

Imbali Student Newsletter

Year-end 2020



This newsletter is the result of a true team effort. Lungani and the editorial team begin meeting in the beginning of the year to plan and prepare who is going to write about what. This generates a lot of excitement and energy and provides students with useful life skills such as: team collaboration and decision making, understanding committees, target audiences, editing, interviewing, research and working to deadlines.

Who is Imbali?

Imbali is a professional training provider of art, craft and design skills and creative arts teacher education. With 32 years of experience, Imbali is a leader in its field. As a non-profit organisation (NPO) Imbali focusses on the disadvantaged in society.

Vision

To change people's lives through arts education and training.

Mission

Imbali is committed to achieving and maintaining a leadership role in the arts, crafts and design education and training sector through upholding high standards of training and professional teacher development, emphasising creativity and innovation in everything we do.

Imbali is characterised by the following key attributes:

- Helping individuals reach their full potential as artists, crafters, designers and teachers.
- Contributing to the development of a vibrant artistic and cultural economy in South Africa
- Excellence, innovation and mastery in the arts and crafts sectors
- Upliftment, sharing and co-operation between arts, crafts, design and other disciplines.

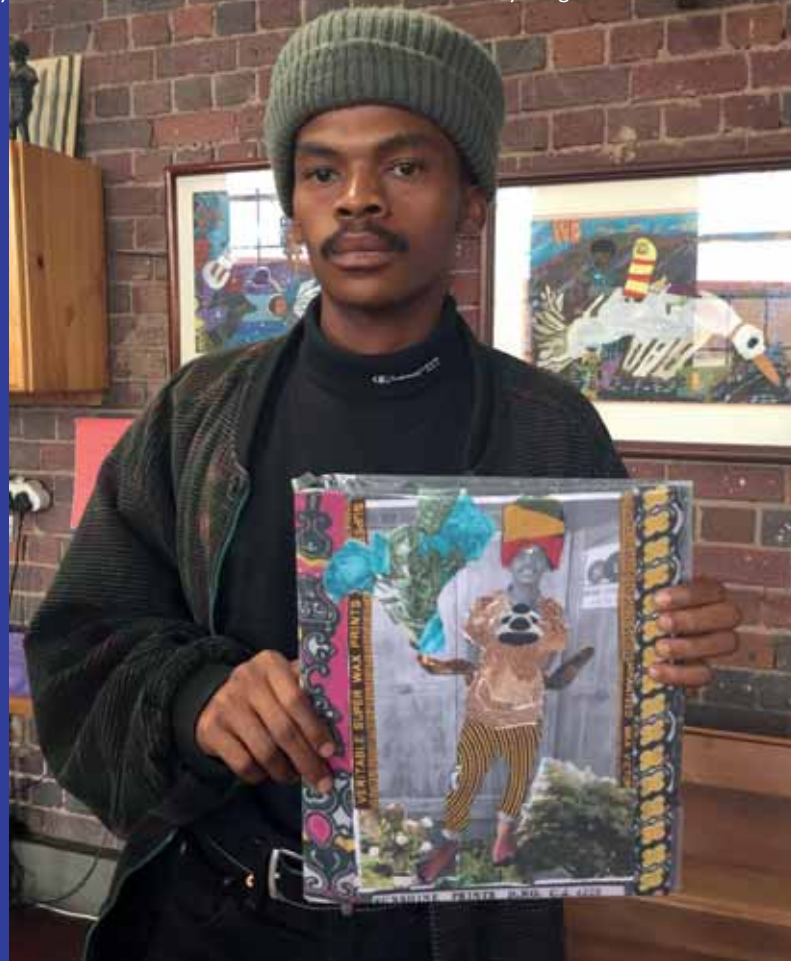
With this set of values, Imbali will continue to grow and set new standards in the fields of craft production and design and creative arts teacher education in South Africa. Imbali is a non-profit organisation that relies on funding to run all its activities.

Editorial team:

Lungani Mogale
Stacey Haahjem
Sifiso Suntsa
Lesego Siane
Yanga Tukela
Unathi Mgolombane
Lungile Ngubane
Pakiso Letsoenyo



These pictures are from the very beginning of the year, journal making and the Foundation Course mask-making. This was before we had any idea of what the year would hold in terms of the Pandemic and everything that came with it.



The Imbali Programme in the time of COVID

By Lungani Mogale

Every year-end Imbali staff meet to discuss the programme for the following year and 2019 was no different as we planned and prepared for 2020. However, like so many other projects, companies and businesses – all plans had to be changed because of the covid pandemic that impacted the world. Just when we were getting going, Imbali had to hit the pause button and send new and old students back home. The Imbali staff had to devise ways of carrying on learning at a distance and also ways of keeping the creative juices flowing while students were in lockdown.

As soon as the restrictions of lockdown were eased it was back to work for Imbali, hitting the ground running on the 1st of June with the 1st years being introduced to ceramics while the 2nd and 3rd years embarked on new territory by learning a Japanese technique called 'sashiko' -making cushion covers and quilts as a finished product.

In term 3, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd years separated for different Unit Standards. The 2nd years learnt Potato Printing and they worked in teams to create sets of gadget bags. The 1st years began work on their second Unit Standard doing Embroidery. 3rd years started working on the design, development and production of their own product ranges.

The 1st years went on to explore Potato Printing with fabric paints and they learnt about producing table runners. They ran with the whole module and again created beautiful designs and products. Mama Connie also introduced them to sewing and the use of sewing machines.

The last term was also packed with modules to be completed before year-end. 1st years did a screen printing marathon and lots of sewing to practice the finishing of good products. The other important Unit Standard to be completed during 2nd year at Imbali is the Mobile Making project. What makes this module so important is that students have to engage the theme in an innovative way, considering the materials, the structure, the colours and the function of the product. This is a module where they learn to be independent and show that they can create an innovative product. They get quite a number of credits for doing this unit standard and it is at level 4. This year, under the guidance of Justine and Portia, they definitely did not disappoint and they all made innovative, beautiful mobiles.

The third year group worked on their own products and eight of them completed the facilitator course which also involved a Unit Standard.

The final modules of the year saw the 1st years' creating incredible projects from woven materials with Portia and the 2nd year group honing their ceramic skills in the dungeon with Lungani.

Despite the pandemic, we feel so grateful for a brilliant year of creativity and progress. Well done to all Imbali staff and students.





The second year group and Prudence with their completed laptop and tablet bags made from potato print fabric



Selection of Imbali hand dyed and potato printed fabrics



First year students weaving with recycled materials.



First year screen print and bag-sewing



Second year ceramics

3rd year product development

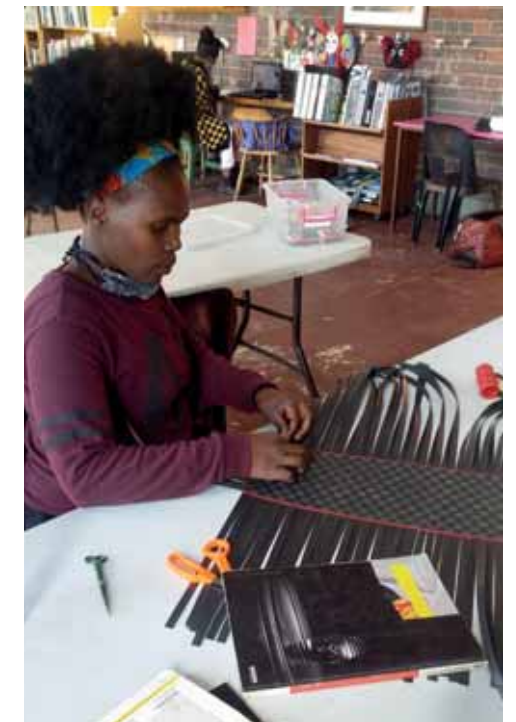
By Lesego Siane

At the introduction of the module on product development I was so thrilled because I've been waiting for it for some time. The idea of working on my own, being my own boss, has always appealed to me and I love the idea of being an independent woman. Being able to work on my own producing top class products has been a dream for a long time and this was the first step towards that.

The first task was that each of us had to create a vision board/mood board inspired by our ideal product. We then presented this to the facilitators and got some input. Putting together this vision board was an exciting and challenging thing to do because one had to think creatively how to make sure everything was clear from the material you were planning to use, textures, colours and all sorts of images you can find to present your ideas.

People came up with great ideas and their presentations were well prepared. It was so inspiring and the help we got from the facilitators for us to start working on our first samples was great. I already knew what technique I want to work with, I just wasn't sure of the finished product but after the presentation I was able to come up with a good sample of a finished product. As much as we were working on our own from knowing how much your materials cost, Imbali was also doing its best to keep us motivated calling in craft business professionals to see and give advice on our products. We had really good input from Margo Snoyman and Carlo Gibson.

It was not an easy journey being independent and taking full responsibility for our work. A lot of lessons were learned like how to be consistent and the importance of time in terms of delivery but we all knew that it was worth while if we want to be ready for the big world and having something to offer out there.



In early September Margo took the 3rd year group to see KAMERS | MAKERS in Hyde Park. This was an inspiring trip as there were so many beautiful and innovative handmade products on show. Everyone saw the incredibly high standard of artisanal craft/art that is out there and the high prices people are willing to pay for excellent quality.

This was a product review session with designer and business owner Carlo Gibson where Carlo gave valuable input on quality finish and design inspiration.

Facilitator's Course with Stacey

It was nearly the end of the year and the 3rd years' were completing their products so that they could go out into the world and become successful craft-designers. But that wasn't all they were doing....They had to push even harder so that they could leave Imbali with one more set of skills...

The facilitator course aims to give Imbali crafters the tools and methods to enable them to transfer and share the amazing techniques they have learnt over the three year craft-design programme with other people of all ages.

Covid delayed the course but didn't prevent it from happening. Eight third year students and one graduate completed the course, which involved a lot of theory, practical classes, assessments and micro-teaching.

The nine successful students were: Sbongile Ngobeni, Dikeledi Dikgale, Lesego Siane, Lebohang Tshweza, Nicole Lequeku, Nomaphelo Fumba, Nyameko Jozana, Tamia Nxumalo and Vincent Duba.

They learnt about the qualities of a successful facilitator, children's creative development, organising a workspace, costing workshops, using alternative materials to create art, craft and design, lesson planning and many other essential aspects of teaching.

They each had to plan, prepare and conduct a short micro-teaching session during which they were evaluated by the rest of the group.

The Facilitator course is challenging and attendance must be high because each session is crammed with knowledge, discussions and ideas.

Well done to the successful graduates! May they go out into their communities and share their enthusiasm, creativity and abilities with many others.

Business with Portia

By Lungile Ngubane

It was the beginning of 2020 "the year of magic!" At least that was what we thought.... We were all optimistic and ready to live our best lives like painters filling a plain canvas with a variety of colours, tints and shades. What we didn't know was that the corona pandemic would disrupt our lives so that the canvas would only be filled with shades. It turned out to be a gloomy and scary season for the art industry and the business sector as a whole. When lockdown came, art galleries closed their doors, projects were put on hold and artists went for months with no jobs or commissions. It is difficult to imagine the hardships that so many people experienced due to the pandemic.

Fortunately, with the restrictions easing and covid levels going down, it has opened up some space for colour and tints to be added onto the canvas. How can we go about creating the picture of our dreams? Let's get straight down to business and find out. Let us ask our business skills facilitator, Portia Thenjwayo and see what she thinks....

Q: Who is Portia and what is your role in Imbali Visual Literacy Project? (Imbali VLP)

A: I'm a mother and a creative. I specialise in jewelry and I use wire, wool and any material that I can crochet or knit into an object to create wearable accessories. I'm also very passionate about business in arts. My passion for business in arts was influenced by the fact that when I began my journey in art back in the day, in my environment of upbringing, art was not considered a career. I thought I should take an interest in business in arts to help myself to make a living from art and share the knowledge with those who find themselves in a similar situation that I was once in. My role in Imbali is that I'm a business skills facilitator, which includes equipping learners with business knowledge in the arts. We touch on subjects such as costing and pricing, bookkeeping and other intricate affairs of business in art.

Q: How has your experience been teaching your students in times like these and what's the most important thing you've learnt from the experience?

A: When the first case of corona was found in S.A. I thought it would be something that would quickly pass, only to find out we've been hit by a pandemic and things were no longer the same. We had to play our part by following protocol and flattening the curve of the corona virus by temporarily closing the institution. This was all new to me and you can imagine the panic it created. The virus was portrayed in such a severe way, I was really scared. The gap it created in the students' studies was a challenge too. We had to unexpectedly move online and some of the students didn't have access to the internet due to their circumstances. What the pandemic experience taught me is that it is so important for us as humans to learn how to adapt to any situation we find ourselves in.

Q: Art business in the times of the corona pandemic..What's your say on it?

A: On a positive note, personally, during lockdown I was able to raise capital for myself. Before the lockdown I mostly created jewelry. But I had to stop in my tracks and reevaluate. It's lockdown. People are locked inside their homes. No one needs jewelry in such times. But... kids are born every day, so I thought, 'why not create kids accessories and put my knitting skills to good use?' So I created new born babies accessories such as knitted hats and scarfs. The items flew off the shelf! That's how I usually advise my students... In moments when something unexpected happens to disrupt your business, always look for the gaps in the market. Ask yourself what people actually need at that time and then supply the demand.

Q: Why is business in art important?

A: Business in art is important because in order for you to have a well-running business in art, you have to learn everything about the art sector. You must know about the practical part of creating marketable and sellable products, also you must learn how to cost your products, manage yourself, your time and your business as a whole. And that's just to mention a few of many aspects that make business in art important. I've observed that many of the skills I've mentioned above are what most people lack in running their art business, especially in black communities. You find people selling just to put bread on the table and selling their craft under value. A solution to this is for people to understand the importance of learning and applying different aspects of business in art. We must strive for knowledge and teach others the way Imbali is doing. That way art can have an impact and have a hand in the growth of our country's economy. Because we do have the skills, it's just a matter of polishing the business side of things.

I always tell my students the importance of being equipped with skills in business, because there are so many opportunities in the art industry e.g being "the middleman", an agent or a wholesaler... those are just a few of many opportunities, which you stand a higher chance to access if you understand business in art.

HOW WAS YOUR DAY AT SCHOOL?

It was a great day when we could finally return to Imbali after staying home for so long during lockdown. There is some risk getting to school but this is a risk I'm willing to take because there's no place like Imbali.

By Pakiso Letsoenygo, Edited by Sfiso Suntscha



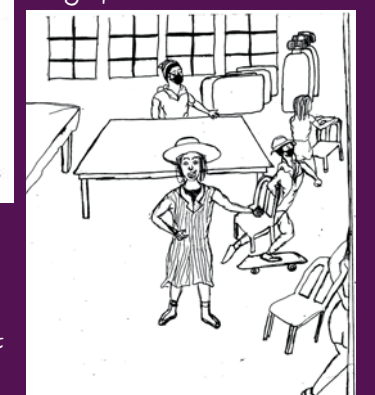
Another morning at Imbali and some students are late again but Portia is not in the mood for this today. "Lungile I'm wondering why you are late? I thought that skate board is suppose to help you go faster, don't tell me you were also stuck in traffic." You can see it in everyone's eyes that they

laughing under their masks.



While keeping social distance became the norm in the studio, noise levels increased as people talked louder with their masks on. This became a concern for facilitators as students' concentration was reduced and at times they had to "elhatlhamulla" (unpick and start start all over again).

It is time to go home and Stacey is trying to get everyone to pack and clean up but people are just running around dodging. "Guys, I can't clean up after you, taking care of your working space, tools and materials is part of your unit standards. You know what, no one is allowed to leave until the space is clean even if you're very special!"



On completing the facilitators course, the newly qualified facilitators were treated to a tea party in the Imbali 'board room'.

Q: Do you think there's still space on the canvas to fill with colour after all the art industry and artists have been through?

A: Yes there's still hope. We have lots of colours that we still need to paint onto the canvas and there are always opportunities to fill the canvas with colours.

For example, collaboration is an effective way of working. If we can collaborate and communicate with each other as artists, then we'll be able to open opportunities for the industry to actually grow.

For instance, we have shops that are South African but supplied by China and other countries. As South Africans, we need to understand what these shops want, how they want it, how they work with crafters and how they get their supplies. We need to know and understand all the aspects.

I have been doing some research and I've found that a big retail company that has been working with South African artists and opening up opportunities for South African products, has an issue with the lack of consistency among South African crafters. Hence they resort to buying a South African design that is mass produce in China. This is something we need to change!

In South Africa there's an opportunity for crafters because more people are looking to buy handmade products than ever before. People are looking for good quality. Due to people being under lockdown in their homes, many people were and are still frustrated by the effect of the pandemic but seeing that restrictions have been eased, they are now "free" and willing to spend money, especially on something that'll make them feel good. As crafters we are here to fill that demand! So let's be positive, create quality products, paint this canvas and fill it in with all the colours of the spectrum. There's still hope!

Q: Any advice to your students and anyone who's looking to make art their career?

A: My advice is to learn everything about the art/craft industry. You have the skills, but you must learn the trends. It's important to know what customers want, what's working and what's not.

Do research on your products. I've noticed most artists use guess work. So learning costing and pricing helps with getting accurate calculations on how to charge customers for your products and services. From material to your labour, overheads, transport and electricity -there's a lot that goes in to creating a product. So it's important to learn about the procedures of costing and of business in general.

Another important thing is 'management'. I repeat again... 'Management.' Managing your time and managing your money. If you lack those two management skills then it'll be hard or impossible for you to run your business. Unless, of course, you want to run a business like a headless chicken, not knowing where you're going.

Another piece of advice is... have a goal and take yourself seriously.

Lastly, it's important to understand that you and your business are two different entities: your business hires you and you

work for your business. Once you understand those two things and know how to separate them, you'll manage your business smoothly. You'll pay yourself accordingly and won't eat the profits. You'll keep the profits and reinvest them into your business. Your business is rich and not you! You have to work very hard at your business and then you may become rich too!

Imbali students' small business enterprises

By Unathi Mgolombane

Talented young people come to Imbali to enhance their creative skills but many of them already have their own small businesses.

Here are some inspiring examples:

First year students

Karabo Mofokeng

Makes crocheted clothing and bracelets Est: 2019 February

Karabo says, "I like woollen jerseys but I'm unable to wear them in summer because they're too hot, so I decided to start crocheting tops and bracelets for wool lovers like myself so we can still enjoy wool even in the hot season. My love for wool came from my mom as she was always crocheting blankets and dresses and I wanted to learn. I couldn't wait to actually see myself wearing something I made.

I feel my business empowers me in a way that I'm able to help support my family and I'm able to buy more materials to carry on working. My small business has brought me to Imbali to broaden my horizons and with my profits I'm also able to pay my transport fees to school.



Karabo Mofokeng

My hope and wish for the future of my business is to add more items with more colours and designs to my production and watch my business grow sky high!"

Ntombizodwa Mahlangu

Paints colourful patterns on caps and other clothing. (UMGWALO) Est: 2018

Ntombizodwa says, "I love playing with colours and I adore the beauty of pattern, so I wanted to show these elements in my artwork. My love for pattern and colour was inspired by my mother back at home when she used to weave traditional mats. She would start by sketching a beautiful pattern and then weave with bright and beautiful colours. I thought, although I can't weave, I still want to keep on seeing those patterns and colours, so I started painting onto caps. People loved my caps and supported me and that motivated me to turn it into a business.

I get a lot of satisfaction in creating my artwork it and it gives me great joy. The business also finances itself in buying materials to make more products but now I would like to experiment with different materials and different products.

I want to see my business grow so that I could supply big stores. That way, they could do the selling while I keep exploring more artworks and making more products."

Second year students

Nonhlanhla Sangweni

Collects and sells a certain style of clothes (Buggie the Collector) Est: 2019

Nonhlanhla tells her story. "People often compliment my dress sense and sometimes they offer to buy my clothes from me, so I decided to turn this talent into a small business to make money to sustain myself.



Nonhlanhla Sangweni



Ntombizodwa Mahlangu

My business empowers me to be independent with things like transport and my toiletries. I can finance myself to attend fashion events and actually stock more products.

I was inspired by a sister I use to see on tv when I was in high school. Her name is Rorisang Thandekiso. I used to loooooove her style of clothing and so I imitated her and today I still admire her style.

My goal is not only to buy and sell but actually design and make the clothes myself, do fashion shows and own a boutique store. In that way I will even create job opportunities for others".

Lebuseng Mofokeng

Prints and sews cushions (Boitshepo Designs) Est 2016

Lebuseng says, "It was while I was waiting to be recruited to a permanent position at MINDSHARE Media Company that I decided that instead of sitting and doing nothing I would start my own micro business.

Now I have my own business, I find that it enables me to buy personal and household items, pay my gym fees, keep the business going as well as save for the future.

I realised that people like personalised stuff and I had learnt



Lebuseng Mofokeng

sewing skills from my parents. I had also done printing at City Varsity, so I combined both my skills and filled a gap in the market at work and around my community.

I want to take this business to a higher level by selling to big companies all over the world as I am constantly evolving my skills and adding new techniques and styles to my products."

Sthembise Mdakane

Creates ceramic jewellery and face masks Est: 2019

Sthembiso recalls, "I started doing ceramic earrings and neck pieces after being introduced to clay at Imbali. I found it so interesting how you can manipulate the material into any shape or form you want and then make it as strong as stone. I started thinking about what I would make if I could create my own ideal items using clay and I started getting more inspiration from ceramic books and magazines. That's when I decided to make jewellery.

My business expanded while I was sitting at home during lockdown this year. I was so disappointed that I couldn't get materials to make my products. Then I thought of creating face masks using old clothes and applying appliqué and embroidery to add value.

I started selling my products at church and to my family where I was getting a lot of support, then I branched out to people in my neighbourhood and friends. With the masks, I started by posting on my social media accounts and people would place orders there if they were interested.



Sthembise Mdakane

My small business has been very helpful to me in terms of saving. I am able to sustain it even though it can be very slow sometimes. The goal for my business is to sell to more people at a higher price because my products are artistic and unique."

Esethu Siphondo

Creates fine art and teaches art and craft (JIK'EKASI Arts and Craft) Est: 2017

Esethu tells us, "Since school I just loved creating things with my hands which is why I do paintings and make paper maché sculptures. At a young age I started attending exhibitions and I was even given a space to exhibit my work.

At first it was just about creating and not about selling, but people were interested in buying the work that they saw at exhibitions and that's when I had to start pricing my art. I also began marketing my pieces by creating pages on social media platforms.

Honestly, my work is not really sustaining or helping me financially very much at the moment and I think I haven't found the right platform yet. Still, I feel it is only a matter of time.

I want to see my art in big galleries all over the world like the work of the famous Basquiat! The other thing I really want to do is to teach craft to kids. That is an important reason that I have to learn more and more about this field of arts, crafts and design. Imbali has been very helpful so far in equipping me to reach my goals."



Esethu Siphondo



Missing in Action

By Stacey Haahjem

We've been having a problem of spoons and pens disappearing in the studio. Can you help to find them in our piles of tools and materials in the images? Of course you didn't take them! So sure you can find them!!!

FIND THE SPOON



FIND THE PEN



Book Review

By Yanga Tukela

AFRICA RISING

Published by Gestalten, Berlin 2016

This book focuses on the rising of African art, craft, design, fashion and lifestyle. It describes how young and relevant designers combine their contemporary work with African patterns and colours.

WHY READ IT? - If you are a creative person, this book is a must-have, as it can really help an artist or crafter who aims to keep their originality and still be relevant with current times and trends. It is so inspiring and thought-provoking especially if you're an Imbali student because it can help improve your skills and give you the tools of how to look at the arts industry in a broader way and with an African eye.



Esethu Siphondo



Nonhlanhla Sangweni



Yanga Tukela



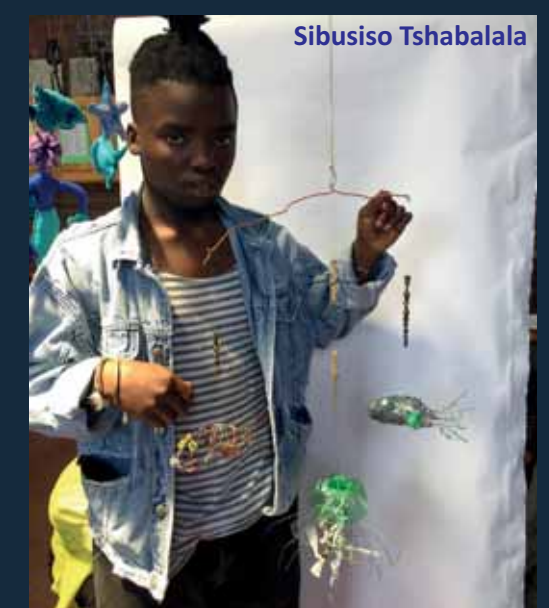
Lebuseng Mofokeng



Adelaide Mthembu



Sithembiso Mdakane



Sibusiso Tshabalala

Under the Sea Mobiles

Every year the 2nd year group are 'tested' in their ability to work independently and follow through an idea from start to finish.

This year the group did not dissappoint, they all created wonderfully inventive, innovative and whimsical mobiles encapsulating their take on the 'under the sea' theme.

From felt and intricate beadwork to Papier-mâché and recycled plastics, tin cans and wire, the mobiles all show a huge amount of hard work, creativity and innovation.



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none of this would be possible:

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