

BLACK ENTERPRISE

HOW THIS SCULPTURE COLLECTOR BRINGS AFRICAN CULTURE TO THE DESIGN INDUSTRY



(Image: Shona African Sculptures)

Manny Beckles has a passion for collecting sculptures, but not just any sculptures – his expertise and interest lies in Shona sculptures and the rich history and contemporary cultural influence that they have within the home design industry. This passion is what led to the founding of Shona African Sculptures in 2005.

Growing up in an Italian neighborhood in Newark, New Jersey, in the 1960's as the youngest of five to a Guyanese father and Virginia-born mother, Manny had quite a diverse upbringing. These rich cultures mixed with a strong preference for visual learning through language, [art](#) and expression provided Manny with the understanding of how people of all cultures relate to one another and set the groundwork for what would later inspire him to start a creative, culturally diverse and art-focused business.

In his efforts to share his knowledge and passion with others about the beauty and importance of Shona culture, as well as highlight and support talented Zimbabwean artists and their sophisticated, powerful and dynamic works of art, Manny founded [Shona African Sculptures](#). This endeavor not only amplifies these skilled artists for their expertise in creating breathtaking and compelling sculptures, but also provides them with a source of income and stability.

On the most rewarding parts of his endeavor, Manny shared that it is, "...Producing and presenting a highly regarded program of exhibitions and events for sale of Shona sculptures from Zimbabwe. Also, providing a virtual internet platform across media disciplines, cultures and contexts highlighting Zimbabwean artists which have been celebrated worldwide for their creative talents in expressing contemporary images of family, love and wellness. Shona sculptures are contemporary and meaningful art that enhances and enlivens the physical environment of the community and supports its visual and diverse objectives by encouraging direct and daily contact with both public and private collectors within the [interior design](#) and arts community."

With all businesses come challenges. Since founding Shona African Sculptures, Manny has seen firsthand how culturally influenced sculptures are not considered the norm within the marketplace and has had to diversify his offering to include more modern and abstract pieces to cater to a larger buying pool.

Despite this, Manny has created a vast network and brand recognition for himself through volunteering, sculpture gardens and partnerships with other local galleries before opening up his own. His perseverance has provided him with the confidence needed to push forward, learn and grow within the [marketplace](#).

After years of success in the Dallas area, Manny is bringing Shona African Sculptures to New York City with the help of [NY NOW](#), a wholesale market specializing in home design and retail; industry expert **Patti Carpenter**, who happens to be Manny's mentor; and the newly instated Exceptional Black-Owned Emerging Talent Award.

Described as a "warm, charismatic and humble artist who is deeply passionate about African stone sculpture," there was little hesitation for NY NOW in choosing Manny as the first winner of this award, which will give him a platform of home design experts, buyers and media to share his knowledge, passion and quality work with.

With a desire to recognize an emerging Black-owned brand or artist with exceptional products and provide them with the support needed for a successful trade show experience, the Exceptional Black-Owned Emerging Talent Award supplies winners with marketing exposure, mentoring, and a complimentary booth at both the Winter and Summer Markets