

# Americans workshop Thapong artists

Being an artist anywhere in the world is hard, it needs constant effort and hard work- Peter Clouse

LAME MALEFHO

This past week, Thapong artists were treated to a four day workshop which was organized by the Art in Embassies Program. Curator of Cultural Programs at the Art in Embassies for the US Department of State, Welmoed Laanstra explained that “cross cultural exchange is important to us. The last exchange we had in Botswana was in 2012 and it feels good to be back again. The beauty about this project is that these American artists who usually come here to share their works do it out of the goodness of their hearts, they are not paid to be here, they

have projects that they are doing back home and to be a part of this program they usually put whatever projects they are doing on a halt and travel with us. And since the 19th, it has been an enlightening outreach for both the local and the American artists.”

To kick start the workshop, Artists Peter Clouse, Jacquelyn Gleisner and Jill Galarneau got to interact with Thapong artists and members in a public seminar. “On the first day of the workshop we got to openly interact with all the artists and from our exchanges we learnt that most local artists here had certain ideas about being an artist in the US. They thought it was easier and one could make a lot



of money but we had to correct those stereotypes because art everywhere is really hard. It is a challenging profession because the pay is often really low, the only difference is that there are a lot more outlets and opportunities to be a practicing artist in the US,” said Clouse. He added; “I currently have about five jobs in art so that I can get by so even in the US it is not easy. Although Botswana artists have a lot of challenges in that most of them cannot do art full time, I appreciated their passion for their craft.” A lot of them are self-taught artists and it was so inspiring to see their studios and see their works being so good yet they did not necessarily study art.”

The last two days of the workshop were characterized by smaller organized groups of artists each learning from the American facilitators. While Clouse taught about using non-conventional materials to make art, Gleisner taught artists how to experiment with different methods of abstraction using key words and references from art history, and Galarneau taught artists how to use traditional geometrics combining them with their own symbols to make art. “I particularly liked that the artists were open to try new things and were enthusiastic even though some of them were established artists,” said Galarneau.

“I shared with my group a brief history of screen printing and how this form of art was adopted by the advertising industry. I also shared with them that you don’t need to purchase material to make art, you can just use what is in your surroundings. I make my art from chicken bones, orange peels, wires and just everything I see,” said Clouse.

Thapong coordinator, Reginal Bakwena expressed gratitude for the program as it helped local artists to perfect their work and also learn from others from different countries. The three artists will also be a part of the Maun International Arts festival were they are scheduled to workshop artists.