

DUMELA



Newsletter from Botswana Sweden Friendship Association No 1/2013

Dear BOTSFA members!



H.E. Lameck Nthekela
new Botswana Ambassador
to Sweden

First and foremost, it is my great pleasure, as Chairperson of BOTSFA and publisher of Dumela Newsletter, to inform you that Botswana's new Ambassador to Sweden, H.E. Lameck Nthekela presented his letter of credence to HM The King on Wednesday 13 February 2013. Ambassador Nthekela has many years' experience working for the Botswana Export Development and Investment Authority (BEDIA), an organisation that Sweden primarily cooperates with and where he headed the Botswana Investment and Trade Centre and was acting CEO. Ambassador Nthekela was BEDIA's regional representative in London from 2003–2007. In recent years, BOTSFA has benefitted from participating in trade-related discussion fora led by BEDIA and looks forward to working with the Embassy under the new leadership. Dumela warmly welcomes you, Ambassador Nthekela!

This issue of Dumela features interviews with a British artist, Ann Gollifer, and co-author of the

book »I don't know why I was created – Dada Coex'ae Qgam«, and Ulf Söderström, Deputy Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Infrastructure, Science and Technology. Enjoy your journey with two people who went to Botswana, one with plans to stay for one year – turning into 27 years – and the other with plans to establish a permanent home, by applying for citizenship following two weeks' of arriving in the country.

Depending on when you are reading this, you may still have time to register for attending BOTSFA's AGM 2013, which will be held in Sigtuna on March 16. I encourage you to actively participate in the affairs of the Association and, if you are reading this but are not paid up for 2013, to renew your membership or join the Association.

Julia Majaha-Järtby
BOTSFA
Chairperson



REMINDER MEMBERSHIP FEES FOR 2013

To assist the Association in maintaining a current record of membership, please pay by February 28, 2013.

Individual: SEK 175 • Family: SEK 300
(incl. children up to 15 years of age)
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visit us on www.botsfa.nu

IN SEARCH of a sense of belonging

INTERVIEW **Cecilia Wanger**

PHOTOS **Mats Ögren Wanger & Ann Gollifer studio**
www.anngollifer.com

Gaborone-based artist Ann Gollifer has just returned from London, where she has been developing her painting and printmaking. She is planning to have a show in London, and possibly also in Johannesburg, in 2013.

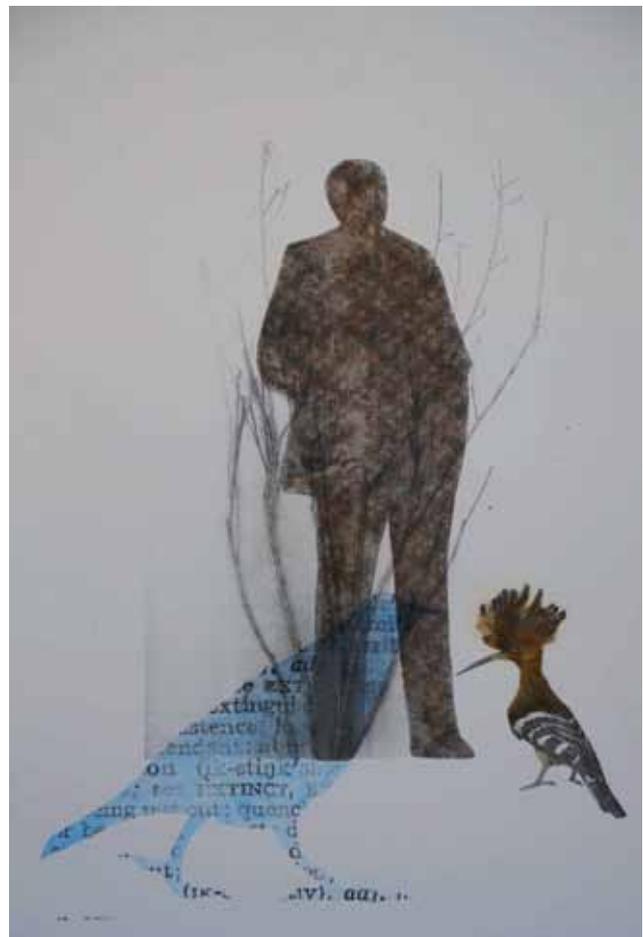


– I want to join the mainstream of serious artists in the world. London is a good place to be since it is a city of many artists, which makes it extremely challenging and stimulating. As an artist, you are one out of millions!

Ann Gollifer was in the midst of working when I met her in her London studio in November. The Bermondsey Street atelier was lined with small broken pieces of ceramics, carefully laid out on Sunday supplement papers. Some of them are findings from Ann's low-tide excursions to the nearby banks of the River Thames. Neatly pinned to the wall, there were fifty-four small watercolours of broken ceramics. Each one of them so carefully painted, they seem real.

– At low-tide on the banks of the Thames, one can find parts of china from the 19th century, and even older. It is amazing; it is history washing up around your feet. I have painted 54 fragments of china, the same number as the nations of the African continent.

Ann Gollifer has lived in Africa for many years, but she was born in Mabaruma, Guyana. She is one of four



siblings. Her father is English and her mother is Amerindian. They met when her father was working with British overseas development in the 1950's in what was then British Guiana.

– My earliest memories – sounds, taste and the smell of fruit are from there. I can recognize a Guyanese accent anywhere!

Her family moved to Botswana in 1976 but Ann was educated in England and Scotland, where she completed a Master's degree in Art History. After graduation, she worked at Christie's Contemporary Art in London. In 1985, she moved to Gaborone, with her husband Mattias, son of »Gus« and Sieglinde Nilsson. The Nilsson family runs the famous Sanitas Nursery and Tea Garden in Gaborone, the oasis where Ann has her art studio.

– At first, I hated Botswana! To me it seemed empty, dry, brown and frightening. No edge, no sea. I saw myself having a career as an artist in London and planned to stay in Botswana for only a year. Now I have lived there for 27 years ...

Botswana became an opening for Ann, who at that time wanted to move away from Art History into a more practical course. She worked with Alec Campbell, founder of the National Museum and Art Gallery, cataloguing Botswana artwork at the museum in Gaborone and also started working with the Phutadikobo Museum in Mochudi.

After working within the museums for two years, she joined the private sector in the printing industry. In 1990



she went freelance, designing commissioned graphic work for various organisations. At the same time, she became involved with the Triangle International Artists Workshops which extended to the creation of the Thapong Visual Art Centre in Gaborone, where she was one of the first artists to have a studio. She eventually moved her studio to Sanitas and quit commissioned commercial art.

– Being an artist in Botswana is very much about being part of the development of the small artistic community. I love it, it is meaningful and a very immediate way of forming real friendships within Botswana.

One of the fruits of the friendships is, »I don't know why I was created« – a book about San artist Coex'Ae Qgam, Dada, one of the most well-known representatives of the Kuru Art Centre at D'Kar. Ann wrote the book together with Jenny Egner – editor, writer and teacher also living in Gaborone.

– The book project took nine years and many hours of interviewing, Ann says.

– I choose to be an artist to be free to pursue relationships with people in a real and meaningful way. It has given me opportunities to be in places where most people rarely go. Anyone can visit the Kuru Art centre, but few could step into Dada's home. Pursuing an artist's career breaks down the barriers between people. The Dada book is an example of that.

With the book, Ann and Jenny tried to break the stereotyping of the Kuru artists. In order to preserve the Kuru art legacy for the future, the book also contains an almost complete catalogue of Dada's prints and paintings.

– I think that artwork should be assessed for its own merit, not because of the artist being labelled as a member of a certain group. Although using the so-called African card can help one's work to be recognised in the international arena, there are black curators that don't even live in Africa who want to see an all-black, African art movement. They want to celebrate blackness to balance the white, western domination.

Besides preparing for her next show in Gaborone, Ann is planning to return to London by autumn 2013 – possibly to work in Brixton, a multi-ethnic part of London with a thriving bohemian art-scene.

– Cultural development is what I've been doing my whole life and Brixton is a place where many people of Caribbean descent settled in the 1940's, Ann explains.

Here, she would create new work and also be involved with the archiving of the London Print-works Trust, helping to make it more accessible to the community.

– I think all artists search for a homeland, physical or meta-physical. I have visited my cousins from Guyana who now live in Queens, New York, and with them I have discovered what it is to be part of the Caribbean diaspora. That experience has given me a sense of belonging. My work deals with this issue – it is the thread that holds it all together.

– I'm not white and I'm not African – you have to be true to yourself. Living in Africa has had a huge influence on me, »Made in Africa« – but I am still not African.

INTERVIEW

I decided to be a Botswana citizen two weeks after arriving in the country ...

BY Julia Majaha-Järtby PHOTOS Ulf Nermark

When, 40 years ago, Ulf Söderström packed his bags with 20 kilos of tools – including dental scraper and mirror to leave Sweden – it was with a deliberate plan to move on.

– I have always felt a bit of a stranger in Sweden, he says. – I was born in Detroit, at the end of the WWII, when my father worked with General Motors on a stipendium from Svenska Stålprensings Aktiebolag (SSAB). I was the third born of four brothers. I later grew up in Olofström in Blekinge with a small population of about 5000 people at the time, but with a diverse base of nationalities, at least 80, most of who worked for SSAB.

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Ulf singles out a Danish family friend, Mr. Andersen, who had worked in Venezuela, as the person who had strong influence on him.

– Mr. Andersen encouraged me to »learn something very well and get a good understanding of everything I could experience.« Ulf took the advice to the limit as he tried gaining skills on anything he could lay his hands.

– I did some hairdressing, went into tailoring and carpentry before I settled for studies at the Tekniska Läroverket in Karlskrona, where I got my building engineering qualification – Byggnadsingenjör. When, at the age of 25, I saw an advertisement by Sida in 1971 for a job in Addis Abeba, I did not hesitate to apply. Unfortunately this was offered to an Englishman, but I continued searching. Another opening for Addis came soon thereafter, including an opening in Botswana.

Ulf chuckles at the prospect of having to decide between Ethiopia and Botswana (a country he had never heard of). "I decided on the unknown young country, called Botswana, and accepted the job."

– I searched everywhere in South America – perhaps due to Mr. Andersen's influence. There was no Google then! When I finally found some information, it was on Bechuanaland Protectorate in southern Africa. Information was scanty, describing the country as »semi desert«. It did not matter what the descriptions said about the country, I chose Botswana and I have never regretted my impulsive decision.

Ulf recalls landing in Gaborone on September 18, 1972, at 12:45.

– I had sold everything I had in

Sweden, and Botswana opened its arms. I received a warm welcome, he laughs, sipping tea that had just been served by his beloved wife, Gaafele.

– My first job was with Madiba Secondary School where I worked with one other Swede, on Sida's Swedish Volunteer Service, Staffan Engström.

As part of a team of 5 expatriates, Staffan and Ulf commenced designing and building the structures in the school, taking leadership in, respectively, design and construction.

– The work started with the house we stayed in. The most rewarding work became that of working with students, as Madiba offered academic and apprenticeship training. I was with the teaching team responsible for training the building apprentices under the brigade program, explains Ulf.

After leaving Sida in 1974, a job offer at Maun Secondary School opened the path that would lead to his over 35 years' marriage with Gaafele.

– I had an accident during a motor cross competition in 1976, as a result of which I lay in the hospital in Maun. I had a serious back injury. Gaafele and I met soon after my release from hospital and a year later we were married.

Ulf talks about the many construction projects he has been involved with and looks admiringly through the big windows of the beautiful house, which has a touch of his building skills.

– I got my citizenship in 1978. Two years' later I established a construction company, Us Builders, which I managed until 1994.

The construction company evolved into a project management business, *Know How* (Pty) Ltd.

– I had to leave the *Know How* in October 2010 in response to an invitation by the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Infrastructure, Science and Technology (MIST) to head their buildings and engineering department. I was, in April 2012, appointed Deputy

Permanent Secretary, a position I currently hold.

The appointment has meant long hours of work and demanding domestic and international travel.

– To cool off, Gaafele and I venture into the Kalahari Desert or Okavango Delta from time to time, Ulf laughs.

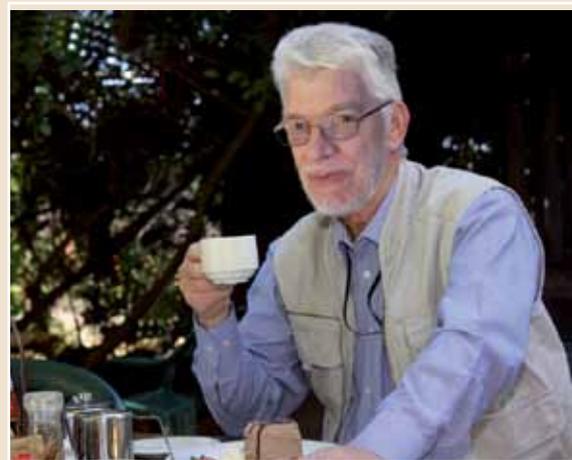
On the lessons gained from the experiences working in the public service, Ulf is quick to say that there is a need for a long-term development plan for dealing with construction, which should be accompanied by solid regulation of the industry.

– A construction coordination unit for all ministries would contribute towards better management of public spending on projects. That is just but one of the issues that is keeping me busy in my new role and in contributing to a more efficient MIST.

Subsequent to the interview Ulf confirmed that the construction coordination unit and the regulator proposals have been accepted for implementation during 2013. He will be heading their establishment.

Ulf Söderström

Deputy Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Infrastructure, Science and Technology
Lives in Gaborone, Botswana
Family: Wife Gaafele, daughter Tsholofelo, sons, Thari and Bengt



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