



Only The Best Will Do

Ari and Minas Mandis offer cutting edge quality to the Bay.

Today's interview is with the visionary Mandis brothers, Ari and Minas, who represent the growing number of entrepreneurs in Port Elizabeth that have been born in the City, left to see the world, and then have come back to enrich PE with the ideas they have encountered on their travels.

Upon entering the combined showroom and coffee shop/deli one thing becomes clear: the day you shuffle off this mortal coil, know that what you buy from here will be fought over bitterly by the loved ones you leave behind.

"We are catering for a client base that has an eye for quality and that would like to cultivate a more refined lifestyle," says Minas. "Whatever we offer, be it furniture or food, rest assured that it will be

of the best possible quality we can source," adds younger brother Ari.

Ari, of The Cotton Mill (which incorporates the Gates to Africa brand) manufactures and offers premium quality furnishings that are one of a kind. Meanwhile older brother Minas, of the Como Café, travels far and wide to source the highest quality artisan products which he stocks in his fantastic New-York style delicatessen. What is featured in store is a reflection of their tastes and style.

"To start off," says Ari, "all our furniture designs are developed in-house and are inspired by current and classic design trends. Paul, my business partner, has had a long career in the industry with 15 years of experience under his belt."

The Cotton Mill only uses solid woods that raises the bar on the authenticity of the design. "We buy these beautiful woods directly from the sawmills and are one of the few furniture makers lucky enough to have access to it. The wood is full of warmth and character, and that ensures that no two pieces are the same. Likewise, we only source top quality South African and Namibian leathers for our 'Gates to Africa' range of couches, which again, are only made with solid wood. We don't use cheaper woods or chipboard in any of our pieces. Everything in our catalogues are custom made at our production facility right here in the City which creates jobs for 30 local craftsmen."

To round out their offerings, Minas has carefully developed the Como Café's product list to include

some of the best artisan food available locally. "There is a niche market in PE for people who are deprived of good quality food," explains Minas, "I've searched all over SA to find suppliers that really focus on quality and sustainability. To give you an idea of the kinds of suppliers I look for, I'll use our cured meat supplier as an example. It's a small concern just outside of Cape Town and they only use meat from pasture reared animals. The curing methods are traditional without the use of harmful additives and preservatives. They don't supply large supermarket chains and sell mainly through high-end food markets. Another notable supplier are a French couple who produce authentic French breads and pastries right here in PE. They are a husband and wife team and it's just the two of them doing everything. They have an amazing work ethic. Sometimes they work through the night to ensure that the breads and pastries are fresh first thing in the morning. It's the products of little artisan operations that have a love for what they do that I've stocked my shelves with. At the end of the day, quality is something you can taste."

Over the years Ari and Minas have found their roles have evolved to much more than just businessmen. They find themselves taking on the role of communicators for fine living.

"We are so far removed from the production of our everyday commodities that most people don't know a thing about what they're buying or how it was made. Most people end up buying poor quality products," says Minas.

"For both of us," adds Ari, "the product's back-story is a huge part of the overall package, and we feel that it's important that our clients know what they're buying. It enhances the product and becomes a point of pride to share with others."

The store is the realisation of a dream they both shared from their varsity days. "I think we both always wanted to be our own bosses," laughs Minas.

"We were serious about the entire enterprise from day one," says Ari. "Our idea back in varsity was to start a coffee shop and deli which sold quality goods like cheeses and speciality meats. We took the whole concept very seriously and did our homework. We put together a business plan; worked out product ranges; sourced suppliers and even scouted for premises. Ultimately, we ran into a brick wall. For two young entrepreneurs, financing was a big problem so we had to put things on the backburner for a while. But we never ever gave up on the idea."

"Gates to Africa began back in 2007," said Ari. "I originally just had that single showroom, which

was much smaller than it is now. We had always wanted to branch out into wooden pieces and fabrics, so when the gym equipment business next door closed down, we started The Cotton Mill in the empty building in 2009."

Meanwhile in the interleading years Minas had travelled widely and had come to develop a healthy respect for the deli culture of New York. "I was living overseas at the time, and I came back for a holiday. It was during a catch up session with my brother where I shared my experiences aboard that we decided to revive our original plan to start a deli with an attached coffee shop."

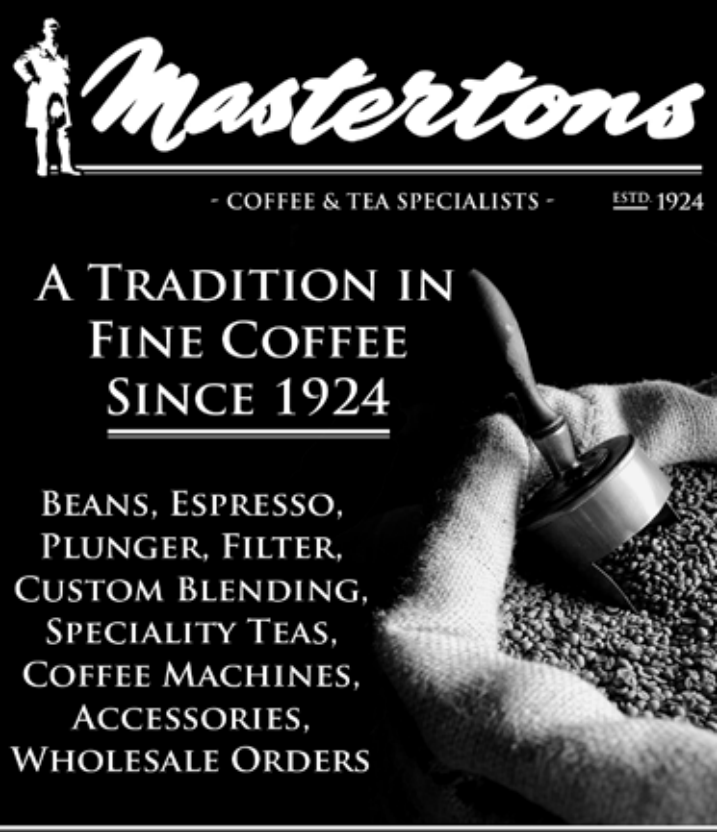
"It's taken time to develop and establish both our businesses, but today our respective brands are well known in the city. We feel that we offer quality products that are upmarket and distinctive. Most businesses will focus on price as the sole determining factor when bringing something different to market. For us the emphasis is always on quality."

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The Athenæum wishes you were here

"The Athenaeum will be the opening host for this fantastic exhibition on the 19th of September 2014. We are also a submission point, so artists can bring their artworks for the selection panel's consideration." said Asanda Mlata, project manager for the Athenaeum, regarding her involvement with the MBDA Wish You Were Here visual arts exhibition.

"I think everyone thought it was just going to be a once off exhibition celebrating heritage month. This project has picked up amazing momentum from day 1 when Cedric approached us with the initial concept. I don't think he even managed to finish his sentence before I blurted out 'Yes!'" she laughs. "Soon after, our upper management approved the project and since then its grown bigger and bigger. We're now projecting the exhibition will continue on into 2015 and perhaps even 2016. In a nutshell, submissions should reflect the heart of what makes PE, PE."

"Projects like the MBDA Wish You Were Here are very important for not only established artists, but also newer emerging artists too. The aim isn't to keep things within this tight artistic community, but rather to widen our community and to cultivate a wider audience of art appreciators. We as a City must be very careful not to let things stagnate as it kills off creativity and makes it very difficult to grow creatively."

"The Athenaeum is the traditional Heart Art and Culture in Port Elizabeth and it is very gratifying for us to be the opening host. It all starts here."



For more information on the MBDA Wish You Were Here project please contact Asanda Mlata

Contact Number: **(041) 585 3641**

Email Address: manager@theathenaeum.co.za



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From Coal Dust to Green Gold

NMMU designs a revolutionary process to minimise waste.

By Marc Jacobson

Coal dust is a useless by-product of the coal burning power generation process. It can't be easily transported and, if airborne, can be a major environmental health hazard. Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University Professor of Chemistry Ben Zeelie has taken a bold and innovative step towards sustainability by discovering a way to convert coal dust into coal briquettes using algae. Called Coalgae™, it was a discovery that was not his initial intention.

"I came about this discovery completely by accident," laughed Prof Zeelie. "We started to grow the algae in plastic bags that hung on a washing line. These plastic bags often broke and then the contents ran out onto the soil. Then when the sun had dried the liquid algae, it dried into a concentrated cake-like substance which is how we came up with the idea."

Just as the algae dried, combining with sand grains to form a hard dry substance, so the same process can also be applied to coal dust. In other

words, a circular renewable approach can be applied to an existing fossil fuel, namely coal, to better sustain that same fossil fuel.

"Coal dust is a huge problem," emphasized Prof Zeelie, "Coal is carbon, which breaks easily. During the mining process when it goes into a processing plant for the surrounding rocks to be removed, the coal rocks break and this forms a lot of dust ... We generate more than 15 million tonnes of coal dust every year in South Africa, and for the rest of the world we are talking more than 60 gigatonnes (one gigatonne is equal to one billion tonnes!) so it is an enormous problem,"

Coal is a valuable resource that can be used and re-used if this sustainable approach can be applied to create an essential rotating 'recycle and reuse' strategy.

Another factor Prof Zeelie raised with regards to this excess loss of coal is that you cannot transport coal dust efficiently, as strong winds easily blow the dust away. Therefore, coal dust cannot be easily protected and manipulated. Just as transportation is essential for the delivery of substanc-

es and products, so too is the protection of such products in rough conditions during transport.

"If you go near to the coal mines in Mpumalanga, and in the Witbank area, the air is black from all the dust looming around, as the wind blows all the coal dust," added Prof. Zeelie. "The dust just needs to be mixed together with the algae concentrate and then it needs a bit of heat to activate the binding, then you can transport the coal stones wherever you want to."

The process of this conversion comes with a few simple requirements, but it needs to be done under the right conditions and with great attention to detail and responsibility. "Firstly, you need water, and it doesn't have to be fresh water – it can also be reclaimed irrigation water that we use around campus. Then you need a container or plastic tube. Instead of bags we now use these columns of plastic tubes that stand on the ground. The columns have to be see-through to allow sunlight to get through. They then need a bit of food and then we add the algae and they will grow.

"The thing that algae need most is carbon dioxide, because 50% of algae are carbon. People around the world are attempting to grow algae to remove excess carbon dioxide from the atmosphere."

The requirements for algae to grow under the correct conditions takes a lot of manual labour and supervision, "Algae need to be harvested literally every day, because they grow very quickly. If you start off with one kilogram this morning, you will have two kilograms tonight – it doubles every day. "Then what we would do is take some of the water out, then remove the algae, which is the complicated part, because algae is very small – they are about one thousandth of a millimetre. Then we would end up with a substance that looks like shoe polish which we would mix with the coal dust. After that we would put it into an oven to dry it up, which is where the binding takes place."

This discovery is a great step towards the retention of resources for the future.

"The 15 million tonnes of coal dust generated that we lose every year is close to a third of all the coal that Eskom uses in a year, and it is all just thrown away. Therefore, we would recover a third of what Eskom would need through this process," said Prof Zeelie. "The biggest benefit is that it removes a pollutant from the environment. Coal dust catches on fire spontaneously and once a coal dump starts burning, it can burn for decades – there are some that have burnt for over 40 years – so it is a very environmentally-friendly process. Because of that, there are a lot of mining companies looking into the technology and working with us on the project. That is positive from an energy point of view.

A fully-feasible commercial roll out of the production process of coal-microalgae composites is the next step to be taken so that sustainability can gear up toward the bigger picture. "We are currently busy with one of the biggest international engineering companies, Hatch-Goba. They are doing full-scale designs for us in what is now the second phase of the engineering development. NMMU is currently in partnership with the Department of Science and Technology (DST), looking at buying a 15-hectare site near Witbank where we will put up the first large-scale facility, hopefully by next year. The idea there is just to test the technology, because it is brand new. I have just been asked by the International Energy Agency to give a talk at the end of November on this technology for coal and algae," said Prof Zeelie.

Another experiment they have achieved with coal is extracting 25% of the coal's mass as oil. The remaining coal is of a very high quality, because a lot of the metals that were in the coal's matrix were removed as well as the sulphur which forms much of the ash. When it burns, minimal smoke is produced and there is no damaging sulphur that gets released. In this single process, they then also produce quality bio-crude oil.

"From a personal point of view, algae is the best soil conditioner known. We have a whole garden all grown just from sea sand conditioned with algae," added Prof Zeelie, "There is one farmer in America who grows potatoes for Simba chips and he hasn't ploughed in the last five years because he utilises algae on his farm. This is because algae contains a lot of protein which gives the soil all the structure that it needs. He also reclaims a lot of clean water from the process."

This sustainable approach can be used to great effect in rural communities as it can be an extremely low-cost and low-effort technique. This is, of course, if the right strategies and correct skills are used to apply to it.

"A hectare of this will be enough to give clean water to a small community," said Prof. Zeelie, "The

one thing we are trying to experiment with is to place a system like this somewhere in a small rural community, where we would get people to grow the algae and then put the algae in a biodigester which generates methane gas. This will then be pumped to the houses to burn for cooking and what is left will get put into the soil as fertiliser. They will then have water, energy and food. Projects like these are ones that people can do by themselves, but we just need to provide them with the right systems to achieve it."

Prof Zeelie, along with many of his colleagues in the Gomery Avenue site at NMMU, have all played a role in this project. All the technology and machinery that has been developed has been hand built by the team without making any additional purchases elsewhere.





national arts festival

Solo Theatre Reviews

A Woman in Waiting

Ms. Mtshali-Jones is an individual born with a massive talent for the stage, and to watch her in action is to see a virtuoso carefully honed over the scope of a lifetime's worth of experiences. 'A Woman in Waiting' is a true South African classic.

An intimate and touching journey through the amazing life of Thembi Mtshali-Jones, and expertly framed through the uncompromising lens of Yael Farber, it has lost none of its impact or relevance since its world debut in 1999.

From her birth and early life in her village in Kwa-Zulu Natal and up to the present day, Ms. Mtshali-Jones transports her audience to key moments in her life.

From her first realisations of the sacrifices made by her parents to bring her a pair of shoes for Christmas; to her first tragi-comic brush with Apartheid seen through the eyes of a little girl; to her role as surrogate mother to a range of privileged white children, Ms. Mtshali-Jones relives these moments with frank sincerity.

Meze, Mira and Makeup

'Meze, Mira and Makeup' is a piece that explores the search of the 'other' for identity and acceptance, amidst the panoply of issues that arise from the clashing of two markedly differing cultures.

Irene Stephanou's 1980's classic is set in the 1970's West Rand life of 'Mira', the daughter of two Greek immigrants, expertly brought to life by Ms. Tanya Louch.

One gets goosebumps watching her deft and delightfully startling transitions between characters: from elegant Greek Matriach to grouchy teenager; from macho disco dancing suitor to the local femme Fatale.

Filled with astute observations of the human condition, 'Meze, Mira and Makeup' nods cheekily to those in the know while playfully initiating newcomers to the idiosyncratic deliciousness of South African Greek culture.

Designer Genes XXL

'Designer Genes XXL' is considered to be the spiritual successor of 'Defending the Caveman', forever associated in this country with the incomparable Tim Plewman.

A rip-roaring journey through the various stages of human evolution 'Designer Genes XXL' is a breathlessly honest examination of the drives that help to perpetuate the human race. Of course, this is oversimplifying the subject at hand as it dives headlong into the complex morass that is the familiar dynamic interplay between inter-gender relations. The piece cleverly derives its laughs through the process of discovery and introspection that Mr. Plewman launches his audiences through.

A master of pacing and rhythm, to listen to his deep and commanding voice is to hear a thespian at the height of his powers.

My Word! Redesigning Buckingham Palace

'Buckingham Palace' is an essential piece of South African literature in the Western Cape, where its study forms part of the provinces' high school English curriculum. Written by Richard Rive, it is a semi-autobiographical account of his childhood in District Six, during the 1950's.

'My Word, Redesigning Buckingham Palace' is stage veteran Basil Appolis' second adaption of this iconic work which interweaves more closely the fictional scenes and characters in the book, and the real life events of Richard Rive.

With cool, commanding intensity that never overplays itself with unnecessarily overly-dramatic gestures, Mr. Appolis' performance is smooth as silk, and as rich as a well-aged brandy.

Cheaper than Roses

If the majority of your exposure to Liz Meiring has been through television, then this is a version of her that you will most likely have never seen.

Liz Meiring plays a coloured woman reclassified as white, from a small Western Cape 'dorpje'. It chronicles her search for a better life as a white woman in Apartheid South Africa, at the expense of being rejected by her own family.

In her own words, 'Cheaper than Roses' is not a political play. It explores the darker, unspoken realities of living under a system that persecutes based on physical appearances.

Funny, moving and tragic, 'Cheaper than Roses' humanises the motivations of the people who lived through the Apartheid era. Liz Meiring showcases the full extent of her acting prowess, and keeps her foot on the accelerator throughout the entire hour long performance never letting up for a single moment.

Salaam Stories (by Bianca Wicks)

Ashraf Johaardien teams up with director, set-designer and Naledi Theatre Awards 2013 nominee Jade Bowers to create a play which covers centuries of history, delving into the lives of multiple, engaging characters to explore what it means to be Muslim in South Africa. First written and performed in 2002, Salaam Stories still enchants. It starts with Ashraf as a schoolboy, explaining his daily routine. Throughout the rest of the play, he tells us the story of his young life and that of his ancestors and the stories they passed on from generation to generation.

Alongside the themes of history and tradition, Salaam Stories touches on political discrimination, religion, family values and various stereotypes surrounding Muslim people.

Ashraf expertly uses a conversational tone to bring his message across. His monologue hints at the traditional campfire conversations when stories were told as entertainment.

The end of Salaam Stories' run will be a great loss to theatre, but 12 years is nothing to be sneezed at. Ashraf Johaardien and Jade Bowers' partnership has given us a delightfully moving play. The masterful combination of comedy and tragedy will make Salaam Stories a future classic.

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Sparking Change in Africa

Amy Shelver returns from 7 intensive weeks in the USA.

Back in 2010, US President Obama launched an educational program called the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI). Its aim is to support young African leaders as they spur growth and prosperity; strengthen democratic governance; and enhance peace and security across Africa. "The security and prosperity and justice that we see in the world cannot be achieved without a strong and prosperous and self-reliant Africa," he said. He called YALI "a long-term investment" in Africa and its youth "and a future we can build together."

Obama said that through YALI, the United States is investing in the next generation of African leaders and has committed significant resources to enhance leadership skills, bolster entrepreneurship and connect young African leaders with one another, the United States and the American people.

Local businesswomen and 2014 Top40 young business achiever, Amy Shelver, won a place amongst 46 other South Africans on this prestigious program and travelled to the US to learn and interact with fellow Africans at some of the best Ivy League US Universities. The key objectives of these sessions was to network the brightest young African minds across the continent; to empower them with the skills; training and technology they need to start new businesses and to spark change

in their communities, to promote education and health care and good governance.

"I think the most interesting thing for me, personally, was finding out about all the activity that's happening on the continent," said Amy. "I think as South Africans we are quite inward looking. We are kind of the America of Africa. We think we are 'it'." she chuckles. "We export a lot of our content; our messages; our products; our companies all across Africa. However, our views toward Africa as a continent is directed almost exclusively inwards towards our own country. We are not looking outwards to see what the rest of Africa has to offer."

Something very special happened during the opening of the program. It was decided that the program was to be renamed the Mandela Washington Fellowship, in Madiba's honour at the inaugural conference where Obama addressed the 500 African delegates.

"We were divided into groups of 25 and attended various top Universities following 3 different tracks dependent on your area of interest. So the tracks were business entrepreneurship; civic leadership or public administration. I was sent to Dartmouth college and went on 7 weeks of intensive academic and leadership training and networking with my fellow business entrepreneurs in Africa."

Amy's time in the US has helped to bring local issues into sharp focus. "I feel that lack of leadership and accountability in the people who do lead us, is a big problem in this country. There is also an embeddedness of poor leadership in the Eastern Cape which makes towns and cities consume themselves. It is something you can see when the street starts to crumble and the lights go out."

Amy however, is a solutions driven person at heart. "I was humbled buy a real sense of independence, and communitarianism over there. People are super independent, they have their say but are mindful of the impact their actions have on their neighbours. There is also a strong sense of pushing to make things different. The spirit of entrepreneurialism and can-do-ism is very strong and it's incredibly infectious. It almost feels like nothing can stop you, and it's then that you can begin to understand why people feel the American dream can come true there. People locally need to start collaborating. We think we know how to collaborate, but we don't. It may seem crazy to pool resources, even when they are tiny but there is power in that. What you need to understand is that you don't need someone's permission to collaborate, you are free to experiment. And failure is ok. It's all a grand experiment, no one knows what the outcome will be. But the important thing is that you take action."