

THE ARTS

A 10-year-old feather in the CAP

TO get onto the platform you need a step. And for 10 years now, the Community Arts Project, situated in a ramshackle building in Chapel Street, Woodstock, has provided a sturdy step for many young artists who would otherwise have found it difficult to explore and develop their talents.

CAP, a non-profit organisation, celebrates its 10th anniversary in November and since its small beginning in 1976 has grown into one of the most vital community arts centres in the Peninsula.

"CAP is especially for those people who, due to South Africa's apartheid laws, find themselves excluded from an arts education. Non-racist, non-sexist and co-operative behaviour is encouraged" are the words on the introductory brochure.

The centre has also extended its activities into the townships and has venues at Langa and Guguletu. This expansion marks the start of future plans to not only develop young artists but to train teachers who can go back into the community. Earlier this year CAP held its fourth five-week art workshop for about 150 farmworkers' children at Boschendal.

The organisation offers a full-time three-year fine arts course as well as part-time classes in, among other things, drawing, painting, dance, drama, music, yoga and photography. It is hard to imagine so much going on in such a small venue, but it does.

Fees are R10 a month for one class a week and R13 for two classes a week. A registration fee of R2 a year is charged for adults and R1 for children. Many of the students cannot afford the fees or transport and a bursary to cover both is available.

But art CAP-style does not exist merely for relaxation.

"Art is a weapon" and "South African art is powerful because it records what is happening now, it conveys things and makes people aware" are two quotes from full-time art students in a recent issue of *CAP News*, a quarterly magazine put together by the students.

A quote from the first edition of the newsletter

Cape Town's Community Arts Project in Chapel Street celebrates 10 years of helping young artists extend their talents. By

MARIANNE THAMM

ter also sums up one of CAP's functions: "Art is not something set aside and unable to be touched. It is a living thing which exists, to greater or lesser degrees, in between the lines of a community's day to day activities.

"People need to be able to write, dance, act and draw about what is happening around them, to make their own culture. In the same way that a nation sometimes needs to re-write

its history, so it also needs to recreate its culture."

Many of CAP's students have exhibited their works and been able to make a living at what they do best.

The centre exists within the structures of progressive community organisations. Students who have completed courses may not walk out with a degree to flash around but with the confidence and sound knowledge that they can take what they have learned and share it.

Later this year CAP will hold a series of exhibitions and open days at its different project bases. Celebrations will culminate in a grand two-day event at the centre in Chapel Street in November.

note 25