

PAINTING THE TOWN

In support of the first **COOL CAPITAL BIENNALE** – a community-powered project in Pretoria – Plascon donated paint for two **SPECIAL MURALS**.

PHOTOGRAPHS **MIA DE KOCK** TEXT **ANNETTE KLINGER**

GUERRILLAS IN THE MIDST

For architect and founder Pieter Mathews, the Cool Capital 2014 Biennale, which took place in Pretoria between 29 August and 15 November, was a project of passion. Hailed as the world's first uncurated, DIY, guerilla biennale, the endeavour saw the Jacaranda City become a blank slate to be adorned by any resident that had the inclination to flex his or her artistic muscles. "Any person or group was free to do anything creative, anywhere, as long as it was within the law," explains Pieter. "The aim was to bring creativity into the public realm and increase the visual quality of our neighbourhoods and city." Highlights of the biennale included walking and bus tours to view the city's architectural giants, film festivals that took place everywhere from rooftops to barns, and pop-up projects such as wrapping tree trunks in shweshwe fabric. Even the usually prim and proper Voortrekker Monument was lit up in purple. "It's important to have fun and rediscover the city we live in," adds Pieter. "Interventions remind us that we belong. There is an abundance of bad news in the daily press. Good news struggles to find some coverage, creativity even more so."

BRIDGING THE DIVIDE

The Open Window Institute, which educates students in the fields of visual communication, design, film and interactive arts, was one of the many Pretoria-based establishments to come on board to prettify the city during the biennale. Heather Maynier from the Irene Landowners' Association reached out to Open Window to help develop a mural for a pedestrian tunnel in an effort to create some cheer for the commuters who use it on a daily basis. Open Window lecturers Nina Torr and Maaïke Bakker, together with a handful of their honours students, brought the mural to life. "Since the mural is located in a tunnel that pedestrians pass through, we thought it would be best to focus on establishing an atmosphere or mood, rather than creating a final image," says Maaïke of the multicoloured striped design. Plascon came to the rescue by donating the paint. "We chose colours that worked well together and would brighten up the spaces, such as blues and greens, and touches of red and pink," adds Maaïke. "A tunnel can be a gloomy thing, so hopefully this is no longer the case. While we were painting the mural, many pedestrians encouraged and thanked us."

ROOM FOR SQUARES

Open Window's marketing team and a handful of volunteers also offered their services to the Viva Foundation, which runs an ongoing initiative encouraging artists to paint some of the houses in Mamelodi East. Mia de Kock, digital media officer at Open Window, says that the decision behind the square design of the mural was two-fold: "There were only two of us in the team that had any art background, so we needed a design that was simple enough for all of us to execute. That said, we also wanted to make an impact with a bold design, which is how we ended up painting the blocks." Again, Plascon was there in spirit, donating no less than 90 one-litre cans of paint in shades including pink, red, purple and lime green. In the true spirit of giving, the paint that was left over was donated to the Viva Foundation. "The idea here was to change the streets of Mamelodi, one house at a time and, in doing so, we managed to give a large family a home that they can now visually enjoy," says Mia. "We would like to extend our gratitude to Plascon for supporting this initiative and ultimately making these city murals possible." www.coolcapital.co.za; www.openwindow.co.za; www.viva-sa.co.za

