

Komatsu comes alive in vivid industrial artworks

2018 - 2019

**KOMATSU**  
Komatsu South Africa (Pty) Ltd



## Komatsu: our South African journey brought to life

As part of a global company that is almost 100 years old, Komatsu has operated in South Africa for just under 60 years, and is proud to have played a role in the growth and development of our beautiful country.

Inspired by Managing Director, Mike Blom's travels, he wanted to depict the vibrant cultural spirit of the Komatsu story in South Africa. The canvas? Two sizable water storage tanks situated at the entrance to our new Parts and Distribution Centre in Tunney, Germiston.



At Komatsu, we're committed to fostering socio-economic development in the communities that surround our own and our clients' areas of operation. One of the ways we do this is through the Komatsu Transformation Trust (KSAF) which saw fit to fund a project that would create a lasting visual imprint of our contribution to South Africa and its people.

The trust focuses on programmes and initiatives that largely support the advancement of young people from disadvantaged communities. For this reason, they commissioned two talented artists who've brought our journey across the length and breadth of our country to life.

## African artists, global talent

Johannesburg-based artists Allen Kupeta and Kenneth Muradzikwa are responsible for turning two items of functional infrastructure into objects of interest and beauty.

They met at school 20 years ago and share a common love of depicting many aspects of South African life – from the vibrant richness of township living with its humour and colourful characters to the sweeping vistas of the highveld grasslands and the arid Kalahari.



Allen is a self-taught abstract impressionist painter who started working with stone sculptures at the age of 10. Well known for his elaborate scenes of everyday South Africa, he was voted best newcomer and best emerging artist at Black-Like-Us and is a past winner of the prestigious Raphael Mural Art Competition. His work is frequently displayed at prominent local galleries.





Kenneth completed a three-year course in fine arts in 2003 and has gone on to show his work at solo and group exhibitions abroad. The two artists met while studying and have collaborated on numerous projects since.





## The brief

Their brief was to colourfully illustrate diverse and majestic South African landscapes and the many ways in which Komatsu equipment has contributed to the country's economic heartbeat. The result is a beautifully executed journey on two backdrops that stand seven metres in height and are 28 metres in circumference.

### Tank 1 visual brief



#### Pit to power station, the Jozi skyline and the Mzansi way of life

Our artists were asked to cover the distance from the Mpumalanga coalfields to the economic powerhouse of Gauteng – stopping along the way to capture scenes from everyday rural and urban life. Flat highveld grasslands and vast agricultural vistas are interspersed by the coal mines, pylons and power plants that characterise the region.

In Gauteng, we asked them to draw the viewer's attention to construction activity which signifies progress and economic development. Incorporated into the visual are some of Jozi's most identifiable structures, pulsating street scenes, taxis and spaza shops, and a glimpse of Hartbeespoort Dam.

The artists have, of course, woven Komatsu, its machines and contribution to social development into the story. Pride of place goes to the excavators, trucks and shovels that mine 'black gold', while in Gauteng equipment is engaged in the business of building roads, civils and other infrastructure.

### Tank 2 visual brief



#### From 'the town under the trees' to the Mother City

We asked the artists to begin their paintbrush journey in the Northern Cape with its red sand, camel thorns and quiver trees. Kathu – which means 'town under the trees' – features prominently as it is here in the area's iron ore mines that some of our largest capacity rigid dump trucks have found their home.

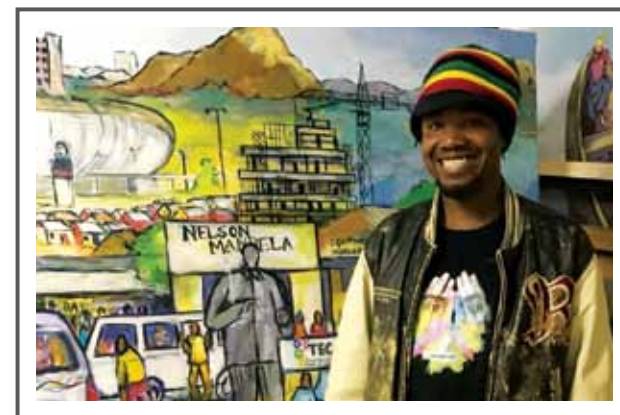
Moving on, we requested that they travel to the City of Cape Town, allowing viewers to take in scenes of the majestic Table Mountain, the Cape winelands and the hustle and bustle of Khayelitsha and Mitchells Plain. Their travels end at the Mogalakwena platinum mine and our mechanical hub in the Limpopo province.



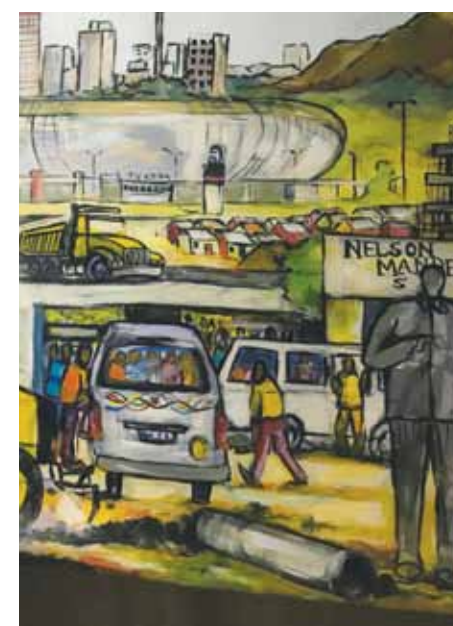
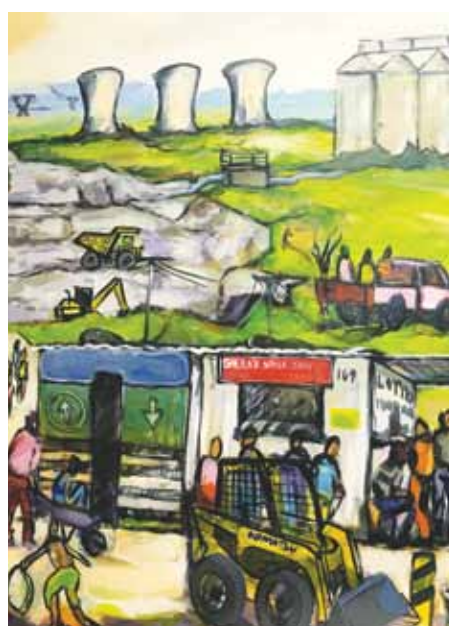
## Making a start - the creative concepts

Allen and Kenneth have completed two remarkable pieces of industrial art. Up close, these demonstrate astonishing attention to detail. From a distance, they amazingly come to life.

The process began in a down-town Johannesburg studio, where Allen outlined the brief with rough painted concept layouts, before finalising the ideas on canvas.



## First rough draft artworks



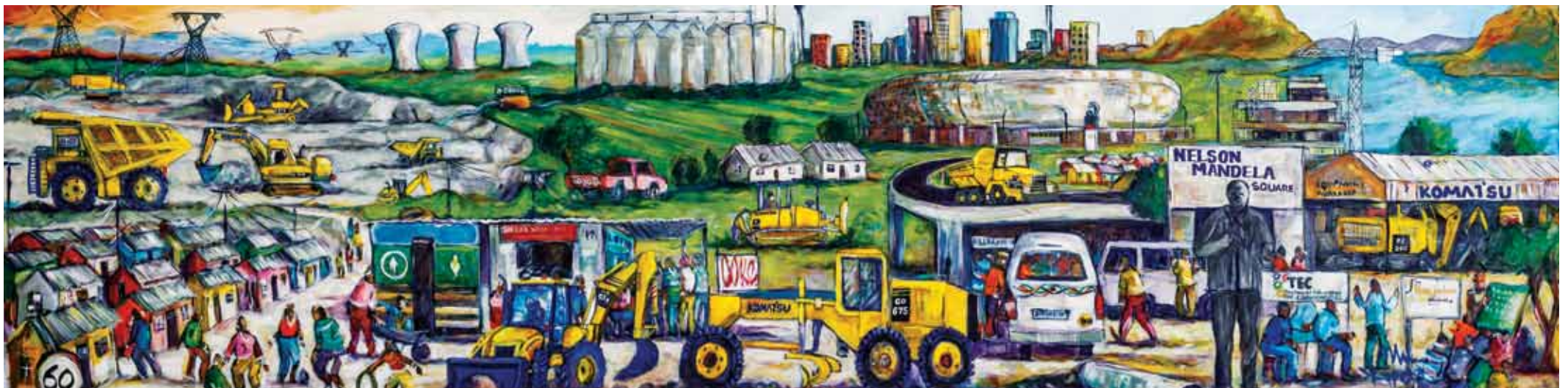


## The story unfolds

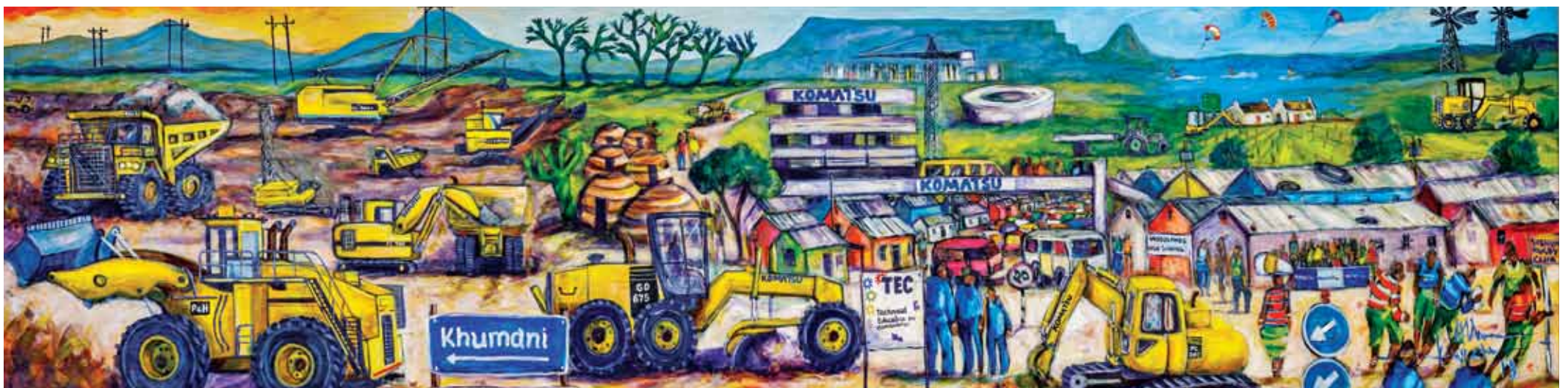
A canvas rendering of the first tank depicts a tour of Mpumalanga, its farmlands and coal mines, before heading towards Johannesburg, inner-city Hillbrow and Soweto where we can see a Komatsu WB 93R-5 backhoe loader at work. Landmarks include Sandton Square's Nelson Mandela statue and Soccer City. Included in the work is a GD 675-5 motor grader levelling the roads that will carry passengers to Soccer City - The Calabash.

On the second canvas, the artists depict iron ore mining at Khumani in the Northern Cape. They illustrate Cape Town with a view of Table Mountain and depictions of water sports, before meandering through the winelands with its Cape-style houses. People are celebrated in the foreground and give the work a sense of vitality.

### Acrylics to paper - Tank 1



### Acrylics to paper - Tank 2





## Final touches to concepts

A preparatory sketch set out the composition and gave the artists an awareness of colour, texture and placement. 'Thumbnail sketches' serve as a memory aid to help artists remember important features to be included in the final work. These canvases now have pride of place in the boardroom at our Komatsu Campus.



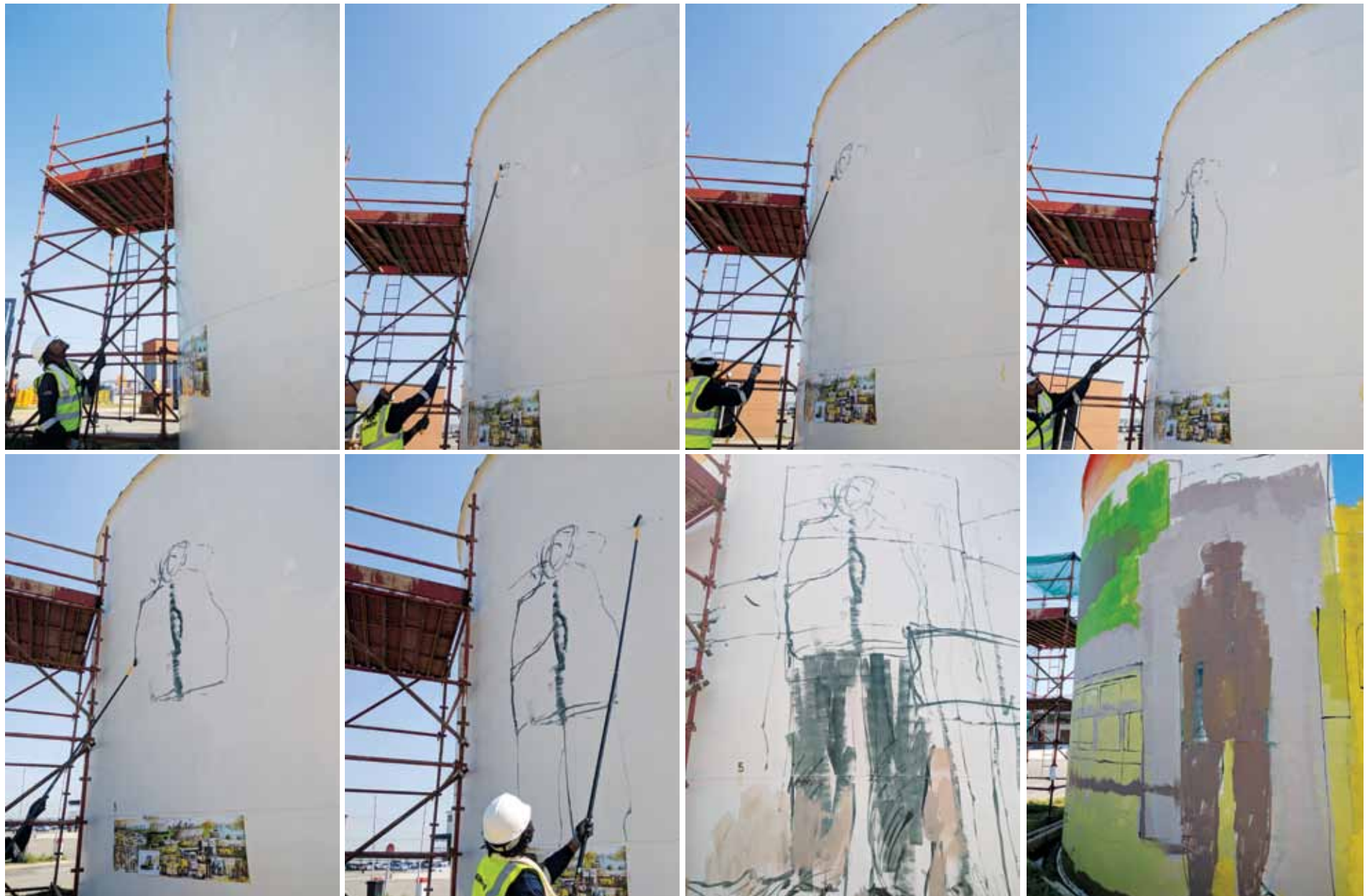


## Prepwork

We're 100% committed to making sure that the people who work for us do not come to harm. Each task is carried out in line with the highest safety standards, and this job was no exception.

Before work could begin, both artists underwent a full examination by an occupational health professional. They received accredited working at heights training, were issued with all relevant personal protective equipment and participated in regular safety briefings on site.

Day-to-day work was overseen by our site safety officer, while scaffolding was erected by an approved service provider. Platforms were green-tagged with each move to confirm that they were safe for use.



# Work of Artistry



## The transformation begins

Underpainting is the layer of colour that gives depth and vitality to a work that would otherwise be flat and dull. This initial layer serves as a base for subsequent layers of paint. Underpaintings help to define colour values for later painting.





## A tank full of colour

An important consideration related to the size of the project was the sheer volume of acrylic medium required to complete the project. In the end, the artists used an astronomical 230 litres. They also worked with brushes significantly larger than those typically used for conventional canvas work.





## Big, bold and beautiful

Apart from the heights involved, Allen and Kenneth were required to work on a circular surface which meant taking great care over elements like scale and perspective. Filling in details with large brushes also requires a high degree of skill.





## A paintbrush journey

To give an indication of the epic scale of the work, almost 50 brushes were used. These included three extra-large rollers with extension poles. A total of 30 litres of high-quality bonding agent was combined with acrylics designed for outdoor use to further protect the murals from the elements.



# Proudly South African











## A South African kaleidoscope





## On point for the 21st Century



Large-scale paintings have a huge impact on an audience – members of the general public and patrons of the arts. They break down language and age barriers and keep communities energised and inspired. People love seeing familiar subjects depicted in art. It gives them a sense of belonging and the audience becomes part of the painting. Street art and graffiti are on point for the 21st Century.

# World Class Artistry



## The space comes alive with vibrant colour







# A Closer Look



## In conclusion

Over 10 weeks, our artists turned an otherwise dull area into one that celebrates the vibrancy of a country that we're proud to be part of. And we couldn't be more pleased with the results. Their work provides a visual imprint of our work and will be enjoyed by visitors and future generations of employees.











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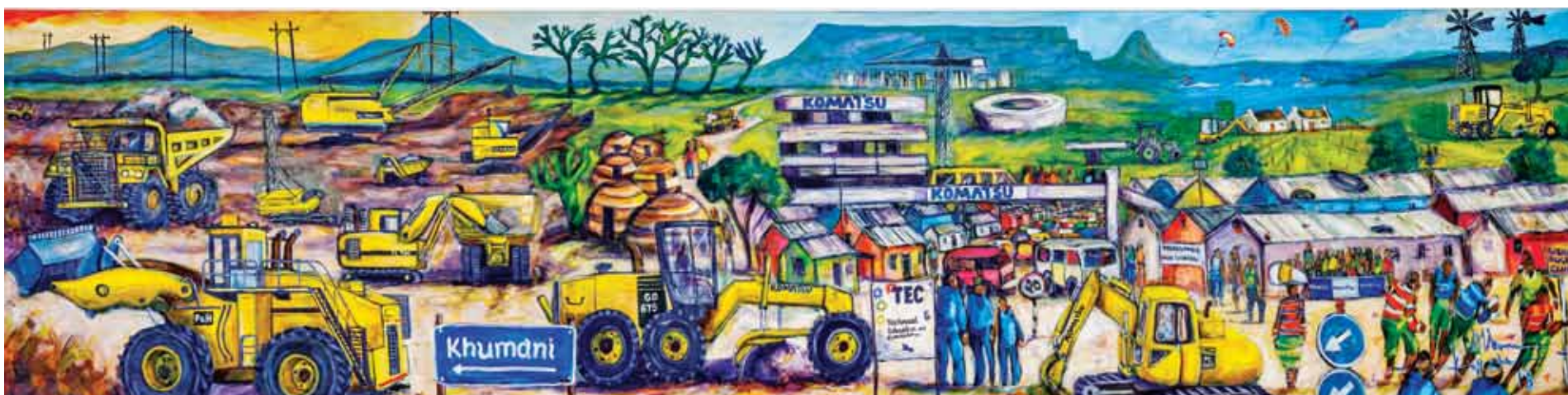
*Thanks to the efforts of these hugely talented artists, we've been able to introduce to our new campus some vital elements of our proudly South African heritage. It was a real thrill to see their bold concepts come to fruition and to witness the enthusiastic response of members of the Komatsu South Africa team, the general public and visiting guests from Japan.*

*Allen and Kenneth have captured the incredible richness of South African culture, the diversity of our landscapes and the role of Komatsu equipment in growing the economy and enhancing quality of life.*

– Mike Blom, Managing Director, Komatsu South Africa

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Final canvasses proudly displayed in the Komatsu Osaka Boardroom.

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[www.komatsu.co.za](http://www.komatsu.co.za)