

Jewelry Designer Values African Beads

By MINGGUO SUN
Epoch Times Staff

Her work is inspired by the history of the beads she uses in her necklaces and bracelets, Nasimiyu Wekesa says in an interview with The Epoch Times. She grew up in Kenya where beads were a part of life.

"In every ceremony everybody had beads. And we used to wear them and cherish them and we used them in different ceremonies," she recollects. She came to the United States 15 years ago and travels back to Africa frequently, collecting trade beads for her work.

Knowing how the girls cherished the beads gives her a deep respect for them as she places them in her jewelry. "Beads were like our clothes," she said. At each point in a girl's life, entering adulthood, getting married, she would be given beads by her grandmother, accumulating her own collection slowly throughout her life.

Wekesa says, "Beads were personal possessions in Africa, some people love them very much. Even when they die, they say, 'You have to bury me with my beads.'"

She explains how her products are made: "I combine the beads myself, I use string that comes from a car tire, recycled string from a car tire. When you rip up a tire, there's some very strong string that comes out. I am bringing back the path of the answers of life together by stringing their past to the present."

Her work takes her into her deeper con-

sciousness where she feels a connection to the beads as she works with them, she explains. "The way I do my beads is like meditating, it's a spiritual thing. You know I set up every bead and they talk to me, they tell me where they want to be. So some beads don't go here, it's not a right place."

Wekesa has spent years collecting certain beads for some of her pieces. Most of them are made from recycled bottles. Some are made of shells, brass, bronze, and there are special ones the villagers made themselves out of stones to be worn by the warriors.

As she sees it, "The history of beads is really linked to the history of people when you look at it together, they were all there." She mentions the connection with Native Americans, that part of Manhattan was bought with beads.

Wekesa wants to make life better for the children in her homeland so she donates 10 percent of all sales from her retail store to Born to Aid, the foundation she established to help lessen the suffering of the children of western Kenya who are victims of AIDS.

She reflects on her work. "I enjoy doing what I am doing. When I sit down and do this, I look at the time and it is 12 a.m. and I forgot to eat, it's like spirit."

For more information please go to www.nasimiyudesigns.com and www.borntoaid.org



COUTURE BEAD DESIGNS: Nasimiyu Wekesa showed her creations at the Couture Fashion Week New York Feb. 14. MINGGUO/THE EPOCH TIMES



WEARING HISTORY: Nasimiyu Wekesa creates necklaces and bracelets using African ceremonial and trade beads. MINGGUO/THE EPOCH TIMES

Fashion Week in Milan

The 2009-2010 Fall/Winter Ready-to-wear collection was presented in Italy's main fashion city on February 28 in the Milan Fashion Week Womenswear show. Designers Gucci, Krizia, Bottega Veneta, Sportmax and Iceberg presented their collections for next Autumn and Winter.

◀ **DARK & LIGHT:** Using a dark fabric with light patterns Gucci offers this outfit in their Fall/Winter 2009-2010 ready-to-wear collection. CHRISTOPHE SIMON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

◀ **BEYOND TAILORED:** With elegant lines Sportmax offers more than a basic business suit at the Milan Fashion Week show on Feb. 28. VITTORIO ZUNINO CELOTTO/GETTY IMAGES

▶ **EXPERT HANDING OF FABRIC:** In the Krizia Fall/Winter 2009-2010 ready-to-wear collection on Feb. 28 they present an elegantly simple tied waist design. GIUSEPPE CACACE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

▶ **EYE-CATCHING:** Bottega Veneta brings in an easy outfit with an interesting collar during Milan Fashion Week Womenswear Autumn/Winter 2009 show. VITTORIO ZUNINO CELOTTO/GETTY IMAGES

▶ **PARTY DRESS:** Iceberg's design at the Milan Fashion Week Womenswear Autumn/Winter 2009 show. VITTORIO ZUNINO CELOTTO/GETTY IMAGES



Fashion Experts Applaud Chinese Classic Shows in Taiwan

TAINAN, Taiwan—Cai Chaowen, CEO of a fabric company and his wife, Chen Jinying, have both been in the fabric designing business for more than 40 years. The two color and fashion experts watched Divine Performing Arts for the second time on February 22 at Tainan Municipal Cultural Center.

Ms. Chen described DPA's costumes as "bright, sunny and with great color contrast. They were used very well. Upon seeing the costumes I am quite stunned in my mind."

Mr. Cai also said that "the color coordination was wonderful." Yet rather than stunning the mind, "it was very soft and gentle."

Ms. Chen even brought last year's program book and studied the different characteristics of the costumes in this year and last year's performances.

She graduated with a major in fashion design. In DPA, from program to program, she saw the transformation of couture dynasty by dynasty. The costumes added to the dances.

"Especially in Water Sleeves, [the costumes] enhanced the dance's grace and beauty."

The couple export their fabrics to clothing manufacturers around the globe; they came to an agreement: the costumes in DPA will greatly affect the design of colors for their own fabrics.

Aside from colors, Mr. Cai was touched by the scene where divine beings appeared to save compassionate people who were persecuted and oppressed.

Ms. Chen said: "The entire performance had no low point at all. The backdrops matched perfectly with the dancers. For example, in The Udumbara's Bloom, when a close up of the udumbara flower was made, the dancers depicted the flower just as vividly as the udumbara was. I was shocked."

She said that they are planning to buy tickets at the



FABRIC DESIGNERS: Cai Chaowen, CEO of a fabric company and his wife, Chen Jinying at Taipei performance by Divine Performing Arts. LI LIAN/THE EPOCH TIMES

front next time in order to see the expressions of the dancers clearly. In Chinese classical dance the dancers' expressions connote rich content.

The Epoch Times is a proud sponsor of the Divine Performing Arts 2009 World Tour. For more information visit DivinePerformingArts.org

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