

Design Indaba gives emerging creative jewellers valuable insight

As part of the [Emerging Creatives programme](#) of the [Design Indaba Expo 2012](#), four design students from the Thuthuka Jewellery & Product Development Programme showcased their work to the local and international audience, gaining valuable insights into market likes and expectations.



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The selected students were Thomas Mosala, Sipiwe Motloug, Khulekani Nkala and Sibusiso Buthelezi, currently studying at the Ekurhuleni Jewellery Project (EJP).

An eye opening experience

In addition to having their work on display and being introduced to the market, the Design Indaba is said to have been an eye opening experience for the young designers. Spending time with other creatives and attending a host of talks, viewing innovative designs has reportedly injected a new dose of enthusiasm into the selected students.

Professional sharing and collaboration is the way that design trends are moving so without exposure to other designers' works, networks and organisations; designers like these who have limited resources is said to struggle to make the leap from study to market.

"I am grateful for the biggest learning curve of my life and happy that Thuthuka and the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC) gave me a key to open the door to my success," says Mosala after the expo.

"Thuthuka was received with open arms by the audiences. We feel it has been an unprecedented success," says the programme's executive director, Carola Ross. "We have built a list of invaluable contacts and even friends. We are truly grateful for all the sponsorship considerations we have received."

Jewellery programme transforms young designers

The Thuthuka Jewellery & Product Development Programme is a partnership between tertiary education facilities, community jewellery schools, the DAC and independent designers that are transforming the capabilities of young talented designers wanting to enter the jewellery trade in South Africa.

The programme hosts several structured mentorship based interventions that partner community jewellery schools, such as Ekurhuleni, with tertiary facilities such as the University of Johannesburg, and introduces professional industry mentors to the students of the programme. The culmination of the main programme each year has been a showcase exhibition of the students' jewellery and Award programme that recognise their development in tangible ways.

"Thuthuka has developed a marketing strategy that explores other avenues for young designers to apply their creativity. We are committed to finding further opportunities to enhance these students' opportunity to make a real living from their skills that reaches beyond the interventions of our more formal mentorship programme," comments Ross on their inclusion in the Design Indaba.

"These students were selected based on their consistent quality output and having come through the Thuthuka programme over several years. The Design Indaba is arguably the most influential design platform in the country with an international reach. It's a big step for our students and the programme to be recognised in this way."

Broader design agenda

In addition to the jewellery aspect of the programme, the broader design agenda sees the programme promote development of a range of unique products that are not restricted to jewellery, but which can be applied to the design of products in the homeware and corporate gift sector.

"We learnt crucial lessons at the Design Indaba, including who our market is and what the market likes and hope to take these lessons forward to all our Thuthuka students," she concludes.

Thuthuka has grown over the last five years and in 2011, the participating jewellery schools were University of Johannesburg Jewellery Design Department, Ekurhuleni Jewellery Project and, more recently, the Central University of Technology Jewellery School, a community outreach facility located in Virginia, Free State.

This skills development programme is specifically designed to improve design and conceptual skills of aspirant young designers in South Africa. It aims to identify and develop the skills of these emerging creatives and helps them become active contributors in the South African economy.

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