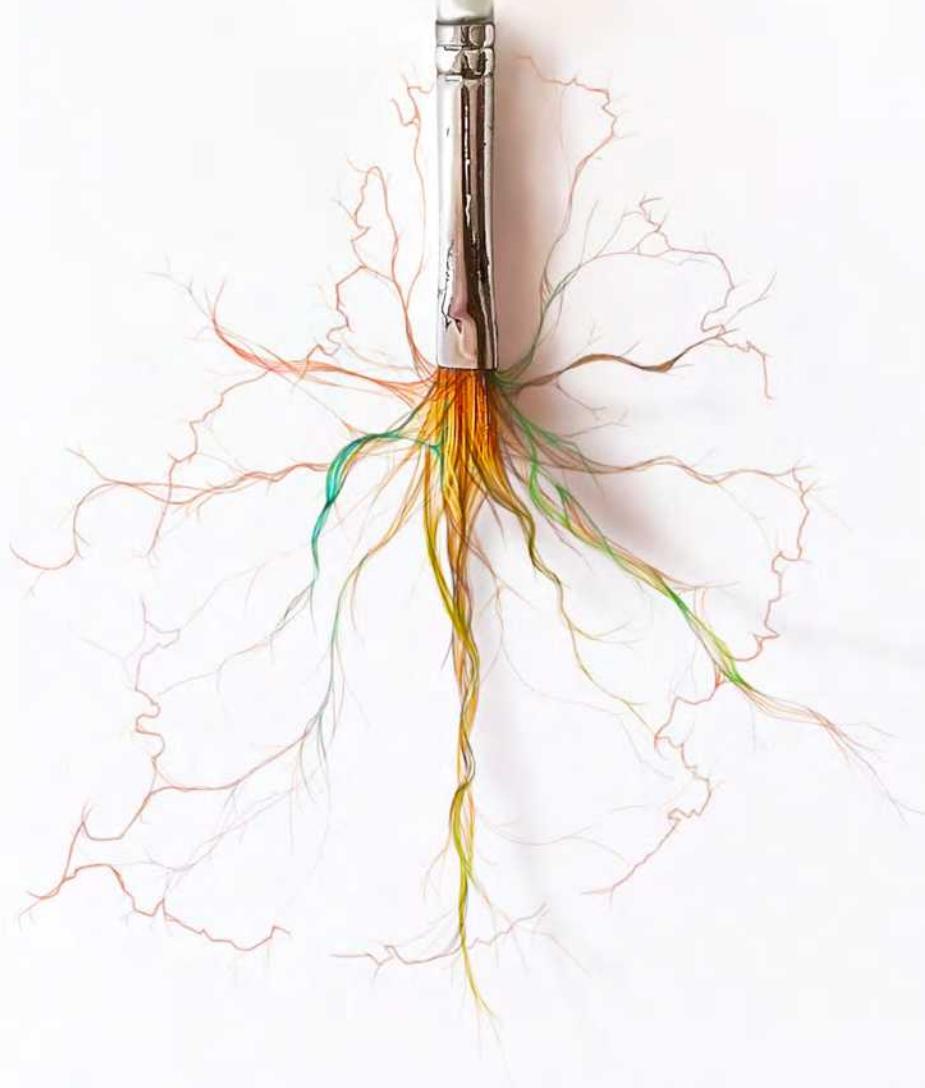


# MOTHERLAND



PAINTINGS OF MAURITIUS BY ROBERT MALHERBE

# ROBERT MALHERBE



PHOTO: JENNI CARTER

Painting for me has always been a visual memorial to our sensations. I left Mauritius a boy of 7, and I'm now returning as an artist at age 54. I felt I was always an artist or painter, and as a child, I wanted to transform my sensations or experiences into paintings. But I did not have sufficient knowledge or skill. This is something I've had to teach myself, and it took many years. The deep visual impressions left on me in the first 7 years of my life in Mauritius has had a permanent effect on my sensibilities, and I think the way I use colour. The most exciting part of this return visit is to again see the colours, forms and character of Mauritius but through older eyes, now more skilled enough to make something of it.

***Robert Malherbe***

## High Commissioner's Foreword

The relationship between Australia and Mauritius is founded on shared values and common interests as Partners in the Indian Ocean. Our two countries have a long history of people-to-people links with diverse, tolerant and multicultural communities a feature of our vibrant democracies.

The celebration of 50 years of diplomatic relations between Australia and Mauritius in 2020 provides a unique platform to showcase these common ties.

The Australian High Commission is delighted to feature the Mauritian diaspora through this *Motherland* exhibition.

There has been a long history of movement - goods, services and people - between our countries. Mauritians travelled to Australia as early prospectors to Victoria's goldfields and skilled sugar workers significantly contributed to Queensland's sugar industry. Today, Australia is home to one of the largest Mauritian diaspora in the world, some 30,000 according to latest Census figures. They are making important contributions to the economic development of both Australia and Mauritius across many sectors. The Australian Government considers the country's cultural diversity as one of its greatest national strengths and a core part of its national identity.

The High Commission is proud to support the 2018 Archibald Prize Finalist and 2019 Wynne Landscape Prize Finalist, Robert Malherbe, on his return visit to Mauritius after 36 years to produce the *Motherland* exhibition - a celebration of our diaspora links and the diversity of Mauritius and its people.

I congratulate Mr Malherbe on his stunning depictions of the rich and diverse landscapes of Mauritius – capturing the historical Baie du Cap where Matthew Flinders landed in his vessel *Cumberland* after circumnavigating and mapping Australia in 1803; floral depictions from the oldest botanical garden in the Southern Hemisphere at Pamplémousses where the unique Australian indigenous Wollemi Pine also grows; and the majestic UNESCO World Heritage Le Morne mountain where slaves were known to shelter. The exhibition also features the many faces of the population that make up this rainbow nation. *Motherland* was painted in-situ during Robert's visit to Mauritius in January this year.

I hope you enjoy this exhibition, inspired to travel and discover the richness of Mauritius and the warmth of its people as seen through the eyes of one of its sons, Robert Malherbe, the boy from Rose-Hill.

**Jenny Dee**  
**Australian High Commissioner to Mauritius**  
**January 2020**

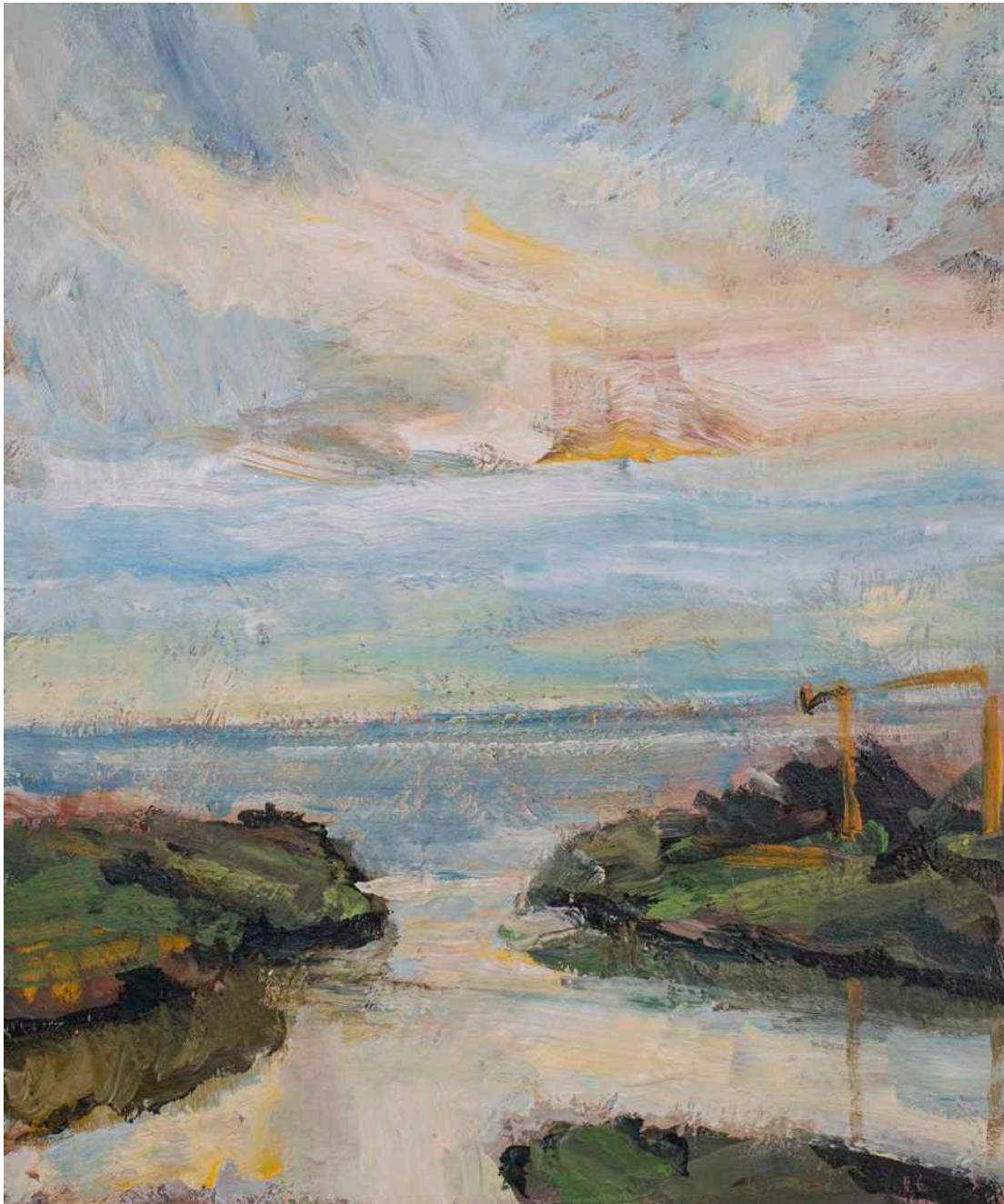
Robert Malherbe's long and self-imposed apprenticeship, driven by his passion for painting is paying off. The artist's training has been the first-hand contemplation of master works in the galleries of Europe, and has provided him with invaluable insights into the craft of painting that he now determinedly applies to his own practice. Looking to predecessors like Corot, Constable and Manet, Malherbe aims to represent the essential truth of his subject, and to realise the inherent relationships between the subject, the artist and the viewer.

Malherbe primarily works 'alla prima', which is a direct painting technique where a work is completed in one session, often by applying wet paint in layers. He thereby eschews the convenience of photography, instead working from life to capture the subtle revelations and feelings of immediacy imparted by the painted or drawn gesture; from the sensuality of the natural environment to the intimate landscape of the human form.

With confident brushstrokes and a reductive approach to colour, Malherbe extols the simple perfection of a moment and offers it for our contemplation.

Malherbe emigrated to Australia from Mauritius as a young boy. He worked as an animator before spending a decade traveling and living in Europe. Malherbe was awarded the NSW Parliament Plein Air Painting Prize (2016) and won the Manning Art Prize (2015). He has exhibited extensively in Australia and has been a regular finalist in prestigious prizes, including the Archibald, Wynne and Mosman Art Prizes.

***Jan Murphy Gallery***



*Baie du Tombeau, 2020*  
Acrylic on Board  
60 x 50 cm



*Julie*, 2020  
Acrylic on Board  
50 x 40 cm



*Le Pouce, view from Eureka House, 2020*  
Acrylic on linen  
50 x 60 cm



*Eureka House, 2020*  
Acrylic on Board  
50 x 60 cm



*Swell*, 2020  
Acrylic on Board  
50 x 40 cm



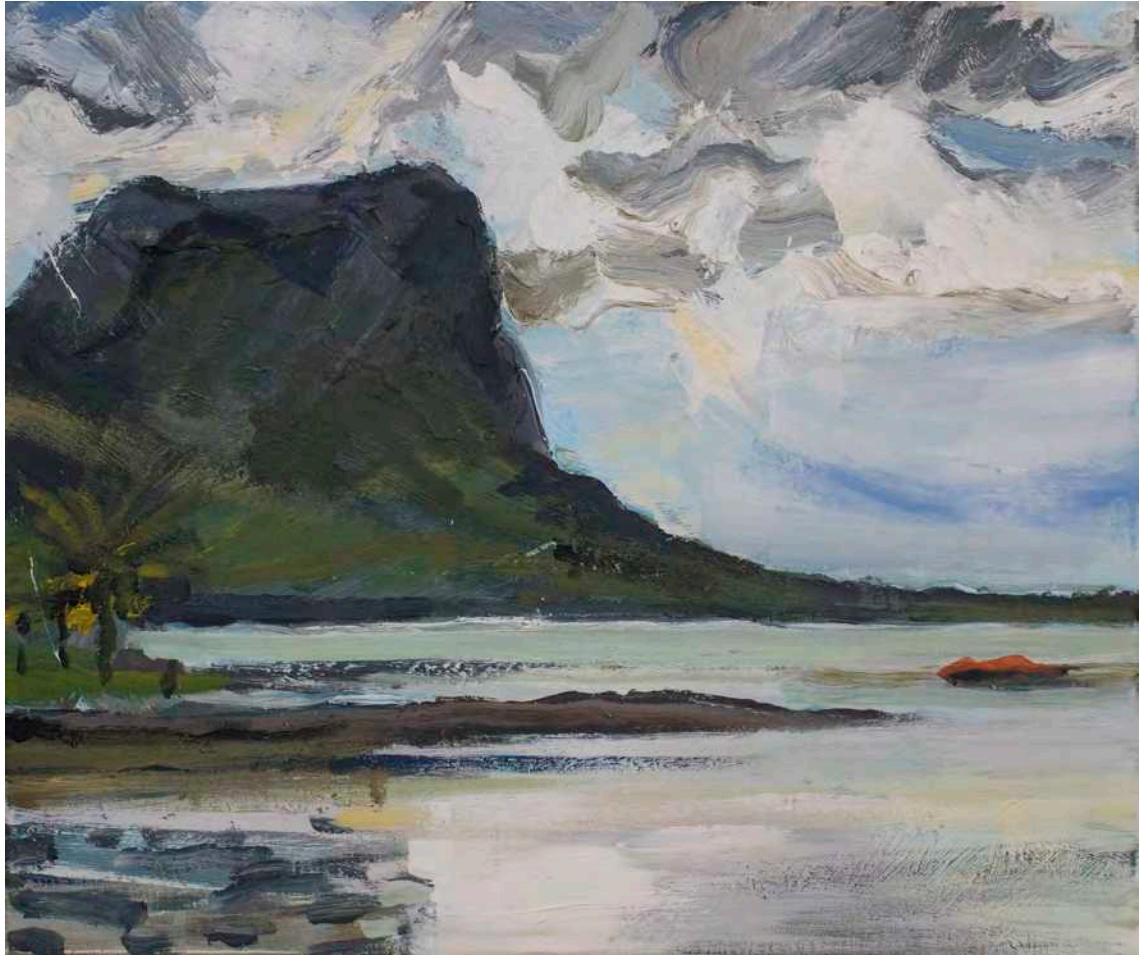
*Pieter Both Mountain, 2020*  
Acrylic on Linen  
50 x 60 cm



*Sarosh*, 2020  
Acrylic on Board  
50 x 40 cm



*View of Port Louis from La Citadelle, 2020*  
Acrylic on Board  
70 x 60 cm



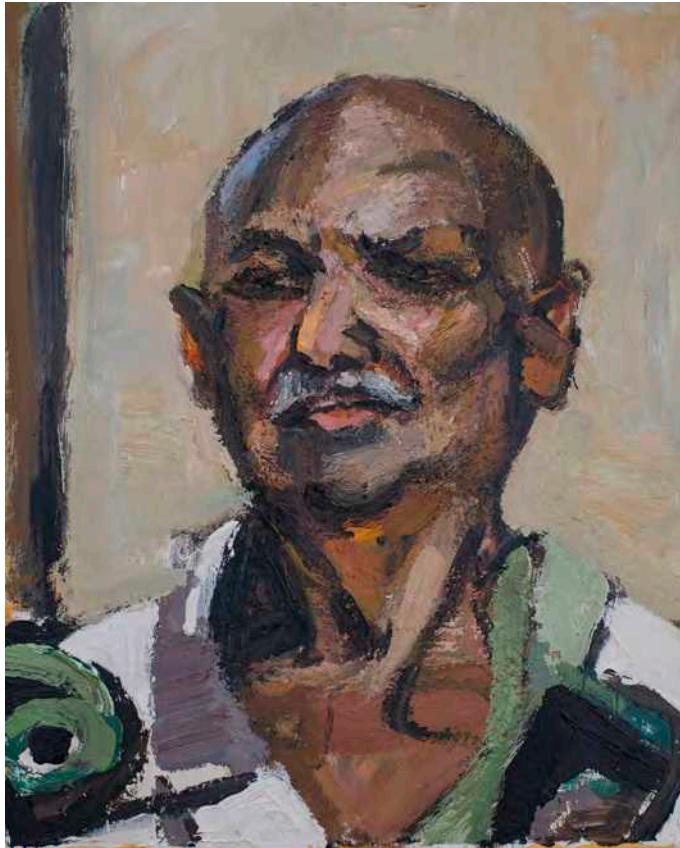
*Le Morne*, 2020  
Acrylic on Linen  
50 x 60 cm



*View from Bois Cheri, 2020*  
Acrylic on Board  
60 x 70 cm



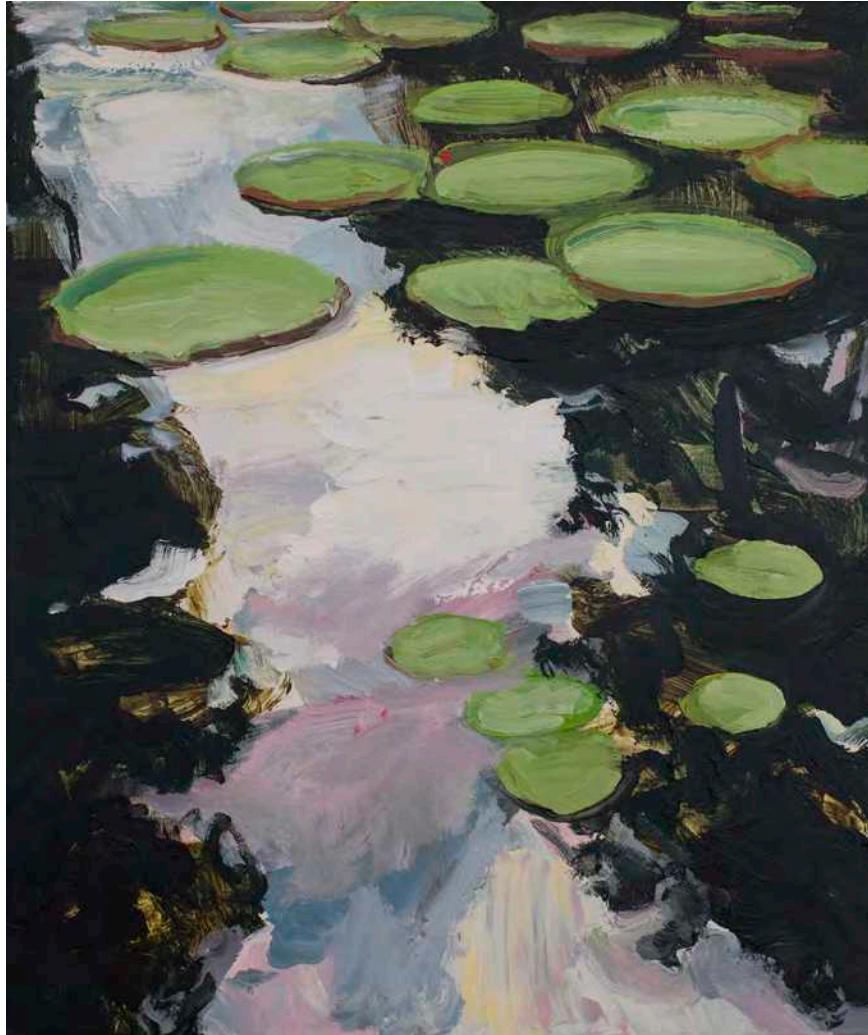
*Jean-Yves*, 2020  
Acrylic on Board  
50 x 40 cm



*Ben*, 2020  
Acrylic on Board  
50 x 40 cm



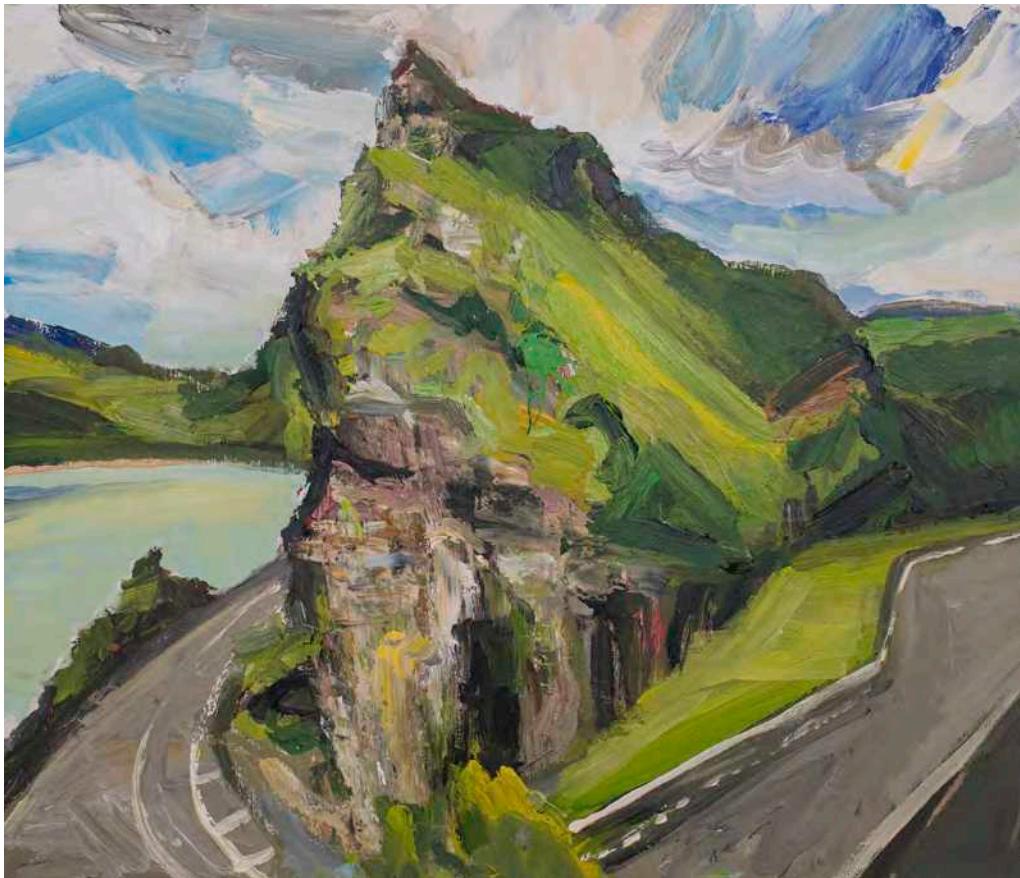
*White Lotus at Pamplermousses Gardens, 2020*  
Acrylic on Linen  
60 x 50 cm



*Water Lilies at Pamplémousses Gardens, 2020*  
Acrylic on Linen  
60 x 50 cm



*Beach at Le Morne, 2020*  
Acrylic on Linen  
50 x 60 cm



*Baie du Cap*, 2020  
Acrylic on Board  
60 x 70 cm

### **Acknowledgements**

The Australian High Commission would like to thank Robert Malherbe for his enthusiasm on this project and for sharing his journey “home” so generously with us. We also thank his partner, Dana Rayson, and Jan Murphy Gallery, for their invaluable support.

Thanks also to our many partners and sponsors including the Mauritian Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage, Krishna Luchoomun from pARTage, Curtin Mauritius intern, Poonesh Seeshaye, who designed the cover and Alicia Maurel and Laetitia Lor from The Third Dot for curation.

Robert Malherbe would like to dedicate this exhibition to the memory of Ann.



# MOTHERLAND

**50**  
YEARS  
DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS  
1970 - 2020



**AUSTRALIA & MAURITIUS**

PARTNERS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

