

February 9, 2006
For Immediate Release

In Black History Month the SPENCE GALLERY presents
Portrait of a Woman

The Portrait of a Woman exhibit showcases three Black female artists – Neo Ntsoma, Award-winning photojournalist from Johannesburg, South Africa along with Mary Ogembo from Nairobi, Kenya and Toronto-based painter Opal Dunbar-Adams. The exhibit is a celebration of women’s strength, courage and beauty.

Award-winning photographs of Neo Ntsoma are presented that focus on women’s work and struggles in developing countries. Pieces from the “Their World in Flames” photo essay, for which she won the CNN African Journalist Award, will be exhibited. There are also photographs from Ntsoma’s “Saris in the Sand” series on women’s working conditions in a Bangladeshi stone mine.

Neo Ntsoma works for one of South Africa’s largest dailies, The Star, and is one of about 10 Black female photographers practicing in South Africa. Denied her pursuit of film and television because of Apartheid restrictions, Neo turned to photography and has become one of the stars of the craft with a string of recognition and awards. Most recently, she was the 2005 Premier Award Winner in the Mondi Shanduka Newspaper Awards (one of South Africa’s most prestigious journalism awards); in the same year she was a National Geographic All Roads Film and Photography award recipient. In 2004, she became the first female recipient of the CNN African Journalist Award for Photography, her work was selected for TIME magazine “Pictures of the Week” and for the second year in a row, she won a number of awards in the Fuji African Press Photo Awards. She was also the first photographer from the Southern Hemisphere to have a photograph selected for the cover of the One World Calendar (*New Internationalist* magazine calendar).

Her work has appeared in publications such as, *The London Telegraph*, *TIME Magazine* and *The Washington Post*. She has also exhibited in Holland, Norway, Italy, France, India, Bangladesh and the United States. Her work is currently being exhibited in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Mary Ogembo current works focus on depicting the beauty and the roles of African women in her paintings. She intends to use her art to communicate to the world about African women. She has participated in a number of exhibitions in and outside Kenya including France, Germany and Zimbabwe. Mary is one of the 2005 Commonwealth Arts and Crafts Award winners and is currently in Ghana for six months as part of the award exchange.

Opal Dunbar-Adams' works portray beauty, strength, colour, diversity in the eyes and on the faces of women. She is a graduate of the Ottawa School of Art and the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. In her recognition of the daily struggles women must overcome, she attempts to portray women's stories of triumph, hope and love through her portraits. Opal has exhibited in several shows around Toronto. (Her artwork is featured on the program cover for Colleen Wagner's Governor General award-winning play "The Monument" that is being presented at Obsidian Theatre Company in March 2006.)

Portrait of a Woman, February 18 - March 26, 2006.

A wine and cheese reception will be held on Saturday, February 18, 2006

The public is cordially invited.

Opal Dunbar-Adams will be in attendance.

(NOTE: Artwork from the three artists will also be exhibited at Obsidian Theatre from March 4 to 25, 2006 during the run of Colleen Wagner's play "The Monument".)

SPENCE GALLERY, located in Mirvish Village, is Toronto's only gallery that showcases contemporary expressions of Caribbean, Latin and African culture. The gallery was founded to share culturally diverse artistic expressions. It provides a taste of contemporary art of Caribbean, Latin American and African artists and the Diaspora. It is dedicated to diversity and celebrates the cultural influences of the artists.

Gallery Hours

Wednesday – Friday 5 – 8 pm

Saturday and Sunday 12 - 6 pm

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