



AURORA CHISTE



FOUNDER

Maakoola was founded by Aurora Chiste, an interdisciplinary designer, entrepreneur, and pioneer of regenerative fashion. Aurora's work sits at the crossroads of art, sustainability, and technology, using fashion as a force for good to empower and regenerate society, culture, and the environment.

Aurora's passion for building sustainable economies through innovation finds its roots in Silicon Valley where she started her career. She has more than 15 years' experience as founder and consultant for a range of companies across the US, Europe and Africa.

Recognized by the World Economic Forum as a Global Shaper, Aurora's vision is to create sustainable economic change that will empower and uplift nations through implementing a system of circular commerce that benefits entire value chains from start to finish.

It is Aurora's vision to create sustainable economic global change that will empower and uplift nations through implementing a revolutionary system of circular commerce that benefits entire value chains from start to finish.

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AURORA CHISTE

Aurora is an entrepreneur and multidisciplinary designer, and founder of sustainable brand Maakola.

With over 15 years' experience as a founder, advisor and consultant for a range of companies across the US, Europe and Africa, she helps organizations to innovate by focusing on their impacts and developing a sustainability path that can create value over the long term.

Aurora's passion for building sustainable businesses through innovation finds its roots in Silicon Valley, where she developed the ability to think in net positive terms by addressing systemic challenges that affect every stakeholder in the value chain to solve the biggest problems to the benefit of all.

It is Aurora's vision to create sustainable economic global change that will empower and uplift nations through implementing business strategies that consider and measure environmental, social, and economic outcomes.

In 2015, Aurora was recognized as a Global Shaper by the World Economic Forum.



CREATIVE DIRECTOR

*“I dream of a day where we see a fashion that doesn’t harm,
but rather empowers.*

*My creations are living organisms that capture hundreds of
people’s voices and redefine beauty through the story they
tell, the impact they have on people and the planet, and how
they become powerful forms of self expressions”*

- Aurora Chiste

Aurora Chiste is an interdisciplinary designer, entrepreneur, and pioneer of regenerative fashion. Sitting at the crossroads of art, sustainability, and technology, Aurora's work reimagines fashion as a force for good – one that can empower and regenerate society, culture, and the environment.

Aurora uses fabrics and technology to create garments that challenge our perceptions of beauty, collectivity and consumption. From wax print Ghanaian gowns to the tailoring worn by an American presidential candidate and gender-neutral biodegradable T-shirts, Aurora pushes the boundaries of how fashion shapes identity and culture, as well as the economy.

By proposing the possibility of phygital and regenerative fashion, Aurora invites her customers to imagine the collective power of fashion to both display and take action. She confronts this by moving beyond the integration of fabrics and stories, leveraging the power of Web3 to explore the spaces where physical meets digital, and creating an integrated dance of fashion, self-expression and sustainability.

Aurora is intrigued by how the transformation of beauty requires rethinking the aesthetic and perception of clothing. Embedding data and technology into objects and experiences, she explores the possibility of a regenerative dynamic in which we reduce the harm we do to other people and the environment through the choices we make.

Central to Aurora's practice is a concern with the relationship between ourselves and the planet, and the ways in which clothing and purchasing choices influence our perception of humanity, power, and wellbeing. What if we could use fashion to draw upon the consciousness of our clothes, expressing our collectivity in powerful new ways? These are questions that Aurora explores in her work.

Aurora's imagination first took flight at the Makola Market in Ghana's capital city, Accra. Every fabric pattern on sale in the market is given its own name and story with African life and culture woven in. "That resonated because to me, fashion isn't only beautiful, it reveals who we are – not only our personal style, but our values. Ultimately, they're not just clothes, they're a reflection of ourselves and our changing society."



BIOGRAPHY

With more than 15 years' experience as a founder, advisor and consultant with a strong ESG approach for a range of companies across the US, Europe and Africa, Aurora Chiste is dedicated to shaping a new type of prosperity through business.

It is Aurora's vision to create sustainable economic global change that will empower and uplift nations through implementing a revolutionary system of circular commerce that benefits entire value chains from start to finish.

The ideas that form the backbone of Aurora's vision didn't emerge overnight. From working with both tech companies in Silicon Valley and emerging entrepreneurs in Ghana, Aurora has learned what it takes to make radical changes. An entrepreneur and a Global Shaper at the World Economic Forum, she understands the power of shaping new economies through circularity and shared value.

Lessons from Silicon Valley

Born and raised in Venice, Italy, Aurora relocated to Silicon Valley after finishing school to complete her undergraduate studies. Having earned a degree in communications, she began her professional journey with an Italian social gamification platform named Beintoo, based in San Francisco, California. Beintoo was later bought out by Mediaset, Italy's largest commercial broadcasting company.

As Aurora matured in her role, her resilience and interest in business development and social change sharpened, leading her to question how societal structures have been built, and if these structures are of real benefit to the world we live in today.

The opportunity to experience entrepreneurial communities such as The Glint and Fortune 500s first hand gave Aurora a deeper insight into how innovation finds its voice and its roots.

Bridging the Innovation Gap

While still based in San Francisco, Aurora founded the nonprofit Hack for Big Choices in 2012. The intended vision for the company was to bridge the innovation gap that existed between development barriers and supporting initiatives at a grassroots level. Hack for Big Choices worked alongside government agencies and partnered with large organizations such as Facebook, Wordpress, and Luxottica.

Her contribution brought change to grassroots communities in Mexico, Columbia, San Domingo, and Ghana. In 2015, alongside her team, Aurora organized the largest hackathon in Africa to date. During the course of the event, 550 young talents were able to overcome local challenges through the creation of innovative products, while 48 new startups were launched worldwide on the same day.

That same year (2015), Aurora became a Global Shaper at the the World Economic Forum, and was appointed as an advisor at The Hub Accra.

Creating Sustainable Impact

During her time in Ghana, Aurora agreed to co-launch the Health Innovation Center to address the healthcare concerns in the capital in 2016.

During the course of the project, it became clear that the building capacity in Ghana was limited as many businesses closed before they could break even. The region clearly lacked the basic infrastructure for business development, and there was little more Aurora could do with her current NGO.

Understanding that the cycles of innovation included failures and pivots, she knew that success comes from a cumulative process of learning and investing one's time and efforts. So after a re-evaluation, Aurora began setting out a new path to finding an alternative solution.

She understood that one person alone could not change everything – but that a collective entrepreneurial ecosystem could. So she decided to build one.

A Collective Ecosystem

Aurora joined BlueSpACE Africa, and dedicated herself to assisting small to medium enterprise businesses (SMEs) by developing new financial solutions to facilitate inclusion as well as trade in Africa.

Data infrastructure was a fundamental driving factor in business and innovation at that time, and Ghana lacked such tools. In light of this, she launched a spinoff of Orb Intelligence, a San Francisco based firmographic data provider, to bridge this gap.

Orb Intelligence, later bought out by Dun & Bradstreet, had a database of over 100 million businesses, yet only a small fraction of them were African. Aurora wanted to change this, and she began by building a functional B2B database for healthcare facilities, which she later integrated into the Orb Intelligence platform.

While this technology proved to be too early a move for the market at the time, the experience helped Aurora define her next move.

Redefining Beauty Through Conscious Clothing: The Birth of Maakola

It was during this period of change in 2015 that Maakola was founded as a side project.

As Aurora was growing and expanding awareness within herself while working with and for the community, she realized that her wardrobe did not match her values, or personality. This led her to call on a Ghanaian tailor to see what they could do.

Together they created custom-made pieces to fit her unique aesthetic and style – a metamorphic journey that ignited her inspiration. The experience redefined Aurora’s perception of beauty, shifting her focus from appearance to experience.

Shortly after her profound perceptual shift, it became top priority to elevate Maakola to become an ethically-produced, female-empowered, and responsible business. Her determination to redefine the foundation of the fashion industry only strengthened from this point.

Driving permanent Change

As Aurora gained experience through her various roles, she wanted to utilize these skills to initiate a more permanent change that would positively impact the world. This led her to launch Ray power Africa in 2018. The company business model was based on an experimental foundation that would develop the market by offering essential services. Ray power Africa uses off-grid solar home systems and water pumps to create distributed networks of electricity that facilitate the much needed transition to renewable energy.

This in itself helps to mitigate climate change while providing accessible digital services, electricity and connectivity at the same time.

Working With Communities

In order to provide meaningful support and create a positive impact for local communities, Aurora serves as an advisor at The Hub New York Metropolitan Area in New York to bring about faster change through reaching out to its global connections.

Currently The Hub New York Metropolitan Area is focused on targeted action to bring about sustainable development in post-pandemic countries. It does this through programs that are designed to kickstart impactful ideas by ensuring effective fundraising and creating revenue models that contribute toward a green recovery. Aurora plays a pivotal role in this process as she works closely with the leadership team to build capacity, and identify the needs of the entrepreneurs.

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