CITY

MAGAZINE INTERNATIONAL

TOKYO_LAGOS

Mika Schneider by Hanayo.


DELSEY
PARIS
1946
delsey.com

DISPATCH



Ojuelegba, Lagos, Nigeria.

Photography by Morgan Otagburuagu

WELCOME TO THE NEW *CITY*. A magazine not merely about places, but about the invisible threads that bind people to them: the gestures, the silences, the sparks of creation and longing that inhabit every street corner. We believe the soul of a city lives in its detours: in the rhythm of a shortcut, the shimmer of a glance, the grace of an unforeseen encounter. That's where stories begin, off the map, on the verge.

Here, we chose to work with local teams, those who speak the language of their own landscape: photographers, stylists, and writers who carry their cities beneath their skin. From the restless breath of Lagos to the suspended quiet of Tokyo, from the golden blur of Paris to the electric pulse of London, *CITY* is a chorus of rooted voices, each echoing outward. Each story was shaped in situ, with the dust and light of its setting still clinging to it. Mika Schneider, the Franco-Japanese model, captured in Tokyo through the eccentric lens of Hanayo. The complex beauty of Lagos, rendered by the keen eye of Morgan Otagburuagu. Las Vegas, seen anew through the prose of writer Ahmed Naji. The cities that inhabit Jean-Paul Goude, drawn like constellations from memory and myth.

This is CITY: global by design, intimate by instinct. Pack light. Stay open. And above all, remember: *"Don't believe the accuracy of our instructions. Believe only the caravan's trace."* (Mahmoud Darwich)*. K.P.

D.R. / Morgan Otagburuagu. *, To a Young Poet (2008), trans. Fady Joudah).

CITY

MAGAZINE INTERNATIONAL

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LE TRI + FACILE
MAGAZINE
BAC DE TRI



Mafeeq Adigun at the Confidence Boxing Club, practicing beneath the Oworonshoki Bridge in Lagos, Nigeria.



Tokyo by Hanayo, 2025.



Grace And Her Imaginary Twin.
New York, 1979, by Jean-Paul Goude.



Olivia Sterling by
Sam Khoury, London, 2025.

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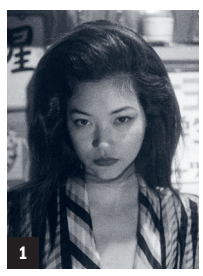

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1. Mika SCHNEIDER by HANAYO, in the streets of Tokyo, Japan. Shirt by LOUIS VUITTON by Nicolas Ghesquière. Styling by Marie HIGUCHI represented by HOME. Hair & Makeup by Rie SHIRAISHI. Coordination, Ayumi KAWASAKI

2. Keziah JONES by Morgan OTAGBURUAGU in Lagos, Nigeria.

FRIENDS & FAMILY

HANAYO



Japanese artist, former geisha and model turned pioneering photographer, musician, and performer, known for photobooks like *Hanayome* (1996), or *Hanayo's Underworld: Half a Century* (2021), with exhibitions at Palais de Tokyo, Taka Ishii Gallery, and Documenta X .
My favorite city: *"I can't specify, but a place with hot springs and forests."*

@hanapooo

MORGAN **OTAGBURUAGU**



Nigerian photographer (based in Lagos) whose experimental work spans fashion, portraiture, beauty, still life, and videography.
My favorite city: *"Growing up in Lagos has made me tougher. It is my favorite city due to its vibrant nature and also its hustling spirit. We call it New York of Africa. It is where dreams are made."*

@morganotagburuagu

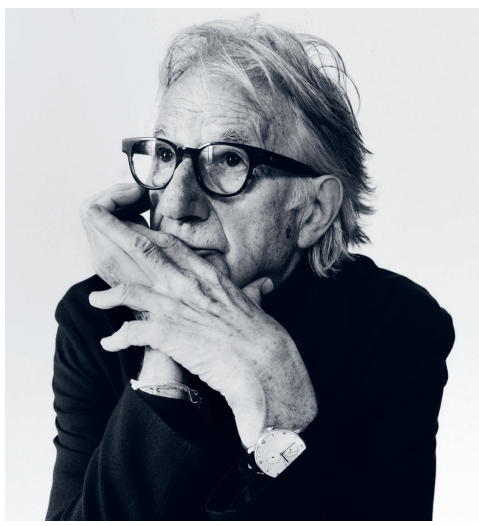
LAURENCE **BENAÏM**



French journalist and biographer, whose major works include *Yves Saint-Laurent: Biographie* (1993); *Marie-Laure de Noailles* (2001); *Jean-Michel Frank* (2017); and acclaimed titles on Dior and Guerlain.
My favorite city: *"The one I've never known, where I could lose myself, only to find myself anew, with a coffee and a page waiting to be written."*

@laurencebenaim

SIR PAUL **SMITH**



British fashion designer known for building one of the most successful independent brands.
My favorite city: *"I've always loved cities. But over the past twenty years or so, they've changed beyond recognition. Of course, London will always have a place in my heart. But today, there are too many cars, too many delivery vans, too much noise. That's why the photograph I shared shows a town, but with a glimpse of countryside. A trace of calm in the chaos."*

@paulsmith

ANDY **AMADI OKOROAFOR**



Nigerian-born, Paris-based filmmaker, art director, TED Fellow, and founder of Clam Studio and *Clam Magazine*, best known for his 2010 debut feature film *Relentless*.
My favorite city: *"Enugu, in Igboland, Nigeria, because it's Africa's emerging creative hub. Writers like Chimamanda or artists like El Anatsui are part of the Enugu system. This is a youth driven tech hub, with a clean and healthy environment."*

@clammag

KAI **NAITO**

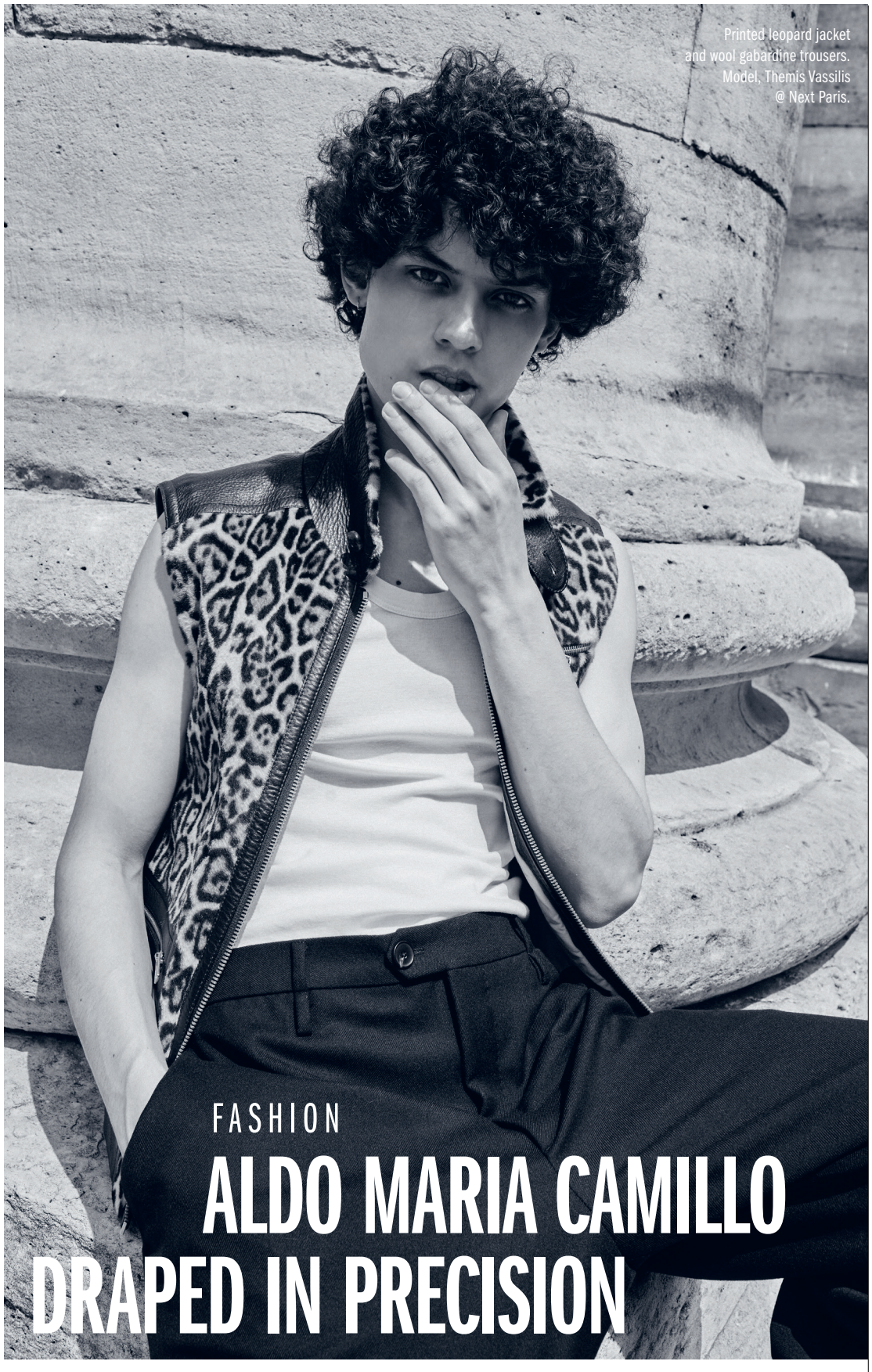


Japanese photographer and editor, born in 1995 and based in Tokyo. His clients include Adidas, Beams, Nylon, Uniqlo, Converse or Birkenstock…
My favorite city: *"Hokkaido, because this is the town where I grew up."*

@kainaito

D.R. / Morgan Otagburuagu / Hanayo / Will Aldersley / Kai Naito.


JEROME DREYFUSS



Printed leopard jacket
and wool gabardine trousers.
Model, Themis Vassilis
@ Next Paris.

FASHION

ALDO MARIA CAMILLO DRAPED IN PRECISION

Aldo Maria Camillo shapes his silhouettes as others write poems: with precision, emotion, and elegance. A former designer at Valentino, Cerruti, and Berluti, he founded his own label in 2019, driven by a clear ambition: to reinvent masculine tailoring by breathing soul, softness, and a touch of melancholy into it.

His Autumn-Winter 2025-2026 collection, titled *Homecoming*, reads like a contemporary elegy. Long black felt coats, perfectly cut leather jackets, subtle animal-print shearling pieces… each garment seems to gently embrace the body, whispering its own story. Nothing ostentatious: just a pursuit of balance, a beauty found in restraint. In Camillo's world, tailoring becomes a secret language, speaking of strength and fragility, confidence and vulnerability. His "effortless" style conceals a meticulous craftsmanship where comfort becomes an art form, and elegance a form of truth. A tailoring for sensitive souls, at the crossroads of classicism and intimacy. ■

aldomariacamillo.com

PARIS



La Gare.

MUSIC
JAZZ VIBES

Paris is swinging to the rhythm of jazz. In recent years, a fresh wave of enthusiasm has taken over the city's jazz scene: the audience is getting younger, clubs are buzzing, and the energy is unmistakable.

Students, night owls, and curious music lovers are all being drawn in by the intensity, spontaneity, and authenticity that jazz offers. And with some of the best venues in Europe, from intimate basements to high-end listening rooms, Paris delivers jazz in all its forms, with style and soul. Starting July 13, the Paris Jazz Festival takes over the Parc Floral with free open-air concerts in a lush green setting. Highlights include the Emile Parisien Quartet (July 13) and the electrifying flutist Ludivine Issambourg (July 19). Later in the summer, from August 28 to September 7, Jazz à La Villette returns with a bold mix of jazz, hip-hop, soul, and funk. For something more intimate, head to Sunside on July 11 to catch the soulful swing of the Marianne Solivan Quintet. ■

Venues not to miss:
LE DUC DES LOMBARDS
42 rue des Lombards,
75001 Paris.

SUNSET SUNSIDE
60 rue des Lombards,
75001 Paris

NEW MORNING
7-9 rue des Petites Écuries,
75010 Paris.

LA GARE
1 avenue Corentin Cariou,
75019 Paris.

To stay in tune with the scene:
parisjazzclub.net

D.R. / Germain Chauveau / @stationgaredesmines.

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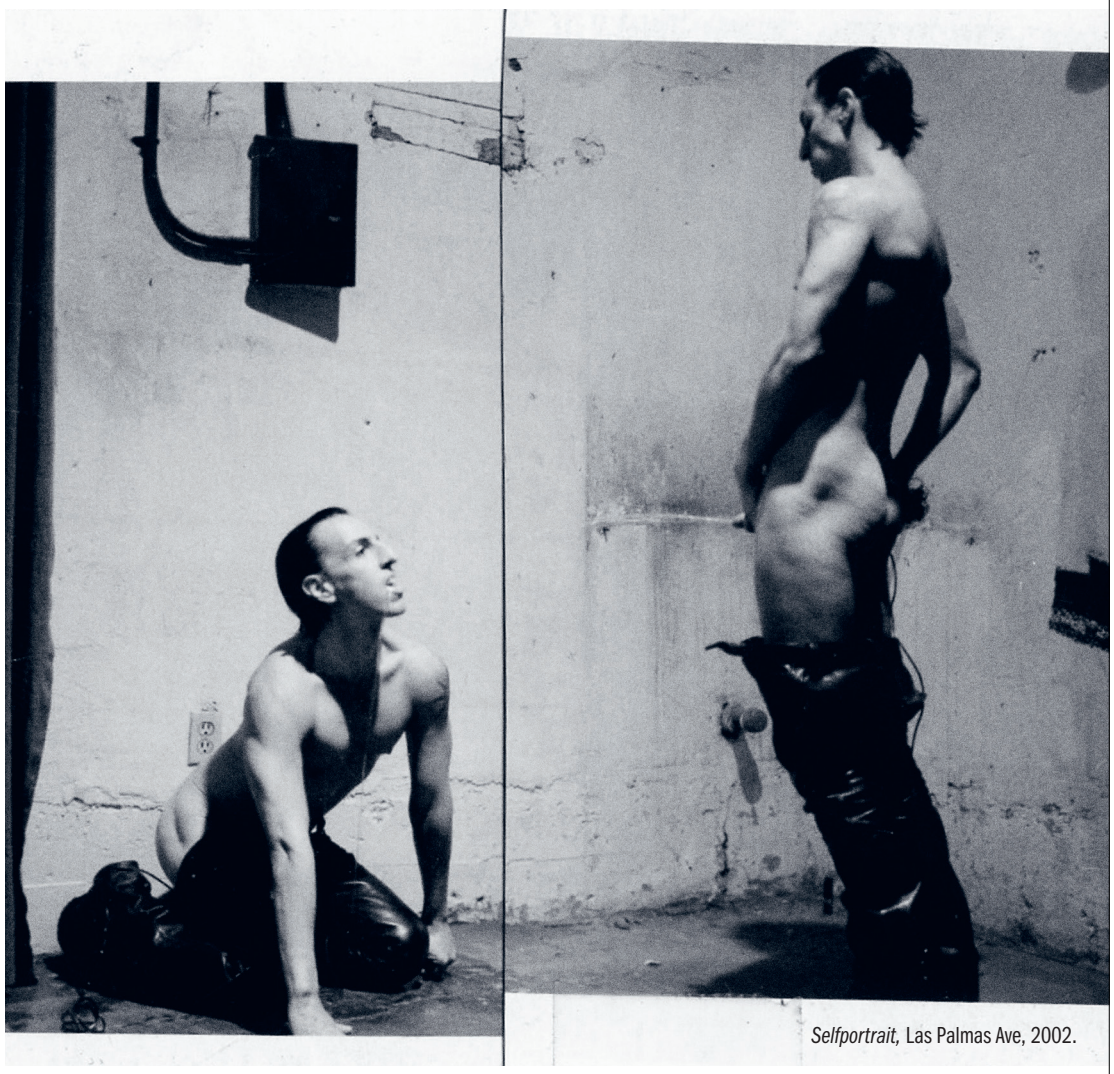
matiere-premiere.com

EXHIBITION

RICK OWENS

TEMPLE OF DARKNESS, TEMPLE OF LOVE



Selfportrait, Las Palmas Ave, 2002.

This summer, the Palais Galliera opens its doors to the singular world of Rick Owens, shadow poet and sculptor of silhouettes. *Temple of Love,* a spellbinding retrospective, unfolds through more than 100 looks, rare archives, monumental sculptures, and fragments of an uncompromising life.

For over three decades, Rick Owens has shaped a telluric fashion, where the body is carved in leather, drapery, and dusk. His garments (cathedral coats, cascading gowns, armored sandals) do not simply dress: they embody. The Owens aesthetic is a tension between raw beauty and mystical decay, an ancient breath coursing through the ruins of a future world. The exhibition becomes a temple in itself: the museum's façade shimmers with sequin-scaled fabric, the garden bristles with brutalist pillars, and the recreated California bedroom he once shared with Michèle Lamy whispers of chaos made intimate. With *Temple of Love,* Rick Owens offers more than a retrospective: he delivers a deep, unrelenting hymn to freedom, to shadow, and to style as spiritual ritual. ■

Until January 4th, 2026 at PALAIS GALLIÉRA, 10 avenue Pierre 1er de Serbie, 75116 Paris
palaisgalliera.paris.fr

Who said jet lag couldn't be fabulous?

Forget sweatpants at cruising altitude. Air France's La Première now comes with couture credentials. In its latest high-flying flirtation with fashion, the airline has enlisted Jacquemus to design "Le Pyjama": navy-blue, logo-kissed, and chic enough to wear straight off the plane (airport runway included). Wrapped in poplin pouches with buttons that whisper Provence-meets-Paris, this is loungewear for those who dream in 4K, just like the twin 32-inch screens in your private suite. Add five panoramic windows, a 2-meter-long bed, a menu with more syllables than your boarding pass, and voilà: jet lag becomes a lifestyle. ■

airfrance.fr

LOVE LETTER FROM PARIS

Who hasn't dreamed of being alone in a grand Parisian department store? Cécile Larrigaldie, Director of Culture, Heritage and Philanthropy at Galeries Lafayette, has that privilege. She shares with CITY her deep affection for this Parisian landmark, the most visited monument in the capital, alongside the Eiffel Tower.

I thought it would be easy to paint your portrait, but there's so much to say... where to begin? Yesterday, I stood on the wooden platform, marveling at the Christmas windows, a toy catalogue in hand. Today, I know your secrets, your backstage, and I work to preserve your story. It took many long conversations, just the two of us, to build this bond; and for me, it's only behind closed doors that you truly reveal yourself. Some evenings, when the lights go out and silence settles in, I wander alone through the aisles. The walls begin to speak. They tell of the frenzy you inspired when you first opened: women so dazzled they gave in to the temptation of theft, or the living mannequins that once graced the windows...Sometimes, I can almost smell the perfume of Belle Époque Paris, when the store stood as a symbol of a rising bourgeoisie, hungry for novelty. I imagine the theatrical ascent of elegant women up Louis Majorelle's grand staircase, now dismantled. Because yes, there are places customers will never see, forgotten stories that remain behind the scenes, like the unfinished theatre dreamed up by Patout, whose remains still linger in the upper floors. Even the Dome, the store's emblem, holds its share of mysteries. Few know it was built in just a few months while the store remained open, or that its stained glass was once entirely colorful, until it vanished in the aftermath of the Second World War. Today, I understand you are more than just a department store: you are a stage, a living memory, a showcase of modernity turned symbol. A symbol of a certain French art de vivre, of timeless elegance, of a shared memory. You embody a certain idea of France: graceful, creative, bold. A mirror of its prestigious past, and a window onto its future. Every moment with you stirs a gentle nostalgia: a connection between generations, between past and present. That is a joy to keep alive. ■

Cécile Larrigaldie

D.R. / © Rick Owens.



Festival d’ Automne

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Septembre – Décembre 2025
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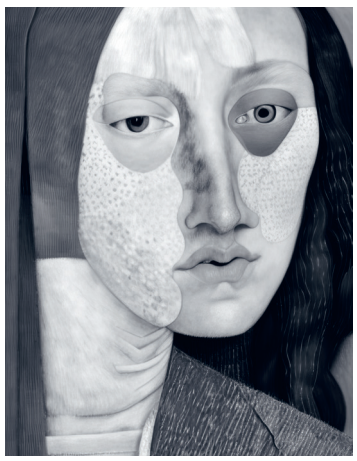
NEW ENERGY ON THE WALLS

A quiet revolution is taking place in New York's art scene. Far from the institutional grid, a new generation of galleries is redefining what an exhibition space can be: intimate, nomadic, generative, and always alive to the moment.

LOWER EAST SIDE: Heft Gallery, which opened in April on Broome Street, dives deep into systems-based and generative practices. Born from Adam Heft Berninger's curatorial project *Tender,* it launched with *Truth or,* featuring artists like Mario Klingemann and Katie Morris. The current group show, *Groundwork*, explores the foundations of contemporary creation through code, repetition, and visual logic.

heftgallery.com



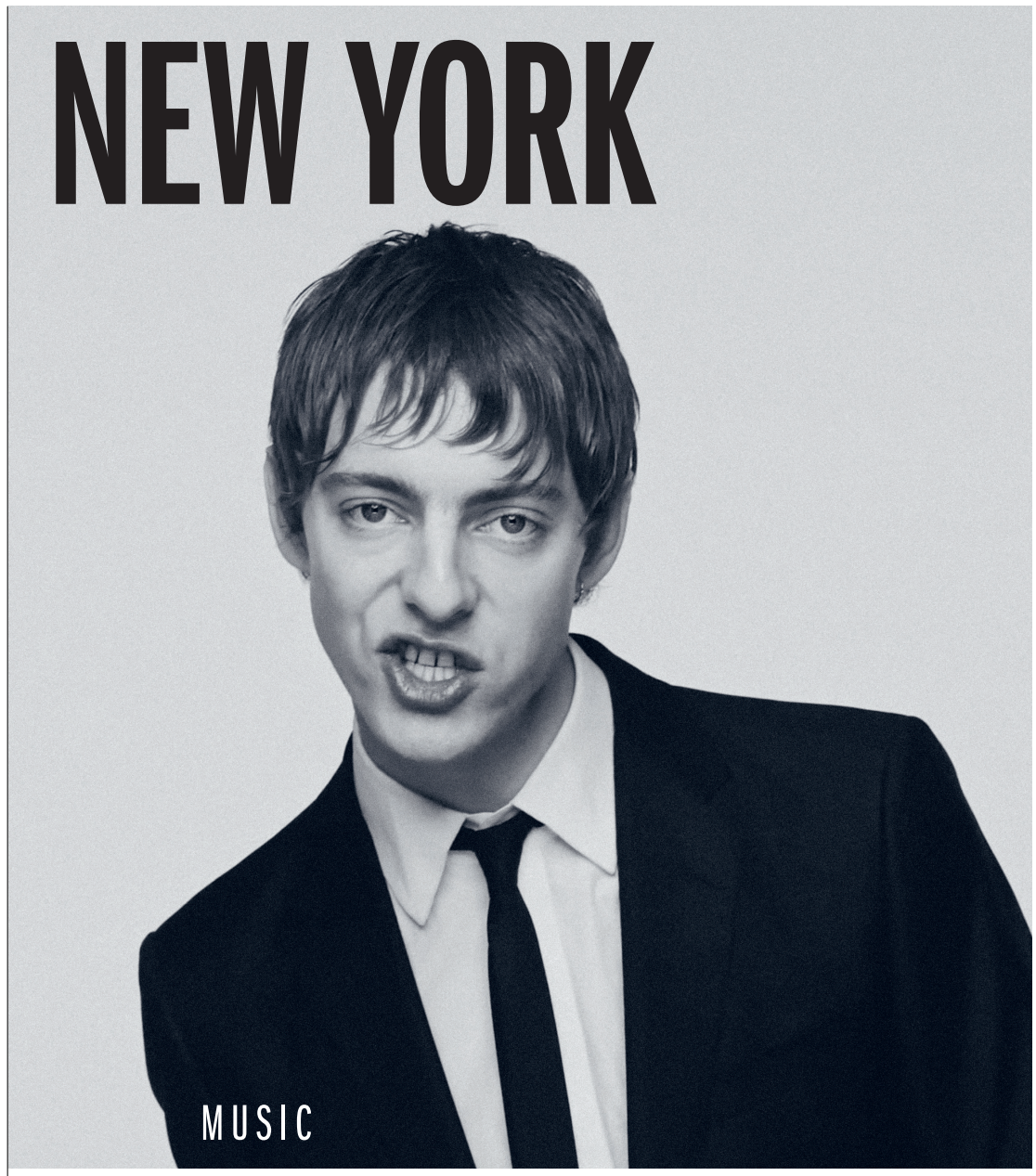
BUSHWICK: Benny's video is a gallery in motion. Initiated by Craig Jun Li in May, it thrives on experimentation and ephemeral formats. After a first show bridging film and photography, it returns in July with *Origami*, a collective exhibition exploring ideas of folding and transformation, both formal and metaphorical.

bennysvideo.com

LONG ISLAND: In Amagansett, Galerie Sardine turns the domestic into the poetic. Founded in 2024 by artist Joe Bradley and architect Valentina Akerman, the gallery inhabits a 1701 farmhouse where invited artists, such as Janice Nowinski and Sophie von Hellermann, live and create. Sardine is also mobile, staging shows in Paris and Burgundy. On view through July 18, a new series of portraits by Julian Kent. ■

galeriesardine.com

NEW YORK



MUSIC

Electroclash & Glitter Bombs

FROM BASEMENT CLUBS TO FASHION WEEK FRONT ROWS, THE DARE IS THE SOUND OF A CITY THAT NEVER CHILLS.

The Dare is not just a musician. He's a live wire. The alter ego of Harrison Patrick Smith, this Los Angeles-born, New York-based provocateur is reviving downtown hedonism with a cocktail of electroclash, dance-punk, and pure chaos. Think strobe lights in a dive bar, Gucci shades at 3 a.m., and a swagger that says, "I came to ruin your playlist."

His debut album, *What's Wrong With New York?*, landed like a synth-soaked slap: fast, fun, and gloriously unbothered. Tracks like *Girls* and *Good Time* have become instant party anthems. They were shameless, stylish, and just the right amount of ridiculous. And now, he's back with *What's Wrong With New York?: Afters,* the deluxe edition, with three new tracks and a razor-sharp cover of The Sound's *I Can't Escape Myself.*

With co-signs from Charli XCX and appearances at Coachella and Primavera, The Dare isn't just making music: he's detonating it. Onstage, he is a full-body exclamation point. His seven-night sold-out residency at *Baby's All Right* felt like a week-long riot with a guest list. His *Freakquencies* parties are sweaty, euphoric messes that leave dance floors grinning and gasping. And of course, fashion's fallen hard. Hedi Slimane shot him in L.A., Saint Laurent gave him a front-row seat, and every look screams: nightlife is couture, darling. ■

@itsthedare

D.R. / Lilyillo c/o Heft Gallery / Screenshot from The Dare, *Perfume*, ©company Object & Animal, 2024.

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MILAN
IS DESIGN DEAD?

ONCE ACCUSED OF REPETITION AND AESTHETIC FATIGUE, CONTEMPORARY DESIGN IS NOT DEAD. IT IS MUTATING.

Nowhere was this more evident than at the 2025 Salone del Mobile in Milan. Themed around "expanded knowledge," the fair brought together nearly 700 emerging designers, transforming the city into a dynamic lab of experimentation. Italian design, long rooted in craftsmanship and conceptual finesse, reasserted its cultural centrality, not through grand statements, but in the nuances: vegetal leathers, modular structures, hand-finished ceramics. The S.Project installations illustrated this shift, with objects acting as mental landscapes rather than mere furniture. Barbara Conte, director of the fair, summarized the new ethos: design as *"a lever of transformation,"* anchored in memory, materiality, and meaning. Living materials (mycelium, seaweed, repurposed waste) signaled a move away from seasonal trends toward durability and poetic pragmatism. AI, once feared as a creative adversary, is being reimagined as a collaborator. In studios like Formafutura, Italian artisans and developers embraced *"cognitive co-construction,"* privileging friction over automation. Milan's vitality lies precisely here: in its ability to stage these tensions with elegance. Yet uniformity persists elsewhere. Global showrooms blend Danish minimalism, Japanese restraint, and Californian softness into a beige, digestible aesthetic. But against this neutral backdrop, more radical gestures stand out: platforms like Paragone, founded in Paris by Guillaume de Saint-Lager but resonating in Milan, or champion designer-makers such as Rudy Guénaire, whose emotionally attuned pieces resist both algorithm and spectacle. What emerges is not disruption for its own sake, but a micro-poetics of care, slowness, and sense. Design may no longer scream its novelty. Instead, it whispers, with rigour, beauty, and purpose. In the face of this inertia, it is often within the margins (informal collectives, design researchers, short circuits, or platforms like Paragone) that the essential work is happening. Where design, instead of seducing or decorating, returns to what it perhaps should never have ceased to be: a form of thinking-in-action, an embodied critique. ■

Jean-Michel de Alberti



FRAGRANCE

FLORENCE IN BLOOM

This is a reverie in a bottle, a breath from the Tuscan hills where the splendors of another time lie dormant. With I Giardini Medicei, a collection of six fragrances, Santa Maria Novella, founded in 1221 in Florence, revives the secret gardens of the Medici, where shade meets sunlight, silence meets splendour. L'Iris, majestic and powdery, recalls the folds of a forgotten gown; Bizzarria, a hybrid spark of citron and bitter orange, whispers nature's wild caprices; Magnolia unfolds its white petals like a midsummer dream. Each scent is a fragment of Italy, suspended between botany and poetry, memory and invention. In this theatre of essences, Florence is not told, it is exhaled. And through the trail of a perfume, an invisible world opens, like a garden once thought lost. ■ S.M.

Eu.smnovella.com

D.R. / Germain Chauveau.

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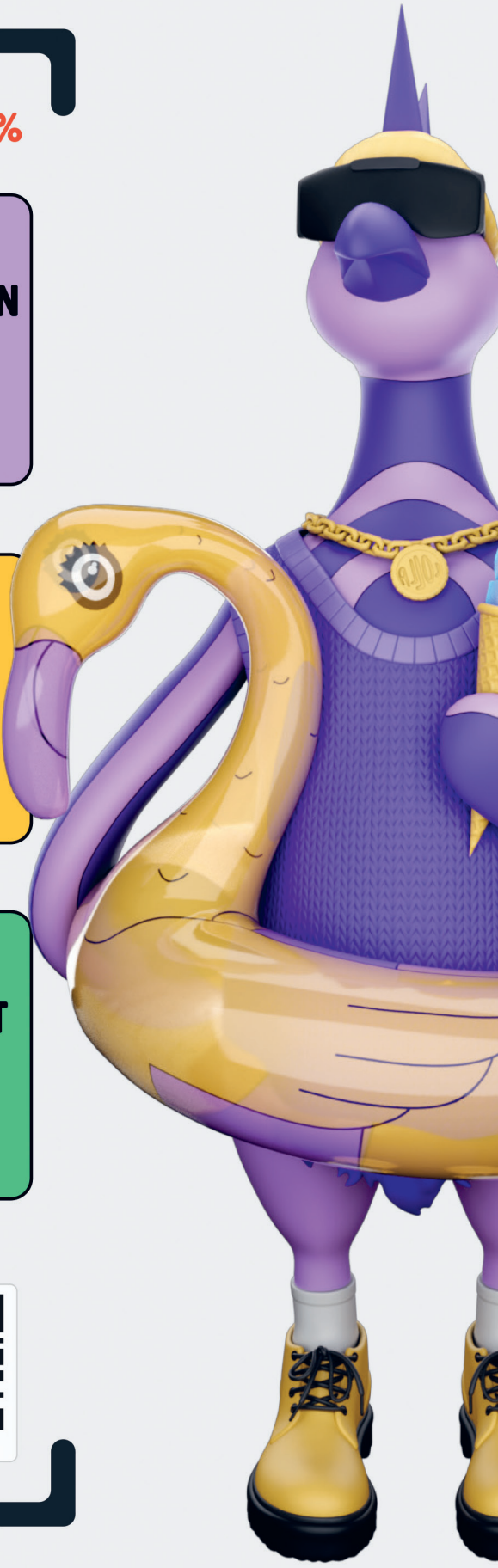



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WHERE GENRES BLUR AND CULTURES COLLIDE

Tokyo's nightlife is buzzing with cross-genre, culture-rich energy. Music, fashion, and creativity blend in unexpected ways. Two standout events exemplify the moment Amapinight and Clubskin Tokyo.

Amapinight, held mainly at Circus Tokyo and Fumin Yugigi Lion in Shibuya, centers around Amapiano, a dance music genre born in South Africa. But the vibe extends far beyond that: afrobeat, dancehall, hip-hop, and more merge into a wildly eclectic soundscape. Started in Osaka, Amapinight now resonates across Japan. Hosted by Sakura, Rina Hagai, and Aoi Takase, the event merges music, fashion, and dance into something closer to a festival than a club night. Fueling the momentum is Fullhouse, a Kansai-based DJ crew known for electrifying sets that span afrobeat, gqom, house, and baile funk. Their global outlook and underground sensibility elevate into something unique—and unforgettable.

Another essential stop on Tokyo's night map is Clubskin Tokyo, held in Shinjuku Ni-chome, Japan's largest gay district. Clubskin's sound crosses boundaries: techno and house form the core, but afrobeat, amapiano, and even J-pop find their way into the mix. The result is a cultural experience as much as a party, with immersive sound and lighting that transcend conventional club vibes. Clubskin Tokyo is also closely tied to LGBTQ+ culture, hosting drag shows and special Pride Month events. It's an inclusive space that draws a vibrant community of artists and creatives, reshaping Tokyo nightlife with new values and contagious energy. In today's Tokyo, nightlife is a celebration of diversity, freedom, and music, moving boldly into its next phase. ■

Ryo Maezawa



Alan Takahashi at Club Skin.







Performance at Circus Tokyo.

TOKYO



Daniel Covsk at Clubskin Tokyo.



Lil Mofo mixing at Club Skin



Cosmos Juice Tomigaya



Cosmos Juice Tomigaya



FFF Yoyogipark

HEALTHY & VISUALLY DELIGHTFUL

In 2025, Tokyo's culinary landscape is undergoing a profound shift toward all things natural and nourishing. Buzzwords like organic, vegan, fermented, and superfoods have become part of everyday life, reflecting a growing awareness of food as a tool for holistic well-being. Acai bowls and cold-pressed juices, healthy and photogenic, are becoming new city staples, beloved by Tokyo's youth and health-conscious urbanites alike.

A prime example of this movement is Cosmos Juice Tomigaya, nestled in a quiet residential corner of Shibuya's Tomigaya district. Since opening in 2023, this small but vibrant juice stand has earned a loyal following. It serves cold-pressed juices, vegan sweets, and acai bowls made with carefully selected organic ingredients. Open from 7 a.m., it draws in early risers, health enthusiasts, and runners. Recently, it has also started opening as a bar on Friday evenings, offering natural wines and original cocktails, adding a relaxed evening twist to its wholesome image. Its most popular item? The Cosmos Shot: a zesty blend of turmeric, ginger, lemon, and agave. A natural energy booster, it's the perfect morning wake-up call. Fans swear by the warm, awakening sensation it offers from within.

This natural lifestyle movement can be felt all across Tokyo. One standout is FFF yoyogipark, a modern Asian restaurant that opened last May near Yoyogi Park Station. Its concept, Fresh Fast Food and Fresh For Family, reimagines Asian cuisine as both comforting and guilt-free. At lunch, the star dish is the FregaPao, a customizable gapao rice bowl made with shiso leaves (instead of holy basil) for a delicate, refreshing twist. Their take on yum woon sen with glass noodles is also highly recommended. Vegetable-packed pita sandwiches round out the menu, perfect for a health-conscious picnic. Dinner here is equally compelling, offering an array of seasonal pickles, chilled soups, salads, meat dishes, and desserts, all to be enjoyed casually with natural wine. Today's Tokyo food culture is more than a trend: it reflects a shift in values and lifestyle. It's about choices, not consumption. ■ R.M.

COSMOS JUICE TOMIGAYA
2-23-5 Kubota Bldg., Tomigaya,
Shibuya, Tokyo 151-0063
@cosmosjuice_tomigaya

FFF YOYOGIPARK
B1, 1-2-8 Tomigaya, Shibuya,
Tokyo 151-0063
@fff_yoyogipark

AMAPINIGHT
@amapinight
Sakura: @slammin_sakura
Rina Hagai: @rinahagai
Aoi Takase: @aoi_takase

FULLHOUSE
@fullhouse.jpn

AISOTOPE LOUNGE
1F, Saint Four Bldg.,
2-12-16 Shinjuku,
Tokyo 160-0022
@aisotope_lounge
aisotope-lounge.net

CIRCUS TOKYO
1F/B1F, 3-26-16 Daini Kano Bldg.,
Shibuya, Tokyo 150-0002
@circus_tokyo
circus-tokyo.jp

FUMIN YUGIGI LION
Floor 7, 6-19-17 Jingumae,
Shibuya, Tokyo 150-0001
@music_bar_lion

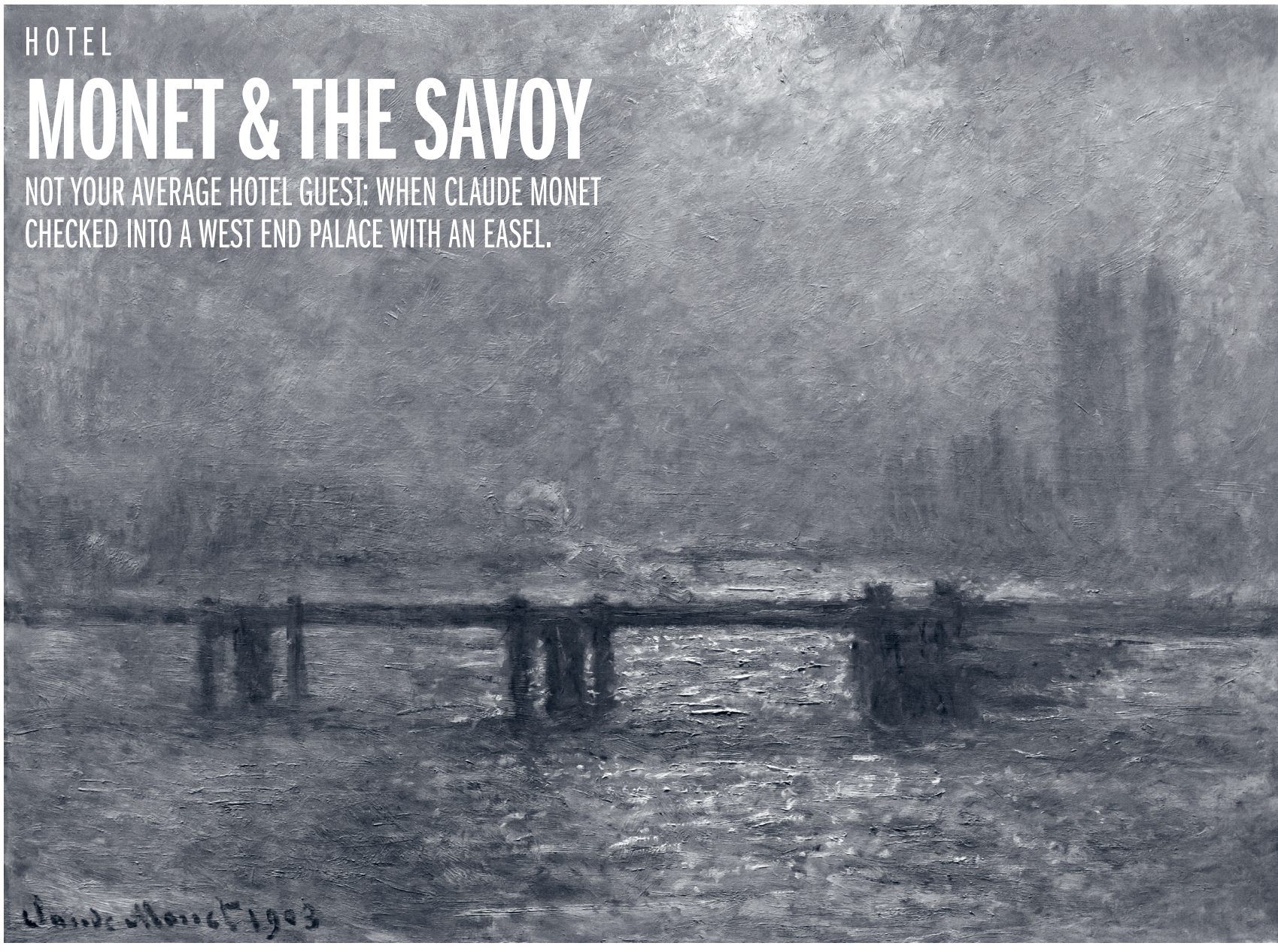
CLUBSKIN TOKYO
@clubskin_tokyo

D.R. / Takao Iwasawa / @walker_vii / Louis Dorantes / @fff_yoyogipark / @cosmosjuice_tomigaya.

HOTEL

MONET & THE SAVOY

NOT YOUR AVERAGE HOTEL GUEST: WHEN CLAUDE MONET CHECKED INTO A WEST END PALACE WITH AN EASEL.



Claude Monet first arrived in the British capital in 1870, seeking refuge from the Franco-Prussian War. On the streets and along the riverbanks, the Industrial Revolution was reshaping the city. Smoke from chimney-tops thickened the fog, and workers were digging tunnels for the new Tube. The short London stay left a lasting impression, and Monet vowed to return *"to try to paint some fog effects"*.

On 17 September 1899, he settled with his wife Alice and daughter Germaine Hoschedé at The Savoy, not far from Piccadilly. His son Michel was already in the city. Eternally searching for the perfect vantage point, Monet chose the balcony of his hotel room, captivated by the light shimmering on the Thames. The Savoy promised guests *"a panorama from Battersea to the Tower Bridge… in all weathers, in sunshine or rain or in the fogs loved by Mr. Whistler"*.

Opened a decade earlier, The Savoy was one of the swankiest hotels in town. Designed by architect Thomas Edward Collcutt, it was the first in Britain fully lit by electric lights, and even boasted the first electric elevator. Monet stayed on the sixth floor, perched above the mist, watching the outline of Parliament dissolve into cold blues and fiery sunsets. It was a far cry from his earlier days as a penniless artist. Now a household name, he had shown *Impression, Sunrise* in 1874 and was enjoying growing success. During his Savoy stay, he focused mainly on two views: Charing Cross Bridge and Waterloo Bridge. When he left on 25 October 1899, he took eleven unfinished canvases back to France. He returned in 1900, alone. This time, he occupied two rooms on the fifth floor – the sixth had been requisitioned for Boer War officers. Room 541 became his studio, and room 542 his bedroom. Dozens of works began to accumulate, but Monet remained haunted by his inability to capture light quickly enough. He kept a strict routine: painting, dinner at The Grill, and a walk. Occasionally, he entertained visitors, like French collector Raymond Koechlin, who dined with him in March 1901 and later purchased one of the London series. Over time, The Savoy became more than a hotel. Alice, writing from Giverny, learned that the director helped Monet scout painting spots, including the Tower of London (never used) and a private club overlooking Leicester Square. He also gained access to the terraces of the newly elevated St Thomas's Hospital across the river. Monet conducted three campaigns in London and with them, The Savoy became forever linked to some of his most revered works. ■ Maïa Morgensztern

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THE SAVOY, Strand, London WC2R 0EZ. thesavoylondon.com

FOOD

KALE YEAH!

Eateries offering plant-based cuisine have evolved from serving diners looking as green as their plate to veggie-lovers sporting a walrus mustache well beyond Movember.

Once considered a placeholder for a politically charged agenda, caring about our food's provenance has finally become, dare we say, fun... And London is the best place to try it. The farm-to-table philosophy that sprouted in the USA dripped its way into the British capital as early as 1961. In Carnaby Street, Cranks popularized vegetarian cuisine with the help of attending celebs like Princess Diana or Paul McCartney. Over the years, convincing people to drastically reduce their intake of animal proteins pivoted from making them feel bad to focusing on delicious meals. But it wasn't until recent years that the classically trained toques dared to give it a sniff. Holy Carrot, which started as a pop-up, settled for good in 2023 in Notting Hill, whipping up flavorful fried mushroom burgers and celeriac schnitzel praised by the best foodie guides. The (unrefined) palm is currently held by chef Kirk Haworth's Plates London, in Shoreditch. Opened in 2024, the venue is the first vegan restaurant in the UK to receive a Michelin star, serving dishes like Lion's mane, the It mushroom that seems to have replaced CBD as everyone's favorite on and offline feed. Even the Michelin-starred Gauthier Soho, once cooking traditional French fare like foie gras and suckling pig, transitioned to vegan. Cheers to a trend worth rooting for! ■ M.M.

HOLY CARROT, 156 Portobello Road, London W11 2EB. holycarrot.co.uk
PLATES LONDON, 320 Old Street, London EC1V 9DR. plates-london.com



FASHION

Edeline Lee: A DRESS LIKE A SPELL

At the Dorchester Hotel, last February, during London Fashion Week, beneath gilded ceilings and murmuring chandeliers, Edeline Lee summoned a vision: not a show, but a reverie. In the Orchid Room, women did not model; they glided, lunged, collided, like echoes of ancient heroines.

Their gestures, choreographed by Josie Rourke and Kate Waters, were not movements but declarations, each thrust and arc a stanza in Edeline' poem of power. Autumn-Winter 2025 was not a collection. It was a myth retold in cloth. Silhouettes sculpted with the precision of memory, fabrics that flowed like thoughts half-remembered, hues pulled from the threshold between dusk and dream. And always, always, the quiet discipline of tailoring, a sacred geometry that traces the contours of a woman becoming. Edeline Lee designs not for the gaze, but for the soul. Her muse is the "Future Lady," not a fantasy but a force: curious, composed, ceaselessly becoming. In her garments, the utilitarian meets the ceremonial: a dress that travels, that resists time, that listens to the body before it speaks. There is no artifice in Edeline Lee's world, only invocation. She does not flatter; she armors. She does not shout; she sings in low, unwavering tones. Her fashion is a gesture of faith in women: not how they are seen, but how they see themselves: brave, lit from within, moving always toward the light. ■

edelinelee.com



FASHION

THE GENTLE RADICALISM OF KARTIK RESEARCH

Born from the vision of a young University of Pennsylvania graduate, Kartik Kumra, Kartik Research is a menswear label founded in 2021 in New Delhi.

At just twenty years old, Kumra launched a brand that intertwines India's ancestral craftsmanship with a quietly modern sensibility. Each garment (plant-dyed shirts, hand-embroidered jackets) is a story in itself. This is clothing for a thoughtful man: one attuned to the echoes of history and the rhythm of handmade creation. The brand's flagship store, "Research Research," located in Greater Kailash II, New Delhi, is more than a retail space. It is a living atelier, where in-house designs meet curated vintage finds and emerging labels. A space for dialogue between heritage and experimentation. Kartik Research stands as an ode to slow elegance in a hurried world: an invitation to wear not just clothes, but meaning. ■

Research Research M82 M Block Market Greater Kailash 2. New Delhi. kartikresearch.com

RITUAL

AYURVEDA, REIMAGINED

In a room where the air carries hints of clove and turmeric, Spiceology unfolds its ritual. Neither strictly Ayurvedic nor entirely French, the brand finds its place between traditions, drawing from the wisdom of Indian plants and the precision of European skincare. Founded by Cyril Feuillebois, a French entrepreneur with a long-standing presence in India, Spiceology weaves together two heritages: the depth of ancestral therapies and the finesse of formulation.Treatments begin slowly, with a precise gesture that invites the body to release. Techniques such as Shirodhara or Podikizhi are reinterpreted with a gentle twist. Turmeric for its warmth, sandalwood for its calm, and saffron for a subtle radiance... The ingredients are chosen with care, without claiming miracle. Instead, there is attention and presence. Spiceology proposes an approach to skincare that values the simple grace of being cared for. These treatments are currently offered in select luxury hotels across India, including The Lalit properties. ■

spiceology.in

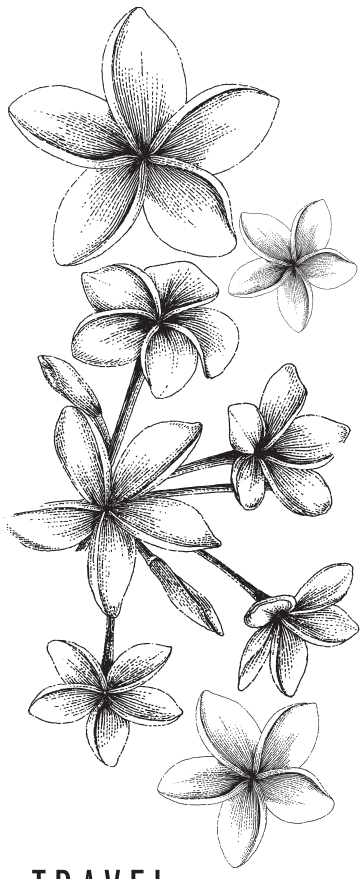
BEAUTY

MEMORY IN THE HAIR

There's something quietly nostalgic about Fable & Mane. Founded by siblings Akash and Nikita Mehta, the brand is less about trends than memory. It is an attempt to translate the childhood ritual of hair oiling into something others can hold. Indian women have long treated their hair not as an accessory, but as something sacred: oiled, nourished, with care and intention. Rooted in Ayurvedic tradition, Fable & Mane's HoliRoots oil blends ashwagandha, dashmool, and time, massaged into the scalp like a whispered story. Each product feels like a bridge, between past and present, ritual and routine. With turmeric, hibiscus, and coconut in their formulas, Fable & Mane is more than a vegan haircare brand. It's a way of caring that starts at the roots and listens to what the hair has to say. ■

fableandmane.com

D.R. / Kartik Research / @marumaru.tahiti / Le Hei Restaurant / Vini Vini Snacking / Le Lotus restaurant. / Adobe Stock.



TRAVEL

MONOÏ IN FLIGHT

On board Air Tahiti Nui, the journey begins long before landing. In Poerava Business Class, each passenger receives a comfort kit designed as an invitation to escape. Bamboo socks, a plant-based toothbrush, and above all, the delicate care of Heiva Cosmetics, with a lip balm and hydrating cream, gently perfume the cabin with notes of monoï and blooming tiaré. Crafted in the heart of the Pacific, Heiva celebrates Polynesian beauty rituals, infusing every gesture with warmth and grace. A trace of coconut, a breeze of white petals on the skin: the essence of the islands lingers in the air. ■T.T.

Air Tahiti Nui operates up to seven weekly flights between Paris and Papeete, with a stopover in Los Angeles.
airtahitinui.com



Le Lotus



Le Hei



Vini Vini Snacking



Maru Maru

FOOD

REIMAGINING MĀ'A TAHITI

Mā'a Tahiti **is more than a meal: it's a ritual, a celebration of land and lineage. Rooted in ancient customs, this traditional Polynesian fare is slow-cooked in the *ahi ma'a*, an earth oven that seals in the smoky aromas of roasted pork *(pua'a rôti)*, taro leaves *(fafa)*, breadfruit *(uru)*, or else, raw fish only kissed by coconut milk and lime. It is the taste of Sunday gatherings, of laughter under frangipani trees, of hands sharing food from woven baskets made of banana leaves. Today, a new wave of chefs is breathing fresh life into these ancestral dishes. Their cuisine is bold yet respectful, marrying the lush bounty of the islands with contemporary finesse, where memories simmer.**

At Maru Maru in Papeete, Chef Teao Maiarii serves *uru* gnocchi and sun-sweetened sauces that honor the rhythm of the seasons. Each dish is a quiet ode to Polynesian terroir: tender, surprising, intimate. Along the seafront, Le Hei Restaurant offers a five-course journey that flows like the lagoon breeze. Chef Heiarii's plates are stories sculpted in ginger, vanilla, and sea salt, where local fish and roots are elevated with delicate precision.

For a more languid luxury, Le Lotus, poised on stilts over the turquoise lagoon at the InterContinental, serves French gastronomy with a Tahitian heart. Try the white tuna tartare with Tahitian vanilla, as you watch the sun melt behind Moorea. And for those who chase flavor in flip-flops, Tahiti's street food holds its own magic. At Vini Vini Snacking, near the fishing port of Fare Ute, the ocean's freshest offerings meet sushi rolls and grilled delights. It is quick, generous, and joyful. Or surrender to the rhythm of Poke Bar II, nestled in Punaauia's Vaipoopoo Park, where bowls of marinated fish are garnished with tropical fruit and love, best enjoyed barefoot by the shore. In Tahiti, every flavor is a memory because tradition doesn't disappear. It evolves, with salt on the lips and sunlight on the tongue. ■Taina Teriierooiterai

MARU MARU.
Rue du 5 Mars 1797,
Paofai, Papeete.
@marumaru.tahiti

LE HEI RESTAURANT
Paofai waterfront, Papeete
heirestaurant.com

VINI VINI SNACKING
Fare Ute Fishing Port, Papeete
vinivini.pf

LE LOTUS RESTAURANT
InterContinental Tahiti
Resort & Spa, Faa'a.
tahiti.intercontinental.com

POKE BAR II
Vaipoopoo Park, Punaauia
@pokebar_vaipoopoo

Lagos Lagoon.

CITY MAGAZINE INTERNATIONAL - July 2025. D.R. / Morgan Otagburuagu..

“LAGOS IS NOT A REAL PLACE”

Words by KARINE PORRET. *Photography by* MORGAN OTAGBURUAGU.

That’s what Gideon told me with a laugh, sitting in the back of a car as we drove from Ikeja to Victoria Island. We had just passed a bus belching thick smoke from every window. No, indeed, Lagos is not a real place. In Nigeria’s economic capital, the population today exceeds twenty million — barely eight million just two decades ago. Here, everything brushes past everything else, everything dodges everything else. Genuine Louis Vuitton bags share the sidewalk with fake Audemars Piguet watches. Shantytowns sit only a few hundred meters from architect-designed villas hidden behind high walls, barbed wire, and private security guards. At a roundabout, a Rolls Royce crosses paths with a danfo, one of those iconic yellow minibuses where Lagosians cram in, sometimes even perching on the window ledges. Green is the color of Nigeria; yellow is the color of Lagos. The yellow of buses and taxis, of dust hanging in the air, of horns blaring and the constant hum of the city. Lagos pulses with cars, noise, voices, laughter, in an unrelenting stream. Bodies slip between vehicles to sell peanuts, bottles of Fanta and Sprite, plantain chips, windshield wipers or framed paintings at red lights. Art is everywhere, hence the artists whose resilient ingenuity has captured the imagination of the world. The streets sweat, the markets seethe. Smiles are everywhere, as if they were a survival tactic. And then there’s Makoko, that floating neighborhood on the edge of the lagoon, built entirely on stilts. A symbol of urban ingenuity and deep inequality, it lives under constant threat of demolition by the authorities, in a move that could leave thousands homeless. A white haze hovers permanently over the homes: smoke from the fish-smoking fires, whose wares are sold in markets across the city.

Between two symphonies of honking, one sometimes catches a glimpse of the future: a brand-new metro, slowly being put into service, snaking its way through the city like a fragile attempt at coherence. Sometimes, here and there, it feels like the Lagos Fela Kuti sang about in the 1980s is resurfacing. And then it doesn’t. The rich keep getting richer, the poor keep getting poorer. The latter are gradually pushed out of their neighborhoods, casualties of a relentless gentrification. Still, people eat *jollof* rice, yam porridge and *moi moi*, a classic Nigerian bean pudding, in *bukkas*, the city’s no-frills eateries where food is hearty and unpretentious. Elsewhere, fusion dishes are served with flair in stylish, air-conditioned spots. Everywhere, a clash of energies and opposites, joy and rage, opulence and lack, all at once. ■



In the artist's home.

KEZIAH JONES *Musician.*

From the streets of London to the cafés of Paris, from the chaotic pulse of Lagos to the quiet pages of his ever-growing notebooks, Keziah Jones has carved a sound that is both rhythmic and reflective. A sound he calls blue funk, a fusion born of contradiction and shaped by cities, solitude, and song.

"My sound really came about from being a solo musician," he says. *"From the start, I wanted to make music that could cover all the bases."* That instinct led him to develop a percussive guitar style where bassline, rhythm, and melody co-exist, all at once. This technique, honed on the streets of London and Paris, gradually evolved into a sonic blend of funk, blues, jazz, and rock. His Nigerian roots add another layer: Yoruba rhythms and percussion woven deep into the fabric of each track. But for Keziah Jones, music is more than sound. It's a lens through which to explore identity. *"Some of my lyrics speak to what it means to be Nigerian, educated in England, always on the move,"* he explains. *"That gives you a diasporic lens on the world."* And in the face of all those contradictions (heritage and exile, tradition and change) he turns to one unifying force: rhythm. *"Rhythm is universal,"* he says. *"It brings us together."*

Watching a new generation of artists emerge, he feels admiration, and difference. "*Back then, you had to spend decades mastering your instrument. You had to deal with record labels and marketing. Now, young musicians represent themselves. They've figured out the business early. I respect that."* But he offers a word of advice: uplift people. *"There's a lot of party music, especially in Nigeria. People want to forget their struggles. I understand that. But music can also raise consciousness, spread ideas, and drive change. That's what makes it soul music. That's what makes you want to get up and do something."* His heroes — John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Curtis Mayfield, Marvin Gaye — weren't just musicians, but messengers. *"We absorb music collectively. It shapes how we move through the world."*

For songwriting, Keziah Jones remains instinctual. *"I've been writing in notebooks since I was twelve. I write what I see, what's around me. You are wearing a blue shirt, birds are singing outside, my guitar is on the table, that's the kind of thing I write down. Later, when the music comes, I go back to the notes, find something that fits, and build a song."* Sometimes, he says, the best writing begins in silence: *"Just sit and wait. If your mind has something to say, it will. Everything you experience gets recorded somewhere inside you. And if you sit still long enough, it rises to the surface."*

Language is central to his work, even in a world where words seem to collapse. He cites Bukowski, Murakami, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Dambudzo Marechera. *"Marechera was wild,"* he says. "*He wrote about the black mind being fractured, and he lived that fracture."* Lately, he's been reading *Natives* by Akala, a British writer unpacking race, empire, and identity. *« That resonates with me. I had to deconstruct all that myself - being Nigerian, schooled in Britain, taught British history in a British tongue."* Indeed, three cities shaped him. London, where he first wrote and performed. Paris, where he refined his craft. Lagos, where he now lives and creates. *"Lagos is home,"* he says. *"All my stuff is here."* The city is experiencing a creative renaissance, driven by digital tools and grassroots energy. What if Lagos were a guitar chord? *"It would be one of those strange, dissonant chords. In and out at the same time, harmonious and jarring. That's Lagos: beauty and chaos, wealth and poverty, potential and pressure, all in the same breath.* ■

This summer, Keziah Jones will be touring select European festivals, from Barcelona to Berlin. His latest album, *Alive & Kicking*, was recorded live in Lagos at Clout Africa Studio.

D.R. / Morgan Otagburuagu.





View of Old Marina Street
from Lagos Light Rail.


CHURCH HOUSE
NIGERINSURANCE PLC
IBUCAP


WONDERFUL
ZAMA
SHOPPING BAG




USA


CAT



TUNDE KELANI *Filmmaker.*

Few filmmakers have contributed as deeply to the preservation of Nigeria's cultural memory as Tunde Kelani. For over five decades, the director and cinematographer has woven Yoruba tradition, language, and spirituality into his work. With new technologies emerging and Nollywood continuing its global rise, Tunde Kelani remains committed to telling stories rooted in heritage, while keeping an eye on the future.

"I was an observer from the start," Kelani recalls. Born in Lagos but raised in Abeokuta, he grew up immersed in Yoruba culture. *"I lived in the community. I was blessed to be born into such a rich cultural environment, not just the geography, but the people."* Oral storytelling, local legends, and books all shaped his early understanding of narrative and identity.

His love for images came before any dream of directing. *"At age 12, I sold books to buy my first camera, a Kodak 127. I just wanted to be a photographer."* But frequent visits to neighborhood cinemas in Lagos soon sparked a greater ambition: film. After an apprenticeship in photography and a stint in Nigerian television, he trained at the London Film School and returned home determined to make culturally grounded film, beginning with an adaptation of a Yoruba novel.

Kelani's filmography is rich with literary adaptations, especially works by Yoruba author DO Fágúnwà. *"He created whole worlds,"* Kelani says with reverence. *"Since I read his books as a boy, the images never left me."* With tools like AI now part of the cinematic process, Kelani envisions using English-language translations to generate visual prompts, then returning to Yoruba for the final storytelling. "*The language of AI is English now. But the soul of the story remains in Yoruba."*

Despite his Lagos roots, Kelani admits he's never made the city his artistic subject. *"Lagos has its own life—the noise, the vibrations—but I don't tell city stories. I've always sought places where I could find the people, the traditions."* Yet, the city has played a role, from the swimming pool at King George Park, where he learned to swim, to the neighborhood cinemas that fed his early imagination. "*My story is everywhere in the city,"* he smiles, *"but Lagos is not my canvas."* When asked what Nigerian cinema still lacks, Kelani doesn't hesitate. *"Cultural diversity. We have over 300 ethnic groups. Imagine if we had 150 films showing all that color, language, laughter… We haven't even scratched the surface."* He acknowledges the influence of Hollywood on younger filmmakers but urges a return to Nigeria's "*intangible heritage."*

As for where he finds peace in a fast-changing Lagos? Kelani names Freedom Park and the National Theatre, spaces that once pulsed with creative energy. "*Those were the places where we flowed,"* he says wistfully. *"We screened films, we gathered, we dreamed."* And Tunde Kelani, dreamer and documentarian, is still dreaming, with one foot in the past and one eye on the future. ■

@tkelani

Left page, from left to right and top to bottom: Timothy aka Pilot, Ibrahim aka Sayso, Blessing, Odunayo aka T-Abey.

D.R. / Morgan Otagburuagu.

FEMI ODUGBEMI

Filmmaker.



One of Nigeria's most respected filmmakers, Femi Odugbemi is a storyteller who understands cinema not just as craft, but as culture, empathy and memory. Over more than three decades, he has directed, produced and curated stories rooted in Nigerian experience, and grounded in a vision of film as both art and instrument.

"For me, it always begins with the story," he says. *"But more than structure, it's about human connection. The audience has to feel the choices characters make. And that requires going deep. Not just into words or images, but into the soul of a person navigating life."* Femi Odugbemi's films rarely offer simple heroes or villains. His work is drawn to moral grey zones, to flawed humanity, the kind of ambiguity he sees every day in Lagos, a city he both loves and dissects. *"Lagos is an unusual place. There's grit, chaos, energy. You'll see a Rolls-Royce in traffic next to someone eating by the roadside. Lagos doesn't just change you: it confronts you."*

Born in Lagos in the 1960s, he remembers a city of street games, cinemas, neighbourly care and open houses. But the energy, he says, remains. *"It's still a movement city. If you stop, you're done."* That same energy, he believes, gave birth to Nollywood: *"People made films with what they had. Nollywood is organic. Everyone here has a story... and five people will tell the same story five different ways."*

It's also what drives his commitment to decolonizing the screen. "*For decades, African stories were told through a foreign lens. But it matters who is holding the camera; who knows not just the facts, but the why. We have to tell our stories with our own emotions, our own sense of the world."* This commitment has shaped his work as co-founder of the iRepresent Documentary Film Festival, now in its 14th year. *"Documentaries start conversations. They don't just inform, they ask, 'What do you think?' That's power. It puts us in dialogue with the world."*

Odugbemi's filmmaking is deeply political, though never didactic. His recent project, *The Man Died*, adapts Wole Soyinka's memoir of imprisonment during the Nigerian Civil War. It's his first adaptation, and it sparked something. *"I want to make more films from literature, and more films about our history. There are so many modern heroes whose stories we haven't told: stories of resistance, courage, the cost of freedom."* But for Odugbemi, decolonization is not about rejection. *"I'll take the car over the horse. But I don't want to lose my relationship with the horse either. The real power is balance: honoring our own heritage while embracing what serves us."* He worries about what's being lost: attention, respect, silence. "*The younger generation has a microwave mentality; everything must happen now. But there's wisdom in waiting. Our traditions taught patience, empathy, care. We must preserve that."* And always, he returns to Lagos. *"If Lagos were a character, it'd be a mischievous but stylish young man: impatient, bold, constantly evolving."* ■

irepdocufilm.com

D.R. / Morgan Otagburuagu.



GIDEON OKEKE

Actor.

He is one of Nollywood's most dynamic voices, an actor shaped by the rhythm of Lagos, and driven by a commitment to craft, authenticity, and evolution. Here, he stands inside the New Africa Shrine, a vibrant cultural landmark founded by Femi Kuti in memory of his father, the legendary Fela Kuti.

He has always been drawn to performance, not just as craft, but as calling. *"Some kids were good at math, some in English. I was good when the school bell rang,"* he laughs. *"Break time, play time: that was my stage."* From childhood plays to national fame, his journey took an unexpected turn via *Big Brother Nigeria*, where he first gained public recognition. But he never intended to remain a reality TV figure. *"Big Brother is an audition every day. You're constantly performing, constantly being evaluated. That trained me to stay competitive, stay present, stay sharp."* From there, he transitioned into acting, and never looked back.

One of his most iconic roles to date was playing Fela Kuti on stage. *"It was a huge responsibility,"* he says. *"Fela is a phenomenon. He never dies. Stepping into that role was humbling and electric."* Okeke trained in the method, but he isn't dogmatic about technique. *"Method acting is whatever gets you to the truth,"* he says. *"Sometimes it's inside-out, sometimes outside-in. The important thing is to play characters that are alive: flawed, messy, human."*

A pivotal influence on his career was director Andy Amadi Okoroafor. *"He gave me my first film role in* Relentless, *in 2010, and later took me to Japan to shoot another film. He told me: 'If you go to school, I'll take you to Asia.' I did. He kept his word."* Over time, Gideon Okeke has become known for pushing against the limitations of genre in Nollywood. "*There was a time we were all just doing drama, drama, drama. But Lagos is faster than that. Lagos is action. It's chaos, hustle, motion. That energy's in me. I sing. I do theatre. I want to jump off a bridge for a role, and I did. Not because I'm brave. Because I'm acting. And then you discover: oh, I'm brave too."* His vision of Nollywood is both critical and hopeful. *"We used to tell Nigerian stories only Nigerians could understand. But now, it's about telling human stories. Stories rooted here but resonating everywhere."* Now, as he continues to evolve, he's less interested in relocation than recognition. *"I don't need to stand in line in Hollywood behind Michael B. Jordan. I want to stand right here, at home, and be big enough for Hollywood to say, 'We need that guy.' That's what Fela did. He stayed. And the world came to him."* ■

@gideonokeke



Iya Blessing, beauty saloon
in Opebi, Ikeja.

CITY MAGAZINE INTERNATIONAL - July 2025. D.R. / Morgan Otagburuagu.


ICON



FRANÇOISE AKINOSHO *Architect.*

Trained between France and the U.S., with early projects in Paris and Brest and experience in international firms, Franco-Nigerian architect Françoise Akinosho eventually chose to base her practice in Lagos. At the head of FAA Design, she is committed to designing architecture that is rooted in context, mindful of climate, materials, memor, and above all, full of meaning.

"Coming back to Nigeria was a form of freedom," she explains. *"It was about trying to forget everything I'd learned, to see if things could really be done differently. But the truth is, everything in my process comes from France."* From the beginning, her ambition was clear: *"The motivation was to design an architecture that looks like the place. Today, when you walk around, you can't really say, 'Oh, this is Nigeria.' There's a need for an architecture that translates the climate, the culture, the context."*

She identifies a rupture in Nigeria's architectural identity. "*The strongest sense of identity was in the 1950s and 60s. Then came the oil boom. Suddenly people had money, and we skipped the industrial phase that forces you to ask: What do we have? What materials? What can we build with them? Everything became import based. So, we brought in things that weren't made for us."* Design shifted away from the environment. *"There was no more thinking about letting the breeze through a house. With air conditioning, people just designed sealed boxes. But after the 'glorious' years, we entered economic crisis—and kept the bad habits."*

Today, she sees a shift. *"People are starting to ask the right questions again. Why build white houses in a place with sandstorms? Why not use brick, which is durable and thermally efficient?"* Whether she's creating new spaces or transforming existing ones, she always tries to preserve a spirit of place. Among her influences, she names powerful female architects like Zaha Hadid—*"even if I can't replicate her formal approach here, because we don't have the same level of craftsmanship"*—and Kazuyo Sejima*: "Her simplicity is extremely complex."* She also cites Brazilian architects: "*They had the same post-colonial contradictions, the same climate, but they managed to work through it, accept who they are, and integrate it. That's what we're still missing here."*

Despite the challenges, Akinosho remains hopeful. *"There's the Lagos way: everything is upside down. But things are changing. Clients want to live differently. They may not know how to say it, but they want open spaces, greenery, to reconnect with the outdoors. That's exciting."* ■

faadesigns.com

BRODA SHAGGI

Comedian, musician.

With over 13 million Instagram followers and a flood of viral skits, Samuel Animashaun Perry, aka Broda Shaggi, isn't just a name, he's a phenomenon. Actor, comedian, singer, and performer, he's turned raw talent and Lagos hustle into a creative force that defies labels.

From the stage to the screen, from laughter to lyrics, Broda Shaggi has built his own path through sheer creativity. *"I started as a stage actor,"* he says, *"theatre was my thing then because I studied creative arts."* Though many spotted his comic energy early on, he didn't immediately imagine it as a career. *"People found me funny, even though I didn't see myself making a career from it,"* he admits. But the roots ran deep: his father was also a theatre practitioner, and art seemed to run in his blood.

Broda Shaggi is not a stand-up comedian by choice. *"I never liked stand-up comedy,"* he says. *"I just like to make people laugh."* Today, he blends acting, music, and skit-making into a hybrid style all his own. *"Aside from comedy, I love to sing, I love to act, I love to play musical instruments like drums and all that."* For him, comedy and music are inseparable. *"It's always linked,"* he says. *"I just love to explore these talents one after the other. People like to box creatives… but for me, I'm a man of many talents."* When asked about influences, he answers without hesitation: *"None. I've just always done my thing."*

Much of his inspiration comes from his surroundings, specifically Lagos. *"I wasn't born here, but I grew up here."* The chaos, humor, and rhythm of the city seep into every character he creates. *"Most of my comedy emanates from my daily life as a Lagosian… Everybody can relate to that character, whether the upper class, the lower class, the middle class."* He's witnessed firsthand the evolution of comedy in the city. *"It's changed big time,"* he says. *"We just had mostly the stand-up comedians until social media comedy skits started… it has really helped."* He's had his share of challenges, especially while filming in public. *"These street guys, they just came to disrupt everything,"* he recalls. *"They come in groups. The first group will come and say, 'we are the ones that own this place'… then another group will come. It can be very embarrassing. I don't like to be mixed up in dramas."* But it's all part of the larger Lagos tapestry: a city of movement, unpredictability, and inspiration. And as Broda Shaggi continues to shape his art, Lagos remains both his muse and his stage. ■

@brodashaggi

D.R. / Morgan Otagburuagu.





KEN NWADIOGBU *Artist.*

He is one of the most compelling young voices in contemporary African art. Known for his intricate, hyper-detailed works that merge hyperrealism with conceptual depth, Ken Nwadiogbu uses canvas as a space for resistance, storytelling, and reflection. Though trained in civil engineering, Nwadiogbu followed an unexpected path into art, and has since become a leading figure in a new generation of Nigerian artists unafraid to question the world around them.

His work often begins with realism, but it doesn't stay there. Instead, it fractures into layers of memory, metaphor, and movement. *"I studied engineering,"* he explains, *"but one day I saw a hyper-realistic painting and it completely changed me. I started learning to draw like that, but in the process, I made a lot of mistakes. From those accidents, new ideas were born."*

His style evolved into something distinct: surreal at times, deeply political, and visually striking. *"I wanted to create something that was mine. My voice, my sound, my language,"* he says. His work addresses identity, power, and justice, shaped by growing up in Lagos, a city he describes as beautiful and chaotic in equal measure. *"If you live here, you've probably experienced all of it: the good, the bad, and the ugly."*

One of the most powerful elements in his work is its fragmented perspective; a visual metaphor rooted in personal history and collective memory. *"Maybe my life is fragmented,"* he reflects. *"I've lived many layers, as an engineer, an artist, moving to London, coming back to Nigeria. When you remember things, you don't see the full picture, only fragments. Those fragments are often the most important parts."*

Nwadiogbu's work may seem hyper-detailed, but he insists the real challenge lies not in technique, but in introspection. *"Self-reflection can be scary. But that's where the magic happens."* When asked to imagine a work simply titled *Lagos*, he responds without hesitation: *"It would be noisy. Surreal. Big hands, small faces, distorted proportions, because that's what Lagos does to you. And the color would be yellow: everywhere you go, the buses, the taxis, even the air has a yellow tint. It would be large-scale, matte, raw. Because Lagos is raw."* ■

kennwadiogbu.com

D.R. / Morgan Otagburuagu.



EJIKE EGBUAGU *Cultural entrepreneur.*

Entrepreneur, art advocate, and founder of 1952 Africa, Ejike Egbuagu is building more than just a platform: he's building an ecosystem. Drawing from his background in finance and a profound personal loss, he's set out to support African artists not just by showcasing their work, but by reshaping the conditions in which that work is created.

"The name 1952 Africa comes from the year my mother was born," Ejike Egbuagu explains. *"She passed in the middle of COVID. It was a very difficult time… I wanted to find a way to immortalize her."* That desire, anchored in love and memory, evolved into something much broader: *"I think somewhere inside, I'm a bit of an activist. My parents were, too. They raised us not to follow the crowd, to ask if we can find something that creates more value."* Value, for Ejike Egbuagu, means recognizing not just the art, but the artist. A turning point came during a conversation with fellow collectors. *"They were celebrating negotiating down an artwork's price. And I thought: what exactly are we celebrating? Is it a victory? I wasn't happy that the artist got less. That moment made me realize I had to do things differently."*



Ejike's mother.

Through 1952 Africa, Egbuagu aims to give artists the most basic yet elusive resource: time and space. *"The biggest problem for the African artist is economic. Just being able to eat, to have shelter... that peace of mind to create. We offer that."* He recalls meeting a roadside artist in Lagos selling sweets in traffic to survive. *"He was also exhibiting art by the road. The pressure of daily life was killing his creativity. That encounter broke me."* His solution draws from his expertise in finance: *"The problem is money. And the solution won't come from artists. It will come from money managers. Historically, it was bankers who pushed the value of art. We need to understand art as a global asset."*

At 1952 Africa, artists are selected not by Egbuagu, but by independent curators: *"If I'm involved, it's no longer objective. My role is to build the institution, not control it."* Beyond residencies, the foundation runs classes: *"It's not just about painting; it's about research, culture, identity. We want artists to create works that will live forever."*

Egbuagu's vision is deeply rooted in Lagos: *"It's a contradiction with wealth and poverty side by side, but what drives Lagos is raw ambition. Everyone believes they can make it. That belief, that fire, could transform the entire continent."* ■

1952africa.art

QUDUS ONIKEKU *Dancer, choreographer, curator.*



View from the QDance Center, Lagos Island.

Born in Lagos and shaped by the rhythms of the world, Qudus Onikeku is one of Africa's most compelling contemporary choreographers. Drawing from Yoruba cosmology, personal experience, and a deep understanding of the body as an archive, he bridges tradition and experimentation in a practice that is at once poetic, political, and metaphysical.

"My journey into dance started by accident," he recalls. *"I was about five, and I saw a kid hit another during a school sports day. Something about that moment triggered something in me. It pushed me toward movement, toward physical expression."* By thirteen, he was dancing seriously. *"After high school, I realized this was what I wanted to do full time. I went from workshop to workshop, moving between companies in Nigeria and France. That's how my international journey began."* In 2009, he founded his own company in Paris. Five years later, he returned to Lagos, the city that always remained his spiritual home.

Qudus Onikeku is known for merging contemporary dance with traditional storytelling, music, language, and costume. For him, it's a natural convergence: *"We come from an oral tradition — meaning a storytelling tradition. Even our clothes, our chairs, the patterns we wear, everything carries meaning. So when I make a piece, every element — movement, light, sound, color, poetry — contributes to the story being told."* At the heart of his choreographic philosophy is the belief that the body holds memory. *"The body is an archive of emotions, traumas, subconscious memories. Even memories older than this physical life. That's why I say dancers have a special chance. Their minds are less colonized by rigid systems. The body remains a free space."* Helping other dancers access that space is part of his mission. *"It starts with joints. Our joints store things. When you move in spirals, certain memories unfold. Often dancers get scared because the movement begins to control them. But that's the point: to let the body lead, not the mind."* He speaks of trance, not as loss of control, but as a space between control and surrender. *"Improvisation is my tool for reaching that space. But to improvise, you need data (memories, experiences, knowledge) embedded in the body. Like AI, which draws from massive datasets to give instant answers, improvisation draws from deep physical memory."*

For Qudus, presence is more important than knowledge. *"When I dance, I glimpse memories. But when I stop, the mind takes over — and I forget. I believe we're born with a kind of amnesia. The Yoruba divide the world into three realms: the world of spirits, the world of the living, and the world of the ancestors. All coexist. When we're born, we forget where we came from. Our lives are a quest to remember."* Dance, then, becomes a tool of remembrance, a spiritual archaeology. *"My work isn't anti-colonial or post-colonial. It's pre-colonial. I want to remember who we were two thousand years ago. Not just before slavery, but before the idea of empire. That's why I say my work is about beauty, not politics."*

He draws inspiration from artists like Fela Kuti: *"Fela wasn't just a political figure. He was a composer, an inventor, a philosopher. He turned Yoruba cosmology into an aesthetic. I'm trying to do the same, with dance."* In his performances, musicians and dancers co-create in real time. *"My musicians don't just play. They watch the dancers, absorb their movement, and translate it into sound. The music becomes the sound of the body."* And while his work is rooted in Yoruba philosophy, it transcends geography. *"It doesn't matter if I perform in Lagos, Paris, or New York. The resonance is human, not national. I'm not interested in national narratives. I'm digging deeper, into the spirit, into the shared subconscious."*

He sees Lagos as more than a city. It is, to him, a living choreography. *"Lagos is a dancing city. Everything here moves: people, traffic, energy. It's sporadic, unpredictable, just like a great performance. Lagos says yes to everything. Over time, it changes you."* ■

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qudusonikeku.com & qdancecenter.com

D.R. / Morgan Otagburuagu.





KUNLE TEJUOSO *Founder of Jazzhole.*

In the heart of Lagos, hidden behind a modest storefront, lives a sanctuary of rhythm, literature, and quiet rebellion. Jazzhole, founded by Kunle Tejuoso in the early 1990s, is more than just a bookstore and record shop: it's a cultural haven, a cabinet of curiosities, and a living archive of Black creativity from around the world.

"I've always been a collector," Kunle Tejuoso says. *"But I wanted more than a collection; I wanted a space where people could encounter the music and literature of the Black world, from Nigeria to the diaspora."* In the pre-Internet era, that meant building something rare: a curated store rooted in knowledge, history, and soul. Books, records, philosophy, jazz, African rhythms, poetry, and protest, all in one place. Jazzhole grew from a tiny corner shop — *"that's why we called it a 'hole,'"* he jokes — into a beloved cultural space. The spirit of the project comes from his mother, founder of the pioneering Glendora bookshop, which turns 50 this year. *"Our food was books,"* he recalls. *"Even during military rule, we would find ways to pass books to people in prison."*

Kunle Tejuoso's curatorial eye is both personal and philosophical. *"I'm always looking for work that can enlighten, books that expand the mind, music that stirs the soul. I'm not so much into commercial pop. I want kids to come in and leave feeling something."* From Russian literature to Afrobeat, from Yusef Lateef to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, his selections reflect a hunger for depth, and a resistance to the superficial.

Running Jazzhole has never been easy. The fluctuating economy, rising costs, and a changing cultural landscape all pose challenges. *"Sometimes I want to keep prices low because I believe in access. But then you struggle with rent, imports, capital. It's a balance between ideals and survival."* Still, the mission remains: to use books and music as tools of transformation. *"Artists have power. Real power. I'm not sure all of them realize it. But like Fela did, like Bob Marley did, they can shape minds, not just fill clubs."*

If he had to choose only one record that speaks for Lagos? *Beasts of No Nation*, by Fela Kuti. One book? Anything by Chimamanda. *"She carries herself with such clarity. She captures the spirit of Nigeria."* And if he had to pick between music or books for a whole year? He hesitates, just a second, before saying, *"Give me the books."* ■

@jazzholelagos

D.R. / Morgan Otagburuagu.

Stephen Okwuke's
barber shop, Oregun, Ikeja.

After school in Opebi, Ikeja.

D.R. / Morgan Otagburuagu.



Iya Togo Ele Wa in Opebi, Ikeja.

CHARLES EMEMBOLU *Entrepreneur, IT architecture expert.*



In the heart of Lagos' booming tech scene, Charles Emembolu is quietly shaping the future. With a background as an IT architect and a deep understanding of both corporate systems and grassroots innovation, he's spent the past decade bridging gaps between talent and opportunity, between tradition and technology, between Lagos and the rest of Africa.

In 2016, Charles Emembolu co-founded Roar Nigeria, the country's first university-embedded tech hub, on the campus of his alma mater, the University of Nigeria in Nsukka. *"There was a serious disconnect,"* he explains. *"You had thousands of students, but most of them came out with degrees and no practical skills. I wanted to change that."* With pillars around research commercialization, digital skills training, and startup incubation, the hub quickly became a model for university-driven innovation in Africa. But his vision didn't stop there. In 2019, alongside 74 other hub founders, he launched the Innovation Support Network, now a 214-member coalition operating in 31 states across Nigeria. Their mission? To foster collaboration in a sector that often remains siloed, and to amplify the power of ecosystem-building for real impact. That same spirit of convergence inspired the creation of the Omniverse Africa Summit, co-founded with Obi Asika. The idea was simple but bold: break down the walls between Nigeria's disparate creative and tech sectors (film, music, gaming, design) and give them a shared, global-facing platform. *"Whether you're a DJ or a developer,"* Emembolu says, *"you're already digital."* Held annually in Lagos, Omniverse has grown rapidly. *"We wanted the world to look here, to see what's happening in Africa. Not just through the usual export channels, but directly, on our own terms."*

Lagos, of course, is central to this story. Charles Emembolu moved to the city in 2003 and quickly recognised both its intensity and its potential. *"It's like a smartphone,"* he smiles. *"A powerful tool full of opportunities, but it depends on what you do with it."* The city's size and energy offer unmatched possibilities, but also real challenges, especially for young people who often struggle to survive long enough to thrive. That's why Emembolu's initiatives have always focused on creating safe spaces, both physical and intellectual, for talent to grow.

He sees Lagos not as an isolated tech capital but as the center of a vast ecosystem that draws strength from beyond. Cities like Jos, Enugu, and Aba feed into the metropolis, offering talent and ideas that need a stage. *"We can't build the future of Nigerian tech without our history. Some of the country's most important digital infrastructure was built decades ago. Omniverse is about reconnecting those roots."* Looking ahead, he's reflective but hopeful. Public office? Perhaps. *"Sometimes I feel drawn to it, but I know the cost,"* he admits. For now, he's focused on scale: helping more Africans gain the tools, skills, and networks to shape their own futures. *"The world often sees our demographics as a problem. I see them as potential. If we support the 99% who aren't planning to leave, we can build something remarkable here."* ■

isnhubs.org.ng
theomniverse.africa

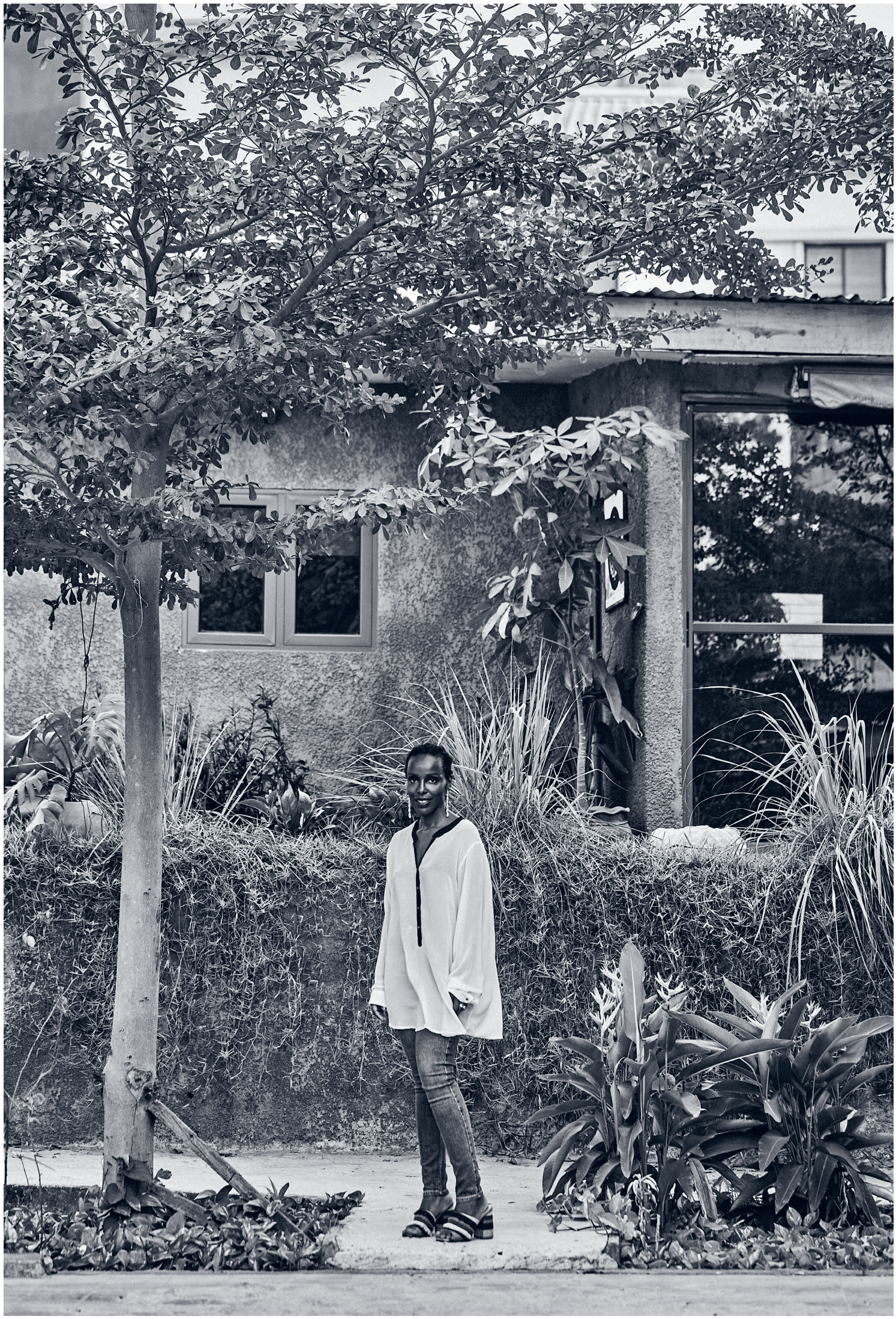
MAZZI ODU *Writer.*

Writer, journalist, curator and cultural advocate, Mazzi Odu wears many hats, effortlessly. From fashion to fine jewelry, from gastronomy to children's literature, her work amplifies the creative pulse of the African continent and its diasporas. *"I think Lagos allows you to explore different avenues,"* she says. *"In other cities, you become known for one thing and that's all you can be. But here? You can do it all."*

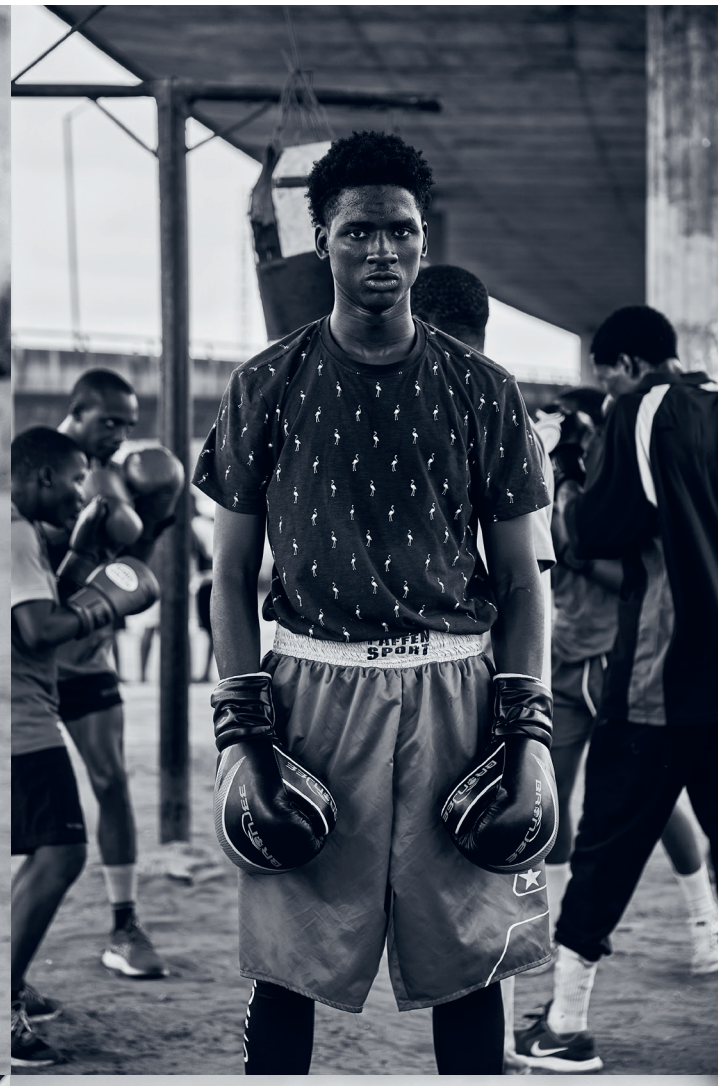
Her journey as a writer began, perhaps unexpectedly, with a Christian devotional. *Heaven in Your Handbag*, her first published book, was *"Bernard of Clairvaux, St. Thomas Aquinas and Carrie Bradshaw in a blender,"* she laughs. Later came *Get Rid of Your Phone Mummy*, a children's book inspired by life in Lagos, and her critically acclaimed blog *Magnus Oculus*, where long-form storytelling allows her to go deep into creative practice. *"It's about amplifying amazing stuff that's happening in Africa,"* she says. *"This is where I can add value."* Raised between East Africa and United Kingdom, Mazzi Odu moved to Lagos in 2009, diving headfirst into the city's cultural currents. Her first impressions? *"The noise, the heat, the color: it was a full sensory explosion,"* she recalls. Lagos, she says, *"forces all of your senses to be fully engaged."* Odu's writing helped spotlight African fashion long before it became fashionable. In 2012, she pitched a piece to *Harper's Bazaar* profiling African designers. *"This was before the exhibitions, before the global interest,"* she notes. Since then, she has written for *US Vogue*, *British Vogue*, *Wallpaper*, and *Elle*, often profiling talents like Tokyo James, Kenneth Ize, and the Lagos Space Programme, many of whom later became LVMH or CFDA finalists. Her work bridges geographies and generations. From the artisanal textiles of *This Is Us* to the tailored precision of rising star Victor Anate *("Iman slid into his DMs!")*, Mazzi Odu celebrates authenticity over trend-chasing. *"Don't try to be a fake Victor,"* she advises young designers. *"Draw deep from your own story."* Jewelry is another passion: she praises designers like Akano Diamonds *("luxury through an Igbo gaze")* as well as sustainable makers who craft from recycled materials. *"Luxury is being framed through our own modalities and realities,"* she insists. In a city she calls *"extra and ordinary, in the truest sense,"* Mazzi Odu is both chronicler and catalyst, amplifying voices, shaping narratives, and reminding us all to listen carefully… because Lagos is speaking. ■

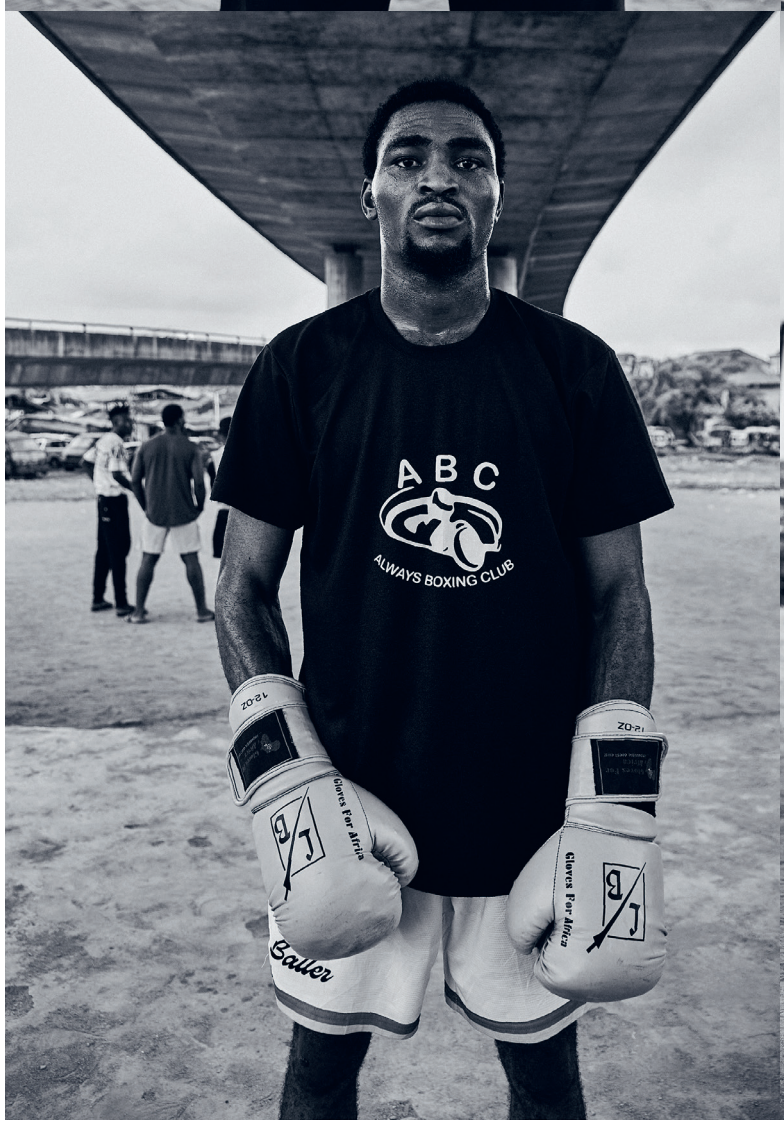
@mazziodu

D.R. / Morgan Otagburuagu.











D.R. / Morgan Otagburuagu.

Confidence Boxing Club's athletes, practicing their craft beneath the Oworonshoki Bridge. Here, Idowu Misturah. Left page, from left to right, and top to bottom: Muritado Monyashau, Kaka Muhammed, Emmanuel Richard, Azeez Samiat.

View from AMAH, Daniel Obasi's creative space, in Lagos Island.

D.R. / Morgan Otagburuagu.



DANIEL OBASI *Art director, stylist, photographer.*

He is part of a new generation of Nigerian artists shaping the future of fashion and image-making in West Africa and beyond. A multidisciplinary creative — stylist, photographer, filmmaker — Daniel Obasi navigates his craft with both precision and poetry. Deeply rooted in Lagos yet global in scope, his work challenges norms while offering new aesthetic and emotional imaginaries.

His entry into the creative world wasn't planned. Trained initially in graphic design, Daniel stumbled into fashion through an internship at Lagos Fashion Week. *"I didn't know anything about fashion,"* he admits. *"But I understood visual composition. That came from design."* A chance encounter with stylist Funmi Fagbemi backstage became a turning point. *"She had this striking, androgynous presence. I introduced myself, told her I wanted to learn. That was the beginning."* What followed was a rapid self-education in styling, writing, and eventually photography, driven by necessity and curiosity. *"I taught myself photography because I couldn't find collaborators who understood my vision. I wanted authenticity. I wanted to show pores. I wanted to reflect Lagos as I knew it."*

His images are raw, political, tender. They earned him recognition both locally and internationally. But from the start, Daniel resisted the romanticized image of the "starving artist." *"I never worked for free. I wanted to build a career with structure, clarity, and longevity. I wanted to show that we could create beauty, and be paid for it."* In Lagos, this stance was bold. "*The fashion industry here lacks infrastructure. There are few magazines, few platforms. Instagram can't be the only gallery. There's too much competition, not enough collaboration."* This led him to create *AMAH*, a self-funded creative space designed to nurture local talent and rethink the way artists work together. "*It's a small ecosystem: part residency, part studio, part agency. It's my way of investing in others, and in a different kind of future."*

Obasi's work is inseparable from Lagos, from its rhythm, its chaos, its contradictions. *"This city turned me into a producer. It teaches you to make your art exist, no matter what."* But he also dreams of Paris. *"I'd love to split my time, six months in Lagos, six in Paris. The energy between the two cities is full of possibility."* ■

danielobasi.com
amah.studio



UGO MONYE *Fashion designer.*

From reimagined Agbadas to bold statements of cultural pride, Nigerian designer Ugo Monye is reshaping the future of African fashion, one royal silhouette at a time. With a deep sense of purpose and unapologetic creativity, he's turning tradition into a global conversation.

Ugo Monye's journey began with a revelation. *"At some point in 2017, I just realised… Africa was the next biggest thing in terms of fashion,"* he recalls. *"We've seen it all in the West. But Africa, because of music, food, and entertainment, is just being noticed now."* It's that shift in global perspective that Monye seized. His breakthrough came with the *Reale Agbada*, a reimagined version of a traditional robe. *"The traditional Agbada was too bogus… it was hard to manage,"* he explains. *"Sometimes when I used to wear it, it could hook a chair and pull it."* He designed a version that retained its grandeur but introduced structure and ease. *"I decided to structure the sleeves… and that changed the game."* When a Nigerian celebrity wore it to a high-profile wedding, the piece went viral. *"The whole entire world started talking about it."*

Ugo Monye's work is bold, fresh and deeply rooted in heritage. *"My last collection was titled Ifeasoanyi —it means 'what we like' in Igbo. Basically, it says we're doing what we like, without any external influence."* His vision, however, goes beyond aesthetics. *"My goal is to unite the West and Africa together with clothing. But first, we need to unite Africa."* For him, it's not about trend—it's about truth. *"There's a tsunami about to happen in the African fashion industry,"* he says. *"And one just needs to do one thing, to be authentic at what you do."*

He travels across the continent gathering cultural elements (raffia, kauris) and weaves them into powerful garments that carry stories. *"Everything I do tells a story."* Lagos, his home base, remains an endless source of inspiration. *"I went to Yaba market, and it was like I had an outpouring of ideas."* For Ugo Monye, creativity doesn't need a fancy resort:*"I can be eating in a restaurant in Lagos and just stop and start sketching."*

Despite his growing reputation, he keeps a low profile. *"A lot of people know the brand. They don't know the face. And I'm happy with that... for now."* Running a fashion business in Nigeria comes with its challenges. *"If the industry was more structured, I could focus on just designing. But here, you have to do everything: creative, marketing, quality control. It's a gift and a curse."* And yet, Ugo Monye remains unwavering. "*This is my calling. I never did this for money. Even when I had nothing, I was excited. I always had a smile on my face."* Now, he says, it's time to *"take this crazy guy's dream to the rest of the world."* ■

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ugomonye.com
@ugomonye.official

D.R. / Morgan Otagburuagu.



A look from the “Ife Aso Anyi”
(What We Like) collection, by Ugo Monye

Tarkwa Bay.

Photo assistants,
DAVID NJOKU,
OWEN OTAGBURUAGU,
ENOGIE CHARLES
Production,
BOLA BELO/256 ARTISTS
Wellfare, HUMBLE ORJI
Logistics, BOLAJI KAREEM

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ADE BANTU *Musician, producer.*

This summer, Ade Bantu returns to the stage with *BANTU*, unveiling new music and celebrating two decades of sonic activism. After the resounding impact of *Everybody Get Agenda (2020)*, the Nigerian-German artist and his band are preparing a series of live performances across Africa and Europe, continuing to merge groove and consciousness, rhythm and rebellion.

Born into a mixed German-Nigerian household, Ade Bantu grew up between worlds, soundtracked by Sunday clean-up sessions where James Last met Sonny Okosun, Fela Kuti danced with chanson française, and Miriam Makeba sang alongside jazz and highlife. *"I never quite understood people with one-dimensional taste,"* he laughs. *"I grew up with so many sounds. Eclecticism is my foundation."*

His musical journey began with hip hop in Europe, but it soon evolved into something broader and deeper. Today, the music of BANTU is a vibrant fusion of Afrofunk, Yoruba rhythms, highlife, hip hop, and protest. *"It's like Lagos itself,"* he says. *"Organised chaos. A talking drum competing with a sax solo and Jimi Hendrix on acid... all finding a way not to collide, but to complement each other."* Lagos remains both his muse and his test. *"Lagos is a waltz with a drunk partner. You think you've got the rhythm... and then chaos. But if you let go, immerse yourself, and shine your eye... it becomes beautiful."*

For Bantu, music is more than entertainment. It is a social tool, an archive, and a provocation. *"We don't have an archival culture in Nigeria. But what happens when someone asks: what was the climate like in 2017 or 2023? You can play a BANTU song. It's all there."* Though often labelled as political, he prefers the word *conscious*: *"I don't offer solutions. I ask questions. I want to start conversations."* This impulse led him to launch Afropolitan Vibes in Lagos over a decade ago: a groundbreaking live concert series that helped revive Nigeria's live music scene. "*When I moved back, there were very few spaces for bands. I wanted to create a platform not just for my group, but for other voices too, from legends to newcomers. Every show was curated like a journey."* Afropolitan Vibes would go on to inspire a new generation of festivals and musicians embracing live instrumentation.

Collaboration, for Ade Bantu, is essential, and humbling. He has worked with legends like UB40 and Harry Belafonte. *"When you enter someone's creative world, you see them vulnerable. It's not about ego. It's about listening, learning, growing."* His music pays homage to those who came before, not out of nostalgia, but legacy. *"I'm at a point where I want to give back, just like others gave to me. Intergenerational dialogue is rare here, but music can bridge that gap."* ■

afropolitanvibes.com



PAINTING THE SELF

Across Tokyo, Paris, London and Brussels, a new generation of artists is reclaiming the figure, not as a symbol or style, but as a living terrain. In their work, the body becomes both subject and medium: vulnerable, defiant, elusive. Through gestures, fragments, and textures, they explore identity not as a fixed image, but as something shifting and intimate. These five painters — Kornel Zezula, Victor Takeru, Olivia Sterling, Matthieu Livrieri, and Nazanin Pouyandeh — speak a renewed visual language where figuration is no longer about representation, but about presence. Each one, in their own way, resists simplification: they paint the unspeakable, the overlooked, the tender or the dissonant. In an era saturated with signals, they offer something deeper: a space for attention, emotion, and quiet revelation. Saffron Miles

PARIS. KORNEL ZEZULA IS ONE OF THE YOUNG PAINTERS TO WATCH IN PARIS. HIS WORK, SHAPED BETWEEN POLAND AND FRANCE, IS MARKED BY A SENSITIVITY TO NUANCE AND A QUIET EMOTIONAL CHARGE: ALIVE WITH COLOR, FORM, AND THE SHIMMER OF INNER LIFE.

Photography by PATRICK WACK

Born in Wrocław, Kornel Zezula first caught the attention of the Parisian art world with his graduation exhibition at Les Beaux-Arts in 2019. His move to Paris was less about geography than artistic intent. Quickly, he emerged as a distinct voice in contemporary painting. At the heart of his work lies a persistent question: what does the other feel? Zezula explores the enigma of human presence, the invisible interior that language cannot grasp. For him, painting begins where words fail. His canvases seek to capture fleeting, contradictory emotions: a ghost of a glance, the tremor of silence, a glimmer of buried memory. Each painting feels more like an act of reaching than a finished product. His process is intuitive, almost trance-like. Music, ranging from classical to jazz to electronic, helps induce this state, guiding him between control and surrender. *"The core of my practice is to follow intuition,"* he explains. Rather than forcing an image, he lets it surface, sculpting it through a tactile dialogue with the medium.

Kornel Zezula's style has evolved from figuration to abstraction, but without the rigidity of academic realism. He focuses almost exclusively on the human figure: portraits and torsos stripped of background, directing all attention to psychological depth. His compositions evoke cinematic stills: a face caught mid-expression, a blurred gesture, a presence dissolving into light. This cinematic quality defines his approach: tight framing, dramatic lighting, and narrative density. Light seems to emanate from within the figures, giving them a sensual, almost breathing presence. These are not fixed likenesses, but portraits of identity in flux, unfolding, shifting, shaped by encounter. ■

Jean-Michel de Alberti

aucube.fr
@kornel_zezula

D.R. / Patrick Wack.



PARIS. WITH A SINGULAR BLEND OF DISCIPLINE AND DREAM, **NAZANIN POUYANDEH** CONJURES SCENES THAT SEEM BOTH EERILY REAL AND MYSTERIOUSLY IMAGINED. HER WORK SPEAKS IN SYMBOLS OF MEMORY, MYTH, AND QUIET REBELLION.

Photography by PATRICK WACK

There is, in the paintings of Nazanin Pouyandeh, the precision of a gaze and the intoxication of a dream. Born in Tehran in 1981 and trained at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, the artist paints freehand scenes that are both hyper-realistic and utterly surreal. Exposed bodies, ruined landscapes, silent fragments of narrative: everything feels meticulously observed yet secretly invented. *"This improbable realism... I care about it. It's an illusion of power in the face of helplessness."* Her models are friends, her settings often imagined. The process verges on ritual. She captures a vision, a sudden "flash", sparked by an old master painting, a voodoo ceremony, a journey. Then she composes. *"What I do looks like the backstage of an experimental film."* To paint, she says, is like making love: a struggle against finitude, an attempt to hold on to life. Fascinated by Jung's idea of the collective unconscious, she believes in images born of dreams more than those shaped by thought. Her visual world draws from everywhere: Benin, Tibet, Hokusai, the Renaissance. *"I speak to the world, not to a single origin. My identity is there, in my colors, in what escapes me."* For her, painting is a universal language, a palimpsest of ancient stories, a murmur of desire and ruin entwined. ■ S.M.

Nazanin Pouyandeh is represented by GALERIE TEMPLON, where she recently presented her latest works (templon.com). One of her paintings is currently on view as part of "The Mystery of Cleopatra" exhibition at THE INSTITUT DU MONDE ARABE (Paris), running until January 11, 2026 (imarabe.org). Her works are also on display at the ARTOTHÈQUE OF CAEN (artotheque-caen.net).

D.R. / Patrick Wack / Charlie de Kersmaecker.



BRUSSELS. HE PAINTS CLUTTERED SINKS, BATHROOMS BATHED IN LIGHT, SOLITARY FIGURES LOST IN THOUGHT. AT 26, **MATTHIEU LIVRIERI,** CASTS A VIBRANT GAZE ON THE EVERYDAY. FROM IT, HE DRAWS SUSPENDED MOMENTS, TRANSFORMING THEM INTO CANVASES RICH IN PATTERNS AND COLOR – FRAGMENTS OF LIFE MADE VISIBLE. *Photography by* CHARLIE DE KEERSMAECKER

For years, he remained fascinated by *Interior with Aubergines* by Matisse, which he discovered as a child at the Grenoble Museum. *"That painting shook me. The way it created an entire world through paint…"* That same world, shifting, close, is what he now tries to recompose in his own way. Trained at the Beaux-Arts schools of Grenoble and Montpellier, and a graduate of La Cambre in Belgium, Matthieu Livrieri was awarded the Paul Smith Foundation Prize in 2024: a distinction that celebrates a body of work where the ordinary becomes narration.

In his large Brussels studio, which he has turned into a hybrid space, part atelier, part rehearsal space for his rock band Saint Matthieu, he works on six to eight paintings at a time. They hang on the walls, always ready to be reworked. His creative process? *"Living. Keeping my eye sharp. While walking, meeting people, observing."* He photographs, collects, assembles. Each painting is a mental collage, fed by images gathered day by day. What he paints are *"the very simple things in life."* But under his brush, a messy sink, a forgotten cup, a reflection in a mirror become a kind of language. Though he embraces a form of realism, it's also to better speak of his time. Brussels, his adopted city, became an obvious choice. *"It's calmer than Paris, more human in scale. Less stress, but a real artistic density. And above all, it's at the heart of Europe."* Like his art: intimate, and quietly revealing of who we are. ■ S.M.

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matthieulivrieri.fr
Exhibition from October 1st to 15th , 2025
at the CICA MUSEUM in Gimpo,
South Korea: cicamuseum.com



TOKYO. VICTOR TAKERU PAINTS THE WAY ONE LISTENS TO A SUSTAINED NOTE: FRAGILE, VIBRANT, BARELY HOLDING. AT 27, THE FRANCO-JAPANESE ARTIST TRACES A SINGULAR PATH, ONE THAT OSCILLATES BETWEEN INTROSPECTION AND DISAPPEARANCE, STILLNESS, AND TENSION. *"I'VE ALWAYS DRAWN, EVER SINCE I COULD HOLD A PENCIL,"* HE SAYS. BUT IT IS SILENCE, PAUSES, AND SHADOWED ZONES THAT NOW SHAPE HIS PAINTING.

Photography by GERMAIN CHAUVEAU

Initially trained in graphic design, and then self-taught in painting, Victor Takeru turned away from commercial design to fully devote himself to a slowly built inner world. *"I need time. Lots of time. My universe, I created it alone, through practice. What art schools like the Beaux-Arts might teach you, I had to figure out for myself."* He calls it "*Ambient Music Painting*", a term he coined to describe the atmosphere of his canvases: *"It's painting like ambient music; very calm, very full. You can walk past it and feel nothing… or be suddenly struck by an unexpected emotion."* That search for a diffuse emotion takes form in faceless portraits (often self-portraits) where the absence of eyes is a deliberate refusal of capture. *"I want the viewer to take in the whole painting, not be immediately drawn to a gaze. There's something of a retreat in my work, an act of hiding."* Oil painting allows him to explore these nuances. *"Acrylic dried too fast. Oil gives me room to breathe. It opens possibilities, especially in texture, in depth."* Slowness lies at the heart of his approach. And the apparent calm is often deceptive. *"I'm not trying to soothe. I'm trying to install a gentle tension."*

His influences are diverse: Claire Tabouret, Sterling Ruby, Léon Spilliaert, and the German artist Florian Krewer, whose soft darkness and faux naivety he admires. As for Japan, he claims only subtle traces*: "A certain sense of order, a way of structuring the image, probably inherited from my upbringing."* Tokyo, with its contrasts, offers a rhythm he finds more peaceful than Paris. *"In Shibuya it's noisy, but one street over, and suddenly: silence. That doesn't exist anywhere else."* Today, Victor is working on a series of self-portraits woven with doorways, always wearing his signature "camouflage cap", a symbol of retreat. An upcoming solo show is in the works for Shanghai, but he is in no rush. *"An artistic career takes time. I'm still in the process of searching.".* ■ S.M.

@victortakeru

D.R. / Germain Chauveau / Sam Khoury.



LONDON. IN THE VIBRANT, UNSETTLING WORLD OF BRITISH ARTIST **OLIVIA STERLING**, LAUGHTER AND PAIN WALK HAND IN HAND. HER PAINTINGS, WITH THEIR BRIGHT SURFACES AND CONFIDENT LINES, PEEL BACK THE COMFORTS OF EVERYDAY LIFE TO REVEAL THE DEEP, PERSISTENT ABSURDITIES OF RACE, IDENTITY, AND OPPRESSION.

Photography by SAM KHOURY

"Everything is so disheartening and painful; the rise of fascism is obviously upsetting," Olivia Sterling confides from her London studio. Born in Peterborough, England, she studied at the Royal College of Art before quickly establishing herself as one of the boldest voices in contemporary figurative painting. Her canvases are clumsy accidents, gluttonous overindulgence, quiet threats. They mirror a world numbed by its own pleasures. *"We are stuck, distracted by luxuries at the expense of others,"* she says. From sugar plantations to fast fashion factories, she draws a brutal line through history: *"It keeps happening, so there must be pleasure in oppression."* For Olivia, humor is both balm and blade. *"Laughter and empathy are bound up with one another. It can be subversive or dissociative, expressive or alienating."* In her paintings, laughter fractures, lifting the oppressed, digesting injustice, or weaponized by those in power. *"I hope to crystallise the abstract notion of oppression through this duality,"* she explains.

Color and language collide in her work with mischievous clarity. Figures tagged with "w" and "p" expose the absurdities of racial labelling. *"White people aren't white; they are pink and peach,"* she notes, challenging lazy binaries. Inspired by medieval illustrations, caricatures, animation stills, and scientific diagrams, Sterling seeks a directness that feels almost joyous. Her world is shaped as much by grand artistic traditions (Bacon, Guston, Colescott, Bonnard) as by fleeting moments with loved ones. *"Family members and friends have an interesting way of speaking,"* she says. *"My last show with Meyer Riegger was titled* Your Cheeks are Wine — *a comment from a friend about how happy I looked at an opening."* Through her charged, playful work, Olivia Sterling invites us to look harder: to find the laughter that resists, and the laughter that wounds; to see the beautiful, bitter absurdity stitched into the everyday. ■ S.M.

Olivia Sterling is releasing a print with Goldmark Atelier Editions goldmarkatelier.com and is preparing for her next solo show in 2026. meyer-riegger.com



The Bird

Words by AHMED NAJI. *Photography by* SYLVIE LAGARDE.

The Egyptian novelist and journalist writes to CITY *from Las Vegas, where he now lives with his family.*

A week after we moved into our house in downtown Las Vegas, I was locking the door on my way out when a bird suddenly bombarded me. Surprised and panicked, I started shouting and waving my hands, trying helplessly to defend myself from the unseen enemy that had already flown high after the initial strike. I hurried to my car, and as I opened the door, I heard a screech. This time, I saw the bird diving toward me. I leapt into the car and hid there.

That was the first—but not the last—attack. The bird assaults became a daily ritual whenever I left or returned home. Yasmin noticed they had nested in the olive tree in our yard. "They're just being protective," she explained. "They could be immigrants like us. Let's wait until they have their baby—then they'll leave."

For political and security reasons, we were both exiled from Egypt after I spent a year in prison for writing a novel. It took four years after arriving in the U.S. to become legal residents. In Egypt, and here, our lives were full of surprises, obstacles, and challenges. Six years after our marriage, we finally settled into a home. And now, I was under siege by a tiny, sharp-beaked Nevada bird.

I had to strategize. I began gathering intelligence—observing, filming, photographing the elegant attacker. It had a long tail, a slender body, and a proud beak. Las Vegas is a bird city. Millions of migratory birds stop here every year. There are entire areas and wetlands dedicated to birdwatching, where they rest and feed. People in Las Vegas are like these birds—immigrants from around the world, pausing to rest and start anew.

I ran the pictures through the AI Google Lens, and I discovered it was a mockingbird. I found that it has a long history of bombarding people. YouTube and TikTok are full of videos where they attack postmen and passersby. As a newcomer, I thought surely locals had developed a method to deal with these mockingbird dive-bombings. I asked two Las Vegans for advice, and both gave the same answer: "Shoot it." I know that's the American answer to many problems, but I couldn't risk my literary honor and reputation by becoming the writer who killed a mockingbird. Instead, I armed myself with a water gun. Before leaving the house, I'd scan the area, then sneak out slowly. If I saw the bird getting ready to attack, I'd spray water to scare it off. But just when I felt victorious, it would strike from an unseen corner.

Every day, I walk or run around our neighborhood in downtown Las Vegas. Most homes were built between the '40s and '70s. Each house unique in color and style, shaded by olive trees. Ironically, planting new olive trees is now banned in the valley to save water for a company called "Wonderful," owned by billionaires Stewart and Lynda Resnick, who control water rights in California and Nevada.

In Las Vegas, everything is within a 30-minute drive, which deceives you. Tourists arrive declaring, "Las Vegas isn't ready for me," only to pass out drunk on sidewalks at the end of the night. Locals, meanwhile, believe they know the city—but its secrets and treasures remain hidden among tree branches.

Despite all my precautions, water gun in hand, I kept losing the war. Yasmin, on the other hand, offered the birds water and seeds. They rarely attacked her. Out of caution, she would open a black umbrella to shield herself and our daughter. Yasmin once whispered to me in a dream that to take root, we must first understand our surroundings. When I woke up, she played the mockingbird's song, admiring its beauty. "Maybe it's a traveler too," she said. "This tree might be its ancestral home—a place where it once laid its eggs."

I began walking the neighborhood with my camera, taking photos of the birds, insects, feral cats, and rodents that live among us. It's an exercise I recommend: take pictures of your neighbors—human and non-human. Get to know them. Introduce yourself if you can, learn about them if you can't. A time may come when you'll confront each other—and maybe then, you won't need walls or weapons. ■

Ahmed Naji is a bilingual Egyptian writer, now living in exile in Las Vegas. He writes in Arabic and English, and is the author of novels and nonfiction, including *Rotten Evidence: Reading and Writing in Prison* (2023), a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award and winner of the Banipal Prize for Best Translated Book. In 2016, his novel *Using Life* (2014) led to his prosecution on charges of "disturbing public morality"; he was sentenced to two years in prison for obscenity.
ahmednaji.net

CITY MAGAZINE INTERNATIONAL - july 2025. D.R. / Sylvie Lagarde.

東京

Photography by HANAYO

Top and skirt, **ISSEY MIYAKE**.

CITY MAGAZINE INTERNATIONAL - July 2025. D.R. / Hanayo.




キッコーナン
金鳥
マツダランプ
臭検確守
ガンダムとは(機動戦士)
一九七九年放送の
テレビアニメ(架空兵器)
一九五八年
熊野町 行
4時20分
11時0分
池袋 行
5時00分
1時一分



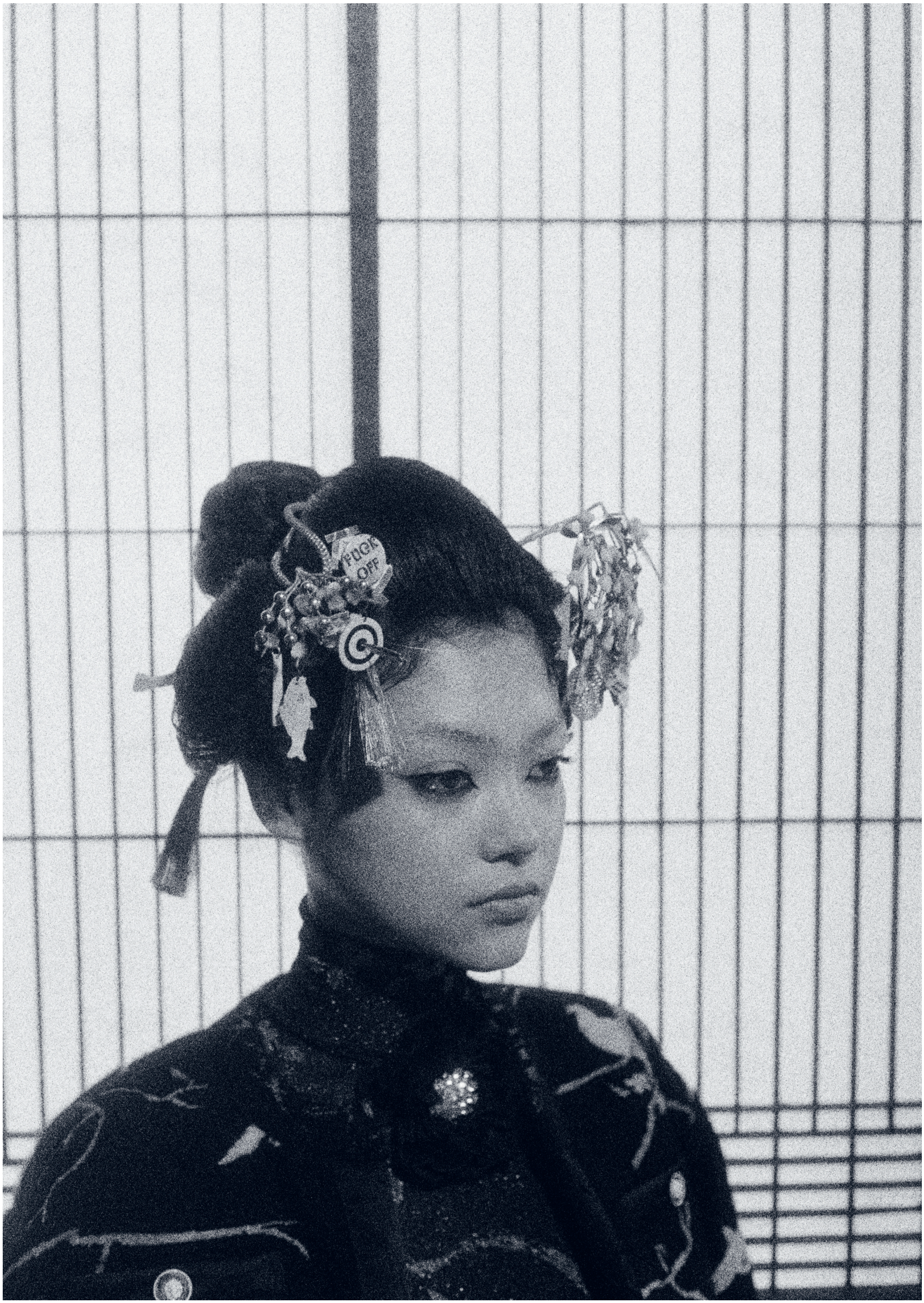
V-neck blouse dress & Jaïpur pants, **LOUIS VUITTON by Nicolas Ghesquière.**

D.R. / Hanayo.



Leggings, turtleneck and jacket, **CHANEL.**

D.R. / Hanayo.


FUCK
OFF


5秒でシャワー 10分で入浴
まんすりバス
安心と信頼
入浴者以外
駐輪禁止
ビル



Scarf, underwear and socks, **PRADA.**
Left page: dress, **KEISUKEYOSHIDA.**



Dress, **YOHJI YAMAMOTO.**
Right page: dress, **PILLINGS.**

D.R. / Hanayo.







LV Fan bag, **LOUIS VUITTON by Nicolas Ghesquière.**
Left page: dress, **COMME DES GARÇONS**; *trench coat*, **COURRÈGES**.

D.R. / Hanayo.

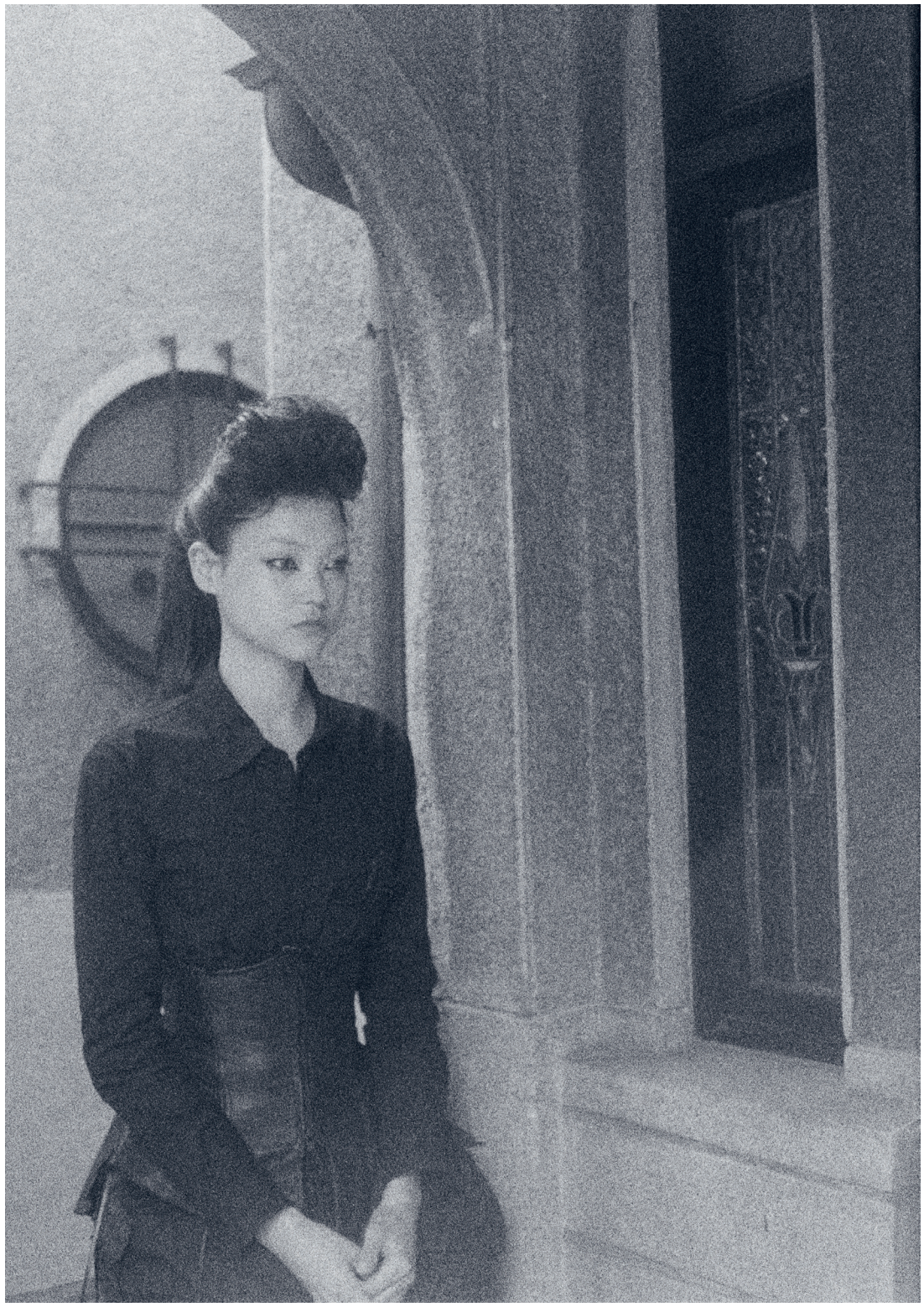


Jacket and pants, **UNDERCOVER.**
Right page: skirt, **COMME DES GARÇONS.**

D.R. / Hanayo.







Shirt, belt and pants, **LIMI FEU**. *Left page: dress,* **YOHJI YAMAMOTO**.

D.R. / Hanayo.



Dress, **PILLINGS**. *Right page: dress,* **ISABEL MARANT**.

D.R. / Hanayo.







Model, MIKA SCHNEIDER @ ELITE
Styling by MARIE HIGUCHI *represented by* HOME
Hair & Makeup by RIE SHIRAISHI *(day 1)* & EITA HASEGAWA *(day 2)*
Coordination, AYUMI KAWASAKI / KIKI INC
Special thanks to KARU MIYOSHI
Location Van, A-PLUS. *Driver,* RYOSUKE YUZAWA

Left page: dress, **ISABEL MARANT.**

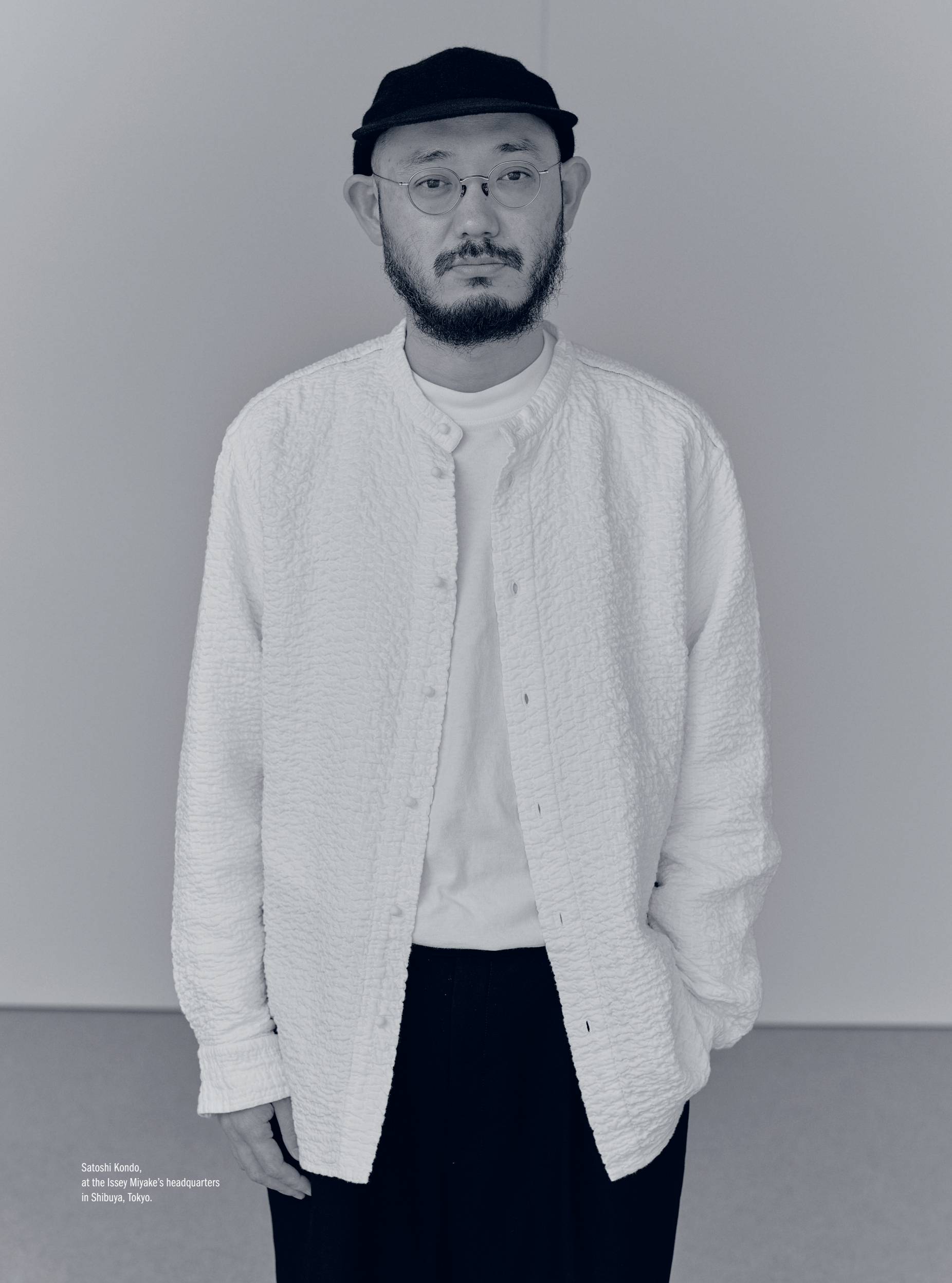
Satoshi Kondo

On The Wings Of Time

Words by LAURENCE BENAÏM. *Photography by* KAI NAITO.

Heir to Issey Miyake's vision, Satoshi Kondo reimagines clothing as sculpture in motion, where joy, time, and breath take form.

D.R. / Kai Naito.



Satoshi Kondo,
at the Issey Miyake's headquarters
in Shibuya, Tokyo.



A dress from the [N]either, [N]or collection,
Issey Miyake, Autumn-Winter 2025/2026

Born in Kyoto in 1984, Satoshi Kondo joined Issey Miyake in 2007. Appointed designer of the womenswear line in 2019, he has been presenting the brand's collections since 2020. In just five years, he has managed to assert a distinctive vision while honoring the legacy of his master. Nothing feels heavy. His work is not simply about garments. It's about space, movement, emotion, and time. It's about joy, and something far more abstract: the deeply Japanese notion of Ma, the poetic emptiness between things. This lightness, rooted in history, stands as a rare exception in the fashion world, where heritage excess often goes hand in hand with a kind of amnesia for new beginnings. *"It has accompanied our daily lives since a distant past, bringing us peace of mind and skill; through its seemingly timeless poetry, it surrounds us. We simply have to grasp it,"* he said of his Summer 2025 collection, inspired by paper.

In a search for lines and space, the Winter 2025 collection ventures through the complex pathways he cherishes. *"The aesthetics of ambiguity unfold in the interstice."* The work of Erwin Wurm served as the starting point, establishing a dialogue *"between opposites, whether in material, form, or meaning."* Exploring the boundary between abstract and concrete, elevating the art of seamless knitting, Satoshi Kondo unites intention and execution in a kind of aerial marriage. Between folds and movement, everything revolves around harmony, optical play, structured suppleness, and sculptural fluidity. Not to mention the shirts that transform into sleeves, in a surreal buttoned game. *"To give everyone the freedom to express their own style,"* says Satoshi Kondo. An open-ended homage to Issey Miyake and his guiding principle: *"I don't create a fashionable aesthetic. I create a style based on life."*

How would you define the style and spirit of Issey Miyake?
Issey Miyake's design philosophy is deeply rooted in society. He didn't just make clothes; he responded to the world around him. There's a strong undercurrent of curiosity in everything he did. That's what drives all of us in the company. It's what fuels our research and development. Our guiding question is always: What can we create to improve everyday life? There's an intimacy in our work; a closeness to society, to the body, to how people live and move. That's what I've learned most from Issey-san: to design not in isolation, but in constant conversation with the world.

Can you describe him?
Issey-san could be a father figure: kind, compassionate, yet uncompromising when it came to design. He had a rare honesty. If he loved something, he would say so immediately. If something felt off, he wouldn't sugarcoat it. He was deeply passionate, true to his instincts, and endlessly devoted to the integrity of creation. That honesty shaped me.

Why is that relationship between master and apprentice so unique, especially in Japan?
I didn't truly know who Issey-san was until I joined the company. And once I did, I began to understand not just the man, but the spirit behind the work. Every day working under him felt like a gift: there was always something new, something profound to learn. In Japan, there's a tradition of learning through doing, through presence, through quiet observation. I'm grateful I experienced that firsthand.

How do you preserve Issey Miyake's DNA without falling into nostalgia?
I never set out to replicate what Issey-san did. His vision isn't a formula. It's an idea. At its core is the abstract relationship between the human body and a piece of cloth. It's this openness that allows the work to evolve. That's why it's not about copying a silhouette from the past. It's about carrying forward a spirit, one that welcomes experimentation, embraces new technology, and remains deeply connected to the wearer. As long as we remain rooted in that principle, we are preserving his DNA.

"JOY REMAINS CENTRAL TO MY DESIGN PHILOSOPHY. EACH COLLECTION IS AN EXPLORATION OF WHAT IT MEANS TO ENJOY THE ACT OF WEARING SOMETHING."

Is Tokyo a creative anchor for you?
Tokyo is my base. Our company is here. But when it comes to textiles, we venture into other regions of Japan. We work with artisans in rural prefectures who specialize in traditional crafts. Tokyo connects these worlds: it's a hub of ideas and energy, a bridge between the ancient and the futuristic. For me, it's not just a city. It's a crossroads.

Your first collection was titled* A Sense of Joy, *featuring floaty bodysuits and dresses that seemed to defy gravity. What about this fascination with lightness and flight?
That collection emerged from a personal need: to bring joy into the world through clothing. I collaborated with a choreographer and scenographer to infuse movement into the garments. The airiness, like the "helicoptering" dresses, was all about expressing joy as something physical, visible, and shared. And joy remains central to my design philosophy. Each collection is an exploration of what it means to enjoy the act of wearing

CITY MAGAZINE INTERNATIONAL - July 2025. D.R. / Kai Naito.

something. . . .

There's also a strong poetic dimension to your work. How do you define poetry in fashion?

We don't present runway shows. We create experiences. Performances that involve light, sound, movement. I think the poetry comes from our intention to move people emotionally. And behind that, I'm always thinking about beauty and time. Time is abstract, ephemeral. It doesn't follow trends. When you design with time in mind, the result often becomes poetic. Because poetry, like time, resists explanation.

Can you explain your concept of Ma, and how it informs your design?

Ma refers to the unfilled space: the gap between the garment and the body. In architecture, it might be the void in a room. In fashion, it's the air around the wearer, the space that allows movement, breath, freedom. We don't aim for garments to hug the body tightly. Instead, we design with that space in mind, letting the fabric live independently from the body. It's not tailoring. It's sculpture.

You were born in Kyoto. What role does this city play in your life and work?

Kyoto is my birthplace. But it's also a city of craftsmanship and heritage. I often return to work with artisans and traditional mills, many of which have been around for generations. There's something beautiful about that: how tradition is kept alive through reinvention. That idea of passing down, of continuity, is at the heart of my work at Issey Miyake.

Do you recall a childhood memory that shaped your creative instincts?

As a child, I loved working with wood. I built things with my hands: hard, solid things. That tactile relationship with material has never left me. I still feel most connected when I'm physically making something.

What is the most important part of your process today?

Making. Touching. Failing. Trying again. There's a tendency now to live in our heads, to overthink. But the truth is, design emerges through physical engagement. Sometimes accidents happen. I call them happy accidents. Often, those unexpected moments lead to the most original ideas.

In a digital age overflowing with AI and information, how has your work adapted?

We don't use AI in our design process. And I think that's what preserves the soul of our work. But we do engage with advanced technology, when it aligns with our materials and spirit. That said, the excess of information today can drown originality. I try not to rely on what's online. I research, but then I detach. Otherwise, I risk designing something that already exists in someone else's imagination.

Is there anything you forbid yourself from doing?

I don't believe in strict prohibitions. But I avoid imitation. And I try not to become overly reliant on digital references. The more I know from outside, the harder it is to find something purely my own.

Do you draw? What are the most important stages in your creative process?

Yes, I draw. Not necessarily in a traditional sketchbook sense, but as a way to think visually. There are two stages I value most: the initial research phase, where we dive deep into ideas without thinking about clothes yet, and the fitting stage, where concept meets material, body, and movement. That's when the real transformation happens.

Which books, music, or art inspire you most?

Bach's cello pieces. They're timeless. I also admire the musician Koki Nakano, whom I've collaborated with on our shows. His music feels tactile, like sculpture in sound. In literature, Haruki Murakami has long been a companion. As for art, I visit all kinds of museums. One that left a deep impression was the Quai Branly in Paris, with its breathtaking collection of tribal and folk art.

"ISSEY MIYAKE'S VISION ISN'T A FORMULA. IT'S AN IDEA. AT ITS CORE IS THE ABSTRACT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE HUMAN BODY AND A PIECE OF CLOTH."

Do you have a motto?

Maybe not a motto, but a mindset: Never give up. Design is a process of persistence. Sometimes you feel close to something, but not quite there. You keep going. You keep working with your hands. That's what I learned from Issey-san: just continue. That's how you arrive.

What's the first thing you do when you arrive in Paris?

Dinner! But if I have time before, I always visit the Yvon Lambert bookstore. It's become a ritual.

You chose a particular dress to be photographed. What made that piece so significant to you?

It's from our most recent collection, *[N]either, [N]or.* The collection explores the space between binary concepts, between sculpture and garment. That dress is made from a single piece of fabric. If you removed all the stitches, it would fall open as one whole cloth. It's minimal, architectural, and deeply connected to the human body. To me, it represents the essence of Issey Miyake: something that lives between categories, never fully definable. ■

Photo assistant, Takumi Yasumoto.



TIME FOR TAKEOFF.

WE ARE NOW
GOING TO
DEMONSTRATE
THE SAFETY
FEATURES
OF THIS AIRCRAFT
WE ASK
THAT *YOU*
PLEASE
FOLLOW ALONG
EVEN IF YOU FLY
WITH US *FREQUENTLY.*

Photography by GERMAIN CHAUVEAU.

CITY MAGAZINE INTERNATIONAL - July 2025. D.R. / Germain Chauveau.

OXYGEN MASKS. If there is a sudden loss of cabin pressure, oxygen masks will drop from the overhead panel. Pull the mask towards you to start the flow of oxygen, place it over your nose and mouth, and secure it with the elastic band. Be sure to secure your own mask before assisting others.

RM UP-01 FERRARI, manual winding ultraflat, **RICHARD MILLE.**
Jacket and shirt, **DIOR.**



LIFE VEST. Your life vest is located under your seat (or between the seats). To use it, remove the vest from its packaging, pull it over your head, and fasten the straps around your waist. Inflate the vest by pulling down on the red tabs, or manually by blowing into the tubes. Do not inflate your vest until you have exited the aircraft.

Big Bang Unico Titanium Ceramic, **HUBLOT.**
Suit and shirt, **DIOR.**

D.R. / Germain Chauveau.

SEATBELT. To fasten your seatbelt, insert the metal fitting into the buckle and pull the strap to tighten. To release, lift the top of the buckle. We recommend keeping your seatbelt fastened at all times when seated.

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Move Noa bracelet in gold and diamond, **MESSIKA.** *White gold ring,* **PASQUALE BRUNI.** *Suit and shirt,* **PAUL SMITH.**

JEAN-PAUL GOUDE

THE DANCING EYE

Words by KARINE PORRET. *Portrait by* PHILIPPE BAUMANN.

It's a luminous afternoon on the heights of Belleville. Through the wide bay windows of his home-studio, Paris unfolds like a set waiting for its staging. Jean-Paul Goude welcomes us into his urban refuge, both understated and teeming, much like his work. At 86, the artist of a thousand images (illustrator, stage director, advertiser, choreographer of the collective unconscious) looks back, without nostalgia, on the cities that have shaped his inner and artistic life, and on all the margins where fiction takes root.

Born in Montreuil to an American mother and a French father, Jean-Paul Goude grew up between the well-behaved rows of Saint-Mandé and the swing broadcast by the BBC. From Paris to New York, places became raw material in his eyes. He remembers the faces, the bodies, the voices, and above all, the rhythm, that secret pulse that turns a location into a myth. Today, Jean-Paul Goude lives almost in retreat, overlooking the city without truly inhabiting it. He speaks with disarming clarity, without sadness but with a sharp awareness of time. Between bursts of laughter and anecdotes about Andy Warhol, Jacques Prévert or Louis-Ferdinand Céline, he traces for CITY the intimate cartography of his life's path.

You were born in Montreuil, at the edge of Paris, but it's Saint-Mandé you claim as your own.

Yes, that's where I grew up, in a cramped two-room flat. Saint-Mandé was like a little bourgeois village: quiet, neat. My mother, an American and former Broadway dancer, would tap dance between the dining room table and the couch. Stuck in France during the war, she didn't speak much French yet. She always spoke to me in English, sang jazz, mimed everything, turned our living room into a stage. She had not been a classical dancer, but a real gifted showgirl, joyful, theatrical, generous. Thanks to her, I was nourished by American jazz broadcast by the BBC, attitude, rhythm, and fantasy.

Your father was quite different, it seems.

Completely. He came out of a drab Paris city orphanage, a lost but determined young man. Later he was taken to New York by Jeanne Aubert, who at the time was a super star of the French musical theater but ended up abandoned by her in New York. He couldn't speak a word of english so he had to go back to Paris and start over from scratch: night classes, Berlitz, engineering exams and finally got a job at IBM. When he found my mother again, he had become a "solid man," as they say. They got married in New York, on Broadway, right across from the theater where my mom was dancing.

Jeanne Aubert, whom you mention, played a special role in your life. Who was she to you?

She was a real diva, a former big star, and a very famous French operetta singer. I think my father had been her lover in Paris in his youth when he was still just a pretty lost boy. This is when she took him to New York. She sort of picked him up like one might pick up a young gigolo, except he wasn't one. Later, she became my godmother. She lived in a gigantic apartment with black monkey fur rugs, a Chinese bed, a white grand piano... It looked like a movie set. She would sing in front of men lying on the floor like children in awe. I used to watch, fascinated. She was a free, powerful woman, surrounded by eccentric creatures. She didn't raise me, but she helped expand my world. She showed me there was another realm, baroque, flamboyant, liberated.

What was your childhood like?

Happy. I was very close to my mother. She raised me with joy, music and dance. One of her friends was Lucette, a dancer herself and the wife of Louis-Ferdinand Céline. Some of the entertainers who came from America to occupied Paris and who often made transatlantic trips, had a certain style. They had afternoon tea, even in the midst of war. One day, Lucette invited my mother to her home in Meudon. My mom went, chatted, nibbled on some cookies, and asked Lucette if she could take a few home for her little boy, me. When she was about to leave, Céline came in and walked to my mom, then taking her to the door, very courteously, he suddenly said, very seriously, "Irène, give me back my cookies." My mother was stunned. He insisted, even checked her bag. She came home furious and never saw either one of them again. It was absurd, humiliating, grotesque… and apparently very much in Céline's style. My mother knew very little about him. She lived in love with my father, in a sort of lighthearted theatricality. She was very popular in the neighborhood: a pretty American artist, cheerful, friendly with a very direct charm. To me, she was like a character from a novel, a musical heroine a bit misplaced in Saint-Mandé. After the Liberation, she opened a small dance school in a gymnasium, with the little girls of the neighborhood, who she called all "Darling." But she also worried, since I was interested in dance. It frightened her. She had seen too many decadent eccentrics on Broadway. She wanted a "normal" life for her son.

Yet you trained in classical dance.

Yes, with a Russian teacher, Nina Tikanova. Arm positions, pirouettes, leaps, very athletic: I loved it. It was extremely physical and rigorous. At the time I dreamed to create musicals, make films where people danced. This is what pushed me to try to mix the movements in my drawings with human bodies, which I eventually hope I did in some of my commercials.

Were you a good student?

Not at all! I failed the baccalaureate three times. A real bad boy; I was obsessed by girls, images and dance. I spent my days drawing naked pin-ups, fantasizing over them, and going out dancing at day clubs. Eventually, I applied and was accepted to the Arts Décoratifs entrance exam. It was the first time I succeeded at something. This is when I discovered advertising and American magazines. • • •

D.R. Philippe Baumann.



Jean-Paul Goude at his home-studio
in Belleville, Paris. 2025.





Left: From *Jungle Fever.* 1981.
Toukie Smith & Jean-Paul Goude
in the subway in New York, 1976.
Photo: Jonathan Becker.







Nineteen year old Jean-Paul Goude, Paris
The Art of Graffiti, Esquire magazine cover, NY, May 1974
With Marie Yakimova in Nina Tikanova's studio, Paris, 1963
From *Jungle Fever,* NY, 1981



CITY MAGAZINE INTERNATIONAL - July 2025. D.R. / Jean-Paul Goude archives.

• • • ***Did you go to New York young?***
Yes, around seven years old. My mother took me to visit cousins in Queens. A house, an Irish neighborhood, Italians next door. Nothing like Manhattan; just a normal neighborhood life. But it was later, around age 25, that I truly experienced New York, through sheer luck. A friend told me there was an American in Paris who didn't speak a word of French and needed help. It was Harold Hayes, the editor-in-chief of *Esquire*, a real icon. He came to see me. I had set up my place to look like a professional studio. He seemed to be impressed. I showed him my drawings, my universe. He asked, "Want to come to New York?" I thought he was joking. But a few weeks later, he called back: "It's all set." I left almost on a whim. Suddenly, I was the art director of a legendary magazine, surrounded by brilliant writers and photographers. It was dizzying. I didn't come from their world and I had no literary culture. But I knew about images, rhythm, and relied on my instincts. They had opened the door, and I ran right through it. Working in New York is when I truly understood what a glamourous, very busy city could be.

Did you meet Andy Warhol around that time?
Yes, of course. I had always admired him from afar. Turning pop culture into art always resonated with me. Andy was a real superstar, silent, distant, mysterious. I was all about rhythm, movement and very much alive. He painted frozen icons; I wanted to create characters in action. But I shared his obsession with imagery. Like him, I dreamt of blurring the lines between art, advertising, fashion and music. And like him, I adored outsiders, unexpected beauties. If Warhol had his Factory, I hung out with my own little gang.

You also took dance classes in New York. How did that influence your path?
I would have loved to enroll in a major ballet school, but I had no money to take classes, so I offered to clean the studios in exchange for lessons at the Joffrey School of Ballet. One day, Robert Joffrey himself, pulled me aside and said, "You'll never be a professional ballet dancer. Too short. Not the right physique." I was a little hurt, of course. But then he added, "But I like your drawings… they are strong. Keep going." That moment was pivotal. I realized I wouldn't be Fred Astaire, but maybe I could invent my own language, somewhere between movement and images. And I owe him for that.

How would you describe your relationship with New York?
I was never a tourist. I was there to work. I took subways, buses, taxis. I had an apartment, I had friends. I discovered Harlem, clubs, Black music, block parties, and women, too. I often had African American girlfriends. That's how I met Grace Jones who literally jumped on me one day with a little 45 that she had just recorded. I saw her potential right away. She wanted my opinion. I listened, encouraged her, styled her, framed her. She wore too much make-up and jewelry like all the other entertainers. I tried to deconstruct all that and turn it into a manifesto of otherness. Together, we invented a new kind of entertainer, a minimal icon, between fashion, music, photography and theatre. It was very powerful. At first, I was a sort of Pygmalion to her. She listened, she needed structure. And I liked the idea of creating a new character. But soon, she started to invent things on her own. What we had accomplished together was a shared œuvre, but unfortunately our two paths which had crossed, eventually diverged.

"LIKE ANDY WARHOL, I DREAMT OF BLURRING THE LINES BETWEEN ART, ADVERTISING, FASHION AND MUSIC. AND LIKE HIM, I ADORED OUTSIDERS, UNEXPECTED BEAUTIES."

And Paris?
Paris is my native city. I have always commuted between Paris and New York; In Paris I was the American and in New York, I was the Frenchman. That tension fed me. In Paris as a child, I'd visit the Museum of the Colonies to stare at the African sculptures. As a student I watched American musicals. All of that shaped a vision. I learned to tell my own visual stories, to stylize bodies, to mix cultures. One day, I was privileged to visit Jacques Prévert, the poet. He was getting old but still working, surrounded by tons of post cards which he turned into fantastic collages. I would have loved to show him my work, but I didn't dare even though he was extremely open. I'd have lunch with him and his family once a week and the moments we shared together stayed with me until his death. Prévert is Paris to me: his language, his images, his way of drawing beauty from detail. A lot of what I tried to do later is connected to our relationship.

Did your work at Esquire help you shape your vision?
Yes, but I got bored quickly, even though I had begun hanging out with terrific talents, writers, brilliant thinkers. In return I brought in young artists from downtown and marginal characters into the magazine, outsiders, and strong offbeat figures: I tried to expose the magazine to Black culture, dance, gay culture. Everything my mother had showed me, without even realizing it. That's how my eye sharpened. After drawing human figures so much, I tried to photograph them, stage them differently.

Then you met Alain Wertheimer, owner of Chanel?
Yes, through Jacques Helleu, Chanel's artistic director. I was far from the Chanel world at the time: I was still this wild illustrator and art director, whose work was shaped by pop culture, New York and its rhythms and imagery. I think that's what Alain Wertheimer liked. He understood that I had a different way of telling stories and he trusted me. That trust allowed me to create for him, some of the most iconic campaigns of my career. Like the Égoïste commercial, for example. If no one else believed in it, he did. We filmed in Brazil on a set inspired by a palace in Nice: with slamming shutters, women shouting from balconies, Racine's text over Prokofiev's score. It was like a mini opera. If the film left a mark, it was precisely because it looked like no others. This is when I understood that advertising could be made from a different point of view, boldness, and a signature, like a mini film or a brief theatrical performance.

You also created the Bicentennial parade for the French Revolution in 1989. What do you remember of that event?
It was absolutely unique. I was entrusted with a colossal task: to celebrate the French Revolution on the Champs-Élysées, live, in front of the whole world. I wanted to turn the event into a joyful, offbeat popular fresco, far from dusty reenactments. I brought in performers from all the countries that had a revolutionary past, dancers from all over the world, the best percussionists from Africa, moving sets: rain for the British, snow for the Russians, etc., images in motion. It was a little crazy, yet very original. I tried to show a living France: mixed, inventive, far from clichés. That evening, it felt as if Paris was dancing with me. It was a big hit, like a dream come true, right in the heart of the Republic.

How do you look back on all those cities today?
They shaped me. Saint-Mandé taught me tenderness, Paris taught me style, New York audacity. ■

POSTCARD

Photography by SIR PAUL SMITH: *Kensington Gardens, London, May 2025.*



'I love my early mornings in London'

Paul Smith

CITY MAGAZINE INTERNATIONAL - July 2025.

D.R. / Sir Paul Smith.

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