

SA Fashion Week Media Release

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South African Fashion Week Commits to Sustainable Fashion Vision

South African Fashion Week (SAFW) has committed itself to a five-year plan to spearhead the development of an ecologically-based and sustainable local design culture by 2025.

According to Lucilla Booyzen, director of the country's premier platform for South African design, now in its 22nd year, the immediate goal is to initiate a process of collaboration and joint problem-solving with the designer community and the broader clothing industry behind the vision of establishing a local fashion ethos that supports people, the environment, creativity and profit in equal measures.

"In this we subscribe to the values articulated by the international Fashion Revolution movement and support the ground-breaking work that this organisation is doing to turn the enormous power and influence of fashion into a positive force," she says.

According to Fashion Revolution, Americans alone throw away approximately 14 million tonnes of garments each year or approximately 36 kg per person of which 84% either went into a landfill or an incinerator whilst The Carbon Trust says that approximately 3% of global production of CO2 emissions derive from clothing.

Locally Booyzen aims to use the SAFW's many established initiatives, in particular its prestigious competitions such as the New Talent Search that has launched the careers of many fashion luminaries such as Jacques van der Watt of Black Coffee, David Thlale and Terrence Bray, the Cape Wool SA Designer Challenge and the SAFW Student competition, to reduce the fashion industry's harmful impact and actively encourage circular economy principles.

This will be done by including critical sustainable fashion evaluation criteria such as usage of fabrics with the least environmental impact, incorporating crafting techniques as well as zero-waste cutting such as draping, knitting or patterning as well as an emphasis on creating timeless and trans-seasonal collection, she says.

"We will also actively resource-share with like-minded organisations and initiatives such as Twyg, the online sustainable lifestyle magazine's Sustainable Fashion Awards which will be announced for the first time this year, to extend our influence and reach. These awards, sponsored by PET plastic recycling company, PETCO, recognise Southern African designers who have implemented a sustainable design approach and foster ethical practices in the fashion industry.

According to Booyzen, SAFW is currently developing a curriculum of sustainable fashion workshops to equip designers with the skills and insights for developing viable business models and production systems which will be launched early in 2020.

Internally the organisation has already begun implementing its own sustainability model following a comprehensive audit to see which measures it could take to reduce its own harmful impact on the environment.

“This ranges from saving time and money by planning and working smarter to using public transport and green products, bringing plants into our offices and changing from bottled to tap water. We also work with like-minded suppliers wherever possible” Booyzen says.

Cyril Naicker, the country coordinator for Fashion Revolution South Africa, welcomes SAFW’s sustainability vision saying that as part of the global family, South Africa simply cannot ignore the gravity of this issue.

“Whilst international retailers opening stores in South Africa has been good for job creation, there is also a fundamental challenge with transparency. Very few people know what really happens behind the closed doors of the factories that produce the garments for global fast fashion retailers.

Cape Town used to be a clothing manufacturing hub which is almost entirely gone, in part due to fast fashion. The spending power is in the hands of the consumer. What it will take to restore our manufacturing? We have to go back to supporting local designers and local manufacturing,” he says.

SA Fashion Week only aligns itself with premium brands that understand the power and influence of the creative fashion industry and the positive impact it can have on our economy. More than ever, we value their generous commitment and urge you to please support them by acknowledging their involvement where possible.

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Sources:

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