

Client Profile

South Africa's fashion industry is non-existent according to Lucilla Booyzen, director of South African Fashion Week, which will be held for the eighth time this year. She and others are trying to build up the industry. In an interview with the author Booyzen explained that, although there has been some international exposure of the SAFW and a handful of South African fashion designers have had the opportunity to showcase their work overseas, our fashion industry is disadvantaged. We do not have the resources to establish ourselves as players in a very competitive industry.

South African fashion designers work in isolation, disconnected from each other. It seems as if there is not a common goal to shape our fashion industry into a leader in its field. Each of the forty odd designers who showcase their work at the SAFW only meet once a year and scatter across the country afterwards, using the same-old same-olds every time in an effort to be innovative and failing in many ways. Resources are not pooled to make development more efficient. Durnig interviews with three South African fashion designers voiced concern about where South Africa is heading also that there is pressing need for someone to take leadership.

The Department of Trade and Industry has, in the past, pumped over R750 000 into the 2003 SAFW. Dr. Tembeka Mlauli, the DTT's Director of Textiles and Clothing, is optimistic. She says: "We have so much untapped potential and so many exciting opportunities to explore in the development of our industry. I have no doubt that South Africa is going to make its mark in the international fashion arena in the years to come and the SA Fashion Week is one of the first steps in our journey towards that outcome." (Davie 2003:1)

For this to be realised, the next step would be the development of a high-quality textile industry contained within one central city block in Johannesburg. The city is the obvious choice because its international airport and already established textile base. The project could be sponsored jointly by the Department of Trade and Industry, the South African Clothing and Textile Work Union, Blue IQ and the Johannesburg Development Agency.

The Newtown Cultural Precinct is close to the Fashion District in

downtown Johannesburg, a place where up-and-coming students and fashion designers have a support structure to establish themselves. It is not only students that flock to this area but also established names in South Africa, for instance Black Coffee, will relocate to this part of town. In an interview with the author, Jacques van der Watt, creative force behind Black Coffee admitted that his store in Rosebank would move to the Fashion District this year, as his monthly expenses will be halved and his studio would be closer to the Oriental Plaza, the fabric Mecca west of Johannesburg's CBD.

West of the Newtown Cultural Precinct and adjacent to the M1-freeway is the light industrial zoned area of Newtown. The textile development and production facility will be housed in this zone.

The city block chosen, after a study of Newtown's character, is directly opposite the Mary Fitzgerald Square with the M1-freeway forming its eastern boundary. The area is discussed in the context study.

The development will entail production facilities on three different scales to accommodate small textile producers, specialised textile development and production and large textile mills that can eventually contribute to the country's export market. South Africa has the potential to further develop and refine wool, cotton, wild silk and synthetic textiles. (See Yvonne Onderweegs' thesis, *Wild Silk: Processing Facility*, 2004)

The large-scale industrial development will focus on fine textile design and development, catering for designer studios as well as providing offices for different stakeholders to be represented in the development.

A part of the city block will be dedicated to retail and garment production. This part of the larger development will form part of the public domain, it is on the western edge of Mary Fitzgerald Square. This part of the greater city block, facing Gogh Street, the De Villiers-Graaff highway and Mary Fitzgerald Square, is the site chosen. The project is called *Urban Identity: fashion nexus*.

The site facing the square is the transitional volume between a big public space and an industrial development. These two functions are opposites of one another. The Square hosts celebrations, markets, and formal public



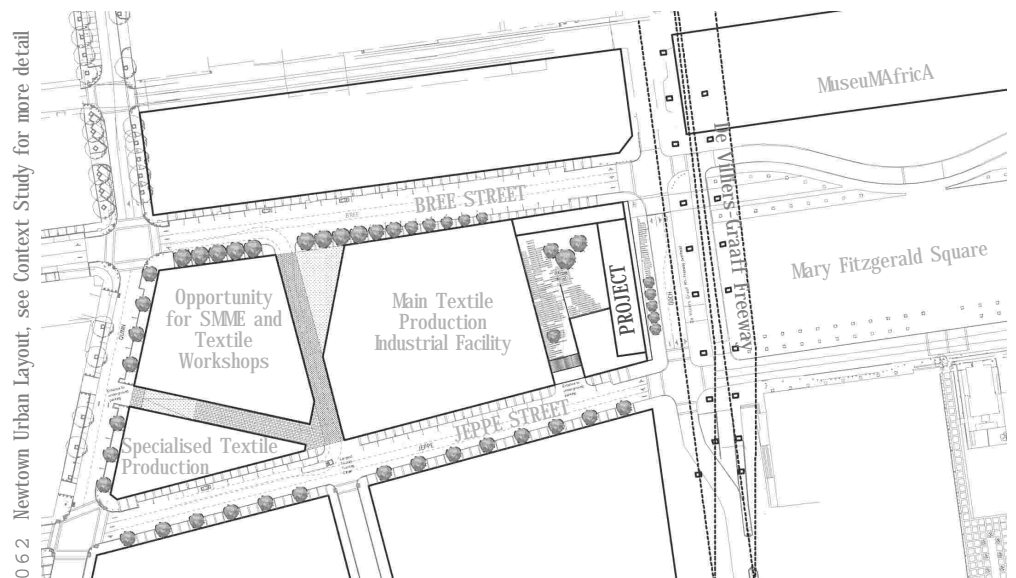
0 5 9 Textile texture



0 6 0 Msisoni on Stephan Burks



0 6 1 Msisoni knitwear pattern



events. Industrial developments, on the other hand, are places the broader public doesn't often experience; it is a private and secluded world for many.

The divide between these two functions is a double volume vehicular national freeway with a constant stream of movement most of the day. This is a visual break in the urban landscape and is read as an ongoing façade.

Looking in a western direction from Mary Fitzgerald Square, a person will see the ground and first levels of the proposed development while a motorist will experience the highest level at speed. Coming closer, a person should distinguish different elements expected to be part of such a building like entrance, shop interface, signage and so forth. Standing in front of the building, a person read what the concept, or finer grain and pattern, behind the development. The concept for the larger framework and urban design is the weaving of a textile industry into an urban rejuvenation scheme.

The programme consists of fashion retail space, fashion design studios, manufacturing workshops, a restaurant and cocktail lounge.

The client, *Twelve Year Cycle*, is a group of twelve fashion designers who have come together with the common goal of pooling their resources to achieve greater quality of design and production, whilst establishing a brand to which all of them conform. As the name of the brand implies, the designers aim to create items of such superior quality in design and fabrication so that a basic garment could last for more than a decade. The keywords defining the image of their brand are robust, basic, urban, vibrant, industrial, on the edge, and young-in-spirit.

0 6 3 Tape Collection



0 6 4 Tape Collection



0 6 5 Tape Collection





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The client is fictitious and was created to aid in the argument presented. One of the examples of innovative, experimental designers the author looked at to create a client, is Grit Seymour. "Seymour created a line of clothes in cotton jersey and stretch fabrics held together by a special boning tape that renders traditional seams superfluous and gives garments a highly graphic appearance."