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AMAZWI CONTEMPORARY ART CELEBRATES 5TH ANNIVERSARY

**Since 2004, African Art Gallery Owners Travel Thousand Of Miles,
A Dozen Countries, To Source Work From Over 100 Talented Artists**

SAUGATUCK, Mich., April 20, 2009 --Amazwi Contemporary Art, the southwest Michigan-based gallery specializing in paintings, sculpture and unique craft from Africa and the African Diaspora, is celebrating its 5th Anniversary on May 2 with a special reception featuring new Shona sculpture from Zimbabwe and paintings by several artists from Brazil and Argentina.

Since 2004 co-owners Mike Tischleder and Wally Petersen have been to Africa several times, as well as to South America. They have traveled tens of thousands of miles to connect with more than 100 emerging and established artists in places like Kenya, Tanzania, Zanzibar and Uganda in the East; Zimbabwe, Zambia and South Africa in the South; and Ghana in the West – as well as to Brazil and Argentina.

Along the way they have come perilously close to two female rhinos on a walk in the African bush, been licked face-to-face by a hungry giraffe, had “sundowners” (gin and tonics) in the shadow of Mt. Kilimanjaro, visited with Maasai and Samburu families in their villages in Kenya and Tanzania, and tasted a fine variety of wines in South Africa.

“These past five years have flown by,” said gallery director Mike Tischleder. “When we first opened, some skeptics didn’t think the contemporary art of Africa would generate much interest here. But we’re happy to say that we’ve opened up a lot of people’s eyes to the depth and beauty of the vibrant African art movement currently underway in many countries across the continent.”

Added gallery co-owner Wally Petersen, “Many of the artists have become good friends, and they deeply appreciate how our support has allowed them to pursue their craft, often in difficult circumstances, while exposing their work to a whole new audience. My proudest moments have been when an artist beams at us and says, ‘God bless Amazwi.’ We know our business and the enthusiastic response of our customers continue to make an important difference in their lives.”

Amazwi’s success can also be attributed to the dedication of Audrey Cavanaugh, a local Saugatuck resident who bartended at the 2004 Grand Opening. A former art teacher, she fell in love with the art that day, and subsequently became the gallery manager responsible for many of the day-to-day operations.

“Audrey is an integral part of our Amazwi family,” said Petersen. “Our customers love her as much we do.”

“Amazwi” is the Zulu word for “voices.” The gallery owners chose the name because they are bringing the voices of African artists to southwest Michigan and beyond courtesy of www.amazwi.com.

Amazwi’s 5th anniversary reception will run from 1-6 p.m. on May 2, with extended hours until 9 p.m. since the business communities in both Saugatuck and neighboring Douglas are hosting their annual “Spring Previews” that evening.

Amazwi is located at 249 Culver St. (at the corner of Griffith) in downtown Saugatuck. Call 269-857-5551 or visit www.amazwi.com for more information.

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Att. Photos: Interior of Amazwi Contemporary Art
“Lilas y Verdes” by Sergio Brandenburg, Buenos Aires
“Marinas” by Roberto Jofre, Buenos Aires



