

IN MEMORY OF THE 7 JUNE 2017 FIRES

Reflection Seed Pod

STEENBOK NATURE RESERVE - LEISURE ISLE - KNYSNA

In June 2017 a fire swept through the greater Knysna region. For a period, roads to the East and West were closed and the wind was so strong that helicopters could not fly. The town was completely cut off and a 'Ring of Fire' put every resident, animal and building at risk. The mayor was quick to acknowledge that the situation was dire and announced that plans needed to be made quickly, in case it became necessary to evacuate the entire population of 77,000.

But the wind dropped, helicopters took to the air and hundreds of firefighters and volunteers poured in to help save the town. This huge team was joined by hundreds of locals and relief organizations. The combined team worked valiantly together. It was dangerous work that required dedication and bravery. Tragically, some paid the ultimate price. It was an inspirational effort. It brought out the very best in South Africans. This memorial artwork is being erected to celebrate the efforts of all of those who worked to save our town, those who lost their lives and all those who worked so hard after the fire had ended, to help those who had lost so much.

Why a memorial artwork?

Two local residents, Jayne Brink and Gina Potgieter, gave birth to the idea of creating something physical as a memorial of the event and the people who turned tragedy into triumph. They initiated The Seed Shop project through their local businesses, Two on Toast and Madam Botany. Their specific intention was to bring back some kind of normality to the donation process by setting-up a space in which the best of the donated items received were thoughtfully displayed allowing people impacted by the fire to 'shop' for what they not only needed but liked and would possibly have chosen in a store before all the chaos turned their lives upside down. They hoped to give value back to the second hand clothing and homeware received by displaying it carefully amongst new treasures. They invented a 'seed' currency and each item donated was assigned a number of seeds depending on its assessed retail value. Each household registered received a seed voucher which could be used to buy anything needed or loved on the shelves of the shop.

With the residual funds from this venture they are able to build a Reflection Seed Pod in memoriam of the Knysna Fires. They hope to give something back to all of Knysna by creating a sacred space for remembrance, reflection and gratitude.

The Seed project has seen fit to partner with Eden Community Initiative (NPO) to project manage the installation. They have contracted Kluys & Co to construct and install the artwork.

The concept & design:

The design is based on a seed pod, inspired by the overwhelming emotion of the initial tragedy, and then more importantly the spirited response from Knysna residents, giving birth to hope and encouragement.

The pod is designed to be a low impact, useful and beautiful sculpture that adds value to the Steenbok Nature Reserve experience. It should offer the visitor to Steenbok Nature Reserve the opportunity to reflect for a moment on that time and the beauty of our community and our environment. The sculpture is intended to be functional, in that residents and visitors can 'take a moment' to sit on one of the benches or simply stand in the shadow of one of the seed husks. It is important that the artwork is not only beautiful and organic in nature but also functional and lasting.

John Noble of Kluys & Co heard and understood the concept and came up with his interpretation in the form of the Reflection Seedpod design



The construction:

The artwork is 3 meters in diameter with nine thin blades reaching a maximum of four meters high.

The pod will be manufactured for sustainability with a high quality galvanized steel sub structure and a more natural looking, minimal superstructure - laminated wood husks with some fine design elements to finish off the sculpture.

The location:

The project team have scanned the town for a suitable location and identified Steenbok Nature Reserve on Leisure Island as the ideal position to erect this public artwork for a number of reasons:

Steenbok Nature Reserve is not only beautiful and well maintained but is also inclusive and welcoming to all Knysna residents and visitors to our town.

The Island allows a 360 degree view of the actual 'ring of fire' that threatened our town. From the seed pod location from within Steenbok Nature Reserve one can see from the tip of the Western Head all the way to the Pezula hills. This all encompassing view provides the perfect vantage point from which to appreciate the magnitude of the threat our town was under.

Now a year later one can take in these breathtaking views with the knowledge that although we lost so much we are still so blessed with the beauty that surrounds us.

Installation:

The Friends of Steenbok Nature Reserve Trust, have accepted the donation of the Reflection Seed Pod subject to approval from the Leisure Island Residents Association, Knysna Municipality and SanParks and are in the process of finalising an acceptable location for its erection within the park. The pod is in the process of being constructed at the Kluys and Co factory and will be completed by the end of July 2018.

The Seed Pod will then be installed by the project team and an unveiling celebration will officially open the Reflection Seed Pod for visitors.



REFLECTION bench
life - remembrance of lives lost
property - acknowledgment of homes and possessions destroyed
nature - understanding the effects of the fire on Knysna's fauna and flora
livelihood - awareness of the economic impact

GRATITUDE bench
service - admiration for the work and bravery of emergency services
energy - appreciation of the time and effort given by so many
generosity - gratefulness for the flood of donations and concern from around the world
strength - recognition of the strength of the human spirit
community - pride in Knysna's sense of community

Symbolism of the 2 benches and 9 husks:

The Seed pod is divided into two halves, each with its own bench. The first is a bench of reflection with its four husks each representing something lost, damaged or harmed during the 7th of June fires. The wood on this half of the pod will be scorched in the Japanese wood burning technique. The first husk is in remembrance of the lives lost. The letters of their names will be embedded in the woodwork in the form of abstract metal lettering. The second husk is in acknowledgment of the homes and possessions destroyed by the fires. The third represents nature and understanding the effects that the fire had on Knysna's fauna and flora. The last husk on the reflection bench symbolises the economic impact that the fires had on our town.

The second bench is a bench of gratitude with five husks, each representing the positive things that came from such a devastating event. The first husk is in admiration for the work and bravery of emergency services. The second husk stands for energy and is in appreciation of the time and effort given by so many. The third represents generosity and Knysna's gratitude for the flood of donations and concern received from around the world. The fourth is in recognition of the strength of the human spirit that was made so clear during this difficult time. The last husk stands for our pride in Knysna's sense of community. This husk will have a leaf skeleton artistic detail.