



Amy Scheepers

## Luxury redefined

*Mohair South Africa ushers in a new era.*

We find ourselves in one of my favourite rooms in the world: the Mohair SA Boardroom in North End.

It's cool, quiet, and decked out in various shades of avocado green. It looks like something a 70's Bond villain would strut around in, and I love it. Yet despite its dated appearance, all the furnishings in the room, from carpets to drapes to seats, incorporates mohair into its design. And there's no mistaking that back in the day no expense was spared in its creation. I mention this to Lindsay Humphreys and Anle Marias of Mohair SA.

"Our boardroom is very retro," said Lindsay.

Anlé steps in: "This will all change in the near future. We have some big plans in the pipeline as we

are relocating our headquarters to Walmer soon. The building is currently in the design stage."

Since the early 70's the headquarters of the Mohair Industry was nestled securely in the heart of Port Elizabeth's fibre industry in close proximity of the brokers and the buyers. Today it is the home of the Mohair Trust, Mohair South Africa as well as the Empowerment Trust of the Mohair Industry.

We spoke earlier with Mohair SA General Manager, Deon Saayman, who filled us in on the reason for the move to Walmer. "With Mohair South Africa taking on the responsibility of marketing the fibre globally, and with South Africa being the pivotal role player in the industry worldwide, both in terms

of production and processing of mohair," said Deon, "it was agreed by the industry to relocate the headquarters to a more prominent and visually attractive area within Port Elizabeth, with easy access to the airport and consumers to gain insight to the magical world of mohair."

"It is truly a watershed moment for the industry and we are looking forward to the next planning stage of our premises with anticipation and extreme excitement." He said with a big smile.

The humble facade of their North End building belies the fact that we are sitting in the very centre of the world of Mohair. Anlé and Lindsay are the glamorous marketing team of Mohair SA.

You can easily tell when someone's working for love, or for money. Mohair, like wine, is just that kind of thing that is made primarily because of love, and that the money is a mere afterthought. Anlé and Lindsay are clearly head over heels with their work.

"80% of our work is done abroad," says Lindsay. "To give you an example we are working with a show called Spin Expo in Shanghai. The show is basically set up for international buyers and international retailers, that will decide on fashion trends for 2014 and 2015. So spinners, fashion bloggers and industry heavyweights will attend. So all the decision makers for labels such as Prada; Zara and Chanel will be there. Our role is to work with various spinners who will produce samples for designers to inspect. If they like a particular sample they then can chat directly to the spinner and order various yarns."

"There is a lot of science behind this industry." She goes on to explain. "We work closely with research organizations that perform bleeding edge market research and macro and micro trend forecasting, in order to anticipate and predict which way tastes and styles will go."

2014 has big things in store for the local market, as Anlé explains. "The central theme for us this year is to share the green and sustainable aspect of what we do in our industry internationally. Telling the story of mohair and all the people associated with it, such as the sixth generation farmers and the communities that work alongside and support them, is a huge priority for us. The immense amount of respect we have for them cannot be expressed in words. The Karoo has so much depth and beauty."

South Africans (and just about all who visit her) love the Karoo precisely because it's a stark and infinite place. It manages to seem so much smaller and intimate, because of the interweaving relationships between communities that criss-cross the landscape, as a result of mohair.

Lindsay and Anlé have made it their mission to make the story of mohair a household one.

"We found that the general public didn't fully understand what it meant to buy a product that contained mohair," said Anlé. "So we decided to create a symbol that brought to mind what mohair is really all about. We wanted people to pick up a product and read the label, and be aware that it contains a measure of mohair in it. We envision that just as the genuine leather mark is an indication of quality, so will the mohair mark come to be associated with a quality product."

The mohair mark was a necessity. We, the public



Anlé Marais, Roxanne Robinson (Glamour), Palesa Mahlaba (True Love), Asanda Sizani (ELLE) and Lindsay Humphreys at the NMMU fashion show.

of the Eastern Cape, seem to take a 'let's just be friends' attitude towards mohair. Which is mind-boggling to industry professionals because the rest of the world is downright infatuated with it, in a way that is feverish and desperate.

To give you a quick example, many iconic props and costumes in movies and television have been made from mohair. Remember the orange couch from Friends? The one they used to sit on in the coffee shop? That's made from mohair. The Chewbacca costume from Star Wars? That's a blend of half Yak and half mohair.

And the awesome thing is that at some time or another just about ALL the mohair in the world is produced or passes through Port Elizabeth and the Eastern Cape. So the Friends couch and the most famous Wookee in the world has quite a lot of the Eastern Cape woven into it.

"As a not-for-profit organization, Mohair SA will not be selling the mark. It will be available to all retailers. But it will be under our auspices and our control."

From our conversations it's clear that Anlé and Lindsay are a well respected and well supported team within their organization. But as we mentioned earlier, the mohair industry is one of hard-as-nails practicality, and they had to work hard to earn their stripes.

The mohair industry is fascinating because it is intensely romantic, yet incredibly practical at the same time. It is because romance enables you to dream about the stars, but pragmatism will get you there.

"Back in the office, Mohair SA is a no-nonsense organization. Our presentations in this boardroom are still very formal. As such, you earn your place here," said Lindsay.

Mohair changes you. You'll fall in love with it and it will get into your blood.

"We love being part of the mohair family and it's a privilege to be a part of such exciting and dynamic times in the mohair industry".

"We look forward to welcoming you at our new HQ soon," says Anlé.



Introducing the new mohair mark. Look out for it on selected mohair products.

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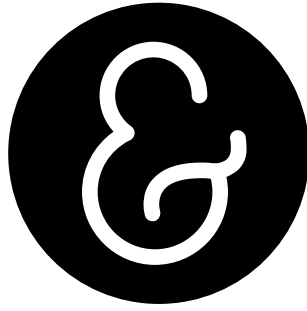
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### INSTAGRAMERS PORT ELIZABETH



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## *Instawalk PE by Chris Kritzinger*

The Instagram sub-culture emerged between avid users in various cities across the globe, forming pockets of Instagram-related activities, of which, Instawalks and Instameets are the most popular. Instawalk and Instameet simply connote a group of Instagramers meeting at a specific place to go photograph locations as a group.

A post-industrial, decaying from the inside out, hyperbole of itself, Port Elizabeth is an instagramer's dream: derelict buildings meet absurd public art, socio-economic malaise joins hands with Vovo Telo latte-sipping ladies of leisure (instagraming their heart shaped barista coffees); ol' PE, where fashion is jean pant and white takkie – so retro its cool; which is why instagramers are at home in this comatose joint. It's ironic, you see.

A new Manlger (manager for English speaking folk) for Instagramming community of Port Elizabeth was appointed in January 2014, flush with the hope that this sleepy-hollow will finally rise from its hibernation and become a cybernation. The idea is to host an instawalk at least once a month. Anyone is welcome regardless of what image capturing technology you use or how well you use it.

The PE Manlger has decided to make it a little more interesting by adding an exhibition to the mix. Three Instawalks will occur over three months, after which a selection of images will be chosen and exhibited in the newly refurbished Athenaeum.

If you are interested join our Facebook page Instagrammers Port Elizabeth. If you have any questions, queries or comments drop @chriskritzinger a line on Instagram.



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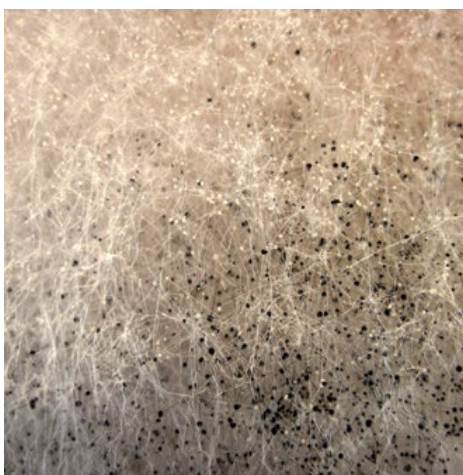




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### *What is a Story Pillow?*

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## Editorial

History begins deep in the mind. That is to say that the course of human events have been driven by ideas. Mankind's imagination is incredibly rich and every event we imagine is a potential new future. So it is that ideas, are a source of change.

History has shown that new thoughts are destabilizing. They generate frustration with the way things are, or suggest possibilities about how they might be different.

This month we focused on two notable ideas. Firstly, that many people can work together in harmony to produce mohair, a product that is more Art than a functional household object. Secondly, we focused on the upcoming Design Indaba that espouses the idea that unconventionality is a very healthy thing, and that it has the power to reshape the world around us for the better.

The Soapbox started off as an idea between two friends, and has grown into an entire community of likeminded innovators. We at the Soapbox are committed to continue bringing you the best new ideas that Nelson Mandela Bay has to offer.

Ideas ignite fires within us and spur us on to new heights. Never be afraid of new ideas, for therein lie the seeds of the future.

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# Design Indaba 2014

*Nearly two decades of creative excellence.*

If your job entails an iota of creativity, then you MUST without fail attend this year's Design Indaba. It boggles the mind that the local standard response to 'So are you going to attend this year's Design Indaba?' is a blank stare and stony silence. Followed by 'Sorry, never heard of it. What is it?'

Let me just start off and say flat out that if you are a student involved in any field that requires design, you need to attend it without a second thought. Architects; graphic designers; production designers; fine artists; engineers; social and physical scientists: Cut down on a month's worth of beers and going out and get yourself a ticket. Trust me, it'll be worth it.

Is there any value for professionals in related industries to attend? Definitely. If your job entails any form of systems design or creative problem solving, you'll definitely benefit from attending. From Logistics to Human Resources and Marketing, there'll be something of profound value waiting for you there.

I chatted to the creative director of the Soapbox, Reino Erasmus, about what the Design Indaba meant to him.

"The Design Indaba really shaped me as a professional," explained Reino. "People think that the Design Indaba is some kind of product expo where new gadgets or products are showcased. It's not about that at all. The Design Indaba has become such an industry event because it focuses almost

exclusively on process. So the creative elite of the world will get up on stage and share their thought and design processes that came into play for various projects."

"I witnessed talks by people who wrote my textbooks, people who I would otherwise have had to travel to Europe or America to see."

Lessons learned from the Design Indaba have incorporated themselves into the very publication you holding in your hands.

"I learned that sometimes the destination is not as important as the journey. Take the Soapbox for instance. It represents conversations we have had with various business owners in the city over the last month. It's filled with stories that these people have shared with us and that we have documented for others to read," said Reino. "For our readers, it represents a glimpse into someone else's world. For us as creators of the Soapbox, it's a journal of our encounters with strangers and the relationships we have subsequently formed with them. I think that the true value of what we do lies in the richness of the interactions we have with incredibly interesting people we happen to meet."

Started in 1995, the Design Indaba aims to uplift society through better design. This year's simulcast in Port Elizabeth will be broadcast in the Little Theatre at the Athenaeum in Central.

The Design Indaba's PE simulcast is a very recent thing. We had a chat with Tim Jones, creative

group head of Boomtown (the agency responsible for bringing the Design Indaba to the City) on how that happened.

"About 2 years ago, Andrew MacKenzie (Boomtown's Creative Director) and I had a conversation regarding how it was such a shame that the Design Indaba was out of reach for so many creatives in Port Elizabeth. Especially for students." Explained Tim. "Many just couldn't afford to travel to attend such an inspirational event. Prior to the PE simulcast it was really an event for a select few in our City. So for us, being in PE, we wanted to make that level of creativity available locally."

"Andrew approached the Indaba and made it known that there were so many people here that wanted to attend. They agreed to it a month before the actual event, so not as many people as we would have liked managed to attend. This year we'll be seeing a much better turnout. The Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University has already committed 60 students, and we are expecting a fantastic turnout this year."

I asked Tim about how the Indaba has shaped his own career. "It was great to be exposed to that level of work and creativity. I have attended the last 5 or 6 years, even when I was working in Cape Town. I somehow managed to make time to attend and came away incredibly inspired by what I saw.

As a young student or professional, the Design Indaba will be a great way for you to see what's out there, and to help you to develop influences in your own work."