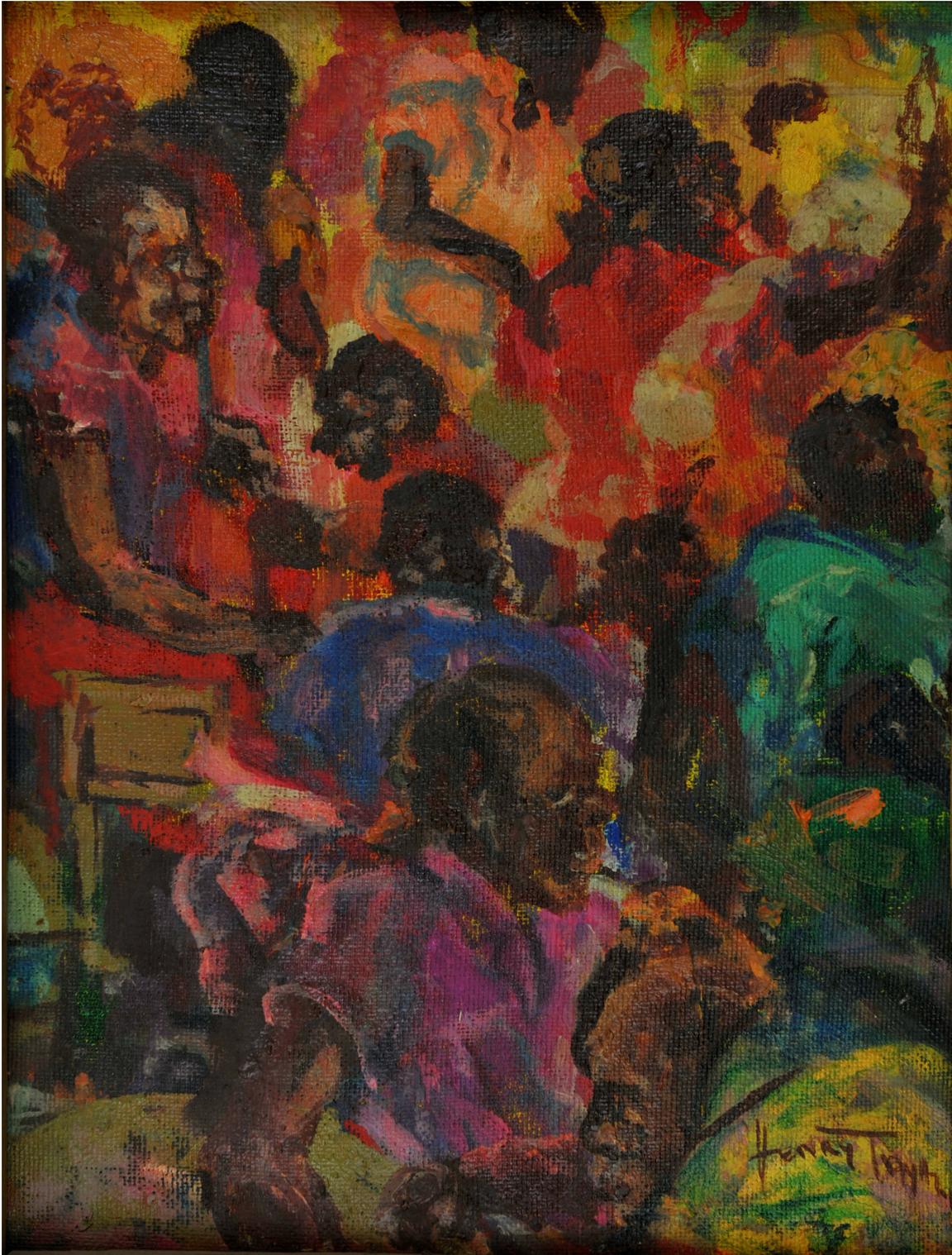


Henry Tayali, Title Unknown, c. 1972



P4-7 Pilot Learning Resource

About the artist

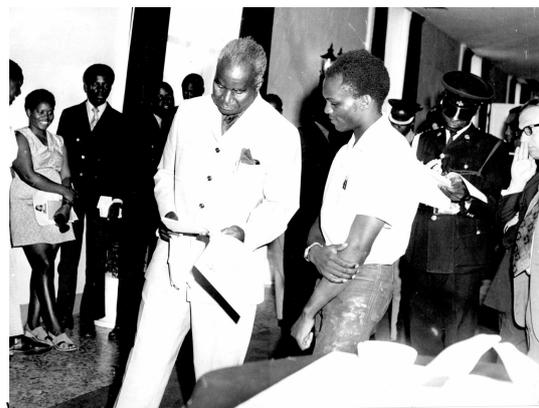
Henry was born in **1943** in a country called **Northern Rhodesia**. It was a part of the British Empire. It was a place of importance because the precious metal, copper, was found there. Henry was from a small town called **Serenje**.

When Henry was a boy, Northern Rhodesia changed a lot. After copper was discovered, it went from being a place of small villages, to a place of many cities. It was the life of the city that Henry was very interested in. He knew that not everyone had a good life in the city, and he wanted to use his art to make pictures of people's real lives.

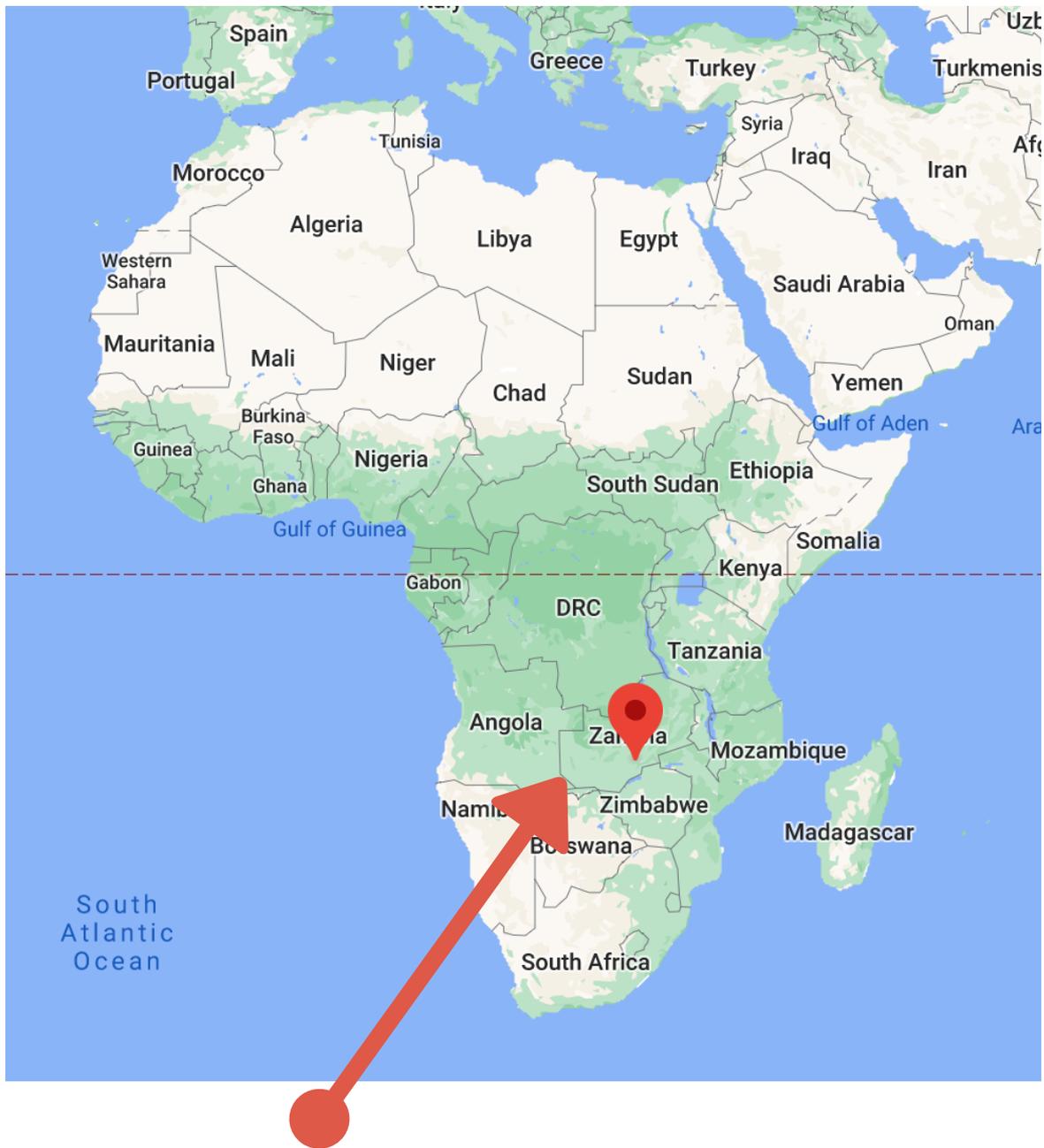
When Henry was a boy, Northern Rhodesia was a country in which Black African people did not have the same rights as the very small number of white Europeans who lived there. It took a lot of struggle and protest, but in **1964** Henry's fellow countrymen became the free citizens of the **Republic of Zambia**.

Henry was a talented artist. He held his first exhibition when he was 15. He went to Uganda and to Germany to study art.

Here is Henry as a young man with the leader of independent Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda.



Later, he came home to Zambia and was in charge of Zambia's museums. In Zambia today there is an important gallery called the Henry Tayali Gallery



This is Zambia on a map. It is a big country which is land locked. Can you see the countries that surround it?

The red spot shows you where the capital of Zambia, Lusaka is. Lusaka is a big city, and it is where Henry spent most of his time working as an artist. Here is a photo of the city skyline at night.



© By Lighton Phiri - <https://www.flickr.com/photos/lightonphiri/24170379690/in/dateposted-public/>, CC BY 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=46472840>

Some other examples of Henry's work:



Village Scene at Night, early 1960s
© Rhodrick Tayali



Bier Garten, 1971
© Rhodrick Tayali

As a young artist Henry was really interested in painting pictures that put the lives of individual people in the spotlight. Look at the painting on the left. **What do you notice? Does the house have electricity? Does this look like a rich family or a poor family? How does Henry show the family? What do you think the mother is thinking?**



On the Other Side of the Bar, 1970s
© Rhodrick Tayali

The print on the left and the one at the top right were made later. Henry became more interested in showing big groups and busy places. In *Bier Garten* there are hundreds of bodies. In *On The Other Side of the Bar* you can see one group at the front, but can see what has Henry done to the background? It has a scratchy pattern all over, which makes the room seem very busy. This is a **woodcut print**. Henry carved lines into a wood block, and then covered that block with black ink. He then pressed the block onto the paper. The white lines are where he carved. They are where the ink did not reach.

Looking closely at Henry's painting

Now that you have seen some examples of Henry's other work, what do you think this painting is about? Look at it up close, and then move slowly backwards. **Do you see different shapes and different colours?**

Up close it looks a bit messy, with lots of different colours all together. When you move away you can see that there is a group of people, all wearing different coloured clothes. This is a style of painting that is **neither realist** (it doesn't look just like reality) nor is it **fully abstract** (it isn't completely removed from the real, lived world). It is somewhere in between. Henry depicts a real place with real people, but in a way that tries to capture some of the things we can't see with our eyes, but we can feel: the energy and movement of the place, and the feelings of the people.

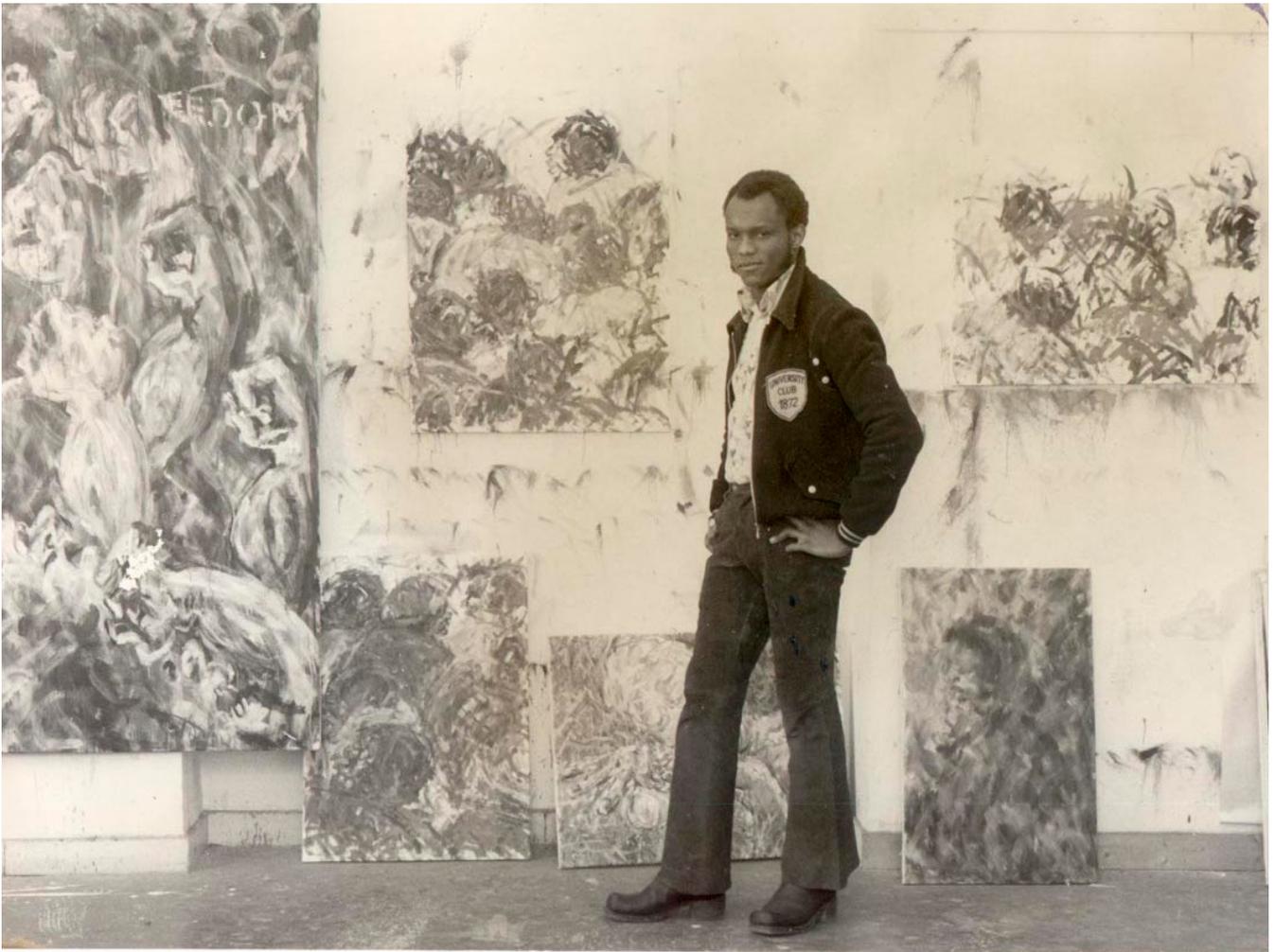
What are some of the ways that Henry has shown different people?

Do some of them look old and some of them young? Can you see some faces better than others? Can you get any idea about how the people feel? Do they look happy or sad?

Having started his career as an artist making pictures of people who were poor, Henry later became very interested in the places where people went after a hard day of work: cafes and bars. He liked to paint and draw large crowds of workers relaxing, reflecting and, sometimes, concocting plans. If you look back at 'On the Other Side of the Bar', it could show a group either playing a game or hatching a plan. Henry leaves these things open to us to decide. Is there some of that mystery in the painting you are studying?

This painting travelled to Argyll from Lusaka. Sadly, we have lost the title of the work. We have been trying really hard to find out what Henry might have called this painting, but for now it just known as 'Title Unknown'. ***What title would you give it?***

Here are is a photo of Henry. It was sent to Argyll by his son, Rhodrick.



Does Henry look like a very serious artist? Can you see some of his other paintings? Do they look like the one we have in Argyll?

The photo gives us a sense of Henry as a proud young artist in his studio. The paintings behind him do not all seem finished, and the paint splats on the wall suggest he is in the middle of working on some of them.

The big painting on the left is very interesting. Can you see what he is painting there? It looks like clenched fists and strong arms. This is a sign of strength and solidarity. By painting lots of them together he is suggesting a group all fighting for the same cause. Perhaps they are the arms of those who fought for Zambia's independence? Do you think this could be a crowd at a rally or a demonstration? If you look closely you can see the letters 'EEDOM' in the upper right. Perhaps this is a sign, or a shout from the crowd, suggesting that they are calling for 'freedom'.

Here are some ideas for things you could do now that you have learned a bit about Henry and his paintings:

1. Think about something that really matters to you. What is something you think is really important? Henry thought it was important to use art to show that some people had a hard life in the city. What would you like to use art to show people?
2. Can you imagine what life is like in a big city? What are some of things that make you think of a big city? How could use paint and drawing to create the sense and experience of a big city?
3. Write a letter to Henry's son, Rhodrick, telling him what you think is interesting about his Dad's painting. You can ask him questions about his Dad's work too if you like.

Have fun!

*This pilot learning resource was developed by Kate Cowcher (University of St Andrews). Please share any comments / feedback: kc90@st-andrews.ac.uk
See www.dartodunoon.com for more information*