

KickstArt exposes children to art

The KickstART project is bringing 150 children from disadvantaged communities to Stellenbosch to experience works by some of South Africa's top artists and to learn about opportunities in the arts. The children have the rare opportunity to learn about art as a career opportunity from renowned local land artist Strijdom van der Merwe.



KickstART is an initiative to inspire and develop the youth of Stellenbosch through art and design. Children from 40 schools from Kayamandi, Cloetesville, Idasvallei, Pniel, Klampmuts, Kylemore, Jamestown, Devon Valley, Koelenhof, Lynedoch, Elsenburg, Franschhoek and Stellenbosch town are participating.

The programme kicked off in Stellenbosch on 17 September in the run up to Heritage Day on 24 September. It includes workshops and guided tours of the outdoor sculptures currently on display in the Stellenbosch town centre, including works by acclaimed artists Lionel Smit, Dylan Lewis, Uwe Pfaff and Marco Cianfanelli.

Wide support

Members of the initiative are a collective of about 40 volunteers, including artists, arts activists, teachers, child psychologists and academics. What began as the educational arm of the Stellenbosch Outdoor Sculpture Trust (SOST) has grown to include support from many organisations in Stellenbosch, including the Stellenbosch Arts Association, Stellenbosch360, the PJ Olivier art school, the Spier Arts Academy, the university's Sasol Art Museum, the town council, the University of Stellenbosch and Deloitte.

Michael van Wyk, the head of Deloitte Stellenbosch, says Deloitte is proud to sponsor this initiative to bring the community of Stellenbosch closer through art and youth upliftment. "We believe there is a great deal of talent to be discovered and developed in the Stellenbosch community and we hope to see the next generation of local artists and job creators rising from this initiative."

Organiser Andi Norton, a SOST trustee, explains: "Taking the multiple challenges and barriers young people are facing into consideration, KickstART aims to expose learners to career opportunities in the arts and creative industries and to provide hope through art - especially those who might have dropped out of school due to a lack of opportunities. SOST wishes to

further extend the reach of art by involving all communities around Stellenbosch, particularly vulnerable youths."

Art has therapeutic quality

Marietjie Steyn, child psychologist and KickstART co-founder, says: "Exposure to art and creativity has a very powerful occupational and therapeutic quality, especially in the turbulent teenage years. We started KickstART because of a passion for the upliftment and development of children in deprived communities." Steyn was approached to specifically develop and create ideas around a community based outreach programme for SOST.

Participating learners aged 12-18 are grouped according to grade and language preference and have a facilitator and an assistant assigned to them. They will have a guided walking tour of the metalwork sculptures and landmarks in the town, sketching, drawing, ceramics and mosaic workshops at the Sasol Art Museum and attend a talk by commercially successful artist Strijdom van der Merwe about making a career in the arts. Stellenbosch University will also inform the learners about the various courses they have available in the arts, as well as the bursary options.

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