

# In upcycling drive, SA designers give new life to Western fashion waste

By Catherine Schenck

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Two South African aspiring designers, Khumo Morojele and Klein Muis, spend hours at a second-hand street market in Johannesburg looking for fashion items.



File photo: South African aspiring designers Khumo Morojele and Klein Muis look at one of their designs made from second hand clothing imported from the West and sold in bales in markets known as Dunusa, in Johannesburg South Africa, 3 July 2023. Reuters/Siphiwe Sibeko/File Photo

The duo then upcycles what they find into clothing or accessories they say express uniquely African style.

Upcycling refers to reusing an object in a new way without degrading the material it is made from, as opposed to recycling, which generally involves breaking down the original material and making it into something else.

The duo's current project, "Dunusa: Life of a Garment", sees them sourcing second-hand clothing often sent to Africa from European countries, which are then deconstructed and reworked into avant-garde and abstract fashion.

Their collection will be exhibited at an international arts programme in Berlin on 14-16 July, "Forecast Forum," where young artists can receive mentorship.

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"The question that we are trying to answer with the project is really the disparity between the north and the south ... how certain parts of Africa become dumping grounds for European countries," said the 22-year-old Muis.

The two also collaborate with other African creatives. They are working with a Ghanaian shoemaker on a project to turn old soccer boots into sandals that reflect both African and European love for the sport.

"Within our culture, its always emphasised (that) we don't waste, because we cherish and we actually connect to the things that we own ... we kind of want to reflect that and transcend that in our garments," said 20-year-old Morojele.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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