

Fifteen years later his family moved to Zimbabwe, where his wife, Boniswa, was advised by the then director of the Zimbabwe Art Gallery, Christopher Till, to leave her private collection at the gallery for safekeeping.

Over time the painting began to deteriorate. Despite appeals by Till to the National Gallery in Cape Town, South Africa refused to assist in their restoration. It was left to Mrs Mvusi and ANC representatives in Zimbabwe to embark on a rescue mission, with the help of the then Soviet Union.

Eight years later, the magnificently restored paintings are back with their rightful owner. Their delayed return can only be ascribed to the vagaries of politics. Firstly, in 1986, the works were supposed to be taken to the ANC offices in Harare where they would be sent directly to the Soviet Union.

The night before their expected departure, the ANC offices were destroyed by a bomb. Miraculously, Mvusi's daughter Linda - now an employee with the Johannesburg City Council - had decided at the eleventh hour to take them home instead and then sent them on to Moscow.

Then followed an era of political turbulence in both South Africa and the Soviet Union. By 1988, Mrs Mvusi had no idea where or even whether the paintings had been restored.

She appealed to ANC President, the late Oliver Tambo, who personally undertook to find them, with the help of the Movement for Solidarity and Co-operation of the Afro-Asian people. He soon discovered that they were safely stored - and restored - in Moscow's Centre for Restoration.

Today they are at last receiving the acknowledgement they deserve.

□ The Mvusi family appeal to anyone who might know of or own a work by Selby Mvusi to contact the Johannesburg Art Gallery, so that a comprehensive catalogue of his works can be compiled for his major retrospective. Telephone Lesley Spiro at 725-3130.

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Zama Mvusi, the people's architect

Zama Coleridge Mvusi, who died last week after a short liver illness, was an outstanding architect and internationally renowned for his efforts to provide affordable housing for disadvantaged communities. He was 38.

Born in Brandfort in the Free State, Mvusi left apartheid South Africa with his family in 1961 when he was four years old.

He received a degree in architecture from the Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo and in 1986 received his M.Sc (Architecture) from a Cuban University.

He was head of the ANC's department of building and technical services and his present position involved managing the ANC property portfolio.

Mvusi is survived by his wife Zodwa (Dr Betty Beyers), his daughter and step-daughter.

A memorial service will be held at the Central Methodist Church in Smal Street today at noon. The funeral and burial service will take place on Saturday at the Mvusi homestead on the Diepkloof Farm in Umzimkulu in KwaZulu-Natal at 11am.