

# AFRICAN STORYBOOK

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## Art in Africa

A press release came my way recently. It concerned a walkabout through Johannesburg by the mayor of the city, showing off the 'good work' he has done. This as local election voting day loomed large in South Africa.

While the sceptic in the well-informed among us will cringe, given the city's barely-maintained infrastructure and woeful billing services, the masses are likely to bow down before his performance. That's the downside of the media's power – blanket the media with a message and, irrespective of its veracity, you're bound to see some success.

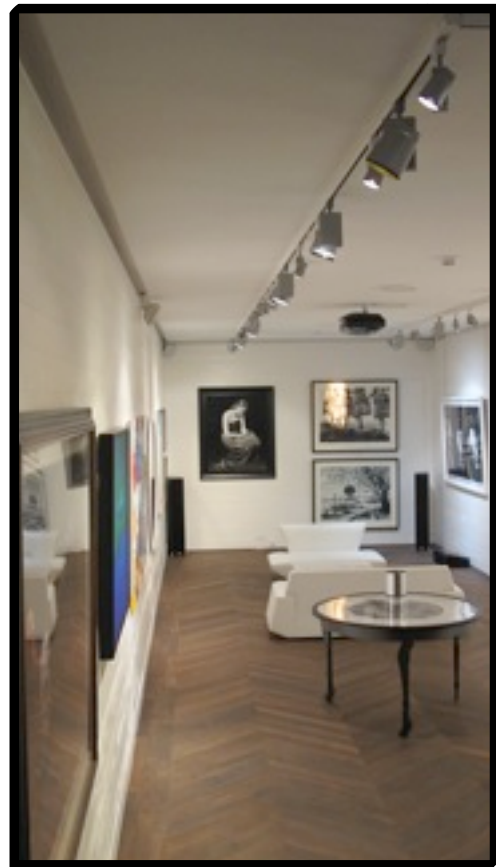
Ellerman House has never had to resort to such lengths to achieve its aims. It was 1999 when I first heard of it - I wanted to include it on a signature safari website I was involved in. The city had only a handful of top quality establishments back then, like The Cape Grace and Cellars-Hohenort, so Ellerman House was Cape Town's understated yet fashionable address.

Sadly the deal didn't work out, and the name took up position deep in my memory. Until a couple of weeks ago...

Fabulous, brilliant and all the other over-worked adjectives that describe everything you can imagine. That's what it is. High above Clifton beach with a remarkable, quite unique view of Cape Town (although that could be because it reveals a part of the city and ocean that we've never seen before).

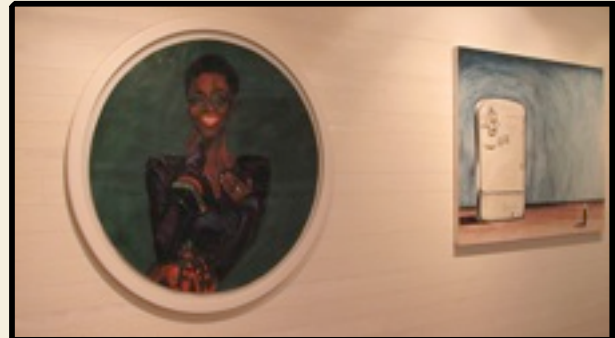
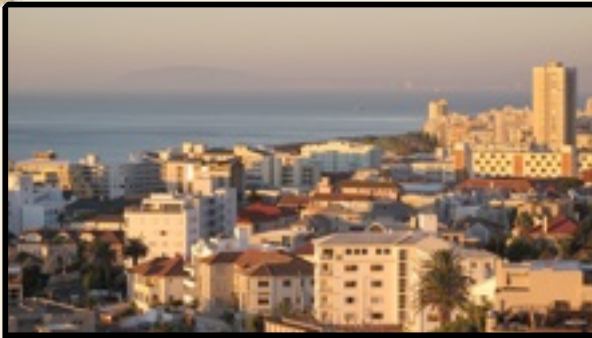
If no-one told you, you wouldn't know you had passed the House. That abused phrase 'tucked away' actually applies here. I don't even remember a sign announcing its presence – yet I've ridden and driven past countless times.

A few features distinguish this establishment from others. It is utterly unpretentious. Having learnt that Denzel Washington had eaten there the night before I imagined it might be smart. 'Arrive in whatever you're comfortable in', I am told. And so we do. We are likewise informed that we can eat when we are ready.



*This is the very best of South Africa art on show, here at this invisible address.*





*"...our local artists' work, for so long unrecognized, is fetching record prices on the world market."*

First we need to satisfy our curiosity, and are shown around the property. The pool is of a decent enough size to swim lengths – important if running and gym isn't your thing - but the cherry on top is the art gallery at the bottom of the garden. With some pieces hanging and easily a hundred more leaning against the walls, this is where you appreciate that the owner is a serious collector. The gallery even turns into a cinema, with the movies activated from an iPad.

We peek in at the private villa adjoining, admiring the rim-flow pool and spa area while a couple read magazines in their dressing gowns. A Zimbabwean named Washington (Nyika) is our waiter. He says he was christened such, and that he has no plans to return to Zim even if the 'old dictator'

Mugabe is ousted – as he has married and established roots here. I think to myself later that he surely gets tired of the same old conversations with guests.

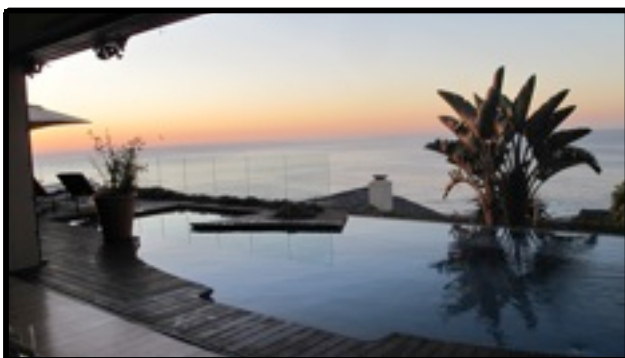
We take cocktails in one of two lounges, surrounded by works of South African masters Pierneef and Irma Stern. Lining the hallway of the 19<sup>th</sup> century mansion are a few works of Gerard Sekhoto. This is the very best of South Africa art on show, here at this invisible address. At a time when our local artists' work, for so long unrecognized, is fetching record prices on the world market, it's a somewhat proudly South African creative moment. Just before the world's jazz greats descend on the city for the Cape Town International Jazz Festival.

With balmy evening chasing oppressive day, dinner slows down -

served on the verandah, under the trees. I enjoy my kingklip a little more than Alison (a meat-enthusiast of note) does her fillet - no matter how good the establishment, sometimes that's just the way it is.

And then it is back to our classically appointed corner-room. With a large bathroom, verandah-with-that-view and large-screen TV (and bar fridge included in the price) - we feel it deserves some time.

That's the thing about Ellerman House. If you already know Cape Town well, you really won't want to leave the House. Which speaks volumes about why it doesn't need to advertise it. Good work speaks for itself.



*With balmy evening chasing oppressive day, dinner slows down - served on the verandah, under the trees.*