



Omba Arts Trust | Namibia |  
Basketry, Beaded Jewelry

## Of ostrich eggshell jewelry and woven baskets



Representing artists from four distinct Namibian tribes, the Omba Arts Trust provides rural artisans with a means of income and creative expression. For decades, Namibia has been struck by economic hardship, and artmaking has long represented a crucial source of income for its inhabitants. Omba's members produce a range of strikingly innovative—and astonishingly beautiful—items, from baskets to jewelry.

One type of basket, called Kavango, is traditionally used for harvesting pearl millet but is suitable for any number of practical tasks. Though techniques and basic materials remain the same, the basket weavers developed a wholly new, sustainable black dye, which they use to add contrast and visual intrigue to items that are both immaculately woven and eye-catchingly contemporary. Omba's artisans produce a type of jewelry which will almost certainly be unfamiliar to most western audiences: necklaces, bracelets, earrings, and more using beads made of ostrich eggshells. Other statement-making jewelry

items are made of recycled PVC pipe, which Omba's artisans transform into bracelets. Worn throughout northern Namibia, the bracelets begin with the artist cutting a length of discarded pipe into a strip, then etching into it with a design. Next, the recesses are filled with color pigment.

Glass beads have been worn, traded and given as gifts by Namibian people for hundreds of years. Intricately designed strands of beads make beautiful jewelry, but Omba's members also stitch beads onto black fabric to make decorative textiles. Whatever their creations, the women of Omba Arts Trust are dedicated to innovation, artistic expression, and to producing both functional and beautiful artwork of the highest caliber.



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF ARTIST