

# Workshops, residencies give crafters creative edge

## STAFF WRITER

CRAFT producers from throughout the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have boosted their creativity and business skills and designed new products, thanks to a series of workshops, residencies and an internship programme funded by the Kellogg Foundation and facilitated by the Cape Craft and Design Institute (CCDI).

Eight workshops, each lasting eight days, have been attended by a total of 103 craft producers since 2008. The workshops have helped the craft producers' improve their livelihoods by encouraging them to approach familiar and new materials in a fresh way, leading to the creation of new, exciting products.

"We don't teach skills such as weaving or knitting, instead the CCDI focuses on how to think and problem-solve creatively," says CCDI workshop facilitator Karen Stewart.

"People are encouraged to grow from the point at which they currently find themselves. Small steps are taken to becoming a better business person, designer and innovator," said Stewart.

The workshops initially take participants through creative activities such as drawing to music with their eyes closed, and making their own tools, which shows you don't have to be limited by lack of access to materials.

They also complete an intensive three-day enterprise development workshop to improve their business systems and management.

Participants are also exposed to design technology in the CCDI Product Support Space, which offers one-on-one support by knowledgeable staff, backed by a wide array of tools and machines, and research and IT facilities.

Participants in the residency programme have the time and space to experiment on new products at the CCDI facilities. They also meet leading designers and attend creative events in the city.

The latest residency graduates are three craft producers and entrepreneurs from Mozambique – Walter Zandamela, an artist and technician working in various materials such as wood and ceramics; Marcia Horst, who makes fashion and home accessories from wood and fibres such as ilala palm and grass under the Dithonga label; and fashion designer Isaque Mohammed, who was co-hosted by the CCDI and the Cape Town Fashion Council.

Horst experimented with plastic for the first time, and created a new fashion accessory range from mixed materials.

"I had two weeks to play with different materials and create women's accessories, which was great. I played a lot, and I could do some things which made me very happy. I don't know if they are acceptable

to the market yet, but I believe so, and will improve them if needed when I get back home," she says.

Zandamela also explored new materials, assisted by the Product Support Space, and made a range of objects combining African and Asian cultures; and Mohammed designed a new range of women's clothing during his stay.

Other participants who have used their workshop experience effectively include mohair weaver Esther Khechange of Lesotho Co-op Handicrafts, who has been inspired to make numerous new designs for rugs and other products; Cape Town florist Alison Prest, who has produced a range of plant containers from recycled material, papier maché and resin; and Gcinumuzi Mavimbela of Swaziland, who has since travelled to Algeria to present his ideas to a wider audience and has been accepted as a foundation student by a Sri Lankan design academy.

"I never knew that I could draw or even design anything, but truly the workshop was an eye-opener.

"I realised my talent and capabilities. I also realised that everything around us can be a resource material," says Mamokhali Makhutla of Lesotho Co-operative Handicrafts, who attended a creativity workshop.

"We were doing some of the things without planning. So now we plan first, to manage our time, to



CREATING AFRESH: Walter Zandamela holds a sushi tray he designed at CCDI during his residency.

find the right market, and to price our things correctly," says Margaret Mugwisi of Batsiranai, an organisation for parents of disabled children in Harare.

The programme has helped craft producers in South Africa and the SADC region to connect with one another, to improve their business skills and enable them to take their careers forward as entrepreneurs, designers and innovators.

In addition, two interns, one from Mozambique and one from Zimbabwe, spent February at the CCDI working side-by-side with

CCDI staff on two programmes.

The internship is aimed at spreading skills and knowledge in the development of the sector across the region.

"Working on the CCDI Handmade Collection stand at Design Indaba gave me the opportunity of further networking with South African and international buyers, and craft producers or designers participating in the expo," says intern Jane Parsons of Global Arts in Harare, Zimbabwe, who was able to link up to the Design Indaba Expo management team.