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A DAY OF TWO ART EXHIBITIONS AND A FINANCE SECTOR SPEECH

On the day following Gibraltar Day in London, the Chief Minister sandwiched a finance sector speech in between two art exhibitions.

After a couple of breakfast-time meetings, Mr Picardo opened his first art exhibition of the day, the 'Useless Mouths' exhibition at Gibraltar House.

The exhibition is the brain-child of Arturo Casciaro, a Gibraltarian now living in UK. Each exhibit is in the format of a book - but artists from around the world have approached this format in many different ways. 'The original inspiration came from my Hispanic and Latin American friends,' said Arturo. 'There were about 60 of them in my network. I sent each of them one of my "art books" and they then sent me theirs. And everyone who sent me a piece has had it included in the exhibition. By their very nature, books are personal and intimate - and they are easy to send through the post'

The exhibition's title comes from the idea that art has no practical purpose. 'So, art is useless,' claims Arturo. 'As soon as art becomes useful then it ceases to be art.'

The Chief Minister then moved on to the Merchant Taylor's Hall in the City of London where, he gave the opening address to a large audience at a Fund Industry and Asset Management seminar arranged by the Gibraltar Fund Investment Association. Minister for Financial Services, the Hon Gilbert Licudi, had originally planned to open the seminar but, as he was attending the European iGaming Congress in Barcelona, the Chief Minister stepped in to take his place.

Finally, the Chief Minister moved on to open his second art exhibition of the day. At the exclusive Clarendon Fine Arts gallery in Mayfair, around 300 people attended a launch party, many of them the gallery's regular clients. All 25 exhibits on display were the work of Gibraltarian artists and had been selected from an original entry of over 180 pieces.

'We were very grateful for the help of the Ministry of Culture when we faced the task of moving pictures and sculpture from Gibraltar to London,' said Rachel Simkiss from the gallery. 'We hope that most of the pieces will be sold this week so perhaps many of them will remain in London.'

The other key figure behind the exhibition is Peter Canessa from Gibraltar House. 'I'm extremely proud to see Gibraltarian art in one of the top galleries in Mayfair, a gallery that provides the art work for Cunard's famous cruise liners, such as the QE2,' said Peter. 'For Gibraltar to have hanging space here is a real coup.'

Most of the artists were present at the opening of the exhibition. One of them, Christian Hook said, 'I haven't been here before and as I walked up the street and saw other galleries exhibiting major works from many of the world's top artists, I realised how incredible this was. I am so grateful to the Ministry of Culture and the Government for making it happen.'

In his opening address, Mr Picardo said that this exhibition, the first of its kind, was a huge step forward for Gibraltar's artists and would show that the Rock was not just about 'monkeys, financial services and border queues!'