the students have done in terms of mounting an overall exhibition."

"I don't want to forget my experiences with students here or what they have to offer the medium. I want to try my best, through the exhibition, to give students who want to continue with their studies the opportunity to do so through scholarships and fellowships in the US."

"And I want to continue promoting the medium of photography within the visual arts in Zimbabwe and worldwide. I may be leaving Zimbabwe in 1996 but I am not forgetting," he said.

By December 1994, Tom Chambers had already written to over 40 different institutions, museums, galleries, schools and universities asking them if they would be interested in exhibiting this combined package to be called "Africa: Moments In Time."

Chambers hopes that the photography workshop will not die with his departure. He hopes that someone with the same commitment to photography will continue putting the medium in the laps of individuals who are serious and sincere about the medium but do not have the kind of money needed to utilise it fully.

"It would be a shame to lose the momentum we've had when I go home. I've worked hard. The students have worked hard. Someone needs to step into my shoes and I

hope that individual is out there. It would be good to have an ex-BAT photo student fill my shoes," he said.

Chambers also suggested that a photographic Art Centre should be established in Zimbabwe. The Centre which would be run along similar lines as the National Art Gallery would serve multiple purposes.

"It will, among other things, enable Zimbabwean, regional and international documentary photographers and visual artists to exhibit their material and in that way increase awareness of what can be done using the medium."

"Seminars and workshops on photography could also be held at the Centre. Everyone who is interested in the medium would then be able to learn all about it at the centre," he said.

Apart from being a documentary photographer and visual artist, Chambers is also a United States Peace Corps volunteer currently living and working in Zimbabwe.

He is working as an art conservator/curator for the National Gallery of Zimbabwe where his duties include researching and classifying the National Gallery's permanent collection.

He is also a photography instructor at the BAT Art Workshop's McEwen Photographic Studio. He is also actively involved with SKIA (Street Kids In action), a welfare organisation he helped form.

As a Tertiary Project, Chambers initiated, and advised "SKIA" ("Street Kids In Action"), a youth development program for at-risk youth in the urban areas (particularly, Harare) of Zimbabwe. He succeeded in bringing together, and motivating numerous individuals from the Zimbabwean community to move "SKIA" forward, at grass-roots level, as a Zimbabwean-based program to address the street kids issue in an all-encompassing manner.



Specifically, a small university approach is planned, in which street children and young adults can benefit from basic education classes, arts/vocational workshops, counseling, athletics and maintenance (Half-Way House approach for the truly destitute); the children are re-integrated in the Public Education system, reunited with the family unit, and placed with corporations/organizations as trainees/assistants/interns to offer them co-operative opportunities.

The program has created a greater awareness of the Street Kids issue, and raised local funds (US\$35000.00 - Charity Casinos, Mayoral Fund, Rotaract Clubs, corporations, fundraising events, individuals and memberships) to purchase a facility to implement its small university approach, and hire a Zimbabwean Project Manager.

Chambers attended the United States Peace Corps Africa region Small Business Development and Youth Development Conference in Gaborone, Botswana (September 19-23, 1994) in connection with this program.

In this same Advisor/Counselor role, he also provided guidance and assistance to a number of individuals and organizations seeking help and practical guidance in urban youth programs as far away as Kenya (where he made presentations to PCVs), Botswana and Ghana.

Chambers also served as a Project Adviser for American students who traveled to Zimbabwe on Study-Abroad programs through Scripps-Pitzer/University of Zimbabwe and School for International Training (He advised seven students in various cross-cultural projects.).

In addition, as a documentary photographer, he generated a series of photographs (portraits/landscapes of Africans and their lifestyles in a rural area of Zimbabwe), "Southwest of Rusape: The Mucharambeyi Connection", and received a US Government grant (US\$400.00) through the United States Information Service (USIS).

This documentary photography project was in association with the Mucharambeyi family in Rusape, North East Zimbabwe and sponsored by U.S.I.S., Harare, Zimbabwe as the inaugural exhibition/event for the United States Information center (1995). The Mucharambeyi family attended, and Johnnie Carson, U.S. Ambassador to Zimbabwe, opened the exhibition.

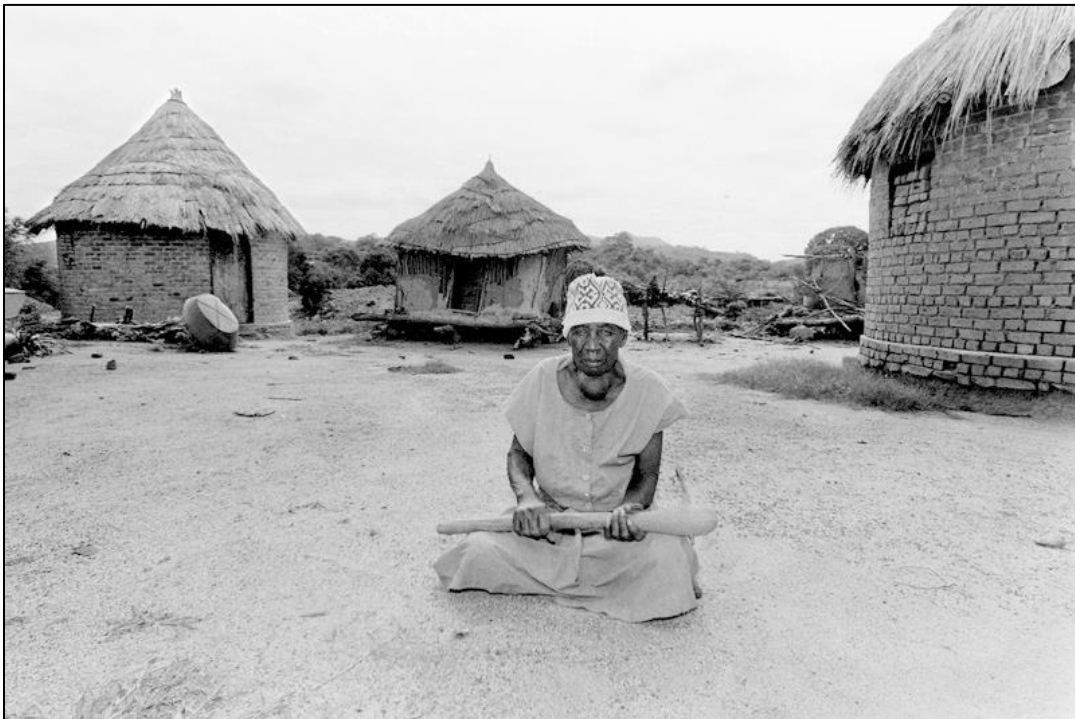
Chambers considers this project one of his more meaningful ones since he spent several days with the Mucharambeyi family in a rural setting that had him traveling from village to village for his assimilation into their culture and customs to provide photo documentation.

Exhibitions

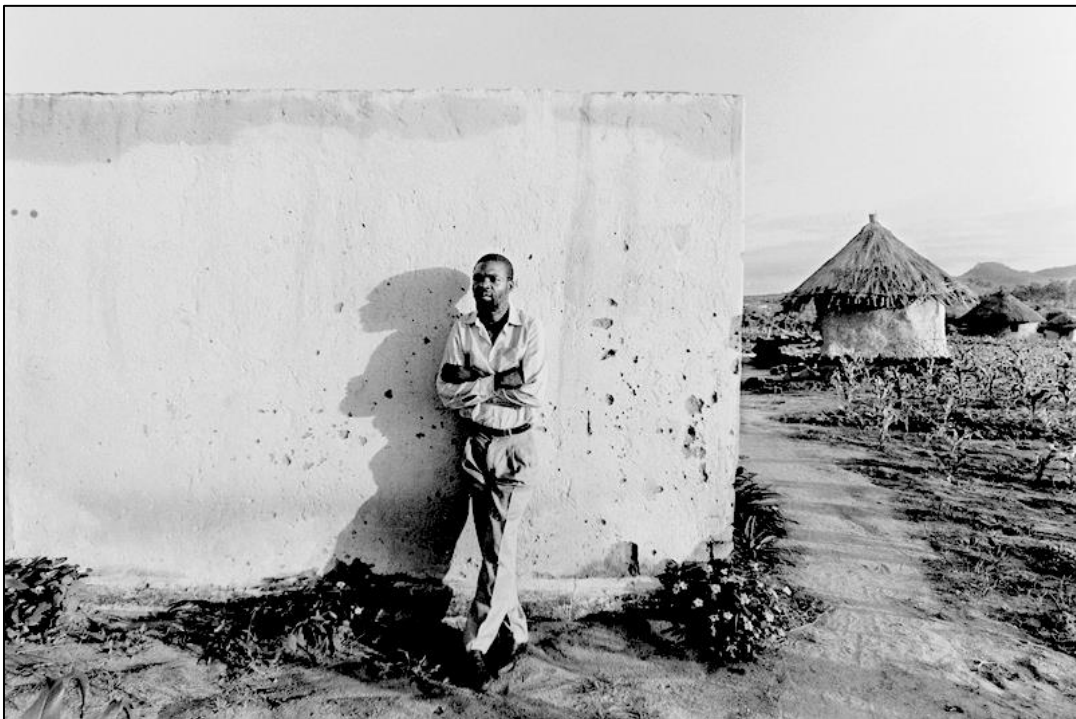
"Hyperlink: PhotoForum Worldwide Exhibition" (Southwest of Rusape: The Mucharambeyi Connection [SWRMC-1]) (group show), first, on-line/hyperlinked exhibition under the auspices of PhotoForum/Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, New York, U.S.A. (initiator/coordinator), 1997.

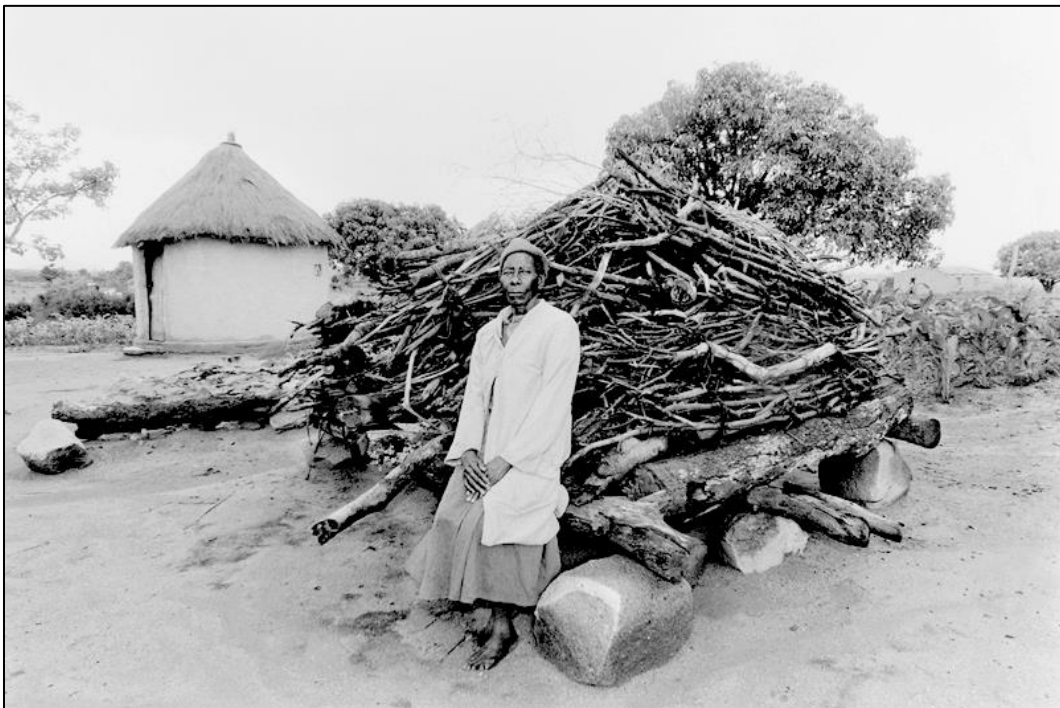
"Southwest Of Rusape: The Mucharambeyi Connection" (solo show), Corridor Gallery, United States Information Service (USIS), Harare, Zimbabwe, Africa (Received a United States Government Grant ; officially opened by the U.S. Ambassador to Zimbabwe; and accepted as a part of the USIS Archives.), 1995.

Several photographs from the project follow:









The opening at the Corridor Gallery, United States Information Service (USIS), Harare, Zimbabwe is seen below in the form of a letter from the Director of USIS:

**United States
Information
Service**

Century House East
Mezzanine Floor
Baker Avenue
P.O. Box 4010
Harare, Zimbabwe

Telephone: 758798/9, 758800/1



Tom Chambers
US Peace Corps
Bamawa House
cnr. Kaguvi/Union
HARARE

Dear Tom:

Attached is a copy of the Embassy Awards program with your exhibit mentioned on the cover.

Thank you very much for the lovely photos. Everyone comments on the beauty of the exhibit and the dignity portrayed in the photos.

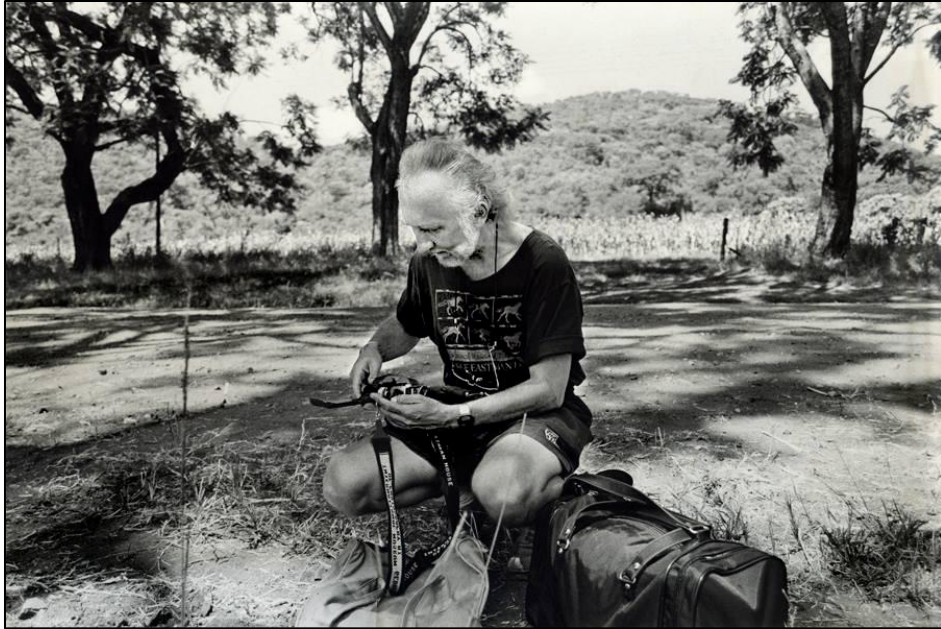
Sincerely,


Lucy H. Hall
Director

Christopher Chipfuya
Conservator
National Gallery of Zimbabwe

Chambers at the "SoR:TMC" opening, USIS.

Chambers is seen in a rural area of Zimbabwe loading his Nikon FE2 camera.



Amy Ratty

His living quarters in Harare.





U.S. PEACE CORPS/ZIMBABWE

Sept 8

Tom,

My earnest congratulations for last night's exhibition and all your work leading up to it. The turn-out was good, and I thought your talk was excellent. I hope you are pleased with all that has resulted from the BAT Workshops. Again, congratulations -

David

MAILING ADDRESS
P.O. Box 3340
Harare, Zimbabwe
Fax: 263-4-796488

BUSINESS ADDRESS
Bamawa House
Kaguvi and Union, Harare
Telephone: 263-4-792810



December 15, 1994

Tom R. Chambers, PCV
Art Conservator/Curator
National Gallery of Zimbabwe
20 Julius Nyerere Way
Harare, Zimbabwe

Dear Tom:

Thank you for your note and information regarding your noteworthy accomplishments while a Volunteer in Zimbabwe. I appreciate your taking the time to write.

It certainly sounds as if you have had a very successful and rewarding tour while at the National Gallery. I'm also pleased to see that you have decided to extend your time in Zimbabwe to complete the important work you have begun.

Thanks again for writing. I wish you the best as you continue your service to the people of Zimbabwe.

Sincerely,

Carol Bellamy
Director

1990 K Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20526

Sargent Shriver (first director of the Peace Corps) (center - white jacket) and Zimbabwe Volunteers and staff. Chambers is seen front row, left:



Chambers and Sargent Shriver are seen shaking hands at the Zimbabwe Peace Corps headquarters:



Chambers and children in Zimbabwe:



Amy Ratty