

Kruger is involved with the ongoing acquisition and display of RMB's art collection together with Carolynne Waterhouse, from RMB's corporate marketing team, and Teresa Lizamore, RMB's curator. The contemporary collection reflects the business philosophy and prized culture of the bank, being *Traditional values. Innovative ideas*. Artists featured include: Wayne Barker, Deborah Bell, Walter Battiss, Willem Boshoff, Mbongeni Richman Buthelezi, Phillemon Hlungwani, Robert Griffiths Hodgins, William Kentridge, Colbert Mashile, Obie Oberholzer, Walter Oltmann, George Pemba, Lionel Smit, Richard John Smith, Angus Taylor, Alfred Thoba, Andrew Verster and Edoardo Villa.

In his private capacity, Kruger has always followed his own thoughts and taste, keeping to works by artists that he and his wife Trienchen both meet and like. One of these artists is a 'painter of houses', a well-kept secret by those in the know in Parktown, Parkview, Westcliff, Dunkeld and surrounds. Fikile, as he is known, operates by his own rules – no studio, no cell phone and not always easily reached. Only by recommendation from one to another do families commission Fikile to capture their homes on paper, often before and after alterations – and consequently his magnificent 'watercolour stories' hang in many houses in these suburbs. Kruger himself commissioned Fikile some years ago to do a watercolour painting of his own house, something that he and his wife treasure, never going unnoticed by art lovers.

It was not an easy task to track Fikile down, given that he does not have a phone. Shantal Maken, Kruger's personal assistant, traced his steps by systematically following the 'client chain' until reaching his latest work-in-progress location. In addition, they had to persuade Fikile to do a painting of the RMB headquarters, something distinctly different from what he has become accustomed to. It promised to be challenging given the architectural scale and design detail of RMB's suite of Merchant Place buildings.

One of Kruger's important deal-clinchers with Fikile was agreeing to fund and deliver a regular supply of the finest art materials from Herbert Evans in Rosebank. Shantal Maken was in daily contact with Fikile and happily did the 'running' to and from Rosebank, carefully selecting materials to meet the artist's precise specifications. Another important and entrepreneurial aspect of the agreement was that RMB was to secure the next commission on completion of his task.

Fikile works on-site, and for each project he must carefully position his makeshift studio. For Pullinger's piece, Fikile chose a spot on an empty plot owned by FirstRand, from which he had an artistically appealing,



tree-framed view upwards of the iconic RMB tower building. Ironically, Alan Pullinger's regular route to work passes this outdoor studio and although he was there for seven weeks, Pullinger never noticed his subtle presence on the dusty, but thankfully tree-lined site. Pullinger's farewell gift was effectively shaped 'under his nose' without him knowing. Particularly meaningful is the angle Fikile selected to portray the building, with Pullinger's home-office window for his eight years in office in clear sight.

This inspired and personalised gift to Pullinger from his office 'friends and neighbours' has since been completed and beautifully framed. It is sure to take pride of place in Pullinger's new office in FirstRand's 4 Merchant Place building. In keeping with the spirit of the deal, Kruger has made sure that Fikile has his next client commission confirmed. When it comes to owning an original Fikile masterpiece – it's not about what you know, but rather about who you know...

James Formby has been appointed Pullinger's successor as CEO of Rand Merchant Bank, a division of FirstRand Bank Limited and will formally take over from Alan Pullinger on 1 October, when Pullinger becomes FirstRand Group Deputy Chief Executive Officer. **CF**