



**Dear residents of Johannesburg,**

It is both my privilege and responsibility to keep you informed about developments that shape our great city. This week, I want to address a monumental achievement in the restoration of the Johannesburg Art Gallery (JAG), a cultural treasure embodying our city's vibrant history. Beyond the restoration efforts, this journey has been a stark reminder of how political motives can distort the narrative. While we celebrate our progress, we must also confront those who choose to spread falsehoods to advance their own agendas.

The Johannesburg Development Agency has enlisted a heritage specialist to ensure the JAG's restoration adheres to the highest standards. With approval from the Provincial Heritage Resources Authority, we are now able to proceed with our restoration without delay. This is a testament not only to our commitment to preserving our heritage but also to upholding transparent governance amid unwarranted criticism. Despite attempts by some to undermine our efforts and claim that our city's cherished art collection was compromised, let me make it abundantly clear: the art was safe.

Those who spread alarming rhetoric about missing artworks aimed solely to create chaos and divert attention from the real issues facing our city. Their tactics reveal a desperate need to sow discord for political gain. The truth has unequivocally prevailed. In an alarming display of partisanship, disinformation regarding the safety of the JAG's collection regrettably gained traction. A total of 145 artworks that were temporarily loaned to South Korea have returned safely, dispelling unfounded claims of theft and negligence.

It's time for us all to reject divisive political rhetoric and unite in celebrating our achievements. To protect our precious collection during renovations, we have established state-of-the-art temporary facilities at

key cultural sites. These facilities not only comply with national standards but also symbolise our city's commitment to exemplary governance. Sceptics will soon have their opportunity to inspect these locations, a move that underscores our dedication to transparency and accountability.

Throughout this period of restoration, we are determined to keep the JAG alive and vibrant. Public exhibitions and educational programmes will continue throughout Johannesburg, showcasing not only our art but also our resilience as a city. During a time when misinformation can spread easily, we remain steadfast in providing access to the JAG's paper collection at the Johannesburg City Library.

Our city is gaining international recognition. In discussions with the French Ambassador, we have established potential collaborations that highlight the value of our cultural institutions. Additionally, in partnership with Standard Bank, we will exhibit the 145 artworks during the G20 Summit, positioning Johannesburg as a beacon of artistic excellence on the global stage. We stand ready to host this significant event, showcasing our city's ability to thrive amid challenges and to celebrate our diverse heritage.

The formation of the Art Gallery Committee, which includes vital representatives from national government and civil society, speaks volumes about our collaborative approach. We are revitalising trust and cooperation while ensuring that political motivations do not derail our mission. In this spirit of collaboration, we plan to convene a seminar that brings together experts, artists, and community members to co-create a sustainable vision for the JAG's future.

Johannesburg, thank you for standing firm amidst the turbulence. Your support reinforces our resolve to move forward with integrity and purpose. As we navigate this journey together, let us be vigilant against divisive rhetoric and focus on fostering a united community that values truth and progress. We will continue to rise above the noise and cultivate an environment where culture and creativity flourish uninterrupted.

Until Next Time,  
Cllr Dada Morero, Executive Mayor of Johannesburg

*Until next time,*

**Johannesburg Executive Mayor Councillor Sello Dada Morero**