

Lumu's fashion rooted in heritage

Through Green Amba, Lumu has built a reputation for bold, contemporary jewellery deeply rooted in African heritage and design.

BY GLORIA HAGUMA

Designers who champion sustainability are not just keeping pace — are reshaping the narrative around what fashion should stand for. Ugandan accessories designer Robert Lumu is among those boldly steering that change.

Through his brand, Green Amba, Lumu has built a reputation for bold, contemporary jewellery deeply rooted in African heritage and conscious design. Working with natural and ethically sourced materials such as bark cloth, cowrie shells, raffia, wood, coconut, and natural stones, he creates pieces that feel both ancestral and modern.

His latest collection, Endless Earth, celebrates nature's abundance while challenging perceptions about locally made fashion. Lumu talks about the collection, sustainability, and what it means to build a Ugandan brand with global ambition.

How would you describe Green Amba?

Green Amba is a jewellery and accessories brand deeply rooted in African heritage and conscious design. We create bold, contemporary pieces using natural materials like bark cloth, natural stone, cowrie shells, raffia, wood, and coconut. The idea is to celebrate the raw beauty of nature while presenting it in

a way that feels modern and wearable.

Endless Earth is your new collection, what does that name mean?

The name speaks to the beauty and abundance of Mother Nature. The earth offers us countless resources that can be transformed into art in many different ways. With this collection, we are appreciating nature and the materials around us, adding value to them through thoughtful design.

What inspired the shapes, materials, and symbols in this collection?

This collection celebrates Ugandan

HIS TWO CENTS

Stay true to yourself and pursue your dream with focus. Take time to create work with a strong story, that is what makes a brand stand out. Have a clear sense of direction. Know where your brand comes from and where you want it to go. Keep researching, keep learning, and surround yourself with like-minded people who inspire and mentor you.

culture and heritage, craftsmanship, and conscious fashion — where tradition shapes the future. The richness of Ugandan artisan work influenced everything.

We incorporated traditional techniques such as weaving, basketry, bead embroidery, and carving. Many of the materials are natural, upcycled, or ethically sourced, and several carry strong symbolism. Cowrie shells, for instance, were once a symbol of wealth. Bark cloth is a traditional handmade fabric and one of the most sustainable materials we have. Every element tells a story.

Who is the Green Amba wearer?

Our designs are for bold, fearless, fashion-conscious individuals who care about sustainability. This is someone who wants to carry a message about nature and the importance of preserving it. They are confident, expressive, and unafraid to stand out.

How receptive has the Ugandan market been?

In the beginning, it was challenging. Many people did not understand the designs. Some even associated materials like bark cloth and cowrie shells with witchcraft and could not imagine wearing them.

We had to work hard to change those perceptions by blending traditional materials and artisan techniques with contemporary aesthetics. Over time, people began to see the beauty and meaning behind the pieces.

What have been your challenges and wins?

One major challenge has been changing mindsets about wearable art. Many people see it as luxury and would rather spend on imported products, assuming they are superior. Because our work is handmade, production takes time. Not everyone understands why that may result in slightly higher prices.

Access to certain equipment is also limited and expensive. Training young artisans requires patience, and sometimes, after gaining skills, they move on.

But there have been significant wins. Ugandans have embraced our designs because of how uniquely we present them. We rely less on imported materials, and there is growing awareness about sustainability.

We have empowered young people through skills development, working with interns from Kyambogo, Ndejje and YMCA. We have partnered with organisations such as A Woman's Worth Uganda and Sawa World to uplift women and young people. And we have grown to the point of creating collections fit for the runway.

How do you stay true to your creative vision?

You need a burning passion. It helps you create work with a strong story. It cannot just be about money. When you truly believe in your vision, you find ways to present it so that the market appreciates it.

What conversations do you hope Endless Earth sparks?

I hope it prompts people to reflect on the beauty of nature and on how tradition can influence contemporary fashion. I want Ugandans to rethink their fashion choices and see that simple, natural materials can make powerful statements.

It should also encourage pride in homegrown brands and raise awareness about slow, sustainable fashion.

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