

Rising Talent

Design Indaba and the Department of Arts and Culture just celebrated 16 years of the Emerging Creatives programme, which gives 50 talented young designers a chance to show their work at the event. We caught up with four of them.



ROBYN AGULHAS
Streetwear designer, Cape Town

What do you love most about being a designer? It has taken me a long time to discover my creativity and to find what I'm truly passionate about. I had doubts about my ability for so many years, even though I've

always known that I loved fashion. Every time I design, I do it with my whole heart. To me, it's not just clothes; it's the story of the collection. I'm grateful that I have the ability to create from what inspires me, and to see my ideas come to life.

Describe your designs in three words.

Tech-wear, detailed, different.

What do you want to convey through your designs?

My graduate collection conveys a message of how attached we are to our devices, and what the future

of fashion could possibly look like if we had technology fitted into our everyday wear. Through my designs, I also want to convey the quality and attention to detail found in locally made clothing.

Biggest inspiration? My friends and family. I love to see them grow and do what they love. From really creative friends in music, art, design, modelling and film to those who are in the corporate environment and absolutely own what they do, they all inspire me to keep pushing and keep doing what I love. My mom is also a huge inspiration - thanks to her, I've seen what determination and hard work look like.

Plans for 2020? I'm currently freelancing in the film industry as an assistant stylist, but I would love to push my brand sinCHUI, and collaborate with people in the worlds of art and music. I'm not too sure what the future holds for me, but I'm ready for anything that is meant to be. I'll continue to create and put in the hard work.

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MMAMOTSATSI MASIQE
Interior/furniture designer, Joburg

How has working as a space planner informed your own practice? Having worked as an interior designer who didn't design furniture, I felt that some spaces lacked character.

Yes, I could add wall, floor or ceiling

finishes, but it wouldn't add enough character to the space, and it left me with a feeling that something was missing from the design. I saw an opportunity to create statement, accent furniture pieces that could be used in spaces as an added "twist" - to bring the spaces to life and give them soul.

What do you love most about creating? I love that creating is abundant. I love how the process has infinite possibilities and solutions - not just one correct answer, but an intuitive one. It is the act of mindfulness that I enjoy the most because it requires me to be my most authentic self. It's like prayer

or worship. It's me being in an active state of listening to the silent space within; being able to feel the passion, love and grace that is in and around us; and being able to transfer and translate that energy/feeling into the creation of something deeper and bigger than myself.

Biggest inspiration? The richness of the African continent's culture and heritage.

Plans for 2020? For my work to get into art, design and cultural spaces. For some of my pieces to be on display in museums or galleries. For my company to be recognised. To get a range of clients, local and international. To showcase my work at the Milan Furniture Fair and London Design Week. I'd also like to collaborate with other creatives, such as Rich Mnisi, Trevor Stuurman and Laduma Ngxokolo.

Mmamotsatsi won the first annual Ravi Naidoo Residency for Emerging Creatives, and will spend an all-expenses-paid residency abroad courtesy of sponsors Clout, the Nando's Design Programme.

@ designmuse_88



PHUMEELA MALUNGA
Fashion designer and mechanical engineer, Joburg

From mechanical engineering to fashion: what made you decide to make the jump? Fashion was always embedded in me. When I was growing up, my mother wouldn't let me leave

the house without properly coordinated outfits. I studied mechanical engineering, so fashion took a back seat - but I like to believe I was the coolest engineering student in my class! What really catalysed the jump from engineering to fashion was the lack of variety of prints, cuts and colours in men's retail departments. Walking through the women's section always left me asking, "Why is there so much variety?" I noticed this gap and set my sights on filling it.

What do you love most about creating? It's empowering. There's just something about starting the day with nothing and ending it with something tangible that excites me. What I love most about it is the journey of constantly surprising myself with my increasing ability and interest in a topic.

What does your brand BY PHUME stand for?

In addition to creating high-quality customer experiences, the BY PHUME brand is a youth-driven movement. It focuses on empowering the youth by creating a network that stems from a common place of interest. We believe in the talent and potential of the youth, and we nurture that through collaborations and engaging content.

Biggest inspiration? I think when local talent Thebe Magugu recently won the prestigious LVMH Prize, it was massively inspiring. He was the first African designer to achieve this kind of global recognition. That gives young designers such as myself great confidence, because the world is finally acknowledging the talent that we know we've always had. I am inspired and motivated to add a chapter to African fashion history.

Plans for 2020? The brand's focus for 2020 is ready-to-wear apparel. In many ways, first impressions last, and since we are a new brand, we want to set up a strong foundation for the future. We will also be working on expanding our footprint locally and internationally.

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SIYANDA MAGABA
Furniture designer, Durban

You launched your own furniture design brand while you were still at university. When did you know you wanted to be a furniture designer?

The idea to start Africular came about in 2019. I started it not just as a furniture design brand, but as an interior design brand, with space planning, conceptual design and installation services attached. I completed my first interior project for fashion brand LSL, which encouraged further interest in learning and exploring practical skills. I have always been a “do it” type of person, and I see my company as a tool to educate myself in every aspect of the design industry.

Tell us about your collection. Africular is a movement towards creating eco-efficient furniture that’s inspired by geometric African patterns. The brand is influenced by the principle of creating for a purpose and crafting unique, unpredictable characters in furniture design. Exploring and learning by doing is my design mission.

Believing and looking past limitations to achieve new possibilities is the foundation of the brand. The current collection consists of four pieces, which differ slightly from one another as a result of the behaviour of the materials and the condition of the reclaimed timber. The signature V-like cutout represents the African zigzag pattern known as the “path of the ancestor”, which is an expression of the ups and downs we face in life on our path to achieving our goals.

Biggest inspiration? My grandfather, who taught me about hard work and determination. He inspired me to be who I am today through his knowledge and wisdom. I am also heavily inspired by the philosophies and craftsmanship of [Bauhaus school founder] Walter Gropius.

Plans for 2020? My plan for 2020 is to expand on the knowledge and skills I’ve obtained through my varsity years and while running my design business. The Africular project is meaningful to me - the mission is to break the boundaries of inaccessibility to African-inspired designer furniture. I plan to evolve the Africular collection to create more functional and aesthetically pleasing furniture, and create more opportunities for accessibility.

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