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Remarks Delivered
by
Mr. Cleviston Haynes, Governor, Central Bank of Barbados
at the Official Launch
Crop Over Visual Arts Festival 2019
Monday, July 8, 2019

Good evening, and welcome to the 2019 Crop Over Visual Arts Festival and to the Courtney Blackman Grande Salle.

This is the 25th year that the Bank has sponsored this exhibition. Our long-standing involvement is not based solely on our recognition of the need for us to demonstrate our corporate social responsibility but derives from our desire to seek to promote and support the development of the arts in Barbados.

Indeed, this very venue and the Frank Collymore Hall next door are a testament to our commitment to the arts and culture, a commitment that is inspired by the Pablo Picasso quote that adorns the wall at the entrance to this building: “Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life.”

We recognise that the arts - whether it's music, theatre, literature, dance or the paintings, photos, and sculptures that grace/enrich this hall and the Queen's Park Gallery - can excite, provoke, soothe, and stimulate.

The arts have the power to transform public spaces. Certainly, this Crop Over Visual Arts Festival enlivens the Courtney Blackman Grande Salle every year, attracting visitors and locals alike into the city and into these walls of the Central Bank of Barbados. I invite you to consider using The Exchange, wedged between the Bank and the St Michael's Cathedral, to mount some of the exhibits in the 2020 Crop Over Visual Arts Festival. The Exchange is a modern interactive museum that explores the history of free masonry, education and business in Bridgetown and would add another dimension to this event.

The arts energise and unify people, and stimulate economies, and this is exemplified in our national Crop Over celebrations, a festival of creative arts and culture. Crop Over increases Barbados' visibility, as the traditional and social media beam the activities to the world. The explosion in fetes, parties and shows has added dynamism to the entertainment sector, and we have created a new export industry

as our calypsonians travel to perform. In short, Crop Over boosts economic activity, earns foreign exchange, generates spend, and bolsters tourism, the mainstay of our economy.

More broadly, the arts bring communities together, increases social inclusion, and make neighbourhoods feel safer and stronger. We have several examples of communities uniting in Barbados around the arts.

The residents of Rock Hall, St. Thomas, Parris Hill, St. Joseph, and West Terrace St. James have beautified their surroundings with murals. Next door at the Constitution River, one of our repeat exhibitors, Don Small, championed a group of school children to enhance the bus terminal and its environs with a resplendent work of art.

The arts support health and wellbeing, and impact positively on specific health conditions like dementia, depression, and Parkinson's disease. Our local Alzheimer's Association exhorts families of dementia patients to treat them to music, and dance, and drawings, to help them cope with their illness.

Research reveals that the arts and culture improve the cognitive abilities of children and young people. This observation suggests that the arts can play a significant role in reducing the level of social deviance that seems to be impacting society. I am pleased, therefore, that the National Cultural Foundation encourages young people to participate in this event, and that our young folk have responded to the call to exhibit alongside the more experienced artists. Some of them have done so, winning top awards for their work. And this year, we have at least five young artists exhibiting.

So the arts and culture offer both concrete and less measurable benefits, as this year's theme "***Crop Over Ah Come From: Exploring the Tangible and Intangible Connections of the Crop Over Festival***" emphasises.

Our artistes sometimes feel that they receive insufficient recognition and rewards for their labours. The recent accolade bestowed upon the Mighty Grynner and, before him, internationally renowned Rihanna should inspire our artistes to persist, work hard and be patient and one day they too may join the national pantheon of cultural practitioners saluted by this fair land.

As we celebrate 25 years of the Bank's association with the Crop Over Visual Arts, I commend the National Cultural Foundation for growing the exhibition to include a lecture and a display of the winning pieces throughout the years. These events should spark greater interest in this festival.

I look forward to seeing the work of the 2019 winners find a place in the Bank. Congratulations! I also acknowledge all entrants, not only this year's but also all artists who have shared a slice of their life with us by showing off their talent, skills, and craft in this national exhibition.

I encourage Barbadians and visitors to view this exhibition and invest in the brilliant work on offer.

To all artists, thank you for creating and interpreting, for soothing and provoking, for imbuing our lives with creativity, and in the words of Picasso “washing away the dust of everyday life”. You inspire mankind, you solidify communities, you transform nations, and you bolster economies. We at the Bank salute you, and we pledge to continue to help you, and to sponsor your work.

May you have a successful festival, and long may the Crop Over Visual Arts Festival live. An enjoyable and safe Crop Over to everyone!

I thank you.