

## INSIDE

Aqua Santa offers a good meal with great service, but runs pricey by Santa Fe standards

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# Venue

Seven

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Friday, July 3, 2009



## SOMETHING FROM HOME

Market expects to bring in 149 artists from 47 countries to the Santa Fe International Folk Art Market

### If you go

**WHAT:** Santa Fe International Folk Art Market

**WHERE:** Milner Plaza, Museum Hill

**WHEN:** 7:30 a.m.-5p.m. July 11  
9 a.m.-5 p.m. July 12

**COST:** \$10 in advance; \$15 market day.

Early-bird admission (7:30-9 a.m. July 11) \$50 (\$25 admission; \$25 tax-deductible donation to the International Artists Fund.)

**CONTACT:** 476-1197; 476-1189 or folkartmarket.org

### TRANSPORTATION

Buses:

Saturday, beginning at 7 a.m. from the PERA parking lot.

Sunday, beginning at 8 a.m. from the PERA parking lot.

Buses will also run to and from the market from the South Capitol Rail Runner Station.

By KATHALEEN ROBERTS  
Journal Staff Writer

**M**onkeybiz's roots reached deep into South African culture, then bloomed into a herd of whimsical animals bringing a steady income to impoverished women.

It all started when Mathapelo Ngaka showed her mother's beaded bracelet to two ceramic artists, Barbara Jackson and Shirley Fintz sent Ngaka home, suggesting she come up with something different because the bracelets were available all across Cape Town.

Ngaka returned with a beaded doll and Monkeybiz was born.

The South African craftswoman is one of 149 artists from 47 countries expected

to attend the Sixth Annual Santa Fe International Folk Art Market at Milner Plaza on Museum Hill July 11-12. Last year's market drew about 20,000 people. Organizers are hoping for similar attendance this year, according to founder and creative director Judith Espinar, an international folk art expert.

In 2008, market artists and cooperatives each earned an average of \$16,300 in sales, close to 10 times what some would make in an entire year in their home countries. Last year's event netted \$2 million. Ninety percent of the sales return home with the artists.

New countries to this year's celebration include Burkina Faso, Indonesia, Jamaica and the Palestinian Territories.

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**TOP:** A beaded scene created by one of 450 women in the townships of Cape Town, South Africa, involved in the Monkeybiz Bead Project. **RIGHT:** A beaded animal created by one of 450 women in the townships of Cape Town, South Africa, involved in the Monkeybiz Bead Project.

# Market Comes to SF

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Shoppers can browse felt rugs from Kyrgyzstan, tribal clothing from China, woven baskets from Rwanda and embroidered shawls from Afghanistan. Prices may range from \$4 bracelets from India to “thousands” for a hand-woven carpet, Espinar said.

Organizers say the market is the largest of its kind in the world and gives visitors and residents alike the chance to make a difference. Live entertainment and food from across the globe offer additional incentives.

Monkeybiz artists date the origins of the cooperative to 1999, when Ngaka, then a part-time student at Jackson's Cape Town ceramic studio working as a domestic, approached Jackson and Fintz with her mother's beaded bracelets. The two women gave Ngaka a bowl filled with glass beads, thread and two beaded dolls purchased from a 1994 festival. Ngaka returned to the studio with a small doll. Jackson and Fintz were hooked.

“I didn't know any beadwork,” Ngaka said. “Beadwork is a tradition in our culture. It was used for necklaces and belts. If you love someone, you would make something that symbolizes that love.”

Ngaka enlisted a group of four unemployed women from a township near Cape Town to learn at her mother's feet. Soon their success spawned a stable source of income.

The women use needles, cotton, filler and wire, cutting separate panels and then joining the pieces around the wire. They've made elephants, giraffes and any number of hybrid beasts in a rainbow of patterns and hues. The rewards have been more than financial.

“Before they started beading, they didn't know they had a talent,” Ngaka



**Mathapelo Ngaka is a founder of Monkeybiz, a South African beadwork cooperative showing at the Santa Fe International Folk Art Market.**

said. “They are so proud.”

Some of the artists have never even seen the animals they portray, Ngaka said, so their designs morph into fantastical creatures spun more from imagination than reality.

“We never may go to the zoo to see the animals,” she said, “so we're going by our vision.”

Today Monkeybiz consists of a growing community of nearly 450 bead artists, many of whom are their households' sole breadwinners.

“It's making a huge difference because some of the artists, they are never working before,” Ngaka said. “We didn't make any animals before. These are our big seller.”

Thanks to Monkeybiz, Ngaka can send her two children to a good school; she also owns a house and a car. Today she works in quality control, inspecting the work and distributing beads.

Many of the artists have never worked for pay before. Of those who have worked, it's usually as a domestic or in farm work for long hours and little pay.

“This product changed their lives,” Ngaka said. They never knew that in

their homes they can make something so wonderful.”

Monkeybiz provides beads, thread, cotton and skills training for the artists, who are paid according to the merits of their work. Monkeybiz then markets the artwork in galleries and shops worldwide. The project also funds a Wellness Centre providing health care, nutrition and yoga classes for bead artists with HIV. About 60 Monkeybiz artists are living with HIV.

“They feel like they're coming home” when they walk in the door, Ngaka said. “Some of them haven't seen their families. Sometimes the families turn their back on you.”

Ngaka has been coming to the Santa Fe International Folk Art Market since 2004.

“It's like my second home,” she said. “It reminds me of where I come from. The adobe house are similar to where I come from and I'm mad about art.”

If it weren't for Monkeybiz and the people who buy her work, she said she would still be cleaning houses. “I just thank God for my creativity,” she said.

“Beadwork was dying. With Monkeybiz, beadwork is alive again.”