



**NEW ADDITION** The newly launched david by David Tlale range

# King David reigns on

March is shaping up to be a very busy month for designer David Tlale. He spoke to **Gugulethu Mhlungu** about all the exciting developments in his career

**D**avid Tlale, fashion designer and ambassador for luxury vodka brand Ciroc, this week launched his **david by David Tlale** diffusion range on Spree.co.za.

"We believe the brand is aspirational and we are a household brand. After 14 years, we are focused on making the range available to the public. What the diffusion range with Spree allows us to do is make something by David Tlale available to more people at a good price," Tlale says.

"The david by David Tlale range is easy to wear, and allows you to start building your designer collection if you are starting out, because if you want to look good, you must own at least one designer item."

The ready-to-wear range is available in limited quantities.

At the Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week in

Joburg on Friday, he will be showing the fabulous high-end fashion he's become known for, which will be "mainly focused on evening dresses and a few surprises".

At the Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week in Cape Town in July last year, he introduced an unconventional bridal couture range - another development of his brand. The bridal wear will not be shown next week, but it "has its own place", Tlale says.

As part of his shows next week, five of the nine young designers currently under Tlale's mentorship will showcase their work, and one will be selected as the winner. Tlale says he's guiding these young people because, "when I graduated, no one mentored me and so now, [using what I know], I am

offering them guidance so they can grow and be better".

After the Joburg show, Tlale will jet off to show at Dubai Fashion Week, where he will exhibit an extended version of next weeks' Autumn/Winter Collection.

He is also planning various events with Ciroc this year.

"I can't talk about them now, but we have a lot up our sleeves."

I ask him if, after 14 years, he feels like a legend. He laughs.

"Oh no, I'm not a legend yet. I mean, I'm only 14 years old, but I am working on that!"

● The david by David Tlale range is available on spree.co.za

● The 2016 Collection that will be shown on Friday will be available from davidtlale.com

**FASHION**

## Everywhere and nowhere

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The opening of **Mawande Ka Zenzile's** eponymous solo show at Stevenson in Braamfontein on February 4 was a spectacle of Debordian proportions. The performative and the real, fiction and fact were entangled in successive moments of action and negation. A bewildered audience tried to make sense of the postmodernist meta objects confronting them on this warm Joburg evening.

Ka Zenzile was in his signature motif - the brown sack - locating himself in the centre of his work, as subject, object and viewer, as he returned the gaze of those milling around the second room of the exhibition on the fifth floor of 62 Juta Street. First Thursdays saw an avalanche of Joburg "society" barrel into an already crowded and cramped Stevenson space: writers and critics and reviewers; students, socialites and celebrities; musicians, film makers and twelebs. It lent an absurdly theatrical air to an already spectacular event. And then there was "the goat".

A man with a brown sack covering his head walked around the gallery dishing out incantations to no particular audience and in no particular direction, as though our very presence in the space was nonexistent. At some point, there was loud wailing; one of the covered figures in the gallery got up and left. This figure, I learnt later, was Ka Zenzile. What had felt like an almost unbearable intensity dissipated.

Afterwards, I could not make any sense of the show; it was everywhere and nowhere at the same time. What is left behind on the walls and by the installations are only traces of

something much more.

There are, of course, breadcrumbs leading somewhere unspecified. The installation "lingcuka ezambethe ifele legusha" is a fixed suspicion on "imported" schemas of knowledge from the West - the bedrock of our so-called South African education and the staple of academia. There's the video installation of a snippet of the 1975 British-American film *Man Friday*, based on the Daniel Defoe novel *Robinson Crusoe*. *Man Friday's* dialogue is cut down to a simple, devastating clip of him repeating, almost like a mantra: "I'm not your slave!" Buried beneath this performative self-exotification, which doesn't quite subvert the colonial gaze, is an organising logic that has more to do with what is unseen than that which assails the eye.

Behind Ka Zenzile's formalist considerations - his use of dung and earth to compose the works, which are largely figurative references to pop-cultural iconography - lies a temperament akin to Ralph Ellison's unnamed protagonist in his acclaimed novel *Invisible Man*.

It might be the *Man Friday* video installation or heads on plinths covered in brown sacks - bringing to mind images of lynched Black bodies in the Jim Crow South - that make one think of Ellison's opening paragraph. Or it's the seeming lethargy of institutions like the University of Cape Town not transforming into modern African universities, or the frustrated cries of those played in the margins of South Africa whose voices can only rise in a crescendo of



**INVISIBLE MAN** A sculpture by Mawande Ka Zenzile on show at Stevenson in Braamfontein

**ART REVIEW**

violence. Or maybe it is the ambitions of a young artist who comfortably occupies the uncomfortable position of being the outspoken enfant terrible in a pale art world that has never been lenient on troublesome, working class blacks.

Whatever the reason, the words of Ellison's protagonist linger in Ka Zenzile's new work. "I am an invisible man," the book opens. "No, I am not a spook ... I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone ... and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me."

● Mawande Ka Zenzile runs at Stevenson in Joburg until Friday



**COLLABORATION OR APPROPRIATION?**



**BEST FOOT FORWARD** A Doja Mahlangu collaboration



**HEEL BEAUTY** These black sneakers sell for \$310 online PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

## Sweden sneaks in Ndebele style

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In yet another North-South fashion collaboration, legendary local Ndebele artist Esther Mahlangu (80) has (according to European news sites) been "plucked out of obscurity" to create a new, Swedish sneaker collection called **Doja Mahlangu**.

The brand in question, Eytys, is a huge name in the sneaker game, fusing different styles to create distinctive footwear for a global audience. Paired with Mahlangu's incredible eye for detail, colour and symmetry, they've created another cult classic and, once again, it's cool to sport African design on European brands.

But is it appropriation, you ask? After all, that's the buzz word to describe collaborations of this nature, which, 10 years ago, were simply seen as "drawing on African culture" - whatever that means.

It's not clear how they collaborated, and whether Mahlangu had a say in the final product, but a lot of the press centres on a generic idea of African design, the idea of Eytys "bringing Africa abroad" and a lot of the usual uncomfortable stuff. With a price tag of more than \$300 (R4 730), it would be interesting to know how much of a cut Mahlangu gets.

Sure, my closet has a Doja-shaped hole in it, and yes they are exquisite, but considering how often kaftans and kangas are pimped out for a thirsty European market, I'm going to have to pass on this one ... as fabulous as they are.

● Check out the Doja Mahlangu line at eytys.com

**FASHION NEWS**