

Sector News

The charm of everyday pieces

What do colourful Ghanaian flags, Zulu beer pots, skulls and a Pulitzer poetry prize-winner have in common? They are among the many diverse references incorporated into a recent exhibition by ceramicist Clementina van der Walt at the Irma Stern Gallery in Rosebank.

The pieces – ranging from giant versions of Zulu pots to quirky little ‘Clemsuke’ figures – were beautifully styled in tablescapes set up in the rooms that are still furnished with the possessions and collectables of the artist Irma Stern. The ceramics were accessorised with complementary weathered wood, indigo cloth, a pristine family heirloom tablecloth, weathered animal skulls and more.

Clementina says she was inspired by the book *Planets on Tables: Poetry, Still Life*, and the *Turning World* by Bonnie Costello. Here the author discussed how the genre of still life, with its focus on domesticity, could be viewed as a retreat from the political and economic pressures of life. Yet many American artists and writers found – in the arrangement of homely objects – a way to connect the individual to larger public concerns.



Another influence (which gave Bonnie’s book its title) was a poem by the American modernist poet Wallace Stevens. He writes in *The Planet On The Table* that, “what mattered was that they should bear some lineament or character ... of the planet of which they were part.”

“This resonated with me as I work in an intimate domestic realm, making things that people use every day,” said Clementina. “I am interested in the utilitarian that people engage with, as it enriches their lives. The book confirms that such pieces have validity.”

The ceramics reflect the many and varied influences on Clementina’s body of work.

Brighter pieces (in the minority) drew on her early years growing up in a home with works by Erik Laubscher and Cecil Skotnes. But most of her recent output has shifted from bright African colours and patterns, using overglazed and underglazed colours, to more muted clay slips, with oxide in the clay. These show the influence of time spent in the Karoo countryside, where pieces are slowly constructed with more contemplative energy. Monochrome glazes reflect the rocky landscape.

A previous order for a ‘cloudy white’ dinner service inspired Clementina to create a similar work, presented on a tablecloth, giving an olde-world, spiritual impression. And a new dinner service for the Irma Stern dining-room has irregular, monotone pieces, although the side plates are painted with still lives. Work in a narrative room was inspired by pre-Colombian ceramics and Ghanaian flags.

Whatever their style, they succeed in encouraging contemplation, conscious aesthetic awareness and bringing meaning and beauty into everyday activities.

Contact: www.clementina.co.za | 021 448 3203 | clementina@mweb.co.za.



Free Leather course on offer

The SA Leather Academy, based in Vanrhynsdorp, offers fantastic courses in leather-making, drawing students from far and wide. The school has been run for 30 years and has a wealth of experience and expertise in the making of fine leather-work. Frik van Jaarsveld, course presenter, is offering an aspiring leather craftsperson a free ten-day course during April this year. The course is valued at R10 000, but the successful applicant would only need to fund his/her own accommodation of R1500 for the duration of the course. In addition, each trainee receives a free basic tool set, made by the Academy.

Contact Frik van Jaarsveld on info@leatherclassics.co.za | 072 221 0200 to apply. Also see www.leatherclassics.co.za | www.leatheracademy.co.za.



Shop of the Month

Africa Nova



“One of the most stylish and desirable collections of contemporary African textiles, arts and crafts,” says the review of the shop Africa Nova in Lonely Planet. And whether you are a well-heeled tourist searching for a splendid length of indigo print, or a collector of fine handcrafted jewellery, this Cape Quarter mecca is the place to visit.



Margie Murgatroyd in her superbly curated shop.

Founder Margie Murgatroyd attributes the shop’s success to well-selected pieces of high quality. “They need to be made by hand and have the mark of the maker; they must say something about Africa,” she says.

Africa Nova is beautifully styled and curated, and Margie has the well-trained eye of a Michaelis graduate – the pieces can easily be envisaged in a buyer’s home, whether

contemporary or traditional. Some 90% of the stock is from Southern Africa, with the remainder sourced throughout the continent. Margie relies on suppliers from different countries and also collaborates with artists if she picks up on a trend – while remaining respectful of their idiom.

At present, she says, customers want more than the purely decorative – they are searching for the functional in traditional objects. This could mean using a tried and tested Zulu wooden spoon to whip up a trendy dish, or chopping fresh vegetables on a wooden platter. It’s also au courant to put a personal stamp on a traditional item – such as her Tsonga stools painted in a pale turquoise.

Margie, who bought her first African collector’s piece aged 20 (a wooden stick sculpture by Zimbabwean Zepemiah Tshuma, of a lion chasing a man) travels to a new African destination every year. Morocco is next on her wish list, so look out for new, exciting additions to Africa Nova’s range of fine art and tribal art, contemporary artefacts, and contemporary design.



Sales assistant Hlengiwe Tshabalala shows off contemporary ware.



Africa Nova offers fine art and tribal art, contemporary artefacts and contemporary design.

Contact: Cape Quarter,
72 Waterkant St, Green Point |
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Product of the Month

Animal skull by Friday Jibu



This year we are asking experienced craft and design retailers to select our newsletter products of the month. Margie Murgatroyd, owner of Africa Nova, chose this glossy wooden sculpture for its accurate, yet simplified form.

Animal skull by Friday Jibu

Description: Naturalistic copy of a lioness skull in pale jacaranda wood. This work reflects the strong personal style of the artist and has a very contemporary feel.

Production: On request. Small and large sculptures of various animals and marine creatures can be ordered.

Retail price: R5 000 – R8 000 per sculpture.

Contact: Margie Murgatroyd | africanova@iafrica.com | 021 425 5123.

