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Steve Maras outside the decorated rear windows of Cocolat

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Mixed signage adds flavour to East End



THE arty French scenes etched into the glass behind the Cocolat cafe is all about creating a certain flavour in the East End, says property developer Steve Maras.

Cocolat, a Rundle Street East chocolate dessert café, has decorated its rear windows with Paris street scenes with the support of Mr Maras, managing director of the landlord Maras Group.

It's part of his belief that an "eclectic and dynamic mix of signs" helps to create a special feel in the East End.

The Maras Group owns almost all the properties on the southern side of Rundle Street East.

"We're big on encouraging our tenants to be a little bit different, to think outside the square when it comes to signage because it really creates the environment," Maras told *Indaily*.

He said tenants were asked to meet certain signage standards.

"So you get some standardisation but without wanting to be too militant about it. Because then you lose the whole flavour of what you're trying to create."

Maras said they had gone around the East End and identified walls and doors in the back lanes that traditionally would have been left blank and boring.

"We've identified those spaces, be it ground level, be it first floor, second floor, and we've had different graphic works done to build a picture of what the precinct's about; or what that little strip's about or what this building says.

"It's worked quite well. You'd be amazed. When you walk around you see people taking photographs, standing outside a door that's got an image of a little Parisian café and getting photographed in front of it.

"That's what we should see more of."

Maras loves the CBD laneways of Melbourne with their cafes and bars. They primed him up for the Cocolat signage.

"There was an awful blank space where the kitchen was that we've done a fantastic makeover with a French Parisian-style scene. It's fantastic."

—DES RYAN