



## One week to renovate a house

FANS of Nine Network's homeMADE are already well aware that Chontelle Samios has loads of talent.

She is one of the young designers rushing around to renovate a suburban house in just one week.

The show started with two teams of five designers each rushing around to make over their house within the budget and timeframe.

By the time the show ends, two competing teams will have renovated 16 houses and only one designer will be left standing to win the \$100,000 prize.

Chontelle, 23, of Monterey is the youngest on the show, and doing very well.

However, we will have to wait several more weeks to see if she makes it to the finish. So far she has demolished and rebuilt a kitchen, bathroom and master bedroom, and if her teammates get ousted, she will have to be responsible for the makeover of a whole house.

But that won't be a problem for a girl who has renovated her own house from top to bottom, and already has a thriving design business.

"I may be young but I'm not stupid," she said. "I'm in the competition to win."

"Don't be fooled by the fake nails. I love getting my hands dirty. I love painting, I love knocking down walls or ripping up the floor. I am so eager and excited to pull on a pair of tradie boots and show Australia exactly what us interior designers can do."

Chontelle wasted no time setting up on her own, Elles InDesign, at Monterey, after completing an interior design course at the Nepean Arts and Design Centre plus an interior style and colour course at the international School of Colour and Design.

"Whether I win or not I loved every minute of it ... it has been an incredible experience to work with the other designers and with the trades people," she said.

"I have learned a massive amount."

**CAPTION: Winning streak: Interior designer Chontelle Samios. Article from The Leader**

# Alexander the Great's statue stirs Balkan passions

*As an exercise in nation-building, Skopje's latest effort is pretty audacious — an eight-story-high statue of Alexander the Great on horseback, in the center of the capital.*

Some are aghast, saying the planned statue will ruin Skopje's skyline, cost more than this poor country can afford, anger a powerful neighbor, even revive communal tensions in a country that suffered an insurgency by militants among the ethnic Albanian minority eight years ago.

The ripples spill across the border into Greece, which lays historical claim to the ancient warrior and empire-builder and even refuses to let Macedonia call itself by that name. It sees the statue as the latest in a series of Skopjan nationalist taunts. The European Union has also weighed in, calling the project "not helpful."

For Skopja, one of seven independent countries born from the wreckage of Yugoslavia, the fuss over the statue goes to the heart of its larger predicament.

The tiny country feels that its identity has been under attack from all sides since its independence in 1991: Not just from Greece but from Bulgaria, which considers its language little more than a dialect of its own, and from Serbia, which disputes the independence of its Christian Orthodox church. Most of its 2 million people are Macedonian Slavs, while one-quarter are ethnic Albanian, many of whom feel dis-



criminated against.

The toughest adversary is Greece, which has its own province named Macedonia and forces its neighbor to go by the cumbersome official name of Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia — FYROM, for short.

Greece worries that FYROM has designs on the province of Macedonia and is increasingly suspicious of its propensity for renaming airports and highways after Alexander. The statue is the latest insult, provoking the Greek Foreign Ministry to ridicule it as "inversely proportional to seriousness and historical truth."

Underlining their tie to Alexander, Greeks voting by Internet last month elected Alexander as the greatest

Greek of all. The yearlong poll organized by TV station Skai gave the conqueror 127,011 of the 700,000 votes cast. Runner-up with 103,661 votes was George Papanicolaou, who invented the pap smear test for cervical cancer.

Thessaloniki, capital of Greece's province of Macedonia, has long had a statue of Alexander, and in January the Greek and Iraqi governments agreed to put up a statue of the conqueror near the port city of Mosul, at the battlefield where he crushed the Persian army in 331 B.C.

Meanwhile, Skopja's prime minister, 38-year-old Nikola Gruevski, is pushing ahead with his plans to honor Alexander astride his horse, Bucephalus. The 22-meter- (72-foot) high statue in bronze is being molded in Florence and will go up in 2010. Along with a church and another dozen statues of historical figures, the bill will total euro10 million (\$14 million), in a country where monthly wages average \$440 and unemployment runs at 35 percent.

Many Skopjans fear the project will stoke ethnic tension. Some ethnic Albanians are saying any new church in the square should be matched by a mosque.

"The divisions are as deep as a canyon," said Radmila Sekerinska, former leader of the Social Democratic opposition. This is no time, she says, for "Alexandermania."

Few have forgotten how Serbian strongman Slobodan Milosevic roused extreme nationalist fervor in the dying days of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, leading to wars in Croatia, Bosnia and later Kosovo.

Alexander was born in Pella in northern Greece in 356 B.C. By the time he died at age 33, he had conquered much of the known world, reaching as far as India.

*Elena Becatoros contributed from Athens.*

## Greek main opposition party wins European Parliament elections

**ATHENS.** -Greece's main opposition PASOK party has won the European Parliament elections, leading the ruling New Democracy by more than four percentage points, according to final results announced on Monday. Greek Interior Minister Prokopis Pavlopoulos said Monday that PASOK garnered 36.65 percent of the vote in the elections on Sunday, while the ruling New Democracy gained 32.29 percent.

Meanwhile, the Communist Party of Greece won 8.35 percent, the Popular Orthodox Rally (LA.OS) 7.15 percent, the Radical Left Coalition (SYRIZA) 4.70 percent, and Ecologists-Greens 3.49 percent.

The level of abstention reached a record high of 47.37 percent, unprecedented by Greek standards. Greek Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis has called the results disappointing. In a televised address Sunday evening, when 90 percent of the votes had been counted, Karamanlis said the results would only increase his resolve to march forward "on the path towards responsibility."

Commenting on the low voter turnout, Karamanlis said it has reflected people's dissatisfaction. PASOK leader George Papandreou on Sunday evening hailed his party's performance in the elections, saying it was a "hope for a better tomorrow" and marked "the first major step" toward turning a new page for the country.

Greece has 22 seats in the European Parliament this year. According to the results, PASOK and the New Democracy will send eight members to the European Parliament each, the Communists and the LA.OS will send two each and the SYRIZA and Ecologists-Greens send one each.