



Everything Terry Pheto touches turns to gold

BY **YAMKELA MDAKA**
February 1, 2016



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21 Icons is a short-film series that uses film and photography to honour South Africans doing great things, and Terry Pheto has been chosen as one of the icons. We chat to the actress-producer and take a look back at her career.

In the third season of the 21 Icons project, the focus is on the future leaders of the country, those who are actively shaping the world around them – and the 19th icon to be celebrated is South Africa's favourite girl, actress and film producer Terry Pheto.

Speaking to *DESTINY Connect*, Pheto says that being chosen to feature on 21 Icons is a great honour.

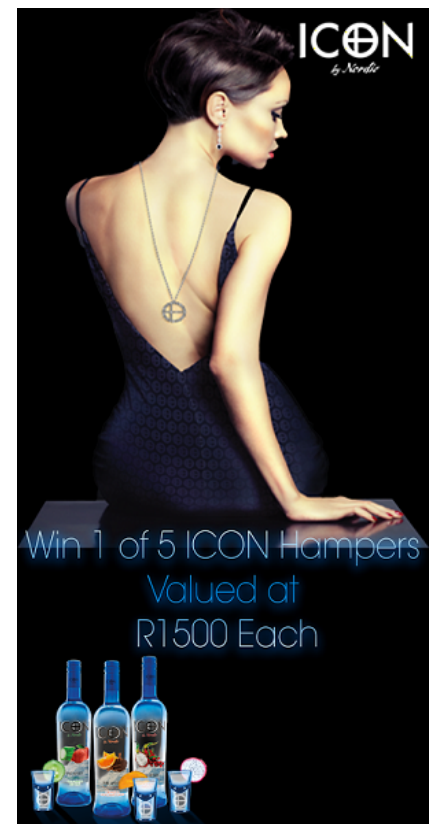
"When you're young in the industry and you're still hungry, and you feel like there's so much more you need to do, then you get an honour like this in the midst of all of that – it's so humbling," Pheto says. "I'm proud of myself. At least people are taking notice of my work. This is the ultimate honour in terms of acknowledgement," she adds.

READ MORE: [Terry Pheto chosen as Emmy Awards' juror](#)

Pheto says she's found that as she's got older, she's tried to be more present and to remember that in the midst of her joy, she shouldn't forget to pat herself on the back and say, "Well done, Terry. You've done well."

"Sometimes we're so busy with life that we forget to celebrate ourselves," she says. "The world is celebrating you, but you haven't even given yourself a chance to celebrate yourself. My heart is full of joy and that for me is the ultimate celebration."

Pheto's advice to young girls or boys who look at her and think, "I want that for my life," is for them to never be afraid of how big their dreams are, to protect their dreams from people who are discouraging and to never give up on the picture they have of themselves 10 years from now.



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"Sometimes people stop because they're not getting enough compliments or encouragement, but you shouldn't be doing it for compliments. Always remember why you started," she says. "Sometimes people are shocked by your dreams because they're things they could never have imagined. Sometimes they'll discourage you because of this, but always listen to that positive voice inside your head."

When Pheto started in the industry almost 13 years ago, she told herself that in 10 years time she wanted to go into producing – and that's exactly how it worked out. Now that she's reached that goal, what's in store for the next 10 years?

"The next five to 10 years will see me pushing on the more entrepreneurial side of the arts. I'd still like to produce films, but my ultimate goal is to own studios. I'm just going to put it out there to the universe!" she says.



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Pheto's career

It's not at all surprising for Pheto, now 34, to be featured on the 21 Icons project, considering the strides she's taken in her career. Pheto was catapulted to stardom after her role in *Tsotsi*, which went on to win an Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film.

READ MORE: Terry Pheto on her new film: Ayanda and the Mechanic

After *Tsotsi*, she appeared in the films *Catch a Fire*, *Goodbye Bafana* and *How to Steal 2 Million*. She also featured in several South African telenovas.

Pheto then went on to be the first South African to star in one of the world's most popular soaps, *The Bold and the Beautiful*, where she played the recurring role of heart surgeon Dr Malaika Maponya.

In 2008, she became the first South African to be the face of international cosmetics brand L'Oréal.

Ayanda and the Mechanic, a film that Pheto co-produced in 2015, went on to do very well in South African theatres and received much international acclaim. The film was picked up by Ava DuVernay, the director of *Selma*, for distribution in the United States.

Most recently, Pheto was chosen to be a juror for the International Emmy Awards.

Tags: Terry Pheto, Tsotsi, celebration, 21 Icons, Ayanda and the mechanic, Photography and Film, greatness



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