

Surprise as Mr Gay South Africa loses Mr Gay World license - MambaOnline - Gay South Africa online



Oelof de Meyer (Pic: Vernondo Boshoff Photography) **Will there be a Mr Gay South Africa in 2016? In a blow to the national contest, the organisers of Mr Gay South Africa (MGSA) have lost the license to send their winner to the Mr Gay World (MGW) competition.**

On Friday, it was announced that this year's South African delegate to the international contest in Malta in April will be 28-year-old Joburg engineer Oelof de Meyer. He was a contestant in the Mr Mardi Gras pageant during Knysna's Pink Loerie Mardi Gras & Arts Festival in May last year.

The news was unexpected. It had been anticipated that the country's representative at MGW would have been the winner of this year's MGSA competition, as was the case for the last six years.

However, with less than two months before the international contest, MGSA has still not confirmed if and when it will host its event for 2016. The last MGSA took place almost a year ago, in March 2015, with [Craig Maggs taking the title](#).

In a statement, MGW revealed that the local license has now been taken over by Grab Corporations, a company that "covers all aspects of the fashion industry." The owners of Grab are Vernondo Boshoff and Louis Douglas.

It is understood that Grab Corporations will in future partner with the Pink Loerie Festival to select the local MGW representative through the annual Mr Mardi Gras pageant in Knysna.

According to Eric Butter, President of MGW, MGSA lost the license as it "did not adhere to the contractual obligations as signed with MGW and to which every national producer worldwide must adhere."

When asked by Mambaonline why MGW had not advertised that the license was available before it was awarded, Butter replied that with the country's past success in the competition and with time running out, "we did not want South Africa to go unrepresented at this year's grand finale to take place in Malta."

In addition to taking the MGW title in 2010 and 2011, South Africa also hosted the international event in 2012 and 2015.

Butter further explained that “with the great track record to date and having worked previously with the organisers of the [Pink Loerie] Mardi Gras Festival, we did not need to look further and approached them as they were closely involved with most of the previous national competitions.”

As for continued concerns about the lack of racial representativity in the local contest, and how hosting the event in Knysna may affect this, Coenie Kukkuk, MGW Director for Africa & Middle East, said he expects the move to “actually enhance diversity”.

He argued that “the Pink Loerie is one of the most diverse local LGB events – there have been many finalists of colour in the top three over the years.

“People from all over South Africa descend on the Pink Loerie every year – more so than in any other LGBT event in South Africa – and therefore I think it is an even better platform than what was done in the past,” he said.

It is unclear what the current owner of MGSA, businessman Thinus van der Walt, who [took over the event in 2014](#) with great fanfare, now has planned for the annual contest.

Mambaonline asked van der Walt how the loss of the international license will affect the event and if he still plans to hold a contest this year. At the time of publishing this article, he had not replied to our questions.

[Entries are now open](#) for Mr Mardi Gras 2016, which will take place at the Pink Loerie Festival in Knysna from 27 April to 1 May. The winner, who must be between the ages of 18 and 40, will represent South Africa at the 2017 MGW contest.

All Mr Mardi Gras entrants will be subject to a panel of judges, who will choose 16 finalists. They will be interviewed and scored by two more panels of judges in Knysna during the festival. Mr Mardi Gras will win R20,000 cash as well as at least [R14,000 worth of prizes](#).