

Craig Jacobs named SA's first recipient of the Fashion Innovation Award

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The sustainability pioneer is recognised for his work as founder of eco-conscious brand Fundudzi at the inaugural Fashion Industry Awards SA.



Sustainability visionary Craig Jacobs, the founder of arguably Africa's first eco-conscious fashion brand, has been announced as the first recipient of the Fashion Innovation of the Year honour at the inaugural Fashion Industry Awards of South Africa.

Jacobs, who created Fundudzi by Craig Jacobs as a conduit to celebrate the rich diversity of African culture and its ecological treasures, was one of 18 recipients in various categories announced during an event on Friday.

The Fashion Industry Awards South Africa (Fiasa), which was launched last year, aims to celebrate and recognise excellence both of fashion industry pioneers and present day creatives.

"It is humbling to receive this acknowledgement at a time when we are more sensitive to the environmental cost of fashion. When I created Fundudzi back in 2004, that wasn't the case – many in the fashion industry were bemused about my vision bring positive change to an industry more concerned about hem lengths than carbon emissions," said the fashion entrepreneur.

Jacobs, who is recognised as a leading voice on sustainability globally and delivered the closing address at the 2015 World Retail Congress (Africa) on the subject of African innovation and sustainability, believes that the organic way of life is inherent to African culture.

His label has imaginatively incorporated African and sustainable materials, along with an intrinsic consciousness of the environmental impact of the design processes, since inception – utilising materials including African produced cashmere,

bamboo, hemp, soy and textiles made from maize.

However, as a panellist at the Future Sustainability Summit in Abu Dhabi in 2020 he announced that simply incorporating sustainable materials into the production cycle is no longer enough.

Alarmed that clothing is increasingly becoming one of the world's biggest sources of landfill, he advocates that brands urgently need to pivot towards an integrated biodiversity strategy to bringing real change.

Fundudzi's approach, ironically, takes its cue from the fast fashion quick response model, but on a more thoughtful manner – the brand only produces limited units of each style in its bricks and mortar partners, producing and replenishing units when required. Meanwhile, online, Fundudzi is disrupting the traditional digital model of fast as possible fulfilment through its 'the value of waiting' innovation, which states: "We cherish every fibre used to create our garments, and that is why we only pre-produce small minimum quantities of each style we offer. Should we run out, our makers will carefully make your garment to order, which is why the delivery window on this garment is between five days and six weeks."

In addition, with the global leather industry contributing to the decimation of Amazon rainforests in the quest for grazing grounds for cattle, Fundudzi is prototyping a new plant-based leather alternative accessories line which will be launched soon.

For more details on Fundudzi visit www.fundudzi.com.

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