

How Jade's Annemarie van Wyk uses jewellery to uplift

By  Maroefah Smith

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For Jade owner Annemarie van Wyk, jewellery is more than just an ornamental piece. It's a continuation of her mother's business legacy and an opportunity to uplift those who have helped her grow the business.



Annemarie van Wyk

Alongside her husband, Rhys, Van Wyk has expanded the jewellery-making business started by her mother, Karin Delport. Since taking over the business, they've opened more branches and introduced more products and services.

More importantly, she has used her position in society and jewellery to uplift those around her.

Van Wyk talks to us about enriching women, sourcing gems and how her business partnership with her husband is like a marriage.



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 What three emotions would you like Jade's jewellery pieces to evoke?

Confidence, joy and admiration.

▣ ***You took over the store from your parents. How have you changed the way the business operates since it opened?***

We have changed many things from the look of the store, to launching new branches, product lines and services. We have evolved over time from a concept of customer-driven designs to a design-driven offering.

But the core of the business remains untouched, we remain committed to offering a premium product at an accessible price to women who are willing and able to be noticed for their own style.

We focus on superior customer service through staff training and retention to ensure only the best experience when you interact with any member of the team.

▣ ***How do you source and pick the pearls and gems?***

Sourcing has to be the most challenging part of the business. My buying trips are anything between nine and 12 days – which does not leave me with a lot of time. I travel three to four times a year to local markets in China and India and also to large jewellery shows.





To answer the question honestly, I never truly know if I am making the right choices, but I design pieces that I love to wear and make me feel good – I am fortunate that my style is also appreciated by our customers.

■ ***What role does Jade play in uplifting women?***

We believe in trying to make a big impact in peoples' lives where we can see the change and that it is profound rather than trying to fix the whole world. One of the amazing ladies of Jade who has been there since the first store opened is Pulane Thelajane.

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[Women who inspire me... true South African warrior women, mothers, breadwinners, fighters a.k.a #divas #africaninspiration #warriorwomen #truesurvivors](#)

A post shared by [annemarie van wyk](#) (@annevanwyk) on Jun 6, 2019 at 11:08am PDT

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Pulane grew up in the Eastern Cape under difficult circumstances in a very poor village and came to Stellenbosch in search of a better life. She started working at Jade – at first cleaning but we could see her ambition, talent and drive from the very start. Back then, I was working for my parents and I gave my very first pay check to her to pay for registration at CPUT.

Since then she progressed to jewellery technician, junior designer, warehouse manager and, eventually, store manager. I am so incredibly proud to say she has finished her studies in mechanical engineering at CPUT.



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She is the first person in her family to finish school and the first to get a tertiary qualification. This will change the course of her and her family's lives. She is an amazing employee, mother, wife and human being.

She inspires me more than she knows. We are lucky to not only have Pulane in the Jade ranks but also her sister Mpokoleng and her niece Tubby working for us

■ **You run the business with your husband. How do you ensure that your contributions are always 50/50?**

It is actually quite easy. It is like a marriage, not 50/50 but 100/100. It is an old cliché but there is a lot of truth in it.

We support each other a lot and pick up the slack whenever there is any. We definitely don't count hours or tasks. We both know we couldn't do it without the other.

I think it works so well because we focus on very different sides of the business. Rhys concentrates on the management and strategic side and I have complete control of creative.

We don't usually interfere in each other's responsibilities but we do make the big decisions together.

▣ What's the biggest challenge for women in business?

Staying ahead of new technology. My biggest challenge is social media. It's ridiculous as I am only 31 and should know how to "market" my own brand, but it can be overwhelming at times. As an entrepreneur, one has to do everything – especially in the beginning.

As your business grows you need to learn to trust others and let go so you can focus on growing your business. My biggest challenge has been handing over control to people who are better than I am and to learn to focus on what I bring to Jade.



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▣ What's the most condescending thing you've ever been subjected to as a businesswoman?

I was 24 when Rhys and I opened our first Jade store in Franschhoek and 25 when we bought my parents out completely. I am proud of what we have achieved so far and don't believe in feeling like a victim.

Unfortunately, it is usually women who are condescending. Sometimes customers (because of the age difference) refuse to acknowledge the fact that I am (now) the owner and will still insist on speaking to Karin (my mother).

▣ What's next for Jade?

We have so much going on, it is a very exciting year for Jade. We just relaunched our new concept store at our first location in Stellenbosch on the anniversary of our opening in 2006. We are celebrating our seventh birthday in Franschhoek this year and our fourth in Johannesburg.

We will be exhibiting in New York in August; Paris in September; and Miami in October! Lastly, we are incredibly excited about the possibility of launching a range of Jade products in the USA early next year, but it is a bit too soon to give any details!

Follow Van Wyk and her jewellery-making adventures on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#). While you're at it, check out the jewellery on <https://www.jade-sa.co.za/>.

ABOUT MAROEFAH SMITH

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