MAKONDE ART SHOW

for the benefit of

FRELIMO

The Mozambique Liberation Front

Inter Church Center
475 Riverside Drive

Monday, June 23 - Robing Room
Tuesday, June 24 - Dining Room C
MOZAMBIQUE

Based on excerpts from FRELIMO bulletins

Mozambique: The territory of Mozambique lies on the east coast of Africa between latitudes 11° and 27°. In the north it borders on Tanzania; in the west on Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe (Rhodesia); and in the south-west, on the Republic of South Africa. It has an area of 301,400 square miles and a population of over 7 million.

For many years colonized by Portugal, the Mozambican people are now organizing themselves; they have formed a united front against Portuguese colonialism and have launched an armed struggle for national liberation.

FRELIMO: In June 1962, three Mozambican nationalist organizations united to create a common front to fight against Portuguese colonialism. This is how FRELIMO was born -- Frente de Libertacao de Mocambique (the Mozambique Liberation Front) -- which held its first Congress in the following September in Tanzania.

Knowing from experience that colonialists meet every demand for independence with repression, FRELIMO, although still offering to negotiate, began a campaign of general mobilization and training for all sections of the population in preparation for the independence struggle. Special attention was given to the formation of military cadres, and to the preparation of the material conditions necessary for the launching of an armed struggle.

25th of September, 1964: "FRELIMO TODAY SOLEMNLY PROCLAIMS THE GENERAL ARMED INSURRECTION OF THE MOZAMBIAN PEOPLE AGAINST PORTUGUESE COLONIALISM FOR THE ATTAINMENT OF THE COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE OF MOZAMBIQUE. Our fight must not cease before the total liquidation of Portuguese colonialism..." It was in these terms that on September 25, 1964, FRELIMO called on the people to take up arms against Portuguese colonialism. Almost five years have passed since that day.

Today in many regions of the country the colonialists have been ejected, and the people there have regained their dignity and exercise full sovereignty. In two northern provinces of Mozambique, Cabo Delgado and Niassa, an area of 150,000 square miles and a population of about 500,000, very extensive regions have been liberated, and in Tete Province to the northwest, a FRELIMO front was reopened in 1968.

The Second FRELIMO Congress was held from July 20-25, 1968, this time inside the liberated territory of Niassa. Hundreds of Mozambicans joined with other representatives of southern African liberation movements in solidarity and reaffirmation of the armed struggle for Mozambican freedom.

Tragedy struck the movement on February 3, 1969 when Eduardo C. Mondlane, President of FRELIMO, was assassinated in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Most recently, the Central Committee of FRELIMO met and reorganized the Front's structure to fulfill its new needs.

National Reconstruction: In the liberated areas of Mozambique, FRELIMO is organizing educational services, medical assistance, production, administration, and justice. Thousands of children who never had attended school now are receiving primary education in FRELIMO schools. The colonial system of compulsory cultivation has been ended and has been replaced by varied subsistence farming. Health clinics, teacher training schools, and the development of small-scale industry plants have been innovated by FRELIMO.
The Enemy: Portugal could not expand 60% of her national budget on defense, and place 150,000 soldiers in Africa to fight her colonialist wars without external aid. This aid, direct and indirect economic and military support, is supplied by the bulwark of southern African racism, apartheid South Africa, and by Portugal's NATO allies, Britain, West Germany, France and the United States. The U.S. continues to belie any condemnation of colonialism by continuing military relations with Portugal, and by increased U.S. corporate investment in the Portuguese colonies, such as Gulf Oil's massive investment in Angolan oil.

FRELIMO: Persepective: Victory is certain. Every day brings news of success for the Mozambican people and of crushing defeats for the army of occupation. The political conscience of the people is developing along with military science and the number of trained troops. The task is admittedly long and hard, but the motto of FRELIMO, "VENCEREMOS" represents the determination of the people. VICTORY OR DEATH.

Opposition to present American policy and support for the liberation movement must come from you. For further information, contact:

American Committee on Africa
164 Madison Avenue
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532-3700
MAKONDE CURIO SCULPTURE

Brack Brown

The Makonde peoples reside on both sides of the Ruvuma River which forms a natural border between Mozambique and Tanzania. Those Makonde who appear to have a vocational gift for carving craftsmanship derive primarily from the Mozambique Plateau, although the bulk of the carvings are done in various locations in Tanzania by immigrant or refugee Makonde.

Some forty years ago, many Mozambique Makonde began to migrate into southern Tanganyika seeking employment, cheaper goods, and alternatives to life under an oppressive Portuguese administration. There they moved into various urban and commercial centers as well as labor-seeking estates where they continued to live and work closely together. Contact with new people, new work patterns, and new commercial possibilities widened their horizons and eventually stimulated a surge of carving output for enjoyment and profit. One explanation for the recent prolific output is attributed to Tanzania's relatively free field for individual and artistic expression which had been reduced or lost in the alien-dominated land to the south.

In the past, the Makonde carving tradition traces back to the time figurines had practical educational, religious, and ritualistic significance. It is still evident in many carvings that folklore, religion, fantasy invention, as well as every-day experience informs the craftsman and gives to his product a uniqueness and charm peculiar to the African environment from which it derives. Traditional carvings were probably of softwoods, sometimes stained to add color. A shift to the durable black ebony resulted from the demand of the curio trade for a more lasting medium but also because of ebony's nearly uniform density and tensile strength which allowed the carvers considerable latitude to experiment with volumes and shapes.

Naturalistic Makonde curio sculpture relies for the most part on simple African genre: common African animals and birds, women carrying water or grinding maize, men smoking or dancing and sometimes traditional or modern religious figures. The carvings in general, however, are several steps above the usual souvenir art of Africa. The figures and animals, though presented in their familiar roles, are sometimes very stylized or abstract. Makonde curio carvings are in fact very closely related to what is coming to be recognized as one of the most important bodies of artistic work produced in Eastern Africa. By this we refer to the recently discovered rich vein of highly imaginative and serious spirit carvings of the Makonde often known as "modern Makonde sculpture". This latter body of work constitutes a genuine artistic discovery of world significance. Frequently the master artists themselves work on the simpler curio items and inject new themes and techniques into the body of the craft.

Both kinds of Makonde sculpture are rapidly becoming more widely known, admired and collected. Books, articles, and exhibits have focused on the Makonde on several continents. A few exclusive shops and galleries in Europe, England, and the U.S. have begun to handle Makonde carvings. In East Africa the Makonde themselves, along with FRELIMO, are setting up smooth-running market arrangements for moving their work rather than remaining dependent upon local, but
alien, entrepreneurs. Nor has the organization of more regular channels to increase the flow of Makonde carvings dulled their spontaneity and originality. Owning even a single carving is not only an original way to enjoy some vicarious participation in some aspect of the African milieu, but is also to support a positive and worthy effort involving the survival and integrity of a displaced and freedom-loving people seeking a free homeland.

One might expect that the increasing success of the Makonde curio and sculpture trade would degenerate into standard curio fare, yet the Makonde have continued to escape the hackneyed repetition of most other African curio carvings. Traditions of personal and small-group independence carried over from their past life in Mozambique have helped the Makonde not only to make their way in their temporarily adopted homeland in the north, but has helped to keep alive the productive and creative talents of native Mozambicans despite Portuguese efforts to regiment and control them for their own purposes. The American Committee on Africa has provided for a wider audience to share in the vital and fascinating craft of a creative people. But even more important, they have allowed us at the same time to help further the cause of creating conditions for a better and freer life in a neglected and oppressed portion of a struggling continent.
How can we tell you the size of our Dream?

During centuries we waited that a Messiah might free us . . .

Until we understood.

Today our Revolution is a great flower to which each day new petals are added.

The petals are the land reconquered, the people freed, the fields cultivated, schools and hospitals,

Our Dream has the size of Freedom.

FRELIMO, 1969