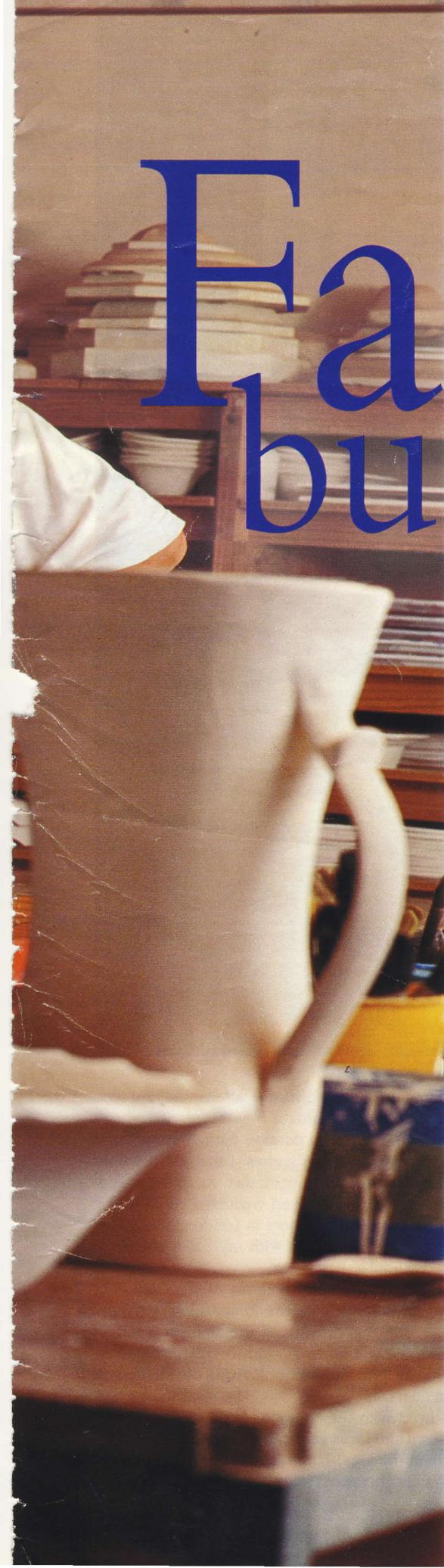




These days, following in your parents' footsteps is regarded as being rather quaint. However, few teams are as strong as a family that sticks together in work as well as in play. **Sue Fox and Jacqueline Myburgh spoke to clans that keep their business all in the family**



Family business

**Esias Bosch, 73, Esra Bosch, 45,
Anton Bosch, 38, all potters**

Esias Bosch was one of this country's first hippies, back in the late '50s. Passionate about ceramics, he tired of art school because it was too intellectual and took himself off to England, where he did an apprenticeship at a pottery studio. 'I was a real voice in the wilderness at that stage,' he recalls.

Life as a young artist was as tough then as it is now, and when Esias returned to South Africa and tried to establish pottery as a craft here, he often didn't have money for food. He settled briefly in Pretoria, but soon moved his entire studio and young family to White River. 'The city was no place to live, especially not the industrial area where I was forced to have my studio. In those days, it was tough to make a living from handicraft but I'd decided that it would come right and just hung in there. All artists struggle when they start, but the joy of being able to do your own thing is the reward. That freedom is wonderful. Life is too short just to accumulate things. I've tried to teach my children that.'

It looks as if he succeeded: at the age of 73, Esias finds himself surrounded by his three grown-up children. Although he never forced them to follow in his footsteps and they all left home to try their own thing in other parts of the country, they eventually returned to the Lowveld to pursue the same lifestyle they had enjoyed growing up.

Esra, the eldest of Esias's three children, started out as a veterinary nurse. But when she moved to Nelspruit a few years ago, she felt drawn to join her father and brother, Anton, in the pottery studio. 'I had a childhood that was so different from that of other children. My father was at home and he was such a gentle, sincere and disciplined person. He made such a difference to our lives. When I came back here, I couldn't go on with nursing. You just realise that what was, was. And what is, is. It was the opportunity of a lifetime to work with my family.'

The intensity of this family's emotions stems from the days when Esra, Anton and their sister, Andree, who became a writer, played under Esias's potter's wheel, a piece of clay as their first toy. Esias and their mother, Valerie, were always around and the Bosches became almost reclusive in their intimacy.

'Our mother was a wonderful, strong woman,' recalls Esra. 'And when she died a few years ago, it was important for us all to be here together and to be able to work through it afterwards. Now we live like a real extended family and are always there for each other.'

Anton recalls an early personal conflict about following in the footsteps of a famous father. 'But the realities of making a living as an artist changed my perspective and now we all work together, doing our own kind of work.' Anton's own three children today continue a family tradition, playing on the floor of the pottery studio where he grew up, with pieces of clay for toys.

JACQUELINE MYBURGH >