

# Fashion sense of "Africanness"

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13 Aug 2013

South African designers are defining their own path when it comes to trends, with unique prints coming out strongly at the weekend's Mercedes Benz Fashion Week Cape Town.

The Fashion Week was held at Cape Town's International Convention Centre from 8 - 12 August 2013.

While this may be so, there's no doubt that black and white - a global trend - is a big combination for summer, having dominated the shows.

From David Tlale's menswear to the perfectly tailored and quirkily styled, but nonetheless classy women's wear by Thula Sindi, the monochromatic palette packed a big punch.

Fashion buyer Felicity Spies said Tlale stole the show as did Cape Town designer Keith Henning of the Adriaan Kuiters label. The latter has previously exclusively done menswear, but for this Fashion Week, Henning also showcased some women's wear in a collection he did in collaboration with artist Jody Paulson.

Spies said she was more excited about the prints and colours explored by the designers.

"It really sets South Africa apart. Because you cannot buy prints off the shelves, designers are being forced to develop their own prints and this enables them to carve out their own individuality. It's interesting that because of the challenge to find prints, we are developing something better."

She also noted a different aesthetic when it comes to shape, something blogger and former fashion editor Robyn Cooke described as a sense of "Africanness".

"For me this is the first time I've seen a collection of modern contemporary clothing that has the essence of Africa about it. It's not just about print. It's about a sensibility; one of slight casualness. There isn't that over-tailoring that we tend to see," she said.

Adriaan Kuiters and Lara Klawikowski were chief among the leading designers in this regard.

On overall trends, Cooke said print was very evident, as was the black and white, but she also noted the lighter fabrication used by designers and what she called an "easier silhouette".

This silhouette would most probably include the dropped crotches that popped up in a lot of the collections. If winter was the season of the peplum, the runways dictate the comeback of the harem pants.

Spies said what makes her uncomfortable about the black and white trend is that people are trying to emulate overseas trends.

"I feel South Africans sometimes take a bit too much influence from the northern hemisphere. I don't think they need to," said Spies.

Source: Sowetan via I-Net Bridge

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