

SA Fashion Week and Fashion Revolution partner to advocate sustainable design

Local fashion design platform South African Fashion Week (SAFW) and Fashion Revolution (FR), the UK-based nonprofit organisation working to clean up the international fashion industry, have joined forces to amplify the global movement's impact on the local industry.



Source: [Pexels](#)

The partnership will be spearheaded by Cyril Naicker of FR's Cape Town-based South African office and SAFW director Lucilla Booyzen in collaboration with specialist exhibition consultant Josh Low, tasked with the expansion of the business-to-business SAFW Trade Show and Seminar Series as well as the Designer Pop-Up consumer retail division.

The first phase of FR's involvement will focus on integrating the sustainable slow fashion ethos into the DNA of all SAFW's competitions which comprise the Scouting Menswear Competition, New Talent Search Competition and Student Competition. FR will provide critical guidelines on sustainability, inform the briefs and criteria as well as participate in all judging panels.



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"Fashion Revolution has a powerful global presence, and the SA office has already been in place for eight years. Partnering with SAFW's high profile, will now allow us to ramp up our fashion activism considerably and with much greater visibility. It will also allow us to mobilise local projects on the ground with greater traction," says Naicker.

Developing a sustainable local design culture

SAFW committed itself to a five-year plan in 2019 to spearhead the development of a sustainable local design culture by

2025. According to Booyzen, the key is to develop collaborative networks for problem-solving with the designer community and the broader clothing industry to envision a realistic local sustainability ethos that can support people, the environment, creativity, and profit in equal measures.

“We subscribe fully to FR’s values and its determination to turn the enormous power and influence of fashion into a positive force,” she says.



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Booyzen believes the SAFW’s many established initiatives, in particular its prestigious competitions such as the New Talent Search that launched the careers of luminaries such as Jacques van der Watt of Black Coffee, David Thlale and Mmuso Maxwell, who recently won the Woolmark Company’s prestigious Karl Lagerfeld Award for Innovation, offer a readily available platform from which to actively encourage circular economy principles.

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



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According to Naicker, South Africa simply cannot ignore the harmful impact of the current fashion system.

“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 entirely gone, in part due to fast fashion. The spending power is in the hands of the consumer. What will it take to restore our manufacturing? We must go back to supporting local designers and local manufacturing,” he concludes.

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