



**Opening of The African Collection**  
**Remarks by:**  
**Dr. the Hon. Ernest Peets, JP**  
**Minister of Youth, Culture and Sport**  
**At the Bermuda National Gallery, City Hall**  
**On 21<sup>st</sup> February 2022**

On behalf of the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sport, I'm delighted to be here at the Bermuda National Gallery to formally open The African Collection: Our People, Our Places, Our Stories.

As you're all aware, this exhibition is being revisited in celebration of the BNG's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and this was one of the Gallery's very first collections it showcased shortly after its opening.

I had the wonderful opportunity of touring the exhibition last week and I must say, it was truly a breath-taking experience.

Produced in the 1940s and 1950s, the Collection of artworks are contemporary iterations of an ancient lineage of performance and belief systems.

It consists of 37 works, representing 22 peoples from 12 countries in sub-Saharan West Africa, which range from ritual sculpture to masks, functional objects and textiles.

Each of these unique pieces tells a powerful and even haunting story of truth.

And even after 30 years this magnificent display continues to remain as relevant as ever, as it connects the story of Bermuda's cultural heritage as part of the African diaspora.

Today is also an extremely timely occasion, as I recently announced that in the coming weeks, I will be visiting Bermuda's museums, art galleries and historical landmarks, with a goal of engaging with those who oversee and manage these institutions.

As we outlined in our National Cultural Heritage Policy, it's important for us all to learn as much as we can about our heritage.

It's also critical that our community support institutions, such as the Bermuda National Gallery, many of which are charitable organisations as they contain a wealth of information about our historical roots. So part of my goal will be to champion the important work of each of these organisations.

However, as much as the formal purpose of events such as this is extremely valuable, I have to tell you that visiting the exhibition and other cultural sites has also been an immensely personal experience for me. It has put me on a journey of discovery and newfound passion – filling a void in me that I hadn't known existed. I leave exhibits such as this feeling joyful, positive, and optimistic about our human condition and Bermuda's future.

That is why I sincerely and honestly want to encourage everyone to visit. I'd love everyone to feel as good as I have from these experiences! Take the time out of your day to have a mindfulness health break and fill your heart and soul with beauty and inspiration.

It is rejuvenating, stimulating, good for you and good for the organizations that make these excellent offerings available to us.

The Bermuda National Gallery has done so much in opening up a window to the incredible world of the arts, and we must do all that we can to ensure that these institutions thrive and survive.

Our Ministry remains committed to supporting the BNG and all of Bermuda's historians, tradition bearers, curators, leading creatives and artists as they continue their critical efforts in our community.

I wish to extend my thanks and appreciation to Mr. Peter Lapsley, Executive Director of the BNG for his tireless advocacy of the arts.

It has been my genuine pleasure to join you today and even if you've seen this exhibition previously, my hope is that The African Collection: Our People, Our Places, Our Stories offers you a fresh perspective and awareness about the cultural and historical connections we share with not just the African Diaspora, but with one another.

Thank you.