

wanted at large

CELEBRATING THE HIGH LIFE, COOL STYLE,

KEEP IT CONSTANT SPEAKING SOUTH AFRICAN TO THE WORLD



South African idiomatic language is rich, textured and often very funny. I recently heard the description of a man who was "sta-sof-ed". In essence, it refers to a man who has been, well, "pussy-whipped" — she dips him into a bucket of lavender Sta-soft and the emergent fellow is easily shaped and moulded. (I admit, the lavender is my own addition, but I like to sniff on that faux, chemical smell.)

Another turn-of-phrase that embedded itself in my conversation was that of the "makhwapheni". Literally translating as the underarm, it refers to a woman having an affair with a married man. To maintain the affair, she needs to remain hidden in that dark, often slightly odorous, spot.

And now from local to international. I've heard that film-goers in Los Angeles are responding with an animated "vokki" to all challenges — an enthusiastic reaction to the locally made *District 9!*

The European Union Literary Award, which takes place in South Africa, is in its fifth year. It pays tribute to this distinctive culture by honouring first-time South African novelists.

Apparently the award is the first of its kind in the world. To quote host Jacana Media: "Supported by the various EU embassies and commissions operating in South Africa, the award has at its core the ideal of promoting new, fresh literature that speaks in a South African idiom to an international audience."

It's probably the use of the aforementioned idiom that has helped many of the winning books pip their competitors at the pen post. Most recently, the 2008/09 winner, *Saracen at the Gates* by Zinaid Meeran, is an idiom-studded read, paying tribute to the "curry-mafia princesses" of Gauteng. An insane babble of bling and anarchy, the author's style has been compared to award-winning UK writer Zadie Smith. Likewise, a few years back, Kopano Matlwa's *Cocoon* was a direct reference to the, well, strangeness that makes us South African. Indeed, if we are going to demonstrate our diversely drawn national identity to the world, it will be through books like these, devoured by global readers, that could be a legacy of the Fifa 2010 World Cup.

Now, the latest 2009/10 judging process of the EU Literary Award will have just gone into play. This year award-winning author Mandla Langa; former editor of *The Weekender*; Rehana Roussou; and Professor of English Craig Mackenzie will already be nose-deep in submitted manuscripts. What will the winning story be? The one that says something different about us to the world. The one that makes us proud of who we are. The one that embraces our foibles, weaknesses, quirkiness and even strengths.

Sadly, this will be the last year that the EU supports this prestigious award. This should be an excellent opportunity for a South African business to support the project — alongside all the advantages that come with naming rights.

It should be a company that understands the importance and longevity of word on paper. (Read here: the opportunity to have its brand in print too!) Its inclusion in the Exclusive Books Homebru series gives another reason for support. This wouldn't be a partnership, but rather a perfect synchronisation.

Think about it, the company that considers supporting this award should want to represent us not just to the world, but to the universe! When those Prawns from *District 9's* faraway galaxy return in the sequel, *District ... 10*, to open that time capsule planted under the aloe tree, hopefully they will find it filled with first-time South African authors, the likes of Kopano Matlwa and Zinaid Meeran. Now that would be *ayoba, nca*, and actually *verskriklik* cool!

Michelle Constant is the CEO of Business and Arts South Africa (BASA), and presenter of SAFM Lifestyle (Saturdays, 9am-12pm)



Photography by Naashon Zalk

CULT SHOP CASSIS, Gardens, Cape Town

"Better than Paris!" is the word on the street. And that's just from Cape Town's French expatriates, who are surely battling both their ingrained cultural chauvinism and their back-home-is-better homesickness.

They're talking about Cassis Paris Patisserie and Boulangerie, a tiny shop in Cape Town's Garden Centre purveying authentic, artisanal French pastries of the highest quality.

Cassis is low key, just a narrow alley with a long glass counter, a till and a display shelf for bread. But inside that glass counter you will find a smorgasbord of Parisian delights: mini cakes like the *Feuille d'Automne*, made from layers of French meringue, dark chocolate mousse and topped with chocolate leaves; or the *Opera* (almond biscuit, chocolate ganache and coffee butter cream). There are authentic croissants, pain au chocolat

and brioche. There are also macarons, éclairs, petit fours, you name it. The bread is also excellent and authentically French: baguettes, sour dough and rye.

Clearly influenced by his 25 years spent at French patisserie giant Lenôtre, owner Patrick Moreau decided to strike out on his own. For him, South Africa was filled with promise. He left Lenôtre, where he was based in Bangkok, and relocated to Cape Town in 2008 with his South African wife. "Cape Town was the best place to start. People are more aware [of food], more travelled and willing to try something different," he says.

His vision is to produce locally, "at the level you will find in the leading boutiques in Paris". He set up a baking facility in Montague Gardens, training staff and importing specialised equipment from France. He works

long hours overseeing all the production. "Since I came to South Africa, I haven't had a single day off." That was nearly two years ago.

Now he has a second store in Newlands, which offers outdoor seating and coffee, and is looking to open a third. He plans to expand to Johannesburg, and possibly other cities, but only once he can offer Cassis pastries at a suitable quality. "I'm fanatic about the standard of my products, I don't compromise."

In Johannesburg's cluttered culinary landscape of fast food joints and mediocre franchises, this is good news. It will be worth the wait.

NAASHON ZALK
Cassis Paris Patisserie and Boulangerie, Shop 37a Gardens Centre, Gardens, (021) 461 6232 or 5 Cardiff Castle, cnr Kildare & Main Road, Newlands (021) 671 1305

Louis Vuitton has stolen our hearts with seven new yellow gold charms released as part of their Valentine's Day offering. If only all hearts were made of gold.

Louis Vuitton (011) 784 9854 or (021) 405 9700

