

THEBE MAGUGU
"PROSOPOGRAPHY"
SS20

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Figure 1 Black Sash women protesting in Cape Town, 1955. Copyright of National Library of South Africa, Cape Town Campus

When one thinks of South Africa's history in relation to Apartheid, the big names - often the men - come to mind. From Nelson Mandela to Desmond Tutu, these men played an integral role in establishing the democracy we enjoy today. However, and often with history, there are the smaller voices whose stories get lost in the transcripts but had just as important a role in the fight towards freedom. In this case, it is the women of the Black Sash.

Founded in May of 1955 by Ruth Foley, Jean Sinclair, Elizabeth McLaren, Tertis Pybus, Jean Bosazza and Helen Newton-Thompson (among many others), this group of brave, liberal women used non-violent methods of protest against the inhumane treatment of black South African's. By opening law clinics to assist P.O.C men and women with any legal trouble and holding vigils and marches, they became a beacon of light in a country shrouded by darkness and - as Nelson Mandela said in a letter to the Black Sash from prison - "[their efforts are] a measure of [their] deep concern for human rights and commitment to the principle of justice for all."



Figure 2 - Black Sash Women participating in a haunting.

The sashes most iconic method of protest was known as "hauntings", where they would stand outside places ministers would assemble at - airports, railway stations, opening of hospitals - and simply stood; an action that would hopefully instill guilt and shame into whoever they were targeting. At some point, police officials began taking their sashes off their bodies but in a cheeky comeback, they would wear long black gloves that they then would then put over their chest. There is an element of the absurd with the Black Sash, which is apt for the absurd times in which they found themselves in.

The Black Sash put themselves in serious danger by shirking their lives of comfort during Apartheid to protect the dignity and culture of black people.

ABOUT THE COLLECTION:

"[Leaving the house], I would have to change into jeans, an anorak and hiking boots", Sue Townsend told me. This made me think immediately of the dual spaces in which these women occupied; dualities the collection draws from: Domesticity VS Disobedience, Masculinity VS Femininity, and Leisure VS Practicality.

The Black Sash were also interested in protecting the dignity and culture of black people, cues of which have been peppered throughout the collection - from fabrication drawing from the traditional Basotho blanket (woven in South Africa), to experimental fabric applications which literally take from the country's soil (Look One is painted with actual mud from a traditional witchdoctor, facilitated by our collaborator Larissa Don). These iconic women also fought for the rights afforded to us by the constitution, and hidden flaps and folds in the collection turn or peel to reveal key texts from the country's official charter

It is quite a multi-faceted collection - which is fitting for such a group of multi-faceted women.



Red Twill Coat



Sebra Mid Set

Suminagashi Pleated
Shirt Dress



Basotho Blanket Poncho
+ Victorians Shirt Dress





Airtech Mesh Safari Shirt
+ Matiego Pleated Skirt





Rosandla Dress



Victoriana Blouse
+ Utility Cargo



Constitutional Jacket
+ Dugaree Shorts
+ Victoriana Blouse





Pistachio Green Coat
+ Cave Drawing Skirt
+ Sulphur Blouse

For wholesale orders, THEBE MAGUGU will be available for the SS20 selling season in Paris at:

NOB

NOB SHOWROOM

43 rue de Montmorency

75003 Paris

From 27 September to 3 October 2019

To set up an appointment, please email Giovanni Romano and Annette Pringle on:

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annette.pringle@thefashionagent.co.za

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