

Botswana, USA in cross-cultural dialogue through visual arts

➔ Ahead of Thapong Artists of the Year extravaganza

BG reporter

Ahead of the 2015 edition of the Thapong Artists of the Year extravaganza (TAYA) scheduled for November this year, the American Embassy in collaboration with Thapong Visual Arts Centre is pencilled to hold an Art in Embassies Cultural Exchange.

The workshop is a welcome development for local visual artists to share and exchange ideas with their American counterparts. It is slated to take place on October 19-27th. A public lecture will take place on October 19th at the Thapong Visual Arts Centre.

A press release explains that the workshop provides a platform to value the work of visual artists in Botswana and the US, and also expand networking opportunities between Botswana and American artists. For artists who are based in Gaborone and surrounding areas, the programme will take place from 19-22 of this month. Three American artists, namely Peter Clouse, Jacquelyn Gleisner as well as Jill Galarneau will facilitate the educational programmes and work with local artists, with the objective of sharing techniques and helping them to develop career-building skills as professional artists. The trio will give workshops in painting, sculpture as well as printmaking and are also expected to impart marketing and networking skills to local artists. Coordinator of Thapong Visual Arts Centre, Reginald Bakwena told *BG Style* that the workshop is a big opportunity for members of the centre to absorb knowledge while at the same time fostering new working relations with their counterparts from outside the country. They are looking at having close to 20 artists per session, and all the sessions will be running concurrently. "People are registering in large numbers," he says. The workshops will help artists to exchange ideas and learn about new trends and materials that they haven't explored before. A similar programme, organised by the Embassy in association with



Bakwena

Poetavango will be extended to artists in Maun and surrounding areas from October 24-27th. The Maun programme is a special one, as it will take place alongside the annual Maun International Arts Festival. The release also notes that during the festival, the visiting artists will hold visual arts workshops and produce works of art alongside artists in Ngamiland. "Of particular note, the American artists will help to complete the second phase of the mural on the Maun Public Library," the release explains. According to the release from the Embassy, the U.S State Department's office of Art in Embassies (AIE) promotes cross-cultural dialogue and understanding through the visual arts by curating permanent collections, temporary exhibitions and cultural outreach programmes at U.S. diplomatic facilities across the world. AIE was established in 1963, and has worked in 171 countries targeting over 20 000 participants including artists, museums, galleries, universities and private collectors. "Over the past decade, AIE

has provided artists the opportunity to travel abroad on more than 200 cultural exchanges. Conducting events at area schools, universities, and arts institutions while often collaborating with local communities to make site-specific works of art, AIE exchange participants help bring art to life through the power of shared experience," explains the release.

About the artists: Peter Clouse

Michigan artist Peter Clouse works with electronic wires to create large weavings. He recently obtained a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degree from Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan where he was in the Fiber Department. His work deals with waste, technology, mapping, consumption, life, equality, identity, sustainability, strength, identity and power. Clouse is deeply committed to process and repetitive actions - this is why

weaving is such a strong part of his work. He currently lives and works in the Metro Detroit area and is active in several exhibitions that span the United States.

Jacquelyn Gleisner

Jacquelyn Gleisner was born in Buffalo, New York, and studied fine art and art history at Boston University, where she was classically trained in foundational drawing, painting and sculpture. Jacquelyn also studied abroad at the Scuola Internazionale de Grafica in Venice, Italy. Jacquelyn continued her investigation of pattern-based abstraction at the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. She received an MFA from the painting department in 2010. The same year she was awarded a Fulbright Grant and a position as a Visiting Researcher at Aalto University in Helsinki, Finland. In addition to her studio practice and teaching, Jacquelyn writes about contemporary art, and is a regular contributor to Art21's online magazine since 2011. Jacquelyn currently teaches at the New Hampshire Institute of Art and Framingham State University.

Jill Galarneau

Jill Galarneau was raised in Phoenix, Arizona, and received her Bachelors of Fine Arts degree in printmaking from Rhodes Island School of Design and her MFA in painting from Cranbrook Academy of Art. She lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. Jill's primary materials are paper and paint, which she uses to build both collages and installations. Inspired by the languages of abstraction in painting, quilting, and lacemaking, Jill's work develops her own personal language to express memory and sensation. Her work has been included in shows at Cathouse Funeral, Butter Projects, Phillips de Pury, and W/ space among others. She has participated in residencies at Virginia Commonwealth University, Ora Lerman Trust, and Vermont Studio Center.