

Design Lab retail readiness programme calls for applications

The Craft + Design Institute (CDI) and V&A Waterfront are calling for a new group of Cape Town-based creative entrepreneurs to apply for their local retail readiness programme for 2022/23. The programme provides a full retail experience at an incubator store, known as the Design Lab, which is located at the V&A's design-forward Watershed shopping venue. It's an incredible opportunity for local designers to receive the necessary support to experience a real-time retail environment, and try their hand at selling and test products in the market.



Source: Supplied

This opportunity will allow for local designers to receive the necessary support to experience a real-time retail environment and try their hand at selling and test products in the market. The programme also unlocks free training covering pricing, packaging, merchandising, product development and much more.

In its current iteration, running from 2021 to September 2022, the programme is working with several creative brands and individuals whose products are showcased and sold at this living retail "design laboratory". Current participants include Nondwe Nyathi, Jenine Allchin, Anele Nono, Malibongwe Nohesi, Ado Ludidi, Sizwe Shumane, and Richard Mandongwe, who are now "graduating" as they exit the programme in the next few months.

"For me to be here at Design Lab," says Shumane, "is a big thing for me. Ever since I started making my art here in Cape Town my wish was to come to the Watershed to sell my designs. I make a sale every time I am here, especially my rings. People love my rings - and the brooches. This has pushed me to come up with other new designs."

Once the first cohort come to an end, participants will be well prepared for their next commercial steps in the form of future market stalls and outlets, as well as potentially their own space at the Watershed. They will continue to receive mentorship and support opportunities from the CDI.

For the next intake of Design Lab participants, CDI and V&A Waterfront are looking to identify four to five new designers to move through the programme, commencing mid-year with training and with the selected creative entrepreneurs entering the Design Lab store in September 2022 for one year.

Supporting local designers

Once again, the newly selected designers will gain hands-on experience running a store and receive dedicated support through training and mentorship provided by the CDI.

"We're looking to support a fresh crop of talented local designers who have the drive and passion to run their own retail spaces," says Fran Stewart, who runs the Design Lab programme and is the CDI's manager for Market Access.

"We are focused on enhancing the sustainability and growth potential of the selected creative entrepreneurs; helping them with dedicated support to hold their own successfully and confidently in the marketplace. The V&A Waterfront's Watershed has consistently provided one of the most sought-after market access opportunities for creative entrepreneurs – we are proud to be partnering with them to accelerate the development of local creative entrepreneurs," adds Stewart.

"We are also thankful to Business and Arts South Africa (BASA), for their additional support of this programme, particularly in helping us create awareness of the Design lab and the fabulous designers we are working with."



Table Bay Mall opens The Fashion Cube to promote small SA fashion brands

15 Dec 2021



The Watershed is a perfect threshing floor for new local design talent. Renowned as a top Cape Town design destination, it boasts more than 150 stores selling 365 brands - objet d'art, ceramics, textiles, furniture, fashion, jewellery and more.

Alex Kabalin, executive manager: retail at the V&A Waterfront, says: "The Design Lab programme allows us to extend the opportunity for emerging retailers to test their product in a real world environment. Through this, it builds a new range of talented entrepreneurs accessing market at The V&A Waterfront."

Prospective applicants must be CDI members (membership is free). Designers will be able to submit their applications online via the CDI [website](#) until 13 May 2022. Only Cape Town-based businesses are eligible to apply at this time.

[More information here.](#)

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