

Woodstock artist excited about Glenfiddich residency

LOYISO MPALANTSHANE

Woodstock artist Dan Halter, 33, is taking part in the 2010 Glenfiddich Artist in Residency programme.

The programme takes three months and international artists from Taiwan, London, America, Canada and India get time to network and share knowledge with each other.

Dan says he is grateful for the opportunity to visit Scotland. "Being invited to this programme is a prize in itself, however, we will get about £10 000 (about R116 000) just to see us through," he says.

Dan is a product of the University of Cape Town's Michaelis School of Fine Art where he graduated with a BA. He won the painting prize and the Judy Steinberg Award in his final year in 2001.

His big break came in 2006 following his first solo show entitled *Take Me To Your Leader* at the João Ferreira Art Gallery in Cape Town.

The next year he was awarded the Pro Helvetia residency in Zürich, Switzerland, and since then he hasn't looked back. His



PICTURE: LOYISO MPALANTSHANE

■ Zimbabwean-born visual artist Dan Halter with the famous "immigrant" bags which he uses in some of his works.

work can be seen at the South African National Art Gallery, the University of South Africa, in private collections and at UCT.

When he is not in his studio in Woodstock, Dan teaches art part-time at his alma mater.

Born of Swiss parents in Zimbabwe, Dan says he has always

been interested in art and was greatly encouraged by his mother.

"After high school I went to Switzerland because I couldn't study art in Zimbabwe; the universities there don't offer it as a subject. Then in 1998, I was homesick for Africa and I came to UCT," he says.

Dan says most of his artistic work is drawn from his personal experiences and from stories related to him by Zimbabweans who live in South Africa as immigrants.

He has produced several maps of Zimbabwe, interwoven with different documents and the under valued bank notes.

One of his most recent works is a depiction of the 8-bit *Space Invaders*. In it he uses the famous bright, Chinese-made plastic mesh that have become synonymous with African travellers and refugees all over the world.

He transforms these in to "aliens" or immigrants "exiting" Zimbabwe and "entering" South Africa.

He does this through photographs taken in a busy Harare "point of departure" and one taken in Johannesburg's Park Station, South Africa's "point of entry". The "space invader" is the mesh bags entering a taxi in Zimbabwe and disembarking from a taxi in Park Station.

He also has videos of Zimbabweans crossing the Beit Bridge border in Limpopo while "moon walking".

Dan says this work was inspired by a story told to him by a Zimbabwean immigrant in Cape Town.

According to the artist, moon walking means walking backwards to avoid detection by border police.

Dan describes his work in two simple terms: Fabric and Fabrication. "Fabric because I would use a cloth of any type made from thread or fibres.

"This can either be woven, knitted or felted. I also look for a particular texture or quality in a fabric.

"Fabrication can either mean the construction of something, the invention of something that is not true, or simply a fraudulent imitation of a signature or document," he says

"My work is not driven by a political agenda or commercial interest. It is outside the normal nine-to-five grind. It is a little reality check.

"My art is simple and it looks at and reflects how society is at a particular point in time.

"Hopefully, people can gain or see something in another way, through my work," says Dan.

