

Painter Louis Jansen van Vuuren has designed the sets for Capab's *The Wizard Of Oz*

# Turning the stage into a canvas

LOUIS JANSEN VAN VUUREN has turned a theatre stage into a giant canvas.

A big man who has immersed himself in the world of colour, Louis had to go for something special when invited by Capab Drama to design the sets for *The Wizard of Oz*.

This opened a new field for him and, it would seem, for the Nico Malan too.

His years of painting did not, however, directly prepare him for the particular demands of stage design.

For one, he had to think on a

far larger scale. For another, he had to be practical: the set had to work for the performers.

Capab gave him a lot of freedom, so Louis took that and went to work.

The result is something quite new for the Nico.

"People are my inspiration," says Louis. This time, instead of painting them, he has had to create an entire milieu for them.

The colours are bright and happy. There is plenty of space for the performers to weave around this playground of colour.

Working with Capab's chief designer, Peter Cazalet, Louis was determined not to get bogged down with technicalities.

Numerous seats, including the entire two front rows, have been taken out for the stage to be extended and to allow *The Wizard's* "Yellow Brick Road" to snake through the auditorium.

"Louis is making the theatre live," says Johan Esterhuizen, head of Capab Drama.

The set comprises many little units. Trees rise and fall, a large house has a small mobile duplicate.

"It was a pity that I could not design the costumes as well, but that would have been asking too much," Louis mused. A lecturer in graphic design at the Michaelis School, he may have found special fulfilment with his *Wizard* set.

The lasting impression is one of bright colour — Louis was introduced to colour by a "German professor" several years

ago at Stellenbosch University. Since then he has prepared his own colours, achieving hues and intensities not often seen.

However, with the set still not ready in its entirety, it is difficult to visualise what the end result will be.

Only time will tell whether it has been a success as audiences have still to return their vote — *The Wizard of Oz* opens on December 5 — but Capab are very pleased and confident about the results of Louis' work.

Hopefully this will only be the first of many stage designs from this dedicated artist.

Louis, an artist of prodigious output, is currently holding his 55th exhibition, this time at the Association of Arts' Church Street gallery.

In February he departs for Paris, where he will spend six months working in the Association of Arts' flat.





**Artist Louis Jansen van Vuuren with some of his work.  
(See Martin Wells's interview, Page 4.)**