

# Cross Selection of Namibian Artists

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Namibia's independence precipitated a revival of African cultures and a greater awareness of inherited traditions. This new consciousness has been eagerly supported by artists like Andrew van Wyk and Temba Masala. The younger generation of artists no longer see their home land solely as a country of fascinating virgin landscapes but also as a colourful conglomerate of cultures. This is apparent in the works of Hercules Viljoen, Helena Brand, Malo Hoebel and others who have integrated African ornaments, motives and mysticism into their works.

Interaction between artists from different backgrounds plays an important role in finding a Namibian identity in art. Since independence, Namibians from a variety of backgrounds have attended a number of art workshops together. The first *Tulipamwe International Artists Workshop* was a milestone in this respect.

What follows is a loose cross selection of some of Namibia's artists. Readers interested in the well researched, comprehensive selection of Namibia's art scene should read Adelheid Lilienthal's excellent book "*Art in Namibia*", published by the National Art Gallery of Namibia. All extracts on Namibian Art have been copied from this book. All photographs in the section on Namibian Art, unless otherwise indicated, fall under the copyright of Helga Kohl.

Dörte Berner produces sculptures in steatite, pyrophyllite, marble and copper. Her subject matter concentrates on human relationships, her strongly stylised and emotive works can be serious and yet humorous at times. She, like most sculptors, works with the rhythm of the stone to bring out of an object.



*Vulture (Dörte Berner, 1986, Steatite)*

Kay Cowley- is inspired by nature and ancient rock paintings, containing magic and mystery. In her style, she tries to find equilibrium between abstract and representational art. She produces painting by first drawing linear lines and adding several layers of paint until she has found the desired effect. She extracts elements of nature and combines them to form hidden shapes or objects, it is in this way that her impressions of the Namibian outdoors are transposed into personal visions.



*Think Tank (Kay Cowley, 1992)*

Malo Hoebel's ideas initially take shape on small pieces of paper. She works on typical Namibian themes in either abstract or descriptive forms. She paints mainly in oil and watercolour and works in other mediums such as stone and ceramics. Her drawing ability allows her to experiment in various fields of art and her use of colour is both abstract and non-abstract at times. She works in a mainly observational method, arranging articles in a still life and then paints them adding collages.



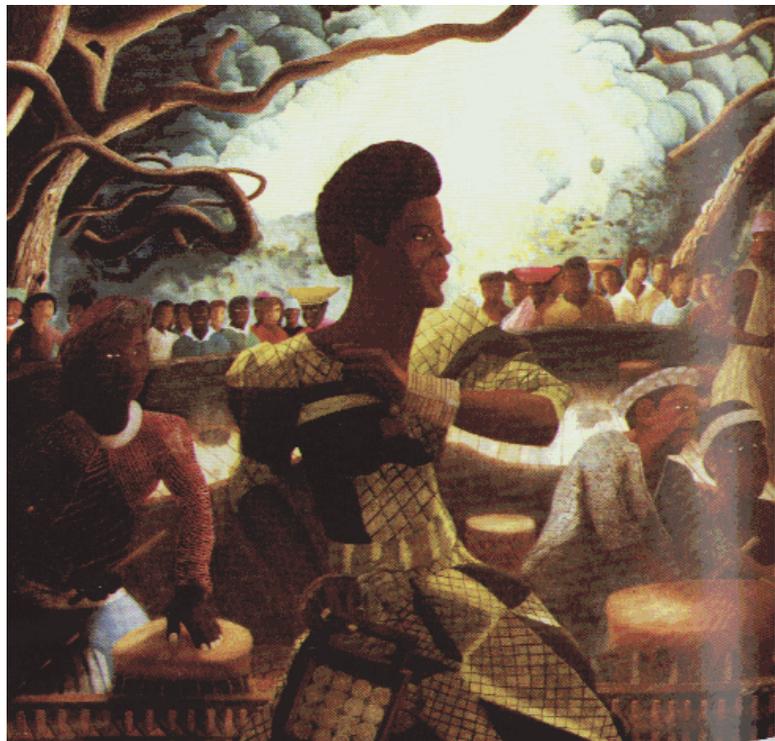
*Tribal Healer (Malo Hoebel, 1992)*

Koos van Ellinckhuijzen has developed his style out of a fascination with surrealistic art. He describes his style as metaphysical or magic realism modelled on artists like Escher. His paintings are characterised as being scientifically precise and clean drawn. He won great praise for the [stamp series](#) he designed, depicting celestial images like the solar systems and Haley's comet. He strives for the eventual fusion of art and science under the motto of "science for arts sake".



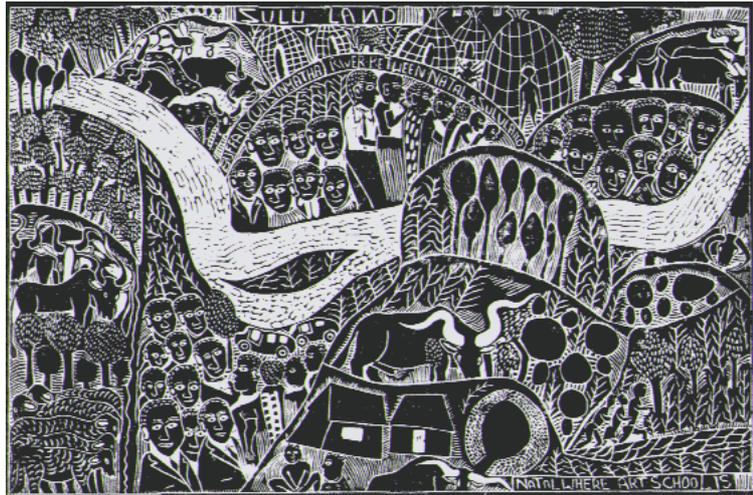
*Fata Morgana ( Koos von Ellinckhuijzen, 1993)*

Andrew van Wyk also works in printmaking techniques like lino, cardboard and monoprints. He combines two worlds together, that of dreams and that of reality, he uses his artistic talent to record communal life and his own personal dreams and aspirations. He comes from an artistically rich background and was carving and painting as a schoolchild. He designs each form and pattern meticulously, almost painfully and he leaves no open spaces or incomplete forms, his love for detail is rooted mainly in the tradition of African story tellers. Colour is of the utmost importance and is his main expressive tool; his use of colour creates a dream- like atmosphere, which evokes different moods and mysterious double meanings.



*African Rhythms (Andrew van Wyk, 1990)*

John Muafangejo (1943 – 1987) is Namibia's most famous artist. His works have been distributed all over Africa, Europe and the USA. Noted for making the most crucial contribution to contemporary art, his death denied him of his dream of seeing independence, a goal he managed to contribute to through his socio-political and critical analysis of life before independence.



*Zululand (John Muafangejo, 1974)*

His introduction into Christianity had a notable effect on his work and it was said that the word of God was a particular source of inspiration for many of his themes. Christianity greatly improved his individual style which he realised when producing linocut and wood etchings. His artworks have been compared with that of famous graphic artists from Europe, and thus should be recognised as great master of linocut in Africa. His works are often accompanied with explanatory text which interpreted the content in a humorous and emotive manner.

His close connection to the church, his love for biblical stories and his awareness of the struggle black people were going through in a country divided by racism, coupled with the horror of the war inspired many of his works.

Joseph Madisia feels that art is a means of communication, an understanding of people and an awareness of different aspects in life, art has no barriers or limitations. He recycles the cardboard backs of writing or drawing pads as an alternative to the more expensive and less available linoleum. Before Namibia's independence, he was mainly concerned with the hopes and hardships of his own people, his comments though are never harsh but rather concealed in symbols.



*Reprimandation of Temptation (Joseph Madisia, 1993)*

The artist often uses the calabash as a symbol, it is associated with the nourishment of a mother's milk, and other symbols include tortoise shells, drums and fish.



*Tulipamwe Triptych (Kosta Shipenga, 1994)*

Kosta Shipenga-A relatively new artist, he was taught to carve by an uncle who encouraged him to never stop drawing. His compositions depict the rural traditions and way of life in the Kavango region, conveying his respect for traditional leaders who take responsibility for their people. At his first Tulipamwe exhibition he was inspired to work on larger formats which has greatly affected his work in general.

Namibia has many talented photographers who use our country as a backdrop for insightful and awe-inspiring photos. Many of them use the desert in its natural beauty in photos out of an attempt to duplicate that beauty.

Tony Figueira -A shifting mood is represented in his photos, his main subject matter is people in their normal environment, mainly in rural areas. He has the amazing ability to decide exactly which angle to use to capture the essence of his subject matter. His primary aim is to expose the character and feelings of single people who pose for him.



*Namibian Woman (Tony Figueira, 1993)*