

Last March, a small group of curators and collectors from New York's Museum of Art and Design (MAD) made an unusual detour during a 10-day itinerary in South Africa. Along with visits to Table Mountain and Johannesburg's Origins Centre, the group spent a day at Nirox, an artist-in-residency programme and sculpture park 45 minutes outside of Johannesburg at the Cradle of Humankind in Gauteng Province (pictured overleaf). Rambling over 181 square miles, the Cradle is a Unesco World Heritage Site rich in early-human fossils; its serene savanna vistas, abundant wildlife and ascendant foodie scene have made it a Hamptons-like retreat for weekenders. And Nirox – founded and run by Benji Liebmann, and set on 37 landscaped acres that are

privately owned by a consortium of prominent South African families – has become the cultural centre-point here since opening in 2007.

It was the art rather than anthropology that drew the MAD group to Nirox. Dotted with large-scale works by artists such as Willem Boshoff and Marco Cianfanelli, Nirox has become a place for both producing and directly engaging with art. At its core is its artists' residency programme, which brings painters, sculptors, photographers, composers and choreographers to Cradle HQ for weeks, or sometimes months, at a time. It has hosted South African icons including Boshoff and William Kentridge, and international greats such as Marlene Dumas and Arnaldo Pomodoro, along with emerging talents like video-installation artist Mika Rottenberg. While no two residencies are exactly alike, most include studio visits or exhibition premieres that are open to the public – which increasingly attracts

travellers seeking a cultural compliment to a Sabi Sabi safari or Cape Winelands tour.

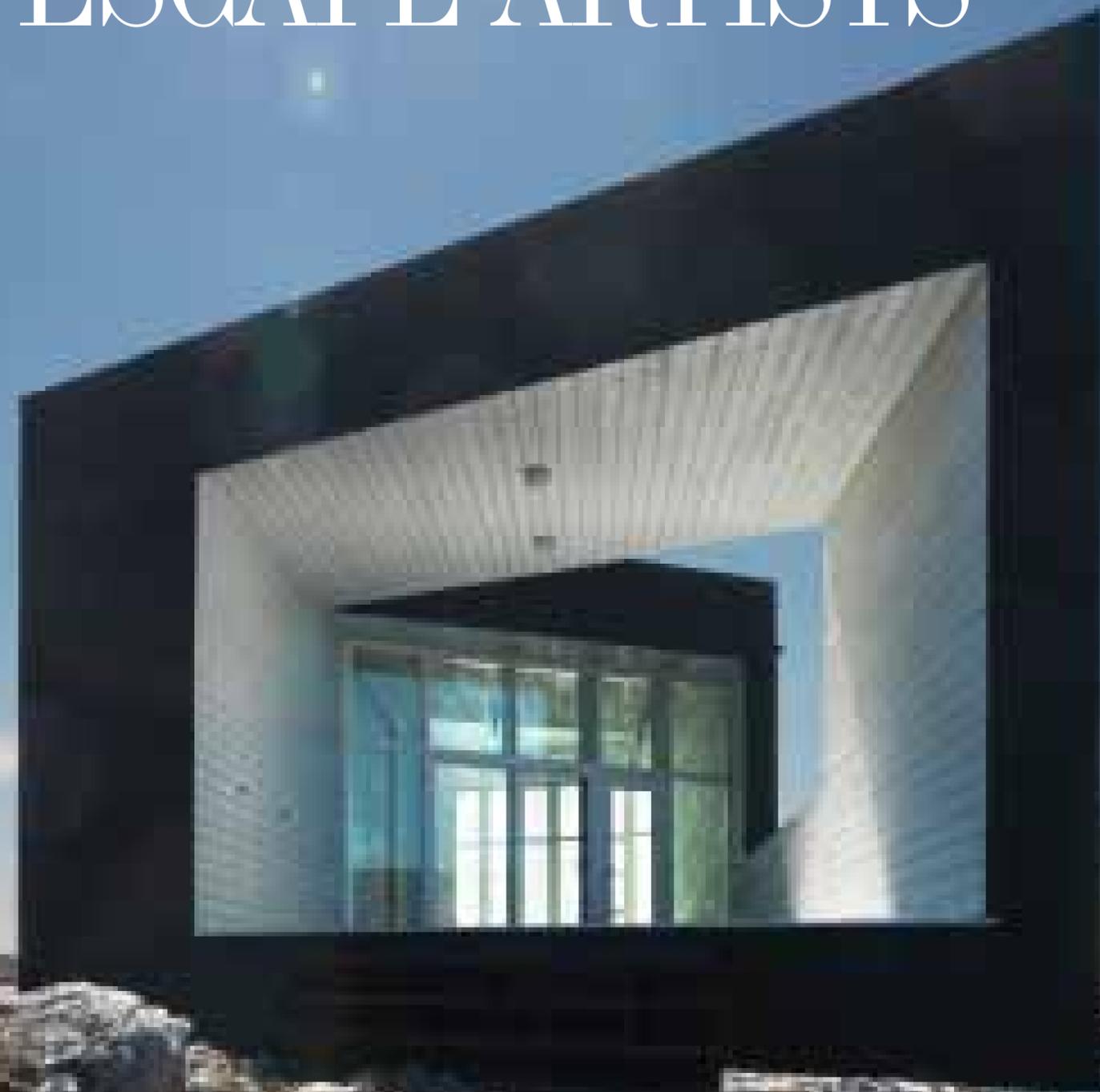
While they may still hover just below the art-world radar, artist residency programmes such as Nirox are quietly joining formal museums, fairs and biennials as must-visit high-culture destinations. This process is still in its infancy, but bolstered by increasingly world-class architecture, art exhibitions and artists with name recognition, residency programmes from Canada to California are evolving from private, creative cocoons to full-fledged – and in some cases, nearly full-service – traveller-centric experiences.

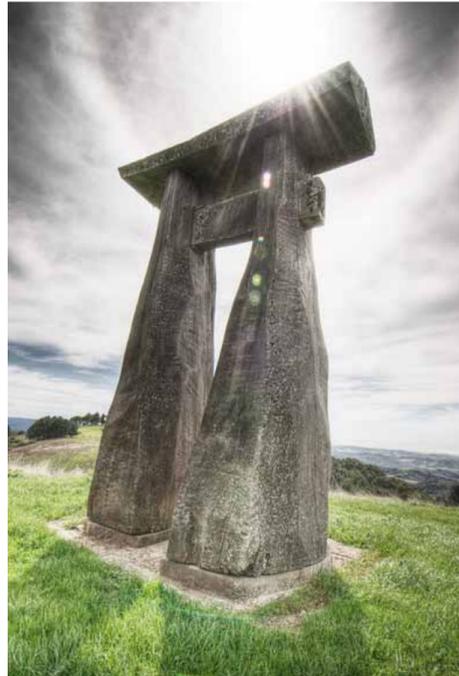
Some, such as Nirox, are set in established tourism centres with myriad restaurants, hotels and spas. Others, like northern California's Djerassi Resident Artists Program and the Brant Foundation Art Study Center in Greenwich, Connecticut (pictured on the final page), constitute easy day-trips from both San Francisco and

Artist-residency programmes are luring travellers in search of singular getaways with insider access to the creative process – and the promise of high culture enjoyed in striking locations. David Kaufman reports

ESCAPE ARTISTS

Shorefast Foundation's Long Studio, located on Joe Batt's Arm, Fogo Island





New York respectively; they can also justify long country weekends, sited as they are in regions of the US that are endowed with quaint inns and world-class spas, fine dining and outdoor attractions. Still others are destinations in their own right: the Fogo Island Arts Corporation (FIAC) is an ambitious new residency programme on Newfoundland's Fogo Island (pictured on the previous page) – six hours' travel time from the provincial capital, St John's.

Whatever their location, each of these programmes provides travellers with unique levels of artistic intimacy and intensity. "Residencies offer the type of 'insider' access to artists and studios that is increasingly rare and out of reach," says Doreen Remen, co-founder of the New York City-based Art Production fund, which has sponsored residency programmes at hotels such as The Cosmopolitan in Las Vegas. "With so much information now available without leaving your living room, there is a danger of sameness to travel today. So there is a real desire for authentic experiences like residencies – something you can't just read about in a magazine or book."

In the case of the MAD delegation, the Nirox "experience" – arranged via Liebmann – included a private sculpture park tour and studio time with artist-in-residence Geoff Hendricks, a visit with students from the nearby Artist's Proof Studio, and a private dinner with Boshoff and Hendricks. The sojourn was lengthy and comprehensive, reflecting "a desire by travellers today for truly interactive encounters", says special-interest tour provider Marion Ellis, whose Cape Town-based firm Cape Insights organised the MAD visit. "With Boshoff and Hendricks showing us around, the trip could not have been more hands-on."

"Nirox is ideal for those interested in contemporary art and African culture," says Joel Zack, president of New York-based Heritage Tours Private Travel, which designs high-end, culturally focused bespoke travel to southern Africa, Morocco, Turkey, Spain and Portugal. "It provides a more private and exclusive experience, and is, of course, based in a beautiful setting." While the MAD group ultimately spent the night in Johannesburg's elegant Westcliff Hotel, they could have easily enjoyed a few days luxuriating in the Cradle itself: the Forum Homini is a modernist, 14-suite spa retreat (pictured overleaf). Its restaurant, Roots, is considered one of the

Johannesburg area's top tables and is booked well in advance during Nirox exhibition openings. So, too, The Cradle Restaurant just down the road; owned by Prospero Bailey, its menu is filled with free-range and sustainable produce, while its walls are covered with works by Bailey's brother, Beezy, the London-based sculptor and painter. Out front, rhinos and giraffes occasionally wander by. And next year, Nirox is planning to open a restaurant overseen by David Higgs, the former chef of Stellenbosch's highly regarded Rust en Vrede.

The landscape is equally stark and compelling thousands of miles away on Fogo Island, where a series of modernist artists' studios have been constructed with the hope of luring architecture and contemporary-art

"There is a real desire for authentic experiences like residencies – something you can't just read about in a magazine"



Clockwise from far left: *Tori* by Bruce Johnson, featured at Djerassi. *To Market To Market* by Ann Weber and William Wareham, featured at Djerassi. The new Diane Middlebrook studios at Djerassi, designed by Cass Calder Smith of CCS Architecture. Katharina von Ruckteschell, director of the Goethe-Institut South Africa, introduces Jurgen Partenheimer in the Nirox amphitheatre at the start of a poetry reading by Lebo Mashile



enthusiasts to this wind-whipped, 92-square-mile rocky outpost. Home to a mere 2,400 residents spread among 10 coastal communities, Fogo Island is the birthplace of social entrepreneur and redevelopment visionary Zita Cobb. Working with her brother, Anthony, Cobb has poured more than \$10m of her own money – matched by an additional \$5m from the Canadian government and \$5m from the provincial government – into transforming Fogo Island from a moribund fishing outpost into a world-class arts and culture destination. Much like Nirox, the main mission of the Cobbs' six-year-old Shorefast Foundation is an arts-centric approach to cultural and economic resiliency for Fogo Island. This is done via FIAC and its formal residency programme; owing to Fogo's remoteness, Cobb is using those residencies as a starting point for a full reinvention through small-scale, high-end geotourism. Art, however, forms the linchpin of these efforts – creativity as a catalyst for the island's long-term survival. "We could have started, say, a rubber boot factory here, but that would not have served the island culturally," says Cobb, who made her fortune as a top executive at fibre-optics giant JDS Uniphase. "We realised we had to inspire people to actually come."

The facilities Cobb has created on Fogo Island are certainly inspiring. Besides the six contemporary design

studios for visiting artists that are themselves works of art (resident artists will cultivate their craft during three- to six-month residencies while living in restored, century-old fisherman homes), there is the Fogo Island Inn, a 29-room luxury hotel with interior and furniture designs by Canadian and international collaborators including Studio Ilse, owned by Ilse Crawford, the London-based editor-turned-designer responsible for Soho Houses in both New York and Miami. Upon completion at the end of 2012, the inn will belong to the people of Fogo Island, with 100 per cent of all proceeds from its operation being reinvested in the community.

Inside the inn is a formal art gallery to showcase works by international and resident artists, who often open their studios to both locals and visitors during their stays. Todd Saunders of Saunders Architecture, which designed the entire project, describes the gallery as the most clearly defined crossing-point "between Fogo's two worlds – artists, and the visitors and local residents – which we've tried to keep somewhat independent of each other on the rest of the island".

The Shorefast team will also organise Fogo Island cultural and nature "immersion" activities and will, if desired, communicate with guests before their arrival to custom-design island itineraries. "An extreme form of social enterprise," is how Cobb describes this island-

wide hospitality effort. Cobb concedes her mission is ambitious at Fogo Island, but she insists its modest scale and unhurried timetable are both feasible. "We are only welcoming about 3,000 or so guests each year," she says. "So we feel confident that the kind of traveller who wants to find us will find us."

Far easier to find are the Djerassi Resident Artists Program in Woodside, California, near San Francisco, and the Brant Foundation, an hour north of New York City and bordering the grounds of the Greenwich Polo Club in Connecticut. As at Fogo Island, both institutions have recently added new studio and/or gallery facilities with impressive architectural pedigrees that are helping to lure curious art-lovers. At the Brant Foundation, founded and owned by media magnate Peter Brant, a 107-year-old barn was converted in 2009 into a 10,000sq ft gallery and study centre by architect Richard Gluckman. With this new space, the 16-year-old foundation went from merely collecting to displaying and ultimately producing blue-chip works. Last year, for instance, the American artist Josh Smith created large-scale paintings of dinosaurs, skeletons and fish. Smith lived at Brant on and off for six weeks while completing the show, called *The American Dream*, which ultimately attracted almost 10,000 visitors. Prior to Smith, Swiss artist Urs Fischer had free reign of the space; a solo

show for American painter Karen Kilimnik opened in early May; and Nate Lowman will arrive on November 11. Although Brant is not a formal residency programme, like residencies, the foundation supports its “in-house” artists during their creation and exhibition periods. After the success of the Fischer and Smith in-house studio stays and exhibitions, director Allison Brant says the foundation is considering a permanent residency scheme. But in the meantime she says that “Brant is already serving as a place to give artists freedom to create while still providing as many people as possible with the opportunity to visit.” The foundation’s by-appointment-only accessibility and its situation in one of America’s wealthiest enclaves also add to the appeal of the destination.

A similar set-up is in place at London’s five-year-old Delfina Foundation, which will be the largest international artists-residency programme in London when it reopens in 2013. The foundation was established by the Spanish arts patron Delfina Entrecanales, and has included satellite programmes across the Arab world. Focusing on artists from the Middle East, north Africa, Turkey and Iran, it allows residents to create works through artistic exchanges with European artists and to present their work in its gallery-like headquarters or in major London cultural



Clockwise from top: the Brant Foundation Art Study Center. An installation view from Urs Fischer’s *Oscar the Grouch* exhibition at the Brant Foundation Art Study Center. Forum Homini Hotel in the Cradle of Humankind



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institutions, such as Battersea’s Pump House Gallery and the Victoria and Albert Museum. Next year, the foundation, which has hosted more than 100 artists since 2007, will double in size as it expands into an adjoining townhouse. In the meantime, autumn residencies include Jeremy Hutchinson and Nathan Witt, two British artists in Ramallah working in partnership with the British Council and ArtSchool Palestine.

At Djerassi, meanwhile, San Francisco-based architect Cass Calder Smith of CCS Architecture recently completed four new writers’ studios, (named the Diane Middlebrook studios, pictured on the previous page) – the first purpose-built facilities in the programme’s 33-year history. Set on 580 acres in the Santa Cruz Mountains, just a few miles from the Pacific, Djerassi limits public studio visits to either private benefactor tours or an annual open-studio day each July. However, scheduled tours are available of Djerassi’s sprawling Sculpture Park, which includes 40 large-scale works by residency alumni such as David Nash, Bruce Johnson, Ann Weber and William Wareham (pictured on the previous page). The tours last between two-and-a-half to

four-and-a-half hours. One can base oneself at the Ritz-Carlton in seaside Half Moon Bay, 20 minutes’ drive west of Djerassi, and enjoy the area’s two-dozen beaches, hiking trails, and proximity to some of California’s more charming seaside towns.

“These programmes allow travellers to engage with a destination and see it through the eyes of an artist,” says Eric C Shiner, director of the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh. “At the same time, because it is so rare to be with an artist while their work is actually in development, the visitor almost becomes a collaborator of sorts with the residents themselves.” As vehicles for both cultural immersion and cultural revitalisation, tourist-focused artist-residencies will, Shiner believes, increase in popularity and complexity. Indeed, the Warhol itself is in the early stages of developing Homewood, a long-term residency programme that aims to help restore the city’s neglected East End by luring culture-focused visitors to large-scale, site-specific art and architecture projects. “For years museums have served as cultural destinations,” Shiner says. “There’s no reason residencies cannot act in the same vein.” ♦

ART IN THE RIGHT PLACE

The Andy Warhol Museum, 117 Sandusky Street, Pittsburgh (+1412-237 8300; www.warhol.org). **Art Production Fund**, 15 Wooster Street, New York (+1212-966 0193; artproductionfund.org). **Brant Foundation Art Study Center**, 941 North Street, Greenwich, Connecticut (+1203-869 0611; brantfoundation.org). **Cape Insights** (+2721-424 0018; www.capeinsights.com). **The Cradle Restaurant**, Route T3, Kromdraai Road, Kromdraai 1739 (+2711-659 1622; thecradle.co.za). **Delfina Foundation**, 29-31 Catherine Place, London SW1 (020-7233 5344; www.delfinafoundation.com). **Djerassi Resident Artists Program**, 2325 Bear Gulch Road, Woodside, California (+1650-747 1250; www.djerassi.org). **Forum Homini**, Letamo Game Estate, Kromdraai Road, Mogale City (+2711-668-7000; www.forumhomini.com), from R3,500 full board. **Heritage Tours Private Travel** (+1212-206 8400; www.htprivatetravel.com). **Nirox Foundation**, 24 Kromdraai Road, Kromdraai, The Cradle of Humankind, Gauteng (+2782-854 6963; www.niroxarts.com). **Ritz-Carlton Half Moon Bay**, One Miramontes Point Road, Half Moon Bay, CA (+1650-7127 000; ritzcarlton.com), from \$475. **Shorefast Foundation**, Highway 334, Building 100, Fogo Island (+1709-266 1083; www.shorefast.org).