

Being "Proudly South African" is a statement of loyalty to a country that has transcended darkness and overcome insurmountable obstacles.

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# AFRICAN MOSAIQUE

## A PAN-AFRICAN RENAISSANCE

As the so-called "USA of Africa", South Africa is a nation of pride, power and prestige. Despite the myriad seemingly disparate cultures, languages, religions and political views, it is a country that unites without dissipating this diversity.

Yet like the USA, it is also a nation of apparent arrogance. Few South Africans have travelled the continent, preferring the glamorous shores of Europe or America. Afrocentric T-shirts may be trendy, but ask the wearer whether they've travelled to Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria or Botswana – and the answer is usually "no".

Thankfully this trend is slowly shifting, with more Mzansi dwellers crossing the border to Mozambique, Tanzania, Senegal and Namibia than ever before. Through initiatives such

as Design Indaba, people the world over are recognising the spirit of entrepreneurship, craftsmanship and creativity that exists in every city, town and rural area of Africa. And one of the greatest vehicles for this unique expression of identity is undoubtedly the world of fashion.

I first heard of (or rather saw) Anna Getaneh as a young girl, when her mesmerising eyes and chiselled cheekbones graced the cover of a fashion magazine. It was hard not to be captivated by the stunning beauty of Ethiopia's first supermodel, a woman who led a successful 10-year modelling career in New York and Paris. Besides appearing in numerous glossy magazines including Vogue, Marie Claire, Elle and Cosmopolitan, Anna modelled for

industry heavyweights like Donna Karan, Christian Lacroix, Ralph Lauren and Yves Saint Laurent. She became an icon of Ethiopian beauty and ruled the catwalks with her unforgettable presence.

Fast forward to 2004 in Johannesburg. Far from the cut-throat runways of New York, Anna Getaneh had moved to South Africa two years previously with her husband and son. Having visited the country many years before, she became entranced by the breathtaking vistas of Cape Town and the air of possibility that permeated Jozi. It seemed the perfect place to base her dream-child enterprise.

African Mosaique was inspired by the relatively weak presence of direct African participation in leading fashion platforms overseas. ■■■



While in Paris during the mid '90s, Anna decided to do something about this – contacting some of the top African designers that she'd worked with over the years, Anna put together the first African Mosaïque collection. With her graceful charm, she managed to convince the formidable organisers of Paris Fashion Week to give these designers a slot free of charge (unheard of for any designer at the time). Top models, including Naomi Campbell and Carla Bruni, agreed to do the show pro bono – another remarkable first. Thus, after the final showing of a Chanel collection, African Mosaïque was born.

The media response was beyond anything Anna had imagined. This was something fresh, something never done before – and the fashionistas were impressed.

Anna wanted to develop this vision into something more concrete. By 2004, Fashion Weeks were being held throughout the continent, with South Africa leading the way. Yet despite this widespread growth of the industry, few (if any) pan-African high-fashion boutiques existed.

Wanting to find a balance between modernity and tradition in contemporary African fashion, Anna decided to establish the African Mosaïque boutique in the oh-so-cool and trendy 44 Stanley. Home to hip art galleries, buzzing

restaurants and avant-garde design studios, this formerly-industrial area of Johannesburg is our answer to New York's Tribeca.

According to Anna, the story of African Mosaïque is one of celebration, imagination and continental integration. In the spirit of a collective culture, Anna chose eight designers to be part of the label, hailing from countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, Mozambique, Botswana, South Africa and of course, Ethiopia. This collection was designed to cast a spotlight on African talent and inspiration; developing and showcasing world-class African creations.

The boutique has flourished, with a loyal following of tourists and South Africans. As Anna pointed out, over 70% of the tourists in Johannesburg are Africans from other parts of the continent and diaspora. Thus, unlike the more Eurocentric city of Cape Town, Johannesburg represents the crux of Pan-Africanism for Mzansi. It is a city that celebrates the cultures and designs of West, East, North and Southern Africa. And it is in this city that Anna's enterprise has thrived. ■■■



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