

Pick n Pay Futurewear cultivates new fashion talent

Now in its second year, Futurewear is a dedicated platform that aims to cultivate the new guard of South African creatives by affording them the opportunity to launch their businesses with an exclusive collection at Pick n Pay Clothing.



Image supplied.

Julia Buchanan with Hazel Pillay from Pick n Pay Clothing and Gavin Rajah

The initiative between Pick n Pay Clothing and Atelier Gavin Rajah provides practical experience to up-and-coming designers and helps create job opportunities for entrepreneurs to grow their businesses.

“Covid-19 undoubtedly hurt South Africa’s clothing industry, with many people having to close their doors, and Futurewear will give the industry the boost it needs,” says Hazel Pillay, general manager of Pick n Pay Clothing.

Real growth to come

According to research company Fitch, the clothing industry is set for real growth between 2022 and 2026 helped by increases in disposable income for consumers and a young, urban base.

“This is why we are targeting young people to enter our programme as they design for their peers,” says Rajah.

“The need for practical experience and application in the industry is key,” continues Rajah.

“For South Africa to be a leader in the creative industries and to foster growth in the local clothing industry, we need to nurture and develop talent who can think innovatively in a commercial environment,” he says.

Success stories

Julia Buchanan, the first entrepreneur to be selected for the Futurewear programme, started Julia, a swimwear brand, in early 2014 while still studying.

She has now launched her third limited edition collection with Pick n Pay Clothing. Since appearing on the racks at the retailer, she has expanded her brand into apparel and accessories and has showcased her garments on the runway for the first time.

Another member of the cohort, Sipho Mbuto, did so well that he went on to show a successful collection in Milan last year, and recently completed an accelerator programme with the Ethical Fashion Initiative.



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The programme

Designers will receive mentorship to help them understand the complexities of garment production, sourcing, sustainability and the need to drive a circular economy.

“When we started this programme, no one was looking at print origination and the possibility of including those with no experience in the clothing industry in an immersive programme such as this,” says Rajah.

“Futurewear is about creating opportunities for individuals who are well equipped with the skills to work in a complex and ever-changing South African market.

“Entrepreneurs who can be innovative, forward-thinking can ultimately contribute to the economy. Besides equipping individuals for their future careers, creating beautiful, accessible clothing that adds to the overall brand allure of Pick n Pay Clothing lies at the core of Futurewear,” adds Rajah.

Among the challenges, the mentorship hopes to tackle include start-ups not having practical experience or the relevant skills to be successful in a commercial environment.

“Their focus is generally creative with little focus on commercial aspects and brand-building. They don’t have access to programmes that foster networks they can turn to for advice or direction. There is also no official industry body, so there is little support for their development,” says Rajah.

“Mentorship helps our future designers develop a knowledge base to make informed decisions and develop a career trajectory. It’s imperative for individuals at the beginning of their careers – it is as important during their career path. It provides a professional infrastructure to rely on and is integral to the emotional support individuals need,” he adds.

Submit your profile

Local designers and creatives over the age of 18 are encouraged to submit their profiles for consideration to join the mentorship programme which will culminate in a limited edition collection that will retail at Pick n Pay Clothing stores

nationwide.

Applicants must send a one-page essay (no more than 700 words) that defines their aesthetics, personality and future ambitions. In addition, they must send a mini-look book of work done which is no longer than three pages. Everything should be sent in a single document in PDF format to futurewear@gavinrajah.com.

The closing date for applications is 30 September 2022.

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