

The authentic design stories of Thandazani Nofingxana

 By [Ruth Cooper](#)

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At only 21 years of age, Thandazani Nofingxana - a fashion and textile designer and one of the 2018 Design Indaba Top 40 Emerging Creatives - has already established a strong design aesthetic that draws from his culture and experience as a young African man.



Thandazani Nofingxana

We chat with him about the inspiration for his latest collections as well as what it means to be an African designer.

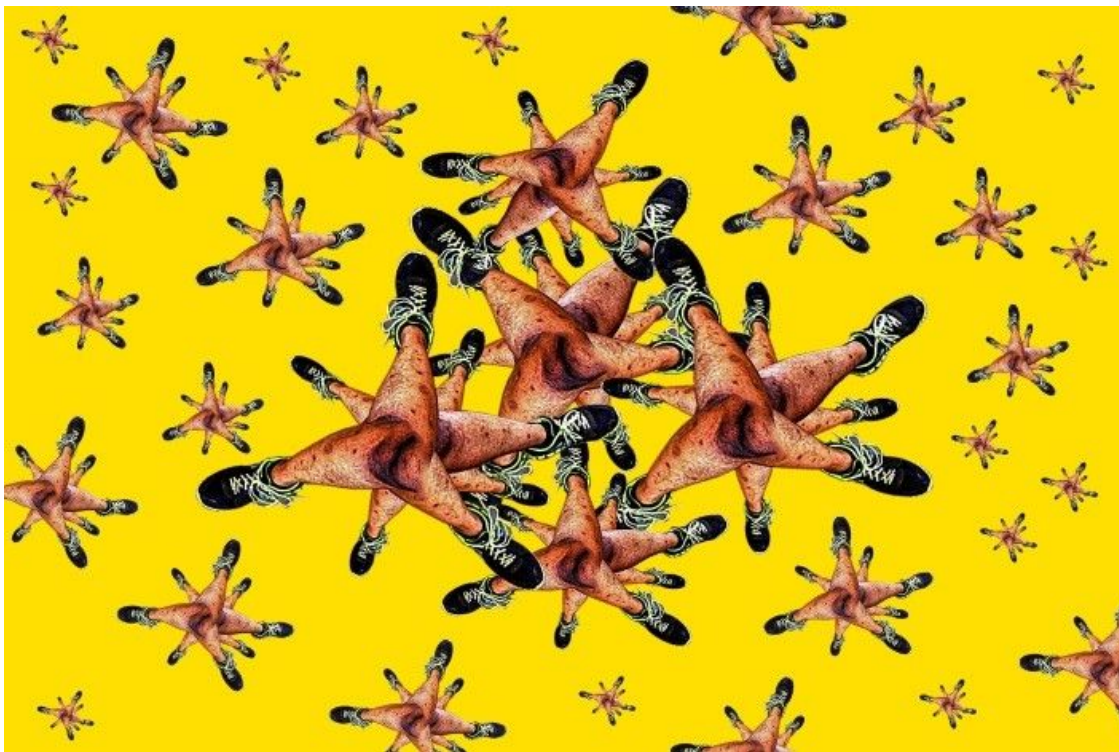
What story do you want your fashion designs to tell?

My fashion and textile designs aim to tell authentic African stories and everything that surrounds the diaspora of the African content. My current range is inspired by mixed ethnic people living in South Africa and trying to tell their stories as authentically as possible.

■ ***What was the inspiration behind your collections 'RICH IS BLACK' and 'vice versa'?***

Colourism would be the word that pops up the most every time I talk about RICH IS BLACK & vice versa. For the longest time I've been so insecure about the colour of my skin, I am dark in complexion and growing up in the township I would get picked on by the other kids and that has grown into this big insecurity.

This is a very personal project to me as I realised I had to turn my frustrations and anxieties into art, and as an Afrocentric type of designer I needed a way of communicating and that was through my textile prints. The project then expanded and I started going all over campus and asking people about their insecurities and this really created a meaningful design process as I felt I was telling these stories correctly because my prints have their insecurities incorporated into them.



■ ***What does it mean to you to be African?***

Being African to me means culture, it is the only thing we have left and as an African artist I need to create art that creates culture, if I am not making art about my people then what am I doing?

■ ***How has growing up in Mthatha influenced your designs?***

Mthatha is very small town but with many rural areas around which really influenced the way I approach my prints. The colours of cattle kraals, huts and the greenery in the veld, amakhukho, Xhosa beads, etc. almost all the cultural elements of AmaXhosa really inspired my design aesthetic.





■ ■ ■ *What have been some of your career highlights?*

- Winning the Collective Fashion Show for Mohair South Africa 2017
- Being in the top three presentations at Laduma x Chivas Business Talks 2017
- Making the Top 40 Emerging Creatives Class of 2018 at Design Indaba 2018

■ ***If you had to describe your design aesthetic in one word what would it be?***

KULTURE.

■ ***What still needs to happen when it comes to the support of African fashion designers?***

People are aware of what is happening but I think there still needs to be a bit of convincing, people buy brands that they trust and in order for us to get support I think quality should be our number one priority and people might just start buying what we make because we are affordable and relatable.



■ ***What advice would you give to other African fashion designers?***

Storytelling is key, the world is looking and the only thing we need to do is tell our authentic story, don't be afraid to talk about your anxieties and depression. Engage on what makes you a better human being and by doing that you will get closer to your dreams by just telling your side of the story.

■ ***What are you currently working on and what's next?***

I have an exhibition coming up in August in Port Elizabeth, dates are still be confirmed. And an exciting collaboration with amazing fashion designer and role model Thabo Makhetha (also still unconfirmed as when we are releasing works).

Photography by Khangelani Kota

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ABOUT RUTH COOPER

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