
This comprehensive and beautifully-illustrated book is the first to document the new wave of African designers who are currently making a big impact on the fashion world. While Africa has been a source of anthropological visual inspiration in the past, it is just now that the continent is becoming known internationally as a hotspot for high fashion. Since the majority of fashion books and articles published have focused on European and American design, this book is an excellent introduction to contemporary African fashion which has not been given its proper due until now.

Jennings, a British journalist and the editor of ARISE, a magazine about African fashion and culture, first provides an introduction to the origins of African dress and beauty and how it has evolved. In the section “Generation Then” she discusses the contributions of the first generation of Africa’s recognized designers. She then traces how African fashion influenced that of European and American pioneers from the 1960s such as Yves Saint Laurent through more recent talents such as John Galliano. Jennings concludes with the “Generation Now” who are using trendy print magazines, social media, and Facebook to promote their collections and connect designers quickly to their customers and to each other.

The author profiles the most innovative designers, models, and street-style photographers from across the diverse continent, providing informative and interesting biographies, as well as full-color images of their work. Designers and brands featured include Duro Olowu, Black Coffee, Maki Oh, and Christie Brown.

Some of the designers profiled in this book aim to make traditional African textiles, patterns, and techniques refreshingly modern. Others make clothes that are not as obviously African, opting more for social commentary on practices such as scarification and adornment, and in doing so, are trying to avoid clichés of the African aesthetic. The combination of contemporary aesthetics with traditional African beauty and adornment makes this new movement of African fashion so fresh and unique today.

The book boasts an abundance of striking fashion photography throughout and a well-designed layout. This thoroughly-researched, insightful, and visually appealing book is highly recommended for all art and fashion collections.

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