

Made in China about basic human needs

By Wonder Guchu

THERE is always a humourous edge to Imke Rust's art which one can never find in any other artist's works.

Imke's on-going solo exhibition titled *Made in China* at the Bank Windhoek Omba Gallery which opened on 27 July and runs until 16 August tackles the human mind's preconceived ideas in a very light manner.

The pieces mounted this time were produced in China using traditional Chinese art materials. She was inspired by her stay in China in 2008 when she shared a studio with a Swedish friend and artist, Torsten Jurell in Beijing during the International Art Camp. Imke worked among Chinese artists who occupy about 100 art studios for three weeks.

Alone in a country where very few people speak English, Imke had to learn to communicate by whatever means necessary. This disadvantage was a blessing in disguise because Imke had to communicate through art using Chinese inks, watercolours and rice paper.

The result of that stay are the works on display at Omba Gallery today which puts Imke on a higher pedestal as – most probably – the only artist who probes the human psyche, spirit and personal relationships.

While on the surface, Imke's *Made in China* has a personal touch as an individual artist's soul searching in a foreign land, it also brings into focus the role of Chinese culture, economy expansion and art in a globalised village.

Imke accurately captures China's expansion into the world in the series *Dragon Looking for Love* where there is a friendly dragon out on the prowl. That dragon which could be a symbol for China has both abstract and literal expression as well as meaning.

In Chinese mythology dragons are considered symbols of imperial power, potency and authority unlike in European and African mythologies where dragons are considered evil.

Coming at a time when Namibia is starting to view China's role as detrimental to the country, some of Imke's pieces bring images and perspectives which explore this relationship.

At the centre of the exhibition is the message that whatever politics say and dictates to us, the bottom-line is that we are all human beings striving for a comfortable life. We have basic feelings and desires. We all want to love and be loved.