

SA model to marry US tycoon

New York-based beauty to make it official with aerospace heir

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SOUTH African beauty Nicola Breytenbach is to marry New York business tycoon Ben Steiner.

He proposed to the 28-year-old model two weeks ago in their apartment on the 47th floor of Trump Tower on New York's Fifth Avenue.

Steiner had asked the permission of Breytenbach's father, Cape Town lawyer Richard Breytenbach, who was visiting them at the time, before presenting her with a "truly special and sparkly" ring, which he had had custom designed.

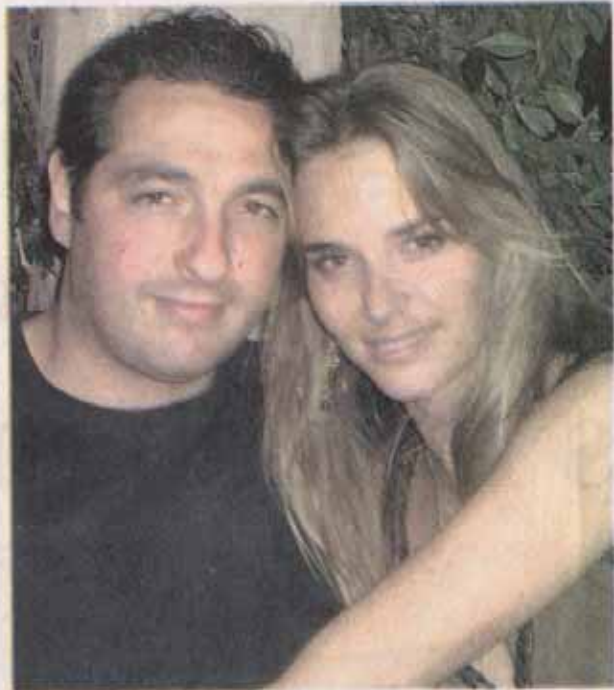
The pair made their engagement public this week.

Steiner is the son of the CEO and chairman of aerospace giant Fairchild Corporation, Jeffrey Steiner.

A love-struck Breytenbach — who has briefly dated swimmer Ryk Neethling — said her fiancé's "mysterious and quiet" ways intrigued her and that he had "the biggest heart".

The couple plan to tie the knot in two years' time. They met in Paris and have dated on and off for seven years.

"I'm honestly happy for her," said Neethling this week. The hunky swimmer and the jade-eyed model are family friends and had a fling when Neethling returned to South Africa from the Olympic Games in Athens two years ago. (She and Steiner were separated at the time.)



DIAMOND CLASS: New York socialites Ben Steiner and South African-born model Nicola Breytenbach, are engaged
Picture: PHOTOWORKS.CO.ZA

friends, we crawled around in diapers together," said Neethling. He added that he did not have any plans to get married or engaged soon and was training hard for the Olympics in 18 months' time.

Breytenbach said she and Neeth-

ling were still friends.

The beauty, who has shared catwalks with Kate Moss and Liz Hurley, and strutted in Cindy Crawford's footsteps as a face of Revlon, also counts US magician and stunt performer David Blaine and tycoon Don-



FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES: Nicola Breytenbach and Donald Trump

ald Trump among her close friends. She supported Blaine when he was shackled to a gyroscope above Times Square for 52 hours last month.

"At the end he had to get himself out and jump down onto wood planks ... it was terrifying," she said.

Breytenbach is signed with Trump's modelling agency and appeared on his hit reality-TV show, *The Apprentice*.

It was Trump who invited her to join the panel of judges of the Miss US pageant last year.

"He is also a family friend of Ben's family, so he's known Ben since he was a baby," she said.

When Breytenbach is not shooting covers for glossy magazines or the likes of Versace, she still enjoys a good old braai ... or rather, nowadays, a barbecue.

"I love music and dancing, but I'd much rather have a dinner party at home than stay out all night.

"Back in New York and London my

friends call me the 'Queen of the Braai'. I'm the first to whip out my Weber when it's a sunny day," she said.

That her career was on a roll hit home when, four years ago, she saw herself on a screen in Times Square advertising hair products.

"It was like having an out-of-body experience. I was standing still amid these thousands of people swirling around me, staring back at myself on a huge TV screen.

"It was shocking and exhilarating all at the same time," she said.

'Back in New York and London my friends call me the "Queen of the Braai". I'm the first to whip out my Weber when it's a sunny day'



QUICK DIP: Swimmer Ryk Neethling and Nicola Breytenbach had a brief romance when she was split from her now fiancé
Picture: RICHARD SHOREY