

Nombuso Nomzamo Khanyile on the sustainable roots of accessory brand Afrikan Passion Designs

 By Ruth Cooper

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Faced with the need to be self-reliant, 25-year-old Biochemistry and Microbiology graduate Nombuso Nomzamo Khanyile founded [Afrikan Passion Designs](#), a sustainable handmade leather accessory brand, with her partner in 2015. We got in touch with the student/designer to chat about upcycling, green living and revolutionising the African style.



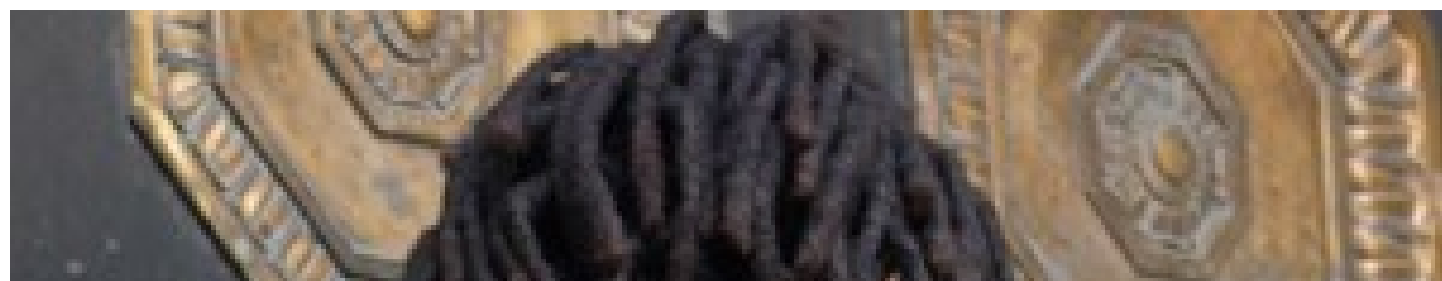
Nombuso Nomzamo Khanyile

■ ***Biochemistry, microbiology and product designer, how did this evolution come about and how do you balance these different disciplines?***

Initially, I came to Durban to do a BSc in biochemistry and microbiology at UKZN. Did some soul searching and remembered who I was, green living became a lifestyle; this completely changed my life perspective and I incorporated it into my lifestyle, through mostly upcycling and reusing. I then met my kind partner and our company Afrikan Passion Designs was born! We create handmade leather accessories with the use of upcycled materials; our sandal soles are made from upcycled car tyres.

Science is very demanding (I'm currently doing a BSc Biochemistry Honours), art/ crafting is my meditation, therefore, I make enough time to merge the two disciplines, plus I trust my team we work perfectly together.







■ ***Was it always your intention to use recycled materials and how are your products sustainable and green?***

Yes, one of the goals is to create a 100% green product, so far we are halfway as we upcycle discarded leather tyres and turn them into sandal soles. We now also use veg. tan leather.

Discarded tyres are everywhere, we made it our mission to reduce them as pollution and use them to make sandal soles.



▣ ***How do you hope to see the world shifting – when it comes to climate change and conscious living – especially when it comes to future generations?***

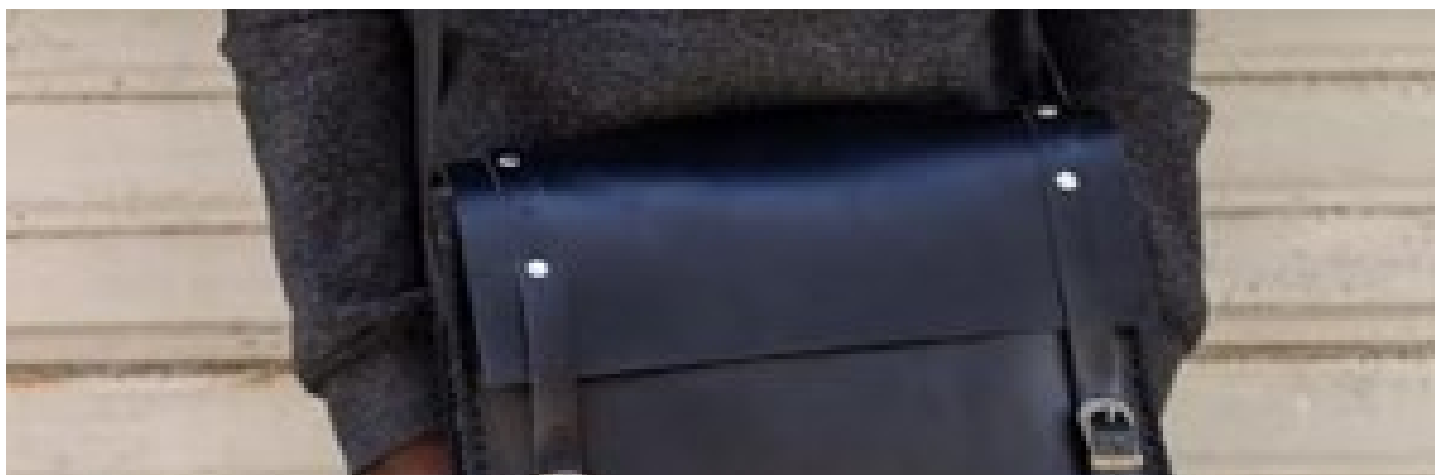
I am quite happy at how the younger generation (Gen Z) are conscious of everything, including their environment, I really hope they incorporate it into their lifestyle not just as a trend.

“ *It is our responsibility as grown-ups to educate them about the importance of taking care of one's self as well as their environment, green living has been a part of South African culture, it is not new, the migration to industrialised cities made us forget, it is imperative that we return to our ancestors' ways and heal ourselves through taking care of our ecosystem. Green living is ubuntu.* ”

▣ ***How would you describe your aesthetic and style when it comes to your designs?***

Responsible Afrikan rebels. We are revolutionising the Afrikan style through rebellion and responsibility, the K in Afrikan is intentional, it is us taking back our identity, redefining it and making it work for us.

Afrikan Passion Designs = science + art.







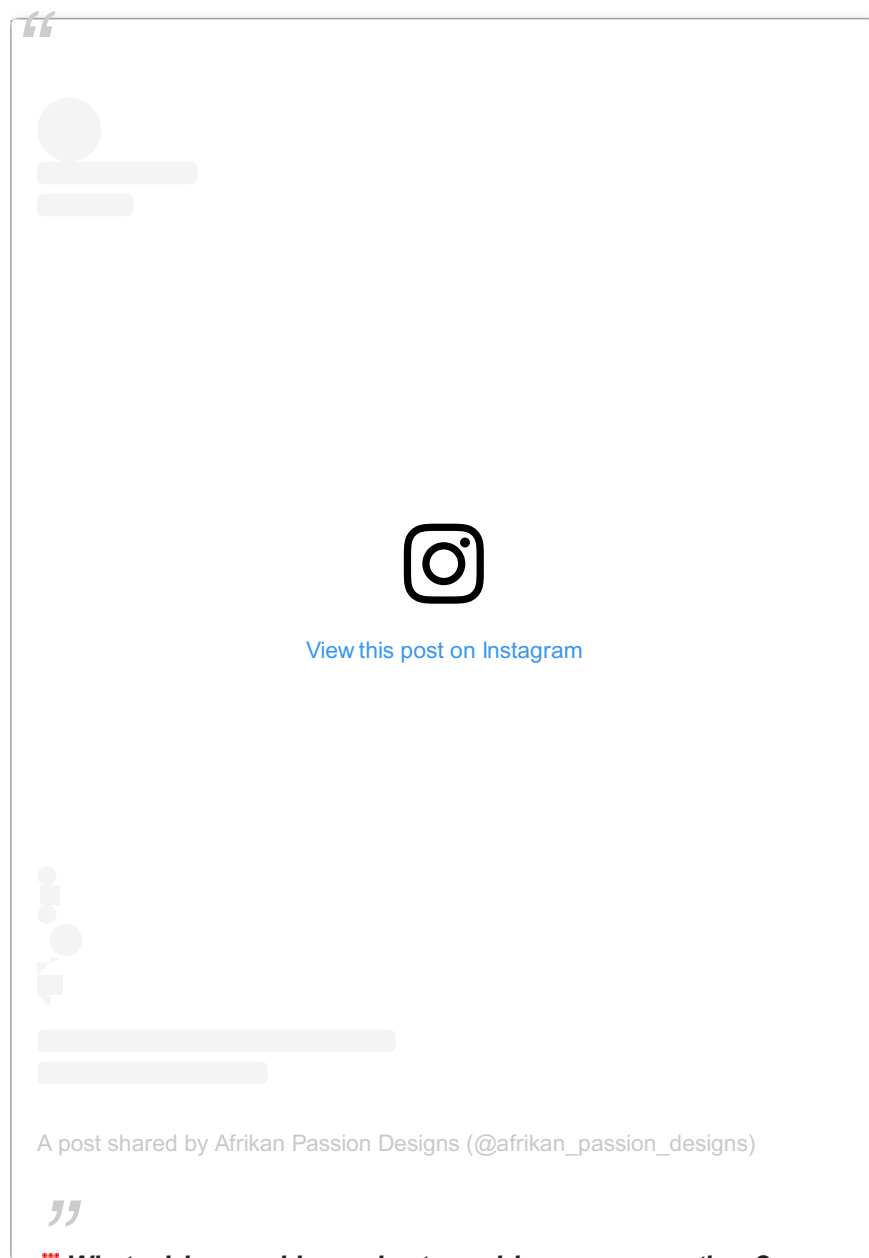
■ **What have been some of your career highlights?**

Being Design Indaba's 2020 emerging creative.

Being featured on *Forbes Africa*, *YOCO*, *Isolezwe*, *Twyg Magazine* and other media platforms.

Winning the first position on Durban Youth Connect Innovative Business Competition.

Being an example to the younger generation, they are showing me love and I appreciate it.



What advice would you give to aspiring young creatives?

Take your time, the only competition you have is yourself. Perfect your craft, take a break if you need to. Proper detailed planning on how you are going to achieve your goals.

Apply for funding/competitions; challenge yourself, networking is important, follow and engage with the right people on social media.

■ ***If you could give a message to your younger self what would it be?***

Trust and love yourself, you are everything you need. All in due time, work smartly.

■ ***Where do you see yourself in five years' time?***

I see myself happy; I know I will be happy wherever I'll be.

ABOUT RUTH COOPER

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