

Italian Design Week Showcases Sustainable Innovation with “Circular Trees” Installation

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As part of Italian Design Week, and in collaboration with the Italian Consulate in Cape Town and the Italian Cultural Institute in Pretoria, renowned Italian designer Matteo Cibic, serving as Ambassador for Italian Design 2025, unveiled the “Circular Trees” transmedia installation. This project highlights “Contemporary Alchemy,” an innovative technological process focused on recovering precious metals from electronic waste.

The “Circular Trees” installation serves as a bridge between Italy and South Africa, fostering collaboration between companies operating within both nations in the realms of sustainability and innovation. In partnership with Holding LEM Industries Spa, a consortium of leading Italian high-fashion and luxury accessories processing companies, and its South African subsidiary, Cape Refining, this initiative aims to establish circular economy projects in South Africa.

This collaboration echoes the successful implementation of similar projects in Italy, where precious metals and critical raw materials are recovered from electronic waste at Valdarno Ambiente’s (Iren Group) newly inaugurated hydrometallurgical plant in Tuscany. The “Circular Trees” themselves are sculptures crafted from recovered gold and palladium, featuring trunks and branches composed of electronic chips, symbolizing the transformative potential of this recovery process.

Beyond its artistic merit, the project is designed to deliver significant socio-economic benefits to local communities in South Africa. The implementation of these circular economy initiatives will generate new employment opportunities and contribute to improved living conditions in the affected areas. This initiative underscores the commitment of Italian and South African companies to sustainable practices and the creation of shared value through innovative design and technology.