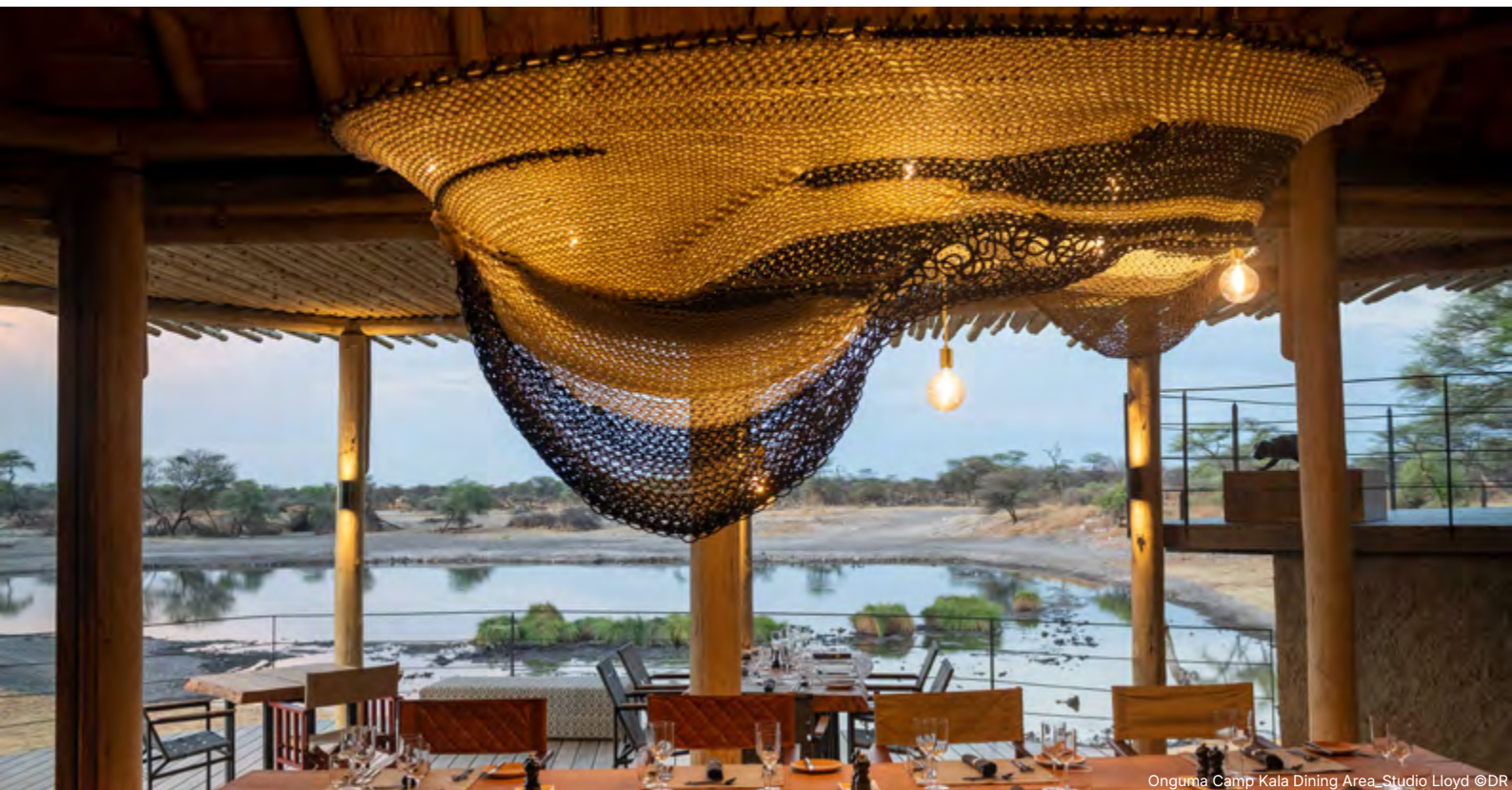


# Maison&Objet Pulse

## Rising Talent Awards South Africa

**Press Kit**

**Paris  
10\_14 Sept 26**





G I G I Counter Backless\_N I S H ©DR

**in south africa, a stylistic revolution rooted in both local heritage and forward-looking perspectives is quietly emerging before asserting itself with confidence.**

Increasingly sought after by the international scene, a new generation of designers is capturing the curiosity and desire of industry professionals.

Eyes are turning toward South Africa's leading creative hubs in search of the names that will define tomorrow's design landscape. Cape Town captivates with its international outlook, thriving galleries, and vibrant concept stores; Johannesburg pulses with a sharp contemporary art scene and a spirit of critical design; while Durban stands out for its singular creative energy, driven by talents blending craftsmanship, storytelling, and multidisciplinary experimentation.

To tell the story of design in this part of the world is also to rewrite history through a dialogue between past and future, rituals, ancestral know-how, and innovative techniques. Weaving, sculptural forms, and symbolic patterns are reinterpreted through minimalist and experimental expressions. Craftsmanship, ever-present, merges seamlessly into a contemporary aesthetic.

**On the occasion of the 2026 edition of the Rising Talent Awards, Maison&Objet Pulse unveils a selection of visionary talents.**

At the heart of the Design District, conceived as a "show within the show" dedicated to emerging creative scenes, visitors are invited to discover an exclusive exhibition spotlighting South Africa's new wave of design talent. This edition also marks a first-time partnership with Decorex, a leading platform for contemporary African design. At the crossroads of local practices and global dynamics, **seven award-winning designers and studios made in South Africa** have been selected by a jury of experts. Each brings a distinctive identity shaped by a unique contextual creativity, where cultural heritage meets innovation in a constant process of reinvention.

# The jury

**Following a rigorous deliberation bringing together leading figures from the South African design scene, the 2026 jury unveils its selection of award winners. Seven names, seven distinctive creative languages, collectively mapping the vibrant landscape of a creative scene in transformation.**

Alan Hayward and Garreth Van Niekerk, co-artistic directors of Decorex Africa and 100% Design Africa and both members of the jury, comment: "The award winners exhibiting at Maison&Objet in September 2026 are entering the international stage at a pivotal moment for South African design."

While Anna Weylandt highlights the importance of storytelling within South African design, Donald Nxumalo acknowledges the exceptional difficulty of the selection process for the Rising Talent Awards: "Narrowing down the selection was a real challenge, as every profile, singular and bold, deserved its place."

Gareth Pearson notes: "Each of the selected designers and studios combines contemporary design with artisanal craftsmanship in a unique way, a defining characteristic of design in this region of the world." This approach is also reflected in the selection of Deft Studios, praised by the jury, particularly by Juliet Kavishe for its sensitive exploration of materiality.

Finally, Stéphane Galerneau, President of Ateliers d'Art de France, naturally selected Karlien van Rooyen for the Rising Talent Craft award. A former environmental activist, she shapes clay entirely by hand.

Thabisa Mjo concludes: "Collaborating with Maison&Objet creates a space where singular voices can be seen and understood within a broader context."



# Alan Hayward & Garreth van Niekerk



Co-artistic directors of Decorex Africa and 100% Design Africa, **Alan Hayward and Garreth Van Niekerk** together serve as members of the Rising Talent Awards jury. They are behind the cultural programming and curation of these two leading platforms dedicated to showcasing the contemporary South African creative scene. Garreth Van Niekerk is also a curator and author, with a particular focus on design, architecture, and culture. Alongside Alan Hayward, he brings both a discerning and open-minded perspective to the evolving landscape of African design and its emerging craftsmanship traditions.

“My selection was guided by creative resourcefulness: I chose designers capable of producing highly distinctive work, often with limited means in terms of investment, infrastructure, or production. This ingenuity reflects a deeply African way of making, pragmatic, inventive, and future oriented. I was drawn to practices that do not simply adapt to constraints but instead transform them into an entirely new visual language. The collaboration with Maison&Objet is essential: here, potential becomes momentum, opening real opportunities. It is also an encounter with a new audience.”

— Alan Hayward

“It is an honor to be part of the Maison&Objet Rising Talent Awards jury.

We deliberated extensively in order to identify the strongest representatives of contemporary South African design. Exhibiting at the fair in September 2026 is a rare and decisive opportunity. Over the past decade, South Africa’s emerging creative scene has established itself as one of the continent’s leading creative forces, driven by a new generation of promising voices. The selected award winners embody this inventive, resilient, and ambitious spirit, now firmly anchored on the global stage. Halala!”

— Garreth Van Niekerk

# Anna Weylandt

Chief Brand Officer of Weylandts and the third generation to carry forward the legacy of one of South Africa's leading design brands, **Anna Weylandt** is recognized for her instinctive approach to storytelling through design. Her perspective is deeply rooted in materiality, craftsmanship, and a profound connection to place.

*"Taking part in the Rising Talent Awards was an incredibly exciting experience. The South African scene stands out for its strong identities, its sensitive approach to materials, and its globally minded storytelling. The emerging talents selected are pushing the boundaries of their practice while remaining deeply anchored in local craftsmanship traditions."*



Anna Weylandt ©DR

# Donald Nxumalo

A leading figure in South African interior architecture, **Donald Nxumalo** rose to prominence after winning the very first season of the reality television show *Win a Home* in 2014. Appointed Creative Director of Design Joburg in 2020 and featured on Beyoncé's "Africa List," he was also honored in 2022 in the Top 100 Designers of the World by Andrew Martin.

*"I was honored to spotlight exceptional South African talents through this initiative. What I will remember most is the extraordinary difficulty of making the final decision. Narrowing down the selection was a real challenge, as every profile, singular and bold, deserved its place."*



Donald Nxumalo ©DR



Gareth Pearson ©DR

# Gareth Pearson

Co-founder of Cape Town Furniture Week, **Gareth Pearson** is also the director of Stadium Place Lab, a creative studio specializing in cultural programming and retail strategy.

*"Each of the selected designers and studios combines contemporary design and artisanal craftsmanship in a truly distinctive way. Together, they reflect the vibrant energy currently driving the South African design scene."*



Juliet Kavishe ©DR

# Juliet Kavishe

An interior architect, design researcher, and academic, **Juliet Kavishe** works toward the development of African design at the intersection of spatial practice, cultural knowledge, and public policy. Over the course of 18 years working across Africa, Europe, Asia, and North America, she has built strong connections between professional practice, education, and research.

Founder of FORMALL Design Research Lab and member of the executive board of the Pan-Afrikan Design Institute, she also previously served as Vice President of the International Council of Design. Today, she is recognised as one of the 100 most influential voices in design in South Africa.

*"An exciting generation of designers grounded in culture and craft, advancing a distinctly African design language with global resonance."*

# Thabisa Mjo

**Thabisa Mjo** founded Mash.T Design Studio in Johannesburg in 2016. Through furniture and lighting design, the studio explores form, materiality, and manufacturing processes, drawing on artisanal traditions and the intelligence of materials conceived as living systems. Her work has received numerous accolades, including South African Designer of the Year in 2019 and Most Beautiful Object in South Africa in 2018. Today, her creations are part of the permanent collections of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, the Louvre Museum, and the Centre Pompidou.

*"Collaborating with Maison&Objet creates a space where singular voices can be seen and understood within a broader context."*



# Stéphane Galerneau

President of Ateliers d'Art de France since October 2022, **Stéphane Galerneau** promotes a renewed culture of dialogue, bringing together stakeholders committed to supporting creative practices while highlighting the strengths and values of the fine crafts sector. Trained as an interior architect and designer, he has collaborated with major tableware and decorative arts houses. A metal founder and founder of Création Galant, located near Poitiers, his approach remains deeply rooted in the field — attentive to the diversity of talents and to their visibility across all territories, beyond borders.

*"Our choice naturally fell on Karlien van Rooyen. A former environmental activist, she shapes clay entirely by hand. Her ceramics carry the memory of fragile lands and vulnerable lives."*



# Rising Talent Awards September 2026



# Ashleigh Lloyd

# Studio Lloyd

**Creative Director and founder of Studio Lloyd in Cape Town, Ashleigh Lloyd is a committed voice within the South African design scene.**

Positioned at the intersection of design and craftsmanship, her work transforms seating and lighting into sculptural experiences. Her signature? Rope weaving. Her philosophy? Supporting and empowering women, encouraging the transmission of knowledge, and cultivating a strong sense of community through an engaged creative process.

**M&O // Studio Lloyd creates oversized contemporary lighting pieces using traditional crochet techniques. Tell us more.**

*"Our approach reinterprets traditional craftsmanship through a contemporary language. Crochet, through its natural flexibility, tactile quality, and almost meditative rhythm, offers a deeply human counterpoint to the rigidity of architectural lighting. Studio Lloyd is also about playing with scale through large-format sculptural lighting pieces. Lighting becomes an immersive experience."*

**M&O // Between organic forms and deliberate refinement, your work outlines a singular vision of luxury.**

*"In contrast to a world dominated by speed, luxury at Studio Lloyd suggests a different relationship to time, gesture, and intention, that of an object slowly shaped by hand, with an almost silent attention to detail. Transmission also plays an essential role. More than a simple object, each piece tells the story of a living heritage."*



Portrait Ashleigh Lloyd\_Studio Lloyd ©DR



Collection SHOT\_07 Floorlamp\_Studio Lloyd ©DR

**M&O // Your creative approach is rooted in empowerment. How does this translate into the day-to-day running of the studio?**

*"Empowerment is at the core of our structure. It is reflected in a model that values artisanal know-how and creates real opportunities for economic independence, skills development, and creative ownership. Many of the artisans we work with come from historically disadvantaged communities, and they play a central role in shaping the studio's identity. The goal is to offer them stability, dignity, and long-term prospects."*

**M&O // What are your creative ambitions for the future?**

*"Expanding scales and applications, particularly through large-scale architectural lighting installations and new typologies of objects. Our UV-treated rope is highly versatile! It is durable and adapts equally well to extreme environments, coastal or desert, as it does to the most refined interiors."*



Light Sculpture - AMOEBA\_Studio Lloyd ©DR

# Oageng Manana & Tshegofatso Ramothibe Meetlo Studio

**Co-founders of Meetlo Studio, Oageng Manana and Tshegofatso Ramothibe blend cultural heritage with a contemporary perspective through a creative approach grounded in traditional references.**

Design becomes a narrative playground where memory, identity, and form intersect, giving life to cultural objects.

**M&O // You are based in Johannesburg. How would you describe the local creative scene?**

*"It is booming! A vibrant scene, shaped by a mosaic of cultures and languages that gives it both richness and complexity."*





**M&O // What makes South African design different from other international scenes?**

*"Today, South African design is an increasingly distinct and confident voice. It is built in close dialogue with the territory. Climate, landscapes, and natural conditions become sources of inspiration and drivers of creation. It is in this encounter between nature, culture, and everyday life that its uniqueness emerges."*

**M&O // How do you position yourselves within this landscape?**

*"Since founding our studio in 2022, we have expressed ourselves through contemporary furniture and bespoke projects. Our creative language draws on a palette of neutral tones and reinterpreted traditional references. Nature and its medicinal plants are also a rich source of inspiration. The result is work that blends functionality with collectible aesthetics."*



**M&O // A preferred material?**

*"Wood accounts for 80% of our production. A material to sculpt, we never tire of exploring its forms."*

# Simphiwe Mlambo

Originally from Mtubatuba, **Simphiwe Mlambo** founded his studio in Cape Town in 2019. His field of expression lies in interior architecture and furniture design. Coming from a family background linked to construction, he developed early on a practice rooted in making and in a direct relationship with materials. A graduate in Interior Design from the Durban University of Technology, he trained within several studios in Durban, working on residential, commercial, retail, and hospitality projects. This multifaceted experience has shaped a practice that is both technical and conceptual, recognised notably with the Nando's Hot Young Designer (HYD) award, which he won in 2024

**M&O // One word to define creation in South Africa today?**

*"Expressionist. Each creative, through their individual context, seeks to express what it means to be South African."*

**M&O // Storytelling is at the core of your approach.**

*"Indeed, my work is directly born from my environment. I draw from experiences and inherited narratives that I transform into contemporary forms. I believe in objects that carry meaning, capable of engaging with the modern world without losing the depth of their original story."*





Floor Lights\_Simphiwe Mlambo ©DR



Table : Zinda\_Simphiwe Mlambo ©DR

**M&O // Is this your first exhibition in Paris?**

*"Yes, this is the first time I am presenting my work in the capital. For this occasion, I have designed a completely new collection, with the intention of showcasing pieces rooted in my local scene. I am presenting three works that function together around a single narrative. The project explores the idea of weaving and traditional craftsmanship through a wall panel, floor lighting pieces, and a bench inspired by the loom. An installation conceived as a ritual."*

# Tanisha Neill

## N I S H

Founder and Creative Director of N I S H, **Tanisha Neill** initially chose the body as her primary tool of expression before turning to design. It all began with classical ballet and contemporary dance, disciplines that shaped her perspective, her sense of rhythm, and her relationship to space.

She also holds a degree in interior architecture as well as a Master's in product design and innovation. Today, she develops a practice that sits at the crossroads of these worlds, a formal language in which every line feels conceived as a gesture, and every volume as a suspended movement.



Portrait Tanisha Neill ©DR

**M&O //** Through materials and craftsmanship, N I S H explores a creative tension between perfection and imperfection. How does this contradiction shape your creative process?

*"My creativity fully expresses itself in the face of constraints. It's limits and obstacles that stimulate my imagination. We can design on paper, but it is in the adaptation phase, during prototyping or fabrication, that everything truly comes into play."*

**M&O //** What kind of sensory experience do you aim to create?

*"A form of appropriation that goes beyond simple ownership. A N I S H piece is never fixed. Placed in three different environments, the same piece will reveal three distinct expressions. Its value lies in this relationship, in the way it is staged, inhabited, and understood over time. More than an object, it is a dialogue."*

**M&O //** Does your background in dance influence the way you think about space, rhythm, and interaction with objects?

*"Dance offers freedom of movement, but also demands technical discipline. The same applies to design: a balance emerges between ergonomic constraints and personal expression. I like the idea of 'practical luxury. For me, everything begins with drawing. Forms emerge on paper, almost like a choreography built through trial, adjustment, until the right gesture is found."*

**M&O //** What directions are you currently exploring within N I S H? What will you present at Maison&Objet next September?

*"Maison&Objet will be an opportunity to present the founding pieces of N I S H, manifesto works serving as a first introduction."*



Un tabouret : G I G I Counter Backless\_N I S H ©DR



Deux tabourets : G I G I Bar Counter\_N I S H ©DR



Portrait : Martin Tallie & Zani Alberts\_DEFT Studios ©DR

# Martin Tallie & Zani Alberts DEFT Studios

Fonded by **Martin Tallie et Zani Alberts**, a creative duo since their architecture studies, DEFT Studios is driven by a deep passion for design and craftsmanship through the creation of sustainable furniture. Each piece is handcrafted locally by the founders themselves. Defined by clean lines and meticulous know-how, their universe expresses a playful yet refined identity.

**M&O // DEFT Studios is said to shape "creative obsessions." What does this concept say about your vision of design?**

*"Yes, our obsession is a deep attention paid to every stage of the creative and fabrication process. Furniture becomes more than just an object within an interior: it is an experience to be lived."*



Etagere en bois clair : DEFT Studios ©She Is Visual

**M&O // In opposition to “fast furniture,” you advocate for pieces designed to last, both functionally and emotionally. How does this vision shape your creative approach and your current positioning?**

*“We create for people in search of singular pieces that carry lasting value. Our design stems from curiosity and imagination rather than trends or production constraints. The goal is not to design what sells easily, but what evokes genuine emotion.”*

**M&O // Your formal language blends simplicity, generous curves, and a playful spirit. How do you find the balance between restraint and that distinctive twist?**

*“The balance generally relies on essential design principles, repetition, symmetry, proportions, textures. It is this tension that gives our pieces their distinctive character.”*

**M&O // What emotion do you hope your creations evoke?**

*“A memory. Each of our pieces is designed as an heirloom to be passed on to future generations.”*



Etagere brune et claire : DEFT Studios ©DEFT Studios

# Siyanda Mbele Pinda Interior Design



Portrait : Siyanda Mbele\_Pinda Interior Design ©Sinomtho Msweli

Originally from Umlazi, **Siyanda Mbele** was first drawn to engineering before turning to design, a path shaped early on by a passion for drawing.

He founded Pinda Interior Design, a name inspired by the isiZulu word "phinda" ("again"), evoking the ideas of repetition and rhythm at the core of his creative approach. His work blends geometric forms, Ndebele patterns, and bold colours, establishing a constant dialogue between South African heritage and contemporary design.

**M&O // You grew up in Umlazi, surrounded by strong family and cultural values. How has this influenced your vision of design?**

*"It has shaped a strong visual identity in my work. In Umlazi, individuality and heritage are essential: I create by telling who I am and where I come from."*

**M&O // Your path shifted from mechanical technologies to interior design. How does that influence your practice today?**

*"Both fields share the importance of precision. It has allowed me to better understand materials and manufacturing processes, which directly influences my creations."*



Tapis : Ischolo Rug\_Pinda Interior Design ©DR

**M&O // How do you reconcile cultural heritage and contemporary design?**

*"It comes quite naturally. I often develop several versions of the same project, moving between cultural references and contemporary details, until I find the right balance."*

**M&O // What are the challenges and opportunities for young South African designers today?**

*"The main challenge is access to real production. Solutions such as upcycling or prototyping spaces within schools could allow students to experiment more freely and think in three dimensions."*



Table de chevet : Mvelo Pedestal\_Pinda Interior Design ©Busiswa Chiliza

# **Talent Craft presented by Ateliers D'art De France**

**Rising Talent Awards  
September 2026**





After a plural and atypical career path marked by medical sciences, grassroots activism, and social transformation dynamics, artist **Karliën van Rooyen** turned to art as a space of repair. Based in Cape Town, her work, shaped by South African landscapes, explores the complex relationships between humans and the natural world. Memory, materiality, and reflections on the contemporary condition are interwoven throughout her practice. A Craft talent selected by Ateliers d'Art de France.

**M&O // Your journey spans grassroots activism, science, and now art. Are these distinct chapters for you or interconnected layers?**

*"These different disciplines have allowed me to explore how to care for one another more deeply, how to protect what sustains us, and how to create art that reflects truths about the human spirit. My scientific training brings the technical rigor needed to understand glaze chemistry and firing processes, while my activist background informs the conceptual foundations of my practice."*

**M&O // What will you present at Maison&Objet in September?**

*"A set of pieces that forms a material reflection on the South African landscape. A tribute to the land that shaped me."*

**M&O // A few words about your creative practice?**

*"My creative process is essentially an act of translation. It all begins with my relationship to nature and the forms that emerge in my mind through contact with it. I draw them, then move to the studio, where I work the clay to its physical limits. Finally, I use glaze chemistry to connect that initial vision to its final material form. It is a constant back-and-forth between mental image and matter."*

**M&O // Your journey spans grassroots activism, science, and now art. Are these distinct chapters or interconnected layers for you?**

*"That shift happened when I realized that while grassroots activism creates immediate change, art allows one to operate on a longer timescale, that of narratives and cultural transformation. I began to feel the need to create objects, physical archives that function as pedagogical tools, capable of surviving moments of tension or conflict. A choice that helps reintroduce a sense of belonging into our living spaces."*

# About Maison&Objet



©FrancisAmiand



©FrancisAmiand

Maison&Objet (SAFI, a subsidiary of Ateliers d'Art de France and RX France) has been a leader in the international decor, design, and lifestyle community since 1994.

Its trademark? Its ability to foster productive international meetings and enhance the visibility of the brands that exhibit at its trade shows and on its digital platform, as well as its singular aptitude for highlighting the trends that will set the hearts of the interior design community racing. Maison&Objet's mission is to reveal talent, offer opportunities for discussion and inspiration both online and offline, and facilitate business development.

With two annual exhibitions and Paris Design Week in September, Maison&Objet serves as an indispensable barometer for the entire sector. Online since 2016, MOM (Maison&Objet and More) allows buyers and brands to continue their exchanges, launch new collections, and make contacts beyond physical meetings. Weekly launches of new products that captivate the interior design community provide an ongoing boost to the industry. In 2023, Maison&Objet rolled out new digital services, and MOM also became a marketplace.

On social networks, discoveries are made on a daily basis by a community of almost two million professionals active on Facebook, Instagram (+1M followers), X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, Xing, WeChat and TikTok. Maison&Objet is a catalyst that positions Paris as a major hub for international creative talent.

**All press information on**  
**[www.maison-objet.com/paris/presse](http://www.maison-objet.com/paris/presse)**

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