

**WORDS BY
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Nigerian designer Ronke Nedd began her jewellery journey with semi-precious beads and graduated to metals, diamonds and gemstones. Her brand Rebecca Noff, which she founded in 2013, draws inspirations from her heritage, nature and her ability to see art in everything. Take the case of her collections: the Adinkra line is a tribute to the Akan people of Ghana, while the pieces of her Nest collection are an interpretation of how interconnected we are. "Gold wires are carefully linked and nested in another set of gold wires," says Ronke, whose jewellery is made in Hong Kong, Bangkok and Toronto.

Her design process always begins with a motif, a shape



or a story that she wants to tell. Ronke regularly relies on textured finishes to lend detail to her gold wearables, as seen in the Leaf and Pebble collections accented with diamonds. "Texture tells multiple stories that clean lines sometimes can't convey and gives context to my design," she adds.

In an e-mail interview, Ronke Nedd discusses her career and jewellery.

Tell us a bit about yourself

I grew up in Lagos, Nigeria. I'm a wanderer with an expansive mind – the one who pushes boundaries and is always willing to go on a journey of self-discovery by stepping into uncharted territories. I love to travel, I love good food, I love to read and I can be a bit of a loner, as I need to retreat to draw energy from within myself from time to time.

You've essayed diverse roles and eventually became a diamond grader and bench jeweller – what sparked those choices?

I studied geography and environmental management. I have a Master of Business Administration degree, and I'm a Certified



RONKE A WANDERER AN EXPANSIVE

ScrumMaster, product owner and business analyst. I've worked in a variety of industries such as investment banking, business aviation and information technology.

I formally learnt benchwork because it was important for me to understand what goes into the art of jewellery-making beyond

design: how metal is melted, forged, bent, rolled, shaped and filed, how diamonds are set, how finished pieces are polished before they ever sit in a window display. Getting involved in the entire value chain gives me a unique understanding of how much effort goes into crafting a piece and a better sense of value for each piece.

What kindled your love of jewellery? Curiosity. This surprises people a lot, but I've always had an active and creative mind, a colourful imagination and a love for shapes and abstract art – things that have now come to shape my

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design philosophy. This meant that I was always looking for ways to express my creativity and that left me tinkering with different things. I stumbled on jewellery-making and I found jewellery design somewhat therapeutic; it allowed me to express myself in ways that I had previously struggled with. This is how my journey into the world of fine jewellery began and I let that be my anchor as I discover more about myself through this art.

Where do you find inspiration for your designs?

My designs are inspired by my journeys, the customer's journey (when making a bespoke piece), my heritage, nature and my ability to see art in everything. When designing a piece inspired by nature, I always strive to preserve every aspect of



the inspiration. The curled leaf design is a testament to how much effort I put into every detail: the apex, the veins, the margin and leaf stalk are all carefully worked into the design and this type of detail can only be achieved by hand.

How did you pivot for sales-client outreach at the onset of the pandemic? What kept you busy during this time?

Since the whole world was online, literally, we had to stay in the client's consciousness with fresh designs and educative videos on diamonds and gemstones, especially, to help drive brand awareness. The pandemic definitely impacted the business. Luxury pieces such as gold and diamond jewellery tend to be first in line to be put on hold on the list of priorities for buyers, but we kept working with existing clients and developing new ways to meet their needs and pique their



interest. Thankfully, things are picking back up as the world opens up.

Has the Black Lives Matter movement and initiatives helped garner interest in your brand?

Not exactly, although I do believe it's a necessary conversation to have and sustain. Ultimately, I want a world where we get visibility on the strength of our work, regardless of who owns the brand.

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