

American artists in Botswana for cultural exchange

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Three American fine artists are in Botswana as part of the US government program called Art in Embassies.

The trio Peter Clouse, Jacquelyn Gleisner and Jill Galarno on Monday presented some of their works to the yearning eyes of local artists at Thapong Visual Arts.

Speaking during the event, US ambassador to Botswana, Earl Miller, said the project is part of a US government programme meant to promote cross-cultural dialogue and understanding through visual arts.

"Since its establishment in 1963, *Art in Embassies* has worked in over 170 different countries with over 20,000 participants," he said.

Miller added that the Botswana artist exchange focuses on developing the visual arts as a career and tool for diversifying the economy and reinforcing the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture's objective to promote the arts as a sustainable profession.

He said the American artists would lead collaborative, practical workshops that will focus on developing new skills for Botswana artists. "They will also participate in panel discussions and presentations to share how they have built their own careers from an artistic and professional perspective," he said.

One of the artists, Galarno, said her work involves cutting and shading shapes. "Most of my



American artists, left to right, Jill Galarno, Peter Clouse, and Jacquelyn Gleisner PIC: MOMPATI TLHANKANE

work is abstract and I keep piles of the work I had painted," she said. Galarno told the audience that she gets inspiration from what she sees on the streets. Galarno, who also works as a stylist, said her work is inspired by food and flavours. There is an overlap between my art and styling. "I love working with food, because it feels like painting," she said. Another artist, Gleisner, said she works with textiles. She presented some of her work to the audience. "I work on paper and I have developed them into huge papers of 30x1 metres," she said. Gleisner said she experiments with the context and it differs every time. "Most of my paintings are large because I work with huge

scrolls," she said. Clouse, said he mostly works with waste material. "I recycle these material and weave them into fascinating products," he said. He told Botswana artists that he managed to succeed because of networking. "Get on the Internet, take your art to the people and you will eventually find someone who knows somebody that can help you," he highlighted.

The trio will hold a three-day workshops co-hosted by the US Embassy and Thapong. The American artists will facilitate the workshop and they will also share techniques and experiences with members. The workshop will cover painting, sculpting and printmaking.