

The Thinking Watermill Society | September 2021

Interview with Temi Olanrewaju

(Founder and Designer at Reva Stryder)



Author: Maria Angela Maina, Chief Research Coordinator-Africa
at The Thinking Watermill Society.



Introduction

Reva Stryder is a female-founded African brand that prioritizes comfort and beauty alongside environmental conservation.

Temi established Reva Stryder as a luxury footwear brand that meshes her African perspective on aesthetics and Italian craftsmanship.

In this interview, The Thinking Watermill Society learns more about Reva Stryder as a growing high-end sustainable brand.



1. You are the founder of a uniquely stunning luxury footwear brand, Reva Stryder. What was your motivating factor behind its launch in 2019?

To be honest, I really wanted to conclude my twenties on a high note, by doing something I truly enjoyed! For three years, I tried working a 9-5 job, but it wasn't for me.

However, by 2017, I had a clear vision: I wanted to develop an African footwear brand that would be at the forefront of international footwear fashion in ten years.

Secondly, I wanted to create a brand that prioritized comfort as much as unique aesthetics.



2. Reva Stryder clearly pays attention to detail from the stitching to the overall comfort aspect. Does Reva Stryder also observe sustainable and ethical practices? If so, what steps are you currently taking?

Ethical and sustainable practices are vast yet attainable. However, for emerging brands like Reva Stryder with limited resources, ensuring that the entire manufacturing process adheres to all of the norms may take longer but remains achievable.

From a socioeconomic standpoint, we made sure to partner with a respected Italian manufacturer who follows ethical principles such as providing employees with safe working conditions and fair pay.

Our shoes are environmentally friendly because we invest in high-quality and timeless designs that will last a long time — avoiding the never-ending waste that quick fashion encourages.

While some argue that using leather is an act of animal cruelty and push for vegan leather, others argue that purchasing our leather from ICEC certified tanneries that follow the “Made in Italy” requirements is environmentally friendly because it is a legitimate byproduct of the huge meat industry.

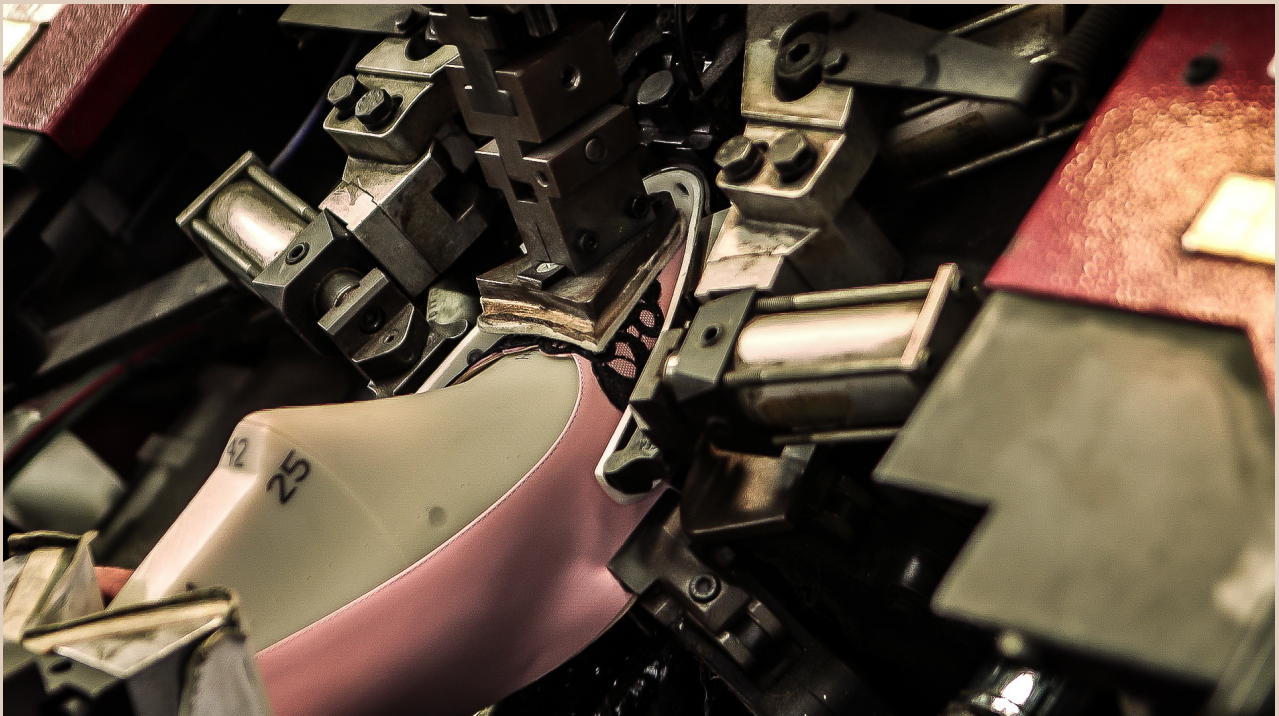
3. It is noteworthy that your brand is built on the conviction that, “shoes aren’t going to change the world, the women who wear them will.”

How does Reva Stryder empower its female workers during the production process?

Because creating a well-equipped factory is capital costly, Reva Stryder (RVS) outsources the entire production process at this time.

However, building a well-equipped factory remains a future ambition.

The goal is to build a women's footwear brand that is designed, manufactured, and managed by women.



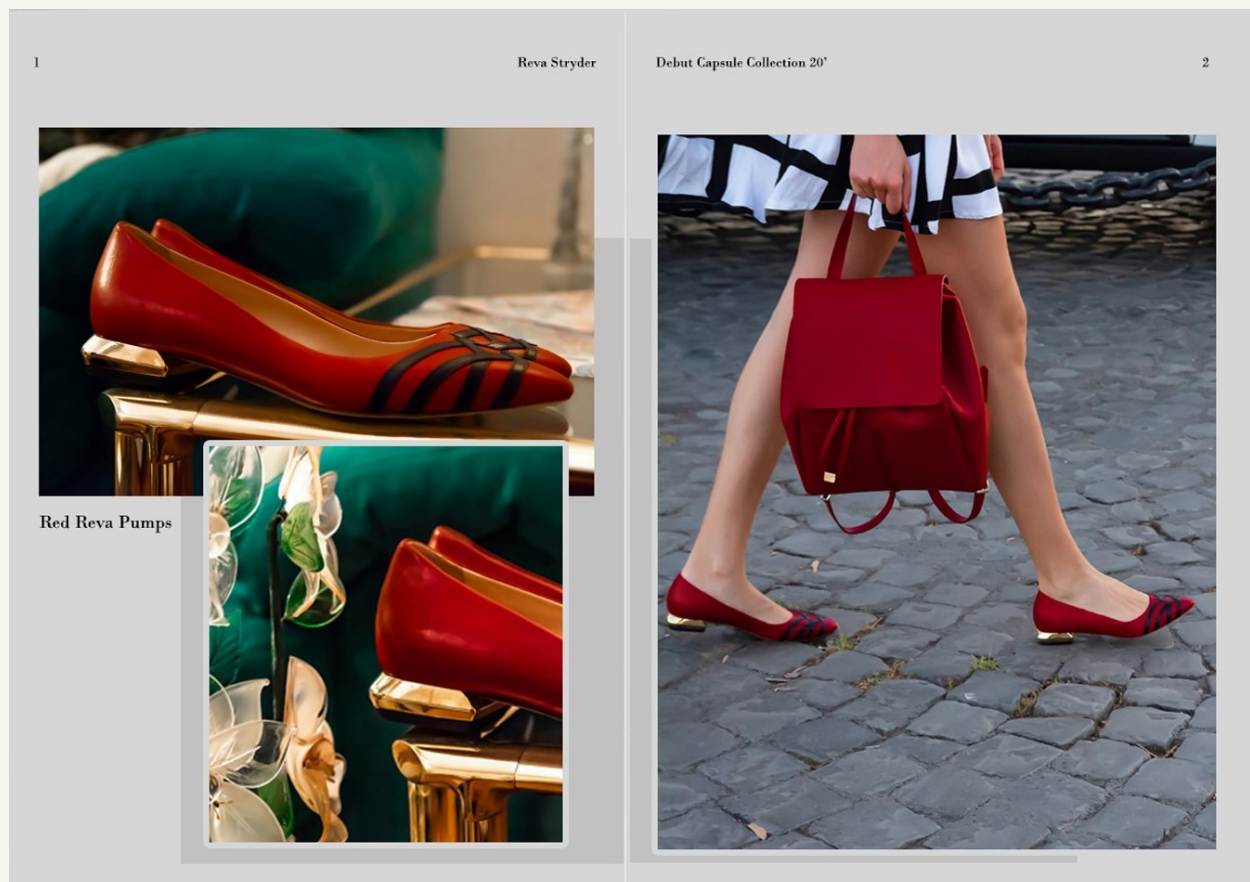
4. With that, Reva Stryder is remarkably consumer-centric. This can also be seen through the inclusion of a special message with each pair purchased.

Why is this aspect important to you?

It's just a little reminder to the incredible ladies wearing our shoes, of their own worth.

A woman's value is greater than we can possibly realize.

Simply put, she's golden!



5. You have created a brand that brings a whole new meaning to the phrase “Made in Italy.” In your opinion, what key role does Reva Stryder’s Nigerian and Italian roots play in spurring innovation in the fashion industry?

The distinctiveness of the Lady Flora design, for example, originates from my African perspective on aesthetics, the Italian factory's exceptional craftsmanship, and my modest exposure to what has already been done in the industry.

Uniqueness remains a key value for the brand. We may employ resources that have been around for a long time, but our finished products must stand out.



6. According to 2019 statistics, 495,000 people in Italy were employees in the textile and clothing industry.

Does Reva Stryder work with local Italian companies? And what has been your experience so far?

"Made in Italy" was (and still is) synonymous with timeless elegance, a guarantee of high quality and traditional craftsmanship when I was growing up. For this reason, I studied footwear design and pattern making at Arsutoria in Milan as I wanted to learn from the best.

During a field trip to the Fratelli Rossetti factory outside of Milan, the level of perfection demonstrated by the local workers piqued my interest, and I hoped to work with a great factory eventually.

That finally happened in 2018, when I collaborated with a high-end Italian footwear manufacturer to create my first line. Unlike other brands that assemble the shoes in Italy and manufacture them overseas, our shoes are completely made and packed in Italy.

Walking on the factory floor allows you to appreciate the artisans' talent, dedication, and craftsmanship.

7. Reva Stryder has exquisite designs, specifically the Lady Flora shoes which have intricate lace details. Which materials are your shoes made from and what role do they play in conserving our environment?

The Lady Flora is crafted with calf leather and a Tulle Embroidery Upper made entirely of polyamide. The latter was designed by me and custom-made by an Italian luxury textile factory for the RVS brand.

The linen is made of goat leather, with a natural leather outsole.

Our use of high-quality materials, as well as our desire to create limited and timeless designs, is intentional. This reduces waste and overproduction. Leathers used are tanned in Italy, where tight restrictions exist to reduce water pollution. The tannery's proximity to factories reduces transportation distances and reduces our carbon footprint.

You'd never find a Reva Stryder pair made of PVC, synthetic plastic.

Our factory abides by Italy's strict labour regulations. In the manufacturing process, we use water-based glues which are non-toxic, eco-friendly, easily recyclable, and safe for the artisans to handle. Dustbags are 100% cotton and reusable. As I previously stated, there is still more work to be done, it never ends.

8. To follow up, what valuable lessons have you learnt from running your own luxury footwear brand?

Passion is vital as it keeps you going on bad days.

Creativity is fantastic because it defines the brand's uniqueness, but sound business knowledge facilitates profitability.

Lastly, you may be the only person left who believes in you, but it's enough.



9. Technology now permeates our everyday lives. It is also seen in the fashion industry to help facilitate production processes.

Have you encountered this mesh of technology and fashion? What are your thoughts on the same?

Yes, our shoes are created by a factory that combines modern technology and robotic machinery with traditional handcrafting techniques to create masterpieces such as the Lady Flora shoes.

I believe that the skilful mix of tradition and innovation improve production processes, eliminates waste and reduces labour hours drastically.

Technology does not replace tradition; rather, it improves it.



10. What should we look forward to from Reva Stryder in the future?

I would love to create another collection, with a much wider range for women as we continue to explore physical retail partnerships and pop-ups in new markets.



Thank you for your cooperation on behalf of The Thinking Watermill Society. All the best in your current and future endeavours at Reva Stryder, Ms Temi Olanrewaju.

Learn More about Temi Olanrewaju

VISIT REVA STRYDER





About The Thinking Watermill Society

The Thinking Watermill Society is a non-profit organization. In particular, it promotes the debate and exchange of ideas among its members regarding the changes underway in the economic, cultural and social landscape, together with the analysis of the consequences that said changes entail, so as to identify the possible opportunities of economic, cultural and social growth related to said changes.

Our headquarters are in Rome, Italy.

Get Involved

Get yourself in gear!

Share your ideas and follow us on LinkedIn, YouTube and Spreaker.

If you wish to have more information on our activities or become a friend of our organization (a Watermill Thinker) or propose a project that you are willing to support.

[VISIT OUR WEBSITE](#)

[CONTACT US](#)



"Ideas are what make us human. Ideas do not get handed to us by elites, the rich or the powerful. Ideas are not bounded by colour, race, gender or religion."