

Arts Alive Plastic Bottle top Mosaic commission 2010
Final report

7 September 2010

The Bottle top mosaic is ready for installation! In the past few months *Such Initiative* worked very intensively to create this public artwork. This collective artwork celebrates its humble origin: as a discarded bottle top lying in the dirt.



Ice's Orange farm group picking up bottle tops on an old dumpsite outside their school, Raphela Secondary, June 2010



8 community centres attracted +/-140 children from disadvantaged communities and disabled adults from Johannesburg



Production process of the Bottle top mosaic

Arts Alive commissioned *Such Initiative* towards the end of May 2010 to create a monumental mosaic woven together from discarded plastic bottle tops. As soon as the MOA was signed between Arts Alive and *Such Initiative* facilitators and assistants/production managers were interviewed and appointed.

Within a week of the commission *Such Initiative* started the 10 week production process of the bottle top mosaic. Production workshops commenced on Monday 7 June 2010 and the artwork was completed and assembled on Friday 13 August 2010. The production took exactly the time we estimated. It took various re-imaginings and plan B's to complete the artwork in time and within budget.

Five full time staff ran the project for the first 6 weeks. The remaining 4 weeks were more focussed on assembly. At its peak we had 140 children and disabled adults and 31 crafters and the *Such Initiative* management team weaving the bottle tops as one.

Such Initiative Manager: HANNELIE COETZEE
(USHA SEEJARIM, were very missed whilst on maternity leave)
Production Manager: ANTHEA MOYS
Facilitators: NKOSIKHONA XABA, PHUMZILE BUTHELEZI, SIPHO MABASO



2010 World Cup fever in *Such Initiative* land

Community centres were hastily invited to participate to make sure the participant's time during the World cup is optimized. The 8 community centres attracted about 140 children and disabled adults from greater Johannesburg. They were workshoped by the 3 *Such* facilitators during the World cup and started weaving the artwork together for 4 weeks. The implementation was on such an immediate timeline that we decided to rather focus more intensively on less centres to increase productivity.

Patterns, gut, hammers, brushes, washing liquid and specific coloured bottle tops all had to be distributed and coordinated during the 4 weeks in the 8 community centres. We drove a lot with huge bags of stinky sticky bottle tops in minibus taxi's and in our cars. The coordination of getting

the right colours to the right centres were of utmost importance for the community centres to stay weaving at all times.

Bottle top collection is more time consuming than one might think. Be Green donated two bakkie loads in the first week. These two bakkie loads took them a year to collect. To kickstart the volume of bottle tops we supported a recycler in Lenasia who mobilized a poverty stricken community to collect bottle tops. We bought an initial bakkie load of bottle tops from him for R550. And then he called us the next day to say we can buy another ton from him! Purchasing these bottle tops was an investment in the recycling entrepreneur of Waste Wise family from Lenasia. But soon enough we realized that very specific colours such as light blue, brown and beige is very scarce. We started approaching the bottle top manufacturers. Three manufacturers (Fontana, Nampak and MCG) responded very positively and supplied the scarce colours to us with their rejects or old stock within a week! HLM Vendors collected bottle tops at the world cup stadiums and Pikitup a bit as well.



Fontana donated and delivered 250 000 bottle tops!



Pikitup's one bag



The one ton we bought from Lenasia



MCG's rejects



Nampak's 6 boxes



Be Green's first crate



HLM collected from stadiums



and The Waste Wise family



Towards the end of the World cup we realized that the **community participation** has an irreplaceable reach and impact with regards to changing participants perceptions about making stuff out of waste. But the pace at which the communities participated was to slow to complete the public artwork within time and budget. The children completed about 25% of the total artwork in the first four weeks of the project.

A very detailed response was summarized by our social science collaborator, Lauren Graham (Appendix 1) as well as the arts and environmental educationalist Sue Nepgen (Appendix 2). In short, 77 participants were interviewed by the facilitators in the 3rd week of the project. According to this questionnaire compiled by Lauren Graham participants responded very positively with a strong indication of their perceptions about waste have been changed. For more insightful explanation read the full report for very detailed explanations of our findings in Appendix 1 and 2 (page 10 to14).

Images from the Community centres



Zanele's Group worked from a shack in Orangefarm. She provided her own old curtains to warm the shack up. The kids got a home cooked meal from Zanele every day during the holidays.

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Images from the Community Centres during the 2010 June/July break



Alex weavers



Anthea washing bottle tops

Siyanqoba participants from Honeydew

Diepsloot group



Zanele's group in Orangefarm and the

REEA centre certificates for participation

Weavers participation in studio from week 5 – 7

Such initiative held a bottle top weaving workshop at the studio for approximately 20 crafters on the 2nd of July. Through all our community craft project contacts, referrals from colleagues in the industry we pulled a team of 31 crafters together. A large part of the group was embroiderers from the Boithumelo group. They were thus sussed with following patterns and beading. They worked consistently every day from 8am to 5pm in the studio and at home. They were paid according to how much they had woven in the week. The weavers were also monitored in shifts by the 3 facilitators. Over a five week period after the World cup the weavers got paid per completed panel. The competition was rife - a clear indication that we have a very active work ethic that surrounds us. Within three weeks the weavers completed weaving all the panels.

To create incentive, the crafters were also rewarded with a R100 Pick n' Pay voucher if they had woven 20 panels or more per week. Some of the weavers employed their own weavers, an incentive that showed entrepreneurial qualities. All these creative ways of completing the artwork within a shorter time span were encouraged. Larger bottle tops were woven into patterns with the same colour which created texture in the final artwork. The artwork reflects the sum of its parts. The individual participants can be recognized by looking closely how each 30X30cm panel has its own character.



Phumzile and Grace moving the completed panels



Sbongile getting her rewards for the fastest weaver

Images from the Weavers at the studio



Zanele checking her panel



Selecting bottle tops



The weavers group at Such initiative studio



Assembling the completed segments

After all the panels (approximately 1m X 1m) were completed a small team of 6 of the best weavers were employed to assemble the bottle top mosaic with steel cable. On the 23rd of July we had a small party to say goodbye to the other 15 weavers. We had a braai in the back yard and rewarded the top weavers with jewellery made out of bottle tops as well as the vouchers.



The bottle top project already impacted permanently on the weavers lives. They were inspired to make crafts from waste.



The entire artwork unpacked in the street at *Such initiative's* studio on 6 August 2010

Images of the assembly of the panels week 8 – 10 of the project



Sbogile weaving the panels together



Shannon, Sbogile and Zanele assembling the middle section

Shannon and Butho drilling the cable holes

It took 10 weeks about 350 hands and a lot of patience to create this work. The lessons we learnt creating such a work has been irreplaceable. The reach has already created a ripple effect. Such's slogan has been fulfilled: *changing perceptions through eco conscious public art*

Such Initiative would like to thank Arts Alive and in particular Brenda Devar for her continuous motivation and focus.

APPENDIX 1

23 August 2010

Lauren Graham Social Scientist

Master of Arts degree in Developmental Sociology from Wits University

PhD Candidate in Sociology at the University of Johannesburg. lgraham@uj.ac.za.

Participant responses to bottle top mosaic project

In order to assess how the participants and facilitators responded to the bottle top project, participants were asked a range of questions about the project in a survey. Independent researchers conducted the survey with participants in order to avoid participants feeling that they had to give the 'correct' answers to the researcher. A total of 77 participants completed the survey. The survey was conducted towards the end of the project but before the artwork was complete.

100% (77) stated that they were enjoying the project. Of these, most of the respondents were excited about making something (30%) and learning to weave (23%). A further 20% liked working with and collecting the colourful bottle tops. Respondents also felt that the project helped them to concentrate, enabled them to network, and it helped them to learn a new skill that would help their communities. Three respondents indicated that they loved everything about the project.

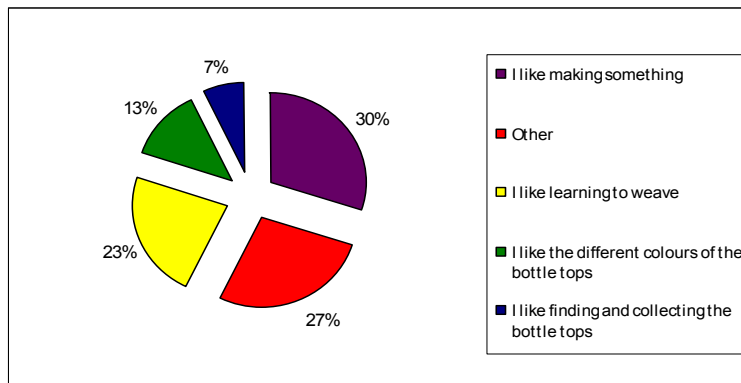


Figure 1: Reasons given for enjoying the project

Some of the reasons that respondents gave for not enjoying the project included that they did not know what the artwork was going to look like afterwards (17% of those who indicated that they were not enjoying the project) or that they did not like working with rubbish (11%). Some of the other reasons given for not enjoying the project included not enjoying picking up and collecting the bottle tops, not enjoying washing the

bottle tops and wanting more colourful bottle tops to include in the project. One respondent said that they felt the community took him for granted when he was trying to talk about recycling awareness.

Because no baseline information was collected before the project started, participants were asked to reflect on what was usually done with bottle tops in their community and then were asked what they would do with items such as bottle tops now that they have had the opportunity to complete the project. This way of questioning provides a pseudo pre and post test to estimate whether the project has had any impact on the participants' views of reusing 'rubbish.'

Participants were asked what their friends would usually do with the bottle tops that were lying around in their community. Interestingly it seems that most had already been reusing the bottle tops even before this project built awareness about reusing rubbish. Many of the participants noted that the bottle tops get collected by children and that "having many makes you a winner!" Despite this game, it seems that for most respondents (67%), their friends would either have left the bottle tops lying on the ground or would have thrown them away.

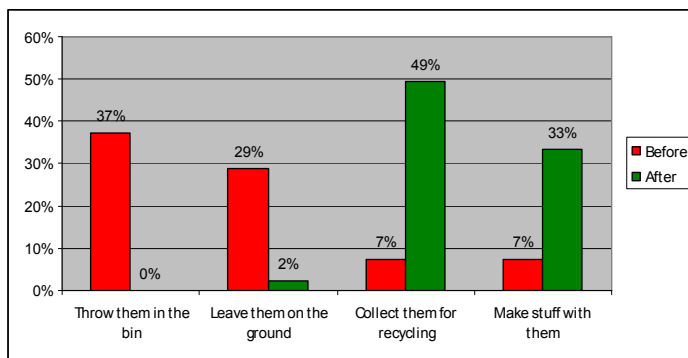


Figure 2: What participants would do with bottle tops: comparing responses before and after the project

In contrast the responses about what they would do with items such as bottle tops now, most participants indicated that they would collect them for recycling (49%) or make stuff with them (33%). This suggests that doing the project might help to build awareness amongst friends about alternative uses for 'rubbish' and might encourage children to reuse refuse rather than throwing it away.

Overall it seems that the project was successful in the eyes of the majority of participants who really enjoyed the project and that it has changed young people's perceptions about rubbish and what one can do with it.



APPENDIX 2

26 August 2010

REPORT ON QUESTIONNAIRE FOR 'SUCH INITIATIVE' BOTTLE TOP MOSAIC PROJECT

Sue Nepgen, MPhil in Education (Teaching) UCT, Art and environmental educationalist

BACKGROUND

'Networking' is a keyword for the Such Initiative mosaic bottle top project. This eco-art organisation has involved a numbers of partners (foremost Arts Alive who commissioned them, together with Pikitup, the Plastics Federation of SA and Be Green) and networked with various groups to identify the three facilitators to be trained. The project includes a widely spread net of community centres and used their own community leaders as teachers (centres in Diepsloot, Orangefarm, Alexander, and at Siyanqoba in Honeydew, Hillbrow Health Precinct and REEA Home in Craighall). The children, youth and disabled adults who participated wove the bottle tops into an intricate net of colours, producing sections of the larger artwork which joins the efforts of several communities. Local crafters from the Boithumelo group and elsewhere were given employment to complete the project: a pixilated image of children running free in an open green space.

THE PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES

In the third week of the project, the participants were interviewed using a questionnaire drawn up by a social scientist. The participants were those committed to the project in that they stayed until the third week. They differed widely in age from primary school going children to more mature teenagers and also including the severely disabled epileptic adults from REEA. The list of centres above also indicates that the participants varied from those in marginalized rural communities to those in township settlements and in the inner city. One group had previous exposure to a recycling project. This was one of the Orangefarm groups: Grade 11s (interview with Hannelie Coetzee, 13 August 2010).

It is not surprising then, that the questions cast a net which drew in wide-ranging responses.

The 77 participants interviewed were first asked the general question **whether they were enjoying the project** (Q1). They were then directed to questions Q2 or Q3 each with four possible reasons for their yes or no response, with spaces for additional comments. Some participants went to both Q2 and Q3 and/or gave more than one reason, as evident in the number of reasons altogether (88). Thirty-eight additional comments were given. The vast majority chose **reasons why they enjoyed it** in Q2 (75 choices of positive reasons as opposed to 13 choices of reasons for not enjoying the project in Q3). The reasons they could choose from were all to do with sensory and physical involvement, most liking the more complex

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acts of creativity (making something, learning to weave), some enjoying the colours and a few liking the activity of collecting.

In the space for **additional comments** (16 given), some responses went beyond the physical and sensory reasons for enjoying the project. Participants showed a sense for the social function of the activity (five comments): networking (2), community awareness and teaching others new skills (2), as well as sharing ideas and spending time with people (1). Some were aware of a pedagogical function (three additional comments): facilitates thinking (1), concentration (1) and challenging one's brain (1). Two participants overtly liked the environmental/recycling dimension of the project (probably participants with previous exposure for whom this project built on prior learning). One of these participants made this comment in section Q3 (which was meant for reasons for not enjoying the project). Two expressed appreciation for the opportunity. Another response found in Q3 indicated that it was interesting. Collecting, washing and piercing the holes were among the physical/sensory additional reasons for liking the project (5). Three liked everything about the project.

Overall the participants interviewed **found the project stimulating**, providing creative, cognitive and dextral challenges and activities for them, within a setting which provided social and community interaction. The bottle tops colours added visual stimulus.

The **reasons selected for not enjoying** the project in Q3 (13 responses) consisted of not knowing the what the finished product was going to look like (6), not liking to work with waste (4) and finding it too difficult (3). None found it boring, which speaks for the stimulating challenges and social environment the project provided. The fact that so few selected negative reasons also indicates the stimulating nature of the project overall.

In the spaces provided for other comments about not enjoying the project 22 comments were given, but 11 were positive comments. Two commented on a shortage of bottle tops or colours, a problem which was minimal as only two mentioned this. Difficulty in learning new skills (2), the picking up of the bottle tops (3) and washing them (1) were other reasons given.

Overall a few found the project too challenging and did not like the processes of collecting and working with waste.

The next sections of the questionnaire (Q4 and Q5) dealt with intended **changes of behaviour** by comparing what friends not on the project would do with the bottle tops with what participants would do in the future.

Participants selected the responses (Q4) that their friends mainly would throw them in the bin or leave them on the ground, with only a few collecting for recycling or using them creatively (altogether 67 selected reasons). In the spaces for additional comments, a trend where collecting the tops to see who had the most emerged (15 comments): a competitive spirit which can be harnessed for the purpose of recycling. Only one comment dealt with creative uses. These

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comments on what their friends would do describe behaviour before the intervention of the mosaic project.

In contrast, the participants showed **marked intended behaviour change** (Q5), with almost all intending to collect for recycling (46) or use them creatively (31). None would throw them in the bin and two would leave them the ground.

In the spaces for comments, the majority of comments (12) centered on creative uses of the bottle tops (making own designs, artworks and products, using the bottle tops, and having new ideas), three seeing the opportunity to make money through their creative efforts. One would teach others, another tell friends and one other collect the bottle tops for sale. Overall these additional comments show that the participants had been **stimulated by the project into creative uses** of recycled bottle tops and could see economic benefits for themselves and others.

CONCLUSION

The Such Initiative bottle top mosaic project has been successful on several fronts. The project was organised in a socially sensitive way and can be used as a model for future projects. The participants were taught by their own community leaders in a safe sheltered space with some food provided, supported by trained facilitators from a community craft centre. This contributed to the majority of participants staying until the third week when they were interviewed, in addition to the enjoyment of physical, sensory, creative, cognitive and social stimulation.

The activity provided for different levels of engagement catering for various ages and abilities, from the simple collection, washing and piercing to the more complex weaving. Very few did not enjoy some aspects of the project, such as collecting and cleaning waste, finding the weaving difficult or not knowing the end product. This project can provide an example for further multi-tasks projects involving art and the environment in communities.

Most significant was the impact on creativity and environmental learning: the participants' intentions to collect bottle tops and find creative uses for them, possibly selling their products. This behaviour possibly could extrapolate to collecting other waste from the environment to make artworks or useful items. Creative uses of waste could be taught to others, as commented on by participants. As there is a trend for friends to collect bottle tops, this is a possibility. Environmental learning included the intention to collect bottle tops and recycle them.

The participants' inspiration will be furthered when they come together to see the erected complete artwork, which by is a stunning product, both aesthetically and in the explicit message of its social and environmental image. The final mosaic is a banner for co-operative networking.