

DELHEIM: WORTH THE JOURNEY **An Exhibition by Artist Joshua Miles at Delheim**

Joshua Miles left the hustle and bustle of the big city behind to settle in the tranquil atmosphere along the art route in remote Baardskeerdersbos.

In his exhibition “**Delheim – Worth the Journey**”, which opened at the Delheim Wine Estate in Knorhoek on 25 May 2010, Joshua captures various scenes at the beautiful Delheim wine estate in his impressionistic and delicate woodblocks, combining masterful cutting with Japanese-style simplicity and sharpness.

The style of his current work is a new direction for him, in that he now enlarges the scale of his prints, thereby translating his painted ‘impressionist’ brush strokes into a more emotive, expanded and expressive relief print medium.

Joshua attended the prestigious Michaelis Art School at the University of Cape Town, where he received the coveted Judy Steinberg Prize, and has exhibited his paintings and reduction-woodcut prints widely in South Africa and abroad.

Joshua attributes his interest in the genre to watching his aunt, the art historian and artist Elsa Miles, producing woodcuts when he was a child, and later, Cecil Skotnes taught him the technical aspects of this difficult craft at Michaelis.

Joshua’s woodblocks are similar to linework, and the process takes about three to four days to complete. He uses compressed wood (“superwood”), as he prefers its sensitive surface. He draws a rough outline on the wood, and then carves certain parts away with a variety of chisels. Ink is mixed and first rolled evenly on a piece of glass, then on the wood. The ink sticks only on the surface, not on the deeper cut-away areas.

Good French paper is then placed on the ink-rolled surface, and then rolled through a press, and thus the first colour is on the paper. This process is repeated on as many pieces of paper as the amount of prints he wants at the end of the day, very seldom more than ten. He then cleans the wood and carves away again for the next colour, which is then rolled on top of the previous colour through the press on each of the prints. So it continues until he has applied the last colour; he usually prints about six or seven colours over each other.

For those who have seen the end result, it is difficult to believe that such a seemingly “crude” process can produce such a detailed effect. At the end of the process only the last carving is left on the wood, and all the other “colours” are in shreds, making it impossible to reproduce any further copies of the original. Thus each of these works is unique, original and irreplaceable.



Joshua regards himself as a very lucky man (and artist, of course!) in that he married a Scottish cabinetmaker who is very practical: she does all his framing, makes furniture, installs shelves and even fixes the wiring in the house! He then has to do “only” the garden (for those privileged enough to have seen it, apparently an work of art in itself) and then of course his “real” job – oil painting and reduction woodcut printing.

Like the typical, creative-but-not-very-practical artist, he says: “My wife Angela is of unbelievable support to me – she helps me deal with the “world out there”, such as pricing and hanging my work at exhibitions. It can’t be easy to be married to an artist; yes, things are easier now financially, but it was not always so. An artist doesn’t get a monthly salary, and for that reason we have an agreement to keep the monthly accounts as low as possible, for example by using solar energy and having a vegetable garden.”

Delheim has commissioned him to produce twelve unique woodprints of views of the estate, and the exhibition of these works by this exciting new artist will be on at Delheim’s “Downstairs” tasting cellar until end December 2010. Nine original, unframed prints of each woodcut will be for sale at Delheim. For more information, please contact Juliet at Tel 021 888 4600 or e-mail directors@delheim.com