

MOZAMBIQUE IN LONDON

ART'S THE LANGUAGE

Now At.
Jly '81

"MODERN ART from Mozambique." That was the theme of an exhibition last month at the Centre for Learning Resources in London. This is the first time that art from an essentially socialist African country has been made available through an educational facility, as opposed to the traditional art gallery.

Divided between several categories of Makonde sculpture and paintings, the exhibition demonstrated the extent to which contemporary art in Mozambique has drawn inspiration both from that country's struggle for national liberation, as well as from the general struggle throughout Africa since the wave of independence. **p. 58**

Makonde sculpture has long been known for its depiction of the metaphysical world in the form of the *Shetvani*, or spirit. But more recently it has gone through a politicisation process in part inspired by the concept of Ujamaa in Tanzania, which produced a wealth of sculptures in the early sixties suggesting

the symbol of nationhood in the form of compact clusters of bodies clinging to a solitary essence, and in part by the nature of Mozambique's struggle against the Portuguese. Such sculptures as that of a woman carrying hand grenades, as opposed to the customary calabash, or of a man literally burdened with the weight of a Portuguese soldier on his back, reflect the changing mood and style in Makonde plastic arts.

Painting as a form of artistic expression has a far less entrenched tradition in Mozambican society. Yet the genesis of a tradition has not meant a take-off from Western art, but rather is derived from the type of imagery contained in traditional Makonde sculpture. Like the best in modern Makonde sculpture, modern Mozambican painting is essentially a cross between literal and figurative images.

Moises Simbine's depiction of a typical village meeting soon after independence is a good example of the new school ●



Sculpture's pride