

Festival aims to foster love for public art in city

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CAPE TOWN's newest art festival promises to bring art lovers out of the galleries and into the streets, and they will possibly be swopping their delicate glasses of bubbles for craft beers.

Baz Art, the company behind next month's inaugural International Public Art Festival (Ipaf), is a non-profit organisation described as the "love child" of relationships that grew around the creation of Leopold 7 craft beer.

The festival is one part of Baz Art's plan to use art to improve people's lives and environments.

Other aspects of the programme, to be launched during Ipaf from February 10-20, include making neighbourhoods more beautiful and safer, giving art lessons to children and helping to get spin-off businesses, such as food stalls, cafés and galleries, off the ground.

Alexandre Tilmans, co-owner of Leopold 7 and a partner in Baz Art, said yesterday it was the process of creating, marketing and selling the craft beer that "opened his eyes to the power of art".

Tilmans, who is currently building a brewery in Cape Town for Leopold 7, said he collaborated closely with artists and designers in the city.

During this process, he said, he became aware of a large gap in the art world in South Africa.

In a city that is home to so many beautiful murals, Tilmans was amazed that public art was seen to

The inaugural festival will be focused on Salt River

have such negative connotations and that there was a municipal by-law declaring graffiti an illegal act.

Baz Art says it has the support of the local communities and authorities, as well as "a list that reads like the who's who of the South African public art world".

The inaugural festival will be focused on Salt River, one of the communities where Baz Art is developing educational and economic activities to encourage "inclusive community building and respect for the arts".

Baz Art set up a festival office at Blackpool Football Club in Salt River.

Local people are being trained for guided tours of the neighbourhood focusing on public art.

The organisers say the 10-day festival will also be the launchpad for various long-term projects, including art classes for schoolchildren, with eight schools initially identified.

Another pillar of Baz Art's mission is to enhance South Africa's role as an international hub for art. The company says it will work with existing art fairs and events, and create new partnerships with players around the world to build Africa's profile.