POTTERS ASSOCIATION OF NAMIBIA

newsletter

March 2024

MESSAGE FROM THE

chair

Dear Members,

Another exciting year awaits us, as we prepare for our National Ceramics Biennale in August this year. This is most certainly one of the most prestigious events on PAN's calendar.

We have been very fortunate in finding a guest judge that will not only judge our entries to be displayed at the exhibition, but who will host an informative and fun-filled workshop. I am sure you will all be as excited as we are to welcome ***Nada Spencer*** from Cape Town to the Biennale. Please check out her work online and of course, "get potting"!

The Biennale will again be held at the National Art Gallery, a venue we are all very familiar with and that works so well for us.

In April we will again have our Annual General Meeting. As per the norm Jacqui will host the AGM at her home, and for those far away we will meet via Microsoft Teams. This platform works much better than Skype (too data hungry) or Zoom (only 30 minutes free, then a 10 minute wait before the next 30 minutes). There is no need to download anything. I will send a link to the meeting a few days prior to the meeting and all you need to do is to click on the link.

Now for serious matters: We really need help on the Committee. Please let us know whether you are willing to help. If the duties can be shared amongst a few members, then I promise it will not take up too much of your time. And you do not need to be an experienced potter in order to serve on the committee. All we need is someone reliable who will help us to get the work done, especially with the upcoming Biennale. We have been very fortunate to have Gary Gray agree to join the committee as the Social Media Guru. We do, however, desperately need a secretary. For the past year I have had to multitask as Chair, Secretary, newsletter editor and workshop organiser. As Chair I now also serve on the National Committee of Ceramics South Africa, a task delegated to the Chairperson of every region. This has just become too much, and I can no longer take on so many tasks. Please remember that we do this for the good of ceramics in Namibia. Nobody does this for personal gain or importance, but to serve our pottery community and bring you inspiring workshops and exhibitions.

Of course, we need input from you, our members, as to what workshops you would like to attend going forward. A request was put to us for an Obvara fun day in Swakopmund. This will probably be held later in the year. Of course we cannot offer nearly as many workshops as last year, because we will all be very busy working towards the Biennale and because Nada Spencer will be hosting two workshops in any case. In the meantime though, please let us have your thoughts.

Another very exiting bit of news is that Bellhaus has asked us to join them for a Christmas exhibition from 21 November to 7 December 2024. This is an excellent opportunity to sell pieces that may not have sold at the Biennale, or pieces that you have made in a practice or warm-up session. Submission date is the 21st of October, so plenty of time to make masterpieces for the Biennale and a few Christmas themed beauties for the Bellhaus exhibition.

As notified on our WhatsApp group, we have decided to increase our annual membership fees to N$350.00 per member. It was not an easy decision, but we have to consider the affiliation fees payable to Ceramics South Africa and for all of you to have access to their online magazine. Please make use of this platform.

Our website is still updated regularly by Franz Klein. Please remember to submit your artist's profile and a few photos if you would like to be included on our website. It is a free service that we offer. And a further reminder that our membership application form can now be filled in on the website and submitted to us.

I hope you will thoroughly enjoy Sharon's piece in this newsletter. It has taken her far down memory lane and must have, at times, been a bit emotional for her. Sharon, for so many years you have been a very active member of PAN, you contribute to every newsletter and I can always rely on you for advice and a bit of emotional support. I am sure that I am not the only one who appreciates you and everything you still bring to PAN to this day. Thank you, from the bottom of my heart.

Until next time...

Yours in potting,

Renate

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A JOURNEY OF MY pottery studio

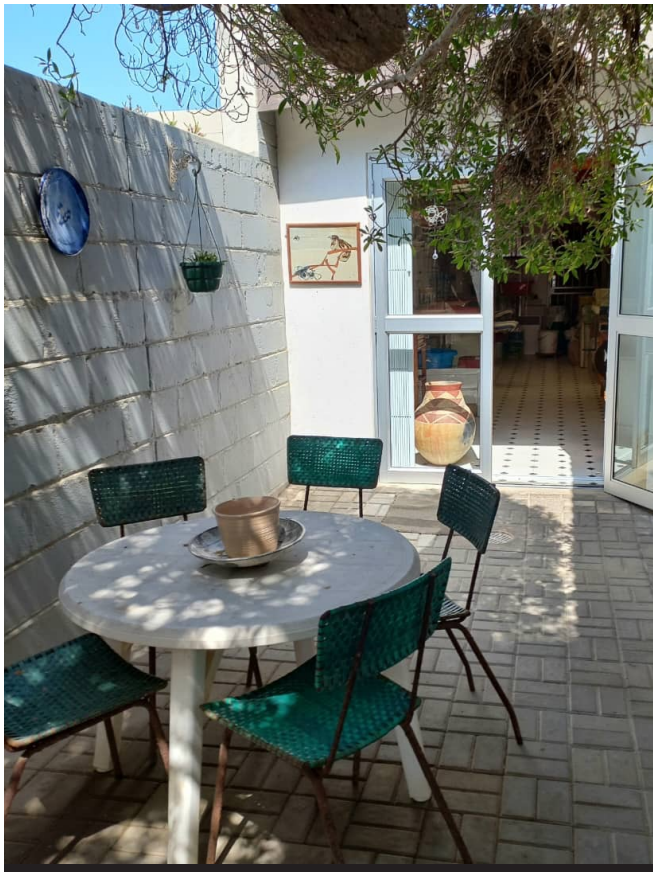
BY **SHARON FLEWELLYN**

IT'S GESTATION, BIRTH AND GROWTH › 1987-2024

In 1980, the "good old days" before TV arrived in Swakopmund, I opened my arts and crafts business Hobby Horse. People wanted to learn how to do popular handicrafts and soon I was teaching in the back of my little shop. As the demand for craft classes grew so did my need for a suitable space to accommodate them.

We found an old empty warehouse in good condition in town (in Bismarck Street next to the Europa Hof Hotel) and after some rudimentary fixing up and furnishing this large space became "The Craft Club". It soon became a very busy hub of creativity with courses offered in many popular crafts: from Bauernmalerei, batik, candle making, cake decorating, calligraphy, decoupage, fabric painting, to patchwork and quilting etc, etc. I was also running my own business and had a growing family at the same time and as the membership ballooned, I could no longer cope on my own and enlisted others to teach some of the crafts.

Pottery became available at the Craft Club in mid-1983 with the arrival of newly-wed vibrant young woman, Karin le Roux who had been doing pottery in the Cape and was a member of APSA. Together we set up the pottery section with a brand new Dabeb wheel, PSMO kiln and other basic necessities, clay and glazes, etc, and soon Karin was teaching classes to the first group of happy, aspiring Swakop potters!



Welcome to Keramos Pottery Studio

Marten Zaalberg at the Craft Club in May 1988

After the arrival of TV, the interest in many of the general crafts dwindled but pottery always remained in great demand. When Karin left in 1986 and moved to Windhoek I took over teaching her classes. My attendance registers and records show that I was soon teaching 6 classes of 10 adults a week in addition to one afternoon a week to a group of kids!!

I joined PAN soon after it was formed in February 1987 and took part in the very first annual exhibition in May 1988 in Windhoek. The highly esteemed professional potter Maarten Zaalberg from Cape Town was the invited guest selector and workshop host and under the auspices of PAN he spent

a weekend demonstrating his skills to us here at the Craft Club. The wonderfully talented couple David Schlapobersky and Felicity Potter were next to share their expertise with us here.

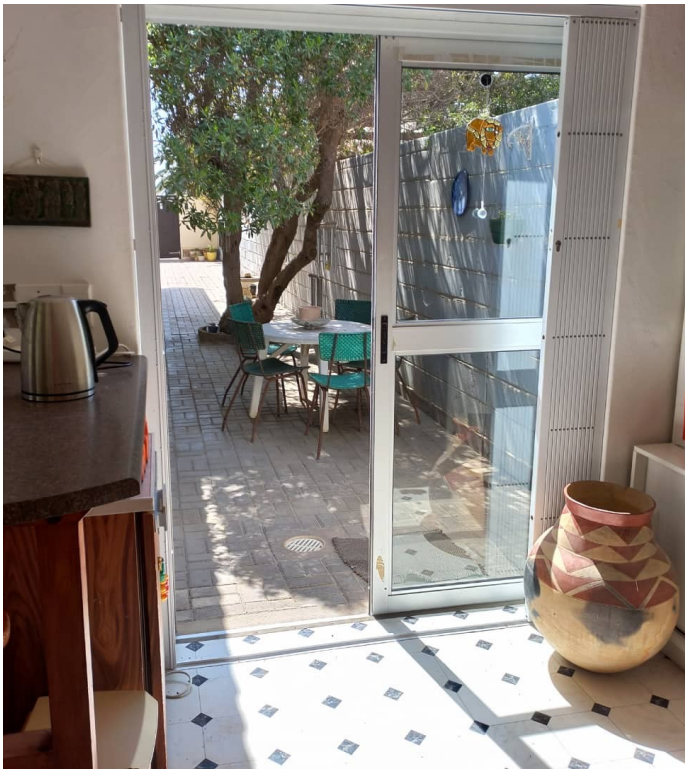
In 1988 / 89 numerous other guest potters from S.A. also came to Swakop to demonstrate their particular skills which greatly assisted in developing and growing ours. Sarie Maritz from Windhoek came for a weekend and gave our first ever Raku workshop which had everyone awe-struck at the results and forever smitten with the technique! Pit firings soon followed.

The small Potters Association of Namibia was growing rapidly and, with thanks to them, so was the pottery following here in Swakop.

I closed down the Craft Club in early 1989 and in September moved the pottery to our newly built studio at our home. This lovely large well-planned space was my dream-come-

true and Keramos Pottery Studio became a reality! This has all been made possible by the enduring love, patience and support of my husband Don ... who continuously has to build yet another much-needed shelf in my studio! We've had numerous fun and educational pottery-related events here over the years including demonstrations and workshops by visiting potters, video evenings, a successful student's exhibition in 2013 and many Raku and pit firings.

The many years of teaching pottery have gone by so quickly and I am proud of the achievements gained by all those who enjoyed working with clay under my guidance. So many wonderful people have passed through these studio doors, happily getting their hands into clay. It's been a great privilege and I have learnt so much too by the experience. I look forward to many more years of 'clay play'!



Don and Sharon Flewellyn checking on the raku firing

I now only teach 2 classes a week to adults and this New Year's sessions are already on the go. My plans for this year include teaching silk-screen printing on clay and a studio competition titled "Go with the Flow" to encourage my students to experiment with some of the techniques they have learnt. My ultimate motivation of course is that many potters from my studio will also join PAN and enter their work into the Biennale in September!

In the postscript of the PAN 2007 "Celebrating 20 Years" booklet I wrote:
"Potters do not have feet of clay – they are solidly earth-bound, grounded, centered and, although they dabble with alchemy and play with fire, they are the sincerest people I know".
This still holds true!

HOW TO RECYCLE clay

BY **SHARON FLEWELLYN**

For best results the clay should be totally bone dry and broken up into small pieces.

1. Put dry clay into a shallow container (or bucket) and cover with water to not deeper than +- 20mm above clay.
2. Allow to stand overnight to slake.
3. Stir clay well into a smooth slip and leave to stand until clay sinks and any excess water rises up.
4. Remove excess water carefully with a sponge or by syphoning.
5. If you don't have a plaster slab on which to dry slip, prepare a very thick wad of newspapers and cover with a cloth.
6. Pour the clay slip onto this and leave it to dry until clay is at a suitable stage to pick up and wedge.
7. You can also pour clay slip into a pillowcase and hang it up somewhere suitable to drip dry. (Put a bucket underneath to collect the drips!)
8. Don't attempt to use your recycled clay immediately. It should ideally be stored for at least 6 weeks to mature and regain its plasticity.

WHY WORK with clay

Clay is fascinating and it will lend itself to your skill level, whatever it may be. Pinch pots are easily accessible to nearly everyone, including young children. You can easily learn to make a pinch pot in less than an hour.
Clay is never boring; there is always more to explore, more to try out and more to create. Be prepared for a fine adventure as you enter the world of pottery, for clay is as deep and as broad as the earth it comes from.

CRACK MENDER FOR greenware

BY **SHARON FLEWELLYN**

1. Put 240ml white vinegar into a container
2. Tear up 4 sheets 2-ply toilet paper into tiny pieces and add to vinegar
3. With a stick blender blitz it until pulpy and smooth
4. Add crumbled bone dry clay to the vinegar pulp until liquid is absorbed. Close container and leave it overnight.
5. Stir mixture well until smooth. It should be consistency of thick toothpaste.
6. Before applying mender to the greenware crack, wet crack with pure vinegar and carefully widen crack with a sharp tool or scalpel.
7. Fill crack with mender and smooth, blending it well until crack and mender no longer visible.
8. Cover the entire piece tightly in plastic to slowly dry before bisque firing.

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TOP 10 TIPS FOR beginners

CENTERING CLAY ON THE POTTERY WHEEL

1. Don't expect too much to begin with. As with any new hobby or skill, you need to expect it to be difficult to start with. Take your time to get used to how the clay feels as you move it around on the pottery wheel.

2. Practise, practise, practise. Then practise some more! There aren't any shortcuts with throwing unfortunately, but the good news is that practise really does make perfect! Be prepared to make a lot of wonky pots before you start producing some that you're happy with.

3. Wedge your clay. Centering is much easier with homogenous clay. Wedge it or put it through a pug mill before you start throwing.

4. Weigh your clay. Try practising using the same amount of clay each time you throw for greater consistency.

5. Put your clay in the centre of the wheel head. Start as you mean to go on! If you begin to throw with the clay in the middle of the wheel, it'll be a lot easier to get it centred later.

6. Remember to add water. When the clay starts to feel hot in your hands, this is a tell-tale sign that you need to lubricate your hands with more water.

7. Anchor your arms into your sides/hips. This will stop the clay from throwing you around so that you can move it into the centre of the wheel.

8. Cone up. If your clay isn't centered, try slowly coning it back up and down again to bring it back into the middle of the wheel head.

9. Repetition. Stick to the same simple forms to begin with, eg cylinders and bowls, before you start trying new shapes and techniques. Nail the basics first!

10. Pay attention to speed. Although the wheel should be spinning quickly when centering, every move your hands make should be steady and deliberate - from coning the clay up and down, to taking your hands away from the clay to add more water. The pottery wheel speed may be fast, but your movements don't have to be.

SINGLE FIRE GLAZING in pottery

Single fire glazing is where you glaze greenware (unfired pottery) and put it through the kiln only once. Potters have single-fired their work for years and a huge quantity of ceramic items through history was produced this way. Bisque firing (and the introduction of the two-step firing and glazing process) were not discovered until much later. It's thought the two-step process was first tried in Europe when tin oxide glazes were used. Tin oxide is not compatible with single fired work as too much damage was caused to the original pieces during the firing process, so a second firing was added.

METHODS

There are generally two methods of raw glazing for the single-fire process. The first being where you glaze the inside of your greenware pot when it is leather hard and then the outside when it is bone dry. The second (more common technique) for raw glazing is to glaze the whole piece when the work is leather hard. This method leaves less room for error in terms of the shock to the work during the firing process.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

The biggest advantage of single fire glazing is that it saves both time and money. Pottery can be a lengthy process and you will need a lot of patience to get your pieces made. Firstly, you'll spend time making your work; then it will take at least 12 hours in the kiln to run through your bisque firing. You'll then need to glaze your ceramic pieces and put them through their second firing. Dependent on what type of glaze you are using a glaze firing can take up to two days.
Firing greenware means you can do your firing and glazing in one go, therefore only having to fire up your kiln once. You can create some beautiful and unusual effects with your glazes in a single firing. Meaning you spend less time waiting until your finished piece is ready and also less power in having to fire your kiln twice. Tempting as these advantages sound, and they are pretty big advantages, you have to also consider the drawbacks of a single firing.

Firstly, on the disadvantages front, cracking can be commonplaces in a single firing. It's also imperative you make sure that your greenware is completely dry before you put your glaze on and fire it, or it may explode in the kiln (this can easily happen if the temperature in the kiln rises too quickly). Your glazes also run the risk of flaking and cracking in the kiln. This is because bubbles will be escaping the clay as the firing process happens when moisture leaves the clay. If you use the traditional bisque then glaze firing, then this process will have already happened. An unfired

piece of work is also, of course, more fragile than a fired piece of work, so you run the added risk of damaging your work during its handling when you put the glaze on.

TIPS AND TRICKS

As water will leave the clay during the firing process, you need to make sure the clay is as dry as possible before you put the glaze on. Some potters recommend leaving the clay to dry to a bone dry level before glazing, as leather hard pieces still carry quite a high level of water content. If you are going to try the single firing method, then you'll have to be a bit of an expert on glazes.
One of the most important factors is that the glaze should contain a high clay content. The reason the glaze should have a high clay content is that the raw piece will be rehydrated by the materials in the glaze and can swell, and if there is not enough clay in the glaze recipe then it can flake off.

Shiny glazes are very tricky to use for a single firing as they often have a lower clay content. Some potters use a spray glazing technique to minimize the amount of water being absorbed into the clay. This method also reduces how much you will have to handle the ceramic ware.

OUTCOME

Whichever way you choose, be mindful of the risks. After all, it's pottery and nothing is ever guaranteed. Right?

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POTTERS' ASSOCIATION OF NAMIBIA

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2024 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Membership

Annual Membership fee: N$ 350.00
Membership includes quarterly newsletters, reduced entry fees for workshops, Biennale participation, exhibition space in PAN's stall at Namibia Craft Centre, plus free promotion on popular Social Media platforms.

Kindly complete the form below in full and email it with your proof of payment to **potters.namibia@gmail.com**
Bank: Bank Windhoek | **Branch:** 483 872 (Maerua Mall) | **Account:** 8004 722 441
Acc Name: Potters' Association of Namibia
Ref: Your name and surname + Memb (e.g. Anna Johnson Memb)

Name: ..... Tel Home: (.....) .....

Postal Address: ..... Tel Work: (.....) .....

..... Cell Phone: (.....) .....

E-Mail: ..... I.D. No.: .....

Are you currently taking pottery classes? Yes ☐ No ☐

If Yes – with whom / studio name/ where: .....

Are you willing to present a workshop? Yes ☐ No ☐

WHAT PAN DOES FOR YOU

- The quarterly PAN newsletter, filled with valuable tips and techniques, news of pottery events, keeps you in contact with other members and teaching studios and classes offered around the country.
- PAN organizes formal and informal exhibitions. A major exhibition "The PAN National Ceramics Biennale" is held every two years at which generous awards are given in recognition of the development of Namibian potters. This prestigious event is attended by an international professional guest potter/selector who also presents a specialised workshop at this time.
- Practical participating workshops, demonstrations, etc with a large variety of topics is offered to all our members from beginner to advanced levels.
- Members enjoy reduced entry fees for exhibitions, workshops and any other PAN event as well as a selling opportunity at our popular stall in the Namibian Craft Centre.
- With our Instagram and Facebook social media platforms and the PAN website, www.pan.iway.na , our Namibian members and their ceramics are promoted internationally,
- PAN is a recognised branch of Ceramics Southern Africa, giving you the opportunity to participate in their workshops and exhibitions in different regions in South Africa.
- PAN's development fund is available at the discretion of the Executive Committee to talented underprivileged individuals requiring assistance in furthering their ceramics development.
- By joining PAN you will learn many new techniques, develop and uplift your skills and expand your knowledge. With the strong support, dedication and friendship of this Association and our like-minded members, you will benefit greatly!

PAN RULES OF MEMBERSHIP

1. Membership is valid for a period of 12 months from 1 March this year to 28 February next year. A renewal reminder will be sent to you in February and if your renewal fee is not received by the end of April, your membership will automatically expire and all communication will be withheld until your renewal is paid.
2. Membership and events fees are regularly reviewed and adjusted if required, at the discretion of the Executive Committee.
3. The Committee of The Potters' Association of Namibia (PAN) reserves the right to decline any application for membership or to terminate the membership of any person and shall not be obliged to furnish any reason for doing so.

I accept the rules of PAN membership as outlined above:

Signed: ..... Dated: .....

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REMINDER

Please remember that your annual membership fees in the amount of **N$350.00** per person are due in **March 2024.**

Contributions

NEXT EDITION:

NO FURTHER NEWSLETTER IS SCHEDULED UNTIL SUCH TIME AS SEVERAL CONTRIBUTIONS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED.

PLEASE SEND CONTRIBUTIONS TO RENATE AT

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