

Haute Afrika embodies sophistication and elegance

By  Evan-Lee Courie

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Ten-year-old Gracia spent hours watching her seamstress grandmother make clothes. As she grew older, she became concerned about how people didn't like to wear African print designs especially as day to day wear and soon mastered the art of making clothes.

Fast forward to 2015 when Gracia Bampile founded Haute Afrika, the home of day to day African print designs made to change the narrative around African fashion.

Gracia Bampile shares the journey of Haute Afrika who has already dressed African TV personalities, actors, presenters, singers and rappers.



Gracia Bampile, founder of Haute Afrika

■ Can you tell us a bit about Haute Afrika?

Haute Afrika is a contemporary African print brand. The ready-to-wear clothing brand caters to both men and women and is aimed to promote African sophistication and elegance catering for a growing continent.

“ The brand embodies a modern culture and celebrates Africa’s heritage and shares the story one print at a time. ”

Motivated to break social stereotypes by infusing art through fashion and sharing the ethnic culture of Africans. The brand is colourful, significant and explores the African roots and uniqueness that are engraved in Africa as part of its identity.

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A post shared by 🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷 (@hauteafrika) on Apr 25, 2020 at 10:00am PDT

Haute Afrika believes that clothing can empower confidence, evoke topics and promote Africanism because “when you look good, you feel good”. In the world of pop culture, Haute Afrika maintains African print as its trademark and stand firm in breaking boundaries in order to merge cultures of artistic mindsets together.

Haute Afrika draws inspiration from East African art, culture and architecture. At its level, the brand is picking up speed and is undeniably beautiful as it's designed with love and care to expand and dominate the global market to cater for a more diverse audience and have it as an established African label.

I started in 2015, but I was inspired by a dress my parents bought for me at when I was seven years old. I was so unimpressed with the dress that I subconsciously fell in love with fashion.

There have been so many challenges. One such challenge was being robbed on set at a photoshoot - everything was stolen from us; the photographer's camera equipment, phones etc. The obvious challenge many entrepreneurs face are the financial challenges. If I had more finances, we would purchase more and better equipment. I would also invest in different projects that would increase the brand.

Have patience. Businesses take time. Panicking doesn't make problems go away or get better.

Wow, there are so many! To name a few, it would be winning the 2019 SADC Top 100 Young Leaders in the Trailblazer category and being interviewed on BBC World News.



A post shared by  (@hauteafrika) on Apr 19, 2020 at 12:42pm PDT

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■ ■ ■ we're going through tough times. What does the future of entrepreneurship look like to you?

I have anxiety and worried about what tomorrow holds. But I know God is in control.

■ ■ ■ What would you like to see changed in the South African startup landscape?

More self-help seminars and easier access to funding

■ ■ ■ What do you believe are the traits an entrepreneur needs in order to succeed?

Prayer, Perseverance and Hardwork.

■ ■ ■ Tell us about your biggest struggles as an entrepreneur, as well as some major highlights.

I started selling my clothes while I was still studying at Wits University and then one day I was told I couldn't sell anymore because it was interfering with other people's studies. I knew I had to make a quick plan and go online. I started in the fashion industry with no experience or connections. Today Haute Afrika gets calls from industry giants for collaborations and multinational corporates for their corporate gifts. It's still very surreal and I am so grateful for all the opportunities.

■ ■ ■ Why would you encourage someone to become an entrepreneur?

The more entrepreneurs there are, the more job opportunities there will be which helps our economy which reduces poverty.

■ ■ ■ Where would you like to see Haute Afrika in the next 5 years?

In five years, I would like to see Haute Afrika as an internationally recognised brand that will bring people from all over the world to Africa.

ABOUT EVAN-LEE COURIE

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