

ART PROJECTS

Kids explore their imaginations and creativity. They discover hidden talents and their confidence soars

Art in restaurants helps to create an atmosphere, and it gives artists a platform

Room 13 opens a new world

A chance for disadvantaged schoolchildren to become more creative, more entrepreneurial and more confident, and learn skills sets to aid employment

WHAT started as a small initiative in the Caol Primary School in Scotland about 12 years ago to help young people develop to their full potential through an easy mix of creative expression and responsibility has mushroomed across the world, and recently came to SA.

Room 13 is a studio run by learners for learners in a school environment, supported by an artist in residence. Learners manage the studio as a business, electing their own management team each year. The artist in residence is their employee, not their teacher.

At the beginning of the year SA had two Room 13s, one in Sapebuso Primary School in Soweto and one in Mmulakgoro Intermediary School in Botshabelo, supported by Woolworths and TBWA Hunt Lascaris.

TBWA Hunt Lascaris was determined to increase the number of these schools substantially, recognizing the need to achieve a more creative and a more entrepreneurial and more confident society, and to provide a support network and outlet for troubled children and orphans. TBWA is co-ordinating the project and its funding, pending the appointment of a full-time administrator.

In January this year two more Room 13s were opened at St Martin de Porres High School (Soweto) and Amohelang Intermediary School (Botshabelo, Free State). During February and March this year Edwaleni Primary School (Mpumalanga),

Maqamela Primary School (Mpumalanga), Olivantsvlei Primary School (Eikenhof) and Reashoma High School (Protea North, Soweto), were added.

TBWA says the criteria for these choices were: historically disadvantaged or needy schools; schools that show they would pursue the concept passionately and be capable of achieving long-term sustainability; and an urban-rural balance.

"We will soon have 13 Room 13 around the country," says co-ordinator Raashida Khan. "It is all about the kids exploring their imaginations and creativity. There is no set syllabus and they are free to do their art in their own time and pace. Art is a way of expressing yourself. Most of these kids have never had access to such things. They discover hidden talents and their confidence soars.

"Many principals have confirmed that academic standards have risen – the kids can't use the facilities until all their homework is done. One principal said that bullying at the school has disappeared since the programme started."

Potential new schools have been identified and the company is negotiating with the schools and the education departments to establish them.

The criteria for selection of the artist in residence was artistic skill, including ability beyond painting; affinity towards young people and the community in general; and an entrepreneurial mindset to sustain the project.

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"The kids run the programme, so they appoint a treasurer and management committee. It is run as a business and the art produced is often used to raise funds for the art room. TBWA also tries to facilitate with fundraising.

"Our Christmas card are often designed by the kids and we try to include artworks from Room 13 in our corporate gifts. Teams of designers work with the kids."

Business & Arts South Africa has committed R150 000 to cover the stipends of three artists-in-residence and The Walt Disney Company has committed funds, as has Shanduka. The Nelson Mandela's Children's Fund has agreed to match all the money raised rand for rand.

Room 13 started in Caol Primary School in Scotland about 12 years ago and has grown to

seven studios in the UK. With the addition of Nepal, India, SA and Forshay (Los Angeles), it is fast becoming a worldwide network.

TBWA says that the intention is to give 100% sponsorship assistance to each studio in year one.

"This amounts to R100 000. In year two this would be reduced to R50 000, and in year three to R25 000. It is planned that by the end of year three the individual studio should be completely self-sustaining, generating income from its own source. Management of the studios would pass on from generation to generation of learners.

In SA, TBWA takes care of the administration and facilitates funding for the project. To date it has been able to secure the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, Shanduka, The Walt Dis-

ney Company (South Africa) and Business and Arts South Africa (Basa) as funding partners.

The existing funders have recently been joined by Vodacom Foundation (through Basa) and the Sugar Association of South Africa. The funds received are limited and earmarked for the artists' salaries and for purchasing the art materials for one year for existing and new Room 13s that are planned.

"In an ideal world there would be a Room 13 in all schools in SA," says Khan.

TBWA says: "It means a more creative, more entrepreneurial and more confident society, skills sets to help employment, help in managing social issues facing schools and a place for children to feel secure and to build respect and spirit."



A Room 13 pupil demonstrates her skill in ceramics.