

## South African artwork receives prestigious British award

The winner of the prestigious BAMB (British Association for Modern Mosaic) Mosaic of the Year Award was announced at the British Mosaic Forum on Saturday 27 October 2012 at the V&A Museum in London. The award recognises the cream of the crop in the industry - four exemplary mosaic artworks in the UK were nominated and South African based Spier Architectural Arts (SAA) walked away with the award for *Coming to the City (2011)*.

Conceived by acclaimed artist Clive van den Berg, and created by mosaic artists from SAA, the 18 x 3m mosaic artwork beautifies the wall of a Nando's restaurant in Kings Cross London. Created in sections through a combination of direct mosaic and custom-made ceramic elements in SAA studio's in Cape Town, *Coming to the City* was shipped to the UK and re-built panel-by-panel by a team of the world's leading experts in mosaic in July 2011.

The mosaic artists have been nurtured by SAA – through a sponsored three-year employment-based training programme in professional mosaic. The goal of SAA is to efficiently build a sustainable new local industry by growing and using local arts to create original architectural signature works, such as *Coming to the City*, for installations around the world.

The idea of site-specificity was fundamental to both the concept and execution of *Coming to the City*. Van den Berg carefully analysed the characteristics of the London site. This included an investigation of the history and culture of King's Cross as a central railway terminus opened in 1852. The experiences of the many thousands of people from different countries that have journeyed to London seemed to the artist to be inscribed in the architecture of the site. Their own personal histories and digitally aided communications with their home countries are translated through van den Berg's use of map imagery and binary code (10101010).

Virtual visitors can view the artwork up-close through a dedicated website for the artwork:  
<http://nandos.co.uk/comingtothecity/>

This is what it took to build a 54sqm mosaic artwork:

- Ten mosaic artists worked for 9 months to complete the artwork, totalling 11,553 hours.
- The artwork measures 3m x 18m (9,8 ft x 59 ft) and weighs 2 tons (4400 lb).
- Materials used include natural sandstone, limestone, granite, pebbles, marble, semiprecious stones, glass 'smalti' tiles from Venice, Italy and hand crafted ceramic elements.
  - The sandstone used originates from South African quarries.
  - 80 % of the materials used were produced by the Spier Architectural Ceramic Studio.
  - Detailed areas in the piece have an average of 40 000 stones per square metre (3700 per square foot).
  - The mosaic piece incorporates of over 800 hues of colours.

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**Short quotes reflecting on the creation of *Coming to the City***

‘The art not only breathes life into our restaurants, making every space individual and unique, but is a key cornerstone in the DNA of our business. In supporting Spier Architectural Arts, Nando's hopes not only to encourage the creation of a South African indigenous mosaic industry that could provide meaningful employment to thousands of people who would be making it possible for artists and architects to engage with a newly revived medium of artistic excellence that has the considerable advantage that it can be scaled to architectural proportions.’ *Robby Enthoven – Managing Director of Nando's UK*

‘Unique to Nando's Kings Cross and accessible to the public in an exciting and welcoming environment, *Coming to the City* is testament to the fact that not all art masterworks are exhibited in the great museums of the world.’ *Jeanetta Blignaut – Art Curator of the Nando's Art Collection*

‘It is a wonderful thing for an artist to both know and be surprised by their own work. Such was my experience when I saw this work take form under the hands and eyes of the team at Spier Architectural Arts. I took delight in seeing how the different parts of the design had been given different treatments, treatments that extended my ideas rather than just reaffirmed them.’ *Clive van den Berg – Artist*

