

## Cape craft recreates local sights

Anticipating that visitors to SA, particularly football fans, would purchase generic craft products, the Western Cape craft producers are drawing on sources as diverse as the texture of Robben Island's sand and the colour of blue lizards at Cape Point, to develop uniquely Cape products.

The Cape Craft and Design Institute (CCDI) was commissioned last year by the Department of Sport, Arts Culture and Recreation to research economic opportunities around 2010 from crafts, said CCDI programmes manager Mel Hagen.

They would need to come up with diverse, novel products linked to the area if they were to differentiate themselves, said Hagen. "Product of place became a very important aspect."

Research also showed that other influences were also at work as tourists bought mementoes for several reasons: Memory - to remember a place; experience - to recreate the experience; and cultural information visitors are eager to learn more about culture and history and enjoy products linked to a story.

The Visual Awareness Programme (VAP) was launched in April 2009 to inspire fresh creativity among craft producers. It is run by the CCDI and the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) to develop the local craft and design sector. The initial craft producers' trip was to the Two Oceans Aquarium and then up Table Mountain, to Cape Point, on a city walk to the Castle and to Robben Island.

The majority of participants came from previously disadvantaged backgrounds and the excursions, offered for a nominal fee to ensure attendance after registration, have transported them to these sites for the very first time.

### Site visits inspire crafters

Karen Stewart, CCDI creative workshop facilitator, said: "We encouraged craft producers to visit places as artists, not as tourists. We found that when you go to a new place and scratch below the surface, it could reveal a whole world of possibility about what can be made. Craft producers took experiences that stirred them emotionally and distilled what was powerful for them. This resulted in rich and beautiful products."

Two new fashion items were inspired by the form and texture of the stone walls of Nelson Mandela's prison cell, while the view of a sea creature under a microscope led to the creation of a knitted product. A bottle has been recycled into a fish and the image of Table Mountain has been reinvented for use on a backpack.

Hagen added that while the global soccer event had been the catalyst for the programme, the plan was to go beyond 2010 and link a product to a particular scenic spot. Some new products could eventually develop into brands inspired by the Western Cape, which could be successfully marketed anywhere.