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## From the markets of Africa to a Toronto runway

Article

Published On Fri Oct 22 2010

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**Nicole Baute**  
Living Reporter

The colours of an African marketplace — electric green, sunflower yellow, cherry red — are hanging on a rack in Hoax Couture's Queen St. studio.

A willowy model is wearing a futuristic, bubble-hem coat by Nada, made with hand-painted floral fabric. Another tries on a classic strapless mermaid gown by LOVAS Wesley Badanjak.

On Friday night, Canadian models and celebrities including Tara Spencer-Nairn from *Corner Gas* and the CBC's Wendy Mesley will sashay down the runway in these vibrant outfits and



Designers Jim Searle (left) and Chris Tyrell bookend models Sierra Nallo, wearing a coat by Nada Designs and Makara Adkins, wearing a mermaid gown by LOVAS Wesley Badanjak

RICK MADONIK/TORONTO STAR

many more, as part of the second [Dare to Wear Love](#) fashion show, the final event for LG Toronto fashion week.

Last year the show, launched by Hoax Couture's Chris Tyrell and Jim Searle, raised about \$40,000 for the Stephen Lewis Foundation. Now the designers are aiming higher, hoping to hand over \$100,000 raised through ticket sales and an auction of last year's dresses to help families and orphans cope with the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa.

The project has a philanthropic goal but is also a chance to showcase Canadian fashion designers in a forum that is "creatively open, open, open," Tyrell says. The only rule is that designers work from six yards of cotton fabric, handpicked during Tyrell and Searle's travels in Zambia and by the Stephen Lewis Foundation in other African countries.

"They're not specially designed fabrics, they're not couturier fabrics," says Tyrell. "These are the fabrics that you find African women wearing every day."

Dare to Wear Love began with a chance meeting between Tyrell and Searle and the

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