

Speech given at the opening of the Wild Flower Show in Clanwilliam 28th August 2014

Thank you for the opportunity to tell you a little bit about the creation of the Clanwilliam quilt. A quilt is what I consider to be textile art and consists of three layers that are held together with quilting stitches.

Like all things that grow and flourish – particularly flowering plants - one needs to have a seed that can germinate. It is very like quilting in many respects.

When the seed of an idea is planted something exciting is bound to happen!

The seed of this quilt was first thought of by Ilse Lochner. She said *“I dream of a quilt to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the town of Clanwilliam”*. *“Ek wil net ietsie he dat wys na the vorige 200 jaar en wat iets se van die dorp en die toekoms met die tema Stap Saam.”*

Ilse had to find out a bit about the sort of thing she wanted and I was asked to come from Cape Town to meet her and some of the ladies in the town to see if this seed could germinate and could grow.

Well, that day the 31st of October 2013, the seed was planted.

Like all good gardeners we needed to have some conditions that would make the seedling grow, become tall and flower and be attractive, colourful, flourish and bear fruit. In order for something to start to grow you need a design and a plan ---

So like a gardener needs a landscape, a plan and design – so the quilt needed it too.

So in the design of the quilt we had to include the sky, the sunlight and water, some soil with fields and some shade, some animals and insects to pollinate it and some people to watch over it as it took root and started to grow.

The design of this quilt was like a seedling with 5 sections or panels, which we thought would need to be a certain size ... we did not know that it would grow and grow! Each panel has something special in it that is connected with Clanwilliam and the region and the ‘stap saam’ theme.

Time is also needed for a plant to grow, the painting of the sky and mountains began in January 2014, the construction of the background and areas of interest followed. And during the seasons and months the sewers got together at a few workshops and after many trips in the car and couriers to and from, we started to see the project flourish.

The Quilt seemed to grow and grow and measures 3.2 metres wide and is 2 metres long.

Here are some statistics that will interest you -

Paper for designing – 15 m and numerous A4 pages. Metres of Appliqué paper, freezer paper, Teflon sheets, Vilene and stabilizer fabrics were used.

There are **148 different fabrics** that have been used - totalling 76 square metres if a quarter metre was to be considered.

1000 metres of bobbin **thread** and another 1000 metres of top thread in different colours – enough thread to go around an Olympic athletics track 5 times. Other fancy threads were used in embroidery, sewing and quilting.

Pins and Needles - at least 100 pins. 16 hand sewing needles of various sizes. Also 12 sewing machine needles, 8 of which were broken or were blunt. 850 safety pins were used to lay up the 3 layers of the quilt.

Cups of Rooibos tea to keep going = 560

No of appointments to the chiropractor = 4

Pieces of the project **that travelled** to and from CT to Clanwilliam = more than 2800 kilometres.

The **number of hours** designing, producing full size drawings, painting the fabrics, constructing and sewing, laying up and quilting and finishing the quilt – conservatively calculated at 600 hours over a period of 28 weeks.

Some research and time spent creating the Legend of the Clanwilliam quilt to explain and list some of the things depicted in the quilt that will engage the viewers interest.

On Tuesday night when I stitched the last flower in place I thought this quilt is in full bloom!

I would like to thank all the ladies who helped, who sketched and stitched and sewed, the people who drove with bits and pieces of the quilt from Clanwilliam to Cape Town and the SA postal service.

Also a special thank you to René, my husband and my family who have put up with every room in the house being full of 'the quilt panels' over the past 7 months.

I believe Clanwilliam will be proud to have the Clanwilliam Quilt on display in the Museum and that you will come and visit it, admire it and tell your family and friends. It is Your quilt, it is - your birthday present!

I see it as a privilege to have worked on this quilt – the many hours of planning and stitching are very little in comparison to the fact that this will hang in the museum for many, many decades to come.

Jenny Hermans.