



Fashion Meets Art: Ifa Lethu Heritage Collection 2007

The Ifa Lethu Heritage Collection was launched in an uplifting way at the MTN Durban Fashion Week held at the end of June. Unlike other shows during the week, the Ifa Lethu Collection was presented with an exuberant mix of song, dance and celebrity models. The hall was full to capacity and cheers and a standing ovation greeted the four designers and Ifa Lethu CEO Narissa Ramdhani. It is her vision of bringing art and fashion together in a *mélange* of South Africa pride in our heritage that takes this inspired collection in a new direction.



Designers of the Ifa Lethu Heritage Collection are Karen Monk Klijnstra, Bonga Bhengu and Gugu Msimang. Renowned fashion consultant Greg Wallis is advising Ifa Lethu on the designs, production and manufacture of the range and is working to get the Winter Collection on the go.

The designers worked on their concepts of the collection with the view of making it appealing to the 16 to 24-year male and female youth market. The targeted segment is based on strong consumer demand for ready-wear street fashion.

“This venture is key to Ifa Lethu because we believe that there’s a strong link and synergy

between our organisational mandate of promoting pride through heritage and is a marrying of two highly inter-related art forms, art and fashion,” says Dr Mamphela Ramphele, Chair of the Board of Directors of the Ifa Lethu Foundation. “While education of our youth is a focal area for the Foundation, we want to excite our local young people in a fashion line they will not only want to wear, but wear with pride in being South Africans. We have repeatedly proved that not everything connected with the struggle was negative. We want to create excitement and demand for our new fashion product as well as promote a thirst for knowledge and appreciation of our struggle history.”

In addition, the Ifa Lethu Collection promotes development in the local fashion and garment industry. The launch Collection uses established



designers, but will be followed by a sustainable and structured programme to develop all aspects of the local fashion industry. The Collection is 100% South African conceived, designed, produced and distributed.

Aside from providing our youth with a more authentic range of clothing with a more South African look and feel Ifa Lethu also seeks to attract this segment of the South African population to the Foundation's work and overall organisational goal of bring heritage closer to people through the arts.

Befittingly called the Ifa Lethu Heritage Collection, this clothing line and its intended target market is a further step closer toward the promotion of respect for South African heritage through supporting the preservation of various South African art-forms. The forth-coming launch of the clothing line is a key milestone for the Foundation in respect of this goal.

"The natural relationship between mainstream visual arts and the cosmopolitan world of modern fashion will be strengthened by this breakthrough launch of the Ifa Lethu Heritage Collection," says Narissa Ramdhani, Ifa Lethu CEO.

