

The Thinking Watermill Society | October 2022

## Interview with Ms Sharon Wendo

(Founder and Creative Director, Epica Jewellery)



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at The Thinking Watermill Society.



# Introduction

Sharon Wendo is the Founder of Epica Jewellery which is a Kenyan brand that makes beautiful African jewellery with a modern touch.

In this interview, The Thinking Watermill Society provides you with a deeper look into the jewellery industry through Sharon's lens as a Kenyan and woman entrepreneur.



## 1. What's the story behind the birth of Epica Jewellery?

I participated in a government project called the Kenya Youth Empowerment Project in 2015. After one year of the project, we were given internships and mine was in crafts. That is where I learned a little bit about beading.

Initially, I wasn't too sure that I wanted to pursue it seriously. It took me two years to finally decide that's the path I wanted to take. In 2017 I made the decision to start a jewelry brand and that is how Epica was born.

## 2. The British Council indicates that you began your career as a school receptionist before founding Epica Jewellery. What role does passion for your career play in running a business?

My passion had everything to do with starting my career.

Even in my early days as a receptionist, I had little-to-no skills when it came to running a business and being a designer. Yet, I have always had a deep passion for fashion and I have always been creative. All I needed to do was to take the steps to fulfill my dreams.

3. Your jewellery pieces are beautifully distinctive. What is the source of your inspiration?

I am heavily inspired by everyday fashion. I am also inspired by different African cultures and how vibrant we are.

My aim is to interpret African cultures in modern-daytimes through my pieces.



4. Have there been specific skills you had to learn along the way?

I have learned most of my skills from Youtube.

Social media has been a lifesaver for my career path and I am still learning as we speak. Learning never stops.

5. The UN reports that Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest rate of women entrepreneurs globally. What are your views on collaborating with other women entrepreneurs in the fashion space?

Women have played a major role in the growth of my business.

When I was starting out, a lot of women who interacted with my pieces loved my brand story and they made sure they recommended me to their friends. That is how the brand has grown.

I have collaborated with a number of women-owned brands that have really helped with brand awareness. Women play a big part in our brand.

## 6. What are some of the critical lessons you have learned as the founder of Epica Jewellery?

One of the biggest lessons I have learned is the importance of research.

When I started the business, I got in blindly. I knew nothing and I made a lot of mistakes along the way. Conducting research on the field you are getting into and finding mentors really helps to avoid a lot of mistakes and hurdles.



7. There has been an increasing focus on sustainability and ethics over the last few years. Does your business have any sustainable or ethical practices? If so, what are they? If not, are you working towards this?

We really focus on decent work and economic growth.

I think it's important to build a sustainable business. Being able to employ one person full-time has been a blessing and I hope to employ more as the business grows.



8. Your pieces have been showcased in several national and international media publications and fashion shows. Do you believe storytelling is important in the fashion industry?

Storytelling is very important for your customers to understand your brand, especially for African creatives.

For a very long time, our stories were told for us. We are now in a time where we have spaces for telling our own stories in our own way. This is very critical for documentation, not only for us, but for future generations.



9. You were a volunteer in the Ficha Uchi campaign which involved helping underprivileged children with uniforms. Have you carried out any other initiatives to help your community?

I haven't done any other initiatives, but I am planning to start doing more, especially by sharing the skills I have.

10. GQ South Africa rightfully named you one of four African designers to look out for this year. What can we expect to see from you and Epica Jewellery in the future?

Expect big things from us. We are working on a few projects coming in early 2023 with other Kenyan brands which we are really excited about. We are also working on releasing at least 2 collections yearly. We are working on being global.



Thank you for your cooperation on behalf of The Thinking Watermill Society. All the best in your current and future endeavours, Ms Wendo.

# Learn More about Epica Jewellery

**VISIT EPICA JEWELLERY**





# 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.

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