

Open Book 2012

A thing of the **past!**

FRANKIE MURREY

Festival Coordinator

The Fringe District in Cape Town was buzzing between 20 and 24 September as crowds gathered for the second edition of Open Book Cape Town. The annual literary festival featured the likes of Alan Hollinghurst, Lionel Shriver and Joanne Harris – all names who need little introduction – as well as some exciting new writers who wowed crowds.

The festival kicked off on 19 September with an opening night cocktail party at the Book Lounge. There is nothing quite like mingling with a crowd that includes not only your favourite local authors, but also international authors you have been reading avidly for years.

Much of what made the first edition of Open Book so special stayed in place, but there were some changes – street posters perhaps being the most obvious! Jokes aside, many of the partnerships we made in our first year grew significantly, enabling us to do some very different programming. Through our existing partnership with the French Institute and a new partnership with Etonnants Voyageurs, we were able to put on two days of events featuring writers from the French-speaking world. This fed into the French Season happening in South Africa this year and we look forward to taking local writers to France next year as part of the South African Season happening there.



◀ Anne Nivat, Atiq Rahimi and Catherine du Toit in a discussion during the event, *Etonnants Voyageurs Writing Conflict*, that took place on Sunday, 23 September (image courtesy of Etonnants Voyageurs)

We were also privileged to host an Edinburgh World Writers' Conference satellite event (20 and 21 September), featuring Keith Gray and Anjali Joseph on the international side and Antjie Krog and Njabulo Ndebele on the local side.



▲ *Should literature be political? A discussion led by Judith February, Antjie Krog and Njabulo Ndebele. (Also visit www.edinburgh-worldwritersconference.org. In the Nov/Dec 2012 issue of the CL Dr Francois Verster will give feedback on this discussion)*

We also ran two pilot events, both of which we are looking forward to growing in years to come. Toni Stuart, local performance poet, generously gave up masses of time to put together a three-hour poetry session, *The distance between the page and stage*. This proved incredibly popular and saw a completely packed venue.

The second pilot, curated by Andy Mason (with special thanks for hard work and massive support to Moray Rhoda), was Co/Mix, a comic book focus day on 22 September. This involved almost 20 participants exhibiting work, as well as ongoing events throughout the day. The venue was packed from opening through to when the doors closed, and again, we look forward to growing the event in 2013.

Responses to the festival this year have been overwhelming. Our fears of people leaving the city for a long weekend away proved to be ill-founded, as did the fear that rain would keep people in bed. Instead, the Fugard Foyer was a hive of activity throughout the festival as was the Book Lounge. What truly brought the level of support home to us was our first experience of sold-out events!

Highlights for me are always difficult – sort of like being asked what my favourite book is – but I loved watching people coming out of events heading straight for the Book Lounge table to buy a book and be first in line to get it signed. The official library hand-over to the principal, teachers and students at Parkhurst Primary

... sitting on a couch with James Gleick, chatting about this and that ... listening to Lionel Shriver read with laughter caught in my throat ... being caught up in a practical joke authored by John Crace ... not things one easily forgets.



▲ *A student at Parkhurst Primary at the official library handover (image courtesy of Meghan Daniels)*

Something I wasn't expecting but has been great are the messages from authors who joined us last year asking how the second edition went.

We have started planning for 2013 and will shortly be sending invitations out to authors for next year ... watch this space!

For further details about Open Book, please contact Frankie Murrey <frankie@openbookfestival.co.za>

Open Book Cape Town is organised in partnership with SA PEN, PEN American Centre, the French Institute, Alliance Francaise, the South African French Season, Equal Education, the Gordon Institute of Performing and Creative Arts, the Townhouse Hotel, the British Council, the Edinburgh World Writers' Conference, the Fugard Theatre, The District 6 Museum, Central Library, The Book Lounge, Cape Town Tourism, the Cape Times, the Caine Prize and the Museum for African Art, and sponsored by Leopard's Leap Wines, SAA, Random House Struik, Penguin Books, NB Publishers, Jonathan Ball Publishers, Book Promotions, Oxford University Press, Central Library and ABSA.

