

Fashion Bridges: Fostering cooperation between Italian and SA fashion industries

South African and Italian organisations have partnered to launch Fashion Bridges - I Ponti della Moda, a project aimed at laying the foundations of a sustainable, inclusive and strategic long-term cooperation between the Italian and South African fashion industries.



Source: [Pexels](#)

The initiative is the result of a partnership between industry, trade and cultural bodies, comprising the Embassy of Italy in Pretoria, South African Fashion Week (SAFW), Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana, Polimoda, Centro di Firenze per la Moda Italiana, Lineapelle, and the Italian Trade Agency (ICE), with the support of Nelson Mandela Forum Firenze.

The Fashion Bridges logo was designed to be a graphic representation of a new inclusive and sustainable cooperation between Italy and South Africa in fashion. The design depicts the 'Ponte Vecchio' bridge in Florence, as a reference to Italy and in particular to Polimoda, the main actor of the special training programme, and the traditional South African 'shweshwe' fabric dating back to the 1800s, which fills the bridge frame, as a reference to South Africa and its style.

"This logo represents a new platform of creativity between Italy and South Africa, aiming at future business developments, through an exchange of cultural heritage and opportunities," the organisations said in a press statement.



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The Fashion Bridges programme is structured on three pillars:

1. Cradle of fashion

The programme prioritises talent recruitment by establishing an academic cooperation between some of the most prominent and more internationally renowned fashion schools and entities in Italy and in South Africa.

SAFW and Polimoda have matched three talented neo-graduates from several South African fashion schools with three of the most talented neo-graduates from Polimoda. Jacques Bam, Fikile Zamagcino Sokhulu and Sipho Mbuto have been chosen from South Africa, while Julian Cerro, Ilaria Bellomo and Domenico Orefice were selected from Italy.

The six junior designers will participate in a virtual training programme developed by Polimoda, with the contribution of Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana.

The young designers will be paired up and their teamwork will culminate in a joint capsule collection to be showcased in Milan, during the Milan Fashion Week in September 2021 and in Johannesburg during the South African Fashion Week in October 2021. Lineapelle, the most important International Fair dedicated to leather, will provide materials to be used by the designers for their creations.

“ The Embassy of Italy in South Africa is bringing to life a dynamic and ambitious Fashion Project called Fashion Bridges- I Ponti della Moda. READ MORE HERE: [@cameramoda @polimoda @lineapellefair @FikileSokhulu @bam_collective#SAFW #FashionBridges pic.twitter.com/RM7YmNyb7i](https://t.co/OLgQ0ROKmf)— SA Fashion Week (@safashionweek) [July 15, 2021](#) ”

2. Young lions

This pillar promotes and expands the market for young, but already established, Italian and South African fashion designers. Two emerging designers (Michael Xavier Sadan from South African and Alessia Dovero from Italy) will be assisted in identifying business opportunities in South Africa and Italy and establishing contact with local agents.

3. Mining for fashion materials and tools

This facilitates round-table discussion and business-to-business meetings between South African and Italian companies operating in the fashion and textile industry.

At the end of October in Johannesburg, the embassy, with the support of the Italian Trade Agency in Johannesburg, is organising a matchmaking event focusing on producers and buyers of raw materials, fabrics, leather, textile machinery, aimed at strengthening technical skills and supply chains of the fashion industries in both countries, with a special attention for quality, sustainability, consistent with the innovative approach of circular economy.



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Lauren Hartzenberg 25 Jun 2021



A [virtual visual diary of the project](#) has been created on the Some Other Label platform run by Errica Iacopini to showcase the stories behind each of the designers and their development and growth on and through the Fashion Bridges project. It will also provide information regarding the initiative itself, the creative talent presented and the institutions and entities involved.

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