Chapungu Cultural Arts Centre at Centerra

Loveland, Colorado, USA
Like the lone tree in an African Savanna, this centre will be a destination for all.
Over the past 40 years, a group of very special artists from Zimbabwe have exhibited their work in many of the world’s most beautiful parks and gardens. Now, this amazing collection is finding a permanent home in Loveland, Colorado, considered by many to be the sculpture capital of North America. A unique partnership between the Chapungu Sculpture Park of Harare, Zimbabwe, McWhinney Enterprises, developer of Centerra, and the community of Loveland, Colorado, provides an amazing gift by establishing the Chapungu Sculpture Park at Centerra. The 26 acre park will contain a permanent, rotating exhibition of some of the world’s most renowned stone sculptors. These remarkable works of art are inspired by the religion, mythology, nature, and culture of Zimbabwe.

The centerpiece of the park will be the Chapungu Cultural Arts Centre. The Centre’s mission will support, encourage and promote the visual and performing artists of Africa, with emphasis on the stone sculptors, painters, performing artists, writers, poets, and cultural performers of Zimbabwe. This is the story of the Chapungu Cultural Arts Centre and the Chapungu Sculpture Park at Centerra.
in a Colorado landscape...
The multi-layered springstone that Chapungu artists use to create their sculptures will be the inspiration for materials used in the Centre’s construction. When polished, this rough, gray-colored stone becomes smooth black, revealing a deeper natural beauty. The stone will transition in layers from rough to smooth, as the walls progress around the perimeter of the building. Light will flow through the layers, creating harmony between the interior space and natural environment beyond.

“Chapungu” is an ancient Shona name for the Bateleur eagle, a messenger bird of great presence representing a protective spirit and good omen to the early people of Africa. This presence will be emulated in the architecture and space of the Cultural Arts Centre. Like wings of a bird, encompassing walls will embrace visitors within, while the roof will soar over the great lawn, much like the head of the eagle who is keeping watch over the sculpture park below. Light will flow into the gallery’s rotunda, saturating sculptures and people in natural light and summoning their spirit to the heavens.
chose the word ‘Chapungu’ because the Chapungu - the Bateleur eagle - has such significance in Shona Culture. It is a messenger of the gods, a protective spirit and a good omen and we wished Chapungu Sculpture Park to be a good omen for the art and the sculptors of Zimbabwe.”

- Roy Guthrie, Director- Chapungu Sculpture Park and Gallery
Rising above an orchard, the iconic form of the Cultural Arts Centre will be a visible landmark, serving as a constant point of reference within the Park. A wandering trail system will wind through an expressive landscape of native grasses, flowing water, open lawn, meadows, and shaded outdoor spaces under ancient cottonwoods. The spaces will be tranquil and unassuming -- a perfect setting for the powerful and expressive hand carved stone sculpture of Chapungu. The sculptures will be placed informally and given space to tell a story. These narrations will be moving depictions of the sculptors’ culture and a commentary on social matters.
The Park will also include many other features that educate and encourage family interaction and celebration. An outdoor performance stage and open lawn will provide for performances and large community gatherings. An open-air African village will offer a glimpse into rural African life. At the dramatic waterfall, inspired by Zimbabwe’s Victoria Falls, children and parents will play in the water. They can also discover Zimbabwe on the large stone map of Africa. Just as children are the center of the African family, the heart of the park is designed to embrace and delight children.
The Chapungu Cultural Arts Centre will not only serve as a home to the incredible works of African sculptors, but will also be hub for arts education. The lower level of the Centre will house a theater for educational & theatrical performances to the public. Also on this level, will be a small classroom and indoor workshop where Chapungu artists will teach stone sculpting and art classes. Adjacent to these spaces is an outdoor plaza where these classes can spill out to the great lawn, where the sculpture park becomes a source of inspiration.
As a multi-level facility, this Centre will serve many functions. The lower level will be a place for education and performances, teaching visitors about Africa and the art of Chapungu. On the main level, a gallery will feature Chapungu works, a small café, and a gift shop. All spaces will offer dramatic views overlooking the great lawn and Sculpture Park. The main level gallery will have an incredible two-story rotunda open to the upper level, with natural light pouring into this space from skylights above. The upper level will contain offices, a library, conference room, and a community room for visitors and local residents. All of these upper level spaces will be open to the gallery below and have views over the great lawn and sculpture park.
Chapungu Sculpture Park was established by Roy Guthrie in Harare, Zimbabwe in 1970 as the Gallery Shona Sculpture and moved to its present park location in 1985. Initially, the primary role of the Park was to keep artists working through support, encouragement, and the purchase of works for possible future exposure. Upon independence from the former rulers of Rhodesia, exhibitions began world wide. This reestablished the credibility of Chapungu sculpture as a valid contemporary art form -- an art that is inspired by deep cultural roots and that depicts a culture in stone. Over time, a strong following of enthusiastic Chapungu sculpture collectors and promoters evolved. In 2001, Chapungu first came to the United States, via a series of exhibitions featured in botanical gardens across the country. While searching for a North American base of operations, the group established a relationship with the arts community in Loveland, home of the largest juried sculpture show in North America, and the biggest concentration of brass foundries in the US devoted to sculpture. McWhinney Enterprises, a long-time supporter of the arts and other aspects of the Loveland community, offered a prominent park site in Centerra for the new home of the Chapungu Cultural Arts Centre. Centerra is the leading master planned, mixed-use community in Northern Colorado, and is fast becoming the region’s destination center. At over 3,000 acres, Centerra provides all of the amenities and resources required for a complete and sustainable community, as well as an integral part of the City of Loveland. A short drive from Denver International Airport, and adjacent to the Fort Collins/Loveland Airport, Centerra is easily accessible to national and international visitors. The six districts of Centerra are characterized by a compact and integrated pattern of land uses and development, strong pedestrian connections, a range of housing opportunities within close proximity to jobs, shopping, entertainment, and social gathering places, connected by a cohesive park and open space system.
As the Chapungu Cultural Arts Centre embarks on its new journey in Northern Colorado, it has established a multi-faceted mission:

To support, encourage and promote the visual and performing artists of Africa, with emphasis on the stone sculptors, painters, performing artists, writers, poets and cultural performers of Zimbabwe.

To serve the communities of Northern Colorado by providing a world class facility devoted to the artists of Africa and to contribute to the reputation of the City of Loveland as an important North American Arts Venue.

Specifically to contribute to the children of Colorado through tours of the Sculpture Park and Culture Centre, special cultural performances, story telling, art workshops and through outreach programmes to schools. Also to facilitate contact between local children and children of Africa.

Through workshops, lectures, slide shows and tours to introduce a culture of hand made stone sculpture and to reach out to less advantaged communities by offering free workshops and training.

To interact with local art communities in all possible ways but particularly by providing an enlightening and uplifting artistic environment.

To create an awareness of the validity of contemporary African artists and the depth of their cultures and in so doing work against the negative image of Africa—providing a basis of pride for North American peoples of African descent.
Become a Friend of Chapungu!

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