



## KEEP IT CONSTANT **Creative roots**

TEXT MICHELLE CONSTANT

I have an architect slash designer friend in Belgium who has taken it upon herself to send these inspirational notes to her mates around the world each week. The one that read “we don’t see things as they are, we see things as we

are” was both obvious and striking — a bit like reading a self-help book where the binary to ‘obvious’ is, in fact, a bolt of lightning.

The recent Design Indaba in Cape Town ([www.designindaba.com](http://www.designindaba.com)) reminded me once again how important it is to take time out of our daily humdrum to find havens, in order to invigorate our creative senses with a few ‘bolts’ and some ‘obvious’. Who wouldn’t want to be told, “stop working, start living”, “there is best and then there is better practice” or “fail harder”?

Likewise awe-inspiring tales of Millennial Forests ([www.danpearsonstudio.com](http://www.danpearsonstudio.com)) and cable cars in South American favelas ([www.u-tt.com](http://www.u-tt.com)) open the doors of possibility with as much force as an Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test.

But it was only post the event, on the Gautrain back into Joburg, that I was really struck by the value of the three days. I met a young woman from Investec’s marketing department and, as she described it, Investec sends a team to Design Indaba each year. The goal is to inspire them to think differently about the work they do, and the world in which their work takes place. Given that I had always assumed the Indaba attendees to be design geeks, this is really forward thinking for a bank. Can you offer that, Steve?

So where do we find these creative havens? It should, but very seldom does start in schools. Recently I read a column on the M&G’s blog *Thoughtleader* by Athambile Masola. Her piece referenced the excellent TED Talk ([www.ted.com](http://www.ted.com)) by Sir Ken Robinson where he asks: “Do schools kill creativity?” Masola, who is a teacher, spoke about the challenges for an educator, saying: “Do we simply want our children to grow up and become citizens who will become cogs in wheels, get sucked up in corporations and further feed the industrial machine? Or do we want creative citizens who can use their imagination to solve the complexities we face in this country and the world?” Whilst we would, first and foremost, like our children to get jobs, Masola talks broadly about the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s claim that the arts support “the ability to deal with complexity and ambiguity in society” (1993).

If this is one of the values of the arts then surely now is the time to support the kaleidoscope of offerings that has been described by the Department of Arts and Culture as Mzansi’s Golden Economy. Recently we, Business and Arts SA, launched our biannual research on the state of arts sponsorship in SA — Artstrack. The research, facilitated by BMI, speaks to around 2 000 respondents, and there are some interesting pointers that come out of it: one, that arts sponsorship is only around 10% of sports sponsorship. I’ve never believed in the either/ or of arts and sports sponsorship, but given that the latter is over-traded and that the barrier to entry in some sports markets is prohibitively expensive, now might be the time to re-engage in the arts.

The Artstrack content is diverse, and it speaks to those creative havens that offer us more than the regular, the magical, the inspirational, the confrontational and the economical. Going back to that little note: these are the spaces, events and people that show us the world not only as it is, but also as we are.

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