

V&A's festive campaign to spotlight African design and sustainability

With eased travel restrictions, the V&A Waterfront in Cape Town is anticipating an increase in visitor numbers this festive season and plans are underway to give them a creative African welcome that reflects the spirit of the continent.



Source: Supplied

Celebrating local design and sustainability

Two years ago the V&A Waterfront questioned its approach to the annual festive celebration with a view to challenge age-old narratives. Why not an African Christmas that benefits local communities? In response, the property set about reimagining a festive season that would celebrate its African roots.

The result was 'Joy from Africa to the World', an approach to the festive season that heroes local design and sustainability.

"We questioned why we were celebrating and reflecting a world that did not look like ours and we realised that we wanted to infuse the festive season with purpose and meaning. We wanted to do this in a way that showcased authentic African stories and inspired joy. We wanted to buy less imported decorations that got thrown away, and instead support local, and to reuse and recycle.

"We wanted to celebrate our heritage and inspire locals, but also inspire the rest of the world and tell the story of a joyful Africa," explains Tinyiko Mageza, executive manager: marketing at the V&A Waterfront.

Now, two years on, the concept of Joy from Africa to the World has evolved beyond a festive season, becoming more than just about Christmas decorations and gifting. Instead, the concept has become a call-to-action for local people to get involved by supporting communities and organisations who are making a difference, with the V&A Waterfront working months ahead of the season to begin bringing all the elements together.

"The ethos of this campaign has influenced our ways of working. We have seen the creative possibilities that emerge when a neighbourhood such as ours embraces the communities and diverse cultures that exist right on our doorstep, and we



Source: Supplied

hope to inspire others to do the same. We have been contacted by other businesses and brands who are keen to also support and celebrate local, and we hope that more do so this year,” continues Mageza.

“We are reflecting on the collective experience of difficult times, taking the route that seeks to encourage hope and inspire people to come together as we rise, rebuild and grow,” she continues.

Last year, over 1,500 baskets from Senegal, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa formed part of the Joy From Africa festive décor. In addition, 187 crafters, makers designers and engineers from five African countries contributed to spreading hope and light through the festive décor by creating additional décor elements, while some 2,800 repurposed plastic bottles and oil barrels were reused to create the displays spread across our neighbourhood.

All of this provided income opportunities for local communities, often where women are often sole providers in their families, while reducing waste and the impact on the environment.



Source: Supplied

4-pronged campaign

Joy from Africa to the World will take place over the months in the lead-up to the festive season, built around four chapters or themes. Throughout the campaign there will be multiple ways for businesses, brands, V&A tenants and the public to get involved.

- **Compassion:** Five communities in the Western Cape, who are solving societal problems with compassion, inclusion and ingenuity, will be featured on the V&A Waterfront communications platforms. This will aim to communicate what people can do to get involved with upliftment of their own communities, as well as inspire others to get involved in their own way.
- **Discovery and creative exploration:** A series of totems have been commissioned to be designed by local communities from around the country, which will ultimately form part of the festive decorations displayed across the V&A Waterfront property. Each totem will be a physical manifestation of the art, craft or skill synonymous with its area of origin. Through the documentation of their creation, the totems will be used to shine a light on various parts of South Africa and their local economies.

- Dignity and pride: African pride and creativity will be celebrated, with a focus on the ingenuity of basket weaving. This will be expressed through a physical exhibition, 100 Beautiful Baskets, which will showcase baskets sourced from all over Africa.
- Hope and joy: The final moment of the campaign will be the physical manifestation of the work done over the past months, coming to life in the form of festive display elements.



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“Opportunity, sustainability and inclusivity are at the heart of the Joy from Africa message. It is a celebration of shared values, of community and of local creativity. We want to connect people from different worlds, viewpoints, and geographical locations while continuing to keeping a safe physical distance,” Mageza concludes.

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