

# Artist Spotlight

## Amanda Bosca helps third-world artists get their work to market

**A**manda Bosca is always on the look-out for exotic artists who live far from America's shores.

Bosca is the owner of Accents For Today, a New York company that imports and wholesales art and handmade craft items. Her product lines include cards, posters, jewelry, wire sculptures and other art objects, and are retailed through a number of museum stores, including the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, the Museum for African Art (temporarily located on Long Island), the Fernbank Museum of Natural History in Atlanta and El Museo del Barrio in New York.

Some of her artists are from Africa. Others are from Serbia, Great Britain, India and Peru, among other places around the globe. She met a couple of these artists while they were at trade shows in New York. She even found one of the artists on the Internet.

"Some years ago I had a booth at the National Stationery Show" in New York at the Javits Center, said Bosca, who is an artist herself. "In the booth right next to me was a Nigerian artist. He had a no-frills booth: no lights or carpeting ... and he had these wonderful fabric cards."

And that's how Bosca met Olaopa, a Yoruba tribesman who lives in Lagos. (His name is pronounced 'OH-la-DAY-lay OH-la-OH-pa.') Bosca said it was evident to her that he was a determined man:

his costly trip to America to attempt to sell his art was a major financial gamble for him.

Olaopa had studied architecture in his native country, but with little opportunity in that field, he ultimately fell back on his self-taught artistic skills to earn money.

"He does absolutely wonderful pen and ink drawings," Bosca said.

She made another valuable contact a couple of years ago at SOURCES, another George Little Management trade show held on the Hudson River piers near the Javits Center, simultaneous with the National Stationery Show. That time she met Vicki and Maggie, two young women from Zimbabwe.

"We just started to talk," Bosca said. Months later, Bosca decided to do business with Vicki but couldn't reach her. (Turns out, Vicki had gone to England to become a nurse.) But Bosca did manage to reach Maggie, who knew several artists. Maggie began providing Bosca with creations from some of her acquaintances, including Tendai, a 19-year-old boy who made animal sculptures out of wire and beads.

At another SOURCES show, she met an Indian couple who supply British museum stores with embroidered fabrics. Together they designed 10 embroidered butterfly and dragonfly pins, which have accompanied some live butterfly exhibits and found a home with botanical gardens.



**Thirty-one-year-old Waisson Mupedza lives in Zimbabwe. These 4-by-6-inch cards come with a white envelope in a bag with an informational insert.**

She met a Peruvian in the United States who helped her connect with other artisans back in Peru, and is starting to produce hand-made greeting cards that incorporate the Peruvian designs in yarn. Those artisans connected her to still others who make art objects and ocarinas from gourds. They also make silver jewelry.

"My latest addition is Waisson Mupedza, a man in Zimbabwe who does wonderful painted greeting cards," Bosca said. Some of Mupedza's cards are in the stores at the Brooklyn Museum and the Field Museum in Chicago.

While surfing the Internet she found Lilliana Site, who lives in a small Serbian town near the Hungarian border.

"She is an artist in straw and she is becoming known here," Bosca said. Her creations are hand-made cards, framed pieces, masks and boxes.

The American Museum of Straw Art in Long Beach, Calif., commissioned a piece from Site, who created a mask called "Mother Earth," and it is now on exhibit there. (Check it out at [www.strawartmuseum.org](http://www.strawartmuseum.org).)

While Bosca seldom travels overseas - "running a small business, it's hard to get away" - she did go to Serbia to meet Site.

"It was a long, long train ride, which kept stopping in cow pastures," Bosca said. "We were in a no-smoking section, and everyone was smoking like crazy."

That trip also opened her eyes to the poverty in other parts of the world.

"It's very poor there, there are no jobs ... They've been left out of the European community," she said, re-

ferring to the expanding economic alliance of the more prosperous European countries.

### Getting to the Market

In the undeveloped or so-called Third World nations in Africa, Asia and Latin America, where there are few if any jobs, people who are artistically inclined sometimes turn to their art in an attempt to make a living. The art won't sell in the artists' home countries because poverty is rife and there is no market for it. The only possible markets are in Europe or the United States - but there are major hurdles in getting it here.

"For example, in Nigeria there is no packaging material" for shipping things, Bosca said. "There is no bubble wrap. I don't know if they even have tissue paper."

"Here we have a post office, insurance ... Do you know how many countries have no insurance? If it gets lost in the mail, too bad."

Shipping costs from Africa to the United States are "enormous," Bosca said.

Another hurdle facing Third World artists: Many simply have no idea of how to deal directly with a museum store in America. Bosca has met foreign exhibitors at trade shows who often "have very little concept of shipping on time, quality control, pricing, shipping details ... Yet they may have very interesting things and the ability to scout for new items, if they are guided in the right direction."

That's where Bosca comes in. She helps the artists get their pieces to market - and brings the market unique, cultural items.

For more information about Accents For Today, Circle Reader Service #208.



**Left, these boxes are created using screw-top cosmetic jars and are lined with fabric or eyelet lace. Artist Lilliana Site picks the straw then presses, weaves, braids and cuts the straw to create the boxes. Middle, Lilliana Site uses her artistic talents with straw to create a number of different artistic pieces, including this straw collage card featuring a moth. Right, straw art is a traditional folk art in Serbia, and masks such as this one demonstrate the unique art created with different types of straw. The American Museum of Straw Art has a collection of straw masks on display.**