

## **For immediate release**

Such Initiative's first corporate commission may have taken a battering in the recent unseasonable Joburg winter storm – but the eco-conscious visual art collaborative is buoyed by the partnership with Rand Merchant Bank that formed the basis of the commission.

Says Such Initiative's co-founder, Hannelie Coetzee, "We were incredibly lucky to work with RMB as our first-ever corporate client.

"The creation of the artwork was very much a partnership between the company and ourselves and is the kind of working relationship that we believe benefits both ourselves as artists and the people who work at RMB."

Inspired by World Environment Day (5 June 2011), RMB's Corporate Marketing division invited Such Initiative to create a public artwork within RMB's headquarters at 03 Merchant Place in Sandton, Johannesburg.

In conceiving the public artwork, Coetzee, together with Such Initiative partner Usha Seejarim, collected used coffee cups mostly from RMB's cafeteria, Daily Buzz, that were then used to create a swarm of bees in the atrium. Says Seejarim, "The work spoke to the four elements relating to World Environment Day: Water, Waste, Travel and Energy and aimed to bring awareness to the urgent need for recycling and separation at source." In addition, the artworks played on the notions of B.E.E., Bee-ing and the role of the collective – particularly in the corporate environment where working together is so crucial.

In this intention of bringing awareness and starting a conversation, the swarm of bees worked brilliantly.

"What we saw happening as we began creating the artwork in the atrium was something we have seen with our other public artworks at festivals or in communities," reveals Seejarim. "People are initially suspicious about what we are doing there because the bigger picture has yet to be revealed. But as the artwork starts taking shape, you can see how people who have very little daily contact with art, start looking at it in a different way, until they feel very much part of it."

With Such Initiative's bee project at RMB, the fact that staff had connected emotionally with the artwork was underscored on June 6<sup>th</sup> when a heavy storm and winds roused Joburg out of its winter slumber – and destroyed the wings on many of the 400 recycled coffee cups used in the swarm.

"We got letters of condolences from some of the staffers who felt devastated that the artwork had been damaged," says Coetzee. "But for us, the artwork was always going to be temporary and we had prepared ourselves for that. The fact that it was a force of nature that impacted it actually also spoke to issues of environmentalism and consciousness."

The Such Initiative-RMB project was overseen by Yvette Nowell (Head of the RMB Fund - Corporate Social Investment), who says that it formed a key part of RMB's project three focus areas – maths, leadership and development; arts, culture and heritage and the environment and conservation.

The artwork will now be included in a catalogue of all RMB art which is currently in production.

"It was really great working with Yvette and her team at RMB on this first-ever corporate commission for Such," says Seejarim. "The value of this kind-of relationship, where the corporate understands the real value of art, cannot be underestimated."