

David Tlale's Cultural Intimacy gets New York kudos

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David Tlale's innovative relationship with the **piece** designer craft initiative drew a rapturous response at the recent Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week in New York.

Tlale's 'Cultural Intimacy' was showcased as part of the Arise Promise of Africa Collective - the result of his triumph in the Arise Fashion Awards as Designer of the Year 2009.

Reviews have been positive for the designer's Spring/Summer 2010 range, with the New York Post saying "David Tlale's talent and craftsmanship are evident in his collection".

That craftsmanship was the result of a partnership between Tlale and **piece**, a designer craft initiative run by Eugenie Drakes. The creative relationship between **piece** and Tlale resulted in a collection that is rich in reference and inspiration drawn from Southern African cultural heritage, reflecting its essence and diversity.

"For us, the collaboration is about, the weaving of different voices, their colours and textures, into a rich tapestry of expression and then having it tell its story combined story on a global stage," says Eugenie Drakes who says she was "honoured to be given the opportunity to be part of this creative journey - of fusing the old and the new".

"The brand, piece, is about exploring vastly different worlds and arriving at the same place - harmony in contrast. David Tlale understands contrast, it is a tale that is his life's own, and through this knowing he has channeled his own journey as well as that of the people, communities, and cultures whose handcraft is featuring in his work. "

Drakes points out the Tlale's collection features his signature feminine quality - the designer's tribute to the strength, the simple, earthy essence, of the women of Africa. "These are women whose hands are speaking in his collection, the women of piece, the women of the Swazi, the Bushman, and the Zulu," Drakes reveals.

"This is collaboration is harmony in contrast - the soft and the hard, the old and new, the urban contemporary and rural traditional. The contrast in the collection can be seen in the gentleness of silk married to course sisal, earthy ostrich shell and hard bone. In using these different textures his collection speaks, with single voice, of different worlds - worlds apart. High fashion is an awkward vehicle to carry the voice of ancient cultures and yet Tlale's collection has managed to strike that balance - harmony in contrast."

Tlale was one of four designers chosen to participate in the Arise Promise of Africa Collective on Friday, 11 September 2009.

Tiffany Amber from Nigeria, the joint-winner of the Designer of the Year 2009 prize, returned to New York for a second season. Jewel by Lisa, also from Nigeria and Eric Raisina from Madagascar completed the well-received collection.

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