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PROFILE

MC Dammy: Reviving Yoruba Culture, One Owambe at a Time



RESTAURANT

3 Nigerian owned restaurants making waves in the diaspora

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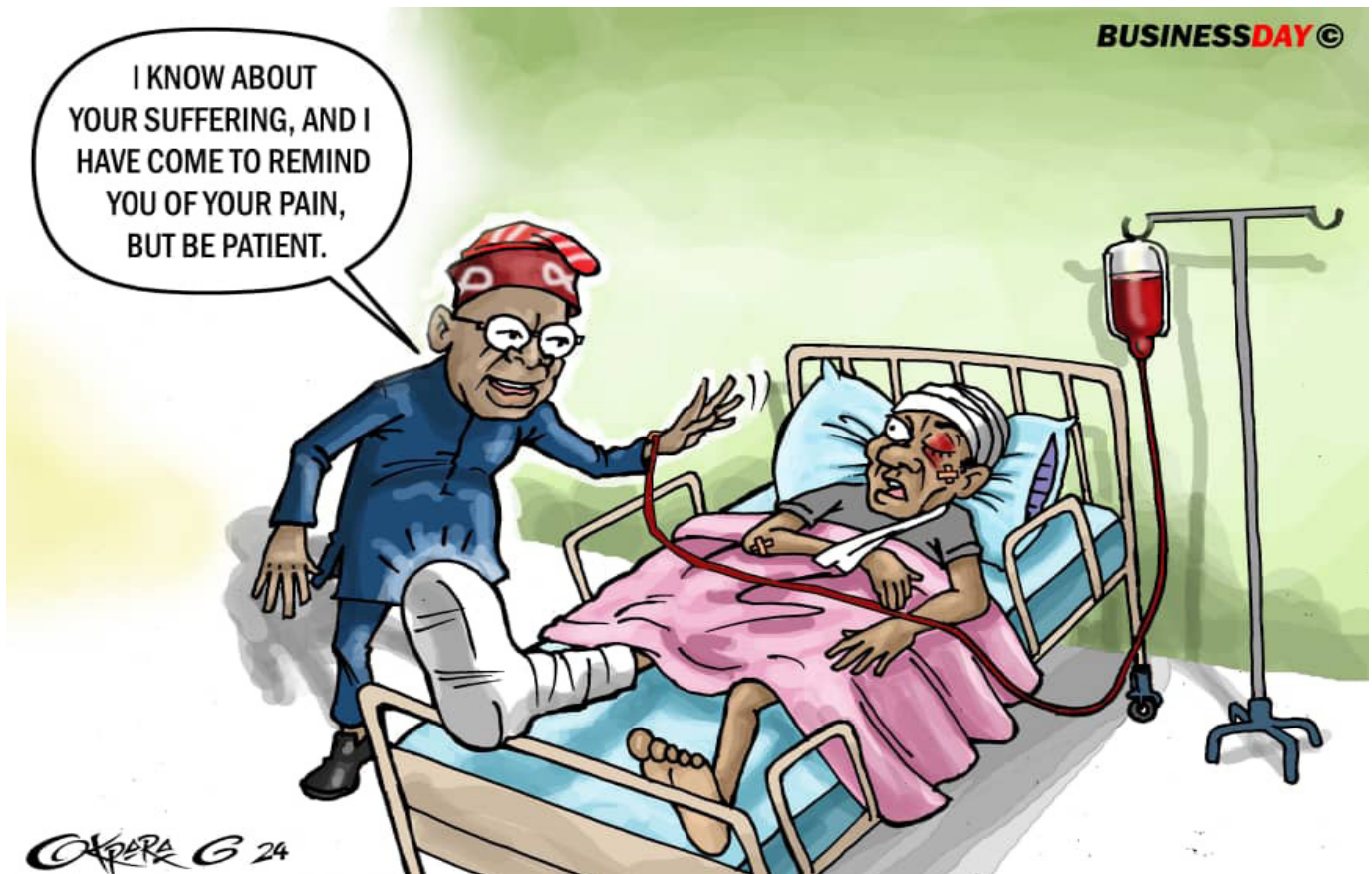
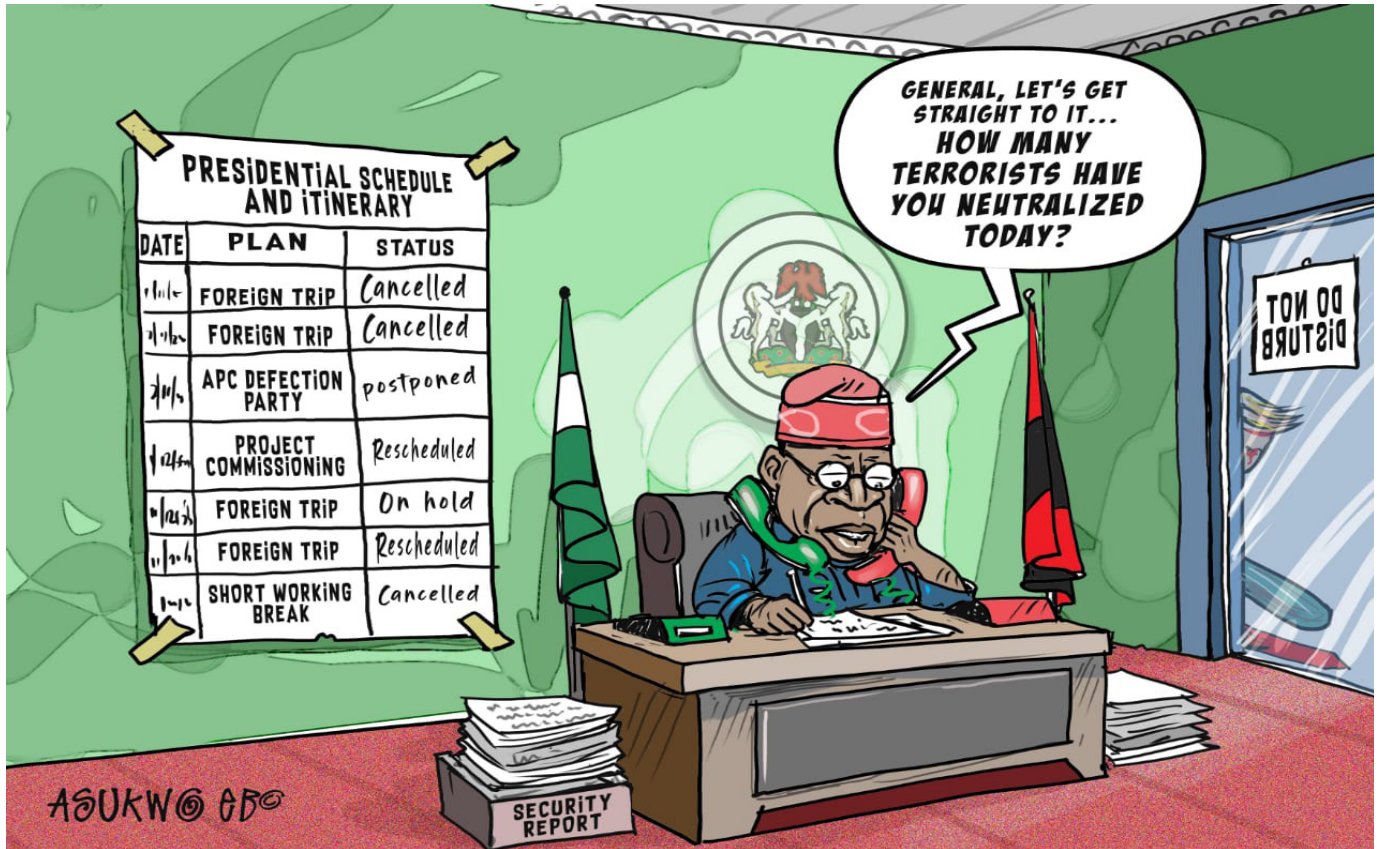




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RUNWAY BRILLIANCE, STREET STYLE ENERGY AT GTCO FASHION WEEKEND 2025

IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA



The streets were alive with vibrant fashion as people from all walks of life converged on the GT Centre for the highly anticipated GTCO Fashion Weekend.

As attendees arrived at the venue, the streets were beautified with a kaleidoscope of colors, textures, and styles. From bold prints to statement accessories, the fashion on display was a testament to the diversity and creativity of African fashion. The event's layout was meticulously planned, with designated areas for runway shows, masterclasses, and exhibitions showcasing the latest trends and innovations in the industry.

The event transformed the venue into a kaleidoscope of colors, textures, and styles, showcasing the diversity and creativity of African fashion. With its theme "Fashion Is Freedom," the event embodied the spirit of self-expression and empowerment, featuring masterclasses, runway shows, and exhibitions that highlighted the industry's latest trends and innovations.

Masterclasses: Learning from the Best*

The masterclasses were a highlight of the event, featuring industry experts who shared their insights and experiences with attendees. Bianca Saunders, a London-based designer, delivered a thought-provoking session on building a global fashion brand while staying true to one's identity. "Know why you're doing what you're doing," she advised, emphasizing the importance of authenticity in fashion.

Saunders delved into cultural storytelling and the pursuit of authenticity in building a global menswear label. She emphasised the necessity of global awareness paired with original design.

"Definitely pay attention to what is happening in the world of fashion, it is really important. You want to create something that is new but also what is the point of the fabric you are making," she said.



“Is it to be very stylish or inspire a group of people that really speak to your world around you? That is a very strong point, to know why you are doing what you are doing.”

Jade Oyateru, co-founder of Trillbende, shared insights on how to drive growth in African retail through innovation and customer-centric business models.

Melissa Butler, founder of The Lip Bar, inspired participants with her journey from a small start-up to a globally recognised beauty brand.

The event’s second day continued with a masterclass led by the Angolan-born supermodel and entrepreneur Maria Borges.

Speaking on ‘The Model Mindset: From Getting Signed to Staying Relevant’, Borges captivated the audience with her journey—from being discovered in the Elite Model Look Contest in 2010 to gracing the runways for fashion’s most esteemed houses, including Dior, Chanel, Versace, and Victoria’s Secret.



Runway Shows: A Celebration of African Fashion

The runway shows were a showcase of Africa’s finest designers, featuring stunning collections that blended traditional heritage with modern style. Designers like Ituen Basi, The Bam Collective, and Mowalola presented breathtaking collections that highlighted the diversity and talent of African fashion. The event’s focus on sustainability and inclusivity was evident in the designs, which not only looked stunning but also told powerful stories of cultural identity and creativity.

Exhibitions: Discovering New Talent

The exhibitions were another highlight of the event, providing a platform for emerging and established designers to showcase their creations. Attendees had the opportunity to discover new talent, network with industry professionals, and purchase unique pieces from Nigerian and African designers. The exhibitions featured a wide range of products, from clothing and accessories to beauty and wellness products, showcasing the diversity and creativity of the African fashion industry.

Empowering Fashion Entrepreneurs

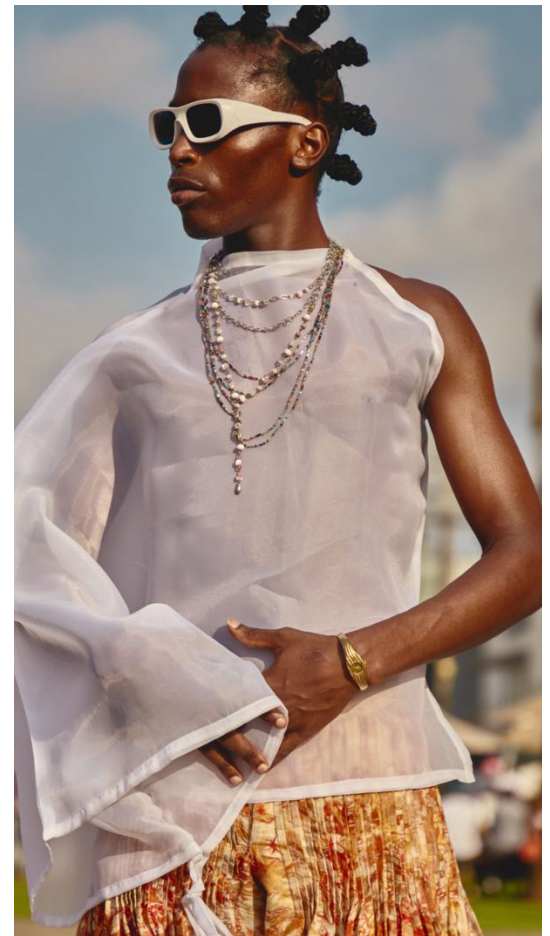
The GTCO Fashion Weekend has become a premier event in Africa’s fashion calendar, attracting thousands of enthusiasts, entrepreneurs, and industry professionals.

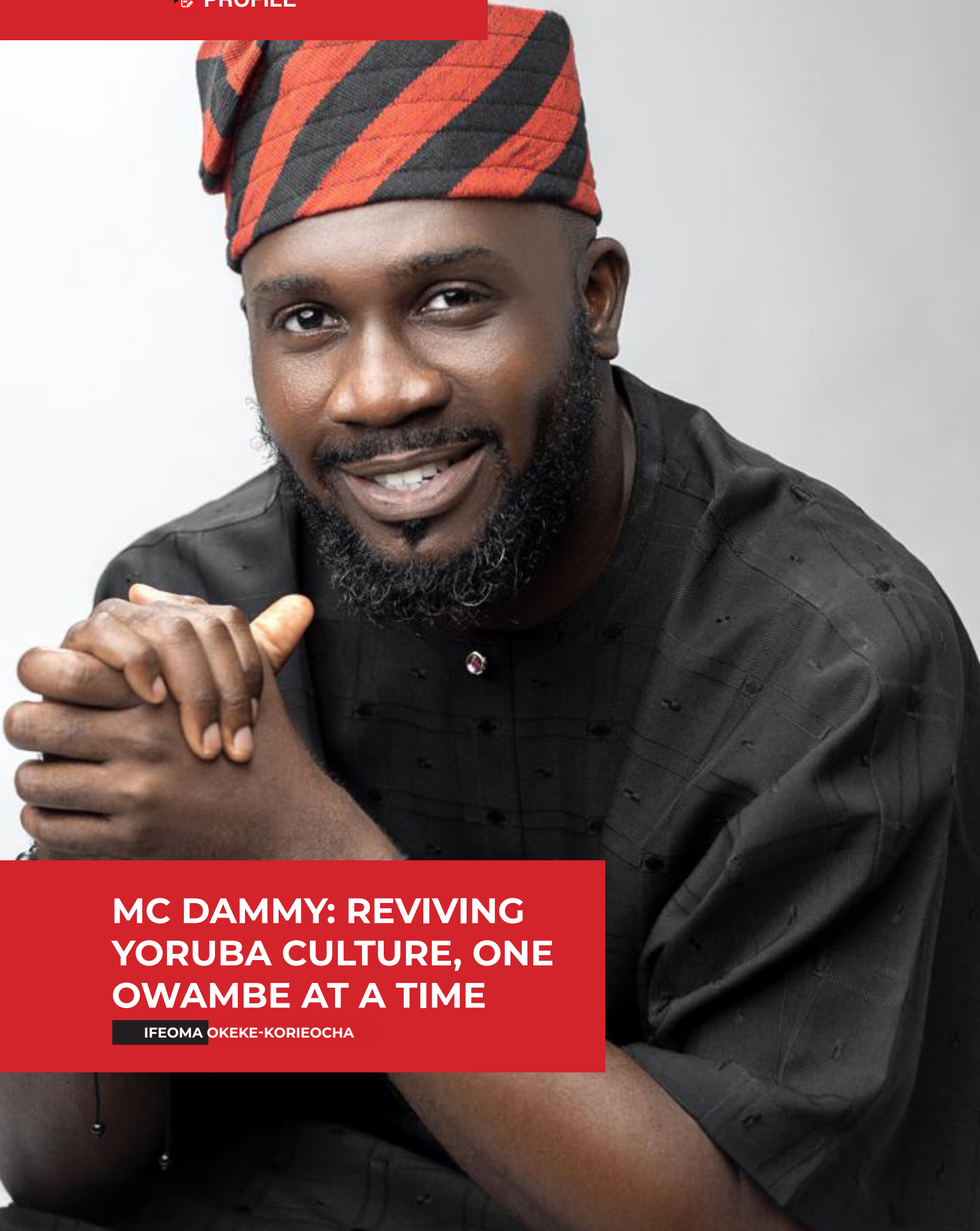
The event provides valuable opportunities for emerging fashion businesses to connect with industry experts, showcase their designs, and reach a wider audience. With its focus on sustainability, inclusivity, and creativity, the GTCO Fashion Weekend has solidified its position as a leading platform for African fashion ².

A Celebration of African Creativity

The GTCO Fashion Weekend is more than just a fashion event; it’s a celebration of African creativity, innovation, and enterprise. The event has become a symbol of the industry’s growth and potential, showcasing the talent and innovation that defines African fashion. As Segun Agbaje, Group CEO of Guaranty Trust Holding Company Plc, noted, “Each year, the GTCO Fashion Weekend reaffirms our belief that enterprise thrives where creativity is encouraged and opportunity is shared”.

The GTCO Fashion Weekend 2025 was a success, celebrating the creativity, innovation, and diversity of African fashion. With its focus on empowerment, inclusivity, and sustainability, the event has solidified its position as a leading platform for African fashion, providing valuable opportunities for emerging designers and fashion businesses to grow and thrive.





MC DAMMY: REVIVING YORUBA CULTURE, ONE OWAMBE AT A TIME

IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA



For over a decade, Adedamola Oni, popularly known as MC Dammy, has been the heartbeat of countless weddings, corporate events, and celebrations across Nigeria. But with his signature cultural showcase, “MC Dammy Live Owambe 2.0: Faaji Repete,” he is doing more than entertaining; he is preserving and professionalising Yoruba party culture for generations to come.

Set to hold on Sunday, November 16, 2025, at NECA House, Alausa, Ikeja, Lagos, the event promises an evening of music, comedy, fashion, and dance, all curated to celebrate the vibrancy of Yoruba heritage.

Endorsed by the Lagos State Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, the ministry highlighted its support:

“We wish to state that the State Government will be participating in the programme in its capacity as a government institution and partner,” the ministry said in a statement.

MC Dammy explained that the concept behind Faaji Repete is to preserve and professionalize Yoruba party culture while creating a platform that celebrates its vibrancy within Nigeria’s creative economy.

“I designed Owambe 2.0 as a structured cultural programme to document, professionalise, and scale Yoruba party culture,” he said. “After hosting over 500 social and corporate events, I saw the need to curate owambe in a way that preserves values and elevates standards, not just entertains.”

A Celebration of Heritage

Owambe, a hallmark of Yoruba social life, blends music, dance, fashion, and communal joy. MC Dammy’s vision is to preserve these traditions while elevating standards, turning each event into a curated cultural experience. From the red carpet showcasing native attire to live performances by musicians and cultural dance troupes, the audience experiences a mix of joy, elegance, and cultural pride.

“From the red carpet showcasing native attire to comedy, live music, and cultural dance, I want guests to leave with pride in Yoruba heritage and an appreciation for the professionalism it takes to present culture at scale,” he said.

Learning and Growth

The first edition, held at Terra Kulture, Victoria Island, in 2024, was praised for its creativity and energy. Yet, organizing it came with challenges.

“Securing sponsorship for the first edition was the most difficult part,” MC Dammy recalled. “We ran a lean operation and relied on goodwill while maintaining professional standards. That experience helped us build better systems for this edition: documented budgets, vendor agreements, safety and crowd-management plans, and a clearer content arc.”

With government support and a dedicated core team, MC Dammy has strengthened the event’s governance and scalability, ensuring it is not only enjoyable but also professionally executed and sustainable.

Cultural Ambassadorship

Beyond entertainment, Owambe 2.0 spotlights Yoruba values: omoluabi (good character), respect for elders, and the dignity of cultural work. It also emphasizes professionalism, fairness, and recognition of excellence in creative sectors. MC Dammy hopes to inspire young talents and create a lasting legacy for Nigeria’s cultural and creative industries.

“Government support helps us uphold safety and quality standards, deepen access for local cultural troupes and vendors, and document best practices that can be replicated annually,” he said. “For the community, it means broader participation and visibility for indigenous arts, and for the event, it strengthens governance and scalability.”

Looking Ahead

MC Dammy envisions Owambe 2.0 becoming a nationally recognized cultural festival, potentially incorporating other Nigerian traditions while expanding digital engagement. The event aims to contribute to tourism, local creative economies, and cultural preservation, building a model for professionally executed, heritage-centered entertainment.

With Owambe 2.0: Faaji Repete, MC Dammy is proving that the Yoruba party is not just a celebration; it is a vibrant cultural institution that fosters pride, preserves heritage, and drives growth within Nigeria’s creative economy.

3 NIGERIAN OWNED RESTAURANTS MAKING WAVES IN THE DIASPORA

ESTHER EMOEKPERE



prepared by chefs who uphold traditional cooking methods. Enish operates as both a restaurant and a lounge, hosting live performances, Afrobeat nights, and themed events that combine dining with entertainment. The founders' goal was to create a space where authentic Nigerian cuisine meets a modern, welcoming atmosphere, and the chain's steady expansion demonstrates the success of that vision.

Dept of Culture

Chef and restaurateur Ayo Balogun founded Dept of Culture, a 16-seat, reservation-only dining room in Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn. From day one, Balogun's goal was simple: to serve the food from his culture with the same dignity and grace that his family showed him growing up. The restaurant offers a tasting menu inspired by traditional cuisine from Balogun's home state of Kwara in Nigeria, and include fish pepper soup with cilantro ashoké, goat meat pepper soup, egusi stew with pounded yam, suya made from

mushrooms, wara ti abe, okele, and dodo ice cream. The space is designed to feel like a traditional buka blended with communal dining, featuring a single large wooden table, a counter with four stools, a record player, and family photographs on the wall. Hosting just 16 people a night, it is consistently booked for months in advance. Balogun believes that while the dishes may not always be familiar to everyone, the experience of sharing food is something all cultures have in common.

Chuku's

Chuku's was founded by Nigerian siblings Emeka and Ifeyinwa Frederick, bringing a fresh concept to London as the city's first Nigerian "tapas" restaurant. The idea focuses on small plates, shared dining, and social tables, combining traditional Nigerian fare with modern presentation to appeal to both Africans and non-Africans. The menu is inclusive, offering meat, vegan, gluten-free, and halal options. Signature dishes include Egusi Bowls, Sinasir, and Miyan Taushe. Sinasir is a gluten-free pancake traditionally made with sticky short-grain rice called shinkafa, but at Chuku's, jasmine rice is used to achieve the same texture. Other favourites include Moi Moi, chicken Ata Din Din, dodo, and suya meatballs. Chuku's is located in Tottenham, London, and has quickly become a go-to spot for sharing authentic Nigerian flavours in a modern, social setting.

Nigerian cuisine is finding its place on tables across New York, London and Toronto, carried by chefs and entrepreneurs in the diaspora. Each restaurant tells a story through its menu, blending recipes passed down through generations with contemporary twists that appeal to a global audience.

Walking into these spaces, you encounter familiar flavours, aromas and rhythms that reflect home. The food connects communities, sparks conversation and celebrates culture. For Africans living abroad and those discovering the cuisine for the first time, these restaurants are vibrant hubs where heritage, creativity and culinary skill meet, offering an experience that lingers long after the last bite.

Here are 3 Nigerian-owned restaurants abroad that are bringing authentic flavours to international tables.

Enish

Enish was founded by Olushola "Shola" Medupin and his wife, Eniola, with the name Enish formed by blending their first names. The chain began in London in 2013 and has since expanded to ten branches in London, one in Manchester, and one in Dubai. Today, Enish is the biggest Nigerian restaurant chain in the world, offering classic dishes such as jollof rice, egusi soup, and pepper soup, all

FROM PASSION TO PURPOSE: ANTONIA AGBEDE ALLY'S JOURNEY IN PHILANTHROPY

IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA





Antonia Agbede Ally is the former Managing Director of the Herbert Onyewumbu Wigwe Foundation. In her hometown of Obudu, Cross River State, Ally recently launched her own non-governmental organization, The Agbede Foundation. The event marked a significant milestone in Ally's career, coming exactly 10 years after her appointment as the pioneering Managing Director of The HOW Foundation, which was established by the late banking icon and philanthropist, Herbert Onyewumbu Wigwe. Driven by a deep commitment to humanitarian service and inspired by the legacy of her former mentor, Ally expressed that her new foundation aims to continue the work of empowering communities through education, healthcare, and youth development initiatives.

In this interview, she opens up about her journey in philanthropy, the lessons learned from her time with the late Herbert Wigwe, and her new mission to empower youth and women through the Agbede Foundation.

You were the founding Managing Director of the Herbert Onyewumbu Wigwe Foundation. Can you tell us about your role there and what the foundation focused on?

Yes, I had the privilege of being the founding Managing Director of the Herbert Wigwe Foundation. My role involved setting up the entire structure and operations of the foundation; from strategic direction to project implementation. We focused on key areas close to Mr. Wigwe's heart: malaria eradication, prostate cancer awareness, and youth mentorship. I was also involved in the early stages of developing the university he was establishing; even down to the marketing direction and logo creation. It was a holistic, hands-on experience in building something deeply meaningful from the ground up.

What would you say were the most valuable lessons you learned from working with Herbert Wigwe?

One of the greatest lessons I learned from him was that you don't need to wait to have everything before you start giving. Philanthropy isn't about the size of your pocket; it's about the size of your heart. Herbert taught us to start with whatever we had and build from there.

Another vital takeaway was the importance of trust and transparency in running an NGO. Everything must be documented and accounted for, not just to satisfy donors, but to build credibility with the public. Accountability is the foundation of impact.

You've now founded the Agbede Foundation. How do you plan to fund and sustain this new initiative?

Funding is always a challenge, but I'm fortunate to have built a strong network of individuals who truly believe in giving back. Many of these relationships were formed during my time at the Herbert Wigwe Foundation. Beyond that, I've learned how to make funds go a long way; maximizing impact with limited resources. Our focus will be on efficiency, transparency, and results, which will in turn attract more partners and donors.

The Agbede Foundation emphasizes skills acquisition. Why is this your main focus?

Because skills acquisition changes lives in a tangible way. When someone learns a skill, they're not just empowered; they're transformed. They can earn, teach others, and build independence. For me, this is the highest form of impact we can create within communities.

Your first project is the "Prince Basi Otu Young Professional Driver Scheme."



What inspired this initiative?

We started in Obudu, where we noticed a high demand among young people for professional driving as a career. Driving is often underestimated, but it's a skill that can open doors; from logistics to personal driving roles, even entrepreneurship. The scheme is designed to train and certify young people, giving them not just a skill, but dignity and employability.

What other skill programs are you planning under the foundation?

Next, we're introducing a Baking and Pastry Making program. It's a skill that's always in demand; from small bakeries to home-based businesses. We want to equip

young women and men with the tools to become self-reliant, especially in communities where employment options are limited.

Sustainability is often a challenge for NGOs. How do you plan to keep your programs running long-term?

Sustainability comes from smart partnerships. We're not reinventing the wheel; we're collaborating with existing schools, training centers, and experienced individuals. This way, we tap into existing infrastructure and knowledge, reducing startup costs while maintaining quality. It's about building an ecosystem of shared impact.

You mentioned partnerships. Are you seeking collaboration with the government or private sector?

Absolutely. The government is a key stakeholder, especially with the president's current emphasis on youth and women empowerment. But we know that to earn collaboration, we must first show results; a clear structure, measurable outcomes, and transparency.

Once we demonstrate impact, we'll approach both government and private partners to scale our initiatives.

In today's world, visibility matters. How are you approaching media and transparency, especially if you prefer to stay out of the spotlight?

(Laughs) Yes, I've never been one to seek the spotlight, but I've come to realize that visibility is necessary for accountability. Social media and traditional media are powerful tools to show the public what we're doing; the progress, the challenges, and the results. So, I'm learning to be more open and collaborative with the media. It's all part of building trust.

Finally, let's talk about volunteers. What's your approach to working with them?

Volunteers are the lifeblood of any foundation, but we have to be realistic about the context we're in. In Nigeria, it's important to support volunteers; even if it's just transport stipends or honorariums. People want to help, but they also have needs. And that's okay.

I also think it's vital to educate people on why we post about donations or volunteer activities. It's not about showing off, it's about transparency. When people see where their contributions go, it builds confidence and encourages more giving.

What's your ultimate vision for the Agbede Foundation?

To create a ripple effect of empowerment; starting with one community, one skill, one person at a time. My hope is that every participant in our programs not only finds independence but also passes that empowerment on to others. That's how real change begins.





THELMA CHIBUEZE: BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN FINANCE, TECHNOLOGY AND HUMAN POTENTIAL

TAOFEEK OYEDOKUN

As Nigeria navigates one of the most complex economic periods in its modern history, conversations around financial inclusion, institutional redesign, and technology-enabled growth have gained new urgency. Amid inflationary pressures, currency volatility, and a rapidly digitizing financial sector, a new cadre of young leaders has emerged, professionals who combine technical expertise with a deep understanding of the country's socio-economic realities.

Among them is Thelma Chibueze, a banking strategist whose work across cooperative finance, digital lending, and international business leadership reflects the evolving character of Nigeria's next generation of changemakers.

Chibueze represents a growing group of professionals bridging two worlds: the traditional structures of banking and the data-driven, human-centered systems shaping global finance. Her career since 2019 has been defined by a singular idea, that financial systems should not simply manage money but expand opportunity. It is a philosophy that has guided her from Sterling Bank's innovation corridors in Lagos to graduate-level leadership forums in Washington, D.C.

At Sterling Bank, where she started her career as a Product Officer, she quickly distinguished herself as a strategist grounded in human-centered innovation.

One of her early contributions was helping shape what became Nigeria's largest nanny-services financial ecosystem,

a platform that digitized domestic employment and enabled thousands of women to open formal bank accounts, access credit, and receive structured wages. It was a project that connected policy-level ambitions with community-level needs, and it marked the beginning of her approach: merging empathy with digital tools to reach excluded populations.

Her strategic orientation within the bank expanded rapidly. She designed customer-reactivation frameworks that reduced dormant retail accounts on a national scale, supported the redesign of core product strategies, and helped shape financial solutions tailored to underserved communities. Even in these formative years, she consistently argued that innovation must be measured by its reach.

Building digital lending systems that scale

When the post-pandemic economy strained household liquidity and consumer resilience between 2021 and 2022, Chibueze played a central role in strengthening PaywithSpecta, Sterling Bank's digital buy-now-pay-later platform. Working across merchant acquisition, user-engagement strategy, and partner management, she helped expand the platform's adoption among SMEs and individual consumers.

The initiative offered flexible credit at the point of purchase, making liquidity more accessible for small business owners who typically faced barriers in obtaining bank credit. Her contributions helped boost transaction uptake and broaden the platform's presence across key retail and service categories. This period showcased her ability to combine fintech-driven lending with real economic value creation for low- and middle-income households.

Scaling cooperative finance and community intelligence

Following her work in digital lending, Chibueze moved into cooperative finance strategy, an area where her philosophy of community-driven economic resilience became more pronounced. Working directly with market associations, savings groups, and grassroots cooperatives, she helped formalize governance structures, introduce digital contribution tools, and improve access to cooperative-based lending products.

Her model emphasized collective creditworthiness, a departure from traditional lending models focused solely on individuals. By organizing cooperatives into structured financial networks and enabling transparent contribution data, these groups became bankable entities capable of negotiating more favorable credit terms. The framework contributed to broader conversations around SME lending, group credit scoring, and risk-sharing models across West and East African development programs. She later expanded her role into strategic partnerships and business development, coordinating national training sessions for retail banking teams and improving community-centric engagement tactics. Her work strengthened the institutional capacity needed to scale inclusive finance initiatives within the bank.

Global education, policy insight, and a systems approach to leadership

Driven by a commitment to public-interest finance, Chibueze pursued postgraduate studies in International Law and Diplomacy at the University of Lagos in 2023. The same year, she began an MBA at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., a program that widened her exposure to global development policy, ethical innovation, and business intelligence.

At Georgetown, she distinguished herself as a Patrick Sheridan Endowed MBA Merit Scholar, a Forté Fellow, and an NMBBAA Merit Scholar. She held leadership positions in Georgetown Women in Business, Christians in Business, and the Explorers Club, and she mentored 20 high-school interns through the Leadership Initiatives program, guiding them as they developed business proposals for entrepreneurs in Northern Nigeria.

Chibueze's academic work centered on the intersection of finance, governance, technology, and community impact. She contributed to conversations on digital lending ethics, responsible AI in credit scoring, and data governance, topics that have grown increasingly important as financial institutions algorithmic decision-making tools.

In one seminar on sustainable leadership, she argued that "Data is not just numbers. It is a language of empathy if we choose to listen," capturing the core of her professional ethos.

Championing women, governance, and ethical leadership

Another defining theme in Chibueze's career has been her advocacy for women in finance and technology. She has been active in mentoring young female professionals, speaking at university forums, and collaborating with initiatives that expand financial pathways for women-owned SMEs. At a Lagos roundtable in 2024, she emphasized that "Women in leadership don't need seats at the table. We need to redesign the room entirely."

Her focus on accountability and governance predates her banking career. During her NYSC year in 2017, she participated in a national walk against economic and financial crimes, a formative experience that strengthened her view that ethical leadership must be a lived standard, not a declaration.

Now based in the United States, Chibueze continues to work across the intersections of finance, technology, diplomacy, and social innovation. Fluent in English, Igbo, French, and Mandarin, she collaborates across cultural and professional contexts, advocating for financial systems that are both data-driven and deeply human.

Her message for African development remains consistent: financial inclusion is not charity, but strategy, and any strategy that excludes people is destined to fail.

BREAKING BARRIERS: PINK UP FOR GIRLS CAMPAIGN EMPOWERS YOUNG GIRLS



The Women International (TWI) has concluded the 2025 edition of its flagship Pink Up for Girls Campaign, a nationwide and global initiative held in commemoration of the International Day of the Girl Child.

The campaign, themed “Breaking Stereotypes: One Girl at a Time,” reached over 3,000 girls through mentorship sessions, community outreaches, and the distribution of essential dignity kits, reaffirming the organization’s mission to empower girls and champion equality.

Since its inception in 2021, Pink Up for Girls has evolved into a global movement mobilizing individuals, communities, and organizations to wear pink in solidarity with girls, challenge limiting stereotypes, and take meaningful action on issues affecting their well-being. These include menstrual poverty, gender inequality, digital exclusion, and limited access to education and leadership opportunities.

The 2025 campaign recorded a significant impact through coordinated activities across Nigeria and beyond. School

outreaches and empowerment sessions were held in Abuja on October 10 and in Lagos on October 11, alongside simultaneous activations in Enugu, Port Harcourt, Imo State, and international chapters in the United Kingdom, Europe, United States, Canada, and the United Arab Emirates.

Each location combined grassroots empowerment, mentorship, and nationwide solidarity to drive lasting change.

The Lagos event, held at Lagos City College, Yaba, featured an inspiring lineup of facilitators and mentors who engaged the girls through interactive and life-enriching sessions.

The program opened with a welcome address by Bukola Maiye, Chief Executive Officer of The Women International, read on her behalf by Mrs. Datarı Ladejo, Lagos Chapter Leader of The Women International. The energy in the room soared as Ifeyinwa Nwakwesi encouraged the girls to embrace their individuality and believe in their potential.



The mentorship conversations covered crucial topics such as menstrual hygiene and self-care with Onyeka Iroha, self-confidence with Mariam Timmer, financial literacy with Union Bank's Aderonke Chukwudeme, leadership with Itohan Barlow, personal branding with Dr. Yetty Ogunnubi, and the power of words with Olajumoke Adekanmi.

Datari Ladejo also led a session on digital inclusion and announced a special sponsorship from Digital Women Africa to enhance the girls' access to technology and digital learning resources.

The event concluded with the distribution of dignity kits and care packages, ensuring that participants left with both knowledge and tangible resources to support their growth.

The 2025 campaign was endorsed by the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development under the leadership of the Minister, Imaan Sulaiman-Ibrahim. Her support underscored the Ministry's commitment to advancing gender inclusion and improving opportunities for women and girls across Nigeria.

The success of the campaign was made possible through the partnership of corporate and institutional supporters, including Providus Bank, Union Bank, Save the Children, Unicaf, Digital Women Africa, FDGS Energy Group, Sweet Sensation, Amali

Cosmetics, Ajoba Development Foundation, The R.E.A.C.H Organization Foundation, Noella Foundation, YD Company, and the Office of the First Lady of Imo State.

Reflecting on the events in Abuja and Lagos, Bukola Maiye, Chief Executive Officer of The Women International, described the sessions as a reaffirmation of the organization's purpose. "The energy and curiosity we witnessed from the girls in Abuja and Lagos remind us why this work is so important. Pink Up for Girls is more than a campaign; it is a movement that opens doors of possibility and helps every girl see that her dreams are within reach," she said.

Chinny Okoye, Founder of The Women International and Convener of Pink Up for Girls, also expressed gratitude for the strong turnout across the two cities. "Seeing the excitement, engagement, and confidence radiating from the girls in Abuja and Lagos was deeply fulfilling. It shows that when girls are given the right tools, guidance, and support, they can rise above any limitation. This is what Pink Up for Girls stands for," she noted.

With thousands of girls directly impacted and many more reached through digital engagement and international activations, Pink Up for Girls 2025 reaffirmed The Women International's commitment to building a world where every girl can thrive with confidence, dignity, and equal opportunity.

STAYING AHEAD OF CAREER CURVE VIA WISCAR MENTORING PROGRAMMES

...How Nigerian Amazons' careers are shaped

CHARLES OGWO



In today's fast-evolving professional landscape, staying relevant requires more than just skills; it demands vision, confidence, and the right guidance.

The Women In Successful Careers (WISCAR) Mentoring Programmes tailored to empower women to take charge of their career journeys, equipping them with the tools, network, and insights needed to thrive and lead in any field.

An evaluation of the top-level executive and board positions in Nigeria's corporate organisations and leadership indicates a gloomy tale of diversity and inclusion. In an attempt to bridge the gap for a more equal world, WISCAR introduced the mentoring programme and the testimonies speak volume.

Some of the beneficiaries, who spoke with BusinessDay, shared how their careers evolved for the best.

Mfon Eshett is an internationally certified Human Resource professional with over six years of progressive experience in HR, talent management, and people operations. She currently serves as the human resource manager at Crop2Cash,

"Beyond corporate HR, I'm passionate about personal development coaching and has mentored numerous young professionals through projects and organizations such as The Growth Circle and Tritex Academy UK, impacting over 1,000 individuals," she said, narrating her career trajectory.

Mfon came in contact with the WISCAR Mentoring Programme through a classmate from her high school.

"I saw her post about the WISCAR programme and conference on her WhatsApp status and watched how the programme transformed her life in two years.

"She is currently in an MBA programme in the US. This gave me motivation to apply for the programme while she supported me and also prepared me for the interview with the WISCAR team," she said.

The young author explained that in the last few months of joining the mentoring programme, she has gained courage, motivation, clarity and access to resources that has helped her take the required steps to boom her career.

"I have seen my career take on a new trajectory including two industry award recognitions this year; the Iconic Brand Africa (TIBA) and the HR Excellence Awards," she emphasised.

She highlighted the mentoring session as one that has broadened her perspective to the possibility of what her life and career can become while also empowering her with resources to make it possible.

For Mfon, the session on Networking as a Support for Career Development by Funke Amobi, stood out. "It stood out for me because I tend to be very introverted, so gaining practical insights into how to network in a productive manner pulled me out of my shell and I have seen results from taking steps to network frequently," she noted.

She applauded Wonuola Adetayo, whom she described as a wonderful mentor. "I don't know how WISCAR did it, but my first meeting with her felt like I was meeting with the future version of myself. She was warm, well articulated, and very hospitable during our first meeting.

"I had to come from Ibadan to Lagos to meet with her because I desired that our first meeting would be physical and it was a very enlightening session where I had great mind reset from her conversation on DISC a psychometric analysis on my strength and how to maximise them for productivity. Our engagement afterwards has been sessions of reflections, planning and tips on execution for the picture," Mfon stated.

She would like every Nigerian woman passionate about career success to take advantage of the WISCAR Mentoring Programme.

"I had to apply twice because I didn't make the cut in the first application so, I decided to be diligent and dedicate

my time and effort into the programme seeing the result it had in the lives of other career women around me.

"So, every woman who wants to scale and thrive in their career should apply for the WISCAR programme and also take advantage of every training, opportunity and resources the programme gives," she urges.

Lovina Utang is a credit risk officer at First Bank of Nigeria who was nominated by her organisation for the programme.

"I was nominated by my organisation, I read up about the WISCAR mentoring programme, did my findings and then I applied," she explained.

According to Lovina, the programme has impacted her in several amazing ways. "From the awesome network opportunities, to the several books and classes we've been exposed to, down to the impactful mentors and sessions shared. I have grown more ambitious and determined to thrive in my career and home." Speaking on the training that imparted her most, she said, "I would say the session on personal effectiveness. It helped me know that I was good but I could be determined to improve in areas that could boost visibility and improve performance.

"Moreso the book "Great work, Great career" speaks to the need to give your best shot, not out rightly expecting the recognition. However, by giving your very best, the recognition like a ripple effect would then follow."

In the course of her training, Lovina singled out Folashade Adebamiro as a mentor.

"My encounter with her was so beautiful! She is very warm, receptive and she paid utmost attention to our conversation, speaking sincerely and being a guide," she said.

She describes her experience with the WISCAR Mentoring Team as awesome, and impactful.

"It has been an awesome experience. From the several shared sessions to the networking opportunities to the book reviews to the mentor sessions.

"They have all been worthwhile. I definitely would recommend this to others, this is definitely an avenue to fan one's inner drive aflame," she said.

she explained that through the programme, she has found herself going above and beyond to reach and attain excellence, this has reflected in her life decisions and quality of work.

Moreover, she said, the recognition follows as the excellence of her work speaks for her.

THE WINE CLUB LAGOS HOSTS SYMPHONY OF WINE, MUSIC IN MULTISENSORY FIRST

ANTHONY UDUGBA



In a unique blend of taste and sound, the Wine Club Lagos recently hosted a symphony of wine and music, marking a multisensory first in the city's cultural scene.

The event brought together exceptional wines and live orchestral performances, creating an immersive experience for attendees.

The event reimagines six distinctive wines from England, Italy and France through bespoke musical arrangements inspired by well-known nostalgic songs, performed live by a 20-person orchestra. Each composition mirrors the personality, structure, and essence of the selected wines.

Folakemi Alli-Balogun, founder of The Wine Club Lagos, leads this pioneering experience, blending storytelling, sensory exploration, and cultural connection.

"This experience is about emotion and connection," Alli-Balogun said. "Wine and music both evoke memory. We wanted to explore what happens when you let them speak to each other," she explained.

According to her, the concept was inspired by a personal curiosity about what wine might sound like. "I was listening to my cousin play in a band, and he was playing with a few of his friends, and I remember listening to them, and for some reason, by listening to that band, it brought the thought into my mind of what does wine sound like, actually," she recalled.



She explained that her collaboration with Vesta -the orchestra, brought the vision to life. “Over the past few weeks I’ve been working with the orchestra, teaching them how to taste wine, how to recognise certain characteristics in wine and letting those characteristics inspire the music that they have chosen.”

“I felt like it would be a really interesting thing to get people to taste the wine as the orchestra was playing the music and to see if they’re able to connect what they’re hearing with what they’re drinking.”

Each of the orchestra performances was carefully composed to reflect the wine’s personality – its rhythm, intensity and mood, which allows guests to experience the interplay of sound and flavour in real time.

“I just want people to experience wine to understand that there’s so much more to wine than just drinking it to the glass,” Alli-Balugun said.

“Wine is art, it’s very complex but it’s also very welcoming, right, so anybody who cares to pick up a glass, there’s something you can relate to with wine,” she added.

The event had an exclusive audience of invite-only guests, including wine lovers, music and art enthusiasts, creative minds, corporate leaders, and long-time supporters of Lagos’s cultural scene.

It was an unforgettable evening that transcended traditional wine tasting. As the performances unfolded, guests tasted, listened and reflected on how both music and wine can stimulate emotions.

Lola Alakija, a pastor and guest at the event, said she could never have imagined that wines would have voices, saying, “But we’ve seen how this evening has helped us to translate, to match music to the taste of wine.”

“And to help you to live and relive experiences through what you taste in the wines,” Alakija said.

Ada Ijara, a financial analyst, said it was amazing to listen to music and drink, as it brings a trip down memory lane, noting that it would be an unforgettable experience.

“You know how music is very emotional, right? Whether you like it or not. So just infusing that with wine, I think, is a brilliant concept,” she added.

The event was accompanied by a feature-length documentary that captures the creative journey from concept to composition and performance, showcasing the vibrancy of Nigerian talent on a global stage.

THE FUNKY BRUNCH LAGOS RETURNS: HOW NIGERIA'S LIFESTYLE POWERHOUSE IS BUILDING A PREMIUM CREATIVE ECONOMY





One of the city's most talked-about lifestyle experience, The Funky Brunch Lagos, is officially making its grand return on December 28, 2025.

After a brief hiatus spent reimagining, rebuilding, and elevating the brand, the ultimate playground for the city's finest is back — bigger, bolder, and more premium.

Since its inception, The Funky Brunch Lagos has evolved beyond a social event into a full-fledged cultural movement, setting the standard for luxury lifestyle, fashion-forward expression, and nightlife sophistication in Lagos.

Revered as the blueprint for the new generation of experiential events, it continues to define what it means to live, connect, and celebrate in true Lagos style.

"After a season of reimagining every detail, we're returning to give Lagos more than a party; we're delivering a new standard for luxury lifestyle entertainment. On December 28, The Funky Brunch will be a carefully curated moment of music, fashion and connection: bold, beautiful and built for a city that refuses to do anything quietly. Comeback isn't the word; this is our elevation," says Efe Tommy, Founder, Tommy Briggs Lifestyle.

This December, The Funky Brunch Lagos will unveil a two-in-one experience, merging high-energy daytime vibes with an exclusive night affair — a fusion of music, fashion, fine dining, and the city's most stylish crowd. Guests can expect a world-

class ambience where creativity, culture, and luxury converge: everything top tier, curated for the city's elite, millennial tastemakers, and aspirational dreamers.

Hosted by Efe Tommy of Bespoke PR (A communications and Marketing agency and Tommy Briggs Lifestyle, a boutique lifestyle agency specialising in PR, creative direction, strategy, and brand concepts, the event reflects the vision of Efe Tommy, the agency's founder, a culture curator, social convener, and tastemaker known for shaping the pulse of Lagos' social and luxury scene.

This December's edition is powered by a growing collective of visionary brands that share The Funky Brunch ethos of excellence, craftsmanship, and culture. From Clase Azul and Adiccion to Rémy Martin, Moët & Chandon, and The Glenlivet, these partners embody refined taste and timeless sophistication.

Adding to the experience, Trace TV and Soundcity join as media collaborators, amplifying the celebration to audiences across Africa and beyond.

Together, they represent a powerful ecosystem of brands defining the new era of premium lifestyle in Lagos. As the countdown begins, The Funky Brunch Lagos promises to shake the city once again: redefining what premium lifestyle experiences should feel like.



#LAUNCHME65: TURNING INDEPENDENCE INTO ACTION

Why I ditched social media noise for a campaign that helps young Nigerians launch their ideas into action

BY: RACHEL ONAMUSI

Why I ditched the green-white-green poster for a campaign that helps young Nigerians launch their ideas into action.

Every year, as Nigeria's Independence Day approaches, there's an unspoken duty to post something thought-provoking on social media.

The annual "celebration" meets us at various stages of delight, deliberation or disappointment, but it seems as though it is impossible to have some sort of social media voice and not acknowledge this one day. The timeline is green and white, filled with hopeful captions about "our great nation." Then October 2nd arrives, and we quietly return to business as usual.

This year, I couldn't bring myself to do it. I just didn't have the energy for another "aspaya-to-paspaya" quote. I wanted something real. Something that would move us an inch closer to the Nigeria we dream about, not just talk about.

That's how #LaunchMe65 was born. It started as a simple idea: For this 65th anniversary, what if we celebrated Nigeria's Independence by launching something - or someone - forward?

So, I created a month-long campaign to give one young person living in Nigeria the support they needed to turn their idea into reality. Their challenge was to post a 65-second video pitching their business idea, project or learning goal, and the difference the prize would make to their journey. A panel of judges comprising entrepreneurs, professional leaders, and youth advocates would review the submissions. On October 31st, we would announce the winner, who would receive a ₦500,000 micro-grant and three months of business mentorship.

It didn't have to be perfect – after all, that's where the mentorship would come in. It just had to be a powerful, well-thought-out desire. The goal wasn't to find the next tech unicorn. It was to find young Nigerians who

were already building, creating, and solving problems in their own corners, and give them a push.

The applications started pouring in, and the submissions left me both inspired and conflicted – because choosing a winner turned out to be the most difficult part of the campaign!

Young Nigerians are building where they are, with what they have. They might not be inventing the wheel, but they're keeping it turning; fixing community problems, creating side hustles, and finding new ways to make a living. And they're doing it with a surprising level of tech fluency.

These young people were splicing and editing videos like pros! One of the judges actually remarked that one of the video scripts "sounded AI-generated," and honestly, I took that as a good sign. If they're learning to use tech tools to improve their storytelling and sharpen their ideas, then maybe the future really is in good hands.

The response to this small idea was overwhelmingly positive. Applicants poured in from across Nigeria, the judges were inspired, and the public applauded the initiative for what it was – just a small step that could make a big difference in a young person's life.

One of our judges with a thriving food business was so moved by a runner-up applicant in the food industry that they offered to mentor them personally. That, to me, is what #LaunchMe65 was all about. It was never about the sum being offered, but what could be done with whatever is in your hand right now.

Our eventual winner was a young man from Aba, Abia State. He'd started a laundry business on his own, offering pickup, service

and delivery, and was already earning a reputation for his reliability. But he was held back by inconsistent electricity and limited equipment.

The grant gave him the boost he needed: alternative power, better tools, and the confidence to scale. His gratitude and determination during our first mentoring session gave me the confirmation I needed that we'd chosen well.

The success of this programme has been both humbling and energising.

The campaign was never a mega-project; it was a micro-grant. But that was the point. I wanted to prove that you don't need massive resources to create change. You just need to start.

#LaunchMe65 reminded me that independence isn't about flags and speeches, it's about taking ownership. Every small act counts – one person at a time, one meal at a time, one school fee paid at a time.

Perhaps there will be more #LaunchMe65 campaigns in the future – perhaps even in collaboration with individuals or organisations who share this ethos of small, meaningful impact. It will depend on partnership and alignment, but it will focus on helping a Nigerian. And maybe if enough of us do this consistently, maybe one day our "Happy Independence Day!" posts will match our lived reality.

Rachel Onamusi is the CEO of VN Sync, a UK-based tech company and full-service marketing firm with expertise in all aspects of media and a strong focus on digital strategy development and implementation. Dedicated to creating lasting impact, Onamusi is a sought-after speaker, thought leader, writer and frequent media contributor.

THE ATLANTIC GAMBIT: HOW WARRI AND KOKO PORTS ARE FORGING A NEW TRADE FRONTIER FOR NIGERIA

JOSHUA EBITIMI

There is a timeless truth tucked within the chronicles of economic progress: a nation's prosperity is only as secure as the diversity and resilience of its trade gateways.

For far too long, Nigeria's boundless commercial vitality has flowed through a narrow corridor in the southwest, creating a bottleneck that has strained infrastructure, inflated logistics costs, and exposed the entire economy to avoidable risks. Today, however, the tide is turning.

A deliberate recalibration is underway, one that views the intricate waterways of the Niger Delta not as a puzzle to be solved but as a prize to be optimised. The revitalisation of the Warri and Koko Port Complex is not a regional intervention. It is a national renaissance, a bold economic gambit designed to strengthen Nigeria's trading backbone for the twenty-first century.

The logic behind this shift is unassailable. The chronic congestion at Apapa and Tin Can Island has long served as an invisible tax on commerce, slowing vessels, inflating freight costs, and dimming Nigeria's competitiveness.

By contrast, the Delta Ports stand as the obvious counterweight, strategically positioned to serve the South-South, Southeast, and North Central regions with natural ease. The opening up of these ports represents a profound act of nation-building.

It shortens the distances goods must travel, decongests the Lagos metropole, and spreads the dividends of trade more equitably across the federation. It is a strategy rooted not in regionalism but in the intelligent design of national logistics.

At the centre of this realignment stands the Landlord Port Model, introduced in 2006 as part of Nigeria's maritime reform blueprint. It represents a marriage of public oversight and private dynamism.

The Nigerian Ports Authority retains its regulatory and infrastructure leadership, while concessionaires such as Associated Maritime Services and Integrated Logistic Services bring capital, innovation, and efficiency to operations. It is a pragmatic alliance that channels private energy into public purpose, ensuring that every berth, every quay, and every dockyard hums with productivity and promise.

This vision, long in conception, is now being implemented with remarkable precision under the NPA's executive management. The mission is unmistakably clear: to tear down both the physical and perceptual barriers that once relegated the Delta Ports to the margins.

The dredging of the Escravos Channel has restored navigational depth and confidence. The construction of the Escravos and Ramos Signal Stations has introduced modern vessel traffic management systems that rival any in the subregion. The acquisition of the marine security vessel SPB Likoro has added a visible, reassuring layer of protection for shipowners and insurers alike. Step by step, the NPA is converting scepticism into certainty.

Perhaps nowhere is this renaissance more vividly illustrated than at Koko Port. Once conceived for agro-allied exports, its operations under Creekshore Jetty & Terminal Limited have shown that it can handle diverse cargoes with agility.

Yet, the true promise of Koko lies in the future. With a natural harbour depth of about nine metres, it possesses the innate capacity to anchor larger vessels and handle complex shipments.

Its strategic location makes it the perfect coordination point for traffic bound for the bustling private jetties of Koko, Sapele, and Oghara, which are already pivotal in liquid bulk operations.

The planned full rehabilitation of Koko Port is not just a refurbishment exercise; it is the awakening of a sleeping economic giant.

Empirical evidence of renewal is already emerging from the waters. Operational statistics from the first three quarters of 2025 paint a picture of transformation. An average of forty-five ships handled monthly, with a turnaround time of 2.89 days and a waiting time of just 1.99 days, signals growing efficiency.

The Delta Ports have handled 293,013 metric tonnes of cargo, contributing 10.7 per cent to the nation's trade volume. These numbers are not dry abstractions. They are the heartbeat of a maritime ecosystem rediscovering its rhythm after years of underutilisation.

Looking ahead, the path to enduring success has been charted with clarity. The reconstruction of the collapsed breakwaters will reduce siltation and deepen navigational confidence.

The institutionalisation of a Channel Management Company will guarantee that maintenance dredging becomes a continuous rather than occasional affair. The planned installation of Aids to Navigation and full illumination of the port premises will anchor a new era of twenty-four hour readiness and operational safety.

Nigeria's maritime future, without a doubt, is being written in the Delta's renewed tides.

The transformation of Warri and Koko is not a peripheral development; it is a cornerstone of national strategy. Each dredged channel and reconstructed quay is an act of faith in Nigeria's capacity to rise to global standards, to move from rhetoric to results, and to transform geography into opportunity.

In truth, what is unfolding here is far greater than an infrastructure upgrade. It is the deliberate forging of an industrial ecosystem where ports become engines of employment, training, and entrepreneurship. A revitalised Delta Ports complex will stimulate the blue economy, support fisheries and aquaculture, attract tourism, and power ancillary logistics services. It is an investment that multiplies itself across generations.

Perhaps the most understated yet profound benefit lies in the regional balance it restores. For decades, maritime commerce has been an uneven story told through the ports of Lagos. Now, Warri and Koko are scripting a new chapter, one where opportunity flows eastward and northward, weaving a more inclusive map of national prosperity. This is how Nigeria builds not just ports but equity.

Steady collaboration remains the golden thread binding this vision together. The NPA's engagement with traditional rulers, local communities, and workers' unions has replaced historical friction with shared purpose. Harmony has become the quiet infrastructure underpinning physical progress. When community leaders see the port as a partner, the cranes rise without disruption.

Institutional confidence is also being rebuilt. Through transparency, data-driven decision making, and adherence to international best practices, the NPA has repositioned itself as both a maritime authority and a development catalyst. Investors now see the Delta Ports not as a high-risk endeavour but as a guaranteed growth corridor.

Resilience is the new currency of Nigeria's port system. With every dredged metre, every illuminated quay, and every trained pilot, the nation is fortifying its logistics architecture against future disruptions. Warri and Koko are no longer fallback options; they are front-runners in a diversified maritime network.

Clearly, what may be regarded as the Atlantic gambit has succeeded in turning geography into strategy. By transforming the Delta's waterways into corridors of confidence and commerce, Nigeria is not just decongesting Lagos; it is decentralising opportunity. It is building a maritime nation in the truest sense, one where every shoreline counts, every community participates, and every ship that sails tells a story of renewal, resilience, and national pride.

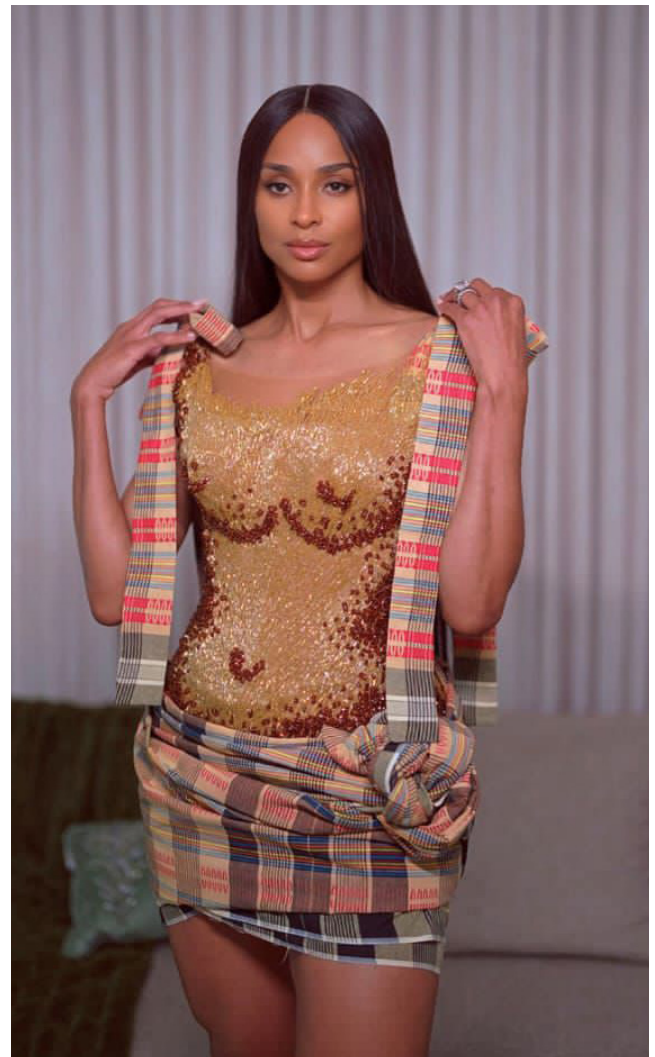
Joshua Ebitimi is a Port Harcourt-based lawyer

TUBO DRESSES CIARA IN A TRIBUTE TO AFRICAN WOMANHOOD: A COUTURE CONVERSATION BETWEEN HERITAGE AND MODERNITY

ESTHER EMOEKPERE



Her latest global moment, dressing international superstar Ciara, wasn't a typical celebrity styling coup. It was a cultural dialogue, a meeting point between African heritage and global couture, yet another opportunity to tell that story to a worldwide audience.



For TUBO, fashion has never been just about the clothes; it's about storytelling, identity, and the unapologetic power of women owning their space. At the heart of her brand lies a mission: to tell African stories through fashion, weaving culture, modernity, and individuality into every design.



The look, inspired by the Iria ceremony, an Ijaw rite of passage celebrating a woman's strength and becoming, was more than fashion. It was Tubo's ode to home, a visual love letter to the essence of womanhood. During the Iria ceremony, the maidens typically came out bare-breasted and tattooed in oils, a symbol the designer reimagined through intensive beadwork to recreate the impression of a woman's form.

Every stitch held meaning: the structured bodice echoed resilience, the crystal tones whispered tradition, and the fluid silhouette captured the confidence and sensuality that define the Tubo woman.

Fashion, in its truest form, becomes a bridge where the diversities of our culture find unity and harmony. At first glance, this look bears resemblance to the beaded elegance of Igbo maidens from Eastern Nigeria,

revealing how different traditions can mirror one another.

Through design, Tubo reminds us that while our cultural stories are distinct, they often share the same rhythm of grace, identity, and womanhood.

Speaking on the inspiration behind the design, Tubo's founder and creative director, Sandrah Tubobereni, shared: "Designing for Ciara was simply Divine Alignment.

"The Iria ceremony represents womanhood, identity, and pride, values that sit at the heart of TUBO. I wanted the world to see that our stories, when told authentically, carry the same power and elegance as any couture tradition. That our culture can be couture and our heritage haute!"

From bridal couture to international red carpets, TUBO continues to redefine what it means to wear African luxury, a seamless blend of tradition, innovation, and feminine strength.

The TUBO x Ciara moment is a reminder that when African designers tell their stories through fashion, the world listens and remembers.

Founded by Sandrah Tubobereni, TUBO is a contemporary African fashion brand renowned for its modern take on traditional craftsmanship.

Known for creating timeless, form-sculpting pieces that celebrate the female silhouette, TUBO has reimagined bridal couture and ready-to-wear for the confident, global woman. With designs that merge cultural heritage and contemporary elegance, the brand continues to shape conversations around African luxury and womanhood on the world stage.

TIMELESS ELEGANCE: PATRICIA ONUMONU'S 18-YEAR JOURNEY WITH TRISH O COUTURE

IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA





From humble beginnings as a bespoke atelier, Trish O Couture has evolved into one of Nigeria's leading luxury brands, admired for its ability to blend African heritage with contemporary sophistication. Over the years, the label has dressed some of Africa's most stylish women, redefining couture with exquisite detailing, flawless tailoring, and timeless femininity.

Reflecting on her 18-year journey, Patricia Onumonu, Founder and Creative Head of Trish O Couture says 18 years represents more than time, it's a testament to resilience, craftsmanship, and passion. Every Trish O piece tells a story of the African woman, her grace, power, and spirit.

After nearly two decades in the fashion industry, Patricia Onumonu, remains one of Nigeria's most celebrated designers — a name synonymous with luxury, femininity, and timeless style.

From her early days beading fabrics as a child to building a globally recognized couture house, her story is one of passion, persistence, and purpose. As Trish O Couture marks its 18th anniversary, she reflects on her journey, the evolution of African luxury, and what lies ahead.

Congratulations on 18 years of Trish O Couture! How did your journey into fashion begin, and what inspired you to start your label?

Thank you so much. My love for fashion began quite early. I grew up around my mother, who was very crafty and loved working with fabrics, so I picked up beading and hand-sewing as a child. Later, my experience as a model and in beauty pageants exposed me to the creative process behind fashion. That was when I knew I wanted to tell stories about women through clothes — that passion eventually became Trish O Couture.

You originally studied and worked in a different field before venturing fully into fashion. How did that shape your approach to design and business?

Yes, I studied Philosophy at the University of Lagos. It might sound unrelated, but it shaped my analytical thinking and taught me discipline. It helped me build structure into my creativity and balance the artistic and business sides of fashion.

What were some of the biggest challenges you faced starting out?

In the beginning, it was about visibility, building a trustworthy team, and finding the right clients. I had to prove myself through quality and consistency.

Gradually, word spread, and the brand began to grow organically through satisfied clients and referrals.

How has Trish O Couture evolved over 18 years?

The brand has matured beautifully. We started out creating very dramatic, fairy-tale pieces, and over time evolved into a refined luxury brand that blends structure with elegance. Our clientele has expanded globally, and we've diversified — from couture fashion to luxury interiors — creating a full lifestyle experience.

Your designs are known for their blend of luxury, femininity, and cultural elegance. What is your creative process like?

My process always begins with the woman I'm designing for — her mood, her strength, her story. I start with sketches, choose fabrics and embellishments, and work closely with my team in the atelier. Every detail matters, from construction to finishing. It's a labour of love.



How has the Nigerian fashion industry changed since you began?

The growth has been phenomenal. There's more global visibility, better production standards, and more recognition for African designers. I'm especially excited about how we're redefining luxury through our heritage — that's powerful.

What does being an African luxury brand mean to you today?

It means authenticity and excellence. For me, it's about creating world-class pieces while celebrating our culture and craftsmanship. African luxury tells our story in the most elegant way.

You've showcased internationally and dressed women around the world. Which milestones stand out most?

Every milestone is special — from our flagship opening to international showcases and seeing global celebrities in my designs. But the most fulfilling moments are when women tell me they feel powerful in my pieces. That's priceless.

How do you balance creativity with running a business?

Discipline and delegation. I've learned to build a strong team that handles operations, so I can focus on creativity and client relations. It's about structure and time management.

Family often plays a role in a designer's success. How has yours supported you?

My family is my backbone. My mother influenced my early interest in fashion, and my family's encouragement has been my strength throughout this journey. They've stood by me through every challenge.

The theme of your 18th-anniversary celebration — "Classics Across All Seasons" — is intriguing. What does it represent?

It reflects the essence of Trish O Couture — timelessness. I believe true style transcends trends and seasons. The theme celebrates our journey and commitment to creating pieces that never go out of fashion.

After nearly two decades, how do you stay inspired?

Travel inspires me a lot, as do fabrics, architecture, and even conversations. I love exploring new techniques and reimagining traditional craftsmanship. Inspiration is everywhere if you stay curious.

What does your lifestyle look like outside the atelier?

It's a mix of business and calm. I spend a lot of time with my family and carve out moments to rest, read, or reflect. Fashion is demanding, so balance is very important.

Sustainability is a big global conversation. How does Trish O Couture embrace that?

For us, sustainability is about quality and longevity. We make couture pieces meant to last — not trends. We're also conscious about minimizing waste and sourcing responsibly. True luxury should stand the test of time.

What advice would you give emerging African designers hoping to build sustainable brands?

Be patient, consistent, and authentic. Learn every aspect of your craft and your business. Never compromise on quality — it's what builds your reputation.

As you celebrate 18 years, what's next for Trish O Couture?

We're looking at expanding globally, collaborating with more artisans, and creating signature wardrobe classics that define African luxury. My dream is for Trish O Couture to be a legacy brand that outlives me.

Your personal style always exudes confidence and elegance. How would you describe it?

Feminine, structured, and timeless. I love silhouettes that celebrate the body but remain classy. On the red carpet I go bold; off it, I keep things chic and simple.

When you're not designing, how do you unwind?

I love quiet holidays, spending time with family, or exploring places rich in culture and design. I find rest and inspiration in equal measure.

Do you have favourite fashion cities that inspire your creativity?

Definitely Lagos for its energy, Paris for elegance, and Milan for craftsmanship. Each city feeds a different part of my creative soul.

And finally, what's the best advice you've received in your career?

Focus on quality and consistency. Trends will come and go, but excellence will always stand out. That advice has guided me through every phase of this journey.

What inspired the launch of your new jewellery line, Lady Trish Diamonds?

Lady Trish Diamonds was born out of my love for timeless luxury and the desire to create something personal and lasting. Over the years, many of my clients would ask for accessories that complement our couture pieces, and I thought, why not create something elegant, authentic, and made with the same attention to detail as our fashion? This collection celebrates the modern woman, bold, confident, and effortlessly classy. Each piece is crafted to make her feel beautiful and empowered.

What makes Lady Trish Diamonds different from other jewellery lines?

It's a true extension of the Trish O Couture brand, rooted in quality, craftsmanship, and emotion. Every piece tells a story. We use fine materials and timeless designs that reflect African elegance with a global touch. It's not just jewellery; it's an experience of luxury, passion, and artistry.



ONALAJA FLAGSHIP STORE: A CELEBRATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE, CRAFTSMANSHIP, AND CONTEMPORARY ARTISTRY



Kanyinsola Onalaja, the visionary founder and creative director of the globally luxury fashion brand Onalaja, has launched her first flagship store in Victoria Island, Lagos.

The new space marks a defining moment in the brand's journey; a celebration of cultural heritage, craftsmanship, and the emotional connection between fashion, art, and memory.

Rooted in her Yoruba and Edo heritage, Onalaja's designs reinterpret traditional African craftsmanship through a contemporary lens.

Each piece is intricately hand-beaded, merging symbolism, storytelling, and artistry to reflect the designer's belief that fashion is not merely worn — it is felt, remembered, and inherited.



“I have always seen fashion as a way to preserve memory; an exploration of where we come from, what we feel, and the legacies we leave behind,” said Kanyinsola Onalaja, Founder and Creative Director of Onalaja.

“Every collection I create is deeply personal. It’s about preserving our stories, celebrating womanhood, and passing something timeless to the next generation.”

Onalaja designs for women who build legacies, own their narratives, and dress for defining moments. Her creations, distinguished by sculptural silhouettes, meticulous craftsmanship, and rich textures, have been

worn by global icons including Tiwa Savage, Ciara, Jennifer Hudson, Kelly Rowland, and more.

At the core of the brand is a deep commitment to diversity and inclusivity.

Onalaja designs for women of all backgrounds and body types, weaving artistry and symbolism into pieces that honor the many forms of womanhood.

Since its inception, Onalaja has evolved from a personal vision into one of Africa’s most distinctive voices in luxury fashion. With the opening of her flagship store in Lagos, the brand continues its expansion to a global audience, attracting fashion curators, collectors, and international clients while staying true to its heritage and artistic integrity.

Designed by Dara Simon-Hart of Cre8 agency, the Onalaja flagship store represents more than a physical space; it is an ode to African luxury where tradition meets innovation, and every bead tells a story of identity, craftsmanship, and pride.

Onalaja is a contemporary African luxury fashion brand founded by Kanyinsola Onalaja, a Nigerian designer celebrated for her fusion of cultural heritage, craftsmanship, and global artistry.

The brand explores fashion as a form of storytelling, blending traditional hand-beading, intricate textiles, and sculptural silhouettes to create pieces that are deeply rooted in identity yet globally resonant.

Onalaja has been featured on global platforms and worn by international icons, positioning it as one of Africa’s leading voices in the redefinition of modern luxury.

NIGERIA'S CYBERSECURITY FUTURE: EDUCATING THE NEXT GENERATION



In observance of Cybersecurity Awareness Month in October, Olamide Thompson-Odeneye, the Convener of The Parent and Child Online Safety Network, spearheaded a significant initiative to bolster digital safety awareness among students, educators, and parents across Southwestern Nigeria.

What began as a focused poster awareness drive in selected public and private schools in Lagos State expanded to include schools across Oyo State, with distributions made in Ibadan.

The core of the initiative involved providing schools with readily designed posters featuring simple yet critical online safety messages.

Thompson-Odeneye stated that the campaign serves as an essential, continuous reminder to students, teachers, and parents about safe digital practices.

The objectives driving the network's efforts are multi-faceted; to significantly raise online safety awareness among primary and secondary school students and to equip schools with ongoing educational resources.

Others are critically to educate teachers and parents, enabling them to actively discuss safe online behaviour with children.

Furthermore, the campaign actively promotes the broader efforts of the Lagos State government, specifically highlighting the Safe Schools Lagos initiative in its mission to safeguard children online.

The distributed materials were anchored on best practices, utilising simple rules like the SMART rules for online safety.

Schools received several posters featuring different messages for prominent display in classrooms, hallways, and other high-traffic public areas.

The campaign's core messages focused on crucial areas of digital citizenship, including cyberbullying prevention, fostering safe online interactions, emphasizing password protection, and promoting the importance of reporting suspicious activity.

In a significant move to enhance resource accessibility, The Parent and Child Online Safety Network partnered with the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), the national custodian for online protection.

This partnership allowed the network to distribute digital resources provided by the NCC in the form of QR codes.

When scanned, these codes direct children, teachers, and parents to targeted safety information, ensuring the nationwide safety message is effectively spread.

The campaign was officially launched on October 10th, Global Encryption Day, at an event attended by representatives from about 13 public schools, each receiving an initial set of materials.

In total, the physical distribution reached approximately 50 schools, bolstered by a digital outreach that shared resources with an additional 30-plus schools online.

Thompson-Odeneye stressed that online safety is a shared responsibility.

The initiative's target audience is comprehensive: primary and secondary students as the primary recipients, teachers and administrators as essential facilitators, and parents/guardians as secondary beneficiaries who help reinforce safety lessons at home.

"Everybody is fully involved because online safety is really is a shared responsibility and all of us should be involved in it," Thompson-Odeneye emphasized.

The Parent and Child Online Safety Network itself is composed of a dedicated group of professionals, educators, and concerned parents volunteering to push cybersecurity awareness and equip children, teachers, and parents with the necessary skills to navigate the digital world securely.

NINE WAYS TO BUILD CREDIBILITY ON LINKEDIN FAST

CHISOM MICHAEL



LinkedIn is emerging as a platform where professionals build credibility through consistent, intentional engagement.

While most users remain passive, a small group leverages newsletters, strategic connections, direct relationship-building and original content to attract clients and grow their businesses. Experts say steady action, optimized profiles and clear storytelling drive measurable LinkedIn success.

According to Forbes, here are the nine steps that outline how users can strengthen trust on the platform and expand their reach.

1. Start a Newsletter That Converts

A LinkedIn newsletter gives visibility beyond normal posts. When someone follows you, they receive an invite to subscribe. If they have email notifications enabled, every issue appears in their inbox even though you do not hold their email address.

Pick one clear topic you understand deeply. Share weekly insights that teach your audience what they need to know. Keep every issue practical so readers can apply the ideas at once. Over time, more people discover your work and subscribe.

2. Build Real Relationships in DMs

Automated messages do not build trust. Genuine conversations do. Start discussions with people who engage with your posts. Thank them for their comments. Ask about their work. Share helpful resources when relevant.

Move a productive comment thread into a private message. Over weeks and months, these exchanges can lead to wider networks, projects, or sales.

3. Accept Strategic Connections

Your first-degree connections see your posts more often than others.

This improves the chance that the right people will notice your work. Accepting everyone, however, reduces relevance and weakens engagement.

Focus on individuals who match your target audience, potential clients, or future partners. Send personal connection requests that explain why you want to connect. Once they accept, follow up with a short message. Repeat this weekly.

Run searches for job titles and industries that matter to your sector. Build a network of people who value your content.

4. Create Original Content Only

Reposts do not build authority. Create posts that show your method, experience, and results. Use stories from your work. Explain how you help clients. Share lessons from your process.

Treat each post as proof of your knowledge. Avoid reposting external articles or random updates. Keep showing your own thinking and work.

5. Use Polls to Spark Discussion

Polls generate engagement and position you as someone who listens to the community. Ask one clear question your audience cares about. Offer four simple options. Encourage comments and guide the conversation.

Leave the poll open for a week. Share the results in a new post. Use the data to shape future content and attract new followers.

6. Post at Peak Times

Strong posts are most effective when people can see them. Test posting times to find when your audience is active. Many users see

results around 10am or 2pm in their time zone, but this varies.

If you post twice in a day, leave at least four hours between posts. Stay online for about 30 minutes after posting to respond to early comments and keep the momentum.

7. Optimise Your Profile Keywords

Your profile functions like a landing page. When people see your posts, they often visit your profile to confirm who you are and what you do. Use relevant keywords in your headline, summary, and experience.

Match your keywords with the terms your ideal clients type in search. Avoid jargon. Use the language your audience uses. Make it clear who you help and why.

8. Tell Powerful Stories

Facts and tips inform people, but stories stay with them. Share moments that shaped your experience. Talk about challenges you have faced and what you learnt from them. Let the audience recognise their own journey in yours.

Include specific details so the story feels real. Give people a reason to believe they can move forward with knowledge, support, or hope.

9. Track What Works

Not every post will perform well. Study what gains attention and what does not. Look at posts with low engagement to understand what to adjust. Try new hooks, clearer points, or different formats.

Observe which topics spark comments. Watch when followers increase. Keep using what works and refine it over time. Consistency builds credibility more than one viral post.

ELEVEN AI TOOLS FREELANCERS ARE USING IN 2025

CHISOM MICHAEL



As freelancing becomes increasingly competitive, many independent professionals are turning to AI-driven platforms to streamline their processes, improve productivity, and deliver higher-quality work. But with thousands of digital tools promising to be “game-changers,” the sheer volume of options often leads to confusion, distraction, and an overwhelming sense of FOMO.

In 2025, freelancers continue to rely on tools that simplify workflows, support content creation, enhance communication, and strengthen data-driven decision-making. A new generation of AI platforms is rising to meet these needs, helping independent workers focus on client value rather than repetitive tasks.

Industry analysts say these tools are especially useful for improving client communication, automating marketing, and sharpening audience targeting—three areas that determine how effectively freelancers scale their businesses. The curated list of top tools gaining traction this year includes Tweet Hunter for building social reach, Blackbox for coding assistance, aiCarousels for increasing engagement on LinkedIn and Instagram, Submagic for short-form video

editing, Chatsimple for chatbot creation, Typedream AI for website development, and Ossa AI for content production.

All eleven tools highlighted are highly rated on leading tech review platforms and fill essential gaps across email marketing, video creation, social media management, analytics, and workflow organisation. Beyond supporting personal productivity, many freelancers are using these tools to deliver faster, more polished services to clients. For instance, a social media manager can deploy aiCarousels to elevate client engagement while simultaneously improving their own brand presence.

Experts advise freelancers to adopt tools gradually rather than chasing every new release. With the right selections, AI can significantly reduce operational time, boost visibility, and increase earning potential throughout the year.

According Forbes, here are eleven AI tools freelancers are using in 2025

Tweet Hunter

Freelancers use Tweet Hunter to grow their reach on Twitter. The tool supports idea generation, post drafting and scheduling. Many freelancers rely on it to maintain consistent visibility and drive client interest through short written updates.

Blackbox

Blackbox is designed for faster coding. Developers and technical freelancers use it to produce cleaner scripts, reduce manual effort and streamline software-related tasks. It also helps non-technical freelancers who need simple code blocks for web pages or automation.

aiCarousels

aiCarousels supports the creation of LinkedIn and Instagram carousel posts. Freelancers use it to package insights, tips and short lessons into slide formats that improve engagement and reach. The tool enables consultants, creators and coaches to share thought-leadership content with minimal friction.

Submagic

Submagic assists freelancers who create short-form video content. Many use it for subtitles, pacing, transitions and exports that suit social platforms. It has become a common choice for creators working with reels, TikTok clips and short brand videos.

Chatsimple

Chatsimple offers chatbot creation tools for freelancers looking to improve client communication or support sales conversions. It is used across e-commerce, service-based businesses and personal portfolio sites where quick responses help close enquiries.

Typedream AI

Typedream AI is a website builder used by freelancers who want to launch or update personal sites without design or coding knowledge. It supports landing pages, portfolios and simple business websites.

Ossa AI

Ossa AI helps freelancers produce faceless short-form videos. It is used by freelancers who want to build content channels without appearing on camera. This includes creators in finance, tech, consulting and education.

Superhuman

Superhuman is used by freelancers who want faster email responses. It supports inbox organisation, reminders and follow-ups, helping freelancers manage client communication and project timelines.

Bardeen

Bardeen provides no-code automation through a Chrome extension. Freelancers use it to connect apps and automate routine tasks such as data transfer, social posting, lead capture and workflow updates.

Beehiiv

Beehiiv is widely used by freelancers building newsletters. It supports list growth, publishing schedules and audience analytics. Writers, marketers and industry experts use it to build communities and attract both clients and sponsors.

Julius

Julius is an AI data analyst. Freelancers use it to visualise information, clean datasets and prepare reports. It is also used by freelancers working in marketing, research, operations and finance who need clear summaries of client data.



LEAP AFRICA'S SIPA 2025: POSITIONING AFRICA AS GLOBAL SECTOR OF INNOVATION AND POSSIBILITY

LEAP Africa, a trailblazer in youth leadership and social innovation, has announced the 12th edition of its flagship Social Innovators Programme and Awards (SIPA), scheduled for November 25, 2025, at Four Points by Sheraton, Victoria Island, Lagos.

The 2025 convening, themed “Africa as THE Sector: Maximising Possibilities through Technology, Finance, and Policy,” will bring together over 200 innovators, policymakers, investors, and private sector partners from across the continent. SIPA 2025 aims to advance youth-led innovation, foster cross-sector collaboration, and position Africa as a global hub for sustainable development solutions.

The theme seeks to reimagine Africa not as an emerging market but as a sector of innovation, growth, and possibility. By exploring the intersections of technology, finance, and policy, SIPA 2025 will challenge stakeholders to accelerate systems change, unlock new pathways for inclusive prosperity, and amplify African ingenuity on the global stage. The convening will focus on driving tangible outcomes from investment in innovation ecosystems to stronger partnerships and policy influence that enable youth-led transformation.

Speaking on the significance of the theme, Kehinde Ayeni, Executive Director of LEAP Africa, noted, “Africa is not a peripheral player; it is the sector of opportunity, creativity, and transformation.

“At LEAP Africa, we are intentional about positioning young African innovators as architects of a redefined global order. More than a convening, SIPA is a movement that challenges us to believe that Africa’s ingenuity can and must set the agenda for the future.”

Since its inception in 2013, SIPA has brought stakeholders together on impact investing and moved the conversation from Hype to Impact.

“Therefore, SIPA 2025 promises an immersive experience, including a Pre-Conference Mixer connecting funders, innovators, and ecosystem leaders; a Partner Breakfast Dialogue designed to spark collaboration; and an Interactive Solution Lab focused on unlocking opportunities through technology, finance, and policy innovation.

This year’s conference will feature distinguished speakers, including Elhadji Malick SOUMARE, Deputy Chief of Party, Entrepreneuriat & Investissement, Senegal; Ms Naomi Emeka Nwokolo, Executive Director, UN Global Compact Network Nigeria; Ruby Igwe, Country Director, ALX Africa; Abimbola Ogundare, Chief Operating Officer, Deloitte Africa Consulting; and Karina Karunwi/Awa Daffe, Regional Head, ANDE West Africa and Francophone.

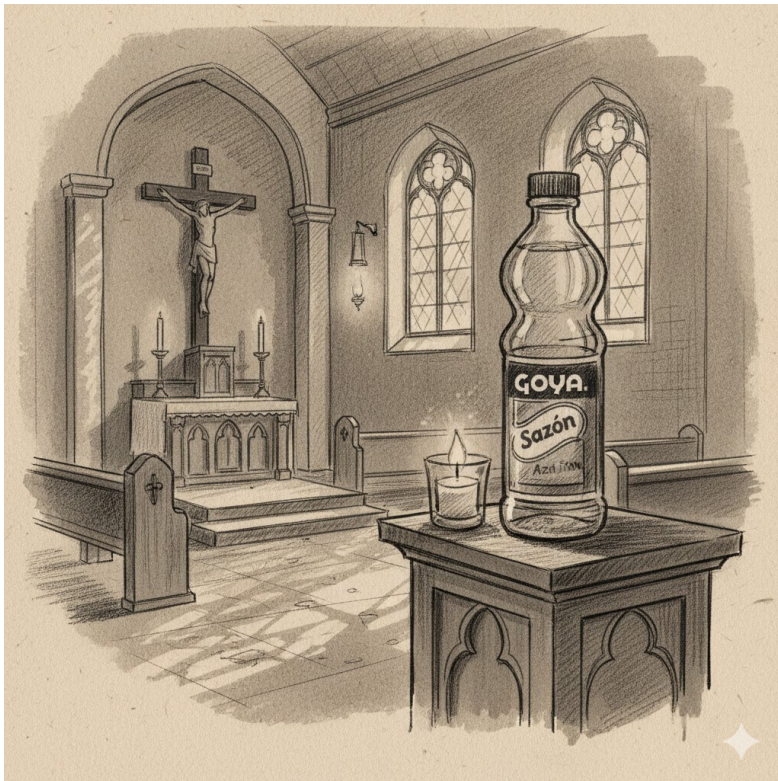
Over the past decade, SIPA convenings have served as a platform for collaboration, connecting young changemakers with mentors, investors, and enablers who continue to shape Africa’s innovation landscape. So far, the Social Innovators Programme has supported over 290 social innovators, transforming more than 4 million lives across 15 African countries and generating over \$6 million in funding and revenue.

The SIPA Awards Ceremony will close the convening by celebrating excellence through categories such as the Outstanding Innovator Award, the Social Impact Award, the Seyi Bickersteth Award, and the Innocent Chukwuma Prize.

LEAP Africa invites corporate organisations, development agencies, and government institutions to partner on SIPA 2025 by sponsoring the event, facilitating Solution Labs, and championing youth-led transformation across the continent.

HOW GOYA COOKING OIL TURNED TO A SPIRITUAL ICON AND TOOK OVER NIGERIA'S PRAYER ALTARS

CHIOMA ONUH



GOYA Olive Oil arrived in Nigeria as a premium imported cooking oil, built around a Spanish heritage and culinary roots. Over time the product silently entered an entirely different sphere, in Nigeria's churches today the blue and gold bottle is more than just a kitchen item, it is used widely as an anointing oil, part of spiritual rituals, not because the brand designed it that way, but because consumers shaped its role. According to a feature in Marketing Edge, GOYA didn't launch a campaign to be holy, it simply built trust through consistent appearance, standard packaging and perceived purity, and Nigerian congregations repurposed it into a symbol of faith and ritual.

The transition matters for business observers because it shows how a fast moving consumer goods brand can move beyond its original function to become a cultural artefact. The value drivers here are not just price or promotion, but cultural embedding

and emotional trust. GOYA's imported status and design coherence allowed it to gain traction in niches where trust is paramount, such as church altars, so Nigerian marketers and investors should note how symbolic positions may create new demand vectors.

On the regulatory front, the global owner, Goya Foods Incorporated, has pushed legal action to protect its trademark in Nigeria. In July 2024 the company sued the Registrar of Trademarks via the Federal High Court in Abuja, seeking enforcement of a 2006 consent judgement that assigned the GOYA Olive Oil mark exclusively to the company. The case points to underlying risks of brand import dependency, intellectual property exposure and grey market distribution, issues critical when a brand's value extends into non-traditional usage contexts.

From a market perspective GOYA's new role suggests multiple business implications. First, imported premium goods that gain symbolic meaning may command resilience in inflationary markets if the consumer perceives emotional or ritual value. For

instance one Nigerian retail site lists GOYA Extra Virgin Olive Oil, 500ml, at about N5,410. Second, the brand's move into ritual usage may alter consumption patterns, one bottle used in worship has very different turnover from one used daily for cooking. Third, local competitors may seek to replicate the ritual angle, reducing GOYA's uniqueness, meaning the brand must continue to protect its visual identity and premium status.

GOYA remains reliant on import logistics, foreign currency movements and distribution networks in Nigeria. Any disruption in those areas could affect availability or pricing. Also, as the product straddles food and faith contexts, regulatory scrutiny could increase around labelling or claims of anointing benefit. Investors and consumer goods strategists must monitor how the category evolves, especially if local manufacturing or substitution begins to emerge.

BEYOND STRIKES: ASUU'S PATH TO UNIVERSITY AUTONOMY

CHARLES OGWO



For decades, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has relied on strikes as its strongest tool in the struggle for improved funding and university autonomy.

For about 15 years the union has relied on strikes, yet, the system continues to face new realities, hence, the need to reevaluate strategies and actions as a union to ascertain whether industrial action alone can secure the lasting independence and reform it seeks.

Christopher Piwuna, the president of ASUU, recently queried the federal government's reluctance to give the public universities the autonomy they clamour for.

“Why is the government afraid of university autonomy, for 15 years the universities are fighting for autonomy?”

“In terms of salaries and conditions, we feel like we are living in the 17th or 18th century. Our salaries are insufficient, and public universities lack the endowments and infrastructure needed to grow,” he emphasised.

ASUU initially was after members' welfare, however, along the line, the union began to agitate for improved funding, quality education, national development and autonomy of universities.



Obviously, there is nothing wrong with that, however, many believe the ways and manners the union has been going about their agitations, could be the latent reason they are not getting the needed result.

Francis Egbokare, the immediate past president of the Nigerian Academy of Letters, emphasised in virtual conversation that the core of the problem in Nigeria's university system is leadership, particularly at the level of governing councils.

"In some cases, council members see their appointments as opportunities for personal gain rather than service. Matters that should be handled transparently are often influenced by vested interests.

"Across Nigerian universities, you can see evidence of this leadership failure in the physical environment, poorly designed and badly finished buildings that do not reflect modern standards," he said.

This observation cuts across the academics and the government officials, and unfortunately, at a time when the world is embracing sustainable construction and innovative design, Nigerian campuses are still filled with substandard structures despite huge government investments.

Hence, Egbokare insists that the country must examine how university leaders are selected. "ASUU has its role, but as academics, we must not speak from both sides of the mouth. We cannot condemn the system's problems while participating in the same practices that perpetuate them," he urged.

Joe Ajaero, NLC president, wondered if strike is enough for ASUU to achieve its objectives. "Beyond the issue of university autonomy, we must broaden the conversation. Is the Nigerian state truly approaching education the right way? Are we focusing only on universities while neglecting primary and secondary education? If we fail to get the foundation right, excellence at the tertiary level will remain impossible," he noted.

ASUU said it is fighting for the good of all Nigerians, but must the nanny mutilate the child she is hired to nurse, one would expect the union to embrace dialogue and not just strikes, to save the students.

However, Piwuna explained that the union is constrained with the government's insincerity.

"ASUU is ready for conversation with the federal



government to address the impasse, but the government has no sincerity coming to the dialogue table,” he stressed.

Worse still, the government is structurally killing the system by appointing university officials; and it is wrong for the university managers to fail to be transparent and accountable, especially over their internally generated revenue.

Like it is said, “Charity begins at home”, ASUU is expected to address its internal rots, such as allocation, and grants expenditure, among others.

Experts believe that if the universities can properly manage their resources and embrace collaborations with other institutions and organisations, the funding and development of the ivory towers would be much easier.

Piwuna, however, revealed that the union is handicapped in terms of collaborating with corporate organisations and individuals as it is evidence that billionaires fund private universities, and not public ones.

A closer look at the number of universities in Nigeria today, shows that private universities are more than federal and state universities combined.

Nigeria currently have 159 private universities as against 151 public ones, and the reason is not far-fetched, as every rich Nigerian ventures into education business.

To address this, the government must invest in tertiary education development, and treat ASUU as partners in progress.

Moreover, the government officials should stop seeing education through a capitalistic lens: ‘if it does not generate profit, it is not prioritised.’

ASUU and the university managements must begin to lead by example, the many duplication, redundancy, and underutilisation of capacity across campuses, all make the system inefficient and expensive to maintain, and the lecturers need address this.

Instead of strikes, may be ASUU should agitate that political office holders must have their children school in public universities. Such a bill would definitely change the perception of the policymakers towards tertiary education development and by extension ASUU yearnings.

ART AS INVESTMENT: WHY AFRICAN ART IS GAINING GLOBAL VALUE



African art is no longer a quiet conversation among collectors. It's a global dialogue that's gaining momentum, and fast. Across major auction houses, from Sotheby's to Christie's, works by African artists are setting record prices. Paintings that once sold for a few thousand dollars now fetch six-figure sums.

What's driving this shift? A growing recognition of Africa's creative power, cultural influence, and untold stories. Investors and collectors are beginning to see what many on the continent have always known — African art carries deep meaning, emotional truth, and long-term value.

In recent years, Africa's art market has expanded beyond borders. Major art fairs such as 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair and Art X Lagos are showcasing the continent's creative excellence to the world. These events attract not just art lovers but serious investors looking for the next great name. Many collectors view African art as both a financial and cultural investment — something that holds its value while preserving history.

In this digest, we will discuss why African art is gaining global value and why investors are turning their eyes — and wallets — toward the continent's thriving art scene.

This digest is brought to you by Patrons MCAA. Think African art, think Patrons. Patrons is Africa's leading art advisory and dealership firm with deep expertise in African art, helping private and corporate art collectors diversify their wealth through art collection, appraisal, packaging & transportation, storage, insurance, maintenance, and restoration. Purchase or general inquiry? Reach out: art@patronsmcaa.com.

TOP PICKS FROM OUR COLLECTION

Title: Self discovery
Artist: O'dare Adenuga
Medium: Relief Sculpture
Dimensions: 10 in H
Available on Request



Title: The Protest 2020 2
Artist: Alabi Oladimeji
Medium: Acrylic on textured canvas
Dimensions: 33 x 12.5 in | 84 x 32 cm
Available on Request



Title: Shadow
 Artist: Justine Gaga
 Medium: Posca and collage on canvas
 Dimensions: 8 x 11 in | 20 x 28 cm
 Available on Request

Cultural Appreciation Meets Smart Investment

Art investment isn't just about profit. It's about preservation. Buying African art supports local artists, galleries, and communities that are building a sustainable creative economy. The growth of digital platforms like Artsy and Africa First has made collecting easier, connecting global buyers directly to African creators.

Moreover, as more museums and institutions—such as the Zeitz MOCAA in Cape Town—highlight African talent, international exposure increases the long-term value of these works. This cultural visibility turns art into a form of legacy building, not just investment.

Why It Is More Than Just Money

Investing in African art isn't only about profit; it's about preserving culture. Each piece purchased helps sustain artists, galleries, and creative communities. It also helps build a global appreciation for African heritage that was long under-represented in mainstream spaces.

As more investors recognize the connection between culture and commerce, the African art market will continue to grow. And this growth benefits everyone, from artists in local studios to collectors building global portfolios.

The global art world is waking up to Africa's creative brilliance. The blend of cultural heritage, originality, and market momentum has turned African art into one of the most exciting investment opportunities of our time. For those looking beyond numbers—those who see value in story, soul, and history—African art isn't just an investment. It's a legacy.

Why Investors Are Paying Attention

Let's start with the numbers. According to ArtTactic's 2023 African Art Market Report, sales of modern and contemporary African art surpassed \$100 million, marking steady growth even amid global financial uncertainty. That's huge.

But it's not just about figures—it is about the stories behind them. African artists are redefining creativity by blending tradition with modern expression. From the vivid brushwork of Amoako Bofo to the layered cultural depth in Njideka Akunyili Crosby's paintings, these artists are shaping narratives that resonate far beyond the continent. Each piece carries history, identity, and resilience, things investors know can't be replicated or faked.

And when a work of art holds both emotional and historical value, it naturally attracts financial interest. That's why collectors from New York to Paris are now bidding on African works that were once overlooked.



Keturah Ovio is an Executive at Patrons Modern & Contemporary African Art. She is also an engineer and Founder of Dukka, a Fintech startup providing bookkeeping and payments solutions for small businesses. Keturah is passionate about African Art and has been collecting art since her early 20s. Now, she advises, curates, and manages collections for individuals and corporate organisations looking to start or diversify their wealth management through art collecting. She strongly believes that a fine marriage exists between Art and Technology

NINE FOOTBALLERS WITH THE MOST TROPHIES IN FOOTBALL HISTORY

ANTHONY NLEBEM

Football's global appeal is driven by drama, elite talent and, ultimately, the pursuit of silverware. While thousands of professionals dream of lifting major titles, only a select few amass trophy hauls that etch their names permanently into football folklore.

Below are the nine most decorated footballers of all time, ranked by total trophies won.

Lionel Messi – 46 Trophies

Widely regarded as one of the greatest players ever, Lionel Messi has collected trophies across club and international football. He won 34 titles with Barcelona, added three more at PSG, and crowned his career with the 2022 FIFA World Cup and multiple Copa América triumphs.

Trophies Won:

LaLiga: 10
Copa del Rey: 7
Champions League: 4
Ligue 1: 2
Copa América: 2
World Cup: 1
Olympic Gold: 1



Dani Alves – 43 Trophies

The most decorated defender in football history, Dani Alves, collected silverware in Brazil, Spain, Italy, and France. His trophy cabinet includes three Champions League titles and two Copa América crowns.

Trophies Won:

LaLiga: 6
Champions League: 3
Serie A: 1
Ligue 1: 2
Copa América: 2
Olympic Gold: 1

Hossam Hassan – 41 Trophies

Egypt's most decorated player and all-time top scorer, Hossam Hassan, dominated African football for decades. He won 14 Egyptian Premier League titles and three Africa Cup of Nations titles.

Trophies Won:

Egyptian Premier League: 14
Egypt Cup: 5
CAF Champions League: 1
AFCON: 3
Hossam Ashour – 39 Trophies
A one-club legend at Al-Ahly, Ashour spent 17 seasons sweeping up domestic and continental titles. He was central to the club's era of dominance.

Trophies Won:

Egyptian Premier League: 13
Egyptian Cup: 4
CAF Champions League: 6



Sergio Busquets – 37 Trophies

One of the greatest defensive midfielders ever, Busquets won 32 trophies with Barcelona and continued adding titles at Inter Miami. His intelligence and consistency defined a generation.

Trophies Won:

LaLiga: 9
Copa del Rey: 7
Champions League: 4
World Cup: 1
Euro: 1

Gerard Piqué – 37 Trophies

Piqué starred for Manchester United and Barcelona, winning every major title available. He remains one of Spain's most successful defenders.

Trophies Won:

LaLiga: 9
Champions League: 4
Premier League: 1
World Cup: 1
Euro: 1



Andrés Iniesta – 37 Trophies

The architect of Spain's golden era, Iniesta enjoyed 16 glittering years at Barcelona before extending his career in Japan and the UAE. His 2010 World Cup final winner remains iconic.

Trophies Won:

LaLiga: 9

Champions League: 4
Copa del Rey: 6
World Cup: 1
Euro: 2



Cristiano Ronaldo – 36 Trophies

A five-time Ballon d'Or winner and five-time Champions League champion, Ronaldo remains one of the game's most driven competitors. His trophy success spans England, Spain, Italy, and Portugal.

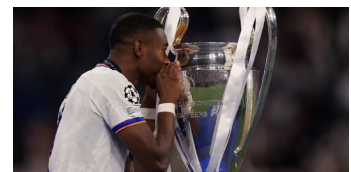


Trophies Won:

Premier League: 3
LaLiga: 2
Serie A: 2
Champions League: 5
European Championship: 1

David Alaba – 36 Trophies

The Austrian star won nearly everything with Bayern Munich before adding more titles at Real Madrid. Injury struggles aside, his trophy record remains extraordinary.



Trophies Won:

Bundesliga: 10
Champions League: 4
German Cup: 6
LaLiga: 2

MARRIED TO MY BEST FRIEND

UDY OSARO-EDOBOR



Kene and Ugo had been inseparable since childhood. He was ten, tall for his age with a quiet instinct to protect; she was eight, small and soft-spoken and was always teased, sometimes bullied by her peers. The day Kene stepped in to defend her, something unspoken began. It was a bond that would grow thicker and stronger over time.

They lived on the same street, shared lunch boxes and studied under the mango tree in Ugo's compound. She always saved him the last piece of meat in her lunch and he would carry her backpack whenever she was tired. Their parents used to joke that they were "joined at the hip" because wherever Kene went, Ugo wasn't far behind.

They played ten-ten, climbed trees, raced bicycles and argued about everything even things like who could whistle louder. In the evenings, they would sit side by side doing homework, swapping dreams about what they wanted to become.

When they both ended up in the same after school class, it felt natural for Kene to continue with his big brother role. He walked her home each day and sometimes they'd linger at the gate talking about everything and nothing.

Years passed. Life happened. They went to different universities. Distance crept in but not enough to break them, not enough to test what they had built. Every holiday was a reunion, every conversation flowed as if they had never missed a day. They laughed through late night calls, teased each other about failed relationships and stood by each other through heartbreaks.

Everyone around them saw it... the inevitability of what they both had going and it's eventual outcome. Friends, family, even strangers said it was only a matter of time. And they were right.

After university, when the noise of youth quieted and both of them had been humbled by life, after Kene had sown his wild oats and Ugo had suffered her own share of heartbreaks, fate decided that it was time to take what they had to another level. They were no longer the carefree kids under the mango tree. They were two grown ups who had found their way back to each other.

Their conversations had more depth... playful but mature and meaningful. Their glances held more meaning than words could explain. One evening, after a long walk, Kene held her hand. It wasn't planned. It wasn't dramatic. It just fit. It felt natural. It felt overdue, like destiny was only catching up.

Dating came naturally. There was no grand confession, no awkward beginning. It was as if they had been rehearsing for it their entire lives. Everyone around them rejoiced! "Finally!" they said.

And truly, it felt right. It felt like home.

When Kene proposed a year later, she didn't even need to think. The wedding was laughter and nostalgia wrapped in music and color. It was the perfect story of childhood friends turned lovers turned spouses. It was also the beginning of something they didn't see coming. Because somewhere between "best friends" and "husband and wife," something delicate shifted.

They discovered that marriage was not just friendship with a ring, it was a constant negotiation of two worlds. The ease that had once defined them became effort. Kene, ever structured, found Ugo's spontaneity exhausting. Ugo, once easygoing, began to see Kene's orderliness as control. The very traits that once made them inseparable became the cracks beneath their foundation.

Laughter turned into silence. Playful teasing became sensitive arguments. The home they were trying to build started to feel smaller, not because of space but because of unspoken words.

Ugo missed the Kene who used to listen, really listen, without trying to fix her.

Kene missed the Ugo who laughed easily and didn't need explanations for everything.

They tried... God knows they did. They went on dates, prayed together, sought counsel and kept up appearances. But friendship doesn't teach you how to navigate ego, pride and expectation. It doesn't prepare you for the quiet loneliness that can exist even in love.

By the eighth month, they both knew they were done. There was no fight, no dramatic ending, just silence over untouched dinner and two pairs of tired eyes that finally understood. Love hadn't left; it had simply changed form.

So they did the hardest, most mature thing two people could do... they let go.

No bitterness. No blame. Just gratitude for what had been and acceptance for what could no longer be. Their story wasn't tragic; it was human.

Sometimes, two people can love each other perfectly and still not fit. Sometimes, the person who once made your world whole is meant to remain a chapter, not the entire book.

Years later, when they met again... older, softer and healed, they smiled. No awkwardness, no regret. Just the quiet understanding of two souls who had once known each other completely but just couldn't be together.

Some loves are not meant to last a lifetime, they are meant to shape one.

And that was the gift of Kene and Ugo: a friendship that taught them love and a love that taught them release. They didn't end up together but they ended beautifully. And sometimes, that's enough.



Udy Osaro-Edobor

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Because Motherhood Doesn't Have to Be Hard -A
Review of Mariam Pedro-Tijani's Soft Mum Era

Title: Soft Mum Era
Author: Mariam Pedro-Tijani
Year of Publication: 2025
Number of Pages: 120
Category: Self Help

SOFT MUM ERA

TITILADE OYEMADE

It's only a woman who enjoys hardship that wouldn't be interested in reading *Soft Mum Era*. After all, who doesn't want to live a soft life?

From the title to the tone, Mariam Pedro-Tijani's book radiates calm, balance, and intention. It gently invites women especially mothers to embrace ease in their daily lives, and to do so without guilt. It's a message that can't be overemphasized, and yet the author wraps it beautifully in this comforting, relatable guide, a daily reminder that softness is strength too.

One look at her picture on the back cover and you'll see it, she embodies the "soft mum" she writes about. Her writing is simple, warm, and engaging, giving you that nudge to care for yourself long before the "I'm too tired" or "I'm too busy" excuses start creeping in.

If you're a mum, you'll find yourself nodding in agreement from the very first page. She gets it, every late night, every anxious thought, and every tender moment. Her insights are drawn straight from lived experience. And though she doesn't set out to alarm expectant mothers, her honesty about the realities of motherhood might just do that but in the best, most necessary way.

As always, she begins with her signature soft-mum tone, gentle and soothing. Then, just when you need it most, she shifts into motivation mode. Can you blame her? Her readers crave that encouragement. Before long, she eases back into her nurturing flow, finding that perfect balance between truth and tenderness.

What makes *Soft Mum Era* truly special is that Mariam doesn't present herself as a superwoman. She teaches, empathizes, and encourages with a genuine warmth that makes you feel seen. At times, it feels like you're chatting with a friend who's been there and just wants you to breathe.

Though centered on motherhood, *Soft Mum Era* reaches far beyond it. The book touches on love,

relationships, marriage, and parenting, making it a truly all-in-one read. It's also bursting with practical tips you'll want to revisit again and again. Don't even think about giving it away, this one belongs on your bookshelf for keeps.

By the time you turn the last page, you might find yourself feeling energized and inspired to do more beyond motherhood, lacing up your Converse, ready to chase dreams and achieve new things.

And while it's written with women in mind, *Soft Mum Era* is a valuable read for men too. It offers a rare, compassionate glimpse into the emotional and physical world their partners navigate daily. It bridges understanding and reminds everyone that motherhood isn't a solo act, it's a shared journey. Whether you're already a mum, hope to be one someday, or simply crave a softer, more intentional life, *Soft Mum Era* is a book every woman should own.



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WEEKENDER

MOVIE REVIEW

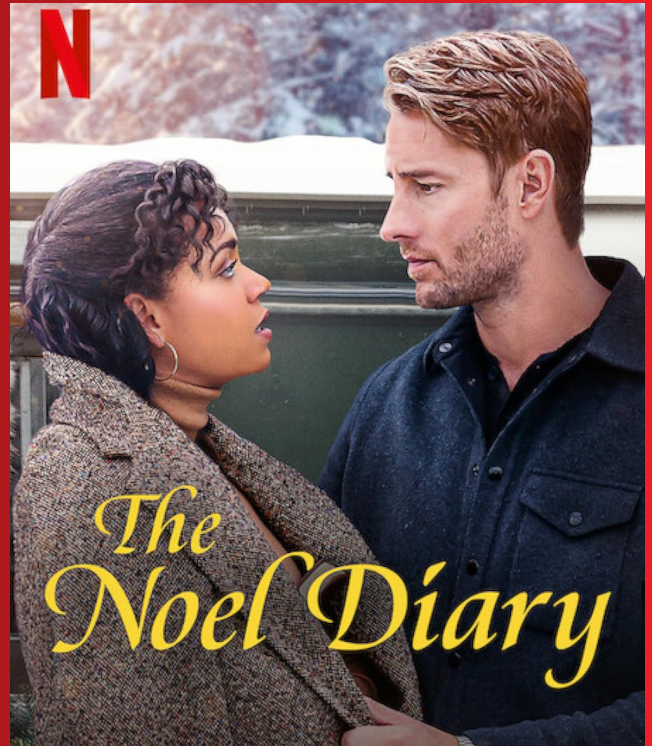
MANGO (2025)

Mango was a very simple and sweet movie something away from the numerous Christmas movie on Netflix. In this movie Laerke was a very successful and ambitious hotel manager, she was so good on the job that whenever there was any difficult situation Laerke was called upon to solve it. This time around Laerke must travel to Malaga immediately disrupting her holiday with her daughter; to appease her she decided to travel with her daughter, to go convince Alex who was a former lawyer to sell his mango plantation to her Real Estate company who wants to build a 5-Star hotel in that village. Paul is sentimentally attached to the farm as it holds loads of memory for him having lost most of his family members to a terrible fire outbreak some years back. Paul must protect the farm which is the major source of income for majority of the people in the neighborhood. You need to check out this movie to find out if Paul finally agreed to sell or not and how he was able to move on with life. The 96m Danish, drama, romance movie was directed by Mehdi Araz, they featured actors like Josephine Park, Dar Salim, Josephine Chavaris Hojbjerg, Sara Jimenez, Anders W Berthelsen, Paprika Steen, Sebastian Jessen, Lise Baastrup, Jacob Jergsholm etc.



THE NOEL DIARY (2022)

Welcome to my first Christmas movie This is yet another Christmas movie recently added on Netflix, it was just simple and nice with loads of flash backs. Joanna grew up with her dad after her mom passed, as she grew and finished school, she worked and moved out of their small town where she met the love of her life Chris, although they loved each other, they were not good at showing their affection. To progress in their relationship Chris decided to visit Joanna's family with his parents to spend the Christmas season with them. Chris must spend the entire day with Joanna's parents and enjoy the entire story of how they met, fell in love and built a strong home, despite all odds and the challenging situation, when they first met. Chris must put up with her parents as he waits for Joanna, who was stuck in the snow storm. The 84m drama, romance movie was directed by Jason Bourque, they featured actors like Nikki DeLoach, Warren Christie, Sydney Scotia, Gavin Angelo, Princess Davis, Lisa Durupt, Jon Collins, Cantriona Leger, Brittany Clough, Jee Costa, Timothy Wallace, Rhys Cowley and many more.



HAUL OUT THE HOLLY (2025)

It's the Christmas season again and you can't get tired of watching them because we are honestly just starting so seat back and buckle up because it's going to be a back-to-back ride of Christmas movies. Emily was the only child of her parents and they loved her so much. Emily just broke up with Dan her boyfriend for 3 years and to heal from the break up Emily decided to pack her bag leave their apartment and go spend Christmas with her parents, her neighbors and friends in the neighborhood where she grew up. On arrival Emily finds out from her parents that they were moving to Florida and she must take over the house and carry on with the HOA Christmas activities, what was supposed to be a very quiet Christmas for her became a very busy one. You must go check out the movie to see how she managed the neighbors, the Christmas activities in her parent's absence. The 84m Romantic comedy, films, Comedies romance movie was directed by Maclain Nelson, they featured actors like Lacey Chabert, Wes Brown, Melissa Peterman, Stephen Tobolowsky, Ellen Travolta, Peter Jacobson, Carrie Morgan, Eliza Hayesmaher etc.



WEEKEND QUOTES



1

When your prophetic word doesn't seem like it was answered. Wait, give thanks, don't complain. The difference may be timing and mode of delivery
.....WhispersbyTEN

3

Rise up, take a step forward.
Leave your past!
.....WhispersbyTEN

2

What you say when you feel your lowest matters, because you are still climbing
.....WhispersbyTEN

4

If you search for two inches heel and you can't find, don't abandon the search; go for three inches
.....WhispersbyTEN