Potters' Association of Namibia

www.pan.iway.na

PAN NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 17

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OUR MISSION

The main objective of The Potters' Association of Namibia is primarily to foster the art and craft of pottery and ceramics in every way. We encourage the development, recognition, appreciation of pottery and ceramics; we hold exhibitions, publish regular newsletters, and distribute related magazines. Furthermore, by providing practical workshops, technical information, skills development, arranging and encouraging social interaction, we support the interests of like-minded people.

Work by Ralph Johnson

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PAN COMMITTEE DETAILS

Committee Contact Details

Chair & Treasurer:
Izaan Pauw
Cell: 081 692 0963
irpauw@gmail.com

Vice Chair:
John Hunter
Cell: 081 605 5636
jrhunter@mac.com

Secretary:
Heleen van Helsdingen
Cell: 081 169 4094
floorheleen@gmail.com

Additional Members:
Anita Zimny
Cell: 081 20 2527
dams.zim@iway.na

Uschi Bauer
Cell: 081 280 9833
ubr@windhoekcc.org.na

Rolf Albrecht
Cell: 081 128 8963
albrechtrolf6@gmail.com

DISCLAIMER:

Neither the Editor, PAN Committee members, nor the contributors to this newsletter will be held responsible for any errors that may creep in unnoticed. The personal opinions freely expressed are not necessarily those of the Association! We welcome, and are most grateful for any contributions to this newsletter! However, the Editor retains the sole right to edit, and/or refuse unsuitable material, submitted for publication.

Words from the Chair

A new year has begun and I hope that each and every PAN member had a blessed festive season filled with special times and beautiful new memories. May 2016 be a flourishing year, full of adventure and new beginnings.

2015 was a bit of a rocky year with the committee moving to Windhoek and organizing the Biennale in one year. The 2015 Biennale was a great success with almost 50% of the pots being sold out, but we have fallen behind with our newsletter and we would sincerely like to apologize for the delay. Carola has once again stepped in to help and I want to thank her for putting the last two newsletters together. The CSA Magazine arrived in Windhoek on Thursday 21 January '16, we will be sending it to everyone as soon as possible.

We have quite a full year planned for 2016, with a workshop in Swakopmund presented by Ralph Johnson and a workshop presented in Windhoek by Sasha Wardell. We have not yet confirmed dates with Sasha Wardell, she will be judging the Nationals in Johannesburg this year, and we therefore have to coordinate with Ceramics SA. As soon as we have more information on the Nationals and Sasha's schedule we will let everyone know.

We will be organizing a PAN stall at the Windhoek City Market to create more exposure for our PAN members, PAN members will be able to sell their work, information is available in this newsletter, you are welcome to contact Heleen on floorheleen@gmail.com for more information.

Lastly PAN would also like to introduce a theme exhibition and gala, closer to the end of the year with the title: The Force of Nature. I think this is a beautiful title, as the whole world has experienced extreme heat, cold and natural disasters over the past year. We are so very thankful for the rain that we have had in Windhoek over the past few days and it has really inspired us to focus more on our beautiful surroundings from the little ant running on the 'o so thankful' ground to the awesome clouds accumulating above us. Please reserve the 5th of November for this exciting event.

I trust this will be an outstanding year for everyone, may you all create magnificent 2016 pots.

Izaan

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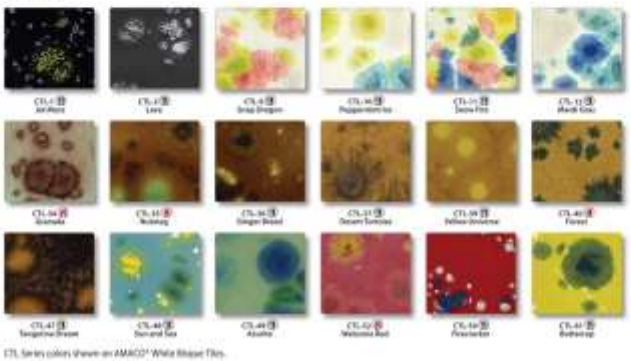

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Wood firing in Namibia

By John Hunter

Namibia has a long history of wood fired ceramics or should I say grass fired pots. The precolonial to present rural potters of Namibia have always used the dried stalks of corn or millet or sourgum to fire their storage jars and other low fired pottery much like traditional Zuni pottery was and is fired in the USA. The difference is that the clay used in early Namibian pottery is a very sandy red clay found in the dry riverbeds close to the Angolan border. Only women made pottery. They made it in underground cave like pits to help keep the pots from cracking while drying. That helped maintain an even damp room like atmosphere in their "studios".

I moved to Namibia in 1997 and began to add to the number of pot shards available for common use. In the past 15 years I have had numerous failures with clay, glazes and shelves al resulting in less than perfect pots. In all I have been potting for almost 44 years so broken pots are nothing new to me but the chance to do it with wood has been even more exciting. My kiln is not a large one by any means and is not of a design I had ever seen before. It is a one fire chamber - Olsen cross draft that is top loading and uses fibre for the roof. Odd huh? Truly, but it works. Well in fact. The other really odd thing is that I have a moveable shelf above the fire box to direct the flow of heat and smoke and ash to the top and bottom of the kiln as needed. Amazing! A kiln with moveable parts. Never before. Recently while I was giving a workshop at my granddaughter's ceramic school in Madison, Wisconsin the owner told me she had never see such good wood fired results in such a small kiln. I think so too.

One of the most important aspects of pottery making is evaluating the results of every firing and keeping good records of all tests and accurate kiln logs. Reading what others have done when they have experienced difficulties is also of great help. Sometimes pots crack on the way up other times when cooling. It is important to learn to see the difference.

Why all the fuss about wood?

It is so much more trouble than gas. Are the effects really that much better? Last year I finally decided to start salting my kiln. Now it is really something. Most of the "Western" potters here in Namibia use electric kilns. I know of only one other potter with a fuel fired kiln and it is really small, maybe 4 cu. ft. There was another salt kiln but the one time I used it, it melted. It was soft brick and on its last leg.

I have used all sorts of kilns and for the type of pottery I make which is mostly functional I love the wood/salt finish. I see a lot of people and books and glaze recipes that

simulate wood fire with ash glazes but to me no matter how hard you try, they always seem flat. No depth. Even an under-fired wood or salt glazed piece has depth.

I mostly use celadons, chuns, temmoku, oribe and ash glazes. I do simple Sumi-e like brush work and focus on simplicity and clarity rather than complicated. I usually don't mix glazes on one pot but let the natural diversity of the salt wood fire add to the complexity of the finish. I use some simple underglazes like Cynthia Bringle's wet/dry/bisque slip and I love Hyme Rabinowitz's cone 13 celadon. It is simply marvellous. He wrote it out by hand for me one year at his studio in Cape Town. I remember there was a baboon in the tree that day barking at us while we had tea.

The ware chamber of my kiln is about 2 x 3.5 x 3.5. Small. And a pain to load since it loads from the top. But I can fit about 100 bowls or mugs into it at a time. I am a very busy man nowadays running a primary school in the old Damara location of the township of Katutura outside Windhoek for disadvantaged children and orphans so small is good. The shelves are about 12x 24 and that leaves a lot of room on the sides for air flow which I always fill up with tall thin vases defeating the purpose and design of the kiln. I just can't help it. An empty space in a kiln seems like a waste to a production potter like me.

After we load it to the brim and drop on the fibre top we start up a couple of Ward gas burners. After an hour or so I start up a "little dragon compressed air powered drip oil burner André Voster made me. We slowly add fuel until I go to bed around midnight and by six in the Morning the kiln is usually about 5-600°C. or about 1000°F. I pull out all the burners and start stoking.

A word about the type of wood we use here. The local woods like Camelthorn wood are far too hard to use and make way too many coals and getting rid of the coals while firing is quite a job. So we use broken up pallets I get from begging at the local food importers. Hundreds of them. Full of nails. I am sure the iron adds to the rich overall finish of my pots.☺

Going from 60 degrees C an hour to 400 an hour when we switch to wood just shows how well suited the kiln is to its favourite fuel. The fire box has a metal grate make for 1" thick rebar with 2" heavy angle iron of the sides. The fire box works best when it is mostly closed up with fibre reinforced with expanded metal as a door. I can open either top or bottom of the door to adjust it as we fire. The whole door hinges open when we need to pull the mass of accumulated coals out every hour or so. As we get closer to temperature we use more wood and need to pull the coals more often. We use a 3 meter metal hoe to rake them out into a metal drum we drag over to a pile. It's the hardest part of the firing and the most trouble, but it needs to be done or the firebox begins to choke and not get enough

oxygen. When we hit cone 10 we start salting, throwing bags of wet salt and soda mixed into the kiln. Or I drop wads of wet salt soda mix onto the wood and toss them in. The damper is open all the way right from the start when we switch to wood. The chimney is about 16ft tall from the ground giving it about 12 ft of real draw. The flames come out of the top of it sometimes up to 3 ft long when we reduce with more wood. The main idea is to keep the top and bottom even as the temperature rises. We keep track with draw tile and cones and a pyrometer top and bottom, left and right. Around cone 12 I start to push the shelf over the fire box hole over so it forces the fire down. The top usually goes to cone 13 flat and the bottom to cone 12. The back of the kiln is usually about cone 10-11.

Probably one of the most important thing about firing is cooling and after many years of cooling kilns too quickly I have learned to wait an entire day before cracking it open. Better to wait than dunt a whole load of pots. Wood fired pots with glaze on the inside mostly are more susceptible to dunting because of the uneven pressure created by glazing only one side of the pot wall. So no fancy cooling tricks for me. I have earned my doctorate in Psyco-ceramics (crackpots).

So is it worth it; all the smoke, dust, ash, burnt lashes and fingers? I think so. I am a convert I will probably never go back. Gas is too expensive here anyway.

Making pots: Is the form balanced in its shape? Do additions such as spouts, handles knobs detract from the design or function? Will the decoration improve the overall presence of each piece? There are many ways to make beautiful pots. Sensitivity to the materials, colors and function are important and should never be overlooked in the struggle to be "creative". I have often picked up a beautiful pot only to find that the handle hurts my hands or it is too heavy or the spouts do not pour well. If it isn't comfortable to use as well as aesthetically pleasing I have failed to serve those who are purchasing my wares.

Throwing is like a dance with a partner. It is give and take. Every clay needs an individual touch and can't be forced beyond its limits. Decoration should be restrained and elegant not busy and confused. All elements should work together towards a cohesive whole. You should enjoy the work.

John Hunter

Next Newsletter Deadline: 30.05.2016

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Pottery Surface Decorating Techniques: **"Aged Stone"**

Try out this easy surface texturing technique to achieve a weathered effect! It is especially suitable for decorative pieces such as tiles, slab constructions, garden pots, sculpture, etc and effective with any clay type.

You need:

Suitable bone-dry greenware item; Bicarbonate of Soda (Baking soda / Koeksoda);

White Vinegar; Artist Masking Fluid (liquid rubber); Dishwashing liquid;

Soft (4B) pencil; 2 large soft hair paintbrushes; A few cheap synthetic paintbrushes.

Method:

With a soft pencil carefully draw on the dry clay piece a particular design or mark off any area you do not want textured. Mask off these parts by painting on a thick coating of masking fluid and allow to dry thoroughly.

Mix approximately 2 heaped tablespoons of soda bicarb in half a cup of water. Using a large soft brush, dab this mixture on the greenware. (Keep stirring the mixture with the brush as you apply it to prevent the soda bicarb from settling).

Load a large soft brush with vinegar and dribble it over (do not brush it on!) the bicarb soda areas, keeping the brush full and working in a small area at a time. This is when the magic happens – the reaction of the vinegar with the bicarb causes fascinating surface texturing. Do not touch the textured areas as this will damage the surface! When you have finished applying the vinegar and the piece is completely dry, carefully lift off the masking fluid to reveal the untextured areas. Colour if desired (underglazes or oxides) may be applied to the untextured design areas only. Handle the item with care to prevent damaging the textured surface.

Bisque fire the clay piece as usual. A brush-on glaze may be applied but only to the untextured areas. Do not apply glaze to the textured areas – this fascinating combination of soda and vinegar creates its own natural aged stone effect – glaze is not required! Fire to your usual glaze temperature whether glaze is applied or not.

****Tip**: Always prime your paintbrush with dishwashing liquid before using masking fluid – this helps with cleaning the rubbery coating off the brush. Constantly clean off the dry rubber and re-prime during the process. Do not use your best brushes – have some cheap ones especially for using only with masking fluid. Store your bottle of masking fluid upside down to prevent a dry plug of rubber forming in neck.

By Sharon Flewellen

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PAN AGM

Saturday 12 March '16 @ 10:00 am

73 Iipumbu Ya Tshilongo Street, Academia, WHK

Pay your membership fee at the AGM personally to receive a 10% discount.

PAN MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Remeber to renew your PAN Membership by 31 March '16

- get 10% discount by personally renewing your membership at the AGM

2016 Membership Fees

- ☐ Single Membership: N$ 350.00 (CSA Mag included)
- ☐ Couple membership N$ 400.00 (1 x CSA Mag included)
- ☐ Full-time student/ Senior Citizen (60yrs) N$ 220.00 (No-CSA Mag included)

Bank Windhoek
7th National Ceramics Biennale

By Izaan Pauw

The 2015 Bank Windhoek Ceramics Biennale was a great success with 29 potters from all over Namibia entering their work. Bank Windhoek is always our rock and without their continuous N$50 000 sponsor every second year, we will not be able to host the Biennale anymore.

The Biennale Judges Anton and Hanlie Bosch travelled to Windhoek from White River, Mpumalanga to act as our judges for the Biennale; this year no artworks were rejected. When I presented Anton with previous Biennale proceedings and that they could adapt awards and reject work as all judge's opinions differ he looked at me confused and responded: 'How do you reject art, no I am very sorry, we did not travel all this way to break someone's hart'. Anton and Hanlie are both beautiful easy-going soles and it was an absolute pleasure having them in Windhoek.

Herewith a few statistics regarding the Biennale, there were 153 pieces on display at the Biennale and Anton and Hanlie took a whole day to crit the work and decide whom the winners for 2015 would be. They definitely did not take their task lightly and as any husband and wife combo they also did not always agree on every decision they made, which I think in this case, was a good thing.

PAN and its members sold ceramics worth N$40 653.23 at the 2015 Biennale, 73 of the 153 pots were sold and this included all 13 Rural Pots that where sent from Katima Mulilo.

Congratulations to the following 7th National Ceramics Biennale winners:

Premier (Joint Award)
Maryke Maree
Heleen Van Helsdingen
Jacqui Jansen Van Vuuren

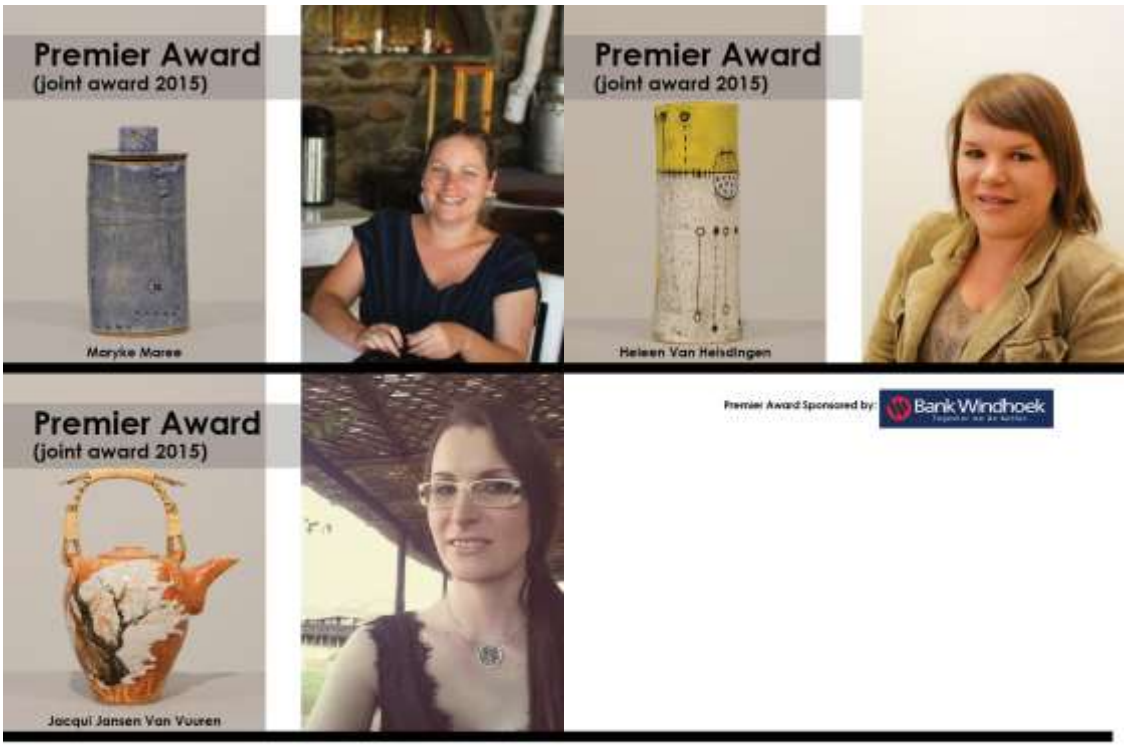
Wheelwork
1st Prize: Jacqui Jansen Van Vuuren
2nd Prize: Rosemarie Praetorius
3rd Prize: Uschi Bauer

Handwork
1st Prize: Maryke Maree
2nd Prize: Izaan Pauw
3rd Prize: Elke le Roux

Sculpture
1st Prize: Mitchell Gatsi
2nd Prize: Sharon Flewellen
3rd Prize: Rosa Smith

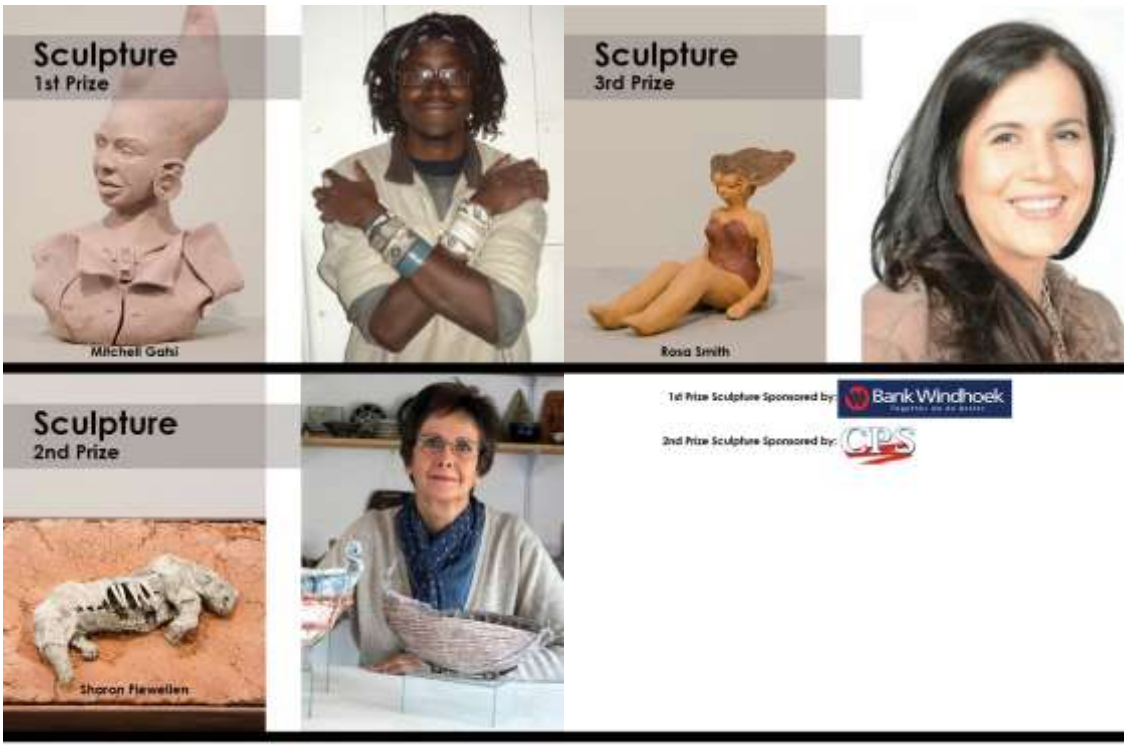
New Signature Award (Joint Award)
Deborah McCarthy
Rosa Smith

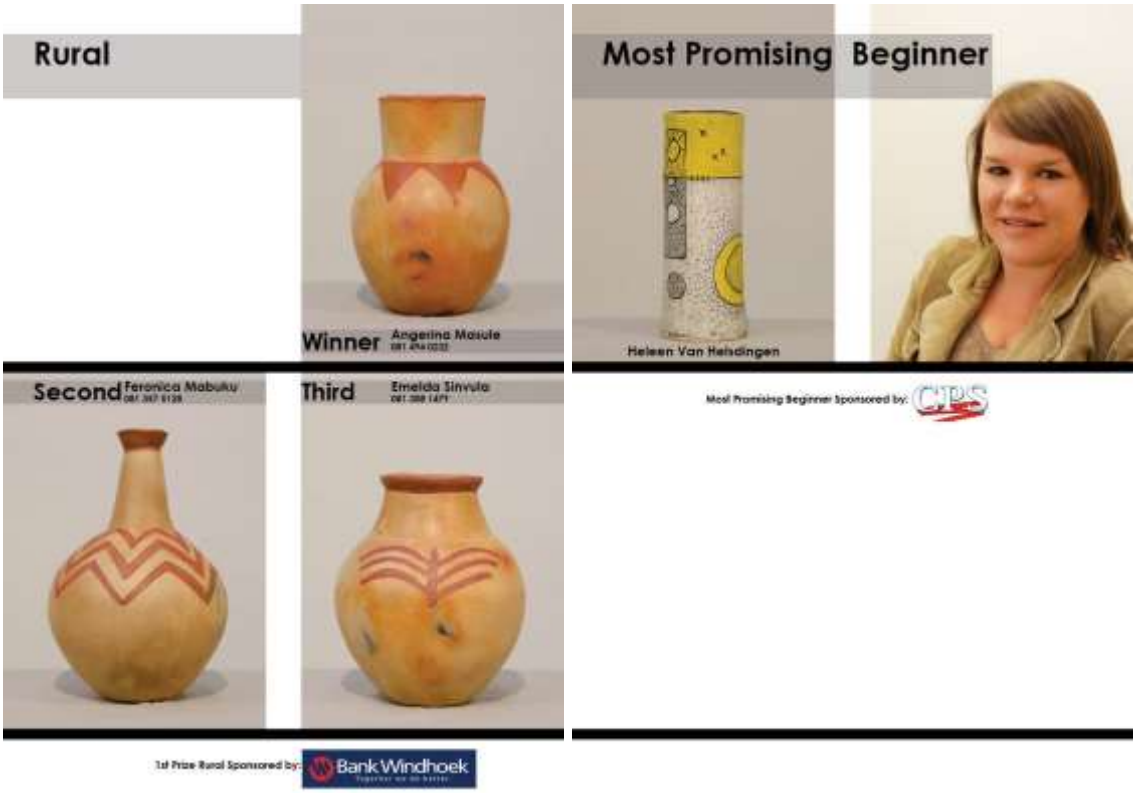
Most Promising New Beginner
Heleen Van Helsdingen


Premier Award
(joint award 2015)
Maryke Maree
Premier Award
(joint award 2015)
Heleen Van Heisdingen
Premier Award
(joint award 2015)
Jacqui Jansen Van Vuuren
Premier Award Sponsored by:
Bank Windhoek

Wheelwork
1st Prize
Jacqui Jansen Van Vuuren
Wheelwork
3rd Prize
Uschi Bauer
Wheelwork
2nd Prize
Rosemarie Praetorius
1st Prize Wheelwork Sponsored by:
Bank Windhoek
2nd Prize Wheelwork Sponsored by:
CPS

Handwork
1st Prize
Maryke Maree
Handwork
3rd Prize
Elke Le Roux
Handwork
2nd Prize
Izaan Pauw
1st Prize Handwork Sponsored by:
2nd Prize Handwork Sponsored by:
CPS


Sculpture
1st Prize
Mitchell Gafsi
Sculpture
3rd Prize
Rosa Smith
Sculpture
2nd Prize
Sharon Flewellen
1st Prize Sculpture Sponsored by:
Bank Windhoek
2nd Prize Sculpture Sponsored by:
CPS


Rural
Winner Angerina Masule
Second Feronica Mabuku
Third Emelda Sinvula
1st Prize Rural Sponsored by: Bank Windhoek
Most Promising Beginner
Heleen Van Helsdingen
Most Promising Beginner Sponsored by: CIPS

New Signature
(joint award 2015)
Deborah McCarthy
New Signature
(joint award 2015)
Rosa Smith
New Signature Award Sponsored by:

THEME
Exhibition
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PAN WHK Market

The Potter's Association of Namibia would like to get more public exposure for it's members, we therefore would like to propose a stall at the Windhoek City Market.

- The Windhoek City Market usually takes place once a month; the venue changes around and has taken place in Avis and Olympia in 2015. The FIRST 2016 City Market will take place at The Village 18 Liliencron Str
- The Market focuses on gourmet food and handmade items.
- Any PAN member can sell their items at the PAN stall given they are willing to help out for part of the day/night. A schedule will be worked out beforehand.
- If you are not able to assist on the day, you may still sell your items, but PAN will then charge you a fee of N$60.
- 10% commission will go towards PAN, so decide on your price and add 10%.
- PAN will arrange a gazebo and tables for the event.

We would already like to participate at the Market starting 12 February 2016,
for more information please contact Heleen at floorheleen@gmail.com or sms 081 169 4094

PAN 2016

January	**February** **12 -** Windhoek City Market @ The Village *18 Lilencron Street, Eros* *contact Heleen to participate in the event see add for details*	**March** **11-** DVD Evening N$ 20 entry **12 -** PAN AGM 10:00 am	**April** Windhoek City Market *contact Heleen to participate in the event* *DATE TO BE CONFIRMED*
May	**June** **18 -** Workshop SWK **Ralph Johnson** *Triggering your creative impulse*	**July** Windhoek City Market *contact Heleen to participate in the event* *DATE TO BE CONFIRMED*	**August** **6 -** DVD Evening N$ 20 entry
September Windhoek City Market *contact Heleen to participate in the event* *DATE TO BE CONFIRMED*	**October** Workshop WHK **Sasha Wardell** *date to be confirmed*	**November** **5 -** Theme Exhibition and Gala Evening **The Force of Nature** *detailes to be confirmed*	**December** Windhoek City Market *contact Heleen to participate in the event* *DATE TO BE CONFIRMED*

Work by Ralph Johnson