

OR TAMBO BUST UNVEILING SPEECH

08 December 2017

Faculty of Law - O.R. Tambo Law Library

Dear Honoured Guests, Family Members, Members of the University Executive, Deans, Heads of Department, Colleagues and Friends,

The name, Oliver Reginald Tambo undoubtedly stirs up a wide range of emotions and perceptions. But arguably the greatest aspect of his life that will stand the test of time is his everlasting legacy as one of the seminal figures in our history. As an anniversary year, 2017 has certainly seen its fair share of this legacy being reinvigorated and re-contemplated by celebrating him as an icon whose ideologies and beliefs still ring loud and relevant today as it did during his lifetime.

As we honour him today as a stalwart of the liberation struggle, we also re-envision him as a true vanguard of the arts. As a performing artist myself, I am acutely cognisant and aware of OR's musical prowess. His passion for choral music in particular is legendary. His compositions for choir remain pillars of motivation that were utilised and performed during the difficult years of forced separation and served as inspiration for the freedom fighters of the time.

The bust that we will unveil today is a product of one of South Africa's own iconic sculptors, Phil Minnaar, who passed away in 2014. Minnaar's greatest contribution over a quarter of a century was most likely the wide range of celebrities that he sculpted during his active years. He is world-renowned for his monumental works such as those at Sol Kerzner's Lost City, the monument of King Nyabela of the Ndebele, and King Malebogo's statue in Blouberg. Furthermore, only recently his sculpture of Walter Sisulu was erected at the Sisulu Botanical Gardens. Other well-known works include portrait busts of General Horatio Herbert Kitchener, Sir Redvers Buller and Lord Frederick Sleigh Roberts, augmenting the already existing series of iconic busts. Mrs. Ria Minnaar, the widow of Phil Minnaar, donated the largest part of his unique collection of fibre-glass sculptures to the Heritage Foundation. It is during this time that the University of Pretoria decided to acquire three busts from the collection, that of Chief Albert Luthuli, President Nelson Mandela, and of course, OR Tambo. The bust that will be unveiled today was first created in 1994. In 2006, it was acquired by the Airports Company of South Africa when commissions were requested after the decision was taken to rename the Johannesburg International Airport to the OR Tambo International Airport.

Therefore, on behalf of my colleagues, it is indeed a pleasure and honour for us as the Department of UP Arts to donate this artwork to the Faculty of Law.

For us as a University and UP Arts, it is appropriate for us to honour OR Tambo through the medium of this art form, namely a sculpture – an art form that will not only ensure that his physical facial attributes and warm demeanour are edged in the minds of young pursuers of knowledge on this campus for years to come, but to be visible in a faculty and study field that he personally cherished and championed: That we are all equal before the law.

Thank you.

Prof Theo van Wyk

HOD: UP Arts