



adrian chimp print



adrian looking at his chimp prints

the Phumani Archive Mill, which makes the paper used for many of the prints. The team handles the preparation, polishing the brass and copper plates, etching, inking the tiles, proofing and editioning.

'As a print technician, you're involved in a very close collaborative exercise with an artist or artists,' says Verity, who is also manager of the pro-print shop. 'Print is known as a collaborative art... most of the time, the artists that printers work with are not necessarily printmakers. They may have studied print or dabbled in it to a certain extent, but they're usually sculptors, painters, draughtsmen. It's the printer's hand and technical know-how that has to guide the process. So the artist will come to us with drawings, and

"It's been really joyous for us. These are people who really know what they're doing, and have been encouraging – to the point of being bullying! – and also providing a lot of assistance, and really good advice"

Handspring at Artist Proof Studio

Collaborating on a print to celebrate *War Horse* led the Handspring team to a recent, highly productive artists' residency at Artist Proof Studio.

Last year, in celebration of the arrival of *War Horse* in South Africa, RMB commissioned an artwork, a print created through a collaborative effort between the Handspring Puppet company – the creators of Joey – and Newtown's Artist Proof Studio (APS), whose professional print shop has a long history of working alongside some of the country's most celebrated artists. The commission resulted in two prints featuring Joey and Topthorn.

RMB's subsequent sale of these works raised more than half a million rand for the Handspring Trust, a not-for-profit venture which supports and nurtures the development of the puppetry arts in Barrydale in the Western Cape. It also led Handspring's Adrian Kohler and Basil Jones to undertake an artists' residency at APS, bringing the duo full circle: now famed for their work in theatre and puppetry, the pair first met while studying sculpture at Michaelis.

'It's the first thing I've done since leaving art school,' says Jones of a large work combining chine-colle and lino cut, and depicting a Karoo landscape, crested by a sky full of odd clouds – the shapes of Joey's inner components. 'The most important thing for me, is to start from where you left off, not try and do something completely unrelated,' says Jones. 'So I've started with the *War Horse* shapes. I'm not working from a completely new iconography, I'm using the *War Horse* iconography, and changing it.'

Kohler's images likewise 'start where he left off.' According to Jones, Kohler has around 2 000 drawings, ranging from artist's impressions through to working drawings from which a puppet-maker will carve out the features of a given character. Together, APS and Kohler selected a variety of these to be recreated in print by the APS team of master printers: Sara-Aimee Verity, Pontsho Sikhosane, Bevan de Wet, Charles Kholobeng and Nathi Ndladla – a master paper maker from



basils artwork



detail of working on linocut

then we have to say "right, this is the technique we think is best suited to get something alike" – not exactly, but similar.' Verity is quick to point out that prints, or multiples, as they're sometimes referred to, are artworks in their own right, not simply reproductions of source material.

'So [for example] a crumbly drawing could turn into a lithograph or a soft ground etching; if you want something that is a lot more painterly, it could be a monotype, or a spit bite aquatint. If you want something that's quite graphic, with a tactile quality, we would go with wood cut, relief or perhaps a silkscreen; and then, the photographic methods are photo lithography and photopolymer gravure, where you can take an image, have it scanned and then expose it and develop it to a plate. So [the final image] is always a step removed from the source material.'

According to Verity, Jones and Kohler 'have been particularly good in understanding that process;' and the

results have been outstanding. 'I'm blown away... I knew it was going to be a productive time, but I think the outcome is a real reflection of a lifetime's work and knowing the working process. We've heard back-stories to the puppets and puppeteers – stories about seventh generation puppeteers from Bamako who Adrian trained with; puppets that never made it to productions, and puppets whose arms failed in working.'

Kohler and Jones likewise speak highly of the experience – the proceeds of which will once again go towards supporting the work of the Handspring Trust. 'It's very exciting for us to be in a space where we are being assisted to make this,' says Jones. 'It's been really joyous for us. These are people who really know what they're doing, and have been encouraging – to the point of being bullying! And also providing a lot of assistance, and really good advice.' CF