

Challenging tradition through sustainable
bridal wear for a contemporary South
African market.

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Abstract

This research was conducted to find a natural and functional alternative to commercialised bridal wear in South Africa, for a South African market base, which is holistically sustainable in light of the global paradigm shift towards sustainability. In order to find what the alternative would be I have questioned the symbolic meaning behind the product being presented to the South African bridal apparel market, and the bridal apparel consumer's views and attitudes towards commercialised bridal wear. For the research I have reflected upon theories of sustainability (Slow Design, Cradle to Cradle, and Design for Environmental Sustainability) which provided the main theoretical underpinning for product development, guiding material choice and usage, as well as production process in order to achieve a holistically sustainable product. My supporting theory, Representation, gives meaning to the idea of an alternative to the 'big white dress' being equally as 'bridal', as Representation states that any object could substitute as a symbol for something else. Inspiration from a self-reflecting road trip through the Karoo as well as tracing my family heritage in Bloemfontein provided the back drop for my bridal range. The Karoo landscape inspired my garment aesthetic and natural fabric usage. I wanted a theme of old-fashioned romance to come through as the essence of my range - inspiring the garments to compliment the rite of passage to which they belong, and not to dominate the meaning of the ceremony. Therefore the garments could easily be adapted to a second function through styling and/or dyeing. The range consists of ten outfits, and comprises of men's and ladies wear.

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