

**Address by:
Mr. William E. Clarke
President and CEO, Scotiabank Jamaica**

at the

**Official Opening of Gallery Barrington
75 Old Hope Road-
Monday, September 25, 2006
6:00 p.m.**

**Theme: “Jamaica Needs to Employ the Visual Arts
in Economic and Social Development”**

I am very honoured to address you this evening on this very special occasion. You may wonder why a banker is being asked to speak at the opening of an art gallery. After all, many people think of bankers as stodgy people, interested only in the bottom line.

The truth is, Scotiabank Jamaica is the proud owner of a fine collection of Jamaican art. We are proud to count among these, the “Pan Africanists by Barrington Watson. This inspiring masterpiece graces the walls on the way to our boardroom. It also forms the cover of a book the Bank commissioned by the same name.

I am also very proud and happy to play this role this evening because this gallery is a symbol of Barry Watson’s commitment to excellence and moreover, his enduring dedication to the advancement of Jamaican art.

BARRY WATSON’S CONTRIBUTION

Barry knew very early in his life that he wanted to be an artist. The reality is that the visual arts are treated as a second cousin in the educational system. All the more credit therefore to artists like Barrington Watson who have nurtured an artistic vocation which started in his teenage years and has persisted to this stage of his life.

Barry has not only produced many outstanding works, but he founded the Jamaica Arts Foundation to promote artistic expression in Jamaica and the Caribbean. They say those who can't do, teach.

This is not always true, Barry has shown that it is possible to both do and teach. He has not only built an outstanding repertoire of personal works but has cultivated the talent of many young persons through teaching.

Many of you may know that Barry Watson taught at the Jamaica School of Art and was very instrumental in changing the name from the Jamaica School of Art and Craft. He was the first director of studies at the school and organised the diploma and certificate courses that are now part of the curriculum at the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts.

Barry has also tried to reach those art scholars who may not reach the formal school system through his book *Shades of Grey*. This book helps everyone to see the world through the eyes of the artist and shares some of an artist's techniques.

JAMAICA NEEDS TO EMPLOY THE VISUAL ARTS IN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

A. Economic development

Despite the outstanding work of people like Barry Watson, art is still under-exploited as a tool for national and social development. Art provides a picture of a society: its culture and norms and current trends. It is also said that while art defines a society, the universal themes in art also links societies and communities, which is very important in this era of globalisation.

Jamaica is well known for the performing arts, especially our DJs and other popular artistes. But the truth is, as a nation we have not truly begun to exploit the visual arts as a tool for economic and social development.

The Fine arts generated \$23.5 billion in sales globally in 2001. In Europe, the art trade created 73,500 jobs across 28,000 businesses. In the USA the sector spawned 35,300 jobs produced by 8,800 industries.

Ancillary activity in the fine arts sector produced another \$3 billion in sales in the US and Europe, creating another 80,000 professional and service jobs. If you check the current Economic and Social Survey of Jamaica, you will find statistics for the entertainment industry: music, film and drama, but nothing for the visual arts.

However, those of us who are art lovers know that there is an abundance of talent in the field of painting, sculpture and other fine arts. According to the 2005 ESSJ 400 students were enrolled at the Edna College in 2004-5. The same report says that 176 persons graduated from programmes at the HEART Trust NTA in 2004-5.

I am challenging these new graduates and those who are more experienced in the sector to move the visual arts from a poor cousin on the fringes of the economy into the mainstream. The educational system must not only train our artists to be more skilled in the genre, but also to be successful entrepreneurs.

I know that traditionally, artists are pictured as lonely, starving people committed only to creating fine works. As a banker, I recognise the importance of a focus on quality production. However I think the time of the starving artist is past.

In today's reality, we need art professionals who are dedicated to their genre, but who have a pragmatic approach to business. These are the people who will not only make a good living for themselves, but provide employment for others as well. The truth is that Jamaica needs to find innovative ways to increase the level of employment among our people.

The ESSJ reports that in 2005, 1,300 more females and 500 males joined the ranks of the employed. Consider this against the background of the how many thousands of persons are leaving the school system each year, hoping to find jobs. Moreover, there was a 0.4 percentage point decline in the labour force participation rate, bringing that figure to 63.9 percent.

I believe the visual arts can play a more significant role in the economy, not only through galleries such as this one showcasing original work, but also through the production of reproductions in prints and on consumer items such as mugs, placemats, notebooks and many others.

A.1 Exploiting the Internet

In these days of globalisation, the market for Jamaican paintings and sculpture reaches beyond our shores. The Caribbean Single Market Economy is opening up a whole new area to be exploited. But the internet and the potential of web-based advertising and sales opens up the entire world.

Artists like Barrington Watson and indeed several other Jamaican painters can stand shoulder to shoulder with the best of their peers anywhere in the world. Jamaica ought to be attracting sales of original works and reproductions of various types, not only from locals and tourists but art lovers all over the world.

This evening we are here to officially open this very attractive space, which will provide enjoyment for hundreds of visitors. But we should also have many virtual galleries where art lovers and casual visitors may view the richness of our contemporary visual arts and buy products.

B. Fine arts and social development

Now I'm going to venture into an area with which I am less familiar, but which is important nevertheless at this time in Jamaica's history. It is well recognised that our examination results at the CXC level leave much to be desired, although there are some students who perform brilliantly. (As an aside, I'm proud to say that our Scotiabank scholars : recipients of full GSAT scholarships for their Grade 7-11 high school life, are among the exceptions.)

We are also at a time in our national development where civility and community spirit seem to be at their lowest ebb. The full potential of the fine arts to address these social issues has not been realised. For example, the visual arts can help young people learn how to express themselves in positive ways. Students who have been through negative experiences can use art to help them to process their feelings and heal.

Teachers have used the multicultural nature of the arts to help students understand relate to persons who are different from themselves. In Jamaica we have seen where urban communities have transformed their spaces with artistic designs.

We need to see more of this kind of collaborative community action, which results not only in aesthetic improvements but also renewed community spirit.

The fine arts can also be a vehicle for economic growth in specific communities through well-designed and run artist co-operatives. And finally, teachers can use the art to teach students how to think critically, and take responsibility for their own learning process.

CONCLUSION

I could say more on this topic but I recognise that you have been standing for a while and that you came here to view the exhibit, not to hear an old banker go on and on. I would just like to congratulate you once again Barry, for entering into this venture at a time of life when many people would be sitting on their laurels.

I wish you every success at this location and I trust that your example will serve as a catalyst for the development of the arts in this country.

THANK YOU