



Welcome to Oranjemund Art Town of Namibia

Oranjemund, Namibia



OMDIS
Art Centre

The making of Art Town, Namibia

The story goes back three billion years, when unimagined heat and pressure turned carbon into diamonds, deep in the earth's core.

They burst to the surface through volcanic pipes, where many lay undiscovered for millions of years. The Orange River carried diamonds down to the Atlantic, depositing some along the way, while most were washed into the ocean, to find their way along the coast.

Oranjemund, a diamond mining town, was formed 90 years ago, next to the mouth of the Orange River. It was closed to tourists and visitors until 2017.

Since then, other activities have grown, like tourism, property development, agriculture, and art. Already there are more than 25 pieces of public art that adorn the small town, artist retreats in the Sperrgebiet, artists' residencies, and workshops on visual art, sculpture, pottery and photography, as well as craft and music classes for children and adults. The hub of the Oranjemund arts world is the dedicated Oranjemund Art Centre.

There are famous art towns around the world, from Ubud in Bali to Clarens and Hamburg in South Africa. Oranjemund, for so many years a secret from the public, is now joining them.

We welcome you, as artist, tourist, or sponsor, to Art Town, Namibia. Be part of the story.



'Welcoming Man' is made from scrap metal and other found objects that sculptor, Elisia Nghidishange, salvaged from the Oranjemund rubbish dump. He stands on a raised platform at the town's entrance.



Public Art - a sense of place

Oranjemund is a place like no other. Located in the world's oldest desert, next to an ocean both wild and smooth, a coastline dotted with shipwrecks and deserted mining camps.

We border the mouth of the Orange River, a RAMSAR protected site with over 50 species of waterbirds. Diamond mines, in operation and shuttered. Oranjemund itself, where oryx roam the streets. They all stir an artist's imagination.

Around the world, most art is in museums, corporate and private collections. In Oranjemund art and sculpture are on the streets and shared spaces, beginning with "Welcoming Man" (previous page) at the town's entrance. Children are inspired daily on the way to school, citizens are proud, and visitors are fascinated. These are the seeds, growing a vibrant arts community.



Building Foundations by Petrus Amuthenu, 2021

Above: Petrus Amuthenu "Jero" chose the complicated south-facing walls of the Oranjemund Little Theatre to paint a large industrial themed mural using traditional graffiti spray-paint techniques. The mural depicts an open-cast mining scene, including a miner and a gigantic excavator digging into the earth. With this image Petrus celebrates the men and women who operate large machinery and are the foundation upon which all the diamond mining operations in Oranjemund are built. Without their dedication and courage, it would be impossible to create the prosperity on which the town depends.



Sperrgebiet II by Aurelia Sieberhagen and Annis Schlechter. Acrylic paint mural, 2021

Above: Aurelia Sieberhagen and Annis Schlechter chose to celebrate the beauty of the wildlife of the southern Namib Desert by painting large-scale naturalistic acrylic murals in and around town.

Right: Artist Frans Uunona chose to create Safety Always, a mural measuring 15 x 9 meters in the center of Oranjemund, well known for its desert diamond mining activities.



Safety Always by Frans Uunona

Art Town, Namibia - growing a legacy

Our public art is added to each year by residencies, retreats and local artists, as well as school children.

Wherever you go, art and nature combine to lift you out of present realities to a world of wonder and inspiration. Exhibitions in Oranjemund and Windhoek spread the word.

Over 25 pieces of public art are spread across the town, inspiring both residents and tourists. Artworks celebrate the diamond mining heritage, the vast Namib desert, golden treasures from the wrecked Bom Jesus, as well as the iconic oryx and other desert creatures. Sculptures grace public parks and murals transform buildings.



Oranjemund Art Centre - the heart of Art Town

The Art Centre is the hub of our Art Town. We hold drawing, painting, craft and music classes here, for adults, teens, children and toddlers.

The Centre's Art Gallery hosts ongoing exhibitions of art, sculpture and photography. There are handmade art and crafts for sale, from handbags and hats, scarfs and blouses, to hand painted t-shirts, driftwood sculptures, paintings from local artists and books about past residencies and artifacts. Visiting artists give master classes and hold workshops. You can find up-to-date information on the Oranjemund Art Centre Facebook page.

Already demand for more space is growing with potters needing wheels, print-makers needing presses, jewelry designers needing workbenches and specialised tools . A community of artists, sculptors, photographers, potters and crafters gravitate around the Art Centre, drawing inspiration from each other, teachers, artists in residence, and the public artworks that surrounds us all.

Art is energy, invigorating jaded minds, restoring beauty and promoting a pause to wonder in this too-busy world. You can be part of the Art Centre.

Realise your inner artist here, visit us, buy before fame puts an artist out of reach, sponsor an event or a programme. The heart of Art Town welcomes you.



A sense of history

Almost 500 years ago, the Bom Jesus set sail from Lisbon on a voyage to India and the lucrative spice trade. The journey ended abruptly in an Atlantic storm off Oranjemund's coast.

In 2008 the remains of ship and cargo were accidentally discovered in the search for diamonds where ocean meets desert. 17 tons of copper ingots, 105 elephant tusks and over 2000 gold coins have been recovered, together with cannons, firearms, swords and three of the oldest known mariner's astrolabes (to measure latitude).

Today, the story of the Bom Jesus is shown in the town's museum. Travel back with us to 450 years ago, and the discovery in 2008. See a scale model of Bom Jesus, some of the recovered contents, murals that show the route, the storm and the discovery, featuring a larger than life wooden artwork of the gold coins.

In other rooms of the museum, you'll find unique photographic and interpretive history of diamond mining here, linked with the story of migrant labour and social life of a community cut off from casual visitors and tourists for over 100 years.

Flora and fauna, natural history, from fossils and geological specimens to archeological finds, round off a unique exploration into a unique town.



Gold Coins by Saima Iita. Part from the trunk of a huge eucalyptus tree, carved to resemble the ocean floor strewn with ancient gold coins from the Bom Jesus shipwreck



Artist retreats in the forbidden desert

Escape everyday noise, TV, social media, traffic jams and the tyranny of the small screen. Open your artistic soul to a desert closed to the public for over 100 years.

Our Sperrgebiet Artists' Retreats and Artists' Residencies offer immersive creative experiences set within the unique and protected landscape of the Sperrgebiet. These programmes provide artists with the time, space, and inspiration to explore their practice while engaging deeply with the natural environment.

Through guided workshops, independent studio time, and shared creative exchange, the retreats and residencies foster artistic growth, cultural dialogue, and a strong connection between place, people, and creativity.

We host retreats for artists, and schoolchildren. People stay deep in the Tsau //Khaeb National Park, known for over 100 years as the Sperrgebiet - German for "forbidden area". Few, apart from mining employees have been allowed here. Lodgings are partially renovated houses in long abandoned mining settlements.

Inspiration is everywhere. The stark beauty of the world's oldest desert, the changeable Atlantic, whose rages leave wrecks along its coast.

Eerie outposts that were deserted after diamonds littered in the sand had been gathered. Geological wonders like Bogenfels, a 55 metre high limestone arch between sand and sea, carved out by the dry Namib winds and icy Benguela current.

Work from these retreats are displayed in galleries and national exhibitions. Retreats are strictly limited - to join one, watch for application dates on our website, or social media - @omdis_oranjemund.



Art Town and you

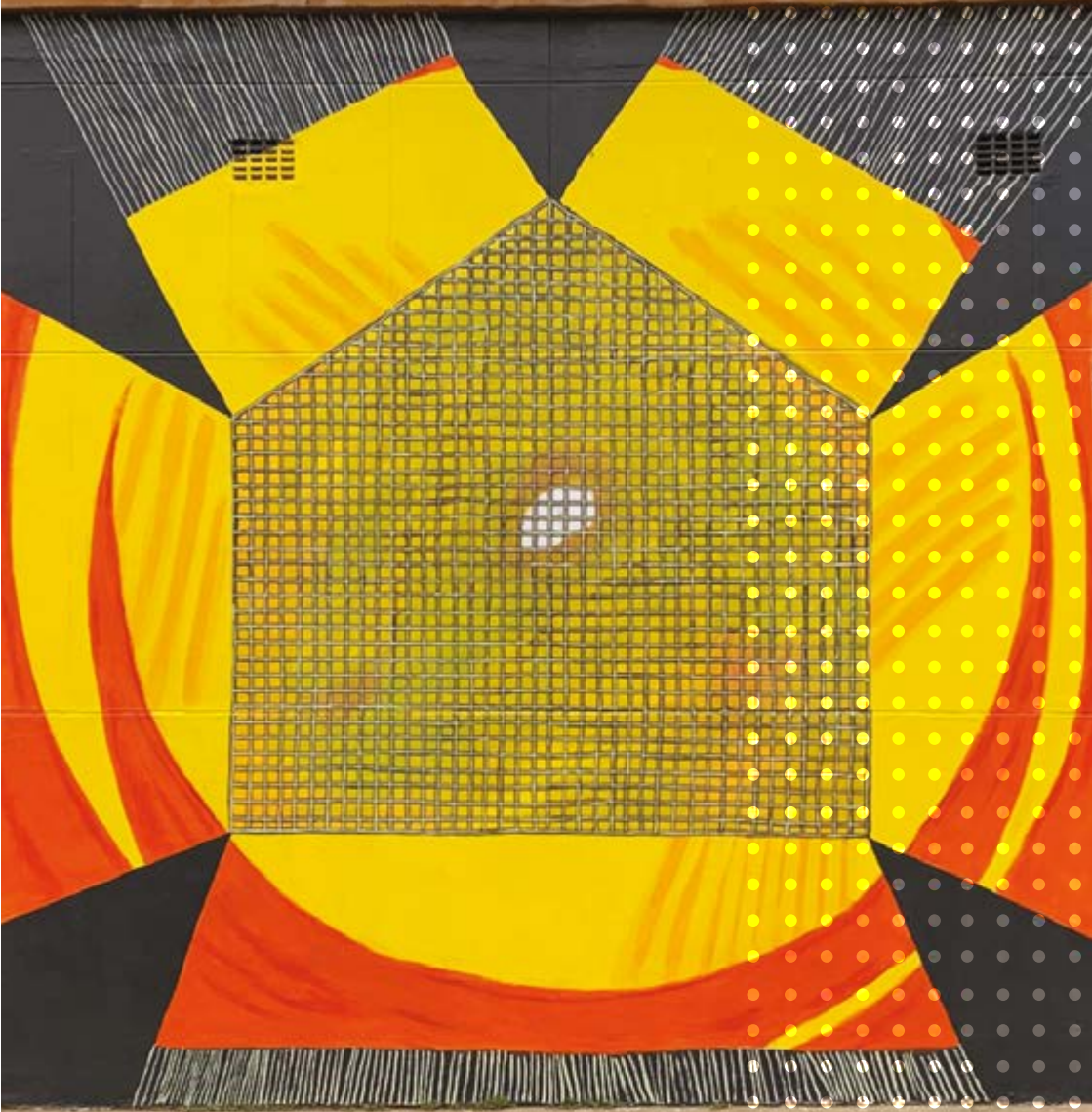
Artists, photographers and sculptors, tourists and sponsors, all play their part in the making of a new Oranjemund.

We have artists' residencies and retreats. Or escape big city pressure to live here. Homes cost far less than Windhoek, with facilities greater than any small town in Namibia. From an 18-hole golf course, to quad rides over the dunes for sundowners. Football, hockey, tennis, rugby, badminton, horse riding and squash are all in Oranjemund as well as good schooling, a well-equipped hospital, and a very fast, affordable fibre network.

Art made by nature and people surrounds you. Tourists are discovering this diamond in the desert, and as our reputation as an Art Town spreads, Oranjemund artists can prosper on a rising tide. Visit the art centre for art and music classes.

Sponsorships fuel the growth of art and position sponsors in a favourable, community friendly light. There are options for every pocket. You can sponsor an art class for toddlers, a residency or retreat. Help to expand the Art Centre, or commission a new piece of public art. Pottery studio space is needed to meet burgeoning demand, business plans for a jewellery studio await finance, while artist materials are always welcome.

OMDis has invested the seed money for Art Town. You can help it grow. All sponsors will be publicly credited. To find out how you can be part of Art Town, contact Oranjemund Art Centre.



'Opening Up' by Nicky Marias. Once a town closed to all outsiders, like a shuttered-up house, Oranjemund is now open and welcoming. One from a series of three murals.



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See Oranjemund Art Centre on Facebook and Instagram