



Puppet Collection

A premier attraction of the Museum is the extraordinary collection of 30 life-sized puppets clothed in the ceremonial attire representing various ethnographic districts. Each puppet has a very specific dress code; the colour, material and design of clothing and jewellery indicating where the wearer is from, their age, gender and social status. The puppets are suspended from cables several feet above the floor in the museum's display areas.



Beadwork

Beads are amongst the most fascinating and interesting symbols in African culture. The Phansi Museum houses an extensive collection of beadwork from various Southern African Tribes including the Xhosa, Zulu, Ndebele, Shona (Swaziland), Himba and Herero (Namibia). The collection illustrates the significance and use of beads and to map out social identity, tradition and spirituality, past and present. The bead collection is filled with the most glorious and inventive pieces.



Library and Research

A library and research space is available to those who wish to submerge themselves deeper into the world of Phansi. We invite interested institutions and individuals to share these spaces and collections with us. We encourage the use of our venues by outsiders and researchers who love the same things that we do.



Pottery

Nothing is more beautiful than a perfectly hand-shaped, pit-fired uKhamba or beer-pot. Traditionally, beer is brewed in honour of the ancestors, and as such has to be respected and presented with the utmost skill and talent, while being respectful to the community. The Museum houses a variety of large, sturdy storage and brewing pots by some of the most respected potters in the country.



Telephone Wire

While many artists were busy exploring the wire plates as an art-form, others experimented with recreating the traditional Zulu beer basket in telephone wire. Others again actually made their own crockery for use around the home out of the same material. The Museum boasts a vast collection of wirework snuff containers dating back to the 1900's and the multitude of carefully wire plaited walking, fighting and divining sticks that personalised precious items for their owners.



Milk Pails

As the link to the ancestors, great respect is also shown in the making of the milk pails, which are whittled from specific trees, beautifully shaped and decorated with the special markings of the tribe. The most famous of these are the amasumpa, or warts which appear on many of the household objects.



Frank Jolles Collection

In 2015, we received on loan the collection of late Frank Jolles, one of the world's leading scholars of SA beadwork and African material culture artefacts. The collection, which is available for research purposes comprises a fine selection of wedding cloaks (izikoti), clay vessels and exceptionally carved milk pails and platters.



BAT Calendar

One of the most admired contributions the Bartel Arts Trust and the Phansi Museum have made to the enrichment of the cultural life of KZN is the annual Art • Craft • Tradition calendar. This famous cultural Poster calendar is in its 22nd year of production and adorns the walls of numerous rural and urban classrooms, libraries, resource centres, businesses and homes.



Phansi Museum

24 Reviews
Specialty Museums, Museums

The Phansi Museum is a cultural beacon in Durban, South Africa, occupying three floors of one of the few domestic national historical monuments in the city. The stately home situated in 500 Esther Roberts Road (previously Frere Road) was built in 1986 by the parents of Esther Roberts, one of the first female anthropologists in South Africa and was declared a national monument in 1980.

The Museum houses some of the finest examples of African artefacts, such as: beadwork, headrests, milk pails, snuff containers, tobacco pipes, telephone wire baskets, clay pots, ceremonial attire and medicinal items dating back to the mid-19th Century.

Guided Tours

Our tours are led by a team of spirited guides who are familiar with many of the traditions and objects on display. Our tours bring visitors face to face with our past and present through fascinating stories and anecdotes. Please contact the Museum to make a booking.

Outreach Programmes

We recognize the importance of reaching out to diverse communities and to making our collection accessible to individuals who may not have had the opportunity to do so in the past or who are ordinarily not easily able to access the city. Each month we aim on bringing 1 000 learners from townships and rural areas to the Museum.

Exhibitions and Events

We host bi-monthly temporary exhibition in the Phansi Goes Phezulu Gallery. The aim of our exhibitions is to encourage direct community involvement and participation and to generate new audiences. Our exhibitions deal with prejudice, myth, collective memory, histories, customs and traditions.

FACEBOOK:

<https://www.facebook.com/PhansiMuseum/>

INSTAGRAM:

<https://www.instagram.com/museumphansi/>

TRIP ADVISOR:

Phansi Museum / Durban

Museum Times:

Mon/Fri 08:00 - 16:00 - Sat 10:00-14:00

Advisable to make an appointment to avoid disappointment

Entrance Fee: Adult R40 / Child R30 / Student and Pensioner R28



Phansi Museum

500 Esther Roberts Road Genwood Durban South Africa

Tel +27 31 206 2889 - Fax +27 31 206 1590

eMail: admin@phansi.com

www.phansi.com

In IsiZulu phansi means below or beneath, a reference to the basement location where the Phansi Museum began. Fittingly, phansi is traditionally known as the place beneath us, where ancestral spirits dwell.

