

# Weekend Leisure



PHOTO: ESTELLE SINKINS

One of the new range of chandeliers being produced by the Umcebo Trust for Design Indaba.



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Each of the works created for Design Indaba 2010 has its own animal guardian.

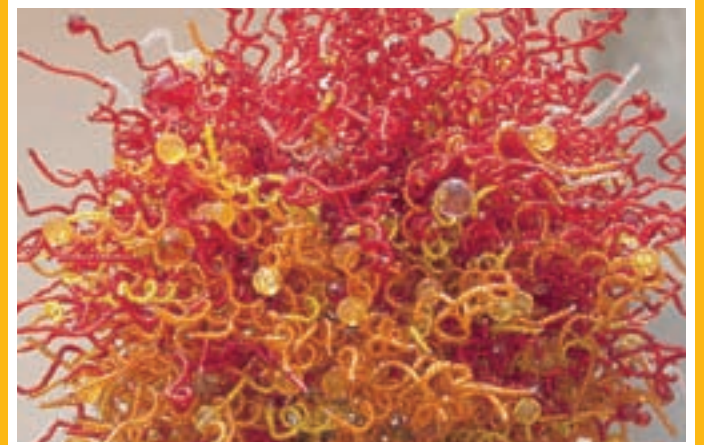


PHOTO: SUPPLIED

An Afro Puff chandelier.

## Recycling takes root

Umcebo crafters draw a bead on a world record

**ESTELLE SINKINS**

USING bottle caps, corks and plastic bottles, the crafters of the Umcebo Trust are well on their way to creating a world record eco-tree out of recycled materials.

When I visited the organisation's retail shop and workshop at uShaka Marine World's shopping precinct earlier this week, the crafters, who have already put the trunk together, were hard at work on the tree's branches.

To make the eco-tree, which is dedicated to the memory of Umcebo supporter Jim Smale, who died in 2009, the crafters will use about 10 000 individual pieces, including wine corks and beads made from two-litre cooldrink bottles.

Once finished, the tree will be about 6,5 metres tall and will weigh one-and-a-half tons. And all those involved hope their achievement will make it into the *Guinness Book of Records*.

"The tree is monumental, enormous," Robin Opperman, founder of the trust, said. "The crafters were fearless when they put it together. I, on the other hand, had to walk around the corner, not look, and say a few prayers that it stayed up.

"It's the largest structure we've ever built, and will be the centrepiece of our stand at Design Indaba 2010 [in Cape Town]. It was not only fun to make, but it represents the central idea behind the trust, which is to explore the depth of local craft and design."



PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Pictured with the trunk and first few branches of the eco-tree are Umcebo Trust members (from left) Mluleki Madlala, Noxolo Nomvete, Siyakudumisa Mavume, Maureen Graham, Mbongiseni Ntuli, Sithabile Madlala and (crouching) Douglas Chepeta and Bongani Luthuli.

The organisation will also be showcasing a new range of beaded table lamps

and chandeliers, each of which comes with an animal guardian in the form of a bee, chameleon or dragonfly.

The stunning creations are Umcebo's answer to what Opperman calls "the Chinese onslaught" in the area of home décor. He is passionate about the need for South Africans to use home-grown products in interior design and believes that products from KwaZulu-Natal can easily compare with those in Cape Town.

It's one of the many reasons that Umcebo make regular trips to Design Indaba, which this year runs from February 26 to 28. "It gets your name out there in the best possible way," Opperman said.

Clearly, it has worked. After the 2008 event, Malan and Associates commissioned the trust to produce beadwork for the new National Library in Pretoria, and last year two beautiful works were commissioned by eThekweni Municipality for Durban's Moses Mabhida Stadium.

For more information about the Umcebo Trust, visit their retail store and workshop at uShaka Village Walk, or log on to [www.umcebotrust.co.za](http://www.umcebotrust.co.za).

### WHAT IS THE UMCEBO TRUST?

**THE Umcebo Trust is a public benefit non-profit organisation, which was established by Robin Opperman, a former maths and art teacher, who worked with children with disabilities.**

**It produces original art pieces and aims to empower individuals with disabilities or who come from disadvantaged backgrounds by enabling them to earn a living and develop self-esteem.**

**The team includes administrator, Di Ching; shop manager Mluleki Madlala; deputy store manager Bongani Luthuli; and in-store crafters Siyakudumisa Mavume,**

**Mbongiseni Ntuli, Sithabile Madlala, Noxolo Nomvete and Maureen Graham.**

**Umcebo also has over 35 non-permanent crafters drawn from Ntuzuma, uMgababa, uMlazi, Lamontville and KwaMashu, who work on a commission basis.**

**Products include beaded trees, wall lights shaped as fish, flowers or birds, jewellery, free-standing sculptures, gifts and ornaments.**

**Umcebo's creations are to be found in the art collections of Virgin tycoon Richard Branson, talk-show host Oprah Winfrey and King Goodwill Zwelethini.**



PHOTO: RAJESH JANTILAL

*To The Sea*, one of two installations made by the Umcebo Trust for the Moses Mabhida Stadium.



PHOTO: ESTELLE SINKINS

A table lamp, complete with its animal guardian, which Umcebo Trust crafters have made for Design Indaba.