

TSHIAMO MODISANE



Modisane credits her gift of authenticity for her ability to manoeuvre and adapt to the turbulent fashion and beauty industry. “If you are authentic, everything else kind of gels. Else I would be putting myself in compromising positions where I’m not doing justice to myself. At the end of the day, it has to be authentic and it has to be my best.”

Modisane has blazed a trail in the public eye in terms of gender-nonconforming representation. But her transformation has been a private matter. It wasn’t until after the death of her mother that she gave herself permission to fully become herself. “I realised that I had spent all my years trying to make her happy. It wasn’t that she’d asked me to but, as a child, we want to honour our parents. Yet the truth is that when we honour ourselves, we honour our parents,” she says. “When my mom died the last thing she said to me was, ‘I’m proud of who you are and how you’ve lived your life.’”

When asked about how much further she has to go in her transformation, she replies: “Soon, and very soon, all the questions you have will be answered.”

Nowadays, Modisane’s focus is on becoming the kind of woman her grandmother and mother would be proud of. “My grandmother and mother were pure ladies. And that is most of my brand — just being a lady. Everyone is trying to be an independent woman and we forget our beauty, subtlety, and softness. When a man asks me what I bring to the table, I always say, ‘I bring my beauty, for the both of us,’” she says in amusement.

“Because I know my personality can be hard, I wear clothing with simple lines to appear soft and approachable. I don’t look closed off. This extends to my makeup, which is always clean and soft.”

Reflecting on her 11 years in the fashion and beauty world, Modisane says that her experience, knowledge, and willingness to learn set her apart in the industry. “When I was working in magazines, I used to ask the makeup artist questions. Makeup differs according to facial features. Soft makeup can soften hard features, while softer features need to be brought out. This industry is the one place where people can be unicorns... where you are allowed to become this figment of imagination. Fashion gives you permission to push boundaries and to explore. I’m grateful to be in such an industry... And because what I brought to it was authentic, people were able to resonate with it.”