



Fashioning the Fabulous

With a career spanning almost thirty years, fashion designer Marianne Fassler continues to move forward - this time with the help of Samsung. Images **Brett Rubin & Simon Deiner / SDR Photo**
Words **Chipo Mapondera**



Models backstage at Mercedes Benz Fashion Week Africa, October 2012

As the most highly-anticipated show of Mercedes Benz Africa Fashion Week, Marianne Fassler’s high-octane return to the ramp last October proved that the designer, who is frequently referred to as “The Doyenne of South African fashion”, still knows what it takes to cause a sensation!

The collection, entitled *Fassler The Remix*, was set to the pulsing beats of Spoek Mathambo’s Joy Divison-sampled, club banger, *Control*, a bold, beat-heavy track that inadvertently provided the inspiration for the collection. “Control was like a welcome shock to my system that really got my juices following,” says the flame-haired designer, “After a year of creativity and travel, I had a yearning to push myself and present a show at Fashion Week. This song was the catalyst that set the process in motion, resulting in the final collection’s debut 5 months later.”

Already known for a visceral vision that scrapes together downtown South African Street culture and mystic traditions from around the continent, the *Fassler The Remix* collection was a reinforcement of the brand’s existing codes presented with a perspective that plunged the Designer into the limelight in a completely unexpected way. Not one to follow trends, Marianne’s emblematic use of leopard print, exotic dye techniques, bold colours and neons were exactly what the fashion set were predicting for the ensuing season, as were her unique styling elements

including layers of dramatic fabric, and accessories and handbags fashioned out of materials usually reserved for the common “China bags” seen in downtown markets and bus ranks. “My work is never about trend,” Marianne says, “I prefer to focus on a timeless African aesthetic that embraces traditional craft, juxtaposed with modern techniques and materials. Despite this, while preparing for this collection I realised that everything I have always done was somehow simultaneously ‘on trend.’”

But *Fassler The Remix* wasn’t just about the music, or the apex of design career, it was also the result of collaborating with technology giant Samsung. “The use of technology around my show allowed me to communicate and create an incredible buzz,” Marianne enthused. The buzz was fuelled by Samsung’s Twitter hashtag, #BlueThread, a concept developed to spark a viral conversation about the marriage of the brand with the concept of fashion. Technology also allowed for the show to be streamed online to engage with a wider audience both in real time and as an archive.

Describing how the #BlueThread concept seamlessly fit into her original concept Marianne says, “Samsung has managed to not only reinvent itself spectacularly, but also to lead the way in setting new benchmarks for others to follow. They are inventive, creative, fashionable and successful... all the qualities that instil the brand with charisma, and this can only be inspiring.” The thread of

collaboration between the brands also ran throughout the show’s production, providing Marianne with a high-tech approach. Lasers and projections cut the way for a striking entourage of models lead by Diandra Forrest and Ajuma Nasenyana, two incredibly successful international models whose strong looks created a juxtaposition



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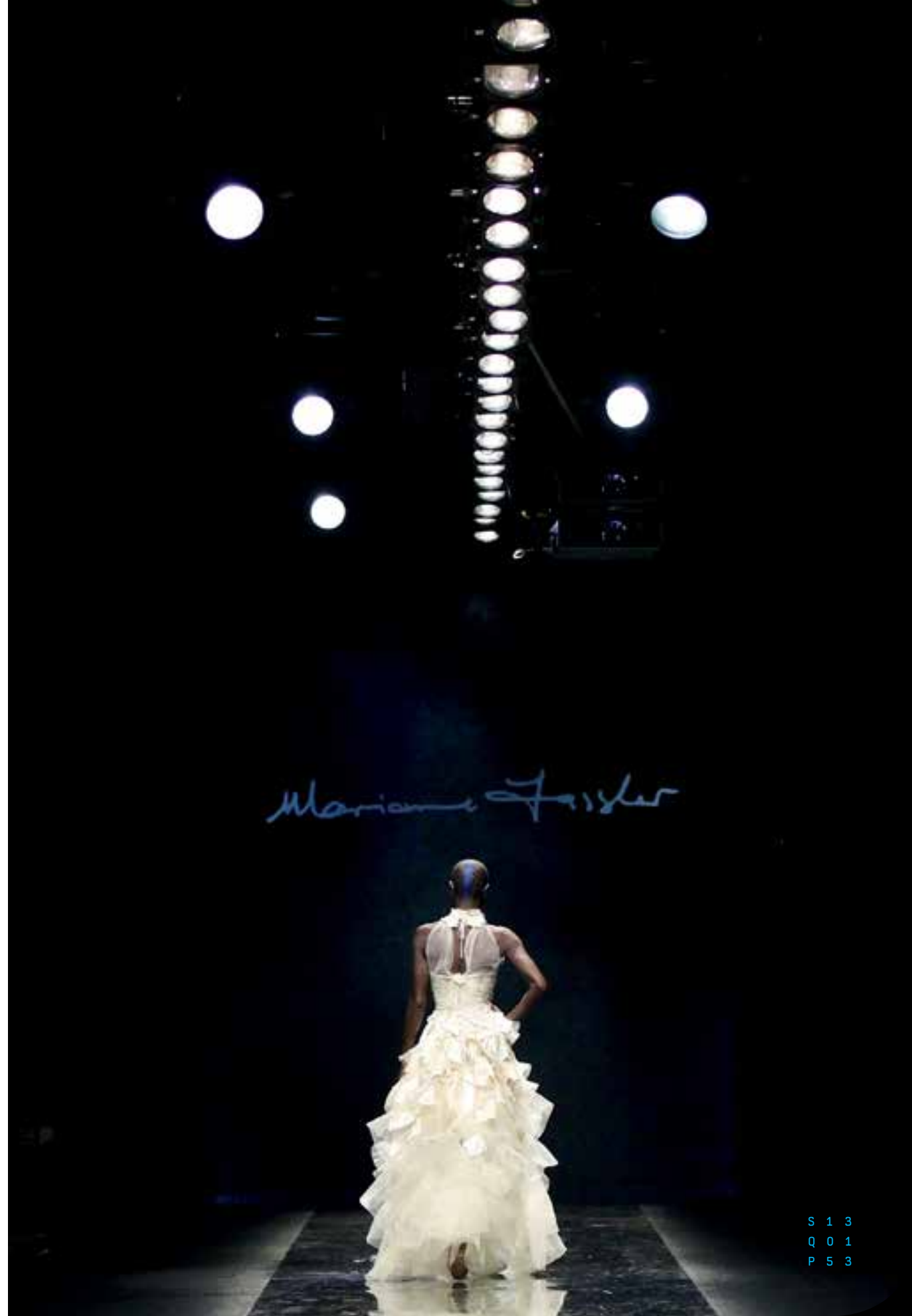


in themselves, Diandra for her alabaster albinism, and Ajuma for her fierce ebony features. A soundtrack that mixed the aforementioned Spoek Mathambo hit, as well as the sounds of Yvonne Chaka Chaka and the Tshetsha Boys, compiled by Marianne’s longtime collaborator DJ Dexterity aka. Greg Bowes summed up the show as an electrifying new take on the future of local fashion. **S**



Ajuma Nasenyana
Diandra Forrest







Blue wall in "Casbah des Oudaias", Rabat, Morocco