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12-2018

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WCU Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology's New Exhibit Featuring Beautiful Rwanda

By Laura Di Giovine, Content Coordinator for *West Chester Living* magazine

Earlier this year, West Chester University's Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology previewed its newest exhibit, *Rwanda Nziza: Beautiful Rwanda*, which will be on display until February 2019.

The museum celebrated its 10th student co-curated exhibit, as well as the formal opening of the Shinehouse Gishwati Research Station, WCU's new primate research station at Gishwati National Park in Rwanda. Although many people may associate Rwanda with its troubled colonial past and devastating genocide in the late 1990s, this museum exhibit focuses on the country's diversity in its natural and cultural forms, the vitality of its people, and its continued resilience as the nation increasingly opens up to the world stage. Inspired by the new, post-conflict national anthem, *Rwanda Nziza* ("Beautiful Rwanda"), which specifically talks about the country's rich natural beauty, "invaluable heritage" and "common culture," the exhibition is divided into three major areas that each explore Rwanda in a broader global context: nature and the primate research that is conducted at WCU's new field station; genocide and post-genocide unity; and the effect of globalization on daily life—from laws dealing with second-hand clothing to the cultivation of coffee and tea for global markets,



to radical changes in the ways in which children are educated to meet global demands.

Led by West Chester University anthropologist and museum director Dr. Michael A. Di Giovine, a specialist in museum and heritage studies, and mentored by an interdisciplinary group of expert scholars from across the campus community, 22 students co-curated this ambitious exhibit from start to finish as their practicum in their Museum Techniques class. This also marks the museum's collaboration with the Delaware Museum of Natural History, whose loans of several animal specimens are on display.

The exhibition features the award-winning mixed media art installation, *800,000: Acknowledge, Remember, Renew*, by artist William Snyder III, which was previously exhibited at the United Nations in July 2014.

Among the nearly 100 artifacts on display are a selection of photographs from artist Billy Ndengeyingo's *Window Shopping: Learning from Kigali, Rwanda*, and exquisite embroideries of daily life scenes woven by genocide survivors, on loan from NJ-based NGO and museum, Pax Rwanda. The exhibit is sponsored in part by C and R Glass, Inc. and the Chester County Historical Society.

The museum is free and open to the public Monday-Friday, from 9AM to 4:30PM. For more information, visit www.wcupa.edu/museum



Rwandan art works captivate visitors to the WCU exhibit



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