

FASHION FORWARD

Industry Development Dialogues



The French Institute of South Africa (IFAS) & The National Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC)

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South Africa and France embark on fashion learning journey

Pilot fashion industry dialogue series brings government and the private sector together to learn about the realities of owning a business in fashion.

In a seminal multi-stakeholder public-private exchange, The French Institute of South Africa (IFAS) has partnered with the National Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC) to provide a forum for experts who represent various fashion subsectors in South Africa to explore topics that pertain to the current state of South Africa's fashion value chain. Fashion Forward: Industry Development Dialogues, brought together French and local fashion experts and representatives from across South Africa to discuss how to collaborate to support local businesses in fashion and provide sector specific input into the implementation of the South African Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) Master Plan and support network development and cooperation between the French and South African industries.

Arnaud Roux, Deputy Head of Mission at the French Embassy in South Africa, Lesotho and Malawi, opened the dialogues, recognising that the cultural and creative industries are key contributors to the economic and social development of South Africa. DSAC in partnership with IFAS aims to develop a deeper understanding of the South African fashion value chain and how to better assist those who are struggling to build businesses in the sector.

Dr Cynthia Stella Khumalo, Acting Director-General at DSAC believes that “*bringing stakeholders together in an intentional way will deepen understanding of the needs of the sector and begin to chart the way forward for South Africa's fashion sector to work together to grow local businesses.*”

The creative industries contribute more than 3% to our GDP and employ many young people, people with disabilities and people in the informal economy and yet there is a need for more support. In their ongoing work with the cultural and creative industries, DSAC have previously successfully convened multi stakeholder dialogues in the animation and gaming sectors that aim to inform policy and drive development.

In line with IFAS' Création Africa and True Fashion programmes, preliminary discussions with a broad range of experts from across the fashion value chain show that sustainability and market readiness are key topics that need to be tackled with urgency.

In panel discussion around sustainability in fashion and the need to develop South African practice including Jacendra Naidoo, Louis Orlianges and Jackie May, Boitumelo Pooe explained "consumers who buy sustainable fashion choose to align with their core values such as prioritisation, planning and habits over exclusivity, functionality and aesthetics". It is therefore important to invest in consumer education.

The two-day programme was supported by the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. French fashion practitioners who are known for innovation, craftsmanship and market-oriented strategies, namely Frédérique Gérardin, Amedi Nacer and Louis Orlianges, were invited to take a deep dive into the reality of practitioners working in the sector alongside South African industry representatives and policy makers.

DSAC and IFAS are encouraged by the success of the dialogue events that included tours of Thebe Magugu House and Fabric Bank, a visit with the Molebatsis and Erica de Greef's beautifully curated and important Fashion Accounts installation at Museum Africa, a program designed by Lesley Donna Williams Consulting. Both partners are committed to engaging the fashion ecosystem further as well as other creative sub sectors to develop future projects to support the cultural and creative industries.

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