



STYLISTED MOTIF: Brett Murray's *Rainbow over Nkandla* is part of a group show at the Stevenson Gallery in Joburg.

Artist Murray makes a dig at Zuma's Nkandla home

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CONTROVERSIAL artist Brett Murray has delivered another barbed comment about President Jacob Zuma's conduct. This time the focus of a new artwork is Nkandla, Zuma's sprawling rural home in KwaZulu-Natal that has been the subject of much controversy this week since the government investigation revealed that the state paid more than R206 million for the upgrade of the property.

Dubbed the *Rainbow over Nkandla*, this new oil painting is a figurative depiction of Zuma's rural family residence. The artwork went on display at a group show called *The Loom of the Land* at the Stevenson Gallery in Joburg last week, proving that Murray hasn't lost his taste for political satire.

The date of the work suggests Murray started it last year and it is clearly based on a photographic source of the president's home. Murray's satirical flourish is a

stylised rainbow in the sky above the home. The rainbow presciently mirrors the government's attempts to "paint a pretty picture", or put a positive spin, on the controversy surrounding public funds spent on developing this property. This stylised motif also evokes the "rainbow nation" phrase, poking fun at the falsehood of this ideal post-apartheid society. The artwork is part of a series that is amusingly dubbed *Made in China*.

When Brett Murray's artwork *Dissent*, a large scripto-visual work presenting the word "Silence", went on display at the Joburg Art Fair last year in September, it created the impression that the president and the ruling party's severe criticism over the controversial portrait of president dubbed *The Spear (of the Nation)* had encouraged the artist to censor himself. Threats were made on the artist's life, the Goodman Gallery, where the work was on display, was forced to close its doors, the president made an appeal to the

court, though he dropped the action, and Gwede Mantashe and other ANC stalwarts addressed a large gathering of protesters outside the gallery. At the time some commentators suggested that the gallery and the artist had been bullied by the ruling party.

It was, therefore, assumed Murray might desist from making controversial statements about the president or the government. This new artwork might not attract the same outcry as *The Spear*, and it is, perhaps, a more tasteful if not sedate and understated dig at the president, but it does suggest Murray intends to continue to comment on political events and the president.

Loom of the Land is curated by artist Anton Kannemeyer, who, like Murray, is also known for his political satire. The exhibition also shows works by Titus Matiyane, Zanele Muholi, Deborah Poynton and David Goldblatt. It closes on March 8.