

Winners of Furniture Design Competition announced

The winners of the 7th National Furniture Design Competition, presented by the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (the dtic), were announced by Deputy Minister Nomalungelo Gina during the recent online Proudly SA Buy Local Summit & Expo.

Ian Perry from the Durban-based furniture manufacturer, Homewood, won the Established Manufacturers category, while the honour of winning the Student category went to the University of Johannesburg trio Mikhayla Peterson, Amukelani Mathebula and Michael Sushan.

According to Prof Desmond Laubscher, chairperson of the judging panel, the theme of the 2020 competition was *“This is mine and these are ours”*, with the brief to design furniture for young, newly-employed people who have come together to rent a modest apartment. *“The aim of the design was to use a minimal budget, while designing a range of multipurpose and functional furniture that is modular, that can be purchased as budgets allow,”* says Prof. Laubscher.

“Possibly the most important criteria when judging the entrants were innovation and how contestants were able to interpret and incorporate functionality and useability, with the design aesthetics and identity having a distinct South African flair,” Prof Laubscher said. *“We judged the ease of how the designed product can be manufactured, the number of parts that must be produced, the size and shape of the product and finally, what makes the most impact when the final product just looks right.”*

Bernadette Isaacs, Managing Director of the South African Furniture (SAFI), says that the competition is extremely important to identify and nurture furniture design and talent in the industry. SAFI is a partner and one of the main stakeholders in the competition. *“In terms of quality and cutting edge design South Africa is up there with the best in the world, but we still have to work on capturing our story, building a truly African design identity. The furniture design competition goes a long way towards reaching that goal,”* said Isaacs.

When announcing the winners, Deputy Minister Gina emphasised how important to the South African economy the furniture sector is. “I believe it is possible to position the local furniture industry as the producer of high-value niche furniture products that are globally competitive and based on quality and differentiated design,” Minister Gina said.

“Consumers must have access to local products and *Proudly SA* plays a pivotal role in achieving this,” she said. She explained to the delegates how the Furniture Design competition assisted in achieving some of the outcomes contained in the Furniture Industry Master Plan and how locally manufactured and designed furniture demand was on the increase.

“The competition is part of our efforts to raise and nurture design capabilities in the country, raise the image of the furniture manufacturing industry and to grow the industry’s competitiveness by encouraging new product design and differentiation. The furniture industry is an important sector in the South African economy because it has the potential to contribute to the reduction of unemployment, increase of exports and boost the development of the Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs),” she said.

“By encouraging participation in the furniture industry, promoting the use of design to respond to changing living space, the use of locally manufactured inputs and getting continuous investments, maximum impact will be achieved,” she said.

Five finalists each in the Students and Established Manufacturers categories were in line for prizes, which included a one-year internship in the furniture industry, a six-month Furniture Design Incubation Programme by Furntech and a graphic design tablet for the students, a one-year ‘Proudly South African’ membership, a one-year ‘Institute of the Interior Design Professions’ memberships as well as an opportunity to participate and exhibit at selected platforms for the winning manufacturer.

The competition was presented in partnership with Proudly South African, the South African Furniture Initiative, Coricraft Furniture, Mecad Solidworks, Furntech Centre of Excellence, Lewis Stores, the African Institute of Interior Designers and Tsogo Sun Hotels.

2020 Furniture Design Competition Finalists

Students Category:

Mikhayla Peterson, Amukelani Mathebula and Michael Sushan (UJ) – Winner

Benedikt Johannes (TUT) – 1st runner up

Katlego Madumo and James Fowler (UJ) – 2nd runner up

Natalie Selibas, Dennis Xavier and Anthony Abbotts (UJ)

Simoné Pretorius (Potch Academy)

Established Manufacturers Category:

Ian Perry (Homewood, KwaZulu-Natal) – Winner

Sandile Nkosi (Protovate, Johannesburg) – 1st runner up

Peet van Straaten (Raw Studio, Pretoria) – 2nd runner up

Chris Fouché (Karwei Industries, Cape Town)

Korrie Bross (Caneworld, Cape Town)

Ends Issued on behalf of the South African Furniture Initiative by Panthera Media. For more information, please contact Winton Windell at Winton@pantheramedia.co.za.