

Recording Mount Pleasant's history through art

Writer
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Following the successful completion of the Zwelihle section of the Hermanus Living Tapestry project towards the end of 2018, embroiderers from Mount Pleasant started work on their section of the tapestry last week.

With the assistance of founder, Carol Hofmeyr and two of the embroidery teachers of the Keiskamma Embroidery Project in the Eastern Cape, this project was launched by a group of six Hermanus women after the violent protests last year. Their aim was to gather together historical narratives from each of the local communities, and then to embroider the stories into a tapestry roughly 24 metres in horizontal length, which would reflect the integrated history of Hermanus.

For the past couple of months a group of senior citizens from Mount Pleasant have sat together, telling and writing down the fascinating stories of their own childhood and those of previous generations. These were given visual life in the form of drawings, which in turn were transferred to a six metre wide strip of hessian by local artists, Alyson Guy and Christa Clark.

In a buzz of excitement on Monday last week, they all welcomed Carol and her teaching assistants, Art Director, Cebo Mvubu, and Siya Maswana for the final phase of their project. The joys and sorrows of their community were to be preserved for all time as

a visual work of art, to be connected to the Zwelihle panel, with those of Hawston and Hermanus town still to follow. One town, many histories.

Most of the Mount Pleasant participants didn't know much about embroidery, but in two ticks they had fallen under the spell of their star instructors and they were on a roll. At the gates of the Lombardi Centre before it opened in the morning and loth to leave in the afternoon, these 15 to 25 elderly members of the Mount Pleasant community grew up together; they had a shared history and a shared sense of humour to go with it. Quickly embracing their mentors, most of the sewing sessions turned out to be nothing short of hilarious. This was their story and they were proud to be turning it into a work of art to share at last with the whole world.

Cebo fanned the fires by telling them about four tapestries, each 1 x 1,5 metres in size which the Keiskamma project has recently produced. They illustrate a true story of their region, captured in a book, *A Sin of Omission*, by renowned Eastern Cape author, Marguerite Poland, which will be launched later this month. After that, the beautiful tapestries will be on exhibiton and for sale at St Andrew's College in Makhanda for R10 000 each.

That was all the intrepid ladies of Mount Pleasant needed to hear. At a price, they would be prepared to reproduce any section of their tapestry in which there might be a special interest. Income from sales would go to their project. From novices to mas-



ABOVE: Angela Heslop (Hermanus History Society), Loretta Doty, Cllr Ronald Nutt, Siya Maswana and Cebo Mvubu (Keiskamma Embroidery Project), Jenny Sauls (manager of Lombardi Centre), Kathie Buley and Cllr Christine May. **BELOW:** Local women working on the Mount Pleasant section of the Hermanus Living Tapestry project in the Lombardi Centre. **PHOTOS:** Hedda Mittner

ter craftspeople in one week, these ladies are fast learners and they're on a mission. By Friday last week, when the visitors from Hamburg were ready to leave, all that remained to be done was the finishing off of the borders.

It is hoped that the piece will be on show at the next Hermanus First Fridays Artwalk and it will be officially launched in December this year. Sewn into the threads, you are bound to hear echoes of the laughter and the tears of this vibrant Hermanus community.

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