

Maropeng welcomes the iconic Long March to Freedom exhibition

Cradle of Humankind — The National Heritage Monument and the Long March to Freedom exhibition has been under development and positioned as a leading South African heritage tourism attraction since 2011.

The Long March to Freedom is the largest exhibition of representational bronze sculptures anywhere in the world. The bronzes and all rights are owned by the non-profit National Heritage Project Company (NHPC).

The exhibition has an estimated value of R100 million.

Dali Tambo, CEO of the NHPC and originator of the concept of the National Heritage Monument, has devoted seven years to seeking funding and support, and leading a professional team to establish what is a world first in presenting the history of a country, and which already enjoys national and international acclaim.

Previously located at the Fountains Valley Resort, City of Tshwane, the exhibition attracted hundreds of visitors.

The project development over the years has created employment and training opportunities for hundreds of people. The project has been endorsed by the Presidency; The Gauteng Office of The Premier; the Departments of Arts and Culture; Tourism; Education; Communication and Public Works and the Dti.

A new agreement between Maropeng, the Official Visitor Centre for The Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Site and the directors of the NHPC sees the installation of the 96 bronze statues making up the exhibition moving to Maropeng. This installation

began in December and was completed on 1 February.

The exhibition will remain at Maropeng for six months.

The Cradle of Humankind World Heritage site is both an area of unrivalled scientific discovery and one of the primary tourism offerings of Gauteng. As a World Heritage Site, it has a simple message to the human race: no matter what our differences may be – whether it be race, or colour or creed – the most fundamental thing about the human species is the undeniable scientific fact that we are one. That we are bound together by a common ancestry. That we share a common present and are bound together in a common future.

The arrival of the exhibition is an ode to the veterans of the struggle who fought against the injustices of an apartheid-governed old South Africa. As the beholder experiences the amalgamation of pure talent in art portraying a story of strength and courage, they are taken on a journey into a bright and transforming future.

The exhibition represents the extraordinary journey of the South African people in their struggle for freedom and democracy. It was a struggle that was in no way isolated. It relied on a range of contacts and connections across the globe. It reflects the inter-connected nature of the human spirit.

It represents the unquenchable desire of our species to be free.

It showcases the struggle of the individual against the backdrop of a collective narrative which fought tirelessly against tyranny and oppression.