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CONSCIOUS CONSUMERISM IS DEFINING A NEW GENERATION OF DESIGN IDEAS. THESE EIGHT INCREDIBLE WOMEN ARE PROVING THAT IT'S POSSIBLE TO MARRY FASHION AND COMPASSION.
BY LYNETTE BOTHA



KAREN MONK-KLIJNSTRA

THE IDEA: The Carla bag

THE CAUSE: Empowering women in Khayelitsha through an employment initiative.

THE ADVOCATE:

Nicole-Marie Iresch.

THE DETAILS: During her maiden voyage as French First Lady, Carla Bruni-Sarkozy visited Township Patterns, a sewing cooperative in Khayelitsha. The women hand-wove a bag from hessian and cotton in the colours of the South African flag and presented it to Bruni-Sarkozy as a gift on her arrival. Inspired by this visit, founder of the NGO, Nicole-Marie Iresch, saw an opportunity to raise funds for an additional cooperative and reproduced the bag as a limited edition. The bags were aptly named The Carla Bag and individually numbered from two to 421. "The number 421 is not significant," says Audrey Touchard, communications manager of Township Patterns, "our supplier ran out of yellow hessian, so we had to stop at 421. A simple story as you can see." The Carla bag travelled with the first lady to Elysee Palace in France, and following plenty of media attention, was introduced to high fashion trend-setting retail store, Colette, in Paris. The Carla bag is sold for R500 in South Africa and 100 euros in Europe. All proceeds go towards establishing a new sewing project that will create further employment and steady income to women in Khayelitsha. For more information call Township Patterns on 021 422 4828.



NICOLE-MARIE IRESCH



THE IDEA:

The Little Travellers range for Woza Moya at The Hillcrest Aids Centre Trust (HACT) in Durban.

THE CAUSE: Raising funds in order to support HIV/AIDS awareness.

THE ADVOCATES: Karen Monk-Klijnsstra and Paula Thomson.

THE DETAILS: With young daughters attending the same playgroup, clothing designer Karen Monk-Klijnsstra and Paula Thomson, the driving force of the Woza Moya initiative, cemented a friendship. They decided to link Monk-Klijnsstra's clothing range with Woza Moya, and collaborated on a collection for design brand 3006. The highlight of the collection is a dress

by the HIV-positive crafters of Woza Moya, and drew much-needed attention.

Spurred on by its success, Monk-Klijnsstra and Thomson teamed up on many more projects, the latest being Monk-Klijnsstra's new collection showcased at Durban Fashion Week in June 2008. The collection was inspired by the hand-beaded "Little Traveller" dolls from Woza Moya. The Little Traveller characters were included on Monk-Klijnsstra's hand-painted garments – in the form of buttons, army style badges and a showstopper "Traveller" skirt. The range was later auctioned off, with all proceeds going to Woza Moya. "I firmly believe that if you can use your craft to put a cause on the map, you should," concludes Monk-Klijnsstra. To get involved visit www.hillcraids.org.za