

All the 5th annual Twyg Sustainable Fashion Award winners

On Thursday 23 November 2023, South Africa's increasingly global fashion industry turned out in well-heeled force at a dazzling gala event that succeeded in being even more glamorous thanks to its mindful host, Twyg, an independent media non-profit organisation working at the intersection of fashion and sustainability.



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Celebrating designers who use sustainable practices, this was the fifth annual edition of the Twyg Sustainable Fashion Awards, with the 2023 ceremony taking place at a consciously decked-out Centre for the Book in the heart of Cape Town.

Designers, members of the media, finalists, judges, sponsors and visionaries gathered to usher in the 2023 cohort of sustainable fashion's finest. While they waited in anticipation for the 10 category winners and one overall winner to be announced out of 31 finalists revealed earlier in the month, the prestigious guests were guided to watch a series of XR sustainable fashion film projects created by the Design Futures Lab, and to explore bespoke activations created for the occasion by fashion labels Polo South Africa and Foschini.

Once the formal proceedings kicked off, the awards adjudicator John Shija introduced the jury and explained the rigorous judging process. Facilitating the process, emcee Danielle Bowler introduced each of the category awards, the winners of which were then announced and presented by a Twyg partner.

Emerging Designer Award presented by SKYY Vodka and Pantone Sundays: Handed over by Nandi Dlepu, founder of Pantone Sundays, this award is given to a current student or young emerging designer who is challenging fashion's status quo, and engaging with environmental and social responsibilities in a playful and creative way. The 2023 winner is Khumo.

Accessories Award: Handed over by Twyg's partnerships manager Benn Ndzoyiya, this award recognises a brand or designer who implements ethical labour practices, limits the use of toxic chemicals and utilises sustainable materials in the design and production of accessories. The 2023 winner is Verse.

Footwear Award: Handed over by Electric South producer Tshireletso Tshwenyane, this award recognises a brand, cobbler or designer who makes quality, durable footwear using sustainable materials, implements ethical labour practices and limits the use of toxic chemicals. The 2023 winner is Reefer Shoes.

Innovative Design and Materials Award presented by POLO South Africa: Handed over by Valecia Beukes of POLO, this award recognises a designer who uses innovative techniques to reduce textile waste and the negative environmental impact of the industry. The 2023 winner is sinCHUI.

Trans-seasonal Design Award presented by Country Road: Handed over by Connie Swartbooi, head of marketing at Country Road Group RSA, this award acknowledges quality design that aspires to be timeless and made to last through versatility and multi-functionality. The winning brand/designer is also invested in the life of their garments and supports slower production cycles. The 2023 winner is Munkus.

Farm-to-Fashion Award: Handed over by Petrone Oelofse of Cape Wools SA, this award celebrates brands or designers committed to cultivating transparent and traceable supply chains and advocating for regenerative textile practices, making garments from 100% natural fabric, and using no fossil-fuel-based synthetics and as few toxins and chemicals as possible. The 2023 winner is Botanical Nomad.

Nicholas Coutts Artisanal Fashion Award presented by the V&A Waterfront: With a R10,000 cash prize from the Coutts family, this award was handed over by Sylvia Tekanyo, Senior Manager: Digital Marketing at the V&A Waterfront, in honour of the late Nicholas Coutts who explored traditional techniques in his designs. This award recognises a designer who uses artisanal methods to create fashion that foregrounds the skills of garment workers and local communities. The 2023 winner is UNI FORM by Luke Radloff.

Social Impact Award: Handed over by jury member Esethu Cenga, the CEO of Rewoven, this award is open to organisations working in the fashion and textile system, and honours those who have a direct positive impact on people, such as raising awareness about social concerns, creating employment opportunities, and encouraging good and fair working conditions. The 2023 winner is Taking Care of Business.

Retail Award: Handed over by Andrea Nagel, the editor of Sunday Times Lifestyle, this award recognises a retailer or retailing initiative that prioritises sustainability by including pre-loved and gently worn clothes, swap shops, garment rental and similar activities, as well as supporting local producers, vertical and regional supply chains, and sustainable design and manufacturing. The 2023 winner is Style Rotate.

Tastemaker Award: Handed over by jury member Sharon Armstrong, fashion director of the Sunday Times, this award goes to a photographer, stylist, influencer or content creator who has actively promoted slow, sustainable fashion and/or slow living over the last 12 months, and who has sparked relevant conversations. The 2023 winner is Felipe Mazibuko.

While the prizes themselves were presented to only a few, 'This significant occasion would not have been possible without all 31 of the finalists, who are all making changes across the industry,' said Jackie May, founder of Twyg. 'To change everything, we need everyone – and Twyg is incredibly proud of the finalists who are playing their role in this mission.'

Each and every finalist's dedication to sustainable and circular design practices is a testament to the power of conscious creativity. We are delighted to celebrate this year's winners and look forward to seeing how they continue to shape the future of the fashion industry.'

After the ten individual category awards were given out, it was time to name the overall winner of the evening, the recipient of the coveted annual Changemaker Award presented by Foschini.

Changemaker Award

The winner of the Changemaker Award is selected by the judges from the highest scorers in the various categories and receives a substantial R100,000 cash prize to further their career. The Foschini group chief strategy officer, James Wilkinson, was called on stage to say a few words, before his colleague Robyn Wenlock, managing director of Foschini, had the honour of announcing the overall winner.

The prize went to Thando Ntuli for her brand Munkus, which also won the Trans-seasonal Design Award earlier in the evening. Founded in 2019 by Ntuli, MUNKUS creates intergenerational modern pieces influenced by the classic silhouettes of 1980s and '90s South African fashion. Each MUNKUS garment is designed to improve with age, thanks to the use of sustainable textiles that are treated to withstand time.

'Congratulations must go to Thando and all involved in Munkus. This success only helps to further inspire the entire industry and we can't wait to see what they do next!' said an enthusiastic May.

She added, 'I'd also like to extend heartfelt thanks to all the sponsors and partners who make this annual project possible – Foschini, V&A Waterfront, Country Road, SKYY Vodka, POLO South Africa, Cape Wools SA, British Council, Electric South and Spier. They all help us move the dial!'

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