

designingways

ISSUE 225

GLASS

WINDOWS TREATMENTS

CONFERENCE CENTRES



November 2019
RSA R35.95
(incl. VAT)

A delightful art route in the heart of the Karoo

Prince Albert open studios

The Karoo is a paradoxical area, dry and harsh, yet bursting with life, quirkiness and originality. As old as time, yet tradition lives hand-in-hand with fresh ideas, where both the land and its inhabitants specialise in making something out of nothing. Sadly, time has overtaken some of the little Karoo towns, and many wear a veil of decline and desperation over their former charm. Others are flourishing with a fresh vibrancy and self-sustaining energy.

One of the jewels in the crown of Karoo towns is, undoubtedly, Prince Albert. It is set in the jaw-dropping beauty of the surrounding Swartberg mountains, which provide springs of fresh water to



feed the still-functioning leiwater system. Oozing with the authentic charm of old Karoo architecture, mostly lovingly and respectfully restored, the town has a tangible creative energy which is hard to resist.

So it is no surprise to find that it has attracted many artists, eccentrics and colourful characters, who both feed off and add to this dynamic atmosphere. Art establishments, fine food restaurants and locally produced goods abound, with plenty of delightful accommodation to welcome visitors who are drawn to this town.

One of the attractions which art lovers flock to experience is the twice-yearly Prince Albert Open Studios, brainchild of celebrated print-maker Joshua Miles, and his wife Angela. Drawing on their years of experience with the successful BBos art route in the tiny Overberg village of Baardskeerdersbos, they initiated a similar event in their new hometown, about two and a half years ago. The idea is to offer local artists a chance to attract a wider client base for their art, and to interact with art-lovers, while allowing visitors the rare opportunity to meet artists in their personal creative spaces.

It is a win-win event, which works well for both the artists and the art collectors/buyers, with the further spin-off benefit of attracting visitors and revenue to other businesses in town.

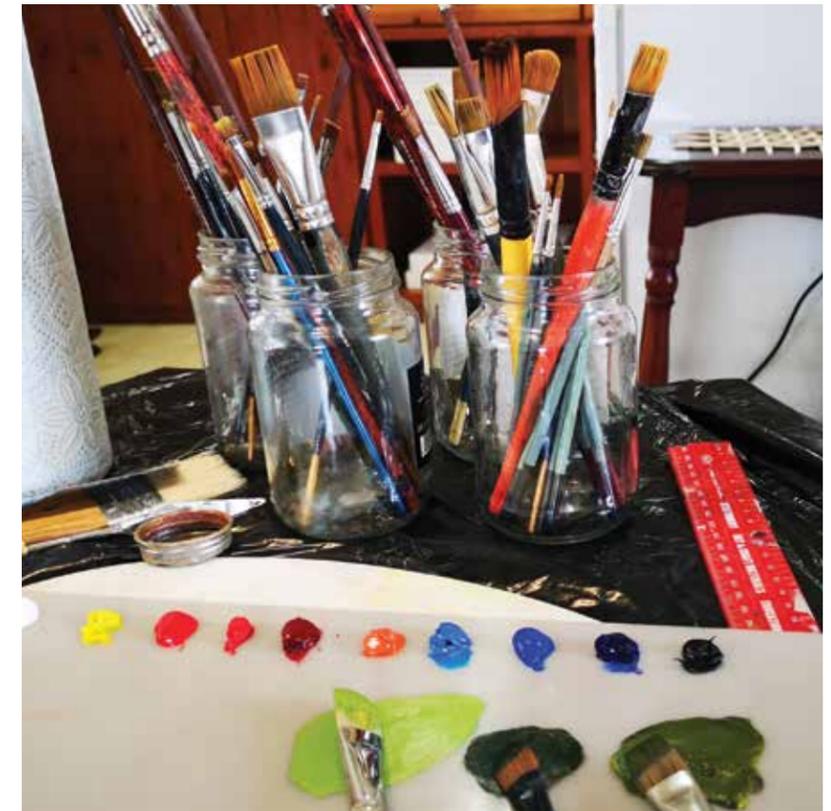
From the artists' perspective, it brings a personal interface to the business of creating and selling art. For many artists, it can feel a little soulless, sending your creative output off to galleries around the country, never to see it again. Being present when it resonates with someone is a rewarding and inspiring motivator to further creativity.

From the art lovers' side, the route offers a chance to see and purchase art directly from the artist. But more than that, it offers a rare glimpse into the hallowed studios of the artists, who are notoriously precious about their personal creative spaces. This is where that alchemy between materials and creativity happens. An artist enters the realm of the right-brain while creating, a zone where time ceases to exist, a solitary space where the outside world is an intruder, and a hindrance to the flow of ideas and work. And, naturally, art lovers are curious about these private spaces from which the objects they love are produced.

So there is great excitement twice a year, when colourful bunting and distinctive sky-blue A-frame boards pop up in front of various homes around town and between 20 and 30 very diverse artists in the Prince Albert area open their studios to the public, to share their new work, and the spaces in which it is made. Like the paradoxical Karoo itself, the range of art coming out of this small town defies cataloguing. You can find anything from ancient skills such as blacksmithing and calligraphy, woodcutting and etching, through a whole spectrum from paintings in oils, watercolours and acrylics, both traditional and contemporary, to sculpture and jewellery made from found objects, land art, ceramics, and even some steam-punk light fittings made from old Land Rover parts.

During this 4-day event, the Prince Albert Art Gallery, owned by Brent Phillips-White, hosts a few high-profile guest artists, in addition to a group show, which features a work from each participating artist. Maps of the town are available there, highlighting each open studio, so visitors can get an overview and identify those that appeal particularly to them. Leading up to the event, some of the artists offer workshops, so visitors often make a week of it and leave town brimming with fresh creative energy, and bags filled with unique treasures.

Many interior designers subscribe to the idea of "start with the art." They will use the client's art as the pivot point from which to build the rest of the design, and the selection of wall coverings, fabrics etc.



often hinges on a key artwork. So Open Studios is a must-see event for designers and art-lovers, who get the opportunity to spend a few days in the magical Karoo, sourcing a wide variety of high-end art direct from the artists themselves, while sampling the famous Karoo hospitality of the various eateries and charming guesthouses around town.

The 2020 Prince Albert Open Studios take place from 3rd to 6th January, 10am

to 6 pm daily, and 18th to 21st June 10am to 5 pm daily.

Visit the website and Facebook page for info on participating artists and events taking place during this time.

Prince Albert Tourism has info on accommodation, restaurants, local markets etc.

www.princealbertopenstudios.co.za

