

# Stacy Beukes puts a ring on Cape Flats culture and creativity

 By [Lauren Hartzenberg](#)

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Stacy Beukes is the curly-haired designer, manufacturer and owner of local jewellery brand '[A Ring To It](#)'. Raised in the [Cape Flats](#) suburb of Grassy Park, Beukes weaves cherished childhood memories and cultural traditions into charming handmade pieces that are packed with personality and evoke nostalgia within the wearer.



Stacy Beukes. ©Rizqah Dollie, The Dollie House

"My jewellery operates on a few different levels and I purposefully design with that in mind. Clients can enjoy the jewellery for its aesthetic appeal or the stories that the pieces tell," says Beukes.

After excelling at school, she was awarded two bursaries in the jewellery design and manufacturing field, the first at Stellenbosch University and the second at Hochschule Pforzheim in Germany – opportunities that she owes to sheer determination. "The cost of the degree programme, equipment, materials and residence accommodation would not have been within grasp had I not worked hard and received a bursary."

## "Out of necessity comes invention"

After graduating, the young designer realised she'd have to create her own career opportunities, a process she describes as a challenging one.

"Without investment, I built my business and brand slowly with limited tools and some perseverance. I started with an old jewellery bench set up in the passage at home in Grassy Park, to shared workshops/spaces, a co-owned business and then to the A Ring To It studio. I focused on working with what I had and though at times it was frustrating, I wouldn't trade the difficult experiences, as it has made the business what it is today."

Despite her now 3-year-old company being commissioned to design and make jewellery for big brands like Jack Daniels, English Blazer and Yardley London, Beukes believes her greatest success to be the ability to create jobs.

"Offering a young woman with no prior jewellery experience the chance to do a 6-month traineeship and now further employment has been a rewarding experience. I value the importance of investing in people, as people have invested in me. The skills learnt I now share and use to empower others."



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As #DesignMonth draws to a close, Beukes chats to *Bizcommunity* about how memory, community and cultural representation shapes her work.

### ■ How has growing up on the Cape Flats influenced your career path and designs?

- Authentically me in industry

Jewellery design as a career choice was not as popular within our community and at career day we did not have any jewellery designers or creative entrepreneurs present. I didn't really have a mentor or someone in the industry who had their own brand, that looked like me, came from my background or offered a voice/viewpoint differing from those that were currently in the industry. So, I was adamant that my brand would be a reflection of me – both visually and culturally.

The jewellery, its story, the values of the business, the empowerment aspect and the visual campaigns put forward – from my curls to the messages we share in our photo shoots – are all informed by the celebration of difference. In an industry where media drives sales, aspirational lifestyles are key selling points and 'fitting in' is the easier option to bridging difference; I opted to celebrate that difference.

I'd like to think that we've done our bit to change perceptions and that when little ones look in magazines or at campaigns they can see themselves in the images.



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- **Memory and the importance of community in the shaping of those memories**

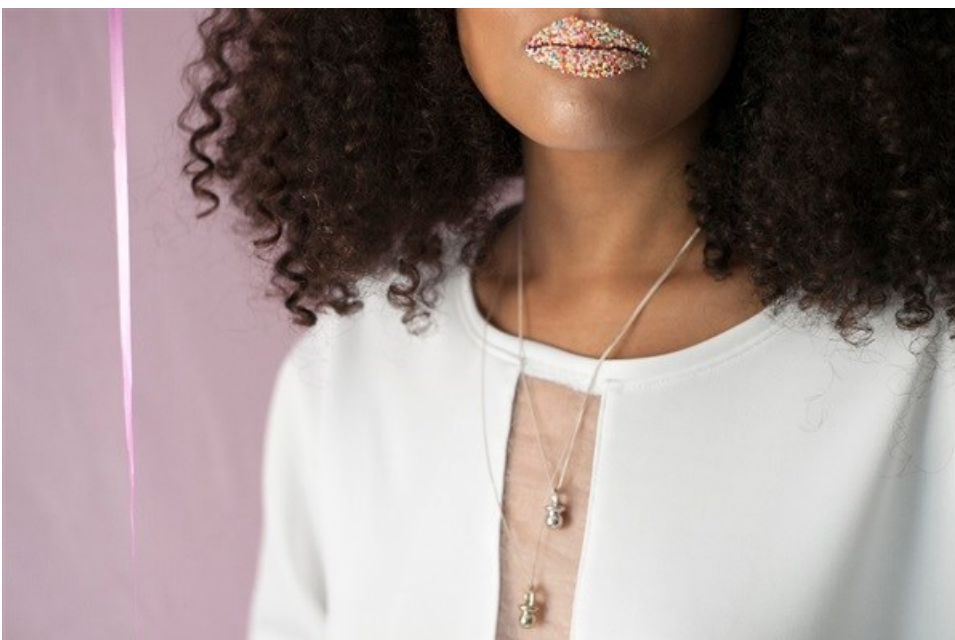
Memory is an important influence in my process and the people and places I've been surrounded by have shaped the stories I now share. Memory is the starting point in weaving the intricate threads that lead to concept.

I'm happy to be a part of the wave of designers telling their stories and relaying their authentic style and identities through their brands. I'm not the stereotypical jewellery designer and business owner. I've made a concerted effort to make the market accessible by having jewellery available at all price points. My campaigns reflect a certain look because I think it's important to show diversity.

■ Your 'Sweets with the Change' range garnered a good bit of attention. Tell us about the concept behind it?

The 'Sweets with the Change' range taps into nostalgia, memory and insights into Cape Town communities. The range touches on the role that 'the corner shop' played as the backdrop to our childhoods – the sense of responsibility when buying a loaf of bread for your 'Ma' and the joy of asking for 'sweets with the change'.

The range rehashes and reinterprets my favourite sweets in clever ways and relooks at magical moments associated with sweets, like the 'lucky packet', 'bazaar favourites' and the process of opening a sucker (pronounced 'suck-kuh'). The walk down memory lane filters through the product, display and packaging.



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### **The story behind the Chunky Bubble Gum Ring...**

I'm the youngest of three kids and the only girl. Holidays were spent running around with the brothers and we

share a lot of the weird and wonderful holiday discoveries, which were brought back home and implemented.

One such holiday find, was the discovery of the 'Bubble Gum Tree' – a tree covered in holiday visitors' old bubblegum. It was a thing of magic and we stood staring in awe. The glistening and almost luminescent colours of the chunks of bubble gum hanging onto the bark of the old tree. LOL. It's a moment I won't forget... the beauty of the dirty bubble gum and a memory I share with my brothers.

Clearly we were impressed, and on our return home the brothers set about converting the underside of our wooden kitchen table back home into our very own 'Bubble Gum Tree'. After a short while we had a small collection. My 'mommy' found out and it was removed using a butter knife. We (all the contributors, including our cousins) were sad and now... I'm immortalising bubble gum!

The ring is produced from chewed pieces of Chappies bubble gum and the shape of the ring was made by the old favourite 'twist your gum around your finger' move, that we so loved while playing '8 hoks' (hop-scotch) in the yard. The range is executed by casting techniques and 'sturried up' (a 'luxury' option) by setting gemstones in the recesses and playing with different methods.

I love it because I get to chew and catalogue vast amounts of bubble gum and play around with my food. Sourcing the material means riding around to different sweet wholesalers or corner shops to test bubble gum. It's a tricky job, but someone has to do it! :)

Every time I wear my ring I can't help but enjoy the memories and associations of yesteryear and the joy on others faces when they associate their own memories or squirm when they realise their jewellery was once chewed.

#### What is your personal favourite A Ring To It piece?

An original 'Stacy Adriaans' (my maiden name) design was my suburb name tag range that I made in my first studio space. 'Studio space' would be a farfetched term, because my first work area was in the backyard under the car port during the day and at night I set up my jeweller's desktop on a rickety old tressle in the passage, between the bedrooms and the bathroom. While the rest of my family slept, I dreamt up and made my first 'Grassy Park' name tag.

The piece was inspired by childhood memories of buying your name necklace in beads on a 'zombie' or stamped in leather at the carnival; the pride with which we wore our names, as though wearing the jewellery confirmed your confidence in self. Later the independent women in popular culture, running across our screens, all wore their name necklace with pride and conviction... 'Carrie'.

I made my own statement by choosing to be proudly from the GP. I didn't know then that my Grassy Park name tag would so neatly showcase my approach to incorporating humour in my designs to highlight difference. The range is still a huge hit under the 'a ring to it' favourites range; we get lots of custom requests for names, suburbs and various words... 'foK', 'po#s', Constantia, etc.

I still have the original piece, I can't bring myself to make a new one. I wear it often. It reminds me of where I'm from, keeps me authentic and motivates me to continue to work hard. When I see the badly sawn out letters, it reminds me of how far I've come.



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#### ■ What are your thoughts on our local creative scene at the moment?

It's an exciting time to be a part of the creative scene in Cape Town. The growth over the past couple of years has paved the way for many businesses producing high quality products for both the local and international markets. Those creative businesses have in turn generated much-needed jobs.

It's also been wonderful to see the response and shift in the mindsets of consumers, who are now opting to support small business and especially locally-made products. Campaigns like #lovezabuyza really highlight the importance of locally-produced products.

*Like what you see? [Shop A Ring To It online](#) , and connect with the brand on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).*

#### ABOUT LAUREN HARTZENBERG

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