

AFRICAN FASHION

A woman with dark skin and hair pulled back, wearing a white headband. She is adorned with a wide, multi-strand beaded necklace in yellow and blue, a matching beaded headband, and a wide beaded waistband. She is wearing a blue mesh crop top and a blue skirt with a fur-like trim at the hem. She has her arms crossed and is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and foliage.

THREADS OF ROYALTY

Jesse Uchechukwu

THREADS OF ROYALTY: HOW NIGERIAN DESIGNERS ARE REWRITING FASHION

BY: Jesse Uchechukwu

When Ankara walks the runway and silk clutches its pearls, you know culture just redefined couture. Fashion is no longer just about clothes; it's storytelling on fabric, and in Nigeria, the stories are loud, proud, and global.



Forget everything you thought fashion was. In the beating heart of Africa lies a nation where style isn't stitched, it's crafted with spirit, heritage and rebellion. From the narrow alleyways of Lagos Island to the dazzling lights of Paris and New York runways, Nigerian fashion designers are threading culture into couture, and the world is watching.

Here, fashion isn't borrowed, it's born from the vibrant swirls of Ankara to the earthy elegance of Aso Oke, Nigeria's style game isn't playing catch-up with the West. It's rewriting the rules, one hand-woven story at a time. Let's take a walk through Nigeria's most creative fashion designers who push the limits.

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Deola Sagoe, she's known as the African queen of couture, thinks lace, beads and regal posture. Deola doesn't just design dresses, she designs power, passion and strength. An outstanding creative mind known for fusing traditional Yoruba fabrics with western silhouettes, her pieces are a tribute to heritage with a high-fashion twist. A creative piece worn by Oprah, applauded in Paris, was made in Nigeria.

Imagine another so creative that it could turn Ankara into global gold. Lisa Folawiyo, known as the Ankara alchemist, took Ankara, once seen as an 'everyday' fabric and spun it into a piece of elegance every lady dreams of wearing. With embellishments, structured tailoring and vibrant layers, Lisa turned traditional prints into luxury staples. Each piece looks like a painting you could wear.



When you think bridal gowns and suits, you think of Mai Atafo, a man that not only makes fashion wear, but commands presence with work. With an eye for precision and flair for timelessness, Mai Atafo designs bridal gowns and suits that would rival anything on Savile Row. He brings that English formal elegance, but with an African heart. You don't just wear Mai Atafo's piece, you enter the room with him.

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Frank Oshodi, the original showstopper, designer of Agbani Darego's Miss World gown. This man was putting Nigeria on the global runways long before hashtags, his creativity, precision and ability to turn your Ankara material into an award-winning piece. Frank has been ruling the fashion world for years and has won different awards, while grooming and inspiring numerous talents and designers. He is indeed the master of traditional meets elegance; he didn't just make Agbani's gown, he made history.



T-Bally, also known as Tolu Bally, merges glamour with grit, from streetwear to statement dresses. Tolu is the queen of accessible luxury. She has in countless ways shown how colours and pieces can be stitched together through creativity and love for the arts. When you think

T-bally, you think Ini Edo, Bolanle Olukanmi, Beverly Naya, Omotola Jolade Ekehinde, Lilian Esoro, and Stephanie Coker. She designs for bold African women who want to show skin without losing soul.

Adebayo Oke Lawal, the soul of Orange culture, doesn't just make clothes, he starts conversations, through his expressive designs, the creator and founder is dismantling historic connotations. His gender fluid, rebellious pieces are bold, vulnerable and unapologetically African. He believes we can heal through fashion. *'What if fashion could heal trauma and challenge norms?'*

Many use fashion as a form of identity, in a world quick to label Africa as 'developing', these designers are proving that Africa is developing the future of fashion, fashion is no longer passive, it's a declaration of gender, of tribe, of rebellion, of pride. Nigerian designers are not just blending culture; they are reclaiming narratives.

So the next time you see a bold print on a red carpet or a gele-topped influencer in Paris, don't just admire the look, admire the legacy because in Nigeria, fashion doesn't follow trends, it creates tribes; and believe me, the tribe is growing.

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In "THREADS OF ROYALTY," Jesse Uchechukwu unveils the dynamic world of Nigerian fashion, where designers fuse rich heritage with cutting-edge couture to redefine global style. From Deola Sagoe's regal creations to Lisa Folawiyo's luxurious Ankara innovations, each artist weaves a narrative that celebrates culture and challenges conventions. This vibrant exploration reveals how Nigeria is not just participating in fashion, but boldly crafting its own legacy on the world stage.