

Fresh crop of retail talent joins V&A Watershed's Design Lab

Local creative brands Janet Ceramics, Rainbow Artz, Diana Seboke Zitha and Wilderblommetjies have been selected by the Craft and Design Institute (CDI) and V&A Waterfront to retail in the Design Lab store at the V&A Watershed.



Diana Seboke Zitha, Janet Lightbody and Tavengwa Dahwa. Source: Supplied

The four businesses took up the space in October 2022, after going through a training programme provided by the CDI.

Getting retail-ready

The Design Lab is a retail readiness programme and a living retail “laboratory” that is open at the bustling V&A Watershed, a prime retail space and top tourism destination within the V&A Waterfront precinct. The initiative is also receiving ongoing additional support from Business and Arts South Africa (Basa).

The annual programme, initiated in April 2021, aids creatives with dedicated support through training and mentorship. It assists creative entrepreneurs to get ready for retail through a real-life experience of running a store in a supported environment.

Individual business assessments, hands-on product support, and business training, are coupled with full on-site training around running a store, including merchandising and styling, sales techniques and etiquette, banking, stock taking and point of sale.

Furniture and decor design destination Always Welcome expands to Cape Town

12 Dec 2022





About the new cohort

Janet Ceramics by Janet Lightbody

Janet Ceramics creates beautiful, top-quality ceramic pieces for the home. The business was founded by Janet Lightbody, who draws inspiration from life, and is passionate about South African people and nature. It was her childhood dream to become an artist, and today, her life is her art. Janet Ceramics has supplied a wide range of homeware stores locally and abroad, as well as interior design companies, game lodges and various galleries and art shops.

Rainbow Artz by Tavengwa Dahwa

Rainbow Artz specialises in wire sculptures, working with galvanised wire and telephone wire. Founder Tavengwa Dahwa uses colourful wire to make a variety of meticulously crafted animals and functional decorative ware. Born in Kadoma, Zimbabwe, Dahwa discovered his gift and passion through meeting other craft practitioners who inspired him. During his childhood he would make wire cars as toys to play with, and these have evolved into his unique, fun and emotion-evoking art pieces.

Diana Seboke Zitha

Artist Diana Seboke Zitha hails from Limpopo and is currently based in Cape Town. She holds a degree in Visual Arts from Nelson Mandela University and discovered her creative abilities during a crochet workshop in the final year of her university studies. She has since gone on to develop and finetune her technique.

Her crochet art has allowed her to travel to places like Sri Lanka as the winner of the South African leg of Society Of Dyers and Colourists design competition. Her inspiration is drawn from the beauty of the past and living in the present.

Wilderblommetjies by Melony Williams

Melony Williams founded Wilderblommetjies in 2018 after having been part of the apparel design community for many years, working as a designer since 2003. The distinct characteristics of South African wild flowers have captured her heart, and inform her vision to create clothing for babies and toddlers that features prints, poems and colour schemes that are inspired by wild flowers.

Her passion is to create styles that kids can move in effortlessly while having fun. Wilderblommetjies has also created designs for many other designer clothing labels for kids.

Market access opportunities for creative business

The Design Lab, with its eclectic mix of undiscovered products and new names on the design scene, adds richness and fresh excitement to the V&A Watershed's existing offering.

"The V&A Watershed is the V&A Waterfront's home to African design and its tenants represent some of the most beautiful and creative local skills, each with their own story to tell. 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," states Alex Kabalin, executive manager: retail at the V&A Waterfront.



Vukile launches Retail Academy to give emerging retailers a head start

11 Oct 2022



The inaugural Design Lab group selected in 2021 saw sales in excess of R160,000 during their participation in the programme. Basa supported the initiative with key marketing activities to raise awareness and drive traffic to the store. A selection of these businesses was also subsequently provided with the opportunity to retail as part of the Cape Town Marathon Expo in October 2022, a major event on Cape Town's annual calendar.

Says Fran Stewart, the CDI's manager for market access: "Through this initiative we are focussed on the ongoing sustainability and growth potential of the selected creative businesses; 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 for this programme to accelerate the development of local creative entrepreneurs."

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