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PHOTOGRAPHY, PAGEANTRY, MODELING AND COMPETITIONS

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Acc Models Randburg

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For many women, balancing family, business, and personal ambitions can feel like a constant challenge. For Chantal Cloete, however, those different roles have become the foundation of a journey built on determination, confidence, and the belief that dreams can be pursued at any stage of life. As a finalist in the Mrs Opulent category for The Next Opulent Model South Africa 2026, Chantal is proving that success is not defined by age, but by the courage to keep moving forward.

When Chantal's name was announced as a finalist, it was a moment filled with emotion and pride. She describes the experience as both humbling and exciting. "I felt incredibly honoured, grateful, and excited," she says. "Being announced as a finalist was a reminder that dreams do not have an age limit. It was a proud moment that reflected my journey of growth and believing in myself despite life's challenges."

Behind the confident smile is a woman who wears many hats. Chantal is a wife, mother, businesswoman, and the proud owner of Vo2 Max Fitness Centre in Pretoria. Her passion for helping people improve their health and confidence has shaped much of her life and career. "My passion has always been helping people improve their health, confidence, and quality of life," she explains.

Although fitness has long been part of her life, modelling offered a completely different challenge. What started as a personal goal soon developed into something much bigger. "My modelling journey started as a way to challenge myself and step outside my comfort zone," she says. "What began as a personal goal soon became a platform to inspire women to embrace who they are and pursue their dreams with confidence."

Entering one of South Africa's biggest modelling competitions was not simply about walking a runway.

For Chantal, it represented an opportunity to grow while encouraging others to do the same. "I wanted to prove to myself that it is never too late to follow a dream," she says.

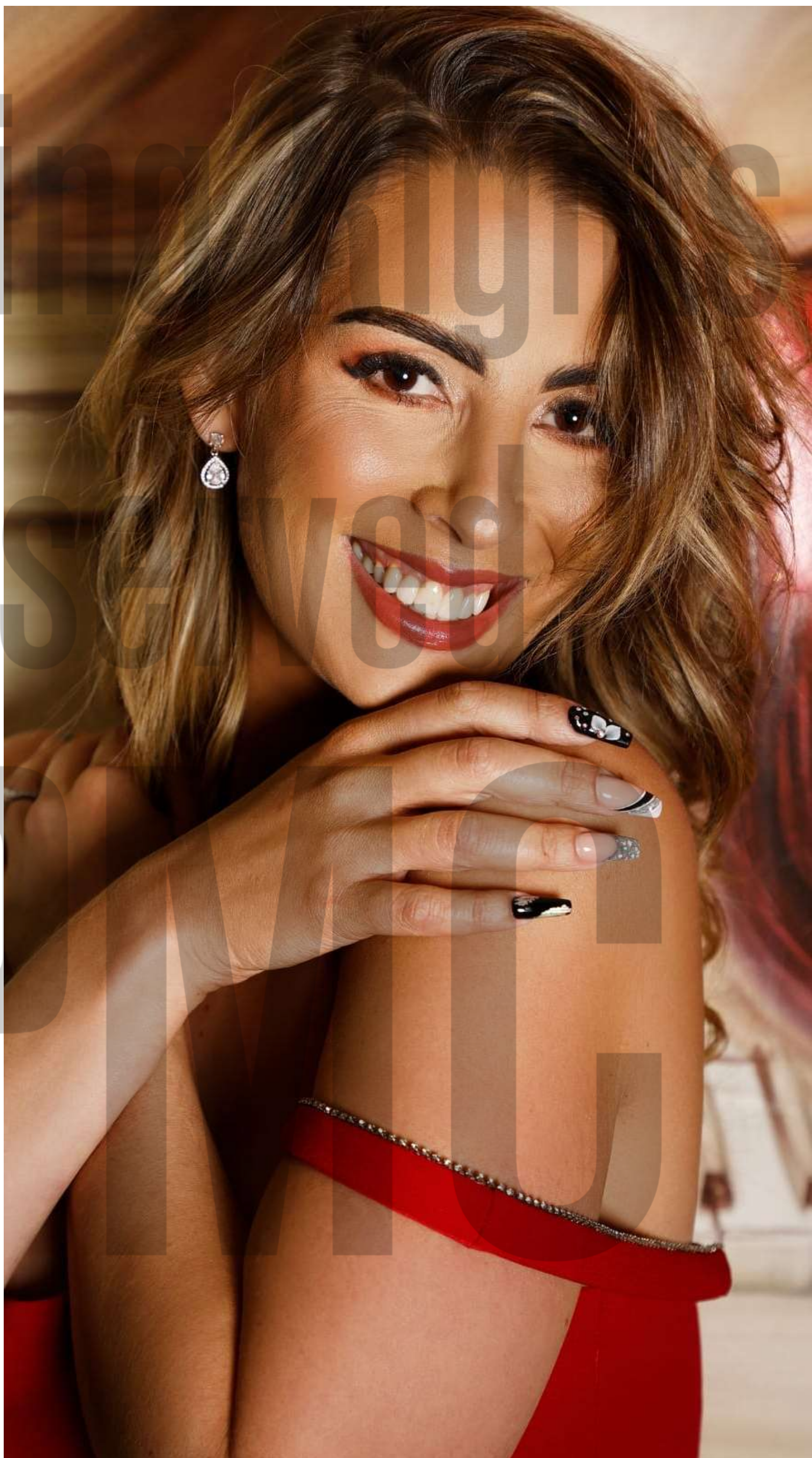




Photo credit: Van Vuuren Photography

“The Opulent platform stands for confidence, empowerment, and authenticity. I saw it as an opportunity to grow, inspire others, and represent women who continue to chase their goals while balancing family and career responsibilities.”

Being part of the Mrs Opulent category carries special meaning for her. She believes it reflects the realities of women who manage multiple responsibilities while still making space for their personal goals. “Being part of the Mrs Opulent category means representing strong women who wear many hats every day,” Chantal explains. “It is about showing that being a wife, mother, and business owner does not mean putting your dreams aside.”

As the competition moves closer to the final event, finalists are preparing to walk in front of more than 5,000 spectators. While the prospect may seem overwhelming to some, Chantal is approaching the challenge with focus and discipline.

“I am preparing by focusing on my fitness, practising my runway walk, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, and building my confidence,” she says. “As a gym owner, health and wellness are already part of my daily life, so I am using that foundation to ensure I am physically and mentally prepared.” One of the most rewarding parts of the journey has been

the people she has met along the way. The support she has experienced within the competition has left a lasting impression. “The highlight has been meeting so many inspiring women from different walks of life,” she says. “The friendships, support, and encouragement within the Opulent family have been truly special.”

Balancing business ownership, family responsibilities, and modelling requires commitment and careful planning. Chantal admits that her schedule can often be demanding, but she believes passion makes all the difference. “As a gym owner, wife, and mother, my schedule can be demanding, but I believe that when you are passionate about something, you make time for it,” she says. “Having a strong support system and staying focused on my goals helps me maintain balance.”

Like many successful women, Chantal has faced obstacles along the way. Both personal and professional challenges have tested her strength, but she has always chosen to learn from those experiences. “Every challenge has taught me valuable lessons and made me stronger,” she says. “Instead of allowing obstacles to stop me, I use them as motivation to keep moving forward.”

Modelling has also transformed the way she views herself. Beyond the glamour and fashion, it has helped her appreciate her own worth. “Modelling has helped me appreciate myself for who I am,” she says. “It has taught me that true beauty comes from confidence, kindness, and authenticity.”

When asked what qualities a Mrs Opulent finalist should represent, her answer reflects the values she lives by every day. “A Mrs Opulent finalist should represent confidence, grace, integrity, kindness, leadership, and authenticity,” she says. “Beauty is not only about appearance; it is about how we treat others, overcome challenges, and inspire those around us.”

Outside of modelling, Chantal remains dedicated to fitness, wellness, family, and community involvement. She enjoys helping others become healthier and more confident while encouraging them to reach their full potential.

Looking ahead, she hopes to collaborate with brands and organisations that promote confidence, health, elegance, and female empowerment. Her ultimate goal is to continue inspiring women to celebrate their uniqueness and embrace their strengths.

Throughout her journey, one group of people has remained firmly by her side. “My family has been my greatest source of support,” she says. “Their encouragement, love, and belief in me have given me the strength to continue pursuing my goals and dreams.”

For women who feel they may have missed their chance to pursue their ambitions, Chantal offers a message filled with hope and encouragement. “It is never too late to start,” she says. “Your age, circumstances, or past experiences do not determine your future. Believe in yourself, take that first step, and trust the process. Every dream begins with the courage to try.”

Through her journey as a Mrs Opulent finalist, Chantal continues to show that confidence grows when people dare to challenge themselves, and that some of life's most rewarding opportunities can begin with a single decision to believe in yourself.



A portrait of a young woman with long, dark, wavy hair, looking directly at the camera. She is wearing a gold sequined, one-shoulder top. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

Leigh-Anne

**A Journey Of Confidence,
Growth And International
Modelling Dreams**

Modeling Academy: Ace Models Randburg
Photo credit: Van Vuuren Photography
Outfit: New Romantics Couture

Meet Leigh-Anne Dhevalall

Miss Ace Models Randburg

A story by:
**Mckayla
Faure**



For Leigh, being selected to represent ACE Models Randburg at the Mr and Miss ACE Models International Pageant is the result of years of dedication, personal growth and believing in herself. The opportunity is one she describes as both exciting and humbling, and one she is determined to make the most of.

"I was absolutely overwhelmed with joy and gratitude when I heard the news," she says, explaining that being chosen felt like "a reward for my hard work and a dream come true." While the excitement was overwhelming, Leigh also understood the responsibility that comes with representing her franchise on an international stage. "It is an honour I do not take lightly, and it has only fuelled my determination to give my absolute best."

Fashion and creativity have always been part of Leigh's life. Long before stepping onto a runway, she enjoyed experimenting with hairstyles, creating outfits and expressing herself through style. Those interests eventually led her to ACE Models after a family member encouraged her to join.

Looking back, she says that taking that first step changed everything. "Once I joined, I never looked back," Leigh says. "It has become so much more than a hobby for me. It is a space where I feel most like myself." What began as curiosity quickly developed into a passion

and opened doors she had never imagined.

Joining ACE Models also helped Leigh build something even more valuable than modelling skills. She admits that confidence did not always come naturally, and she wanted to find a place where she could grow. "From the moment I joined, I felt supported, challenged and seen," she says. Through the guidance of coach Kyla Taylor and the encouragement she received, Leigh slowly began to believe in herself.

"Before I started, I was quite shy and wasn't the biggest fan of public speaking," she explains. "The training and encouragement helped me discover a strength I didn't know I had." Today she says she has learned "to own the space I walk into" and to embrace what makes her different instead of hiding it.

Her passion for fashion and creative hairstyling has also influenced the way she approaches modelling. Rather than focusing only on what she wears, Leigh enjoys understanding how every detail contributes to the finished result. "When I think about a look, I think about the entire picture," she explains. "The clothing, hair and overall aesthetic all communicate something." That mindset allows her to work closely with photographers, stylists and makeup artists while appreciating the creativity each person brings. "These passions make me versatile and deeply engaged in every shoot I am part of."

One of Leigh's favourite parts of the industry is the opportunity to work alongside talented people who all share the same goal. "Every shoot, every show and every collaboration is an opportunity to create something beautiful and meaningful," she says. She especially enjoys the friendships and teamwork that develop behind the scenes. "There is a magic that happens when a team comes together to bring a vision to life, and being part of that is something I treasure deeply."

Along the way, Leigh has learned that success is about far more than perfection. One of the biggest lessons ACE Models has taught her is that "consistency and character matter more than perfection." She believes that remaining professional, prepared and positive is what helps a person continue growing, even when

things become difficult. Like many young models, Leigh has experienced moments of self-doubt and rejection. "There were times when I compared myself to others and felt like I did not measure up," she admits. Instead of giving up, she leaned on her family, strengthened her faith and reminded herself why she started. "I chose to see every setback as a stepping stone rather than a stop sign."

As she prepares for the international pageant, Leigh is working hard both physically and mentally. She is practising her runway walk, improving her stage presence and communication skills, while making sure she stays focused throughout the journey. "I want to represent myself and ACE Models Randburg with confidence and grace," she says. Her family, friends and coach continue to encourage her every step of the way. "My parents have sacrificed so much to help me pursue my passion," she says, adding that Kyla Taylor has been "incredibly inspiring" throughout her journey.

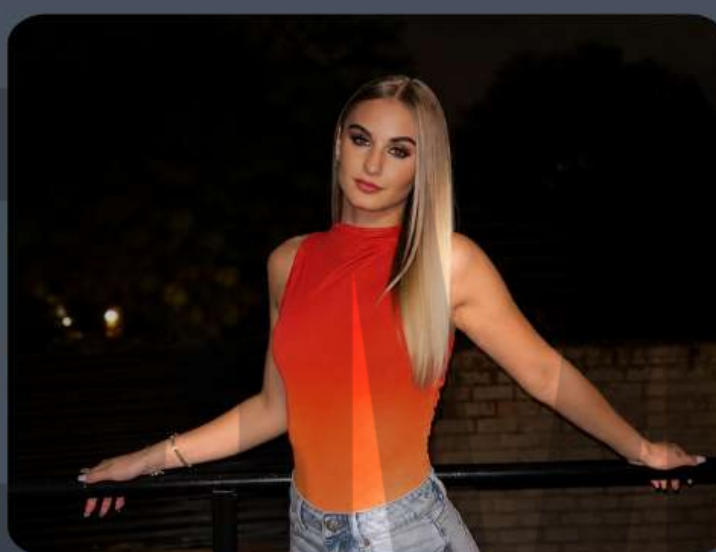
Although Leigh dreams of travelling the world one day, with Japan and Hawaii at the top of her bucket list, her focus right now is firmly on November's international competition. More than winning a title, she hopes to leave a lasting impression. "Success is not defined solely by a placing or a title," she says. "True success would be knowing that I inspired at least one person, that I made my family and franchise proud, and that I walked away having grown in ways I cannot yet imagine." For Leigh, that would be the greatest achievement of all.



This Life Photography

CHININKE HOMAN

THE NEXT OPULENT MODEL SOUTH AFRICA 2026 FINALIST



Chininke never imagined that entering one of South Africa's biggest modelling competitions would lead to her becoming a finalist in The Next Opulent Model South Africa 2026. The young model and student described the moment as something she still struggles to fully believe.

"I was honestly shocked at first because I wasn't expecting it," Chininke said. "Once it sank in, I felt incredibly grateful and excited. Being announced as a finalist made me feel proud of how far I've come and reminded me that taking chances and putting yourself out there can really pay off."

At just 19 years old, Chininke is already balancing her studies in Project Management at Akademia while building her place in the modelling industry. Fashion, beauty and creativity have always been a big part of her life, and modelling became something much more serious after she discovered how much she loved being in front of the camera.

"My modelling journey started from simply enjoying photoshoots and being in front of the camera," she explained. "The more I learned about the industry, the more I wanted to challenge myself and grow."

What began as a simple interest quickly turned into something she wanted to pursue professionally. Chininke has worked hard to gain experience, improve herself and create opportunities that could help her grow in the industry. Entering The Next Opulent Model South Africa 2026 was one of those opportunities.

She admitted that stepping into such a major competition was intimidating at first, but she knew she wanted to prove something to herself. "I wanted to challenge myself and step outside of my comfort zone," she said. "I also wanted to prove to myself that I'm capable of achieving more than I sometimes think I can." Being selected in the Female Runway category holds special meaning for Chininke because runway modelling

has always fascinated her. She believes there is something unique about being able to present a designer's vision confidently on stage while still expressing your own personality. "Being part of the Female Runway category feels like a huge achievement and motivates me to keep improving and growing as a model," she shared.

The Opulent stage is known for its large audience, with finalists expected to walk in front of more than 5000 spectators. While many people would feel overwhelmed by the thought, Chininke has chosen to focus on preparation and mindset. She spends time practicing her walk, improving her posture and building confidence. More importantly, she reminds herself to enjoy every moment of the journey. "Walking in front of so many people is exciting, but I'm choosing to see it as an opportunity rather than something to be nervous about," she said.

For Chininke, one of the most exciting parts of the competition has been connecting with other contestants who are equally passionate about modelling and fashion. She says the experience has introduced her to talented people who are all chasing similar dreams. "The support and excitement surrounding the competition has made the journey really special," she said.

Although modelling may appear glamorous from the outside, Chininke admits that it comes with challenges. One of the biggest struggles she faced was learning not to compare herself to others in the industry. Social media and competitions often make it easy for young models to feel pressured or insecure.

Chininke says she had to learn that every person's journey is different. "I've learned to focus on my own growth and remember that everyone starts somewhere," she explained. "Staying consistent and believing in myself has helped me overcome a lot of self-doubt."

Through modelling, Chininke has also discovered a new level of confidence within herself. She believes the industry has pushed her to become stronger, more self-assured and more willing to take risks. "It has taught me to believe in myself, accept myself, and be more confident in who I am," she said. Outside

of modelling, Chininke enjoys photography, social media content creation, fashion and spending time with close friends and family. Despite her busy schedule, she remains focused on her studies while continuing to pursue her dreams in the fashion industry. She describes herself as a creative person who enjoys exploring new ideas and expressing herself in different ways.

Looking ahead, Chininke dreams of working with luxury fashion brands and walking in major fashion week shows around the world. She hopes to one day represent brands that celebrate individuality, confidence and creativity. "Walking in a major fashion week show would be a dream," she said.

Throughout her journey, Chininke says her family and close friends have played an important role in keeping her motivated. Their encouragement helped her believe in herself during moments of uncertainty. "Having people who genuinely support your dreams makes a huge difference," she shared.

As she continues preparing for the big Opulent stage, Chininke hopes her story can inspire other young girls who dream of becoming runway models one day. She wants them to understand that everyone begins somewhere and that confidence grows over time. "Don't be afraid to start, even if you feel nervous or inexperienced," she said. "Your uniqueness is what makes you special, and confidence comes from embracing who you are."





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Jadon

**From Shy Dreamer to
International Stage Through
Confidence and Determination**

Modeling Academy: Ace Models Randburg
Photo credit: Van Vuuren Photography
Outfit: New Romantics Couture

Interview with Jadon Nadasen

Mr Ace Models Randburg

A story by:
Mckayla
Faure



Jadon is proving that confidence can grow from taking a single step outside your comfort zone. As he prepares to represent ACE Models Randburg at the Mr and Miss ACE Models International Pageant, the young model is embracing every opportunity that comes his way while staying focused on his dreams. His journey has already opened exciting doors, and he believes the best is still to come.

Being selected to represent ACE Models Randburg was a moment Jadon will never forget. "I felt very excited to be given this opportunity and blessed," he says. "Representing ACE Models and being a proud ambassador was a dream come true." The opportunity is more than just another competition for him. It is recognition of the hard work and dedication he has shown since beginning his modelling career.

Jadon joined ACE Models in January last year, and the experience has already transformed his life. During his first year, he participated in numerous photoshoots for the agency and achieved another important milestone by signing with GAPA Model Agency. Away from the runway, he is in his second year of college studying Creative Communication. When he has free time, he enjoys watching Formula One and football, giving him a balance between his studies, hobbies and modelling career.

Looking back, Jadon admits he was once a very shy person with big dreams. Joining ACE Models changed the way he viewed himself. "I realised that I don't need to be shy or afraid of anything," he explains. "It built my confidence and my character." The growth he has experienced has not only made him a stronger model but has also helped him become more confident in everyday life.

Representing ACE Models on an international stage means everything to him. "It will be a dream made reality," he says. Knowing he will carry the name of his agency onto an international platform motivates him to work even harder and make everyone proud.

Photographic modelling has become one of Jadon's favourite parts of the industry. He enjoys the creativity that every shoot offers. "You can do many different poses

and styles in the photoshoot with confidence," he says. "Each one is unique because of the themes or the companies that we shoot with." Every session allows him to express himself differently while learning new skills in front of the camera.

Among his many achievements, Jadon says being named Mr ACE Models Randburg stands out as one of his proudest moments. Winning several trophies in different categories gave him confidence that he was moving in the right direction. Another unforgettable experience came during the agency's Term 4 examination when he had the privilege of meeting Johan Ungerer, Managing Director of Opulent Models South Africa, and attending MOPA. "It was an awesome opportunity," he says.

Jadon is quick to recognise the people who have helped him grow. He credits his modelling teacher, Kyla, as one of his biggest supporters. "She has always given me new opportunities in the modelling industry and has always helped me with building my self-confidence and my work ethic," he says. "She supports and pushes me to reach my full potential."

Preparation for the international pageant is already well underway. Jadon spends time practising his poses, perfecting his pageant walk and mentally preparing himself for the competition. "I am psyching myself up for this great opportunity," he says, knowing that confidence is just as important as technique.

Although he describes himself as naturally reserved, modelling has encouraged him to become more outgoing. "In the modelling industry you need to be out there and outspoken," he explains. "Modelling is actually assisting me to be more outspoken." He believes stepping outside his comfort zone has helped him develop valuable life skills that will benefit him well beyond the

modelling world. Like many young models, Jadon has learned that success requires patience. He admits that many people expect endless photoshoot opportunities, but reality is often different. "I have learned to be patient," he says. "Everything happens in its time." That mindset keeps him focused on steady progress rather than quick success. His biggest inspiration comes from home.

Jadon says his parents have sacrificed so much to give him these opportunities, and their support motivates him every day. "I would like to make this modelling opportunity a great success, so that I can one day take care of them," he says. Retiring his parents one day remains one of his greatest goals.

Looking to the future, Jadon dreams of modelling for major international brands while also building his own successful business. He hopes his journey encourages others to believe in themselves. "You are capable of anything," he says. "Do not let fear hold you back. And if you fail, try again until you succeed."

As he prepares for the Mr and Miss ACE Models International Pageant, Jadon already considers reaching the international stage a victory. "I hope to enjoy every second of preparation and believe in myself that I will do my best," he says. "It is going to be a lifetime experience." With determination, humility and growing confidence, Jadon is ready to make the most of every moment that lies ahead.



This Life Photography

Introducing Maderi Lemmer

Strength, Discipline and Dreams Beyond Limits



Fashion designer Maderi Lemmer has built a name for herself through creativity, attention to detail, and a passion for creating garments that tell a story. As the founder of Maderi Couture, she has transformed her love for fashion into a thriving brand known for bespoke bridal gowns, matric farewell dresses, special occasion wear, maternity collections, and the introduction of the Flying Dress concept to South Africa.

For Maderi, fashion has always been much more than clothing. "Fashion has never been just about fabric and thread for me. It has always been about storytelling, transformation, and creating moments that people remember for a lifetime," she says. Her journey into the industry was not something she initially planned. Raised in a family of teachers, she expected to follow a similar path. However, after returning to Pretoria, she found herself questioning her future and searching for a new direction.

That search led her to a local boutique owned by a family friend. What began as a simple request for work soon became the foundation of her future career. "Walking into that boutique felt like stepping into a fairytale," Maderi recalls. Surrounded by imported laces, beautiful fabrics, and custom-made garments, she quickly discovered a natural talent for understanding fabrics, sewing techniques, garment construction, and pattern-making.

Recognising her passion, her father encouraged her to pursue fashion professionally. He gifted her an enrolment form to study Fashion and Design, a decision that would change her life. Four years later, armed with a Bachelor's degree and a dream, she was ready to begin her career.

A move to Rustenburg presented both challenges and opportunities. Luxury fashion was not easily accessible, and professional fashion opportunities were limited. Instead of seeing obstacles, Maderi saw potential. She identified a growing demand for beautiful yet affordable matric farewell and wedding dresses.

Working from a small one-bedroom apartment, she laid the foundation for what would become Maderi Couture.



Introducing Maderi Lemmer

Strength, Discipline and Dreams Beyond Limits



Over the years, the business continued to grow, even through difficult periods. After the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic and another move back to Pretoria, she rebuilt her business and strengthened her vision. "With each setback came an opportunity to refine my skills, strengthen my vision, and elevate my craft," she explains.

One of the milestones in her career came when she was selected to design garments for Miss Pretoria Tshwane 2021. The opportunity allowed her work to reach a wider audience and remains one of her proudest achievements.

Another turning point arrived through an unexpected maternity photoshoot request. Designing that garment inspired an entirely new direction for her brand. "I fell in love with the idea of empowering women through fashion during one of the most transformative periods of their lives," she says. This inspiration led to the creation of the Maderi Couture Maternity Collection, featuring luxury robes, flowing fabrics, dramatic silhouettes, and elegant designs created to celebrate motherhood.

Although she enjoys designing a variety of garments, bridal wear holds a special place in her heart. "I have always believed that a wedding dress should be more than a garment. It should be a reflection of a bride's story, personality, and dreams," she says. Whether creating a classic white gown, a colourful design inspired by nature, or a striking black dress for a non-traditional bride, every gown is carefully crafted to reflect the individual wearing it.

One of the elements that makes Maderi Couture stand out is its personalised approach. Every garment is custom-made to suit the client's personality, vision, and style. "Every piece is customised to reflect your personality, your vision, and your story," she explains. For Maderi, understanding her clients is just as important as selecting fabrics and creating patterns. The process behind every Maderi Couture design begins with listening. Inspiration can come from

nature, emotions, colours, architecture, or even a personal story shared by a client. From there, sketches are developed, fabrics are sourced, patterns are created, and fittings ensure every detail is perfect. The result is a garment that is both beautiful and meaningful.

Maderi is also known for bringing the Flying Dress concept to South Africa. The dramatic designs feature long flowing trains that create breathtaking visual effects during photoshoots. "I wanted to create something bold, empowering, and unforgettable," she says. Designed for women of all shapes and sizes, the Flying Dress has become one of her most recognised creations and a symbol of confidence and self-expression.

Keeping up with fashion trends is important, but Maderi believes in staying true to her own identity as a designer. She studies international fashion developments while maintaining the craftsmanship, elegance, and individuality that define her brand. This balance allows her to create modern designs without losing the signature style her clients have come to love.

Looking ahead, Maderi has ambitious plans for the future. She hopes to expand Maderi Couture, showcase her work on larger platforms, and continue contributing to the growth of the South African fashion industry. She is equally passionate about inspiring future designers to follow their dreams.

Her advice to aspiring designers is simple yet powerful: "Believe in your vision, work hard, and never be afraid to start small." Having built her brand from a one-bedroom apartment into a respected couture label, she understands that success is achieved through dedication, patience, and passion.

Today, Maderi Couture reflects everything Maderi values most: creativity, authenticity, craftsmanship, and celebrating individuality. Whether designing for a bride, a matric farewell student, an expectant mother, or a woman wanting to feel extraordinary, Maderi continues to create garments that become treasured memories. As she proudly says, "Most importantly, I want Maderi Couture to remain a place where dreams become reality."



Facebook: @CoutureMaderi
Instagram: @couturemaderi



GERDALIZE BUKES

THE *Next* OPULENT
MODEL™
SOUTH AFRICA

Gerdalize Bukes is using her journey as a Curve Category finalist in The Next Opulent Model South Africa 2026 to inspire women to embrace their uniqueness, chase their dreams and believe that age and size should never define their potential.





At 44 years old, Gerdalize Bukes is proving that confidence, ambition and a willingness to step outside your comfort zone can create exciting opportunities at any stage of life. As a finalist in the Curve Category of The Next Opulent Model South Africa 2026, she is embracing a journey that is not only helping her grow as a model but also allowing her to inspire women who may believe that age or size could stand in the way of their dreams.

When Gerdalize was announced as a finalist, the news filled her with excitement and optimism. For her, the achievement represented more than a place in a prestigious competition. It was another opportunity to challenge herself and continue growing. She describes the moment as a chance to push her limits, saying she was “very excited” because it offered her “a chance to grow and get more confident” in herself.

Originally from a background outside the modelling spotlight, Gerdalize’s journey into the industry began when she entered Mrs South Africa. What started as a single opportunity soon developed into a genuine passion. As she gained experience and confidence, more doors began to open, eventually leading to her being scouted by GAPA Models.

Looking back, she says her modelling journey simply “grew from there,” giving her opportunities she never expected when she first started. Part of what

motivates Gerdalize is her love for personal challenges. She enjoys discovering what she is capable of and refuses to allow fear or uncertainty to stop her from trying something new. She explains that she entered one of South Africa’s biggest modelling competitions because she loves “to challenge myself and see what can happen next.” That mindset has become one of the driving forces behind her success.

Representing the Curve Category carries a special meaning for Gerdalize. She sees herself as an example for women who may think they are too old or do not fit the traditional image of a model. Rather than focusing on stereotypes, she wants to show that beauty comes in many forms. For her, the opportunity is about “representing myself and showing older ladies that you can do anything no matter the age or your size.” It is a message she hopes will encourage more women to pursue their goals without hesitation.

One of the most exciting parts of the competition will be walking the runway in front of more than 5,000 spectators. While many finalists may feel nervous about such a large audience, Gerdalize is eagerly looking forward to the experience. She admits that she loves “the stage, the lights and the action” and cannot wait to stand on a stage where many celebrities have performed. For her, the opportunity is “such a privilege” and something she truly appreciates.

So far, one of the highlights of her Opulent journey has been attending the MOPA Party. Although there have been many memorable moments, that event stands out as one of her favourite experiences because it allowed her to celebrate the journey alongside fellow finalists.

Modelling has also played an important role in shaping Gerdalize’s confidence and self-image. One of the biggest lessons she has learned is not to compare herself to others. Instead, she focuses on becoming the best version of herself. She believes people should “not look at someone else’s journey or how they walk and look, because we are not the same,” adding that the most important thing is “to work on yourself and be you.” This outlook has also helped her deal with challenges and stereotypes within the

modelling industry. Rather than worrying about fitting into someone else’s expectations, she encourages others to embrace their individuality. Her advice to women is simple: “Be you and believe in yourself and work hard to be the best version of you.” She also reminds people not to compare themselves to others because every individual has their own strengths and qualities.

When discussing what makes a successful model, Gerdalize once again returns to the importance of authenticity. She believes that success comes from recognising your unique qualities and developing them. In her view, aspiring models should remember that “we are uniquely made and have our own superpower,” while also investing in themselves through training, classes and mentorship opportunities.

As a size 12 model, Gerdalize is passionate about promoting body positivity and challenging outdated ideas about beauty. She points out that “models come in all shapes and sizes,” and believes the most important thing is to be “healthy and happy.”

Away from the runway, Gerdalize enjoys an active lifestyle. She loves training, spending time in the gym, participating in endurance sports, competing in Ironman events and taking part in CrossFit. Her commitment to fitness reflects the same determination she brings to every area of her life.

Looking ahead, Gerdalize dreams of working with celebrated South African designer Gert-Johan Coetzee because his work is “so different” and inspires her creativity. She also hopes to walk at major fashion weeks in New York or Paris one day. Throughout her journey, she credits her husband and two sons as her biggest supporters. As for the future, Gerdalize remains focused on growth, fashion week opportunities and proving that dreams do not come with an age limit. As she says, “Maybe I am too old, but maybe I am just what they are looking for.”



GABYRIELLA
GROENEWALD





Gabyriella Groenewald has spent the past decade building a name for herself in the pageant industry, but on 1 May 2026 she achieved something few competitors ever experience when she walked away from Pageant Festival Africa with an incredible 22 awards in a single evening.

At just 20 years old, Gabyriella has already built an impressive journey that began when she was only ten years old. Growing up in a small town in KwaZulu-Natal, she never imagined that an unexpected change in direction after a hockey accident would lead her to the pageant stage. She entered her first pageant in 2016 and quickly discovered a passion that would shape her future.

In 2017, she joined Trelique Models International and has continued to grow ever since. Looking back, she says the industry taught her valuable lessons about discipline, confidence and determination. "One thing I can say with certainty is that giving up is not in my dictionary," she explains.

Although Gabyriella had won 11 awards at Pageant Festival the previous year, nothing prepared her for what happened in 2026. She admits the reality only truly sank in when she returned to her hotel room and laid out every crown, sash, certificate and award across the bed. "That was the moment when it really sank in — I had just walked away with 22 awards in one night," she says. While she was proud of the achievement, she laughs when remembering her immediate concern. "Where am I going to put all of these crowns and sashes?" she joked.

For Gabyriella, however, success has never been measured by the number of awards collected. She believes the real reward comes from the hard work behind every achievement. "It is about the journey behind those awards — the hard work, the countless hours of practice, the sore feet, the sacrifices and finally stepping onto that stage," she says.

As the evening unfolded, her name seemed to be called repeatedly. She recalls placing one crown on the table before hearing her contestant number announced again. "It was somewhere between thinking, 'Here I go again,' and 'Yes! Here I go again!'" she laughs. One of her favourite memories came from a

family seated nearby who celebrated every win as enthusiastically as she did. Their excitement added to an evening she will never forget.

One particularly special moment came during the Evening Wear category. Earlier in the performance, Gabyriella stumbled slightly on stage and feared it had cost her a placing. Instead of allowing the mistake to affect her confidence, she encouraged herself to keep going. When she was later announced as a category winner, she was stunned.

"My jaw literally dropped," she recalls. The experience taught her that perfection is not always what matters most. What matters is how a person responds when things do not go according to plan.

While pageantry initially attracted her because of the dresses, hairstyles and excitement, Gabyriella says her reasons for competing have changed significantly over the years. Today, she is inspired by the opportunity to create meaningful change. Through pageantry she has participated in charity work, motivational speaking, judging events and advocacy projects.

One of her proudest achievements outside of competition is creating Awareness Projects International, a social media platform that brings models together from around the world to raise awareness about important social issues. The idea came after witnessing pollution during a previous Pageant Festival event. What started as a single awareness campaign has grown into an international initiative. "I have learned that a title is not what gives you purpose — it is what you choose to do with your platform that truly matters," she says.

Gabyriella believes one of the reasons she stood out at Pageant Festival was her ability to enjoy every moment on stage. During her Harry Potter-themed performance, she became completely immersed in the character. Instead of quietly mouthing the famous phrase "Expecto Patronum," she enthusiastically shouted it. Looking back, she laughs at the memory but says it perfectly captured how much fun she was having. "I wasn't thinking about winning. I wasn't thinking about scores. I was simply having fun." Throughout her journey, Gabyriella

credits her success to a strong support system. Her mother, Nikkita, helps design her gowns and manages her hair and makeup, while her father supports her behind the camera and documents every milestone. Her best friend and boyfriend have also been constant sources of encouragement.

Today, Gabyriella continues to dream big. Whether through pageantry, advocacy or awareness campaigns, she hopes to inspire others to chase their goals while remaining true to themselves. Her message is simple but powerful: "Take the risk. Chase the dream. Create your own opportunities instead of waiting for them to appear." After a night that produced 22 awards and unforgettable memories, Gabyriella has shown that success is about far more than crowns and titles. It is about using every opportunity to grow, inspire and make a difference.

For young people hoping to follow a similar path, Gabyriella's advice is both encouraging and honest. "Keep going. Keep moving forward," she says. "There is no timeline for success and there is no expiration date on your dreams." However, she believes there is something equally important that many people forget. "Never become someone you are not proud of just to fit into the industry. Do not allow pageantry to completely shape you.

Instead, let it inspire you to grow into the person you want to be—the person you are proud of, not the person society expects you to become." Gabyriella says success should never come at the cost of a person's values, identity or self-respect. She encourages young contestants to remain authentic, stay true to their beliefs and remember that their individuality is one of their greatest strengths. "Never give up. Stay true to your values. Keep improving. And never be afraid to be unapologetically yourself," she says.



Miss South Africa 2026 Entrant

Nadia Erasmus



Introducing Nadia Erasmus

Miss South Africa 2026 Entrant



At 21 years old, Nadia Erasmus from Meyerton, Gauteng, is proving that beauty, education, and purpose can go hand in hand. As an independent model, law and theology student, and Miss South Africa 2026 entrant, Nadia is building a future focused on both personal success and making a positive difference in the lives of others.

Nadia's journey into modelling began through her love for confidence, creativity, fashion, and being in front of the camera. However, she quickly discovered that modelling offered much more than

photographs and fashion. "Modelling has always been more than just taking beautiful photos for me. It is a platform where I can express myself, grow, and inspire others to believe in themselves," she says.

What Nadia enjoys most about modelling is the confidence it has helped her develop and the opportunity it gives her to share a message through every image. She believes each photograph can tell a story while showcasing strength, elegance, and personality. "It also gives me the chance to connect with people and motivate others to step out of their comfort zones," she explains.

Her dedication has already earned her several impressive achievements. Nadia has been a finalist for Face of Riverstone and Miss Sovereign South Africa, and she is currently a quarter-finalist for Miss International South Africa. She is also proud to have entered Miss South Africa 2026, which she describes as an exciting milestone in her journey. "Each of these opportunities has helped me grow in confidence, purpose, and leadership," she says.

Alongside her achievements in modelling and pageantry, Nadia takes great pride in her academic journey. As a law and theology student, she values the lessons she is learning about justice, compassion, faith, and service. These principles continue to guide her both personally and professionally.

Nadia hopes to continue growing within the modelling and pageant industries while completing her studies. She wants her Miss South Africa 2026 journey to represent more than a competition. "It is not just about a crown. For me, it is about making a change, inspiring young women, and showing that we can use our platforms to uplift others," she says.

Nadia dreams of becoming a woman known for purpose, faith, strength, and impact. She hopes to lead with compassion, stand for justice, and make a meaningful difference wherever she goes. Her personal philosophy is reflected in the words she lives by: "I believe God does not place a dream in your heart without also giving you the strength, grace, and purpose to walk it out. My journey is not just about being seen, but about being used to bring light, hope, and change."

With determination, faith, and a clear vision for the future, Nadia continues to inspire those around her while building a platform that extends far beyond the runway.



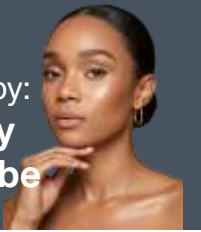
TUMELO NKESE



Interview with Tumelo Nkese

Building Impact Through Purpose and Leadership

A story by:
Mandy Mahalabe



Tumelo Nkese has built a career that reaches across technology, entrepreneurship, mentorship and leadership. As the founder of TruFaith Real Estate, a woman in technology, a mentor, speaker, commercial model and mother, she has dedicated her life to creating opportunities for others while building a legacy rooted in purpose. Her journey has been shaped by personal loss, professional success and a commitment to making a meaningful impact in every space she enters.

For Tumelo, the foundation of her leadership journey was laid long before she entered the business world. She credits her late mother and grandmother for shaping her values and outlook on life. "The example they set showed me that education, service and leadership are powerful tools we need to use not only for ourselves but to uplift one another as well," she says. Inspired by their example, she developed a passion for creating opportunities and helping others grow.

Her career in technology introduced her to the power of innovation and digital transformation. Through her work, she saw how strategic thinking and technology could improve business operations and positively affect people's lives.

That experience sparked her interest in entrepreneurship, financial freedom and wealth creation, eventually leading her to establish TruFaith Real Estate. "I wanted

to build something sustainable that creates long-term value, provides quality housing and supports meaningful economic participation in South Africa," she explains. While her achievements speak for themselves, Tumelo admits that her path has not been without challenges. As a young black woman working in technology and leadership spaces, she often found herself underestimated.

"Early in my career, I often felt pressure to constantly prove myself," she says. Rather than allowing those experiences to discourage her, she focused on education, technical competence and consistently delivering results. She learned that preparation and excellence would always speak louder than doubt.

Another significant turning point came when she was diagnosed with ADHD later in life. At the same time, she was navigating the responsibilities of motherhood. Instead of viewing these experiences as obstacles, she embraced them as part of her journey. "Receiving that diagnosis was actually liberating because it gave me language, structure and self-awareness," she explains. She believes ADHD strengthened her creativity and problem-solving abilities, while motherhood deepened her empathy, discipline and leadership skills.

The loss of her mother in 2018 and her grandmother in 2020 became defining moments that changed the direction of her life. Both losses occurred while she was pursuing her master's degree, forcing her to pause her studies. Supported by her husband, she stepped away from the corporate world and began focusing on entrepreneurship and purpose-driven leadership. Looking back, she sees that difficult season as a time of growth and transformation. "I stopped chasing titles and started focusing on impact," she says.

An unexpected opportunity arrived in 2022 when she was selected as a Top 30 finalist in Mrs South Africa. The experience pushed her to embrace visibility and confidence during one of the most challenging periods of her life. "It helped me understand that leadership is not confined to boardrooms," she says.

"Influence can happen through authentic storytelling, mentorship, community engagement and representation." Today,

Tumelo balances entrepreneurship, family life, mentorship and further studies with a focus on intentional living. She no longer believes in the idea of perfect balance. Instead, she focuses on alignment and understanding that different seasons require different priorities. "Motherhood changed my perspective significantly. It taught me that productivity without presence is not success," she says. Faith, family and a strong support system continue to keep her grounded and focused on what matters most.

One of the habits that has contributed most to her success is what she calls an "Always in Beta" mindset. She believes growth is a continuous process and that there is always room to learn, improve and evolve. Combined with planning, prioritization and continuous learning, this approach has helped her remain focused and adaptable throughout her career.

Mentorship has also become one of the most important parts of her journey. Since 2019, she has served as an Industry Mentor with the Allan Gray Orbis Foundation, helping young entrepreneurs build sustainable businesses. She has also mentored digital creators through Chic-Tribe Digital's EmpowHer Series, judged hackathons and contributed to numerous community initiatives. Through her networks and volunteers, she has helped raise more than R500 000 for various charitable causes and organizations. "Networking, when approached authentically, is not about collecting contacts," she says. "It is about building genuine relationships rooted in value, trust and shared growth."

Looking back, Tumelo's definition of success has evolved significantly. While she once measured success through awards, recognition and milestones, she now views it through a broader lens. "Today, success means alignment," she says. "It means building a life where my work, values, faith, family and purpose are not constantly competing with one another but coexist in harmony."

For Tumelo, success is about creating impact, showing up for the people I love, mentoring future leaders, building sustainable businesses and becoming the woman her mother and grandmother always hoped she would be.



Thembi Jantjies



Introducing Thembi Jantjies

Walk in Elegance Fashion Show PE

A story by:
**Etaiya
Briscoe**



Thembi Jantjies is proving that passion can often be discovered in the most unexpected places. Based in Gqeberha, South Africa, she works in marketing at KellyGirl Skills Academy, where she helps create content, promote events, and connect with different audiences. Along the way, she found herself drawn to photography, turning what began as a work requirement into a creative pursuit that continues to grow.

For Thembi, photography was never part of an original career plan. Instead, it developed naturally through her marketing role. "As part of my work, I often needed visual content for social media, events, and promotional campaigns," she explains. What started with taking photographs on a cellphone gradually evolved into a deeper interest in visual storytelling. "The more I worked with images, the more I appreciated photography as a powerful way of communicating and connecting with people."

Her background in marketing and communications has played a significant role in shaping the way she approaches photography. Through years of working with brands, events, and audiences, she learned the value of strong visual content. "Photography became a natural extension of my marketing work," she says. "Rather than choosing photography as a separate career path, it developed alongside my marketing work and gave me another

creative tool to express ideas and document experiences." What makes photography particularly meaningful for Thembi is the opportunity to tell stories through images. She finds inspiration in everyday life and the people around her. "I draw inspiration from people, fashion, community events, and everyday life," she says.

She enjoys observing how individuals express themselves through their personalities, interactions, and unique sense of style. For her, a photograph is much more than an image. "I am inspired by the way a single photograph can capture emotion, confidence, and a moment in time that might otherwise be forgotten."

As someone who works across both marketing and photography, Thembi understands the differences between commercial and editorial work. She believes both forms share a common goal of storytelling but require different approaches.

"Commercial photography focuses on promoting a brand, event, or message, while editorial photography often focuses more on documenting people and experiences," she explains. The challenge, she says, lies in balancing creativity with the purpose of each assignment. "Sometimes you need to think like an artist, and other times you need to think like a marketer."

Most of her photography opportunities come through the professional relationships she has built over the years. Through marketing projects, referrals, events, and networking, she continues to expand her experience behind the camera. "I believe in building connections, being open to learning, and saying yes to opportunities that help me grow," she says.

One of the aspects of photography that she enjoys most is working with people. Capturing genuine moments and authentic expressions is what motivates her every time she picks up a camera. "Every person has a different story, energy, and presence," she says. "Photography allows me to freeze a moment that reflects who they are, even if it's just for a split second." While client work continues to teach her valuable

lessons, personal projects remain equally important. They provide a space where she can experiment, learn, and develop her own style without pressure. "Personal work is important because it gives me the freedom to experiment and improve my skills," she explains. "As someone who is still growing as a photographer, personal projects help me learn, practice, and discover my style."

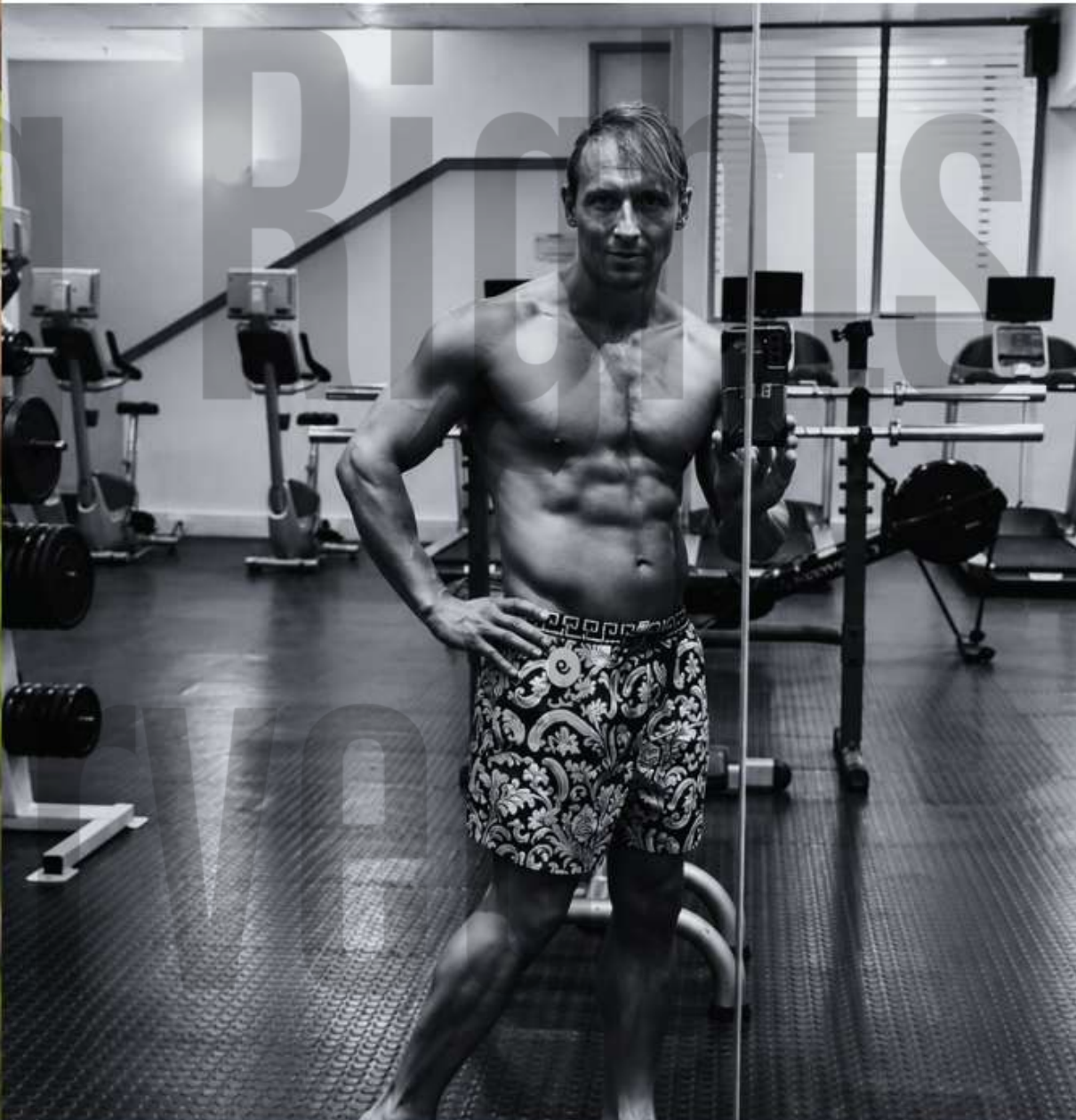
One of her most memorable experiences so far was photographing the Walk in Elegance PE fashion event. The fast-paced environment pushed her beyond her comfort zone and challenged her to think quickly while capturing important moments. "It was exciting to experience a different side of visual storytelling and learn in a live event setting," she says. The experience helped her grow both technically and creatively while giving her confidence in her developing abilities.

Like many photographers, Thembi understands that some moments happen only once. "The hardest part is knowing that some moments only happen once," she says. "You have to be ready at all times because there are no second chances." Whether working at an event, photographing individuals, or documenting special occasions, she believes adaptability is essential. Every environment presents new challenges and opportunities to learn.

As she continues building her skills and portfolio, Thembi remains passionate about growth and learning. Her advice to aspiring photographers reflects her own journey. "Don't wait until you feel like an expert before you start," she says. "Learn your camera, practice regularly, and take every opportunity to improve." She encourages newcomers to embrace mistakes and focus on storytelling. "Most importantly, focus on telling stories rather than chasing perfection. Every photographer starts somewhere."

For Thembi, photography is more than capturing images. It is about preserving stories, documenting moments, and creating meaningful connections. As her journey continues, she remains committed to learning, growing, and finding new ways to tell stories through her lens.

Built Through
Discipline Driven
By Purpose



Interview with Thinus Els

Driven By Discipline And Passion

A story by:
**Etienne
Vermaak**



Thinus Els has always had a passion for sport, competition, and pushing himself to achieve more. Today, he combines that passion with fitness modelling and bodybuilding, building a career that allows him to showcase not only his physical strength but also the dedication and discipline required to succeed in a demanding industry.

From a young age, Thinus was actively involved in sports and quickly developed a love for competition. Looking back, he says his journey into fitness modelling happened naturally as his interest in staying fit and maintaining a healthy lifestyle grew stronger.

"I have always been fitness aware in the sports industry," he explains. "From a young age I have been doing all sorts of sports. I love being competitive and I love doing sports. From being in shape I also loved doing modelling. So I did my modelling diplomas and started to do modelling competitions. This evolved into fitness modelling, which I love."

His interest in bodybuilding began during his high school years when he entered a competition called Mnr Spiere. Winning the competition became a defining moment in his life and opened the door to a completely new world. "In high school I did a competition called Mnr Spiere," he says. "I was so lucky to have won this first-ever fitness body competition. This sparked a desire to grow and develop in

this sport." Before fully entering the fitness competition industry, Thinus also experienced another exciting opportunity when he was cast in the popular television soapie *Getroud met Rugby*. He played a character named Els, which happened to share his real surname. "Stepping in front of the camera felt like a dream come true," he recalls. "It was very exciting, yet stressful. It made me believe that dreams can be followed."

While the glamour of fitness modelling and bodybuilding may seem appealing from the outside, Thinus explains that success comes from countless hours of hard work, strict nutrition, and intense training. As competition dates approach, every aspect of his lifestyle becomes more focused. "The closer the competition gets, the more dedicated I become to my diet and training schedule," he says. "It's true what they say about chicken breast and egg whites. They are perfect for dieting."

His goal is to reduce body fat while maintaining muscle mass, which requires careful planning and discipline. "I divide my training into cardio sessions and strength training, with about five to ten training sessions a week."

One of the biggest challenges he faces is maintaining consistency, especially when social events and daily temptations make dieting difficult. "The hardest part is staying consistent in training while dieting," he says. "Friends want to go out and enjoy food and drinks, and when you're dieting, it feels like everyone around you is eating the nicest food."

When motivation becomes difficult, Thinus reminds himself why he started in the first place. "I think about what my goal is and what I want to accomplish with the competition," he explains. "It's either go full out or don't even bother trying."

For Thinus, one of the most rewarding parts of the industry is seeing the results of his efforts. Winning titles is exciting, but personal achievement matters just as much. "Even if I don't win, just the fact that I get to be in the best shape of my life makes me enjoy every single second," he says.

Fitness has also brought major changes to his life beyond physical appearance. He believes the journey has strengthened him

physically, mentally, and emotionally. "Physically, I have noticed that I almost never get sick compared to people around me," he says. "People in the fitness industry and even at the gym look up to you when you accomplish goals like this. They tell me I inspired them, and that feels good because you know you have helped someone."

He adds that the challenges involved in preparing for competitions have taught him valuable lessons. "Being challenged and uncomfortable is what helps you grow as a person. You learn a lot about yourself and what you are capable of."

When asked what advice he would give to beginners, Thinus encourages people to focus on small victories first. "I would start with small challenges in your own body," he says. "Set small goals and actually reach them. Then make the goals bigger, and when you are ready, go for a competition. Don't give up if you don't do great in the beginning."

One of the most important influences in his life has been his father, whom he describes as his biggest role model. "My dad is my role model," says Thinus. "He showed me through what he accomplished in his life that even when the odds are against you, you can do anything as long as you keep trying."

Balancing work, personal responsibilities, training, and competitions is not always easy, but Thinus credits his support system for helping him stay focused. "I have an amazing wife, family, and friends who help a lot," he says. "Without this support, I would not be able to do everything alone."

Looking ahead, Thinus has big dreams. He hopes to become a successful influencer, act in movies, and perhaps even appear on television shows such as *Mytropika* or *Survivor*.

For the young people who follow his journey, his message is simple but powerful. Quoting William Shedd, he says, "A ship in the harbour is safe, but that is not what a ship is built for."

Thinus believes life is meant to be lived boldly. "Put your trust in God and remember that you only live once," he says. "Go all out and make it count."



Dr. Mbeto Medupe



MRS SOUTH AFRICA 2026 SEMI-FINALIST



Meet Dr. Mebelo Medupe

Mrs South Africa 2026 Semi-finalist



Dr. Mebelo Medupe has built a career defined by service, education, leadership, and a passion for empowering others. As a healthcare professional, academic, researcher, and advocate for women's empowerment, she has dedicated her life to improving healthcare outcomes while helping others discover their potential. Her recent selection as a semi-finalist in the prestigious Mrs South Africa 2026 competition has added another exciting chapter to a journey already filled with purpose and achievement.

Mebelo describes herself as someone deeply committed to making a difference in people's lives. Through years of hard work and dedication, she has earned both an MBA and a PhD, qualifications that have strengthened her ability to bridge the worlds of clinical practice, leadership, and academia.

"My professional journey has been driven by a commitment to improving healthcare outcomes, advancing nursing education, and mentoring future healthcare professionals," she explains. "My work focuses on empowering individuals through education, healthcare advocacy, leadership development, and community engagement."

Being selected as a Mrs South Africa 2026 semi-finalist was a proud and emotional moment for her. "It was both humbling and exciting," she says. "It was a moment of immense gratitude and reflection, knowing that my journey, values, and commitment to making a difference had been recognised." For Mebelo, the opportunity represents far more than a title. It is a chance to stand alongside women who share a desire to create positive change in society.

Her decision to enter the competition was inspired by the platform's focus on purpose, leadership, and personal development. "Mrs South Africa is far more than a pageant; it is a movement that empowers women to embrace their

authenticity, develop their leadership potential, and become catalysts for positive change," she says.

The competition offered her an opportunity to challenge herself while amplifying causes that matter deeply to her, including healthcare awareness, education, and women's empowerment. For Mebelo, being a semi-finalist represents courage, growth, and purpose. "It is a reminder that women should never place limits on themselves and that our stories, experiences, and voices have the power to inspire others," she says. She believes the platform allows her to expand her impact while connecting with women who are equally committed to making a difference.

Balancing a demanding career, academic responsibilities, advocacy work, and pageant commitments is no small task. Yet Mebelo approaches it with focus and determination. "Balancing these roles requires discipline, effective time management, and a strong support system," she explains. She believes the secret lies in recognising that all her roles are connected by a common goal. "Service, leadership, and empowering others remain at the centre of everything I do."

Her passion for women's empowerment stems from witnessing the barriers many women face in accessing opportunities, leadership positions, and education. Throughout her career, she has seen how mentorship and support can transform lives. "I believe that when women are empowered, families thrive, communities prosper, and future generations are inspired," she says. Through her advocacy work, she hopes to create opportunities for women to recognise their value and pursue their dreams with confidence.

Years in healthcare have also shaped her understanding of leadership. Mebelo believes true leadership is rooted in compassion, empathy, integrity, and service. "Leadership is not about authority," she says. "It is about serving others, inspiring trust, empowering teams, and creating environments where people can succeed." These lessons continue to guide her professional and personal life.

Like many successful women, Mebelo's journey has not been without challenges.

Balancing professional responsibilities, academic pursuits, family commitments, and personal aspirations has often required perseverance and adaptability. Looking back, she sees these challenges as important opportunities for growth. "Every challenge has contributed to my growth and shaped the leader and woman I am today," she says.

Among her greatest rewards has been seeing the positive impact of her work on students, healthcare professionals, and communities. Watching people grow and succeed through education and mentorship brings her immense fulfilment. Being selected as a Mrs South Africa semi-finalist is another milestone that she treasures because it allows her to inspire others to pursue their dreams.

Throughout her journey, one person has remained her greatest source of strength. "My husband has been my greatest source of inspiration and unwavering support," she says. She credits his encouragement and belief in her abilities for helping her pursue opportunities and embrace growth. She also speaks warmly about the sisterhood she has found through Mrs South Africa. "Being surrounded by strong, accomplished, and compassionate women who genuinely support and uplift one another has been truly inspiring."

Looking ahead, Mebelo hopes to continue advancing healthcare education, research, leadership, and community development. She also wants to expand her advocacy work and contribute to initiatives that promote health, education, and women's empowerment. Above all, she hopes to leave a legacy built on service and positive change.

Her message to women is simple yet powerful. "Believe in yourself and never underestimate the power of your purpose, your voice, and your potential," she says. "Do not allow fear, setbacks, or the opinions of others to define your journey." For Mebelo, success is measured not only by personal achievements but by the impact made on the lives of others.

Through her work, leadership, and example, she continues to prove that women can pursue their dreams boldly while helping to build stronger communities for future generations.

The Next Opulent
Model South Africa
2026 Finalist



*Phané
Venter*





Chané Venter never expected to find herself on a modelling stage. In fact, when the opportunity first presented itself, she almost walked away from it. Today, she proudly stands as a finalist in the Mrs Opulent category for The Next Opulent Model South Africa 2026, proving that sometimes the most rewarding journeys begin with a single unexpected decision.

Looking back on the moment she was announced as a finalist, Chané admits that entering the competition was never part of her original plan. “Honestly, I didn’t even want to sign up at first,” she says with a laugh. “A friend encouraged me to take the leap, and without her support I probably never would have entered.”

Being selected as a finalist was both exciting and overwhelming for someone taking part in her very first modelling competition. “It still feels a little unreal, but I’m incredibly grateful that I said yes to the opportunity.”

Family is at the centre of Chané’s life. She is a devoted mother of four children and the proud wife of a hardworking husband whom she describes as kind-hearted and supportive. Away from the runway, she enjoys spending time in the gym, staying

active, and making memories with her family. She jokes that while she loves fitness, she also has a weakness for chocolates and good food. “I can’t say no to chocolates and delicious food,” she admits. Her journey into modelling happened completely by surprise. It was not something she had planned or dreamed about growing up. Instead, it became one of those opportunities that arrived unexpectedly and encouraged her to step outside her comfort zone.

A major influence behind her decision to enter Opulent was her friend, Monique Maritz, winner of Mrs Opulent 2025 and owner of Von Ami Couture. Chané speaks highly of the impact Monique has had on her life. “Watching her journey and seeing the impact she has made motivated me to step out of my comfort zone and give this opportunity a chance,” she says.

For Chané, the competition is about far more than crowns and titles. She sees it as an opportunity to set an example for her three daughters. “This journey is about showing my three beautiful daughters that even when you doubt yourself, there will be people who believe in you,” she explains. “Winning is wonderful, but it’s not everything. Sometimes the greatest achievement is simply having the courage to try and giving your absolute best.”

With the Opulent finals taking place in front of more than 5,000 spectators, Chané admits there are moments when nerves creep in. “I wouldn’t say I’m shy, but walking in front of thousands of people can definitely be nerve-wracking,” she says.

Like many finalists, she has had moments of wondering what could go wrong. “I keep asking myself, ‘What if my heel breaks?’ or ‘What if something embarrassing happens?’” Yet she remains focused on faith and growth. “I’m placing everything in God’s hands and trusting Him every step of the way.”

One of the most memorable parts of her journey has been meeting the sponsors and supporters who contribute to the competition. Chané is grateful for the people who invest their time and resources into helping finalists succeed. She also praises the organisers for their commitment behind the scenes. “The amount of work, organisation, passion,

and commitment they put into making this competition a success is remarkable,” she says. Balancing modelling with family life, a full-time job, and daily responsibilities requires careful planning. Chané acknowledges that sacrifices are sometimes necessary, but she has learned the value of organisation and perseverance.

“With planning, dedication, and support from those around you, everything eventually falls into place,” she says. “And when things don’t go perfectly, I remind myself that tomorrow is another day and another opportunity to try again.”

When asked about her biggest challenge, her answer comes quickly. “Walking in heels!” she laughs. What started as a struggle has become a skill she continues to develop. “Practice makes progress, and now I find myself adding more heels to my collection. I think I’ve discovered a new obsession—besides my husband, of course!”

Although Chané says modelling has not dramatically changed her confidence, it has reinforced an important lesson. “Confidence isn’t about being perfect—it’s about being authentically yourself,” she explains. She believes a Mrs Opulent finalist should lead with grace, integrity, kindness, and compassion while uplifting other women and encouraging them to pursue their dreams.

Outside the competition, Chané enjoys off-road adventures, hunting, fitness, makeup, and spending quality time with her children. Looking ahead, she admits that entering Mrs South Africa has crossed her mind. “This journey has taught me never to limit myself,” she says. Her biggest supporters remain her daughters, whose excitement motivates her every day. “Seeing how proud they are of me reminds me why I started this journey in the first place.”

For women who believe they have missed their chance to follow their dreams, Chané offers a simple but powerful message: “It’s never too late. Don’t allow your dreams to remain dreams simply because fear or self-doubt is standing in the way. Take the chance. Believe in yourself. Trust God’s timing, and remember that every great journey begins with a single step.”



Lvana Creations

PPMC MAGAZINE ISSUE 178

Walk in Elegance Fashion Show

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Introducing Cresenda Williams

Owner and Designer of Lvana Creations

A story by:
Etaiya
Briscoe



From childhood dreams of dressing dolls to creating elegant gowns for women across South Africa, Cresenda Williams has built Lvana Creations on faith, passion, and a desire to help women feel confident in their own skin. Based in Gqeberha, Cresenda balances family life, a full-time career, and her growing fashion business while staying true to the values that inspired her journey.

Fashion has been part of Cresenda's life for as long as she can remember. Growing up watching her mother sew sparked a fascination that would eventually become a career. "My love for fashion started when I was a little girl," she says. "My mom sewed, and I grew up watching fabric transform into something beautiful." While other children played with toys, Cresenda spent her time creating detailed evening gowns for her dolls, paying attention to every small detail.

As she grew older, that childhood passion developed into something much deeper. Cresenda wanted to help women feel beautiful, confident, and valued through clothing. She began experimenting with designs, sewing garments, and learning through experience. Her own struggles with finding clothes that fit properly also played a major role in shaping her future. "I often had to settle for what was available rather than what made me feel confident, comfortable, and beautiful," she explains. That experience eventually became one of the driving forces behind the creation of Lvana Creations.

The name Lvana carries special meaning for Cresenda. It means "God is gracious" and "a gift from God." The business itself holds an even deeper story. Rather than starting the company from the beginning, Cresenda inherited Lvana Creations from her mentor and spiritual mother, Irma, who entrusted her with continuing the vision. "That trust means everything to me," Cresenda says.

Today, Lvana Creations offers carefully selected pre-loved designer gowns as well as custom-made dresses for special occasions. Each garment is chosen or designed with the individual client in mind. Cresenda believes every woman deserves to wear something that reflects her personality and allows her to feel confident. "Every woman deserves to

walk in grace, confidence, and her own story," she says. Her design style focuses on elegance and femininity. She loves clean silhouettes, structured designs, beautiful fabrics, and details that celebrate a woman's natural shape. Rather than following every trend, Cresenda prefers creating timeless pieces that have personal meaning. "I am more interested in creating pieces that feel timeless and meaningful to the person wearing them," she explains.

When creating a new design, inspiration often begins with a feeling, a conversation, or even a particular piece of fabric. One of the most important parts of her creative process is understanding how her client wants to feel. "When a client shares how she wants to feel in her dress, that becomes my brief," she says. For Cresenda, fashion is not simply about appearance. It is about helping women express who they are.

Running a fashion business while maintaining a full-time job and raising a family is no easy task. Cresenda credits her Post Graduate Diploma in Business Management for helping her manage the practical side of entrepreneurship. Careful planning, clear communication, and strategic thinking have become just as important as creativity. "When your time is limited, you become very intentional about how you use it," she says.

Like many entrepreneurs, Cresenda has faced challenges. Building a brand in a competitive industry requires patience and determination. One of her biggest ongoing goals is increasing awareness of the Lvana Creations brand. Despite moments of self-doubt and slow growth, she remains focused on her purpose. "I have learned to celebrate small wins because each one is proof that the vision is alive," she says.

Among her most treasured career moments are the reactions of her clients when they see themselves in their finished dresses for the first time. "The way her face changes, the way she stands differently, the way something shifts in her eyes," Cresenda says. "Those moments remind me that what I do is about so much more than clothing."

Another milestone was participating in her first fashion show through Walk in

Elegance. Seeing her designs on the runway was an emotional experience after years of hard work behind the scenes. "Standing there watching it unfold felt like a confirmation that I am walking in exactly the purpose God placed on my heart," she recalls.

Sustainability is another important part of the Lvana Creations story. Cresenda gives pre-loved designer gowns a second life and carefully repurposes leftover fabric from projects. In some cases, those fabric pieces are transformed into farewell dresses for young women who may not otherwise be able to afford them. "If I have fabric, I have skill, and there is a girl who deserves to feel beautiful on a special night," she says.

Looking ahead, Cresenda is excited about launching an online store that will make Lvana Creations accessible to women across South Africa. She is also preparing for another Walk in Elegance showcase and hopes to continue growing the brand's presence in formal wear and bridal fashion. Her vision for the future is clear. She wants to create meaningful fashion that celebrates individuality, encourages sustainability, and helps women feel like the best version of themselves every day.

"I want Lvana Creations to stand for quality, purpose, faith, and the belief that every woman deserves to walk into a room feeling like the best version of herself," Cresenda says. It is a vision that continues to guide every stitch, every fitting, and every dress that leaves her studio.





MARNUS BOTHA

MISTER GLOBAL
SOUTH AFRICA 2026
REPRESENTATIVE



Marnus Botha is proving that leadership is about far more than titles and appearances. As a husband, father, Town Planner, and humanitarian, he is using every part of his journey to inspire others while preparing to represent South Africa on the international stage at Mister Global 2026.

For Marnus, the opportunity to wear the South African colours is deeply personal. “Being selected to represent South Africa at Mister Global is a dream come true,” he says. “It is an opportunity to not only represent myself, but also my family, my community, and my country on an international stage.”

Family plays a major role in shaping the man he is today. Marnus speaks proudly about his wife and two children, saying they continue to motivate him daily. “At my core, I am a husband and proud father of two beautiful children, and my family is my greatest source of motivation and

purpose,” he shares. Professionally, Marnus works as a Town Planner for the City of Cape Town, where he focuses on infrastructure planning and development. He believes his career has given him a deeper understanding of communities and the importance of creating opportunities for people.

“My work allows me to contribute to the sustainable growth and development of communities,” he explains. “It has taught me that successful cities are not just built through roads, buildings, and infrastructure, but through understanding the needs and experiences of the people they serve.”

Outside of work, Marnus enjoys spending time outdoors and staying active. Whether it is hiking or simply enjoying the beauty of Cape Town, he values the moments that keep him grounded. “I enjoy staying active through fitness and spending as much time as possible in nature,” he says.

His pageant journey officially reached a turning point in 2025 when he competed in Mister Global South Africa and was crowned First Runner-Up. Although it was not the final title, the experience changed his outlook completely. “That experience taught me invaluable lessons

about leadership and self-belief,” he says. “It pushed me to keep working on myself, to embrace new opportunities, and to continue striving for excellence.”

When the call finally came confirming that he would represent South Africa internationally, Marnus describes it as one of the most emotional moments of his life. “When I received the news, I was overwhelmed with gratitude, excitement, and a deep sense of responsibility,” he says. “It was one of those moments that felt surreal because it represented the realisation of a dream I had worked towards for a long time.”



Interview with Marnus Botha

Mister Global South Africa 2026 Representative

A story by:
Etienne
Vermaak



His thoughts immediately went to the people who stood beside him throughout the journey. "My first thoughts immediately went to my family — my wife, our two children, and everyone who has supported me throughout this journey," he says. "Their belief in me has been a constant source of strength."

For Marnus, carrying the South African flag means representing far more than himself. "South Africa is a nation rich in diversity, strength, and talent," he says. "I am honoured to be an ambassador for those values."

He hopes to showcase the heart of South Africa to the world and inspire others back home at the same time. "If my journey can encourage even one person to believe in themselves and pursue their goals, then I will consider that a success," he says.

Beyond pageantry and his professional career, community work remains one of Marnus's greatest passions. One of the projects closest to his heart is the annual Art and Wine Auction held in support of the Somerset West Night Shelter. The event successfully raised over R100 000 for vulnerable members of the community.

"What made the event so special was seeing people from across Cape Town come together for a common purpose," he says. "The sense of community and willingness to give back was truly inspiring."

Marnus says the project reminded him how powerful unity can be when people work together to help others. "It reinforced my belief that leadership is about service and using whatever platform you have to bring people together and create positive change," he explains.

His efforts in community upliftment later earned him the Best Humanitarian Award at the 2025 Bold Excellence Awards. Although grateful for the recognition, Marnus says helping others has always been the main focus. "It was never about receiving an award," he says. "It was about making a real difference in the lives of others and supporting causes that have a positive impact on our communities." As a father, Marnus says his children have

strengthened his desire to uplift communities even more. "Every child deserves the opportunity to grow up feeling safe, loved, and supported," he says. "I want to lead by example for my children by demonstrating the values of compassion, service, and empathy."

Balancing family life, a demanding career, humanitarian work, and pageantry requires discipline and careful planning. "Family always comes first," Marnus says. "I believe balance is not about giving equal time to everything every day, but about giving the right amount of attention to what matters most in each moment."

As he prepares for the Mister Global stage, Marnus believes modern titleholders should focus on purpose and authenticity rather than appearances alone.

"A strong titleholder is someone who leads with authenticity, integrity, and purpose," he says. "A title is about much more than appearance — it's about character, values, and the positive impact you have on others."

Looking ahead, Marnus hopes his journey will remind people that true success is measured by impact, not titles. "I want to show that true success is not defined by achievements alone, but by the positive impact we have on the lives of others," he says.

He also has an important message for young South Africans chasing their dreams. "You don't need a title or a big platform to make a difference," he says. "Real change starts with small actions, a willingness to serve others, and the courage to take the first step."

Through his journey, Marnus continues to show that leadership is built through service, family, humility, and the determination to uplift others wherever possible.





VANSHELLS CREATIONS



Interview with Luzeen Solomon

Walk in Elegance Fashion Show PE

A story by:
**Etaiya
Briscoe**



From a young age, Luzeen Solomon was fascinated by beautiful clothing. What began as admiration for fashion has grown into a thriving career as a designer who is passionate about helping people feel confident, comfortable and proud of who they are through her creations.

Known on social media through her brand Vanshells Creations, Luzeen has built a name for herself by creating garments that are stylish, modern and designed with the wearer in mind. Her journey into the fashion industry was inspired by a love for clothing that started during her childhood and never faded. "I loved beautiful clothes since I was a little girl," Luzeen says. "That inspired me to become a fashion designer."

Today, her designs reflect both her personality and her understanding of what clients are looking for. Rather than focusing only on trends, she believes fashion should be practical, comfortable and make people feel good about themselves. She describes her designs as "comfortable, outstanding and modern," qualities that have helped her connect with a growing audience.

For Luzeen, designing clothing is about much more than creating attractive garments. Her goal is to leave a lasting impression on the people who wear her work. "My goal is to make my clients feel comfortable, beautiful and confident in my designs," she explains. "My passion for fashion is my inspiration."

Like many entrepreneurs, Luzeen has learned that success requires more than creativity. Running a fashion business involves balancing artistic ideas with the realities of managing clients, finances and everyday challenges. She believes that experience has been one of her greatest teachers. "I balance creativity and practicality with my skills, experiences and what I have learned from my challenges," she says.

One of the most difficult moments in her career came when she lost everything and was forced to start her business again from the beginning. While it was a painful experience, it also changed the way she viewed her future and helped her redefine her goals. "My biggest challenge was when I lost everything and had to build my business from scratch," Luzeen

recalls. "But it changed my vision for my business." Instead of allowing that setback to stop her, she used it as motivation to move forward. Rebuilding her brand gave her a clearer understanding of what she wanted to achieve and strengthened her determination to succeed.

Among the highlights of her career are the opportunities she has had to showcase her work on television. Being able to present her designs to a larger audience and share her vision remains one of the moments she treasures most. "It was an amazing opportunity to be featured live on television four times, showcasing my designs and sharing my vision for my business," she says.

Building a successful fashion brand requires strong relationships with clients and supporters, and Luzeen has worked hard to create those connections. She makes use of social media platforms, participates in fashion shows and focuses on maintaining good communication with her clients. "I make use of social media, fashion shows, good client communication and word-of-mouth advertising," she explains.

Her advice to aspiring designers is straightforward. She believes confidence and visibility are essential for anyone wanting to establish themselves in the fashion industry. "Believe in yourself," she says. "Promote your business regularly, showcase your work in fashion shows and take every opportunity that will benefit your business."

Luzeen also understands the importance of staying informed about developments in the industry. She regularly follows fashion forecasting sites and keeps an eye on the work of respected designers to stay inspired and informed. "I follow fashion forecasting sites and I also follow famous and successful designers," she says.

Despite paying attention to industry trends, Luzeen remains committed to maintaining her own unique style. She believes originality is important and works hard to ensure her designs stand out while still appealing to modern fashion lovers. "I keep my designs unique but also trendy," she says. The future looks exciting for Luzeen as she prepares to participate in the Walkers In Elegance Fashion Show, hosted by Cordi in Cape

Town on 15 August 2026. The event follows her successful participation in the same fashion show held in Port Elizabeth on 6 June 2026, an experience she describes as both enjoyable and rewarding. "I am looking forward to showcasing at Walkers In Elegance in Cape Town," she says. "I showcased at the same fashion show in Port Elizabeth and it was a great experience."

As the fashion industry continues to grow and evolve, Luzeen is excited about the opportunities ahead. She has noticed an increase in fashion showcases and believes this will encourage fresh ideas and creativity across the industry. "The number of fashion designer shows is rising and it's exciting for me to see how it will influence the world of fashion with new creativity," she says.

Looking ahead, Luzeen dreams of expanding her brand beyond South Africa and becoming an inspiration to other designers who are pursuing their own goals. She believes there is still much more to achieve and many opportunities waiting in the future. "I would like to grow globally and be an inspiration to many other designers," she says. "I believe my journey is not over, and there is still so much more to accomplish."

With passion, determination and a clear vision for the future, Luzeen continues to create opportunities for herself while helping others feel confident through fashion. Her story shows that even when challenges arise, dedication and belief in one's dreams can help turn setbacks into new beginnings.



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Mamasela

**Confidence, Determination
and Big Dreams Shine on the
International Modelling Stage**

Modeling Academy: Ace Models Randburg
Photo credit: Van Vuuren Photography
Outfit: New Romantics Couture

Introducing Mamasela Ramollo

Teen Miss Ace Models Randburg

A story by:
**Mckayla
Faure**



Mamasela is stepping onto an exciting new stage in her modelling career after being selected to represent ACE Models Randburg at the Mr and Miss ACE Models International Pageant. The opportunity follows months of hard work, personal growth and dedication, and she is looking forward to proudly representing her branch on the international stage.

Being chosen for the pageant was a moment Mamasela will never forget. "It was such a surreal moment," she says. "I felt so happy and grateful for the opportunity I was presented with, especially after the progress and growth I experienced after joining ACE Models Randburg." The selection reminded her that the effort she has put into developing herself as a model has been worthwhile and has inspired her to keep aiming higher.

Mamasela's modelling journey began in 2024 when she joined ACE Models Randburg. Since then, she has attended workshops, participated in photoshoots and continued building her confidence and skills. Her commitment paid off when she was signed by GAPA Kids in 2025. Looking back, she describes the experience as enjoyable because it combines many of the things she loves most. "It has been a fun-filled journey since I love public speaking, and I also enjoy spending my time singing and acting," she says.

Her decision to join ACE Models started with a simple moment on social media. "I saw an Instagram post for an Open Day to learn modelling skills at the ACE Models Randburg Modelling Academy," she explains. "The post interested me because I had always wanted to be a model and do pageants when I was younger." That decision has since opened opportunities she once only dreamed about.

The modelling industry has helped Mamasela become more confident, both on and off the stage. "I have grown more self-assured, composed in what I do and confident in myself," she says. "I have become a person who is poised and determined." She believes modelling has taught her valuable life skills that go far beyond posing for photographs. Learning proper posture, self-presentation and

communication has helped her become comfortable in her own skin and express herself with confidence.

Many people admire Mamasela for her determined attitude, something she believes comes from refusing to give up. "People describe me as determined and strong because of my tenacity, my refusal to give up and the courage to keep trying," she explains. Those qualities have helped her overcome one of the biggest challenges every model faces: rejection.

"The biggest challenge I faced in my modelling journey was handling rejection," she says honestly. Rather than allowing disappointment to stop her, Mamasela chose to learn from every experience. "I have learnt to overcome rejection by never giving up because success comes from learning through every challenge." That positive mindset continues to motivate her as she works towards new goals.

Representing ACE Models Randburg internationally is something she takes seriously. "Being able to represent ACE Models Randburg on an international stage means being able to showcase my powerful, confident and radiant personality," she says. "This opportunity is a chance for me to show people my hard work and skills." She hopes to make both her branch and everyone who has supported her proud.

Preparation for the international pageant has become a major focus. Mamasela is training with determination and a positive attitude. "I am working even harder and training with the mindset that I am going to do very well and represent my branch with pride regardless of the outcome," she says.

Behind every successful young model is a strong support system, and Mamasela is grateful for hers. She says her parents have been her biggest supporters from the beginning. "They have always believed in me and encouraged me to represent myself in the best way possible," she says. Their constant encouragement has given her the confidence to keep moving forward.

Among her proudest achievements are winning the Miss Teen ACE Models Randburg title and being signed by GAPA

Kids. Both milestones remind her that dedication brings results and inspire her to continue working towards even bigger dreams.

Mamasela also hopes her journey encourages other young people to believe in themselves. "Keep believing in yourself and never give up, even after facing rejection," she says. "Success comes from learning from your mistakes." It is advice she follows every day as she continues to grow.

Looking ahead, Mamasela has big ambitions. She is committed to excelling academically while continuing to build her modelling career. "I hope to do exceptionally well at school because I am very dedicated to my studies," she says. "I also want to inspire others to achieve their goals and make the name Mamasela Mokwe Ramollo known."

As she prepares to compete internationally, Mamasela knows the experience will be about more than winning a title. "Success at the pageant would mean everything to me because it would remind me of my modelling journey and all my hard work," she says. "I also hope to gain more knowledge and skills within the modelling industry." No matter the final result, Mamasela is already showing that determination, confidence and a willingness to keep learning can take a young person a long way.



This Life Photography

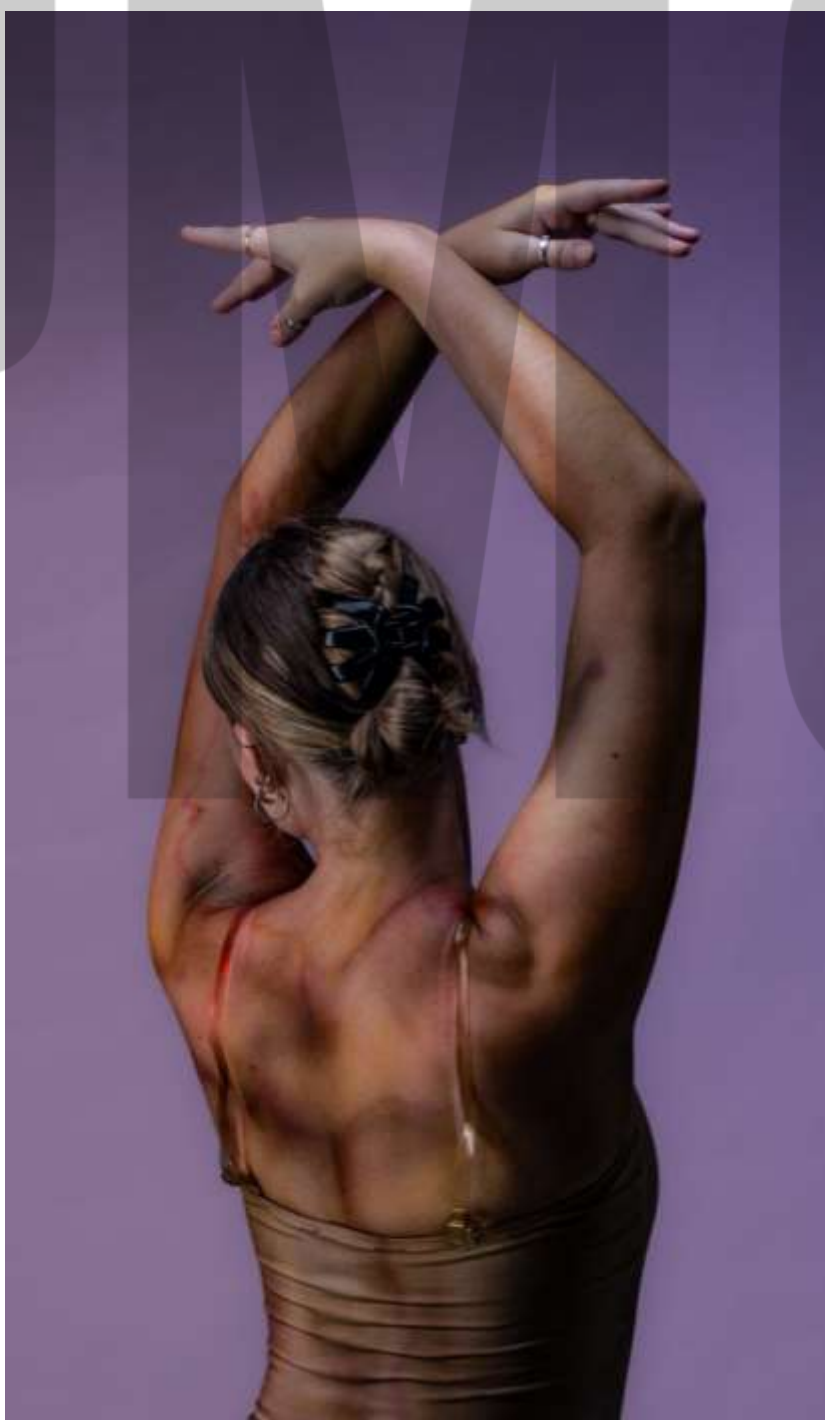


KS Dance Studio

PPMC MAGAZINE ISSUE 178

Kristen Stockenstrom (Coach K)

Facebook: KS Dance Studio & Entertainment
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Instagram: @kristen_j_s



Meet Kristen Stockenstrom

KS Dance Studio & Entertainment



Creativity has always been part of Kristen's life. As a dancer, dance and aerial coach, entertainer, business owner, fire performer and model, she has built a career around doing what she loves most. Based in East London, she has turned a childhood passion into a profession that allows her to perform on stage while helping others discover confidence through dance.

Looking back at where it all began, Kristen says dance quickly became much more than a hobby. "I realised dance was more than a hobby when I couldn't imagine my future without it. Every opportunity to perform or teach made me realise how much fulfilment it brought me. Seeing the impact dance has on people's confidence and lives inspired me to pursue it professionally. It became something I wanted to dedicate my life to rather than simply enjoy in my spare time."

Today, Kristen successfully balances many different roles, something she admits takes planning and dedication. "Balancing so many roles definitely requires organisation and discipline, but I genuinely love every part of what I do. Teaching keeps me grounded, performing keeps my passion alive, modelling challenges me creatively, and running a business allows me to build opportunities for others. I remind myself why I started, and that purpose keeps me motivated even during the busiest seasons."

Teaching has become one of the most rewarding parts of her career. She enjoys watching students grow not only as dancers but also as individuals. "The most rewarding part is watching my students achieve things they never believed they could. Seeing someone walk into class feeling shy or unsure of themselves and slowly develop confidence, discipline and self-belief is incredibly special. Dance isn't just about learning steps. It's about personal growth and finding confidence that carries into everyday life."

Performing in front of audiences has also shaped her in many ways. "Performing has taught me confidence, adaptability and trust in myself. Every audience is different, and every performance brings new experiences. It has encouraged me to keep improving my skills and to step outside my comfort zone, even when

things don't go exactly as planned." Kristen's passion eventually led her to establish KS Dance Studio, which has since expanded into KS Dance Studio & Entertainment. The studio offers contemporary dance, aerial hoop, aerial silks, stretch and conditioning classes, Little Dancers programmes for young children, and custom choreography for performances and special events. More recently, the business has expanded to provide professional entertainment, including fire dancing, LED performances, aerial acts and speciality performances.

"I wanted to create meaningful and inspiring experiences for dancers while sharing my passion for dance and performance," she explains. "Becoming an entrepreneur has allowed me to build a business that reflects who I am while inspiring confidence, creativity and self-expression. It has also created opportunities for performers to grow, shine and share their talents."

Alongside dance, modelling has become another creative outlet. "Modelling has helped me become more confident in front of the camera and has taught me how to communicate emotion through expression and movement. Dance and modelling both require discipline, professionalism and creativity, and they complement each other beautifully."

One of her proudest achievements has been watching her business grow while seeing students reach goals they once believed were impossible. "Every successful performance and every student who reaches a personal milestone reminds me why I chose this career."

Like many people working in the creative industry, Kristen has also faced difficult moments. Building a business has brought challenges, including periods of self-doubt, setbacks and limited support from some within the dance community. Instead of allowing those experiences to discourage her, she has used them to

become stronger. "I've learned that success isn't about avoiding failure. It's about continuing to move forward despite it and not letting other people's opinions affect my love for what I do."

She credits many people for encouraging her throughout her journey, including her family, mentors and fellow performers. One of her biggest inspirations is singer and dancer Tate McRae. "She taught me the importance of kindness, humility and always striving to become better than I was yesterday."

While Kristen inspires others daily, she also quietly faces challenges that many people cannot see. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, she has been diagnosed with three chronic illnesses: Ehlers-Danlos syndrome, POTS (Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome) and Fibromyalgia. She is currently undergoing preparation for stem cell therapy while managing constant pain and fatigue.

"Most people think I look perfectly healthy, but chronic pain and fatigue are part of my daily life," she says. "Rest, recovery and pain management have become essential so that I can continue teaching and performing. It has been the most difficult five years of my life."

To help create greater understanding of invisible illnesses, Kristen recently completed a dance photoshoot called Making the Invisible, Visible. The project aims to raise awareness of chronic pain and encourage compassion for those living with conditions that are not always obvious.

Despite these challenges, Kristen remains focused on growing her business, expanding her entertainment work and reaching more people through dance. Above all, she hopes to continue inspiring others to believe in themselves.

Her advice to young people hoping to build a career in the creative industry is simple but heartfelt. "Confidence doesn't come before trying—it comes from trying. You don't have to be perfect to begin. Every expert was once a beginner. Stay committed, keep learning and don't be afraid to fail because every setback teaches you something valuable. Believe in your abilities, stay humble and never stop creating."

The Next Opulent Model South Africa 2026 Finalist

Marcelize Greyling



Introducing Marelize Greyling

The Next Opulent Model South Africa 2026 Finalist



Marelize Greyling is proving that dreams can be pursued at any stage of life. As a finalist in the Mrs Opulent category for The Next Opulent Model South Africa 2026, she is embracing a new challenge while continuing to balance a successful career, family life, and her passion for making a difference.

When Marelize learned that she had been selected as a finalist, the moment was deeply emotional. “I felt honoured, grateful, and humbled,” she says. “After everything I’ve overcome personally and professionally, being selected as a finalist felt like confirmation that it’s never too late to believe in yourself again.” For Marelize, the achievement is about much more than modelling. She describes it as a symbol of growth, healing, and stepping into a new chapter with confidence.

Away from the runway, Marelize is a respected veterinarian and the owner of Zwartkop Animal Clinic. She is also a devoted mother to three children. Her life has always been centred around helping others, whether caring for animals, supporting families, or guiding pet owners.

Modelling was never part of her original plans, but it soon became an opportunity for self-discovery. “It became an opportunity to challenge myself, build confidence, and inspire other women,” she explains. “My journey has been about

discovering that beauty comes from authenticity and embracing every chapter of life.” Her decision to enter one of South Africa’s biggest modelling competitions came from a desire to push beyond her comfort zone. “I wanted to step outside my comfort zone and prove to myself that dreams don’t have an expiry date,” she says.

After facing personal challenges, Marelize wanted to rebuild her confidence and show her children that courage comes from following your dreams, even when fear is present. “Opulent gave me the platform to do exactly that.”

Being part of the Mrs Opulent category holds special meaning for her. She believes it celebrates women who manage multiple responsibilities every day. “It means representing women who wear many hats every day—mothers, professionals, business owners, wives, partners, and caregivers,” she says. For Marelize, the category is a reminder that beauty is not limited by age or circumstances but is shaped by character and personal growth.

With the Opulent finalists set to walk in front of more than 5,000 spectators, preparation has become an important part of her routine. Marelize is focusing on much more than perfecting her runway walk. “I’m working on my confidence, fitness, posture, stage presence, and mental strength,” she explains. She values every opportunity to learn from mentors and fellow contestants while reminding herself to enjoy the experience. “Opportunities like this are truly special.”

One of the most rewarding aspects of the competition has been the friendships she has formed. “The incredible women I’ve met along the way have been the highlight,” she says. The support, encouragement, and shared experiences among the finalists have created what she describes as a genuine sisterhood. “It’s been so much more than a competition.”

Balancing a demanding career, family responsibilities, and modelling requires careful planning. Marelize credits discipline and a strong support system for helping her manage it all. “My career as a veterinarian and clinic owner will always be a priority, alongside being present for my children,” she says. At the same time,

she believes pursuing personal goals makes her a stronger mother and professional.

Like many women, Marelize has faced challenges including heartbreak, self-doubt, criticism, and moments of uncertainty. Instead of allowing those experiences to define her, she chose to learn and grow from them. “My faith, my children, my loved ones, and my determination helped me rebuild my confidence one step at a time,” she says.

Modelling has transformed the way she sees herself. “Confidence isn’t about perfection—it’s about embracing who you are,” she says. Through the journey, she has learned to appreciate her individuality and celebrate the woman she has become. Today, she says she stands taller, smiles more confidently, and believes in herself more than ever before.

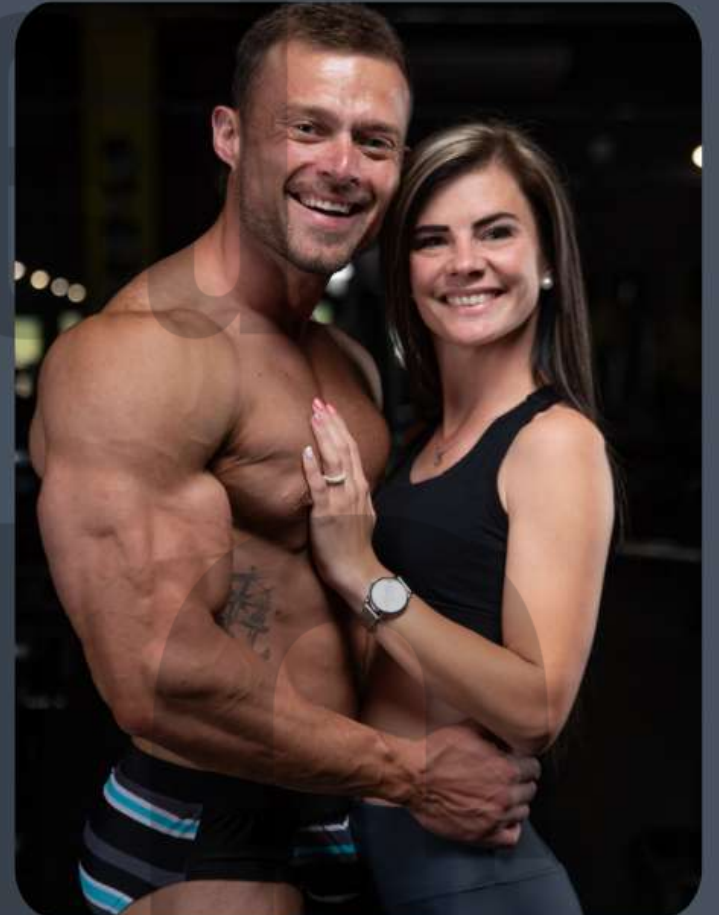
Outside of modelling, animals remain her greatest passion. She enjoys horse riding, photography, spending time in nature, particularly in the bushveld and the Kruger National Park, and creating special memories with her family. She also enjoys using social media to educate pet owners and inspire others.

Looking ahead, Marelize hopes to work with designers and brands that celebrate confidence, elegance, and authenticity. More importantly, she wants to support projects that empower women and encourage people to embrace who they truly are.

Throughout her journey, her fiancé Dion has been her strongest supporter. “He has believed in me even during moments when I struggled to believe in myself,” she says. She also credits her children as a constant source of motivation and inspiration.

Her message to women who feel they have missed their chance is simple but powerful. “It’s never too late to become the woman you’ve always dreamed of being,” she says. “Your past doesn’t define your future, and your age doesn’t determine your potential. Believe in yourself, take the first step, and remember that courage isn’t the absence of fear—it’s choosing to move forward despite it.” Through her Opulent journey, Marelize is showing exactly what that looks like.

CLINTON SAMONS



Clinton Samons has built a life around discipline, family, and personal growth. As an IBFF Pro Classic Physique Athlete, qualified personal trainer, online coach, husband, father, and now a finalist in the Male Body of the Year category for The Next Opulent Model South Africa 2026, he continues to prove that success is earned through commitment and consistency.

When Clinton was announced as a finalist, the moment carried special meaning. "I felt incredibly honoured, humbled, and grateful," he says. "Being announced as a finalist reminded me that years of hard work, discipline, sacrifice, and perseverance have all been worth it." For Clinton, the recognition reflects not only his achievements but also the obstacles he has overcome throughout his journey.

At 30 years old, Clinton has established himself as a respected athlete and coach. However, his journey began with a simple desire to improve himself. "My fitness journey started with a simple goal: to become the best version of myself," he explains. What started as a personal challenge soon became a passion and eventually a career. Through bodybuilding, Clinton discovered confidence, purpose, discipline, and self-belief. Modelling later became another platform where he could motivate and inspire others.

His decision to enter one of South Africa's biggest modelling competitions came from a desire to challenge himself in a new environment. "I wanted to challenge myself outside of bodybuilding and step into an environment where confidence, character, and presence are just as important as physical appearance," he says. The competition offered an opportunity to continue growing while sharing his story with a wider audience.

For Clinton, competing in the Male Body of the Year category represents much more than physical appearance. "To me, it represents years of discipline, sacrifice, self-belief, and overcoming challenges," he says. Every achievement and setback has contributed to the person standing on the stage today.

Preparing for an event that will place finalists in front of more than 5,000

spectators requires dedication. Clinton approaches the challenge the same way he approaches every goal in life. "My preparation includes structured training, proper nutrition, runway practice, and mindset work," he explains. "Bodybuilding has taught me how to perform under pressure, and I plan to bring that same confidence to the runway."

One of the highlights of his Opulent journey has been the people he has met along the way. "The most rewarding part has been meeting inspiring people and hearing their stories," he says. The experience has reinforced his belief that everyone faces challenges and is striving to become a better version of themselves.

Maintaining a competitive physique is no easy task. Clinton follows a structured routine that includes five days of resistance training each week, balanced nutrition, proper recovery, and consistent healthy habits. "Fitness is not something I do occasionally; it is a lifestyle," he says.

Like many successful individuals, Clinton's path has not been free of hardship. One of the most painful experiences in his life was losing his father in 2021. More recently, he suffered an Achilles tendon rupture that required surgery and a lengthy recovery. Financial and personal struggles also tested him along the way. Despite these challenges, he remained focused. "I overcame these obstacles by refusing to quit, focusing on what I could control, trusting the process, and continuing to move forward one day at a time," he says.

His greatest motivation comes from his family. "My family is my biggest motivation," Clinton shares. "I want to be the best husband to my wife, the best father to my children, and the best role model for my clients." He believes that while motivation can come and go, discipline is what carries people through difficult times.

Fitness has shaped every aspect of Clinton's life. Beyond building muscle, it has taught him patience, accountability, consistency, and confidence. "The person I am today was built through the challenges I faced and the lessons I learned along the way," he says.

Away from the gym and runway, Clinton enjoys spending time with his family, growing in his faith, mentoring others, and helping people transform their lives. Seeing others achieve goals they once thought impossible remains one of his greatest rewards.

Looking ahead, Clinton hopes to work with brands and campaigns that promote health, discipline, family values, and personal transformation. He wants to partner with organisations that genuinely inspire people to improve their lives.

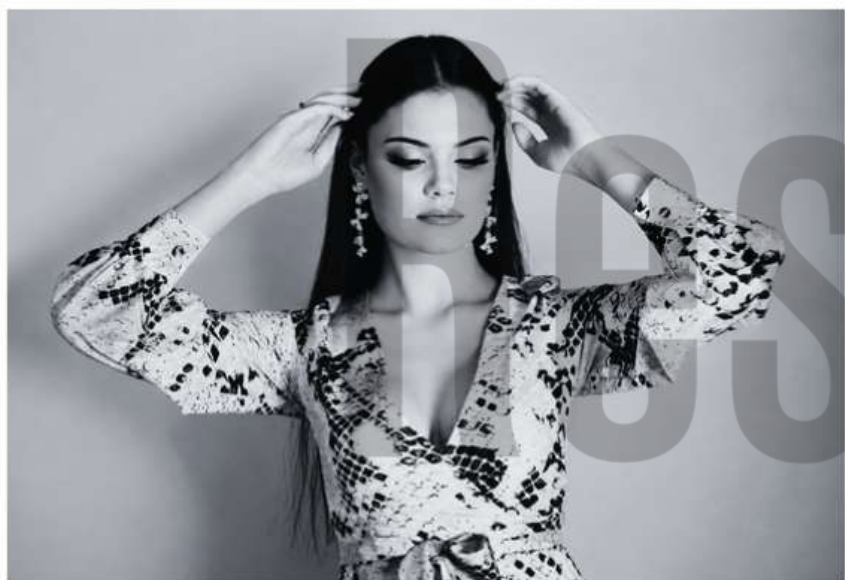
Among all the people who have supported him, one person stands above the rest. "Without a doubt, my wife," he says. "She has stood by my side through victories, setbacks, injuries, competitions, and challenges." His children also serve as a daily reminder to keep pushing forward.

For young men chasing their dreams, Clinton offers simple but powerful advice. "Never underestimate the power of consistency. Success is not built overnight. It is built through small actions repeated every single day."

As Clinton continues his Opulent journey, he carries lessons learned through years of dedication. "Bodybuilding taught me discipline, consistency, confidence, and how to become the best version of myself as a husband, father, coach, and man," he says. "The stage is temporary, but the lessons last forever."



Photo credits: Michael Maciej



Miné
Beytelli





Miné Beytell's journey in modelling is a story of growth, determination, and a genuine love for fashion. As a Female Runway Finalist for The Next Opulent Model South Africa 2026, she is preparing to step onto one of the country's biggest modelling stages, carrying with her years of hard work, confidence, and a dream that began when she was just thirteen years old.

When Miné's name was announced as a finalist, the moment was filled with excitement and gratitude. "Being announced as a Female Runway Finalist for The Next Opulent Model South Africa 2026 was both exciting and incredibly rewarding," she says. "I felt honoured to be part of such a prestigious platform and grateful for the opportunity to compete on one of South Africa's biggest runway stages alongside individuals who share the same passion for the modelling industry."

Miné describes herself as a hardworking and driven young woman who is always looking for opportunities to grow and learn. Her modelling journey started during a primary school pageant when she was only thirteen years old. It was there that she met her modelling coach, Natasha Menino-Costa, who would become an important mentor in her life.

"My modelling journey began at the age of 13 when I entered my primary school pageant," she explains. "From that moment, I fell in love with modelling, and

what started as a single pageant quickly grew into a lifelong passion." Her love for high fashion played a major role in her decision to enter The Next Opulent Model South Africa competition. After learning more about the platform and its reputation in the industry, she knew it was something she wanted to be part of. "I entered with the goal of challenging myself, gaining experience, and giving my very best," she says.

For Miné, being part of the Female Runway category is about much more than walking confidently down a runway. It represents the personal journey she has taken over the years. "Modelling has transformed me from a shy young girl into a confident young woman who believes in her abilities," she says. "This opportunity allows me to celebrate my journey, express myself creatively, and inspire others to have confidence in themselves and pursue their dreams."

One of the biggest challenges ahead will be walking in front of more than 5,000 spectators. While the thought can be intimidating, Miné believes preparation is the key to success. "I spend time practising my runway walk, refining my stage presence, and learning techniques to stay calm under pressure," she explains. "By the time I step onto the stage, I focus on feeling relaxed, confident, and fully present in the moment."

Among the many memorable experiences she has enjoyed during her Opulent journey, one stands out above the rest. Attending MOPA 2026, known as the biggest model party in South Africa, became an unforgettable highlight

"It was an incredible evening filled with amazing entertainment, outstanding sponsors, and the opportunity to connect with fellow contestants," she says. "The atmosphere was unforgettable, and it was wonderful to celebrate and share the experience with others who are equally passionate about modelling." Before every runway appearance, Miné follows a simple routine to help her stay focused. "I

spend time practising my walk and mentally preparing myself for the stage," she says. "Taking a deep breath before I walk out helps me feel focused, confident, and ready to perform at my best."

Like many young models, she has faced challenges along the way. One of the most important lessons she has learned is not to compare her journey to that of others. "I have come to understand that success looks different for everyone," she says. "My achievements are unique to my own path. Embracing this mindset has helped me appreciate my accomplishments and remain focused on my personal growth."

When asked what makes a runway model stand out, Miné believes confidence is essential. "A standout runway model possesses confidence, a strong runway walk, and an undeniable presence," she says. "The best models leave a lasting impression and make the audience feel something when they walk."

Outside the modelling world, Miné enjoys baking, drawing, and dancing. She is also passionate about education and has a strong interest in biomedical sciences. Her curiosity and commitment to learning show that her ambitions extend far beyond the runway.

Looking ahead, she dreams of working with internationally recognised fashion brands and hopes to one day walk at major fashion events such as Paris Fashion Week and New York Fashion Week. Throughout her journey, one person has remained her greatest source of support.

"My biggest supporter has always been my mother," she says. "She has stood by my side throughout every stage of my journey, encouraging me, believing in me, and motivating me to always give my best."

For young girls who dream of becoming runway models, Miné offers simple but powerful advice. "Always believe in yourself and your abilities," she says. "Never stop learning, growing, and striving to become the best version of yourself. Challenges may arise, but perseverance and self-belief can take you further than you ever imagined. Most importantly, never give up on your dreams."



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Mckayla

**Believing In Every Dream
While Inspiring Others Through
Confidence And Kindness**

Modeling Academy: Ace Models Randburg
Photo credit: Van Vuuren Photography
Outfit: New Romantics Couture

Interview with Mekayla Stander

Junior Miss Ace Models Randburg

A story by:
**Mckayla
Faure**



When Mekayla found out she had been selected to represent ACE Models Randburg, it was a moment she will never forget. "I felt very happy and excited! I was so proud and thankful to be chosen. It is a big dream for me, and I feel honoured to represent ACE Models Randburg," she says. For the young model, the opportunity is not only exciting but also a chance to represent her agency with pride on an international stage.

Modelling has become something that brings joy into Mekayla's life. She says she loves the way it allows her to express herself while learning new skills. "I love modelling because it makes me happy and helps me express myself," she explains. Her journey began when she joined ACE Models, where she quickly realised how much she enjoyed being on stage and discovering new things about herself.

Joining ACE Models was an easy decision for Mekayla because it brought together everything she enjoys. "I wanted to join because I love dressing up, meeting new friends, and learning how to be confident," she says. Since becoming part of the agency, she has found more than just modelling opportunities. "Being part of ACE Models has taught me so much, and it feels like being part of a big family."

The experience has helped Mekayla grow both on and off the stage. She believes she has become much more confident and now trusts herself more than ever before. "I have become more confident and believe in myself more. I have learned to work hard, be kind to others, and never give up on my dreams," she says.

That confidence has been built with the help of the people closest to her. Mekayla says the encouragement she receives from her family, friends and coaches reminds her that she is capable of achieving anything she sets her mind to. "They always encourage me and remind me that I can do anything if I work hard and believe in myself," she says.

One of Mekayla's favourite parts of modelling is performing in front of an audience. "I love showing my personality and making people smile," she says with excitement. She also enjoys meeting new friends and learning alongside other

young models, making every competition and training session something she looks forward to. Her proudest achievement so far has been earning the opportunity to compete internationally.

"Being selected to represent ACE Models Randburg internationally has been my proudest moment. It is something I will always remember, and I am very grateful for this opportunity," she says.

Like many young performers, Mekayla admits she sometimes feels nervous before stepping onto the stage. Instead of letting those feelings stop her, she has learned how to face them with courage. "I remind myself to be brave and do my best," she says. She has also discovered that making mistakes is part of learning. "It is okay to make mistakes because they help me grow."

As she prepares for the international pageant, Mekayla is focused on practising her walk, learning new skills and improving every day. "I am working hard every day, but I am also making sure to have fun and enjoy every moment of this exciting journey," she says. She believes enjoying the experience is just as important as preparing for the competition itself.

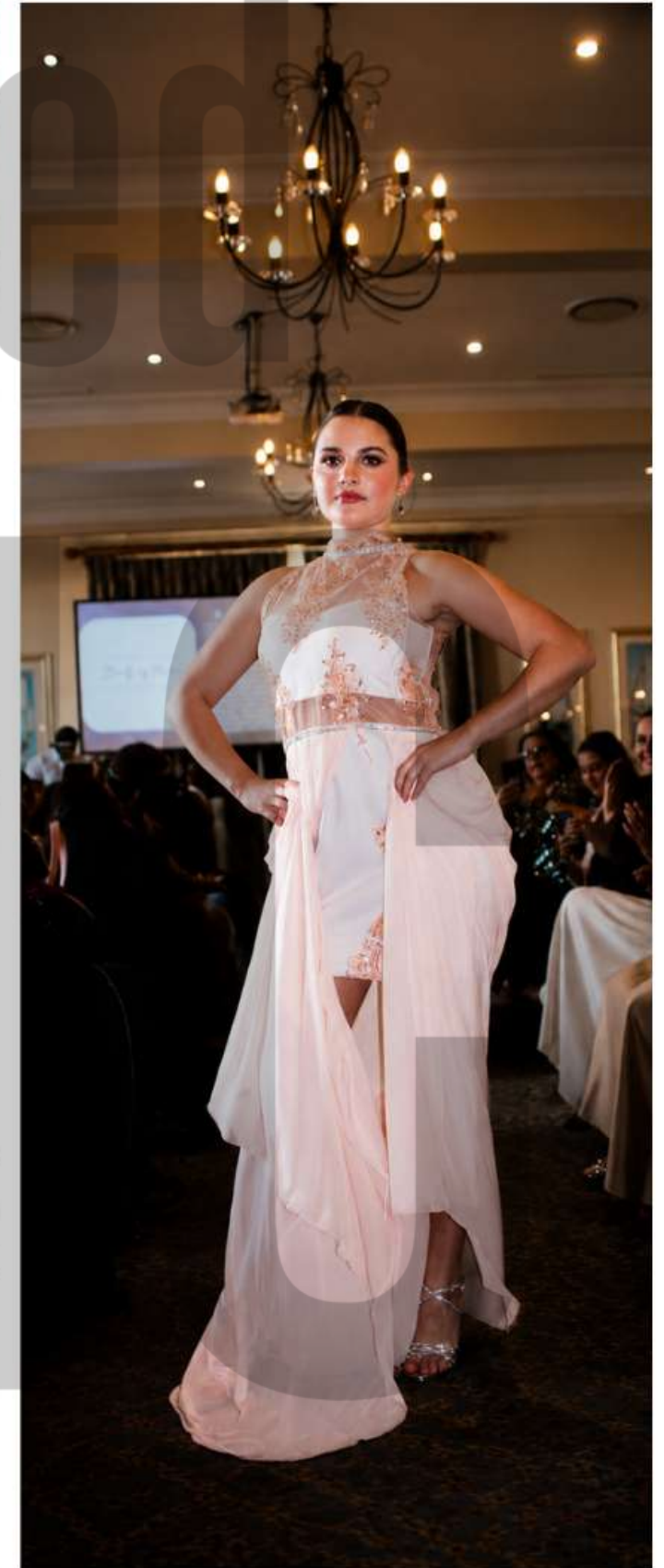
Looking ahead, Mekayla hopes to continue modelling and compete in many more pageants while also doing well at school. She dreams of one day making a positive difference in the lives of others. "I want to continue modelling, do well in school, and one day help others and make a positive difference in the world," she says.

For other young people who dream of following a similar path, Mekayla has a simple but meaningful message. "No dream is too big. Believe in yourself, work hard, and never give up. Always be kind, stay true to who you are, and remember that you can achieve amazing things if you keep trying and never stop believing." With her positive attitude, determination and love for what she does, Mekayla is already showing that dreams really do begin with believing in yourself.



This Life Photography

Beauty by Binki



BIANCA BAARTMAN IS TURNING HER PASSION
FOR FASHION INTO A GROWING BRAND THAT
CELEBRATES ELEGANCE, BEAUTY, AND
EMPOWERMENT.

Interview with Bianca Baartman

Walk in Elegance Fashion Show PE

A story by:
Etaiya
Briscoe



Fashion has always been part of Bianca Baartman's life, but for her, it is more than creating beautiful garments. It is about continuing a family legacy while adding her own creative touch. Together with her mother, Bianca is helping grow Beauty_by_Binki into a brand that celebrates beauty, elegance, confidence, and empowerment.

Bianca explains that her journey into fashion began at home. "Fashion and creativity have always been a part of our family," she says. Her mother spent years designing bridal and formal wear, creating elegant garments that helped women feel beautiful on some of the most important days of their lives. Watching that passion unfold inspired Bianca to become part of the business. "Recently, I officially came on board as Binki, blending my own creative vision, branding ideas, and modern aesthetics with her experience and craftsmanship," she says.

Today, Beauty_by_Binki is much more than a fashion label. It has grown into a collective brand that includes beauty products, décor, bridal wear, and formal fashion. The mother-and-daughter team combines experience, creativity, and business knowledge to create something unique for their clients.

Bianca describes the brand's design style as "timeless elegance blended with modern femininity." She says every garment is created with attention to detail,

flattering silhouettes, luxurious fabrics, and refined finishes. "We aim to create looks that make clients feel confident, graceful, and unforgettable," she explains.

When designing a new piece or collection, Bianca and her mother begin by getting to know the client. "Our creative process usually starts with understanding the client's vision and personality," she says. From there, they sketch ideas, explore fabrics, textures, and colours, and refine the design until it reflects the client's individuality.

Inspiration comes from many places, including fashion trends, nature, culture, art, weddings, and everyday beauty. Because the business also focuses on beauty and décor, event themes and overall aesthetics often influence their designs.

Running a fashion business requires more than creativity, and Bianca understands the importance of balancing artistic vision with practical business decisions. "Balancing creativity and business requires structure, discipline, and teamwork," she says. While her mother focuses on the technical and design aspects, Bianca manages branding, marketing, social media, and business development. Together they ensure their creations remain stylish while still meeting the needs of clients and the market.

Like many entrepreneurs, the pair have faced challenges along the way. Bianca says one of the biggest obstacles has been growing the brand while maintaining both quality and affordability. Another challenge was combining different creative perspectives into one shared vision. "We overcame this through communication, learning from one another, and staying focused on our shared purpose," she explains.

One of Bianca's proudest moments has been watching the business expand. "A memorable milestone has been seeing Beauty_by_Binki evolve from a small creative passion into a growing brand," she says. She also treasures the opportunity to work alongside her mother. "It has been incredibly meaningful to build something that reflects both legacy and new vision." Building relationships with clients is a

major part of the brand's success. Bianca says they stay connected through social media, personalised service, and authentic storytelling. "Beauty_by_Binki is not just about products or fashion — it's about creating a supportive community that celebrates confidence, beauty, and creativity," she says.

For aspiring designers hoping to enter the industry, Bianca encourages patience and dedication. "Stay authentic to your vision and never underestimate the importance of consistency and hard work," she advises. She believes understanding the business side of fashion is just as important as creativity. "Be willing to start small, grow gradually, and continuously improve your craft."

Although Bianca keeps a close eye on fashion trends through social media, runway collections, client preferences, and industry research, she believes true style should go beyond seasonal changes. "We believe in creating timeless pieces that remain elegant beyond seasonal fashion changes," she says.

Sustainability and ethical practices are also important to the brand. Bianca says they focus on reducing unnecessary waste, creating quality garments designed to last, and supporting local talent. "Our goal is to grow a brand that is both impactful and meaningful while remaining ethical and client-focused," she explains.

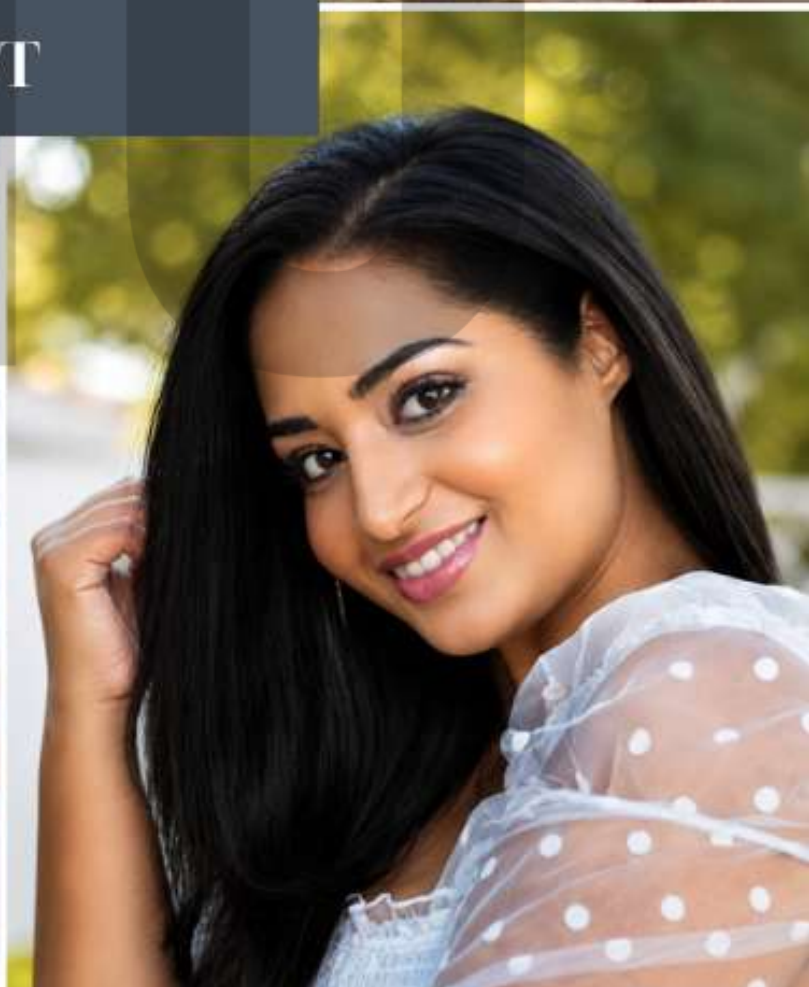
Among the highlights of their journey has been participating in the prestigious Walking in Elegance Fashion Show with Cordi. The experience gave Beauty_by_Binki the opportunity to showcase its work on a larger platform and dress more than 20 models, including PPMC Magazine South Africa Brand Ambassador 2026 Etaiya Briscoe, Mrs Nelson Mandela Bay, Miss Teen Eastern Cape, and many other inspiring women. "Seeing our designs come to life on the runway and being part of such inspiring events has been a major highlight in our journey," Bianca says.

As Beauty_by_Binki continues to grow, Bianca remains focused on combining creativity, elegance, and empowerment. Through every garment, every event, and every client interaction, she is helping build a brand that honours its roots while embracing a bright future.



MELANY SAMUELS

ULTIMATE MRS KLERKSDORP 2026 FINALIST





With more than two decades of experience in the pageantry world, Melany Samuels continues to prove that confidence, purpose, and determination can open doors at any stage of life. As a finalist for Ultimate Mrs Klerksdorp 2026, she is embracing a new opportunity to inspire women, serve her community, and continue growing both personally and professionally.

When Melany received the news that she had been selected as a finalist, she was overwhelmed with emotion. She describes feeling “incredibly honoured, grateful, and excited” and says she was humbled by the opportunity to represent her community on such a respected platform. For her, being part of Ultimate Mrs Klerksdorp is not only a personal achievement but also a chance to encourage others to believe in themselves and pursue their goals.

Away from the pageant stage, Melany is a devoted single mother of three children and a woman whose life is guided by faith, family, and service. She values spending quality time with family and friends and enjoys supporting community projects and local events. Whether she is attending weekend soccer games, participating in soup drives, or helping at open-air church services, Melany believes in staying connected to the people around her and making a positive contribution wherever she can.

Her decision to enter Ultimate Mrs Klerksdorp once again came from a desire to challenge herself and inspire other women. Having previously competed in 2023 and placed in the Top 5, she felt ready to return with renewed purpose. Melany explains that she entered because she wanted “to challenge myself, to grow as an individual, and use my voice to inspire other women in my community.” She believes that every woman has a story worth sharing and says the competition provides an opportunity to encourage women to embrace “their worth, their confidence and potential.”

Melany’s journey in pageantry began when she was 19 years old. What started as a personal challenge soon became a lifelong passion. Over the years, she has participated in numerous competitions and earned many titles, but she says the greatest rewards have gone far beyond trophies and crowns. Reflecting on her

journey, Melany explains that “what started as a personal challenge so many years ago quickly became a passion.” Through pageantry, she found a platform where she could build confidence, develop valuable skills, and connect with women who continue to inspire her.

Being a finalist today holds special meaning for her because it represents far more than a title. Melany says it is “more than wearing a sash or competing for a title” and instead represents personal growth and an opportunity to inspire others. She believes it serves as a reminder that people can pursue their dreams regardless of age or circumstance and that life experiences help shape stronger, more capable individuals.

Throughout her years in the industry, pageantry has played a significant role in building her confidence and helping her discover her strengths. She says it taught her “to believe in my abilities and embrace my uniqueness,” while also helping her develop skills in public speaking, leadership, and self-expression. Most importantly, it reinforced her belief that “true beauty comes from authenticity, kindness and confidence from within.”

Some of Melany’s most treasured memories involve the people she has met along the way. She describes meeting inspiring women from different backgrounds, building meaningful friendships, and receiving encouragement from supporters as some of the most rewarding aspects of her journey. Seeing the positive influence her story has had on others has also been especially motivating and has encouraged her to keep moving forward.

Like many women, Melany has experienced moments of self-doubt and uncertainty. There were times when she considered giving up, but she credits her faith, determination, and strong support system for helping her overcome those challenges. Rather than allowing obstacles to stop her, she learned “to focus on progress rather than perfection and to view every challenge as an opportunity to grow.”

As a role model, Melany is passionate about sharing an empowering message with women from all walks of life. She wants women to understand that “their

dreams are valid, regardless of their age, marital status or circumstances.” She believes women are capable of achieving remarkable things while also being mothers, partners, and active members of their communities. Her message is simple but powerful: “Never underestimate your value, your strength, or your ability to make a difference.”

Melany credits much of her success to the unwavering support of her family and close friends. Their belief in her abilities has given her the confidence to continue pursuing her goals, and she remains grateful for their constant encouragement throughout her journey.

One cause that remains particularly close to her heart is the Breyton Basson Foundation. Through supporting its events and initiatives, she has witnessed the positive impact of programmes focused on uplifting youth, empowering families, and encouraging self-confidence and personal development. She strongly believes in giving back and supporting initiatives that help people reach their full potential.

Looking toward the future, Melany hopes to continue growing within pageantry while building a life centred on faith, family, and purpose. If she is crowned Ultimate Mrs Klerksdorp 2026, she plans to use her reign to empower women and young people to believe in themselves and pursue their dreams fearlessly. Her goal, she says, is to leave behind “a legacy of encouragement, inspiration, and positive change” that continues to make a difference long after her reign comes to an end.





Mwakwendu Asandile

National Mr Endless Brilliance 2026 Finalist



Mvakwendlu Asandile is proving that determination and purpose can take a person far, no matter where they come from. The young finalist from Port St Johns is using his journey in modelling and pageantry to inspire others while also building a future for himself filled with leadership, service, and hope. Describing himself as someone who believes in “hard work, purpose, and staying true to who I am,” Asandile says his passion for modelling and uplifting others continues to guide every step of his journey.

His journey into modelling only began last year, but in that short time he has already experienced both challenges and growth. One of the biggest moments in his journey came when he had to withdraw from the Mr Courageous competition because of financial difficulties. Instead of allowing that setback to stop him, Asandile chose to use it as motivation. “Although I had to withdraw from Mr Courageous due to financial challenges, that experience taught me a lot and strengthened my determination to pursue my dreams,” he shared.

Today, Asandile proudly stands as a finalist for National Mr and Miss Endless Brilliance 2026, a milestone he describes as both emotional and meaningful. “I felt overwhelmed with joy, gratitude, and excitement,” he said about being selected. “It meant that someone believed in my potential and saw qualities in me that could make a difference.”

For him, the competition is not simply about walking on stage or wearing a title, but about using the opportunity to inspire and empower others. “It is an honour and a great opportunity to use this platform to inspire, empower, and positively impact the lives of others,” he explained.

Growing up in Port St Johns played a major role in shaping his outlook on life. Asandile says his background continues to inspire him daily and reminds him why he wants to make a difference in the lives of young people. “I want young people, especially children, to have opportunities that I did not have growing up,” he said. “I am passionate about creating hope and encouraging others to dream bigger.” His experiences taught him that challenges should never define a person’s future and that believing in yourself can open doors

that once seemed impossible. Pageantry has also transformed the way Asandile sees himself. He explained that the industry helped him grow into a more confident and outgoing person while teaching him the importance of self-acceptance. “Pageantry has helped me become more confident, outgoing, and self-assured,” he shared. “It has taught me to embrace my uniqueness and appreciate both my strengths and imperfections.” Through competitions and public appearances, he has learned how important it is to remain authentic and comfortable in his own skin.

Asandile believes a strong titleholder is someone who leads with kindness and humility. He explained that titles should never be about popularity or status, but rather about service and positive influence. “A good titleholder should be humble, compassionate, dedicated, and passionate about serving others,” he said. “They should use their platform to create positive change and inspire those around them.” Those values are something he hopes to carry with him throughout his journey in pageantry and beyond.

One of the moments that left the biggest impact on him was meeting Andisiwe Andy Jack, someone he says encouraged him to continue using his journey to uplift young people. “One of my most memorable moments was meeting Andisiwe Andy Jack, who encouraged me to continue inspiring and educating young people through my journey,” Asandile explained. The advice and encouragement he received reminded him that his story could motivate others to keep believing in themselves.

Behind Asandile’s growing success is a support system that continues to encourage him every step of the way. He proudly speaks about the people who have stood beside him during both the good and difficult moments. “My support system includes my best friend Kwakho, my coach Kwakhanya Kulture Sibono, the reigning NMEB 2025 queen, my sister Ziyanda, and many loved ones who continuously encourage and support me,” he shared.

Their encouragement has helped him remain focused on his goals and continue chasing his dreams despite setbacks. To prepare himself mentally and physically

for competitions and life in general, Asandile follows a disciplined routine. “I stay active through exercise, practise mindfulness, and pray regularly,” he explained. “These habits help me remain focused, disciplined, and prepared for any challenge.” He believes that keeping a healthy mindset is just as important as physical preparation, especially in an industry where confidence plays such a big role.

Outside of modelling and pageantry, Asandile enjoys listening to music, playing softball, and learning about law. His interest in law is more than just a hobby, as he hopes to build a future career in the field. “I aspire to become a lawyer and continue helping people through advocacy, leadership, and community development,” he said. He hopes to combine his passion for leadership and helping others into a career where he can make a lasting impact in his community.

Asandile also wants to encourage more young boys to see pageantry and modelling as spaces where they can grow and develop leadership skills. He believes too many young men are discouraged because of stereotypes and fear of judgement. “Believe in yourself, work hard, and never allow stereotypes to limit your potential,” he advised.

“Pageantry can help you develop confidence, leadership skills, and a heart for service.” With his determination, purpose, and passion for inspiring others, Asandile is proving that pageantry is about much more than appearance. For him, it is about growth, leadership, and creating hope for the next generation.





Katlynn Pienaar



THE NEXT OPULENT MODEL SOUTH AFRICA 2026 FINALIST

Katelynn Pienaar is turning her passion for fashion into a growing modelling career, and becoming a Female Runway finalist for The Next Opulent Model South Africa 2026 is an important milestone along the way. Driven by determination and a desire to grow, she has embraced every opportunity to improve her skills while inspiring others to believe in themselves. For Katelynn, modelling is about much more than walking a runway. It is a journey of confidence, personal growth, and chasing dreams with purpose.

Being announced as a finalist was a moment filled with excitement and gratitude. Katelynn says hearing her name called made her realise that the effort she had invested was paying off. "I felt incredibly honoured, excited, and grateful," she says, adding that being selected as a finalist was "a proud moment" that reminded her "hard work and perseverance do pay off." She explains that the achievement strengthened her belief in herself and motivated her to continue working towards the goals she has set for her future.

Katelynn's journey into modelling began with a simple love for fashion and self-expression. What started as an interest gradually developed into a serious passion as she became involved in photoshoots and modelling opportunities. She explains that every experience helped her improve both personally and professionally.

"My modelling journey began with a love for fashion, confidence, and self-expression," she says. "Over time, I started participating in photoshoots and modelling opportunities, which helped me develop my skills and grow both personally and professionally." Today, she continues to build on those experiences with every competition and event she enters.

Taking part in The Next Opulent Model South Africa was a decision motivated by her desire to challenge herself. Rather than staying in her comfort zone, she wanted to experience a competition that would help her grow as a model. "I wanted to challenge myself, gain experience, and step outside of my comfort zone," she explains. She believes the competition offers aspiring models an

opportunity to learn from industry professionals while showcasing their talent on a much bigger stage. Being selected for the Female Runway category holds special meaning for Katelynn because it represents qualities she strives to live by every day. She says the category celebrates "confidence, strength, and determination," while giving her "an opportunity to inspire others" by embracing her individuality. For her, walking the runway is not only about presenting fashion beautifully but also about showing confidence and encouraging others to accept themselves for who they are.

With thousands of spectators expected to attend the Opulent event, Katelynn knows preparation is essential. She has dedicated herself to improving every aspect of her performance. "I have been focusing on practising my runway walk, building my confidence, maintaining a positive mindset, and taking care of my overall well-being," she says. She believes that preparation involves much more than physical training, explaining that "preparation is not only physical but also mental," and she wants to step onto the runway as "the best version" of herself.

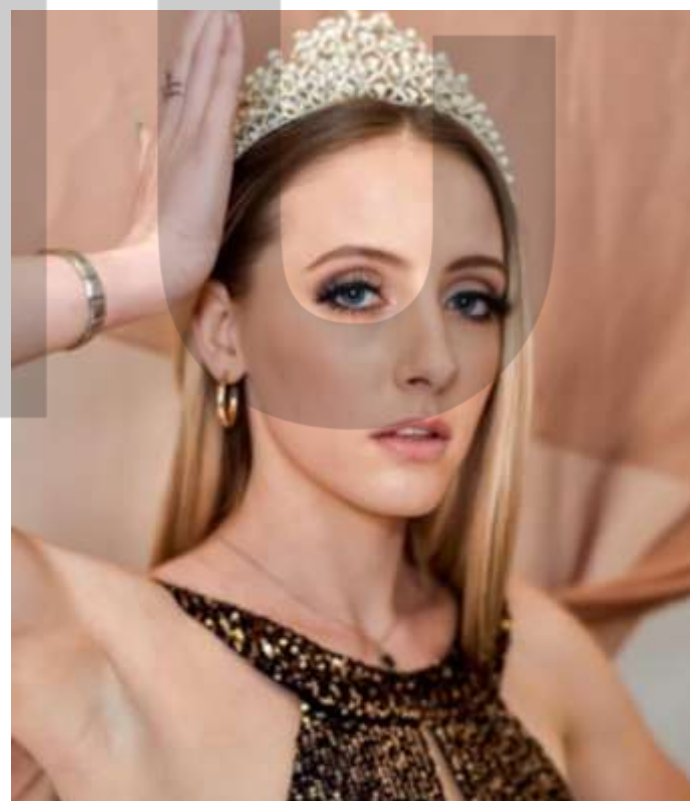
One of the most rewarding parts of the competition has been the people she has met along the way. Katelynn says connecting with fellow contestants and learning from others has become one of her favourite memories. She describes meeting inspiring people and gaining valuable experience within the modelling industry as unforgettable. The support she has received throughout the competition has made her journey even more meaningful and reminded her that success is often built alongside others who encourage one another.

Before every runway appearance, Katelynn follows a simple routine to help her stay calm and focused. "I take a moment to focus, breathe deeply, and remind myself to enjoy the experience," she says. She believes confidence comes from consistent preparation, regular practice, and believing in herself. Rather than allowing nerves to take over, she reminds herself that every runway is another opportunity to learn and improve. Like many aspiring models, Katelynn has faced moments of uncertainty. Balancing personal

responsibilities with her modelling ambitions has sometimes been difficult, and there have been occasions when self-doubt crept in. Instead of allowing those challenges to stop her, she chose to stay focused on her purpose. She says she overcame those moments by "staying focused, believing in myself, and remembering why I started my journey." Those experiences have strengthened her confidence and taught her valuable lessons about discipline and perseverance.

Katelynn believes that truly successful runway models stand out because of their attitude as much as their appearance. She says confidence, professionalism, authenticity, and a strong work ethic are the qualities that leave a lasting impression. Outside the modelling world, she enjoys spending time with family and friends, listening to music, staying active, and working with children. She also dreams of working with internationally recognised designers and representing South African talent on some of the world's biggest runways.

She credits much of her success to the encouragement she has received from those closest to her. Her family, friends, and everyone who believed in her from the beginning have given her the confidence to keep moving forward, even during difficult times. As her modelling journey continues, Katelynn hopes to inspire young girls to believe in themselves. "Believe in yourself, work hard, and never let fear stop you from chasing your dreams," she says. "Stay true to who you are, be confident, and remember that your uniqueness is your greatest strength."





Sarah

**Model Chasing International
Dreams With Confidence, Grace,
Determination and Purpose**

Modeling Academy: Ace Models Randburg
Photo credit: Van Vuuren Photography
Outfit: New Romantics Couture

Interview with Sarah Foley

Pre-Teen Miss Ace Models Randburg

A story by:
Mckayla
Faure



Sarah's journey with ACE Models Randburg has become about far more than beautiful outfits and confident runway walks. Over the past three years, the young model has discovered new strengths, formed lasting friendships, and learned valuable life skills that continue to shape her both on and off the stage. Now, as she prepares to represent ACE Models Randburg at the Mr and Miss ACE Models International Pageant, Sarah is embracing the opportunity with excitement, gratitude, and determination.

When Sarah learned that she had been selected to represent her agency internationally, it was a moment she will never forget. "I felt incredibly proud of myself and very excited," she says. "It is a huge honour to represent ACE Models Randburg on an international stage, and I am grateful for this amazing opportunity." For Sarah, being trusted with this responsibility is both exciting and motivating as she prepares to compete against talented contestants from around the world.

At just 11 years old, Sarah already has a busy schedule filled with activities she loves. Alongside modelling, she enjoys dancing, another passion that allows her to express herself creatively. Her modelling journey began three years ago after another model's mother suggested that ACE Models would be the perfect place for her. Looking back, Sarah believes joining the agency was one of the best decisions she has ever made.

Since then, Sarah has seen remarkable personal growth. "I have become much more confident, independent, and comfortable speaking in front of people," she explains. "I have also learned important skills like discipline, professionalism, and believing in myself." These lessons have helped her not only in modelling but also in everyday life, giving her confidence to face new opportunities with a positive attitude.

Much of that growth has come through the many experiences ACE Models has provided. Competing in pageants, walking on the runway, speaking in front of audiences, and meeting people from different backgrounds have all played a part in building her confidence. "Every experience has taught me something new and helped build my confidence," she

says. While Sarah enjoys every aspect of modelling, it is the personal development that stands out the most. "What I enjoy most is the confidence it has helped me build," she says. "I also love making new friends, learning new skills, and having opportunities to challenge myself." Every event becomes another chance to learn, improve, and become a stronger version of herself.

Those who know Sarah often describe her as graceful, kind, and positive. These are qualities she values deeply. "I believe that being kind and treating people with respect is very important," she says. "A positive attitude helps me stay motivated, and I always want to be someone who encourages others." She believes kindness is just as important as talent and hopes to leave a positive impression wherever she goes.

Like every competitor, Sarah faces challenges along the way, but she has learned how to stay focused on her goals. "I remind myself why I started and focus on doing my best," she says. "My family, coach, and friends always encourage me to keep working hard and never give up." Their constant support gives her the confidence to keep moving forward, even when things become difficult.

One of Sarah's proudest moments came when she won the ACE Junior Model of the Year title. "It was a very special moment and showed me that hard work and dedication pay off," she says. The achievement strengthened her belief that consistent effort brings rewarding results.

Representing ACE Models Randburg internationally carries special meaning for Sarah. "It means a lot to me because I get to represent not only myself but also ACE Models Randburg," she explains. "I feel honoured to be trusted with this responsibility and excited to make everyone proud." She understands that she is representing her agency, her coach, and everyone who has supported her journey.

Preparation for the international pageant has become a daily commitment. Sarah is working on her public speaking, building her confidence, refining her runway walk, and carefully preparing her wardrobe. "I am constantly working on my wardrobe preparation and coming up with creative

ideas to ensure I present myself in the best possible way," she says. "Most importantly, I am staying focused, positive, and enjoying every step of the journey while learning from my coach and the people supporting me."

Sarah is quick to recognise the people who have helped her reach this point. She credits her parents, brother, grandparents, and coach for always believing in her. She gives special thanks to her coach, Kyla, saying, "Thank you for believing in me and trusting me with this title and responsibility." She also expresses her gratitude to her parents for giving her every opportunity to follow her dreams.

Looking ahead, Sarah hopes to continue modelling internationally while also pursuing her love for dancing. Beyond the fashion industry, she dreams of one day becoming an Occupational Therapist, showing that her ambitions extend far beyond the runway.

Her advice to other young people is simple but meaningful. "Believe in yourself, work hard, and never be afraid to try new things," she says. "Confidence grows when you step outside your comfort zone and keep going, even when things feel difficult." As she prepares to compete on the international stage, Sarah believes success is not only about winning a title. "Success to me means doing my best, enjoying the experience, and making my family, coach, and agency proud." It is a goal she is determined to achieve with confidence, kindness, and gratitude.



This Life Photography

#NOMSA Mr. Opulent 2026 Finalist



When Mosimanegape Carlos Tsele was announced as a finalist in the Mr Opulent category of The Next Opulent Model South Africa 2026, the moment came as a complete surprise. The husband, father, student, and aspiring model admits that he never expected to find himself standing among the finalists of one of the country's biggest fitness and modelling competitions.

Looking back on that moment, he says, "This was truly unexpected. I'm so humbled and blessed, being recognized by the biggest fitness and modelling competition in South Africa. It still feels unreal." The achievement marked the beginning of a new chapter for a man who has spent years balancing family responsibilities, work commitments, and personal ambitions.

Mosimanegape describes himself first and foremost as a family man. He is a devoted husband to his wife, Boitshwarelo Vivian Tsele, and a proud father of four children. Guided by his Christian faith, he strives to live with honesty, loyalty, and determination. He believes in giving his best in everything he does and credits his faith for helping him pursue opportunities that once seemed out of reach. Although modelling had always been a dream, life often demanded his attention elsewhere.

"Being a model has always been a dream. Working full-time is not easy, but when God opened this door, I knew this was my time and exact moment to be the best model I can possibly be," he says. For Mosimanegape, every opportunity carries value because, as he explains, "Time is not refundable, and I choose to use every opportunity with intention."

Fashion has always been a strong interest in his life, making The Next Opulent Model SA an opportunity he could not ignore. He views the competition as much more than a runway event. For him, it is a

place where learning, growth, and mentorship come together. He says that "fashion is part of me," adding that walking in designer creations and learning from experienced mentors is something he considers a privilege.

Mosimanegape believes that knowledge is one of the most valuable things a person can gain. "Knowledge is power and no one can take it away from you," he says, explaining that every lesson he learns through the competition is helping him become a better version of himself. The possibility of winning the Mr Opulent title carries deep personal meaning.

While the crown would be a major achievement, Mosimanegape sees it as an opportunity to inspire others. He wants his children to see that dreams can be pursued at any stage of life and hopes his story encourages people who believe they are too late to start something new.

"Firstly, this will be an incredible honour. Not only will I be able to inspire my children, but also anyone who thinks it's not possible or it's too late," he says. He believes that people grow when they challenge themselves and enter spaces that demand excellence. As he puts it, "I believe that you must get into an environment that puts a demand on your greatness."

Preparing to walk in front of more than 5,000 spectators is no small task, but Mosimanegape is approaching the challenge with determination. Inspired by Nelson Mandela's famous words about courage, he understands that confidence is built through preparation.

He explains that success requires balance and discipline. "For me, it's a package deal to find balance emotionally, physically and mentally," he says. His daily routine includes training, improving his physique, practising his runway walk, and building the confidence needed to perform on such a large stage.

One of the most memorable parts of his Opulent journey has been the atmosphere created by the organisation and the contestants. He describes The Next Opulent Model SA as a platform that encourages personal growth while raising standards within the industry. Attending the MOPA Model Party SA was a

particular highlight. "Being part of such a huge and respected platform is amazing," he says, adding that the event was organised with exceptional style. What has impressed him most, however, is the support between contestants. "Everyone is cheering you on," he says, noting that the positive environment has made the experience even more meaningful. As someone who had never done runway modelling before, Mosimanegape admits there have been challenges along the way.

Learning the technical side of modelling required patience and commitment. He credits mentor Willie Venter for providing guidance and practical advice. "The challenge is taking the tips that Willie Venter gave us and practising them until I perfect my walk the best I can," he says. Rather than allowing inexperience to hold him back, he has embraced the learning process and committed himself to continuous improvement.

The journey has also transformed his confidence. By stepping outside his comfort zone, Mosimanegape has learned to embrace his individuality and trust his abilities. "Modelling helped me build confidence by pushing me totally out of my comfort zone," he says. The experience has taught him how to perform under pressure while remaining focused and self-assured.

Outside of modelling, Mosimanegape enjoys soccer and currently serves as co-coach of his company team, Bidvest Fighters FC. He has also developed a passion for hunting and sports shooting, participating in a major sports shooting competition in Rustenburg during 2025.

Through every stage of his journey, one person has remained his strongest supporter. Speaking about his wife, he says, "She's been my biggest fan, cheering me on. Your support system is very important on a journey like this."

Looking ahead, Mosimanegape dreams of earning a doctorate degree while continuing to grow both personally and professionally. His advice to aspiring models reflects the mindset that has guided his own journey:

"You will never be 100% ready, but do it anyway. Purpose fuels passion, and consistency beats intensity."



Kelly Mellisa Duke

Kelly has spent her life proving that challenges do not have to define a person's future. At just 19 years old, she has overcome life-threatening health conditions, hearing loss, bullying and countless obstacles to earn her place on the South African Under-23 Baseball Team. As she prepares to represent South Africa in Hong Kong this August and the United Kingdom in 2027, Kelly says she is living proof that determination and faith can overcome even the toughest circumstances.

Born in Westville, KwaZulu-Natal, Kelly's journey began with a fight for survival. At only two weeks old, she died in her mother's arms before being revived and rushed to hospital, where doctors discovered she had gallstones. Her case made medical history, as she became the first baby doctors had encountered with the condition.

At just 13 months old, her gallbladder was removed, but that was only the beginning of years filled with hospital visits, illnesses and blood transfusions. Doctors later discovered she had hearing

loss in her left ear, a weakened immune system and an underdeveloped area on one side of her brain that affects the way she communicates and processes information. Her parents were even told she might not live beyond the age of 12. Looking back, Kelly says, "Here I am today. I almost died four times, but I never stopped believing."

Growing up brought new challenges. Kelly attended a mainstream school with hearing implants and later hearing aids, but instead of receiving understanding, she faced bullying from both classmates and some teachers. She admits those years were incredibly difficult, explaining, "I refused to wear my hearing aids because I was bullied. People don't understand how difficult life can be for someone with a disability."

Sometimes I don't understand jokes and everyone laughs while I just stand there." Despite those painful experiences, she refused to let other people's opinions determine her future. Instead, she focused on discovering what she loved most. Her mother constantly reminded her that she

was unique and capable, advice that helped Kelly keep believing in herself when life became difficult.

That passion was sport. Kelly excelled in an impressive range of activities, including ballet, Irish dancing, ice skating, athletics, cross-country, synchronised swimming, softball and horse riding. She earned KwaZulu-Natal colours in athletics and cross-country, represented South Africa in synchronised swimming and played provincial softball for three years. After moving to Pretoria during the COVID-19 pandemic when her father was transferred for work, she joined a local baseball club and continued developing her talent.

Today, she has been part of South African baseball for five years and has represented South Africa in Baseball5 for the past three years, travelling internationally with the national team. Kelly says, "Sport is my life and I have always enjoyed it, no matter how difficult it was. I always had to work harder than my teammates because I wanted to be at their level."

Interview with Kelly Mellisa Duke

South African Under-23 Baseball Team



Being selected for the South African Under-23 Baseball Team is one of Kelly's proudest achievements. "When I was selected for the South African Under-23 Baseball Team, I felt incredibly proud," she says. "To represent South Africa in Hong Kong and the United Kingdom is something I have worked towards for years."

Wearing my country's colours means everything to me." She loves the challenge and excitement that baseball brings, but she admits the journey has not always been easy. "Sometimes people tell me I'm not good enough, but I refuse to believe them. I know how hard I work, and I never stop giving my best."

Through every challenge, one person has remained Kelly's greatest source of strength. She speaks with deep gratitude about her mother, saying, "My mom has always been my superhero. She is with me 24 hours a day, seven days a week. She always tells me, 'Chin up. You know that you are good."

Never give up. Always believe in yourself, and know that God is always by your side.' Without her support, I wouldn't be where I am today." Those words have carried Kelly through some of the hardest moments of her life and continue to motivate her every day.

Away from the baseball field, Kelly finds comfort with her horse, Fire. Three years ago, while she was away competing at a South African Baseball5 tournament, her grandmother passed away. Her mother waited until she returned home before sharing the heartbreaking news. Kelly struggled with the loss and turned back to horse riding as part of her healing process.

Receiving Fire as her 18th birthday gift became one of the greatest blessings in her life. Smiling as she speaks about him, Kelly says, "He is my happy place. I sit with him and tell him about my pain. He helps me stay calm and feel safe. We have a very special bond." She believes horses have given her confidence, emotional strength and a place where she can simply be herself. Although Kelly once enjoyed modelling and even won several competitions, she decided to step away from it so she could focus fully on her sporting career. Like many young adults,

she has also been trying to build a future by looking for work, but she says this has become another difficult battle because of her disability. "As soon as I tell employers more about myself, I often hear, 'Sorry, we don't employ people with disabilities,'" she says. "That is heartbreaking because it makes you wonder what happens to so many other people just like me. It's not my fault that I was born like this."

Everyone should be given a fair opportunity to show what they can do. Don't discriminate against people with disabilities. We all have feelings, and I can tell you that we are hardworking people who would give anything to have a job." Despite these disappointments, Kelly refuses to lose hope. She believes that faith has carried her through every challenge she has faced, from her health struggles to earning national colours. "It's hard out there, but I will not give up," she says.

"God will stand by me and help me find something." She also treasures the advice her mother has shared throughout her life: "In His time He will provide. Don't give up on hope, just have faith." Those words continue to inspire Kelly as she works towards both her sporting dreams and building a successful future.

Looking ahead, Kelly is excited about wearing the South African colours on the international stage once again while continuing to inspire others through her story. She is currently seeking sponsorships to help make her international tours possible, as the cost of competing in Hong Kong and the United Kingdom is significant. Kelly hopes that by sharing her journey, people will see ability before disability and recognise that determination, commitment and heart cannot be measured by physical challenges.

Her message to other young people is one she lives by every day. "Don't be afraid to stand up to people who tell you that you are not good enough," she says. "We are all good at something. Never stop believing in yourself. Put your fear behind you, trust God, and keep moving forward. You are stronger than you think." It is a message that has shaped Kelly's life, and one she hopes will encourage others to believe that no obstacle is too great when you refuse to give up.





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**Empowering Women Through
Timeless Beauty, Confidence,
Creativity and Professional
Artistry**

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Meet Emmarentia Coetzee

Owner of EMbrace Makeup Artistry

A story by
**Mckayla
Faure**



For Emmarentia Coetzee, beauty has always been about much more than makeup. As the founder of EMbrace Makeup, she has built a career around helping women feel confident, empowered, and comfortable in their own skin. At 35 years old, she has transformed a personal passion into a thriving profession, using her creativity and expertise to make a meaningful difference in the lives of her clients.

What began as a hobby quickly developed into something far greater. Drawn to the artistry of makeup and its ability to enhance natural beauty, Emmarentia discovered that she loved not only the creative process but also the confidence it inspired in others. The joy of seeing someone look in the mirror and feel beautiful motivated her to pursue makeup artistry professionally.

"My journey started with a passion for beauty and helping women feel confident in their own skin," she explains. "What began as a creative hobby soon grew into a career because I realised how much I loved transforming not only appearances, but confidence as well."

Today, Emmarentia specialises in bridal, soft glam, and occasion makeup. Her signature style focuses on creating timeless, elegant looks that enhance a client's natural features while ensuring they look flawless both in person and in photographs. Rather than masking individuality, her approach celebrates it.

Of all the styles she creates, soft glam remains her favourite. The look strikes the perfect balance between sophistication and natural beauty, allowing clients to feel polished without appearing overdone. "I love soft glam because it enhances a client's features while maintaining a fresh, radiant appearance," she says. "It creates a beautiful, timeless result that suits so many different people and occasions."

One of the most rewarding aspects of her career has been working with brides. Wedding days are among the most significant moments in a person's life, and being trusted to help a bride look and feel her best is a responsibility Emmarentia values deeply. "There is something incredibly special about being part of such an important milestone," she

says. "Helping a bride feel confident and beautiful on her wedding day is always memorable and rewarding." Creativity is at the heart of everything she does, and inspiration comes from a variety of sources. Fashion trends, social media, beauty campaigns, and industry developments all influence her work. However, she believes that some of her greatest inspiration comes directly from her clients. "Every face tells a different story," she explains. "Every client has unique features, preferences, and personalities, which keeps my creativity flowing and challenges me to create something special for each person."

Behind every flawless makeup application is a carefully selected collection of products and tools. For Emmarentia, quality is essential. Her must-have items include a flawless foundation, versatile eyeshadow palettes, professional brushes, reliable setting sprays, and effective skincare products.

She believes that beautiful makeup starts long before the first product is applied. "Healthy, well-prepared skin is the foundation of any great makeup look," she says. "The preparation process is just as important as the makeup itself."

In an industry that evolves rapidly, staying up to date with new trends and techniques is crucial. Emmarentia is committed to continuous learning and regularly follows leading beauty professionals, attends training sessions and beauty events, watches educational content, and tests new products to refine her skills. While she enjoys exploring modern trends, she remains focused on creating looks that are timeless and flattering rather than simply following every passing fad.

Outside of makeup artistry, Emmarentia enjoys creating social media content, exploring new developments within the beauty industry, spending time with family and friends, and continuously learning new skills. She believes personal growth and professional growth go hand in hand, and she is always looking for opportunities to improve and evolve.

One of the qualities that sets her apart is her commitment to working with every client's unique skin type and skin tone. She understands that no two people are

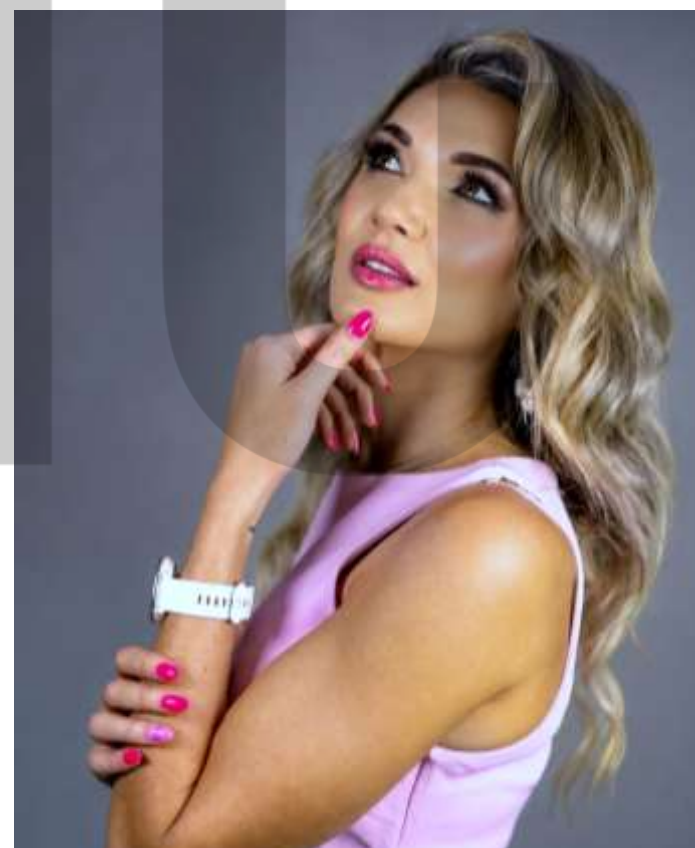
the same, which is why she tailors her approach to suit each individual. "Proper skin preparation, product selection, and colour matching are key to achieving a flawless and long-lasting result," she explains. "Every client deserves a personalised experience."

For aspiring makeup artists hoping to enter the industry, Emmarentia offers practical advice based on her own journey. She encourages newcomers to practise consistently, invest in education, remain patient with their progress, and never stop learning. "Building strong relationships and providing an excellent client experience are just as important as mastering technical skills," she says.

Above all else, it is the confidence she helps create that continues to inspire her every day. The smile on a client's face after seeing the finished result reminds her why she chose this career in the first place.

Through EMbrace Makeup, Emmarentia Coetzee continues to combine artistry, passion, and professionalism to help women feel their best. Whether preparing a bride for her wedding day, creating a glamorous look for a special event, or simply helping someone see their own beauty more clearly, she remains dedicated to making every client feel confident, radiant, and empowered.

For Emmarentia, beauty is not just about appearance—it is about embracing confidence, celebrating individuality, and helping people see the best version of themselves.







Natasha Perold has spent more than two decades serving others through healthcare, leadership, and community work. Today, as the newly crowned Mrs Face of the Universe South Africa 2027, she sees her latest achievement as far more than a personal milestone. For Natasha, the crown is an opportunity to inspire hope, serve with purpose, and make a difference in the lives of others.

When her name was announced during the Mrs Supranational South Africa Grand Finale, Natasha says time seemed to stand still. "It was one of the most humbling moments of my life. Everything seemed to stand still, and my first words were simply, 'Thank You, God.'" She believes the title represents far more than winning a competition.

"This crown represents so much more than a title. It represents redemption, healing, purpose, and God's perfect timing." She adds that she wasn't simply celebrating a victory but accepting a greater responsibility. "This platform is not about me alone; it is about serving others with greater intention, integrity, compassion, and hope."

Natasha is a wife to Roeland Perold, a proud mother and grandmother, a registered nurse, healthcare business development professional, entrepreneur, speaker, mentor, and founder of the Visible Hope Movement, Thrival®, and LITT with ThrivalTash. Throughout her career, she has worked alongside healthcare professionals across South Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa to improve patient care through education, innovation, and collaboration.

Her Christian faith remains at the centre of everything she does. "Everything I do is guided by three leadership principles—Mindset, Responsibility, and Stewardship," she explains. "Life has taught me that our greatest pain can become our greatest purpose when we choose healing over bitterness and hope over fear."

Growing up in Port Shepstone, Natasha dreamed of one day representing South Africa. Although life took her on a different journey first, she believes every experience prepared her for this moment. "Looking back now, I understand that God wasn't delaying my dream—He was

preparing me for it," she says. While her Mrs South Africa journey helped rebuild her confidence, joining Mrs Supranational South Africa gave her a platform where service, leadership, and purpose came together. "I didn't enter to win a crown. I entered because I believe our scars do not disqualify us, our past does not define us, and purpose has no expiry date."

Natasha says pageantry has never been about beauty alone. It has taught her confidence, discipline, leadership, humility, and the importance of serving others. She also treasures the friendships she built throughout the competition.

"Although we stood on the same stage as competitors, we chose to support one another, celebrate one another, and genuinely want the very best for each other," she says. "Winning the title was an honour, but gaining lifelong friendships and becoming part of a family committed to leadership, excellence, service, and impact is something I will treasure forever."

Like many women, Natasha has faced difficult seasons that included adversity, financial hardship, disappointment, and rebuilding her life. Those experiences shaped her outlook and strengthened her faith. "Faith taught me to keep showing up," she says. "Every setback became preparation. Every challenge strengthened my character." Today she hopes her story reminds others that delays do not mean dreams are over. "I stand as living proof that a dream delayed is not a dream denied."

Throughout her journey, Natasha has drawn strength from the people closest to her. She gives credit to God first, followed by her husband, Roeland, her children, family, mentors, sponsors, colleagues, and everyone who encouraged her along the way. "No one reaches the finish line alone," she says. "This crown rests on my head, but it has been carried by the hearts of so many people."

As Mrs Face of the Universe South Africa 2027, Natasha plans to use her platform to promote healthcare awareness, cancer education, mental wellness, women's empowerment, youth leadership, gender-based violence prevention, and restoring dignity through her Visible Hope

Movement. She believes lasting change comes through collaboration and meaningful partnerships. "Visible Hope begins when ordinary people choose to make an extraordinary difference in someone else's life," she says.

For women considering pageantry, Natasha offers simple advice. "Don't wait until you feel ready. Growth happens when we step into the unknown. Stay teachable, be coachable, and surround yourself with people who challenge you to become the best version of yourself." She reminds aspiring contestants that "the crown is never the destination. It is simply a platform to serve."

Looking ahead, Natasha hopes her reign will be remembered not for the title she holds, but for the lives she touches. "I want people to remember not the crown I wore, but the hope we created together," she says. "Leadership is not about being the loudest voice in the room. It is about helping others discover theirs." Above all, she hopes people leave every encounter feeling "seen, heard, valued, and inspired," believing that true beauty is measured by the hope we leave behind.

Natasha extends her sincere gratitude to the Mrs Supranational South Africa Directors and Leadership Team—Lee-Ann Naidoo, Rodney Prins, Dercia Josue, and Jared Wallace—for creating a platform that develops not only contestants but women of purpose and leadership.

She also thanks Yolandi Naicker for the grace shown during the crowning handover, Sharon Ndzabela for her guidance, strategic coaching, and mentorship, as well as her family, friends, fellow finalists, production teams, sponsors, and every person who prayed, voted, shared her journey, and supported her every step of the way.



Karlién HusseImann

Photo credits: Justin Visagie



Meet Karlien Husselmann

The Next Opulent Model South Africa 2026 Finalist

Karlien Husselmann is embracing an exciting new chapter as one of the finalists in the Curve Category for The Next Opulent Model South Africa 2026. Although she is new to the modelling industry, she is already proving that confidence, self-acceptance, and a willingness to grow can open doors to incredible opportunities.

When Karlien's name was announced as one of the finalists, the moment was almost too much to believe. "I was in complete disbelief! Being chosen as one of the 10 finalists out of four regions for one of the biggest fashion events in the country was a truly humbling moment.

I am beyond excited to be styled and glammed up by the best designers and makeup artists in the industry. It's an honour to be part of such an incredible group," she says.

Although she explored pageantry as a child, Karlien believes she has now found where she truly belongs. "I dabbled in pageantry as a child, but after experiencing the Training and Mentorship Day with Opulent, I've discovered that I am definitely a runway woman at heart. This is my first major show, and I am so energized by what the future holds."

Watching the previous season of The Next Opulent Model South Africa inspired her to enter the competition. She admired the professionalism and clear vision behind the event, while her own journey of self-acceptance gave her the confidence to take the opportunity. "I loved that there was no grey area. It was all about confidence and style. I'm quite spontaneous, and since I had already started my own personal journey of self-acceptance, I decided to take the leap. My main focus now is to see this through and finish what I started."

For Karlien, representing the Curve Category is about much more than fashion. It reflects everything she has overcome and the woman she has become. "It represents embracing who I am today. I've been through a lot medically and financially, and this journey is about honouring that recovery and

becoming the best version of myself. I want to show other women that if I can take this step after all I've faced, they absolutely can too." As she prepares to walk the runway in front of more than 5,000 spectators at the SunBet Arena, Karlien is choosing to enjoy every moment rather than focusing only on the outcome. "I'm practicing, but I'm also constantly reminding myself that it isn't just about the win. It's about enjoying the journey, stepping onto that stage, and fully owning that moment."

One of her favourite memories so far has been the MOPA party, where finalists had the opportunity to dress up and celebrate together. However, it was the mentorship and training that made the biggest impact. "The MOPA party was an absolute highlight, but beyond the fun, the mentorship and training day was life-changing. Being surrounded by the support of the other ladies, as well as Johan Ungerer and his incredible team, was empowering. I've made it a point to be myself, laugh loudly, and soak up every lesson I can."

Karlien believes modelling has helped her see herself differently. Instead of comparing herself to others, she has learned to appreciate the encouragement around her. "Like Johan Ungerer mentioned, there's always someone who might seem prettier or more experienced, but I've stopped looking for judgment. Instead, I've found respect and encouragement that have truly changed my perspective. It's made me realise that I can do this, and I'm determined to make the most of every opportunity."

She admits that accepting herself has not always been easy. "It's rare to find women who truly love the way they look and mean it. I haven't always been comfortable in my own skin, and I'm still a work in progress. However, I've accepted where I am now. With such a supportive team, a custom-fitted dress, and professional stylists, judgment is simply no longer on my radar."

Karlien hopes her story will encourage other women to believe in themselves. "You have to work on your mind before you can work on your body. I want to inspire other women to tell their stories because behind every curved woman is a powerful story waiting to be heard. If I can

stand tall, you definitely can too." Although still at the beginning of her modelling journey, Karlien believes success starts with the right attitude. "Having a strong team behind you makes the journey much smoother. The biggest quality is a willingness to learn and grow. If you show up with an open mind, the rest follows." Away from the runway, Karlien enjoys spending time in nature, reading motivational books, creating AI artwork, writing and producing music, and experimenting with hair, makeup, and styling. Despite previous surgeries affecting her singing voice, she still enjoys the occasional karaoke evening. She also believes in balancing her creative life with quiet moments and admits that "there's nothing wrong with a little Netflix and chill."

Her biggest supporters have been her family, her fiancé and his family, her friends, her 24-year-old son, and The Next Opulent Models South Africa team. "I hit a major setback and almost walked away, but their support and my faith in the Lord helped me keep standing strong."

Looking ahead, Karlien is excited to see where this journey leads. "I'm keeping my doors open to whatever piques my interest or presents itself to me. Whether that means entering more competitions, staying involved with the Opulent team, or exploring new creative ventures, I'm ready."

She also has a special invitation for every Curve Queen to experience the excitement firsthand. "I'm so looking forward to the support of all the Curve Queens out there! This is an event you truly do not want to miss. We'll be at the SunBet Arena on 20 August for what is going to be an unforgettable runway show featuring incredible talent."

You can follow Karlien on Instagram at @karlienmhusselmann. If you would like to support Karlien's journey, you can do so by using the following link: <https://itickets.co.za/register/new/485644?&referrer=KarlienCurve>



CASSIDY CARELSE





Cassidy Carelse is a 17-year-old aspiring model and pageant contestant from George, South Africa, whose journey has been shaped by determination, personal growth, and a desire to inspire others. Balancing her studies with the demands of modelling and pageantry, Cassidy continues to pursue her dreams while proving that challenges do not have to define a person's future. With two major competitions on the horizon, she is preparing to compete in Face of South Africa Teenager 2026 and for the prestigious Miss FNB 2026 title in August, both of which represent important milestones in her growing career.

Her passion for modelling began when she was just 10 years old. What started as a young girl's love for self-expression and confidence gradually developed into a journey that would help her discover her purpose. Cassidy explains that she was always drawn to opportunities that allowed her to step outside her comfort zone and showcase her personality. Those early experiences eventually led her into the modelling and pageant industry, where she found a platform to grow, challenge herself, and inspire others through her story.

One of the biggest influences in Cassidy's life was her sister, Shamone Carelse, who passed away from colon cancer in 2019. Speaking about her sister's impact, Cassidy says Shamone taught her the true meaning of strength. She remembers how her sister endured tremendous pain without ever complaining and became an example of courage for the entire family.

Cassidy says that watching Shamone's journey changed her outlook on life and inspired her to keep pushing forward no matter what obstacles came her way. She explains that her sister "showed me what it is to be a strong woman, never complaining of any pain," and adds that although Shamone suffered greatly, "I promised myself I'll make her proud." That promise continues to motivate Cassidy every day as she works towards achieving her goals.

Her hard work began to pay off in 2024 when she earned the title of Princess for Miss FNB. The achievement was more than just a crown. It became a learning experience that helped her build

confidence and develop important life skills. Cassidy explains that the opportunity taught her to believe in herself and trust her abilities. She says it helped her "speak with confidence and embrace my uniqueness," while also strengthening her leadership skills and giving her a greater sense of purpose. Through pageantry, she learned the value of persistence and discovered that success often comes from refusing to give up when life becomes difficult.

Among her favourite memories are the people she has met and the experiences she has gained through pageantry. Cassidy says stepping onto the stage with confidence and achieving goals that once seemed impossible have been some of the most rewarding moments of her journey. Every experience has helped shape her into the young woman she is today.

Another significant milestone came in 2024 when Cassidy was scouted for Pageant America. It was an exciting opportunity that many young contestants dream about. Unfortunately, financial challenges and health complications prevented her from pursuing it. While it was disappointing, Cassidy chose to focus on the lessons rather than the missed opportunity. She explains that watching the opportunity slip away was difficult, but it taught her patience, determination, and the importance of staying focused on her long-term goals.

Health challenges have also played a major role in Cassidy's story. On 2 April 2026, she underwent major surgery that kept her at home for an entire school term. It was one of the toughest periods of her life. Cassidy recalls that "it was a very difficult time for me," explaining that she had to learn how to walk and perform everyday tasks all over again. The experience tested her physically and emotionally, but it also strengthened her determination to keep fighting for her dreams.

Even today, Cassidy continues to live with a health condition that can sometimes limit her physically. However, she refuses to allow it to define her future. Instead, she views it as motivation. She says, "I refuse to let it define who I am or limit my dreams," adding that her challenges have made her stronger, more grateful, and more determined to succeed. Every

obstacle she has faced has helped her develop courage, confidence, and a deeper appreciation for every opportunity that comes her way.

In 2025, Cassidy once again celebrated success when she was crowned First Princess at Miss FNB. The accomplishment carried special meaning because she knew how much she had overcome to reach that point. Looking back on her journey, she believes setbacks do not have to stop a person from achieving their dreams. Instead, she says they can become the very reason someone rises stronger than before.

Now, Cassidy is eagerly preparing for two of the biggest competitions of her career. In August 2026 she will compete in Face of South Africa Teenager 2026 while also vying for the coveted Miss FNB 2026 title. She sees both competitions as opportunities to continue growing, meet people from different backgrounds, learn from experienced mentors, and proudly represent herself and her community. Beyond modelling and pageantry, Cassidy dreams of becoming a paramedic and making a positive impact in her community while using her platform to encourage young people facing challenges.

Her message reflects everything she has learned throughout her journey: "Believe in yourself, work hard, and never let setbacks stop you. Stay authentic, remain dedicated to your goals, and remember that success comes from perseverance. Your story, your struggles, and your strengths make you unique. Embrace them and keep moving forward."



Mrs Best Model South Africa 2026

Laurika Els





Photo credit: Janine Pretorius

For Laurika, being crowned Mrs Best Model South Africa was far more than receiving a beautiful crown. It was the reward for believing in herself, working hard, and proving that dreams can still become reality, no matter what stage of life a woman is in.

When Laurika's name was announced as the winner, it became one of the most memorable moments of her life. Looking back, she still remembers the emotions she felt. "Being crowned Mrs Best Model South Africa was one of the most unforgettable moments of my life. I felt overwhelmed with gratitude, excitement, and pride. It was a reminder that hard work, dedication, and believing in yourself can lead to incredible opportunities," she says.

Away from the runway, Laurika enjoys a busy and fulfilling life. She is a devoted wife, loving mother, and sports educator who works with young children. Helping children develop confidence while encouraging them to stay active is something she is passionate about every day. Modelling and pageantry were never simply about winning titles.

Instead, they became a way to challenge herself and discover new strengths. "My journey into modelling and pageantry began as a way to challenge myself, build confidence, and step outside my comfort zone. What started as a personal goal quickly became a passion, allowing me to grow both personally and professionally,"

she explains. Her decision to enter the Mrs Best Model South Africa competition came from a deeply personal goal. Laurika wanted to show herself, and other women, that marriage and motherhood should never mean giving up on personal dreams. "I entered the competition to challenge myself, grow as a person, and show other women that they can pursue their goals no matter what stage of life they are in," she says.

Holding the title has given Laurika a greater sense of purpose. For her, the crown represents much more than success in a competition. "This title means so much more than wearing a crown. It represents perseverance, confidence, and believing in yourself. As a role model, I hope to inspire women and young girls to dream big, work hard, and never underestimate their potential," she says.

Throughout her journey, modelling has helped Laurika grow into a more confident person. She believes every competition has taught her something valuable. "Modelling has helped me discover confidence I never knew I had. It has taught me discipline, self-belief, and how to embrace who I am. It has also shown me that growth happens when we step outside our comfort zones," she says.

Winning Mrs Best Model South Africa remains the highlight of her journey so far, but she treasures many other experiences too. Meeting inspiring women, learning new skills, and watching her confidence grow have all become important milestones that continue to motivate her.

Like many women balancing several responsibilities, Laurika admits the journey has not always been easy. Family life, work, and modelling all require time and commitment. There were moments when she questioned herself, but she refused to give up. "There were times when I doubted myself, but I stayed focused on my goals and reminded myself why I started. The support of my family and my determination helped me push through those challenges," she says.

Maintaining balance remains one of her biggest priorities. Careful planning and organisation help her manage her responsibilities, while her family remains at the centre of everything she does. "My

family always comes first, and I work hard to make sure I give my best at home, in my career, and in modelling," she says. Laurika is quick to credit her husband and family for helping her succeed. "Their encouragement, belief in me, and constant support have given me the confidence to keep pursuing my dreams," she says.

Working with children every day has also shaped the causes that matter most to her. She is passionate about children's development, confidence-building, and promoting healthy lifestyles. She believes every child deserves encouragement, support, and opportunities to reach their full potential.

As Mrs Best Model South Africa, Laurika hopes to inspire women across the country to believe in themselves. She believes a successful titleholder should be kind, humble, respectful, confident, and willing to help others by leading through example.

Looking ahead, Laurika hopes to continue growing within the modelling and pageantry industry while making a positive difference in the lives of the children she teaches. Above all, she wants to be the best role model she can be for her own child.

Her advice to women is simple but powerful. "Never let anyone tell you that it is too late. Whether you are a wife, a mother, building a career, or starting over, your dreams still matter. Take that first step, believe in yourself, and don't be afraid to chase what sets your heart on fire. Success begins the moment you decide to believe in yourself."



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