



Near Middleberg



Vondeling Sunset

Karoo Scapes

Text: Lesley Miles
Images © Peter Bonney

South Africa is a land known for its colourful splendour. From its people to its landscape, the country lacks not vibrancy, diversity or beauty. It is a land drenched in visual appeal, begging to be soaked up by its people, its passers-by and its explorers. Capturing this very essence is the extremely talented Clarens-based hyperrealist artist, Peter Bonney.

Bonney has a unique ability to depict the South African landscape's inviting qualities in an astonishingly photo-like manner, known as "hyperrealism". However, unlike with traditional hyperrealism, he chooses not to paint every object as it exists in its natural setting, but rather to create a "very realistic imaginary scene," as he describes it.

Convinced that Da Vinci would have embraced the use of top-notch cameras and technology as the tools of his trade had he been alive today, Bonney relies strongly on photography as a means of capturing reference material. Inspired by his travels, he pinpoints his greatest joy as getting into the driver's seat of his car, camera at hand, and heading to

the Karoo, where the inspiration for his paintings is endless.

The starkness of the Karoo landscape does not appeal to everyone, with some even finding it off-putting. Bonney, however, has the true artist's gift of seeing beyond the superficial appearance of things, and his paintings of the Karoo reveal the breathtaking, complex beauty of the region.

Despite the fact that his acrylic masterpieces could easily be mistaken for photographs, Bonney chooses to describe himself as somewhat of an impressionist. And, like the 19th century French impressionists, he employs a range of painterly techniques to create scenes that are simultaneously real and illusory.

With painting in his genes, it is fair to say that Bonney's journey as an artist began as a child. Although he did not study art (initially pursuing a career in the polyurethane industry after studying chemistry), his love for art has always been evident. During his school years, he used to arrive early for an extra hour of drawing, and he spent many a Saturday sketching and painting boats at a nearby

dock while others played rugby or cricket. If that doesn't display his passion, then the fact that he left his career in the corporate world in 1983 to dedicate his time to painting certainly does.

It was the following year that the sale of Bonney's paintings took off significantly under the wing of Crake Gallery's Chris Crake (introduced to Bonney by artist Hannes du Plessis). Sadly, after 30 years of being Bonney's representative, Crake passed away two years ago. Soon thereafter, Bonney met Chérie de Villiers of the Chérie De Villiers Fine Art Gallery in Johannesburg. Other than at his own studio, all of Bonney's recent works are exclusively available at the De Villiers gallery.

At a sell-out show many years ago, Crake shared the following words with Bonney: "You're never going to look back after today." Considering the quality of the artworks that Bonney continues to produce, it is no surprise that those words remain true to this day.

For more information please visit www.peterbonney.co.za ■