

## ▶ LANGUAGE

# Optimo OTIMO

## Portuguese

One spelling for all

Getting Portuguese speakers all over the world to use exactly the same language, at least on paper, has been a slow and difficult task. The aim of the new orthographic agreement — signed by Portugal's Prime Minister Anibal Cavaco Silva in 1990 and ratified in June by Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, East Timor, São Tomé e Príncipe and Mozambique — is to simplify Portuguese for use in internet searches, legal documents, film and media. Brazil and Portugal began implementing the agreement in 2009.

The move is widely seen as beneficial to those two countries, but the changes, affecting only around 1.5% of all written words, have caused controversy elsewhere. "Any attempt to impose one single version of Portuguese throughout these radically different countries is tantamount to dismissing their cultural heritage," says Beatriz Gil-Schwandl, Africa expert at think tank Contraditório. Mozambique's adult literacy rate is just 55%, according to the United Nations Children's Fund. Not only will the agreement have a limited impact, but it will also cost an estimated \$100m for new textbooks and training that could otherwise be used to improve education. ●

Syma Tariq

## ▶ PHOTOGRAPHY

## Fashion Omar Victor Diop: glamour from the kitchen

The Senegalese photographer's Fashion 2112 collection tricks us into taking a new look at trash. This summer it travels to Europe

The mannequin wore a bodice of fine grey knitwear flecked with red weave, the lapel pinned into an elegant curve. The sleeves were puckered into delicate folds, and the skirt danced outwards like a modern Josephine Baker costume, a brooch glittering at the waist. Around the mannequins at an exhibition during Dakar's 2012 art Biennale (11 May to 10 June) hung more photographs styled like the covers of fashion magazines.

The photos hold nothing back, demanding your attention. But on closer inspection, the grey and red knit is in fact a cloth used for mopping floors and the sleeves a folded dish towel. The pins on the collar are wooden kebab skewers and the brooch a ball of steel

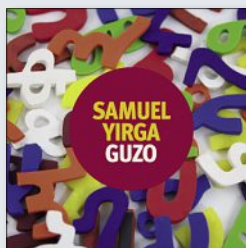
**Food sacks and dishcloths are turned into high fashion by Omar Victor Diop's lens**

wool, the kind used for scrubbing pans. The skirt is made out of old water bottles. The photos, impressively glossy and manicured, show a woman wearing a dress made out of gin boxes and an onion sack on her head. The colours and textures are familiar to anyone who has cooked in a Senegalese kitchen.



OMAR VICTOR DIOP

## ▶ ALBUM REVIEWS



### Guzo

Samuel Yirga

The young Ethiopian pianist with dub-funk outfit Dub Colossus has gone solo. His new album, *Guzo* (Amharic for 'journey') is a tantalising blend of sounds, from salsa and Latin to jazzed-up versions of old Ethiopian classics. The album has sparkling cameo appearances, among them Haitian-Cuban band the Creole Choir of Cuba, and includes a dramatic cover of the 1970s soul classic 'I Am the Black Gold of the Sun'. The songs are masterfully produced by Nick Page. ●



### Rising Tide

Mokoomba

What this Zimbabwean band lacks in sophistication it makes up for in pure electric energy. The songs are alive with raw, rap-like vocals and salsa and soukous guitar riffs. There are also some soulful acoustic numbers with a strong Zimbabwean feel. The album is underpinned by strong production from Ivorian bass player Manou Gallo. These are pan-African tunes in the best of ways. Catch them on tour this summer. ●