

EXCITEMENT AS BRIDAL INDABA GOES TO SOWETO

THANDI SKADE

IT'S THE township that's played host to some of the country's most historic liberation struggle events, from the adoption of the Freedom Charter in 1955 to the Soweto uprising of June 16, 1976.

In more recent months Soweto has become the sporting hotspot of the province, first hosting the Super 14 rugby semi-final and final and then several World Cup matches.

Now that the World Cup is done and dusted, Soweto will once again play host, but this time to the first Bridal Indaba wedding exhibition to be held at the Walter Sisulu Square in Kliptown on July 31 and August 1.

It will be an entirely different spectacle compared to past exhibitions held in the northern suburbs, says organiser Corine Scheepbouwer, so expect to see traditional African style dresses, bright colours and about 80 bridal specialists – including 20 designers – showcasing everything from bridal wear, flower arrangements, wedding cakes and wedding photography to property developments, invitations, décor and advice on marriage contracts.

There will be two fashion shows on the Saturday and one at midday on the Sunday.

"It's like a one-stop shop to planning a wedding from start to finish," Scheepbouwer says.

"It will be different because for

the first time we're going to be showcasing a selection of wedding specialists and designers, most of local to the area, who will bring an African theme to the exhibition."

Another highlight to look forward to is the daily 45-minute fashion shows and the food to be catered by popular Vilakazi Street restaurant, Sakhumzi.

Scheepbouwer and her business partner, sister Liz Vrijenhoek, decided to take Bridal Indaba from the Indaba Hotel in Fourways, where it has been held for the past 12 years, to Soweto because it's "the place to be right now".

"A lot of our big weddings at the moment are coming from Soweto so there's a huge market there, but we've been expecting them to come through to the north. Also, after the rugby and the soccer, Soweto is the place to be," she says.

Response to the venue change has been good, but Scheepbouwer admits that there was initial hesitation from some regular exhibitors who raised concerns over safety, concerns which were allayed after a tour of Soweto was arranged.

"I'm absolutely thrilled, so excited about it," says Scheepbouwer, "but at the same time I'm very stressed because it's brand new and I don't know what to expect."

Designer Florence Ngwenya of Thokomala Creative Designs in the Joburg CBD, will be showing con-

temporary African wedding couture using lots of colour in it.

"My main colour is orange, with some purple, cerise pink and feathers and leopard print," she says.

The only white dress she will be displaying will be one with asymmetrical burnt orange and olive green squares embroidered across the front.

Born and bred in Soweto, she says she is ecstatic that Soweto, and particularly the Walter Sisulu Square where the Freedom Charter was drawn up in 1955, has been chosen to host Bridal Indaba.

"The area on its own has such rich history. At the moment, aside from some fruit and vegetable sellers, the venue isn't being used. By doing something like this people can get to learn more about our history while viewing proudly African themed garments," she says.

Veteran African couture designer Sister Bucks says it is about time black women moved away from the traditional white wedding dress and went back to their African roots.

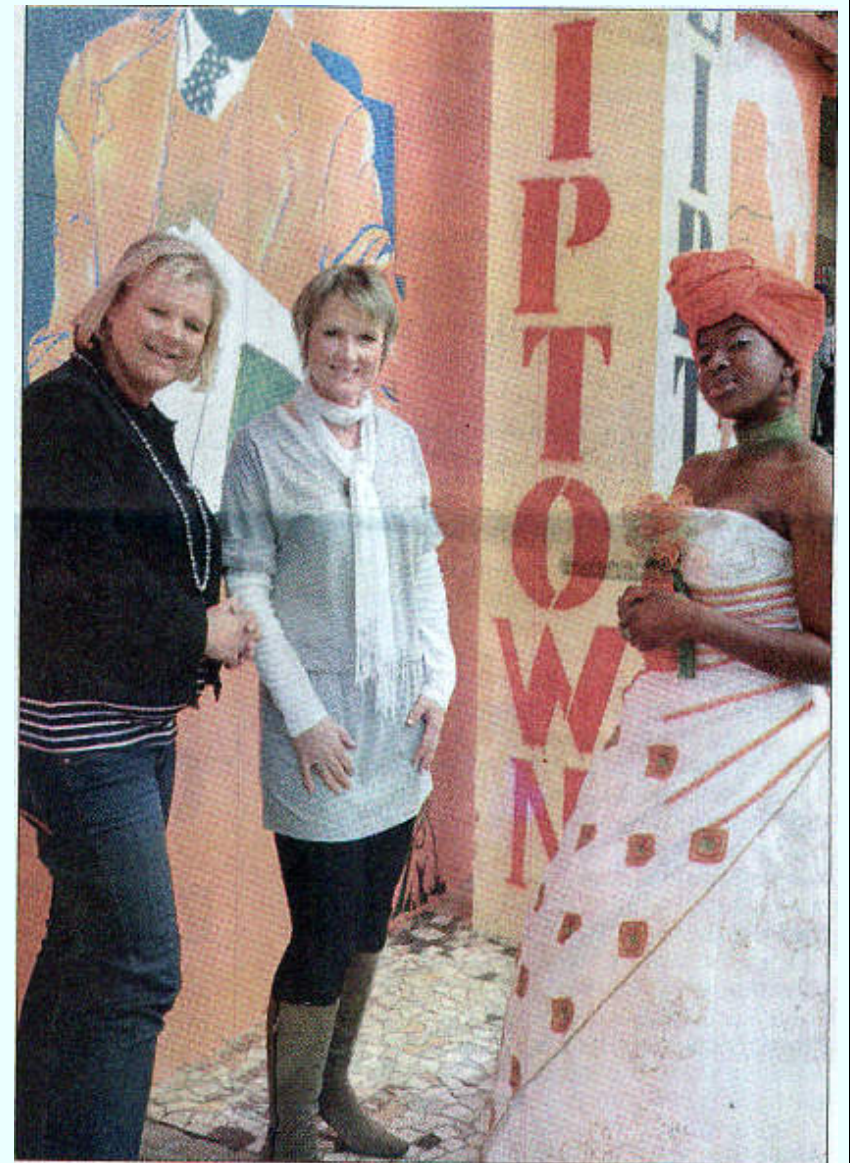
"I'm doing it because it's got something to do with Africa. I'm promoting awareness of my African culture. I'm tired of the white dresses," she says.

Entrance to the exhibition costs R50 a person and tickets are available at the door. Doors open from 9am to 5pm on July 31 and August 1. See www.bridal-indaba.co.za



In front of the iconic Museum Tower on the Walter Sisulu Square in Kliptown, Soweto, where the first-ever Bridal Indaba wedding exhibition takes place at the end of this month, models Dineo Selai and Hussein Abdul show wedding garments by LC Dei Conti, one of the exhibitors that will showcase their work at the Indaba on July 31 and August 1.

PICTURES: LETTIE FERREIRA.



Corine Scheepbouwer and her sister, Liz Vrijenhoek, both from Fourways, are taking their annual Bridal Indaba which is usually at the Indaba Hotel in Fourways to Soweto. They are seen here at the Soweto Hotel, situated on Walter Sisulu Square in Kliptown with model Charlotte Khanyile in a creation by local designer Florence Ngwenya of Thokomala Creative Designs.