

# REMEMBERING BURNETT

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**A**N EXHIBITION to honour the life and work of Durban artist Martin Burnett, who died in December, will be held at The Collective in Morningside, Durban, from Monday.

The local visual arts community has rallied together to create works for this exhibition, to pay tribute to this popular artist, teacher and collector.

Burnett was known for finding interesting objects – “treasures that the city had discarded”, as fellow artist Dee Donaldson called them – with the intention of transforming them into art.

He had collected 30 paper mache mannequin busts which 30 KwaZulu-Natal artists will re-interpret, decorate and re-imagine. These busts will form a major part of the exhibition.

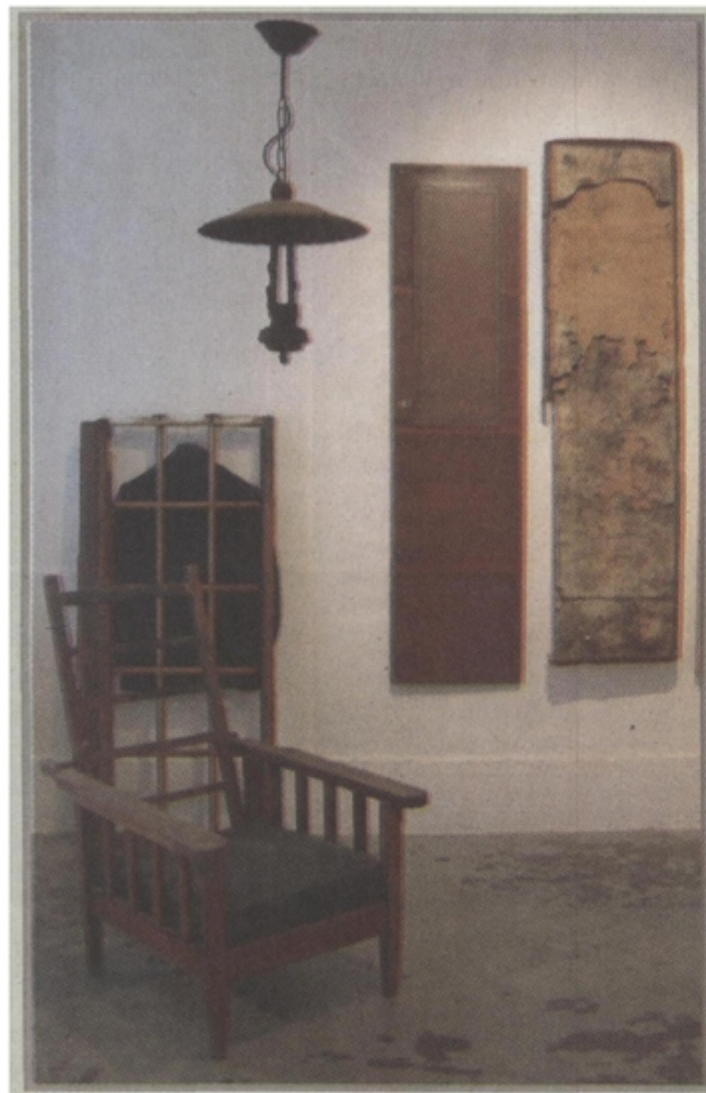
Complementing the busts will be works by Burnett, and works for and of Burnett – including Jackie Freer’s painting of the artist, from the artSPACEurban *Inspiration 2* exhibition.

“My students and I shared a studio at artSPACEurban with Martin for many years,” remembers Donaldson.

“To talk about collage or mixed media would seem too dry to describe Martin’s process. When he assembled or grouped things together; a poetic dialogue began between texture, words, fragments, colours, tones and shapes.

“Stories about time, personal histories and forgotten things emerge...

“There was the sensitivity of Martin the painter in the arrangements, but also, very often, the evidence of his lovely sense of humour. To have seen the world this way is



a rare and beautiful thing.”

Born in Joburg in 1946, Burnett had lived in Durban since 1970. He obtained a Higher Diploma in education from Technikon Natal, now the Durban University of Technology (DUT) and, before that, did window dressing and interior decorating.

He lectured and taught at a number of schools and different tertiary institutions, including DUT, the University of Natal, M L Sultan Technikon, Durban’s BAT Centre and Nanda Soobben’s Centre for Fine Art,

Animation and Design (CFAD).

Burnett had been connected to the Natal Society of the Arts (NAS) since 1971, as an exhibitor on numerous exhibitions, and had been a NSA council member. He had also been a committee member of Friends of Durban Art Gallery and the Art Deco Society, a founder member of Joburg’s “Artists Under the Sun” and Durban’s Berea Meander.

Burnett’s works are in private collections worldwide, and most recently he taught

painting and drawing at CFAD with part-time students and full-time students, for about five years.

“He was one of the most eccentric artists I have met – and a brilliant painter,” remembers Soobben of Martin’s time spent teaching at CFAD.

Burnett stood in solidarity with women in abusive relationships and supported initiatives which assisted abused women and children.

To this end, the new exhibition will be a fundraiser for two important organisations, one being the KZN Network of Violence Against Women which facilitates training for several small organisations in KwaZulu-Natal.

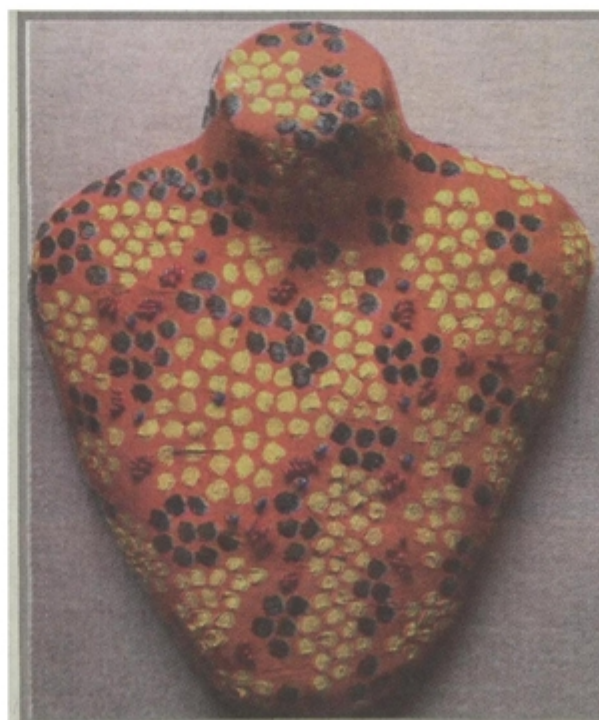
They address abuse against women, domestic violence, date rape, corrective rape, teenage pregnancy, drug abuse, child molestation and many other social ills.

The second beneficiary is Diakonia Council of Church’s Thursdays in Black campaign which encourages people to wear black every Thursday, to create ongoing awareness about the international injustices against voiceless women and children.

“The World Health Organisation’s statistics in 2009 indicated that every 15 seconds a woman is raped in South Africa. We say this is unacceptable,” says Jenny Sprong, social justice co-ordinator for Diakonia.

“Wearing black is an outward sign of mourning and of standing in solidarity with those women who have suffered, and died. It signifies a desire to make a difference in our world,” she adds.

For more info, contact Amy-Jo Windt, the curator of The Collective gallery.



**ON SHOW:** Works by and in tribute to late Durban artist Martin Burnett – pictured above in his studio in 2009 – will be on show from Monday at The Collective gallery in Durban. Among the works on show will be those by Robin Opperman, left, and Andrew Verster, far left. Pictured above left is detail from an installation by Burnett.