

An oil painting of a dense forest. The upper half of the image is filled with tall, slender trees that have vibrant red foliage, resembling pine or cypripedium. Their trunks are thin and light-colored. The lower half of the image is dominated by a thick carpet of green ferns, painted with visible, textured brushstrokes. The overall color palette is a mix of deep greens, blues, and greys in the background, contrasting sharply with the bright red of the trees. The lighting is dappled, suggesting sunlight filtering through the canopy.

GLOBAL LANDSCAPES SOUTH AFRICA

Ella Spira MBE

Foreword

By Pietra Mello-Pittman MBE, Co-Founder, Sisters Grimm

It has been a true privilege to witness Ella Spira MBE’s artistic journey. Since we began working together in 2008, as cofounders of Sisters Grimm, I have watched first-hand as her creative vision has deepened, shaped by boundless curiosity and a profound connection to South Africa, forged through years of collaboration and lived experience.

Ella’s relationship with South Africa began more than a decade ago through a remarkable partnership with the late Joseph Shabalala (1941–2020), founder of the legendary isicathamiya group Ladysmith Black Mambazo, national treasures of postapartheid South Africa and cultural ambassadors named by Nelson Mandela. Together, Ella and Joseph co-composed the original score for INALA, a pioneering Sisters Grimm production that fuses Zulu musical and dance heritage with classical and contemporary forms. Developed over five years, INALA premiered in 2014 and earned a Grammy nomination in 2016 for Best World Music Album. Since then, it has toured internationally to critical acclaim, with sold-out performances at the Royal Albert Hall, Marina Bay Sands in Singapore, Johannesburg Theatre, and a Royal Command performance at Hampton Court Palace.

What made INALA so special is that it was never simply an artistic project, it was an act of cultural exchange, built on mutual respect, generosity, and creative integrity. That spirit continues to shape Ella’s work today. Her Global Landscapes series and this South African chapter in particular, is grounded in that same ethos of presence, immersion, and reverence for land and legacy.

The 38 works featured in Global Landscapes: South Africa were all painted en plein air, across a range of extraordinary terrains. I have been fortunate to accompany Ella on many of these journeys, witnessing how she listens, observes, and connects with each place before committing her response to canvas

Ella’s paintings are far more than depictions of landscape. They are responses to the spirit of place, shaped by memory, sound, emotion, and a profound respect for South Africa’s people and culture. Each work is rich in atmosphere, sensitivity, and personal reflection.

This collection is part of a wider, multidisciplinary body of work that Ella continues to create and curate. Alongside her paintings, she has developed a limited-edition artist-label wine series in collaboration with leading South African fine wine makers, and continues to nurture the global legacy of INALA, now rooted in the House of Sisters Grimm in London’s West End.

Through Global Landscapes, Ella Spira affirms her distinctive place as an artist whose visual practice is as original, resonant, and deeply considered as her acclaimed musical compositions. The works gathered here reflect a creative life devoted to immersion, discipline, and authentic engagement with place.

This book stands as a tribute to a remarkable body of work, to Ella’s unwavering artistic integrity, and to the generous land and people of South Africa who continue to inspire her.



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Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens, Cape Town, South Africa, Oil on canvas, 150cm x 120cm



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Dainty Bess, Robertson, South Africa
Acrylic on canvas



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Janno’s Enzaamheid Wine Farm, South Africa
Acrylic on paper



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De laire Graff Wine Estate, Stellenbosch South Africa
Acrylic on canvas



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Tswaing Crater, Oil on canvas, 150cm x 120cm



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Eenzaamheid, Janno’s Stellenbosch Mountain, South Africa
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Oldenburg Vineyards, South Africa
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Rosebank, Johannesburg, South Africa
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Table Mountain, Cape Town, South Africa, Oil on canvas, 150cm x 120cm



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Stellenbosch Mountain, South Africa
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Sterkfontein Caves, outside Johannesburg, Oil on canvas, 150cm x 120cm



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Graham Beck, Robertson, South Africa
Watercolour, acrylic, gouache and soil on paper



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Swerwer Swartland, acrylics & gouache & decomposed granite soil



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Stellenbosch, South Africa, Just After Dawn
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The Durban Playhouse Durban KwaZulu Natal South Africa 50cm x 75cm Oil on Canvas



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Robertson, South Africa
Watercolour on paper, 4 May 2025



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Tesselaarsdal, view from Berene’s family home, 7th July, acrylic, Gouache & watercolour



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Hilton view Flunluwe-mtolozi Park, KwaZulu Natal, South Africa 75cm x 69cm Oil on Canvas



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Stellenbosch, South Africa
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Table Mountain, from Stellenbosch, South Africa
Pastel on paper



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Ahrens, Paarl Terroir, View from a plane, South Africa
Watercolour on paper



Page 22
Stellenbosch Mountain, South Africa
Watercolour and acrylic on paper



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Ankole Cows, Stellenbosch, South Africa
Watercolour on paper



Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens, Cape Town, South Africa, Oil on canvas, 150cm x 120cm

Aloe, Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens, Cape Town, South Africa

The Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens in Cape Town are renowned for their diverse flora, including the medicinal aloe plant. Aloe vera, known for its healing properties, has a long history of traditional medicinal use in South Africa.

Ella Spira's portrayal of the aloe plant in her paintings not only showcases the botanical beauty of Kirstenbosch but also pays homage to the cultural significance of medicinal plants in African heritage. The artwork highlights the importance of respecting and preserving botanical diversity and traditional healing practices, inviting viewers to appreciate the region's natural wonders.

Tswaing Crater Nature Reserve, Gauteng Province, South Africa

Tswaing Crater is a nature reserve that houses one of the youngest meteor impact craters on Earth, formed approximately 200,000 years ago. This Salt Lake, nestled within the reserve, carries a unique history of cosmic collisions and geological transformations.

The painting brings attention to the fascinating blend of natural forces that shaped this landscape. By highlighting this site, Ella invites audiences to ponder the Earth's ancient past and the enduring impact of celestial events on our planet's geography.



Tswaing Crater, Oil on canvas, 150cm x 120cm



Table Mountain, Cape Town, South Africa, Oil on canvas, 150cm x 120cm

Table Mountain, Cape Town, South Africa

Table Mountain, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, holds a special place in South Africans' and visitors' hearts. Its distinctive flat-topped silhouette and majestic presence have made it a symbol of Cape Town. The mountain's rich biodiversity, unique flora, and stunning vistas have captivated nature enthusiasts for generations.

With an age spanning millions of years, Table Mountain's enduring strength and resilience add to its mystique. Its ancient geological formations and spiritual energy create a sense of connection with nature, drawing visitors to its slopes.

Ella's decision to paint Table Mountain reflects a deep appreciation for its natural beauty and cultural significance. Through her artwork, she aims to capture the essence of this iconic landmark and share its timeless allure with audiences worldwide.

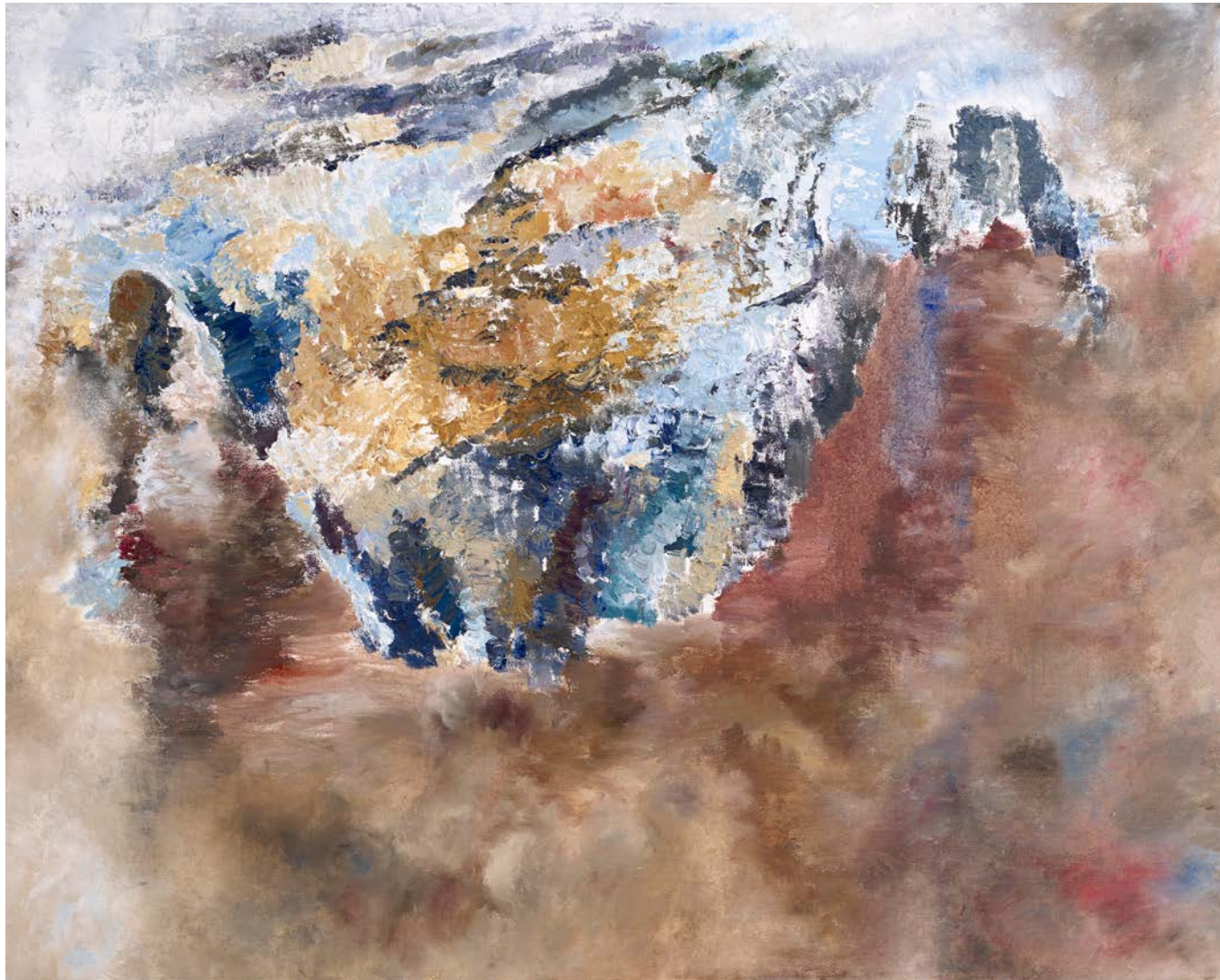
Cape Agulhas, the most southern tip of South Africa

Cape Agulhas, located at the most southern tip of Africa, marks the meeting point of the Indian and Atlantic Oceans, serving as a crucial navigational landmark for global trade routes. This geographically significant location has historically guided ships along the Cape Route used by European sailors to reach Asia during the 15th to 17th centuries.

The discovery of Cape Agulhas by explorers such as Bartolomeu Dias and Vasco da Gama influenced European exploration and trade with the East, leading to the establishment of trading posts and colonies. Ella Spira's portrayal of Cape Agulhas highlights the natural boundary and convergence of the two oceans, emphasizing the power and interconnectedness of the world's water bodies. The artwork celebrates the majesty of Cape Agulhas and its symbolic significance in South Africa's geography, blending historical importance with the natural beauty and navigational relevance of this iconic landmark.



Cape Agulhas, the most southern tip of South Africa, Oil on canvas, 150cm x 120cm



Sterkfontein Caves, outside Johannesburg, Oil on canvas, 150cm x 120cm

Sterkfontein Caves, outside Johannesburg, South Africa

The Sterkfontein Caves are located within the Cradle of Humankind, a region designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1999. They hold profound significance for fossil finds, with some of the oldest humanoid remains discovered within their depths.

The painting of the closed-off Sterkfontein Caves, inaccessible to the public, captures their mysterious allure. It visually immortalises a site crucial to understanding human evolution and ancient history, emphasising the scientific and archaeological significance of the location and prompting reflection on humanity's origins and the pursuit of knowledge.

The Little Foot fossil is a rare specimen because it's a near-complete skeleton of an Australopithecus individual much older than most other human ancestors. The creature, probably an old female, stood about 4 feet tall with long legs suitable for bipedal motion when it lived some 3.67 million years ago.

Called "Little Foot" because the first bones recovered consisted of a few small foot bones, the remains were discovered in a cave in South Africa in the 1990s. Researchers have spent years excavating it from its rock encasement and subjecting it to high-tech analysis. Called "Little Foot" because the first bones recovered consisted of a few small foot bones, the remains were discovered in a cave in South Africa in the 1990s. Researchers have spent years excavating it from its rock encasement and subjecting it to high-tech analysis. The bones proved to be the most complete skeleton of the early hominin lineage leading to humans, with 90% of the body being recovered.

Boulders on Munster Beach, KwaZulu-Natal

In 2013, during the final stages of composing and recording the INALA score, Spira, Joseph Shabalala, and Ladysmith Black Mambazo worked intensively from a house on Munster Beach, KwaZulu-Natal. The striking pink-toned boulders that line the shoreline formed part of their daily environment, viewed from the studio windows and encountered on walks between recording sessions. Painted a decade later in 2023, this work revisits the same stretch of coast, drawing on the emotional and creative resonance embedded in the landscape.



Boulders on Munster Beach Port Edward KwaZulu Natal South Africa 50cm x 75cm Oil on Canvas



Pietra looking at the sea Munster Beach KwaZulu Natal South Africa Collage 20cm x 30cm Watercolor acrylic Liquitex and enamel on paper

Durban Playhouse, KwaZulu-Natal

The Durban Playhouse was where Spira first began composing music with Joseph Shabalala and members of Ladysmith Black Mambazo in 2010. At just 22 years old, she sat at the piano, surrounded by the nine male members of the legendary isicathamiya group—none of whom had heard her play before. It was a defining moment: the future of INALA and the vision behind Sisters Grimm depended on whether creative trust and artistic synergy would emerge. It did. What followed was a deep and enduring collaboration rooted in mutual respect. This painting honours the room where trust was built, music began, and the foundation of a groundbreaking cultural project quietly took root.



The Durban Playhouse Durban KwaZulu Natal South Africa 50cm x 75cm Oil on Canvas



Hilton view Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park, KwaZulu Natal, South Africa. 75cm x 69cm Oil on Canvas

Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Game Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal

Established in 1895, Hluhluwe-iMfolozi is Africa's oldest proclaimed game reserve and played a central role in saving the white rhino from extinction. Located in KwaZulu-Natal, the ancestral region of Joseph Shabalala, the site blends conservation history with cultural connection. Spira's painting reflects this layered presence—observing the land from a distance, honouring its ecological and emotional gravity.

Limited Edition Collaboration Wine Labels

Landscapes in South Africa

Series on paper and canvas 210mm × 297mm each

This page, top to bottom:

1. **Ahrens**, Paarl Terroir, View from a plane, South Africa
Watercolour on paper, 5 May 2025

2. **Dainty Bess**, Robertson, South Africa
Acrylic on canvas, 21 May 2025

3. **Eenzaamheid**, Janno's Enzaamheid Wine Farm,
South Africa
Acrylic on paper, 10 April 2025

Opposite page:

Landscapes in South Africa

Series on paper and canvas 148mm × 210mm each

1. Stellenbosch Mountain, South Africa
Acrylic on paper, 15 December 2024

2. Table Mountain at Night, Future Found Sanctuary,
Cape Town, South Africa
Acrylic on paper, 1 July 2024

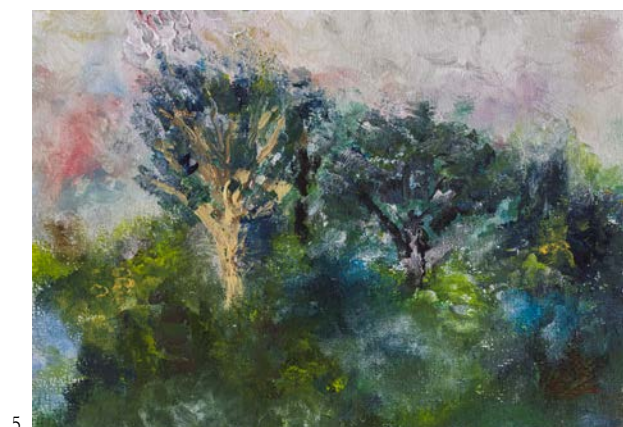
3. Benguela Cove, Hermanus, South Africa
Acrylic and gouache on canvas, 20 April 2025

4. Waterford Wine Estate, Stellenbosch, South Africa
Acrylic on paper with vineyard soil, 14 December 2024

5. Stellenbosch, South Africa, Just After Dawn Acrylic
on paper, 16 December 2024

6. Robertson, South Africa
Watercolour on paper, 4 May 2025





Landscapes in South Africa

Series on paper and canvas 210mm × 297mm each

This page, top to bottom:

1. Graham Beck, Robertson, South Africa Watercolour, acrylic, gouache and soil on paper, 4 May 2025

2. Delaire Graff Wine Estate, Stellenbosch South Africa Acrylic on canvas, 18 April 2025

3. Benguela Cove, Hermanus, South Africa

Opposite page:

Landscapes in South Africa

Series on paper and canvas 148 × 210 mm each

1. Stellenbosch, South Africa Acrylic on paper, 14 December 2024

2. Stellenbosch Mountain, South Africa Watercolour and acrylic on paper, 15 December 2024

3. Janno's Enzaamheid Wine Farm, South Africa Acrylic on paper, 10 April 2025

4. Oldenburg Vineyards, South Africa Acrylic on paper, 13 December 2024

5. Table Mountain at Night, Future Found Sanctuary, Cape Town, South Africa Acrylic on paper, 3 July 2024

6. Cape Winelands, Bush Vines, South Africa Acrylic on canvas, 5 May 2025

Landscapes in South Africa

Series on paper and canvas 148mm × 210mm each

Top to bottom:

1. Janno's Enzaamheid Wine Farm, South Africa
Watercolour on paper, 10 April 2025

2. Table Mountain, from Stellenbosch, South Africa
Pastel on paper, 15 December 2024

3. Ankole Cows, Stellenbosch, South Africa
Watercolour on paper, 16 December 2024



1.



2.



3.



1.



3.

1. Delaire Graff Wine Estate, Stellenbosch
South Africa
Acrylic on canvas, 17 April 2025

2. Rosebank, Johannesburg, South Africa
Acrylic on paper, 5 April 2025



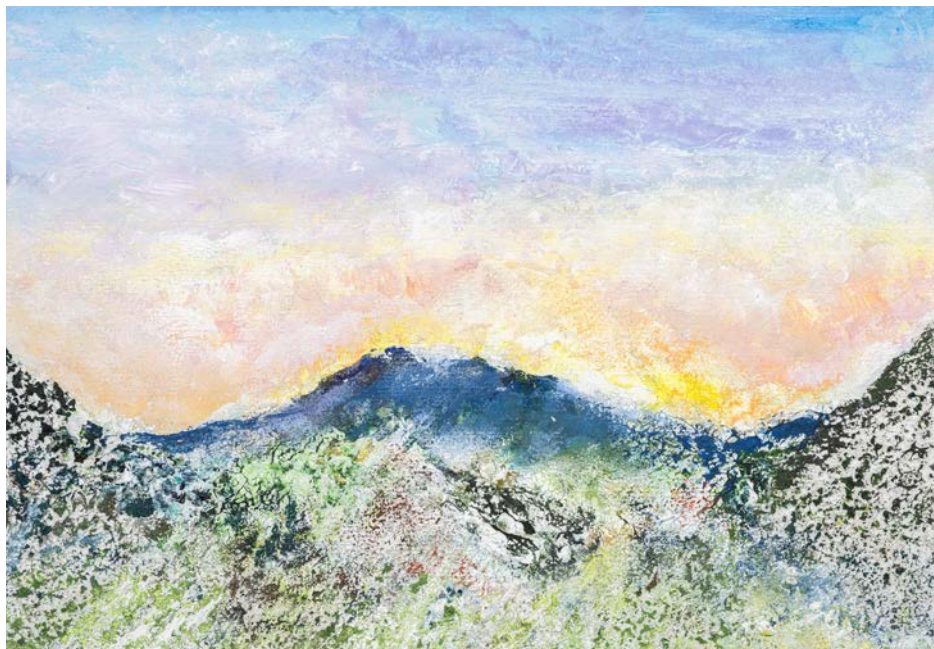
2.



4.

3. Stark Conde, Stellenbosch, South Africa
Pastel on paper, 13 December 2024

4. Robertson, South Africa
Acrylic on paper, 3 May 2025



Swerwer Swartland South Africa 29.7cm x 21cm , Acrylics & Gouache & Decomposed Granite Soil, 29 July



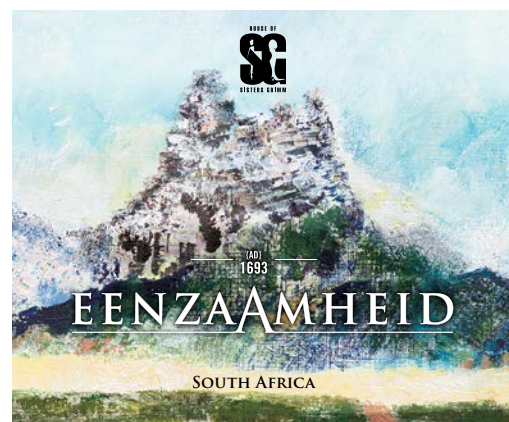
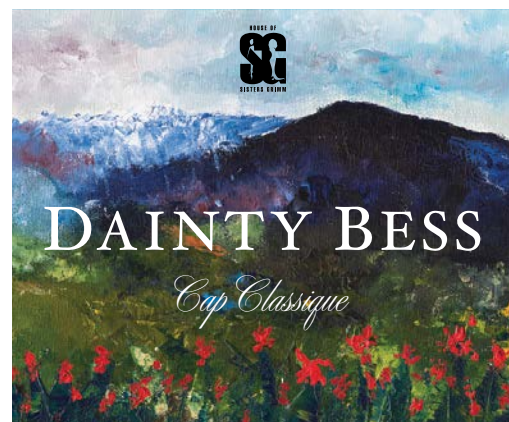
Spier Stellenbosch South Africa 29.7cm x 21cm , Acrylics & Gouache, 18 July



Hermanus, view of the Atlantic South Africa 29.7cm x 21cm , Pastels, 8 June



Tesselaarsdal, view from Berene's family home South Africa 29.7cm x 21cm , Acrylic, Gouache & Watercolour 7 July



Artist Biography

Ella Spira MBE

Multidisciplinary Artist, Composer

Ella Spira MBE is a Grammy-nominated composer, award-winning landscape artist, and co-founder of the B Corp-certified production company Sisters Grimm Ltd. A third-generation Holocaust survivor raised in a family of artists, Spira works across disciplines to create immersive, socially driven artistic experiences.

Her Global Landscapes series, developed over more than a decade and spanning five continents, preserves the emotional and environmental essence of diverse locations through works created en plein air. Each piece serves not only as a visual record but also as a reflection of Spira's presence and interaction with the landscape.

Spira's visual art is closely connected to her internationally recognised music career. Her creative partnerships with communities and renowned collaborators, particularly in South Africa, demonstrate a sustained commitment to authentic storytelling. Her work has been featured in cultural diplomacy initiatives, global exhibitions, and multidisciplinary productions including INALA, which she co-created.

Ella Spira was awarded an MBE for her contributions to the arts and for advancing cultural understanding through innovation across music, art, and performance.



“Ella isn’t just an artist, she’s a cultural documentarian. She paints landscapes in situ, embedded in communities, while co-creating music that reflects the soul of a place. Her work doesn’t romanticise, it honours. That authenticity is rare.

What moves me most is that Ella’s always been driven by something bigger than herself, a duty to amplify global stories and traditions that the world too often overlooks. That’s why our company is called Sisters Grimm, we’re committed to preserving and evolving folklore and heritage through modern artistic forms.”

Pietra Mello-Pittman MBE
Co-founder and Director, Sisters Grimm



Tswaing Crater Nature Reserve, Gauteng Province



Table Mountain, Cape Town



Cape Agulhas, the most southern tip of South Africa



Boulders on Munster Beach Port Edward



Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens



Waterford Wine Estate



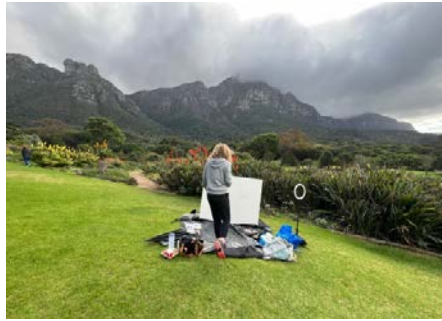
Sterkfontein Caves



Stellenbosch



Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park, KwaZulu Natal,



Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens,



The Durban Playhouse



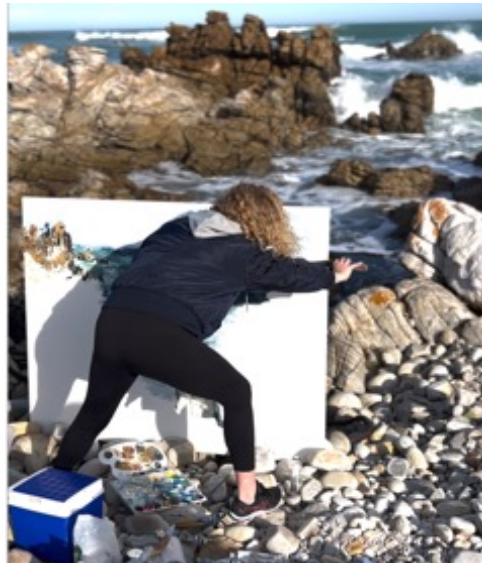
Ankole Cows, Stellenbosch



Ahrens, Paarl Terroir, View from a plane,



Sterkfontein Caves



Cape Agulhas

