

South African soft toys launch in Barneys, New York

In a coup for a Cape-based design house, the Taunina collection will take centre stage at the Easter display in New York's iconic luxury department store, Barneys.



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An anagram from the African word 'tau', meaning lion, and NINA, an acronym for 'No Income, No Assets', this luxury brand was established in 2011, employing underprivileged women skilled in its signature artistry to handcraft its heirloom-quality collections. Each piece is one-of-a-kind, created by a single artist over a four to seven day period and embellished with exquisite embroidery and appliqué detail.

The company's soft toy collections made their New York City debut in September 2012 at premier children's boutique store Bundle where these South African hand-made collectables flew off the shelves within a week. It will be releasing its home décor range in April 2013.

A-list clientele

The specialty retailer, located on Manhattan's prestigious Madison Avenue, is the 'go-to' store for sought after designer brands, its A-list clientele includes chart-topping pop stars, Hollywood actresses - Sarah Jessica Parker, Reese Witherspoon and Halle Berry - fashion celebrities and New York City socialites.

"It is a 9-storey magical castle overflowing with beautiful, timeless and unique pieces of art. The perfect hideaway for our artists' enchanting creations," said Tracey Chiappini-Young, co-founder and CEO of Taunina.

"We are delighted to offer our one-of-a-kind treasures to the store's discerning clientele and to provide them with the opportunity to serve as ambassadors of social good and protagonists for a better world," said Karen Jansen, who co-founded the enterprise to meet the growing needs of disadvantaged communities through employment creation and authentic empowerment.

Supporting artists

Besides paying the artists above market-related salaries, the company is structured so that 30% of the before tax profits flow to the artists: 20% through the Bear Essentials Fund to pay for housing, healthcare and education and 10% in productivity-related bonuses.

Each creation carries the initials of the artist and is a manifestation of her inspiration and dreams for the future, providing her with financial security and the ability to transform both her own life and that of her family.

"The unique beauty of each collection piece lies in how it transforms the life of the women who made it and establishes a lifetime connection between the artist and the purchaser," concludes Chiappini-Young.

The toys are available for sale online at www.taunina.com, www.bundlenyc.com and www.barneys.com.

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