

# voices

## BOOK NEWS

### A 21st-century guide to MISOGYNY

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Like many other young black readers, I was incredibly excited to see what Blackbird Books - a new imprint at Jacana for black authors - would produce.

But this is the first time I have nothing good to say about a book. I expected a light guide to dating from a man's perspective. I did not expect an arrogant guide to misogyny and mansplaining (men patronisingly telling women what life is all about), from a man who clearly has very little writing talent and even less regard for his female readers.

I began *The Refined Player* with an open mind. After all, I've read *He's Just Not That Into You* more than once - and seen the movie more times than I'd care to admit. I even suffered through Steve Harvey's now infamous *Act Like a Lady, Think Like a Man*.

But from the first diatribe about the countless women Marc has slept with, I knew this wasn't going to go well.

At first, the inclusion of his family history gave me a sense of someone with purpose and drive, and he nearly fooled me, but I later realised all this served to do was to set Marc up as the "good guy" whose "refined" Casanova ways could be excused by his heart of gold. Unfortunately for him, I'm not buying that.

As I understand it, the book is intended to show men how to be players - to sleep with multiple women - without being jerks. But the psychology at work in many of Marc's arguments is some of the most offensive I've come across.

At one point, he writes that when women say they are too tired for sex it could be because they genuinely are, or because of a "dysfunction" like vaginismus (a condition that causes the vagina to spasm). Despite treating this subject delicately, Marc is entirely unaware of how flimsy and downright offside this kind of binary is - either you're tired or there's something medically wrong with you. God forbid you're just not into the guy.

Throughout, his insights are offered in a reductive, authoritative fashion, as though written by God himself. He has set up a vague, homogenous group of "women" who will apparently respond to these tactics in a uniform way - because I suppose, if you've slept with 180 women, as Marc had at the time of his eureka moment, you can be sure of exactly how the other roughly 3.5 billion on the planet will react.

Here's the kind of thing he writes: "I must point out to the independent and successful women that a man wants to feel like a man in the relationship... I've always found it interesting that most successful women are lonely [and] single..."

But let's assume that all of the insights were true, and the copy was perfect and not riddled with typos - who does this book serve? Certainly not women.

Because if you want to know how a particular woman wants to be treated, you need to ask her.

And the players? Now that they are reformed, refined and in touch with their emotions, all they've been taught is how to make their misogyny more insidious.

The point of the book is that women are a hobby ... to be slept with, connected with and moved on from as soon as - according to the checklist - each one no longer meets a man's physical and emotional requirements.

#### Mda wins again

Zakes Mda has won the R75 000 University of Johannesburg (UJ) prize for his grim and beautiful novel *Rachel's Blue*. The other winner of the 2014/15 UJ Prize for SA Writing in English for debut fiction, which was announced this week, is Penny Busseto. At the prize giving later this year, she will take home R35 000 for *The Story of Anna P. As Told By Herself*.

Talking about *Rachel's Blue*, a novel that deals with rape, Mda this week described writing the work as "harrowing". He is at the Jaz Book Fair in Joburg, which ends today.

#### Grace Jones, queen of shade

Legendary singer, actress, club diva and now author Grace Jones had the internet trembling this week at the first extracts of her soon-to-be-published autobiography, *I'll Never Write My Memoirs*. Jones launched an umbrella full of shade on pop acts that just follow trends - notably ones she set. "Trends come along and people say, 'Follow that trend.' There's a lot of that around at the moment: 'Be like Sasha Fierce. Be like Miley Cyrus. Be like Rihanna. Be like Lady Gaga. Be like Rita Ora and Sia. Be like Madonna.' I cannot be like them - except to the extent that they are already being like me," she writes, saying today's pop stars have "no long-term vision".

#### Fiction prize winner's new book

There was an air of hushed awe at the annual Open Book Festival in Cape Town when the winner of last year's Sunday Times Fiction Prize, Claire Robertson, launched her anticipated new novel, *The Magistrate of Gower*. Robertson chatted to British novelist Patrick Gale about the book, a historical account of a British general in South Africa rumoured to have had a homosexual affair with a Boer prisoner of war - and been bounded for it. She described the general as a historical "bottle site" in one man.

#### The weed book

The marijuana legalisation debate won't die down - and now Jacana Media is publishing a book called *Dagga: A Short History* by Hazel Crampton, which tackles the proposed issues around licensing, legalisation and the taxation of dagga in a future South Africa. Smoking stuff.



IN PURSUIT OF HERITAGE Ivor Ichikowitz stands among thousands of artworks collected over the decades

The world of patronage is a double-edged sword - one wielded by some of the world's wealthiest elite who earned their fortune, in many cases, doing the type of business that most artists could only paint as dark and sad. In the world of arts

patronage, there is no shortage of these shadowy figures who walk around art fairs anonymously snapping up works of emerging creators for whom the money provides an opportunity to create more. They are two difficult subjects to reconcile yet, in a commerce-driven art market that relies on patronage to get by, they are rarely talked about.

Enter South Africa's Ivor Ichikowitz, the founder of the Paramount Group, a role player in the world of arms and sole owner of the largest private defence and aerospace producer in Africa. In the same week that Paramount announced that commercial production of its Arhlic reconnaissance aircraft would begin, the most expensive aerospace development project in the history of South Africa, you would think that business would keep the man busy enough. However, on Wednesday last week Ichikowitz invited City Press to talk at his sleek offices at a prime spot overlooking Sandton City before the launch of the Ichikowitz Heritage Art Collection - one of the largest and most valuable collections of African art in the world - scheduled to premiere to the public during the upcoming Art Week Joburg.

Why are you launching the Ichikowitz Heritage Art Collection now?

Our foundation has been involved in a whole host of projects over the years that deal with oral history, music and heritage in general. As we've worked through the process of collecting oral history over the past 25 years, we realised that there were a lot of events that were going on in this country that were never properly recorded. One of the most difficult things to record is emotion and sentiment - nothing captures that better than art.

We started collecting contemporary art, primarily street art - made on the streets of this country - between the early 1970s and today. We've amassed an amazing collection of many, many thousands of pieces, which has taken years to curate. Now we're ready to launch the heritage collection as one that we want to make accessible over a whole number of exhibitions over the next couple of years.

For a lot of South Africans, art collecting is quite a foreign concept. How would you advise someone who wants to start buying?

When you think of the concept of 'collecting art', the first thing that comes to mind is an economic imperative - the value of art as an asset class - but that is not our view. Our view is that art has value as a communication medium, but by default, is also an asset class.

The art in our collection was made by artists who needed to earn a living, so the primary objective for them was to make art that could be sold.

There is a very limited culture of buying art for the majority of South Africans, so we want to promote that because, ultimately, if there is a market, then artists can continue making art.

It's not just for the elite.

# The business of art and arms

Garreth van Niekerk sat down with arms dealer Ivor Ichikowitz ahead of the launch of his heritage art collection at Art Week Joburg

How did you go from being an actor to working in the defence business?

A lot of people are absolutely amazed that I was once an actor, but the truth is that art is business. I was never a fine arts student, but I was a film maker, producer, actor, director and lighting designer. The truth is, it is a business like any other.

The art business is the business of communicating, so for me it was a very easy transition from being in the business of theatre and film making to being in conventional business.

My background has been a huge asset. The arts are not about academia - they are about integrating communication skills into the real world.

What specifically shifted your career so dramatically?

One of the greatest skills that my training gave me was the ability to be sensitive to my surroundings.

My transition into business came about because I saw an opportunity in a problem that needed to be solved. In 1993, the whole of Africa had gone mad.

There was conflict all over the show, the genocide in Rwanda was in full swing, and South Africa had just

went through its transformation, so it became very clear that the development of the rest of the continent was not going to be possible unless peace, security and stability were brought to Africa.

After studying African literature and then travelling a lot of the continent, I started noticing that most Africans were making their money in Africa, but were exiting their investments because they didn't trust their governments to look after their assets.

I realised the only way this issue could be fixed was to help governments create institutions that could help protect their security. I felt that I could play a role in doing this, so I started a business that addressed that reality.

Someone once asked you why you don't like being called an arms dealer, and you responded by saying that calling you an arms dealer was like calling the CEO of GlaxoSmithKline a drug dealer.

Unfortunately, the whole label of arms dealer is very, very unfortunate, and I still very much stand by what I said then.

The truth is that I am an industrialist who has had the privilege to lead a major industrial company that employs 3 500 people.

I am very privileged to be in that position, and very privileged also to be involved in the highest level of innovation that this country is involved in.

We continue to amaze ourselves and the world with what we're doing in this country. You will always have detractors, and I suppose one always becomes a victim of one's own success, but I've learnt to live with that and become quite comfortable with the fact that we are making a difference.

We're contributing to the growth and development of our economy and we're doing stuff that is playing a role in making the emerging economy of South Africa a fully fledged First World one.

#### TALK TO US

Do you think that African street art gets enough exposure? Do you buy art from informal traders on the street?

Let us know by SMSing your name and answer to 35897.

Start the SMS with the keyword STREET ART. SMSes cost R1.50. Alternatively, email voices@citypress.co.za

## I got an A for matric, but am I ready for my future?

MICHELLE LISSOOS  
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Today's children are born into technology. A primary school pupil does not know of a world without Google, Facebook, Twitter or an iPad.

In one second on the Internet, 57 412 Instagram photos are uploaded, 162 816 Skype calls are made, 735 845 tweets tweeted and 41 000 Facebook posts posted. We live in a world of selfies and hashtags.

The workplace is rapidly changing in this world, so much so that we need to prepare our students for jobs that don't exist today.

There is a decreasing demand for routine manual skills. To be employable, people need improved cognitive skills to outperform technology. Career paths are no longer simple to plan.

Employers expect new skills from their recruits. It's no longer just about the reading,

writing and mathematics.

Employers now want proficiency in disciplines such as teamwork, problem-solving, planning, complex communication, collaboration, information evaluation and analysis, technical flexibility and leadership.

Are schools meeting these demands? Is today's curriculum ensuring the future employability of our youth?

Do existing education paradigms create critical thinkers and innovators?

We are definitely seeing shifts in the education space to meet these needs.

A new trend is the flipped classroom, defined as "a pedagogical model in which the typical lecture and homework elements of a course are reversed". In this space:

- Short video lectures are viewed by pupils at home before the class session and class time is devoted to exercises, projects or

discussions;

- The teacher's role has been redefined;
- Coding has been introduced as a new literacy; and
- Classroom spaces are being made less formal and more collaborative.

But there is no systematic shift to a new way of learning.

There are pockets of innovation in South Africa's schools, but an unchanged assessment structure (ie, matric), which remains the benchmark, prohibits flexibility and change.

We need a greater redefinition of our teaching and learning to meet the demands of the future that await today's primary school pupils.

Lissoos is managing director of Think Ahead Education Solutions. For more, go to thinkahead.co.za.

This is the second in a series of five articles on the subject of 21st-century learning, developed in partnership with City Press

21st CENTURY LEARNING

#### TALK TO US

Are you optimistic that your child will find a decent job?

SMS your comment to 35897 with the keyword WORK, or email us at projects@citypress.co.za. Each SMS costs R1.50