

FASHION & DESIGN IN KENYA AND AFRICA


THE
DESIGNERS
STUDIO

ISSUE

ONE

MAY 2019





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WHO WE ARE

The Designers Studio is a lifestyle premium brand that connects you to the world of Fashion & Design in Kenya shedding light on a new African reality through content and commerce. Inspired to create accessibility and knowledge of the Kenyan fashion brands.

In short: Buy Kenya | Build Kenya

BRAND HISTORY

Inspired to create accessibility and knowledge of the Kenyan fashion brands, TDS was created to search, tell their story and bring them closer to the consumer.

We sell a lifestyle, a story and shift in mentality. We strive to redefine the African story by choosing to invest in what we believe: Africa is cool!

BRAND PROMISE

To realize the African possibility, bring about a change in lifestyle and attitude by living and loving Africa. Shedding light on a new reality through content and commerce.



THE
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FIND US

Magazine: www.tdsblog.com

IG: [@shopattds](https://www.instagram.com/shopattds) & [@thedesignersstudio](https://www.instagram.com/thedesignersstudio)

E: fashionke@tdsblog.com (Magazine) &
hello@shopattds.com (Shop Queries)

WHY TDS?

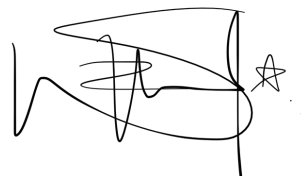
“The narrative will always glorify the hunter until the Lion itself learns how to write. Its not so much about what the international media does but what you write about yourself.”

Komal Afeke Dumor,

Welcome to our world.
Enjoy the read!

WANJIKU NYOIKE-MUGO

Founder and CEO of The Designers Studio



ADMINISTRATOR
Georgiannah Jumba



FASHION CORRESPONDENT
Natalie Kimani



**RETAIL ASSOCIATES - SHOP TDS -
TWO RIVERS**
Kevin Njimu
lavender Achieng

SOCIAL MEDIA
Annesofie Sharon Misiyani
Kevin Njimu



PHOTOGRAPHY
Joseph Kiswili

CEO & FOUNDER
Wanjiku Nyoike-Mugo





Nio Fan[®]
By Milcos



PINDA
BY
SIYANDA MBELE

“

SEBASTIAN WANZALLA

Kenyan Photographer

**PHOTOGRAPHY IS
THE ART OF
CAPTURING AND
RECORDING
LIGHT**

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[IMAGES: © J.D. OKHAI OJEIKERE - NIGERIAN PHOTOGRAPHER]

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Free

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Made in...

MOZAMBIQUE

TAIBO BACAR

By Natalie Kimani

Cover Photo Courtesy of World Fashion Week

If there is a list of African designers that require little to no introduction, Taibo Bacar is certainly on it. We first spoke (read gushed) about this designer from Mozambique in our 2015 article titled, 'Africa Feature: Taibo Bacar. Full Stop.'

To date, he continues to be a leading brand on the continent, and we can see why. Bacar has created a brand identity that is easily recognizable thanks to three key elements: influences from his Mozambican heritage and customs, devotion to quality, and the assiduity to the female silhouette.

TDS caught up with the designer to find out more about his journey so far and his take on African luxury:

How would you define it?

[Luxury is] Something directly connected to beauty, seen by the eyes and felt by the soul, something that can please all five senses.

Luxury is all about creating a dream that customers can believe in. What narrative does the Taibo Bacar brand hope to pass on to its consumers?

We believe we can be pioneers in writing a new history of Fashion, not from Africa, but from Africa to the world (a product of African design that anyone in any place in the world, in any season can identify with), because we are Africans and our goal is to create for the world.





[Images: Courtesy of Taibo Bacar]

What steps have you taken as a designer to refine your brand?

First, learn to know the end consumer; accept and respect the opinions of others; discover our DNA; set goals and objectives; work and achieve.

How would you describe the Taibo Bacar client?

Intelligent, Versatile, confident, determined and lover of simplicity. The TB woman is a common mortal with dreams and ambitions whose goal is to be and to make happy.

We hear that they were the inspiration behind your current collection

Bacar's Diary is a collection inspired by the Taibo Bacar woman.

A woman who does not let herself be dressed by the clothes but instead dresses the clothes, Bacar's Diary is a collection which aims to show to the world the woman that exists inside the soul of the TB creator, a woman who can be a Brazilian living in NY, a Japanese living in Bali, an Australian living in Gaborone or even a Mozambican living in London... anyway a woman from the world to the world.

Apart from price, what makes you stand out as a luxury brand?

First of all, the price is defined according to the product, so automatically every name has a direct link with the product and not with the price. Therefore, the quality of the product, the production specifications, the human factor (who produces) and how it is produced determines the price and, consequently that price determines the designation "LUXURY".

How would you say your style has evolved since you started?

We started with a dream and halfway down we found out that there should be a balance between dream and reality. That is to say, we should always believe in our dreams just as we should respect the dreams of those who consume our products.

Our goal is to be a complete brand and to be able to compete and lead in any global market, therefore it is our duty to offer a complete range of products to the consumer.



Bacar's Diary is a collection of defining cuts, remarkable silhouette, intense modelling and strong colours, easy confection light fabrics, fresh elements which determine the DNA of the TB brand, a right balance of materials, colours and cuts which aims to please the TB woman and make her reach her goals and satisfy her wishes.

We've noticed your media interactions – as well as your social media communication – isn't as frequent as other brands. Is this a deliberate move?

Yes. We are a small brand, until now we have survived by investments on our profits, and we have to prioritize some areas. At the moment the sector that we decided to prioritize is investigation, design and quality production.



What other challenges have you faced being a luxury brand in Africa?

1st Devaluation of African brands by Africans;

2nd direct connection with political issues.

3rd The fact that we are part of a pioneer group;

4th Constant comparison with renowned international brands.

Contact them -

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LULU MUTULI: The AMILO Brand Founder Goes Tech For Fashion

KENYA

No doubt, Lulu Mutuli had an interesting 2017. She was one of the first Heineken® African Inspired Fashion Challenge, got to develop their designs at LEW Design House in Amsterdam for a week and had her first fashion showcase; which just happened to be at Lagos Fashion and Design Week (LFDW). She was also one of the five designers in Young Designers Kenya.

After a whirlwind 2017, anyone would feel the pressure to capitalise on the exposure to quickly churn out the next collection or project. Lulu chose a different approach.

The SCAD (Savannah College of Art and Design) graduate enrolled at Moringa school in 2018 to learn a little more on Front End Web Development. A move that plays into the grand scheme of things. We talked to the young designer to find out more about AMILO, software development exploration and how she plans to tie it all together:

So...tech development?

After last year, I've since done a course in web development which will eventually circle back into my fashion career. I've recently started working at a start-up that deals with UI (User Interface), User Experience, web development and possibly applications. UI is basically what you interact with when using an application or website. It's the visuals and how it looks. Part of my style and themes that I use in my fashion is related to why I chose Moringa and the web development that I'm doing now.

And how would you describe that style?

Initially, it was Afro-futuristic. I was inspired by how technology is playing an integral part in Africa and how it's evolving and developing. Being part of the economic narrative, I think that it can also be part of the creative and visual one that gets exported worldwide. My last two collections were Afronauts and AfroGlitch.



When you took the collection to Lagos for LFDW, were there any lessons you garnered that you'll incorporate into AMILO?

I've been able to witness what people are doing, what their products look like, who they've been able to connect with, and where they've been able to show. All of that takes time, refining and fixing. That it's worth taking the time and creating a good product, instead of trying to create something for the sake of making it. Nothing is lost in taking my time and coming out when the time is right. So, my goal is to grow my global community but maintain the Kenyan heart to it; especially given that the name is AMILO.

Who is AMILO targeting?

The young, modern working woman. It's versatile clothing that supports the woman on the move. She doesn't have a lot of time to plan her wardrobe but if I just throw anything that AMILO has made into my suitcase I will be sorted. It's generally to solve a lot of the issues that my friends and family have had. They want workwear but something that can also work at a cocktail or wedding. And the idea here is for customers to shop the way I do. That is, getting complimentary pieces that work well with one another. Thus, every collection should complement the one before it. So that it's a collectable and there would be limited editions of each one.

The former was a capsule collection depicting the concept of "Africa going to Space" while the latter was the first collection under the AMILO label. It was a seven-look capsule collection that celebrates the role that technology has taken in Kenya; which was kind of distorting the natural textures and saturated colours of digital print and distorted figure on the print. I wanted to take the thought process a little bit further and see what the technology element had to offer. And in the long term, seeing how to best integrate the two.

Are you currently selling clothes under the label or have you taken a break?

At the moment, I have taken a break. I think for the first half of this year it's been quite interesting switching gears in that way. Working with the Heineken project and Diana Opoti made it clear that 90 percent of a fashion brand is business. Coming out of fashion school, a lot of designers don't realise that fact and that the business element does take time. I think in the next half of this year I could start opening up a bit more and start to actively source fabric. It's a slow process unfortunately, but I think it's better to refine my product first.

AfroGlitch Image: Courtesy of AMILO by Lulu Mutuli





AfroGlitch Image. Courtesy of AMILO by Lulu Mutuli



Where does the tech aspect come in?

This decision was informed by my time in New York. A lot of the stores I was working in were going out of business because they did not have an online presence. Instead of having a brick and mortar store, people are now building their online presence which makes them easy to reach and creates a seamless shopping experience. However, some focus more on the online presence, without really understanding the fashion elements as well.

What DO you see AMILO being once you've started up again and have some years under the label?

Hopefully I will be online and have a warehouse. I'll also have a factory where I'll be shipping things from. I'd like it be international and that would require creating relationships or partnerships with existing online brands. For instance, 2ManySiblings collection with ASOS. It's those kinds of partnerships that I'm starting to see people are interested in what the African designer has to say. It has given me hope in the sense that there's an open market that wants to wear African designers. Overall, what would make me happy is to see the brand come to fruition.

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THE SUITCASE

QUICK BITES

ARTISTIC DISPOSITION ART VS. CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Image: Mathew Guidol



The Creative Director

Also known as the 'idea personnel', they see the bigger picture when it comes to the fashion creative team dynamics. This kind of director oversees the development of the early phases of a project or concept. They take a marketing goal or artistic idea and develop the creative brief that will guide the overall implementation. It's their job to not only ensure career development and that the client's objectives are achieved, but also ensures that consumers are effectually reached.

The Art Director

If the Creative Director is in charge of generating the idea behind the project, the Art Director is the one that makes it a reality. Once the concept is finalised, they work with a production team to develop the aesthetics. Taking on this role does require some technical skills such as graphic or web design, photography, editorial, art or animation skills.



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it's poor quality.

This is just material sown together
What is the big deal?

THIS IS JUST MATERIAL SOWN TOGETHER
WHAT IS THE BIG DEAL?

if it's locally made, shouldn't it be
cheaper?

**I can make this
with my tailor**

Kenyan Designers are all the same - expensive

*I will support Kenyans when they
make better products*

IS THIS HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT KENYAN FASHION?

THOUGHT POCKET

Haiya?

Siii...a designer is a tailor?

Why is this so expensive?
isn't it Kenyan made?

If only Kenyan
designers made
clothes for the
Kenyan woman

My tailor is cheaper

The finishing is
bad, that's the
problem with the
Kenyan Fashion
industry

I think I have seen that
somewhere *I can get cheaper from China*
Kenyan Designers just copy

SHOP TDS Proudly Presents

Women's History Month Lookbook



For her outstanding and excellent performance and contribution to history and civilisation as we know it.

Photography: [Joseph Kiswili](#) / Kabutha Kago
All images subject to Copyright



Ndovu Bracelet
Designer: Kipato Unbranded



Spiral Ring & Kimpa Ring
Designer: La Kwetu

Photography: Joseph Kiswili / Kabutha Kago



Chango Oshun Necklace
Designer: Embody Accessories



Naama Talon Necklace
Designer: La Kwetu



Photography: Joseph Kiswili / Kabutha Kago



Satinless Steel Wrap Bracelet
Designer: Embody Accessories



Bag: Odam Handbag
Designer: Voila Apparel

Photography: Joseph Kiswili / Kabutha Kago



Bag: Jojo Mini
Designer: Zizi Africa



Bag: Box Bag
Designer: Menabe Addis

Naama Talon Necklace
Designer: La Kwetu



Necklace
Designer: Kipato Unbranded



Photography: Joseph Kiswili / Kabutha Kago

Bangle Set
Designer: La Kwetu



MALI - BÒGÒLANFINI: Mali Mud Cloth



Bògòlanfini is a major element of life, often incorporated in milestones and sacred events. For instance, it was a prominent aspect in events such as marriage, birth, death and circumcision. It was also a reflection of social status, often revealing the wearers character and occupation.

EGYPT - OKHTEIN: The Stunning Luxury Brand Made in Egypt



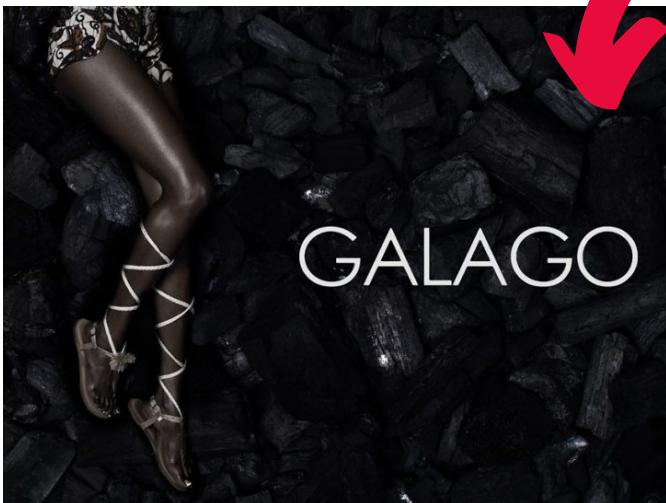
Okhtein, which mean 'Sisters' in Arabic, is an Egyptian brand created by the Abdelraouf sisters; Aya and Mounaz. The design duo launched the brand in 2013 to address a gap within the Egyptian luxury market. That is, the need to promote the refinement of Egyptian artistry in their home country and on the international stage.



THE SHORTLIST

Top Buys in Africa

SOUTH AFRICA - GALAGO SHOES: Endless Sandal Options Made in South Africa



Adhiambo Mula-Lauwers grew up in the sunny coastal region of Mombasa, Kenya. She had the idea that we could, in fact, express individualism through something so mainstream. "Why not change colour, style, texture? What if we could make 7 different styles with one shoe? One for every day of the week?" From this, Galago was born, setting up roots in South Africa in 2012.

KENYA - The Colourful & Quirky Fusion Style of Kangarui



Kangarui is the product of Japanese born, Kenyan raised artist Rui Yamashita. Drawing from her life experiences and her love for travel, her quirky fusion style, filled with animals, colour and collages came to fruition.

**"ALWAYS STAY TRUE
TO YOURSELF AND
NEVER LET WHAT
SOMEBODY ELSE
SAYS DISTRACT YOU
FROM YOUR GOALS."**

MICHELLE OBAMA



Sinitta Akello Owor. You may know her better as simply Sinitta Akello. Or perhaps Cultured Ego. The Ugandan-born makeup and body artist is one of Kenya's most sought-after creatives.

And rightly so. Her distinctive approach to beauty allows her to swing between natural aesthetic and the magnificent manipulation of mixed media to create stunning and eclectic looks. A skill that has caught the attention of industry leaders.

Be it being involved with the Osborne Macharia project titled Ilgelunot or recently being featured in American Vogue's 'Kenyan Cool Girls Guide to Nairobi'. Meet the Nairobi-based artist responsible for some of the most quintessential looks in the Kenyan industry to date.

FASHION SHORT

Sinitta Akello - Showcasing her work

Cover Photo : [Photographer Osborne Macharia | Props, Styling and Production Kevo Abbra | Styling Assistant Sylvie Owalla |
Makeup artist Mdeizi MakeUp Sinitta Akello | Hairstylist Richard Kinyua & Corrine Muthoni | Comic Universe Consultant
Paddy Gedij | Photographer assistants Victor Ndalo & Jared Maina

[Photography: Osborne Macharia Model -
Linsey Kairo
Makeup - Sinitta Akello]



MOON WATCHING
FRANCK BIYONG

[Photographer - Lyra Aoko
Model - Beleng Akuany
Stylist - Jamie Kimani
MUA - Sinitta Akello]





[Photography - Thandiwe Muriu
Model - Anita Barbra
Makeup - Sinitta Akello]

NIO

Nio Far by Milcos:
Giving Shoes The
Bògòlan
Treatment

FAR



(Image: Siaka S. Traore)

Senegalese footwear brand, Nio Far, wants to get mud all over your shoes. Mud cloth, that is. From afar it would appear that founder and designer, El Hadji Malick Badji – alias Milcos Badji – has simply created a footwear of contemporary style.

But it's the use of the mud based fabric known as 'Bògòlanfini' (often referred to as Bògòlan) that gives this footwear ethnic depth, rich in meaning. Currently they have a capsule collection of Nio Far released in limited edition. However, we'll look at their popular 'Nnéma collection' to better understand this merger between indigenous and modern style.

"Nnéma", which means comfort, is a collection that features handmade sneakers, made from leather and Bògòlan.

The patterns and colours that form on the fabric are no coincidence, with each delivering a unique story or meaning.

This mud cloth, which has particular significance in Malian culture, is made by taking hand woven cotton and dyeing it in a painstaking process using branches, leaves and river mud.



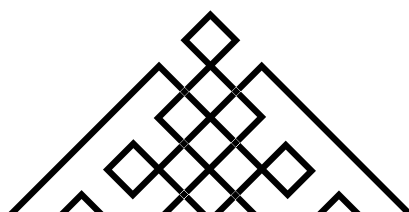
(Image: Siaka S. Traore)



What's intriguing about Nio Far is the layers with which it approached slow fashion. Apart from supporting the handmade trade, it calls the customer to think before they purchase.

In one vein, the focus on quality material and finishes indicate that the footwear is meant to last more than a couple of months. It's asking the consumer to think long term, invest and utilise it for time to come.

But it's also calling you to think about what message you want to convey. With meanings so intrinsically woven into the very fabric of the shoe, customers are encouraged to look for meanings that strengthen their personality.



VIDEO SHORT

YONAS TADESSE: Ethiopian Contemporary
Photographer To Watch



Born and raised in Ethiopia, Tadesse has always been fascinated with the art. He is a self-taught photographer who has the ability to utilise the resources around him. A necessary skill in a country where resources are limited. However, he hasn't let that get in the way of building his fashion photography career. While there is a strong fashion angle to his images, Tadesse seeks to always incorporate the richness of stories beneath the glamour.

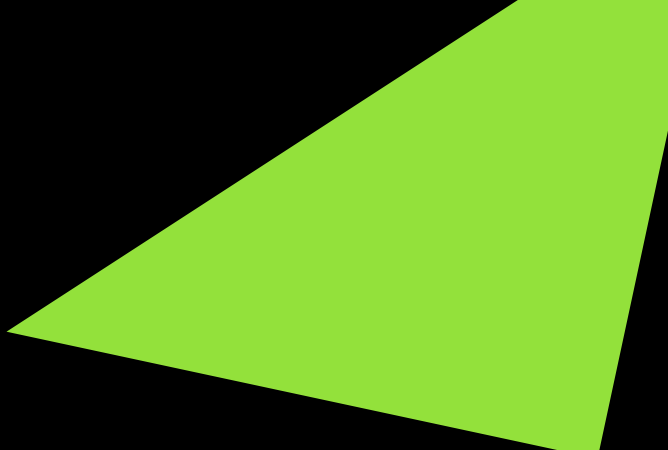
Furthermore, he started the Humans of Addis Ababa (HOAA) which was inspired by Humans of New York (HONY). For those who aren't familiar with the concept, HONY started out in 2010 as a photography project by Brandon Stanton. His mission was to photograph 10,000 new Yorkers to create an exhaustive catalogue of the city's inhabitants. As the project progressed, he started to interview the subjects and began to share their stories along with their portraits. The result was a vibrant blog that inspired 20 other countries to start their own. Similarly, HOAA takes a glimpse into ordinary people's lives in Ethiopia.



Image: ©Yonas Tadessel



Image: ©Yonas Tadessel



**"WE MAY
ENCOUNTER
MANY DEFEATS,
BUT WE MUST
NOT BE
DEFEATED."**



MAYA ANGELOU

THE END

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