Jewellery designers compete for top prizes

Selected from amongst more than 1,000 entries, Lincoln Mokoena is one of 11 finalists in this year's AuDITIONS Urban Tribes gold jewellery design competition.

Designers from campuses and professional studios countrywide submitted designs, under the theme 'Urban Tribes', which was conceptualised by trend analyst Dion Chang.

The designs had to suit characters, namely: The Futurist; Extreme Street; Hip Hop Homeboy; Jabulani Bond; Old Money Honey; The Pampered Princess; The Black Gold Prince and the Gold Digger.

Mokoena will be vying for the first prize of R60,000 along with the other 10 finalists, who have each designed two pieces.

They are Desmond Mapedi, Eduard Claasen, Kristen Malan, Oriana Todesco, Sid Foreman, Tiffany Marx, Trevor George Lewis, Tshepo Ditshego, Zenre Rabe and Kyle Visser.

Second prize is R30,000, third is R20,000 plus all finalists receive R2,000 each. Grants will be awarded to the value of R100,000, merit awards will go to the institutions with the most finalists, and R20,000 will be awarded for technical excellence.

Speaking about his background in jewellery design, Mokoena said he was encouraged by a friend at school, who recognised his creative abilities.

“I designed and produced pieces of jewellery using plumbing scrap that I sourced from my father, who is a handyman,” said Mokoena.

His brass and copper pieces became popular amongst his school friends and neighbours in Rockville, a suburb of Soweto.

“I moved from Johannesburg to Cape Town where I worked in a hotel. It was whilst there that I decided to enroll in a jewellery course at a local college." Mokoena completed his apprentership and has since had a hand in manufacturing pieces sold in both Browns and Charles Grieg jewellers.

During a period of retrenchment, Mokoena was approached by his former lecturer, who asked if he would be interested in teaching a design and manufacture course, at the College of Cape Town's Guguletu campus. Mokoena taught there for a year.

Currently Mokoena works for Mintek. "I go out into the rural areas where I train people how to make jewellery. I teach them

how to design, set stones and instill what jewellery is all about because these people formerly thought that it was made by machines. We are making them aware that it can also be made by hand."

“It was my current boss who encouraged me to enter the AuDITIONS competition,” said Mokoena.

Two pieces - namely his Hip Hop Homeboy mag-wheel ring and the Bond, Jabulani Bond cufflinks - were selected as part of the 22 piece collection eligible for the final prizes.

“My inspiration for the Hip Hop Homeboy category was their culture - the way that they live, their style and their attitude. I chose the mag-wheel element from their life style because Hip Hop Home boys love their fast cars,” said Mokoena. “My ring which is made from 18 carat white and yellow gold is still in the manufacturing process. It spins just like a mag-wheel."

“My Bond, Jabulani Bond cufflinks were inspired by the James Bond lifestyle. My design actually came from his home décor. I focused on a wine rack element where I have replaced the wine bottle concept with white gold balls,” said Mokoena.

Mokoena's two pieces are currently in the manufacture process and they will be unveiled along with the other 20 pieces in October this year.

“It is pretty amazing what I can do with my hands and with my mind," he says.

"I would like to encourage young people out there to start believing in themselves, because nothing is impossible if you believe.”

Celebrities design for collection

Although they are not eligible for any prizes, musicians Loyiso Bala and Louise Carver, actor Carl Beukes and the glamour band Jamali, have also designed gold signature pieces for Urban Tribes Collection.

Jamali's trio Liesl, Jacqui and Mariechan got down with the Gold Digger theme and have designed a 'booty bling' piece called The Golden Rose, which is intended to be draped across a bootyliscious bottom.

Loyiso feeling the Hip Hop Homeboy, designed a gold power-neckpiece with some real Africa zing called Egoli.

Louise Carver's classical gold Carver Cuff was inspired by Old Money Honey, and the practice of handing down a precious piece of jewellery from mother to daughter, from generation to generation.

Carl Beukes inspired by The Warrior has designed a bracelet with leaves that transform into lethal blades.

The four celebrity pieces will be added to the 11 finalist's jewellery pieces and accessories that are currently being manufactured to complete the Urban Tribes collection for 2009/10.

More about the competition

AuDITIONS has become the world's largest gold design competition since its inception in 1998 and is hosted every two years in Brazil, India, Arabia, China and South Africa.

Each season expands the jewellery treasure, already valued at R30 million.

Through the awards AngloGold Ashanti supports the World Gold Council's aim of developing gold design talent and in doing so helps add economic value to gold.

For more information, see: www.goldauditions.com

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