

Virtual Next21 expo to spotlight export-ready SA design

The Next21 virtual trade exhibition will see 23 small South African craft and design brands have their creations showcased to a global audience of importers, retailers and decorators, as well as design-loving members of the public.



Studio Stirling

Held online this year due to the pandemic, the product showcase will feature furniture, lighting, fashion accessories, textiles and homeware designed by local talent and manufactured in southern Africa. The Next21 exhibition launches on 25 March 2021 and will run for a full year.

Now in its 4th edition, the annual Next Trade Exhibition is an export development initiative of the Craft and Design Institute (CDI). The CDI is a South African non-profit craft and design sector development agency with two decades of experience developing creative people and small businesses.

In previous years, Next took the form of a week-long exhibition staged in Cape Town. For 2021, the exhibition has been re-strategised to encourage Covid-19 safety and give the event increased longevity and a wider global reach.

For the first time, Next will take the form of an innovative online platform that can be accessed by buyers, members of the trade and the public from across the globe. The year-long digital exhibition is made possible with support from the City of Cape Town and the exhibition is free to access.



Modern Gesture

Export-ready producers

Next21 constitutes the first-ever digital expo for the CDI and will provide a video walkthrough for viewers. The online exhibition will showcase a variety of export-ready producers who will all be launching new, ready-to-order ranges on the platform. The participating businesses hail from across the nation and represent the best of South African craft and design.

Exhibitors include a mix of well-established brands and rising stars such as Africa Ignite, Saks Corner, Modern Gesture, Design Afrika, Chimpel, Ozzy Eco Décor and Studio Stirling, amongst others.



Africa Ignite

All 23 of the Next21 exhibitors have been coached through the CDI's export development programme, which has supported over 70 businesses since inception. This programme has been running for several years and was initiated and run with the support of the Dutch Centre for the Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries (CBI).

The programme saw an average of over 50% increase in export sales (from 2016 to 2018 to European markets). The Next Trade Exhibition was launched in 2018 and has grown annually. The 2019 and 2020 events drew in dozens of international trade buyers from a diverse array of countries such as Denmark, France, Sweden, Italy and the US amongst other countries, many of whom travelled to Cape Town specifically for the trade exhibition.

Upside to virtual expo

For 2021, the virtual walkthrough will render it unnecessary for international buyers to undertake long-haul flights, or for local buyers to travel via domestic routes. It also removes concerns about pandemic-related travel restrictions.

Because the costs of international travel, accommodation and transport have also been removed, there are few barriers to entry for international trade, which widens the net so that an even greater number of international buyers and media entities can view the exhibition. The extended timeframe will also make it easier for buyers to view the latest products over the coming months.



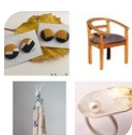
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Says the CDI's group CEO Erica Elk: "Last year, the CDI seamlessly converted our training and development modules into effective online tools. We're thus confident that Next's change in format from a real-time event to a virtual offering will benefit the exhibitors in many ways, the most pertinent being the dramatic increase in potential reach.

"We are now able to accommodate many more interested parties, from many more territories, than ever before. We look forward to seeing the export outcomes this change yields and to welcoming the Next chapter in which our beautiful South African products make their way across the globe!"



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Stimulating economic recovery

According to Alderman James Vos, mayoral committee member for economic opportunities and asset management at the City of Cape Town: "It is heartening to see how the City of Cape Town's strategic business partners have pivoted their operations to adapt to the next normal, and the CDI Next21 online initiative is a prime example.

"Design and innovation are vital for the City's economic recovery after Covid-19, and we will do our part to support the sector. The City not only offers financial support to the CDI, but we have collaborated on many other programmes in support of the craft and design sector. This partnership has delivered many successes including the training of SMEs, product expansion, international exports of locally made South African products and skills development."

To view the array of products that will be launched on Next21, visit www.thecdi.org.za/next21 from 25 March 2021.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>