

INSTITUUT VIR EIETDSE GESKIEDENIS

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Art centre experiment a success

By MARCELLE KATZ

IN 1962 an Art Centre was established in Rorke's Drift, Natal, by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Southern Africa. And what initially began as an experiment soon grew into a flourishing business.

Manager of the centre Mr Goran Skoglund says a lot of the women in the village were left to look after their children with little financial support. After being trained in weaving and pottery at the centre, the Rorke's Drift community has gained worldwide recognition and a pool of talented artists.

Rugs and tapestries are made of pure karakul wool and designs are never repeated. The aim in this cross-cultural art and craft production is to maintain a standard of quality, integrity and vitality. As Goran stresses: "This is not a factory and artists are free to express themselves as they please".

The influence of Swedish missionaries is apparent but the emphasis is on the preservation of black art linked with Christian ethics. "It is," says Goran, "a place of women and children. And one of the most peaceful environments I've ever lived in."

An exhibition of Rorke's Drift fabric, tapestries and pottery is on view at the Ikapa Gallery in Strand Street and will run till December 19.

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