

Kenneth M Alexander – Author and Artist

I was born to Dennis and Kathleen Alexander in a single motor garage at 21 Limerick Road in Athlone. In those days, the midwife would do her rounds on a bicycle at the time when the stork was seen flying over the now-collapsed, missing going, gone forever Athlone Towers. Either that or she went to the foot of Table Mountain and placed a hollowed out pumpkin with a precision cut hole in one side. The monkey would come, stick his or her hand in the hole, grab some pips and in trying to pull its hand out in a fist, it gets stuck. The midwife then pounces on the helpless monkey, knocks it out with her case, and then stuffs “it” into that same black case and off she motors on her “dik” wheel bicycle to deliver the latest addition to an Athlone family. The monkey cries with relief when let out of the case. I have since moved on from that belief system. For some reason, the majority of the employers I worked for still believe that. In fact, far too many white people still do. To them we are monkeys and they pay us with peanuts.

I always joke that I was supposed to be a Mini but turned out as a Mercedes with all the frills but I just cannot change the garage mentality. Maybe all my plugs were not tightened properly. Instead of nappy changes, I had oil changes. After all, what can come out of a garage in the sandy Cape Flats of Cape Town, but a crock leaking recycled fish oil?

My parents are, or were, classified as Coloured. Coloureds do not have a colour. You could be light-brown or dark-brown or brown or yellowish-brown or even white, but your hair, yes, your hair may be your downfall. In *Pavement Specials*, you can read all about my “Hairitage”.

I started my school days at Alicedale Primary in Gleemoor, sub A and B. My highlight there was to wet my pants within the first week of school. I do remember writing with thick government-issued wax crayons on newspaper. Up down. Up down. Up down. From standard 1 to 5, I was enrolled at St Raphael’s RC school in Lawrence Road in Athlone.

High school was at Alexander Sinton in Thornton Road. The glory of Sinton returning from another victory on the Green Point Athletics Meeting down Thornton Road was suddenly erased with the Trojan Horse massacre on 15 October 1985. It was a terrible day. By then I had already matriculated in 1973, 12 years earlier.

This was followed by more than forty-two years in Architecture. It started on a kitchen table in Athlone at the age of 15, and then off into offices filled with drawing boards, to open fields, climbing up badly constructed scaffolding, being praised and being humiliated. Quite a mixed bag, filled with life's good and bad.

Eventually, I made it to the top as a Design and Production Director at EBESA Architects until my number was called. "Your time is up". Suddenly I was reduced to monkey status again, or was it a 'crock' from the sandy Cape Flats? In true Christian style, I stood up after standing up, remained standing and refused to lie down, because my time was not up.

The Engine powering my Artwork

Coming from a diverse, historical disadvantaged background, my work encompasses an eclectic mix of beliefs, culture and lived experiences. Everyday life dictates my inspiration to capture a distinctive spirit prevalent in the Cape Flats from central Athlone to the outskirts of the city.

As a self-taught artist, the only colour wheel that I know of is the one at Carnivals. Blue equals your money, Red doubles your money and white swallows your money. NO LIMITS and NO BOUNDARIES.

To make art available to a financially captured society, I make limited copies for sale at affordable prices. I believe that we must wake up what the enemy cannot take away from us. The ARTIST SLEEPING within us.

Books authored by me

An extract from: *Welcome to my World*

"Lastly, for everything these days, we must qualify to be deemed fit for the job. Should we not also qualify before getting married to see if we

have what it takes to raise children because most times they pop up somewhere along the line? And just to throw that last punch, grandchildren follow children. You decide.

An extract from *Pavement Special*

“Either a car gets me or some horrible animal sickness. Rabies, tick fever or hunger. I share a piece of cardboard under the moon with my best friend Johny Vuilvoete. But as they say, it’s a dog’s life this. I am not a dog, I am not a “Pavement Special” or even a “Weekend Special”.

An extract from *A South African By-Product*

“Their minds have been trained to know that they are superior to any black person. From day one, their superiority is drilled into them. Whites are people and Blacks are a mistake and Coloureds a By-Product of Sin.”

An extract from *#just4you*

“All is good until he falls off the wall, bumps his head leaving it cracked, breaks a leg while everyone comes and stares at him in a helpless state. Did he fall off the wall or did life just happen? Did circumstances perhaps push him off the wall? Was he unstable and why? Did he perhaps jump? Who knows? Who really knows? Does anyone really care about you?”

One of 42 contributors to *Disrupting Denial* authored by Dr Sarah Malotane Henkeman.

Contributions: The forgotten People of Simons Town (and Pencil art).

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