



My business neighbourhood

Known for its funky beaded animals, Monkeybiz and its team of creative beaders has elevated a traditional craft into an artform, gaining international recognition in New York and London

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Q & A

Last year the Monkeybiz and studio moved home, but only just around the corner, staying close to its roots in the Bo-Kaap. Kate Carlyle, general manager of Monkeybiz tells us more.

Q: How did your business start?

A: Monkeybiz started in 2000 with Barbara Jackson, who was an iconic South African potter. Barbara wanted to pay it forward and help women to help themselves. The beading project soon grew to provide work for around 450 women.

Q: Why did you choose this area to set up shop?

A: Monkeybiz was born in the Bo-Kaap and has had a very close relationship with the Bo-Kaap community. We are close to our largest benefactor and supporter, Carrol Boyes.

Q: How did you find your premises?

A: Our new premises are next to the very old, established family business, Rocksole. When we had to move, as the Carrol Boyes head office was vacating to new premises, Monkeybiz went to Mr GK from Rocksole, who happened to have something available.

Q: Why are the premises ideally suited to your business?

A: Monkeybiz has a target market mainly made up of international tourists. Our retail store relies on passing tourist feet and the retail space on Wale Street, opposite the Hilton Hotel and where the tour buses stop, was ideal. Our studio space works in conjunction with the shop and we need easy access as well as close contact between the two spaces. We have a large studio space directly above the shop and it is accessible

to customers visiting the retail arm, as well as accessible parking.

Q: Who are your neighbours?

A: One of the oldest and best-known family-owned businesses in Cape Town, Rocksole.

Q: What are the shop rental/sales prices like in this area?

A: I do not know what the prices are in the area, but we have had the support of Mr GK and Mr B of a very reasonable rental, as we are a non-profit organisation.

Q: What is your shop footprint?

A: Compared to last year we can say that the number of walk-ins has dramatically risen way over double. We were previously in Rose Street just two blocks off course, so only the people who knew us would come through and very few walk-ins. Now we are well on the beaten track and have a high visibility.

Q: Do you have any expansion plans?

A: No, this was our expansion plan.

Q: Do you operate online as well?

A: Yes, we have an online shop at monkeybiz.co.za.

Q: What's your most popular item?

A: Beaded artworks.

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