



INTERVIEW WITH Leesette

Encouraged after leaving our own calligraphy in places to inspire others, we sat down with South African calligrapher Leesette Turner - the brain behind #leftletters.

Check out more of Leesette's work @leesetteturner

When were you first inspired by Calligraphy? When did you first get involved?

I have always been fascinated by writing. My mom said that I used to write on toilet paper when I was very small: on and on... They used to find it very funny! My first teacher at school was a calligrapher and I used to copy her writing. I also had a high school teacher who was a well known calligrapher in Cape Town. I started writing with a dip pen and ink, always wrote at school with a fountain pen, and did my own "calligraphy". I only really discovered calligraphy "proper" when I attended a class with Hilary Adams just before my first child was born. So I guess I was always inspired.

Has there been a mistake you've made in Calligraphy that helped you learn something?

Lots of mistakes. Doing calligraphy with a fountain pen helped prepare me for the delight of thicks and thins, line quality and control you get from the real deal. Thinking "rhythm" was a technique and not down to consolidation and practice - that this is something you develop once you understand what it is. Not using good paper, and then realising how much better your work can be when you have a good surface. Trying to be too perfect instead of just enjoying myself! And so much more... we are after all always learning as calligraphers!

What does your typical day look like?

I try and get up really early so that I can fit some calligraphy in when its dead quiet and before the day starts. Then it's a quick breakfast and off to my own left-brained digital business where I work as a pharmacist. I take all my notes in journals with pencil, brush and fountain pens and think that my calligraphy has made a huge difference to how I design data-driven solutions. At the end of the day I try and fit in more calligraphy, exercise and 20 minutes of French. Then it's the usual; cooking supper, finishing errands, family commitments and sleep.

What is your favourite music?

I love music and most genres. Its easier to say that I am not a fan of ballads and blues! MPeople, Pharrell Williams and Fleetwood Mac make me very happy!

And/or your favourite food?

Fish salad made from green mangoes Seychelles style, Masala dosa and warm idli, and fresh warm koesister in the Bokaap.

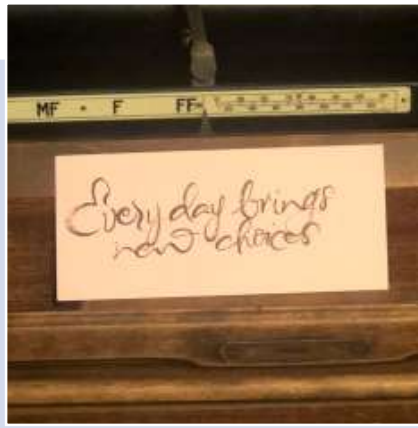
Where do you get your inspiration from?

Cape Town - everything about it - the light, its nature, people, food and so much more.

What are three fun facts about yourself?

1. I used to dance hip hop with a performance group
2. I was a corporate executive
3. My Zulu name is Nomhle.





What is your favourite typeface / calligraphic hand?

I don't really have a favourite hand, but if I had to pick it would be Carolingian. I prefer to draw from our classical training and mix up the styles or hands. For typefaces I love the feel of an old typewriter, and own several.

Are there any new skills or calligraphic hands you are considering learning? If so, what are they?

We are always learning as calligraphers. I have been learning Kufic and would love to learn Arabic in more depth and Devanagari.

Tell us more about the left letters project. What inspired you to start the left letters project?

I had written a whole lot of cards for practice and stopped at a robot (traffic light). A man was begging and I gave him some food, money and a handwritten card. He immediately gave the card back to me. When I told him it was for him, he could not believe it. That made me decide to give away more pieces of calligraphy. I then decided to leave some extra ones on the steps to a supermarket and could not believe how quickly people picked them up. So #leftletters as a way to use calligraphy as a random act of kindness was born, and I decided to carry around little calligraphy cards and leave them where they could maybe brighten someone's day. I do it all the time. I once #leftletters and had some children running after me to ask how you write like that!

What are the most interesting letters you have left or seen?

I love leaving thank you notes for people to find when I leave, and a letter in an envelope gets a wonderful response. I have had such great reactions - people running after me! One can make a difference by valuing the role that others play in your days. I also find it very interesting to see how people respond to their name. I often watch for reactions from a distance. Graffiti is really #leftletters and I find a lot of graffiti in Cape Town very inspiring. I also find discarded begging boards very sad #leftletters.

How would you like to see the Left Letters project grow and evolve?

I would like #leftletters to be a movement, a calligraphic random act of kindness that people pass on, and to develop into something bigger in the future. When you go to a class and the teacher gives you some of their calligraphy, one is normally so inspired. Imagine if we did that on a much bigger scale.

What advice would you share to someone beginning their calligraphy journey?

Stop trying to be perfect, just start and be you. Write cards and give all your less than perfect pieces away as #leftletters.

Do you have a favourite quote you would like to share with us?

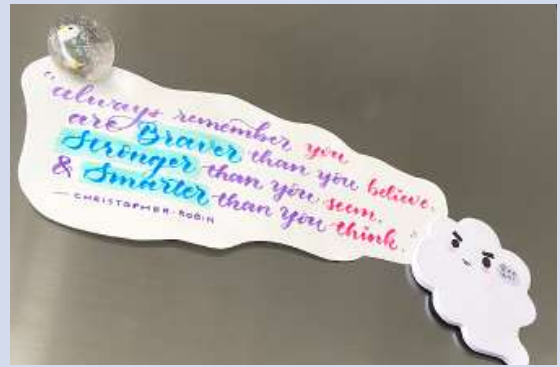
"Writing is a cardiogram of one's character" - Friedrich Neugebauer.



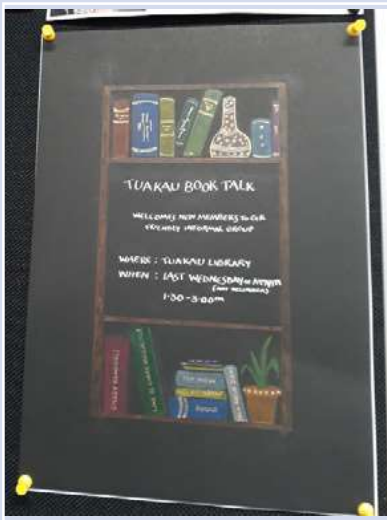
Where did you leave your #LeftLetters

Last newsletter's challenge had us creating an uplifting piece of calligraphy and leaving it in a public space to share inspiration and encouragement.

Below we have some submissions to share...



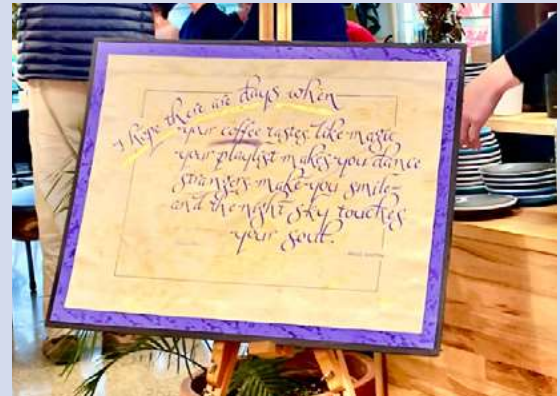
Jaclyn Hon - on the fridge



Ros West - Tuakau library



Nicole Drummond - fire hydrant case in Ponsonby



Bevan Holmes - on display at the local café in Waipu



Wendy Valler - in a lift



Anita Cole - on her teenage son's bedside table



Rose Browning - the local ATM machine at Mangawhai where it hasn't stopped raining!



Bevan Holmes - on display at the local café in Waipu