

Mahufe sees his subjects from different angles



Dr Tony Monda
Art Zone

SOMETIMES artistic answers are needed to express human feelings, but when an artist is mute, artistic answers become the only voice he has. These sentiments are what have compelled Zimbabwean artist Shepherd Mahufe to create paintings that penetrate cultures and illustrate the basic elements of humanity.

Shepherd's colourful critiques of suburban life, rural life, and wildlife, culture and human psychology breathes life onto the canvas and paper he works on. He is also a superb draughtsman with the ability to see his subject from penetrating angles. His oblique angle of vision and bold translation of human society and everyday objects is witty, original and unequivocally Zimbabwean in style, content and context.

Mahufe's approach to painting is emotive expressionist and his paints have an extraordinary feeling of tactility and spontaneous movement, painting satirical social allegories with acid wit.

In his recent exhibition, the artist creates zoomorphic personages in a Shona cultural context, addressing and dressing his characters in animalesque masks which denote their Afro-centric totems. The artist delves into phantasmagorical allegories and metaphors which depict people in their natural environment according to Shona ontology. Says Mahufe: "In the city, there are zebras, 'vayera mbizi'; monkeys 'vayera soko'; lions, 'vayera shumba'; elephants, 'ana samanyanga'; urbanised in pinstriped designer suits hustling to get the better of each other". He says people are no different from animals — both deal with the laws of

survival of the fittest.

It is an eye-opening exhibition that fuses social critique with colourful wit and pun.

Born in 1967, Shepherd Mahufe is an extraordinary Zimbabwean artist, who trained under Helen Liros. He has taken part in numerous international and regional exhibitions. This show is a rare solo outing

for the artist who illustrates his diversity.

● *Dr Tony Monda holds a PhD in Post-Modern Art Theory and a Doctorate in Business Administration (DBA) in Post-Colonial Art and Heritage Studies. He is also a practising artist, designer, art critic and corporate image consultant.*



Shepherd Mahufe