

...NOT IN THISDAY STYLE? THEN YOU'RE NOT IN STYLE

THIS DAY

Style

SUNDAY, APRIL 13, 2025



AMINA MAINA IN
ODIO MIMONET

OJY OKPE IN
ILARE

NKIRU ANUMUDU
IN CHRISTOPHER
JOHN ROGERS

DEOLA BALI IN
LISA FOLAWIYO

EVBADE
OHIOWELE IN
EJIRO AMOS
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ADESOMO EDO
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COVER NOTE



If the 2025 ARISE Gala and Awards Ceremony was a tribute to 80 formidable women who are reshaping the world, then the red carpet was its glittering love letter to fashion—a runway of ambition, legacy, and unapologetic glamour. Set against the grand backdrop of the Eko Convention Center in Lagos, the night wasn't just about powerful speeches and lifetime achievements; it was a visual masterclass on how to dress like you run the world.



Society

AT THE SECOND EDITION OF THE +234 ART FAIR

The second edition of the +234 Art Fair has just wrapped up at the stunning Ecobank Pan African Centre (EPAC), and we're still basking in the afterglow of what was undeniably one of the most vibrant cultural events on Nigeria's creative calendar.

EDITOR'S LETTER



EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Killin' it

If we're being honest, the event is never really just about the event, is it? Especially when it comes to galas. The next best thing—if not the absolute best thing, depending on who you ask—is always the red carpet. The fashion. The drama. The glamour. The slay. And the ARISE Gala? Absolutely no exception.

Everywhere you turned, there was one stunning woman after the other. Sequins, sculpted silhouettes, sheer elegance, bold colours—name it, we saw it. Nigerian women showed up and showed out, and it was clear that everyone came prepared. You could feel the effort. You could see the thought. It wasn't just about putting on a pretty dress. No, it was about making a statement. About honouring the moment. About being part of the story.

And what's even more beautiful is that many did it Nigerian. Yes, we spotted pieces from international houses, but there was also a proud showing of Nigerian fashion.

So, for those of you who missed it, this week's edition is for you. We're spotlighting the biggest fashion trends from the ARISE Gala red carpet—not just because they were beautiful (they were), but because they said something - about how fashion remains a form of language and, most importantly, about how Nigerian women never play when it comes to looking good. Consider this edition yet another reminder.

Speaking of things that leave an impression, I need to talk about Baby Farm, the newest series from EbonyLife Studios, which is now streaming on Netflix. If you haven't watched it yet, please add it to your list immediately. Not just because it's compelling, brilliantly acted, and emotionally gripping but because it tells a story that needs to be told. A story that doesn't get nearly enough airtime. A story that feels uncomfortably close to the truth.

A few weeks ago, I happened to stumble upon a documentary covering similar real-life events. Chilling stories. Stories of exploitation, of desperation, of women and babies used as currency in an underground economy of pain. So, when Baby Farm dropped, it hit even harder. It might sound fictional, but trust me, it's not. It's one of those realities we all need to confront: how inequality, poverty, and gender-based violence often become tools of manipulation. How entire systems are built on the backs of women with nowhere to turn.

This series doesn't flinch. It doesn't soften the blow. And that's exactly why it matters. I think it's incredibly important that we use our platforms to tell stories like these—raw, impactful, and necessary. As a society, we can't fix what we don't face. So please, don't just take our word for it. Watch Baby Farm on Netflix. And for a deeper, thought-provoking take, do read our review in this issue: Baby Farm – A Bold Exploration of Society's Dark Corners.

Can we talk about how it feels like the year is sprinting? I mean, how are we already talking about the Easter holiday? It feels like January was last week. But I'm not mad at it. It's actually been a pretty good year so far—hope you feel the same.

With the Easter holiday just around the corner, I hope you find time to rest, reset, and reflect. Or even just eat some chocolate and take a nap—both are valid.

Sending you all the good vibes and wishing you a beautiful week ahead.

Love,
Konye

At the Second Edition of the +234 Art Fair

The second edition of the +234 Art Fair has just wrapped up at the stunning Ecobank Pan African Centre (EPAC), and we're still basking in the afterglow of what was undeniably one of the most vibrant cultural events on Nigeria's creative calendar.

Following the roaring success of its debut edition in 2024, the 2025 fair did not just return—it evolved. With an even bigger vision, bolder exhibitions, and a deeper commitment to the heart of the Nigerian art story, this year's theme, "Championing Patronage in Nigerian Art", resonated throughout every corner of the venue. The fair was a multi-day celebration of creativity, community, and the unrelenting spirit of Nigerian artists—especially the unrepresented and "un-galleried" talents who are often left out of mainstream exhibitions.

Curated by the Soto Gallery Foundation, in partnership with Ecobank Nigeria Limited, Africa Finance Corporation (AFC), and main sponsor Craneburg Construction Company, the +234 Art Fair created an inclusive space where art, ideas, and influence converged beautifully.

With free entry and a packed programme, the fair was designed to foster cultural access while giving emerging artists the platform they deserve.

This year, art patrons and collectors stepped into the light, offering their support and backing to young artists. Their presence sent a clear message: the business of art in Nigeria is growing, and it's being powered by a new wave of passionate supporters who believe in its potential as both a cultural and economic force.

One of the standout successes of this year's fair was its ability to draw a diverse crowd—Nigerians, Africans, international residents, diplomats, policymakers, and tourists alike mingled under one roof. For many, it was their first exposure to Nigerian contemporary art, and it left a lasting impression.



TOLA AKERELE (FOUNDER OF +234 ART FAIR AND SOTO GALLERY) AND RENI FOLAWIYO



OSAHON OKUNBO | EMMY KASBIT



OSADEBO ADEFULU AND YEMI OSINDERO



CHUKA OBI, NICOLE ASINUGO, TOYIN LAOSHE



OSA SEVEN AND FEMI EDUN



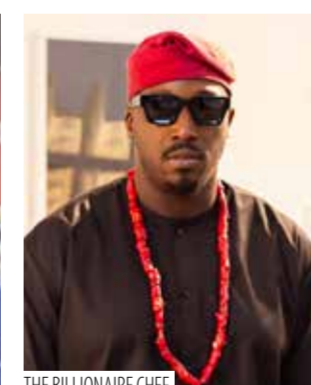
OLUFEMI OGUNTAMU



MALIK AFEGBUA



JOKE SILVA



THE BILLIONAIRE CHEF



ADDIE MAK



ANDERSON EDEWOR



L-R, JULIET OKON, TOLA AKERELE, FEGHO UMINUBO, OMOBOYE ODU



KIM OPRAH



RENI AND FARIDAH FOLAWIYO



UGONNA IBE AND CHIKA UWAZIE



DOLORES ODOGWU

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THIS DAY **Style**

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Glenfiddich Honors Bold Women With First-Ever "Celebration of Her" Brunch In Lagos

To close out Women's History Month, Glenfiddich Whisky paid tribute to the incredible women shaping industries, celebrating their achievements while embracing the evolving appreciation of whisky among female connoisseurs.

On, Saturday, March 28, the renowned and most awarded Single-malt whiskey brand hosted its first-ever "Celebration of Her" brunch at Knowhere Lagos, located in the heart of Victoria Island. The intimate event, designed to bring together influential women and emerging trailblazers, was co-hosted by the brand's female collaborators, Nancy Isime and Shaffy Bello.

This event was curated as part of Glenfiddich's ongoing commitment to pushing the boundaries of tradition and excellence through its #CelebrateTheBold campaign—an initiative dedicated to honoring those who challenge the status quo, break new ground, and drive meaningful change.

The brunch kicked off with Glenfiddich-infused cocktails, including the signature Lady Mariko, Whiskey Sour, and Old Fashioned, setting the tone for a relaxed yet elegant atmosphere. This vibe was further elevated by the stunning Olive Emodi, who moderated the event with grace, creating a safe space for meaningful conversations. To officially begin the day, Jovial Faith Jonah, PR Marketing Manager, Ledrop Nigeria delivered the opening speech, setting the stage for an empowering and inspiring event.

Glenfiddich collaborators Nancy Isime and Shaffy Bello further set the tone for the event by sharing their personal stories and journeys, inspiring the women in attendance to find their purpose, live fulfilling lives, and uplift other women in their communities.

The heart of the event was an engaging panel discussion led by Nancy Isime, Shaffy Bello, Jola Ayeye, Rewa Udoji, and Njidechukwukah Emu, who delved into how women are breaking barriers and redefining success in male-dominated industries. The discussion was themed, "The Bold and the Brave: Women Who Lead, Inspire, and Transform", and covered topics such as earning respect in the workforce, taking bold risks, embracing authenticity, navigating female friendships & leadership, and challenging societal norms



NANCY ISIME, NJIDECHUKWUKAH EMU, SHAFFY BELLO, JOLA AYEYE, REWA UDOJI AND OLIVE EMODI



VALERY BRAVE



MARYJANE OKOLIE



NJIDECHUKWUKAH EMU



MYAD OMILE



TIAMBI MILLS



GLENFIDDICH 21 YEAR OLD



GLENFIDDICH 15 YEAR OLD

SITUATIONSHIPS, SLOW DATING, AND SOFT GHOSTING: LOVE IN THE TIME OF DMS

In the not-so-distant past, dating was relatively straightforward—at least in theory. You liked someone, you asked them out, and you either became a couple, or you didn't. Today, that simplicity has been replaced by a kaleidoscope of blurry boundaries, emotionally confusing labels, and relationship statuses that can't quite fit into a Facebook dropdown.



In 2025, dating in Nigeria feels like entering an uncharted forest where everyone is using Google Maps, but no one has a network. The language has changed, the expectations have shifted, and navigating intimacy feels more like decoding an algorithm than forming a human connection.



It starts with a "Hey" in the DMs. Maybe on Instagram. Or X (formerly Twitter). Or perhaps, as is becoming more common these days, on WhatsApp thanks to a mutual friend who "just knew you two would get along." It's slow at first. Light likes. A few memes. One or two "just checking on you" messages at 11:49 p.m. The type of conversations that drip-feed hope into your chest like an IV drip. Then, before you know it, you're emotionally invested in someone you've never even defined anything with. Welcome to the labyrinth of modern romance—where everything is something, but nothing is exactly clear.

In 2025, dating in Nigeria feels like entering an uncharted forest where everyone is using Google Maps, but no one has a network. The language has changed, the expectations have shifted, and navigating intimacy feels more like decoding an algorithm than forming a human connection. "Are we dating?" "Are we vibing?" "Are we just friends that send each other voice notes at midnight and talk about our future kids?" These are the questions that fill our group chats now. What used to be clear is now murky. What used to be labelled is now left deliberately undefined.

Situationships have become the preferred way to fall in love without saying you're falling in love. They offer the thrill of emotional intimacy and the safety of zero commitment. You talk every day, maybe even meet each other's friends. You fight like lovers but apologise like strangers. You celebrate birthdays with personalised playlists and customised cakes, but no one dares ask, "So, what are we?" because we've all internalised one dangerous truth: asking for clarity might ruin the whole thing.

Blame it on trauma, or our collective fear of vulnerability, or perhaps the rise of hyper-independence disguised as self-awareness. But it's clear that dating now—especially for young Nigerians in cities like Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt—has become a careful performance of affection where no one wants to be caught caring too much.

Social media hasn't helped. If anything, it's made us all romantic hoarders. With endless access to new people, we've started treating relationships like tabs in a browser—always open, never fully loaded. The dating pool isn't even a pool anymore. It's an ocean of options, filtered through thirst traps, tweets about red flags, and weekend soft-life photoshoots. And somewhere between all this curated perfection, we've become emotionally unavailable... but still deeply lonely.

Slow dating is the rebellion, or at least that's what we tell ourselves. We romanticise taking it slow—emphasising "vibes first," convincing ourselves that ease is better than effort. So, we ghost our traumas by not defining anything. We tell ourselves, "Let's see how it goes," but we're secretly hoping the other person will be bold enough to bring up the talk we're too afraid to have. We play cool, pretending not to care, but then spiral when they post someone else on their story.

And then there's soft ghosting—the gentler, more passive-aggressive cousin of full-blown ghosting. It's when the replies slow down like a bad internet connec-

tion. They still view your stories. They still "lol" at your jokes. But suddenly your midnight chats turn into blue ticks. You rationalise it: "Maybe they're just busy," "Maybe they're going through something," "Maybe Mercury is in retrograde." But deep down, you know. The connection is fading. They're no longer emotionally available, but they haven't left either. And because they haven't left, you don't feel like you have the right to either.

We've all become experts in maintaining pseudo-relationships—just enough to feel something, but not enough to build anything. And it's exhausting. There's a quiet grief that comes with these types of entanglements. The kind where you mourn someone who never officially belonged to you. The kind where your heartbreak doesn't come with closure, only unanswered texts and an Instagram post that lets you know they've "moved on."

In truth, modern dating in Nigeria is reflective of a bigger cultural shift. Our generation has watched marriages crumble and seen long-term love fail. We've been taught that love is sacrifice, but we've also been warned not to lose ourselves. We're trying to find a new language for connection that doesn't cost us our mental health. And sometimes that means choosing "vibes" over vulnerability. But at what cost?

The rise of therapy culture has also made us more self-aware, but also more self-protective. We're afraid of messy love, even though the most beautiful things are born from chaos. We want our lovers to be emotionally intelligent, consistent, romantic, funny, rich, healed, and available—but only on our terms. We want the Instagrammable parts of love without the messy, confronting, vulnerable bits. We want to be seen, but not too deeply. We want to love, but without the risk.

Still, despite all of this, we crave connection. We're not as detached as we pretend to be. Behind every "I'm just going with the flow" is someone silently hoping for a good morning text that actually comes. Behind every "let's not label it" is someone secretly planning anniversary outfits in their head. We've mastered the art of casual affection, but we're still learning how to stay. How to choose. How to be chosen.

So maybe the real challenge of dating today isn't just finding someone—but finding the courage to say, "I like you, and I want this to be something." Maybe it's about learning that vulnerability isn't weakness. That commitment isn't a trap. That slow dating doesn't have to mean emotional stagnancy. That the only way to avoid soft ghosting is to be honest—even if it hurts. Especially if it hurts.

Until then, we'll keep decoding "wyd?" texts, reading meaning into emojis, and screenshotting conversations for our group chats. Love in the time of DMs may be complex, but if there's one thing we all still believe in—whether we admit it or not—it's that one day, maybe, hopefully, someone will finally text back: "Let's define this."

THE BIG W WITH MENA IMASEKHA



ON MINNA SALAMI AND CAN FEMINISM BE AFRICAN?

Earlier in February, whilst the world was gearing up for Valentine's Day and I was not, Minna Salami's second book, *Can Feminism Be African?* was released. Salami is a Nigerian-Finnish and Swedish feminist writer, penning the award winning MsAfropolitan blog. She is also an author; her first book, *Sensuous Knowledge*, which has been translated into multiple languages, is a collection of intellectually engaging and reflective essays exploring themes of sexism, racism, oppression and liberation. Salami is a poetic and intellectual speaker, combining witty and, at times, almost satirical storytelling with academic rigour. I sat down with her over a lovely but short call to delve as deep as we could into her new book.



MINNA SALAMI

Before we dive into the interview, I must confess I have only just started reading Salami's book. It is engaging in ways that I was not expecting. It is very hard to story tell with subjects that require academic research, but I have made several notes already, on the construct of Africa, the fallacy of written historical bias, and even a quote from our very own Orúnmìlà, the Yoruba deity of wisdom and knowledge. When I decided to interview Salami, I wanted to the article to be timely, to be somewhat aligned with the release of her new book. What I could not have foreseen was the accusation of sexual harassment made by Senator Akpoti against the Senate President, her then near-immediate dismissal by the Senate, and the ensuing public debate that has followed, throwing into public consciousness and examination of the nation's regard for women. The conversations surrounding this echo a phenomenon Salami describes in the interview: the love/hate dualism Africa has for its female leaders, and they touch on the obstacles women leaders face.

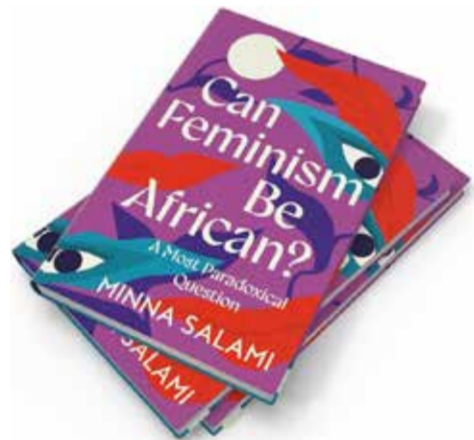
This interview has been edited and condensed for clarity.

Tell me a bit about yourself, in particular the work that you do?

I'm a professional feminist, meaning that everything that I do is connected to my feminist mission. I'm also the Research Chair and a Senior Fellow at The New Institute, which is a platform that gathers thinkers from around the world to collectively think about social change. And lastly, I'm a social critic.

What inspired your new book?

I wrote this book for three key reasons. Firstly, I have been writing a blog called MsAfropolitan, which is about African feminism, for 15 years, which is a long time



to be deep diving into a topic without writing a book about it. Then, I've had so many conversations around the topics on the platform with various people and I just really wanted to sit with those conversations and distil them into a book. A lot of people have asked to reference my work, and whilst they can always reference the blog, I thought it might be useful to have some of these ideas condensed into a book form. Finally, there's an absence of African feminist literature in the wider global context of feminism. In the past decade, an unprecedented amount of feminist literature has been published. While many of these have tackled the intersectionality of race, class, and sexuality, the African perspective is still largely missing, so I wrote this book to contribute these perspectives to the wider global conversations.

I love the title of your book. It's provocative, it's inquisitive and, as you say, paradoxical. What made you choose this title?

There is some sense that book titles are very mystical, at least to me. They just seem to arrive. I was playing around with the topics

I wanted to cover, and the title of the book dawned on me. I knew instantly why this was the title and what it meant to me. I'm a writer who seeks to stun people out of apathy and to get them to think and reflect. Here, I'm asking this question to get people to ponder, also, in a way, as if there's an already at the end. Why can't feminism be African already? As if to indicate or to ask why these perspectives aren't being included in the global narrative. In a second sense, the title also speaks to conservative traditionalist Africans, who have successfully pushed this narrative that feminism is not African. The title attempts to arrest their attention in what may seem like an initial compliance, which, as they read on, will not be found in the contents of the book. The last reason I chose this title is its paradoxical nature. I'm strongly drawn to paradoxes. Paradoxes are generative because there is no easy answer to them. With African feminism, we need to have that conversation because it is a space that holds a lot of tensions, contradictions, and paradoxes, and very often, we are looking for easy answers that just don't exist.

Can you share some of the key themes or arguments you explore in this book?

A key thread that runs through the book is the issues being raised by Africans. One is the exploitation of Africa; the second is the oppression of women by men, so patriarchy, whether from tradition, culture or religion; and lastly, what are the ways we come out of this space, so the question of selfhood, agency, and autonomy. These three themes are areas I see as central to African feminist political philosophy which is still nascent. There has been a lot of activism and writing of various related topics separately, but African feminist philosophy has not yet been consolidated, and this is what the book attempts to do.

So, how does one define feminism in the context of Africa? Do you think there is a difference between African feminism and the Western feminist narrative?

First, I must say that all feminisms have the same aim, that is, to eliminate patriarchy. African feminism differs because, by context, it is not dealing with the same issues as Western feminism. It must contend with colonialism, religion, class. It must contend with the fact that the African identity has been shaped

from the thresholds of masculinity.

I think when people imagine the difference, they imagine this idea of strong African women, this idea of our matriarchs and female queens and extrapolate that to say or believe that the oppression of women here has not happened in the same way as around the world, which is not true.

African feminism is more expansive because it looks at what affects us here, and those are a wide range of things: climate change, extractive, decolonisation and so on. These are topics that African feminists have been looking at and analysing for decades, which means that our political philosophy, in some sense, speaks more robustly to the times that we're living in.

Are there unique challenges that African women leaders face?

I do think that there are unique trials that African women face it comes to leadership. We are now generalising for the continent, but I have a sense this goes across quite broadly. I think we have a distinct culture where there is a strong regard for strong women. The idea of this strong woman is almost romanticised, which is not necessarily the case in other parts of the world. Simultaneously, the continent is very good at putting women in leadership down (we are seeing this happening right now), which is a paradox. On the other side of the romanticism, are obstacles these women face. There are degrading and derogatory narratives about women in high leadership positions. When women leaders make mistakes, they are punished in ways their counterparts would never be punished; in fact, their counterparts are often celebrated for their transgressions. Whilst I don't have an answer for why this is, I do think it important to point out this unique dualism of both an admiration and misogynistic hatred of women leaders.

• As I have not finished reading the book, you'll have to see it for yourself. I do hope that you will pick it up and read on as the issues that African feminism grapples and contends with are salient and critical to all. If the philosophy seems nebulous and far off, its concerns are very real and concrete. Case in point: the recent happenings in the Senate. Salami interweaves history, satire, and intellect whilst taking the reader on a journey in the hopes that by the end he/she will have discovered their own answer to the paradox, Can Feminism Be African?



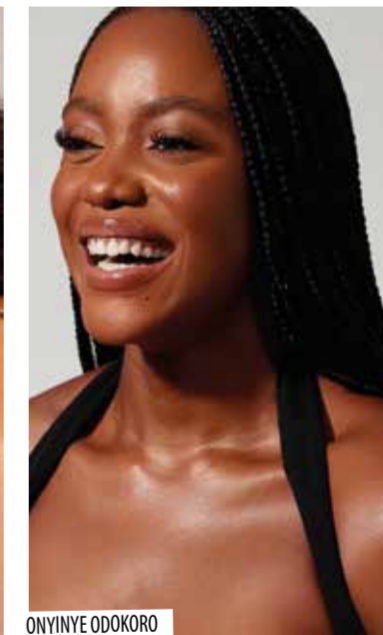
Baby Farm - A Bold Exploration of Society's Dark Corners

Baby Farm unravels the shocking tale of exploitation disguised as charity through a gripping narrative and a stellar cast, strongly led by Onyinye Odokoro.

By Bukola Amoboye



MO ABUDU



ONYI NYE ODOKORO



The Mo Abudu-led EbonyLife Films continues its streak of thought-provoking cinema with *Baby Farm*, their latest Netflix release that dives into the grim underbelly of baby farming. Following the immense success of their sex-trafficking exposé, *Oloture* (2019 and 2024), it's clear that their commitment to telling raw, impactful stories isn't a one-off. By spotlighting issues that are true, gravely underexplored, and harrowingly relevant to our society, EbonyLife Films is doing justice to narratives Nollywood often shies away from. At its heart, the movie follows the journey of a young woman (played by Onyinye Odokoro) who becomes pregnant and leaves her home in Abia State to search for her boyfriend in Lagos. Vulnerable and desperate, she is lured into a facility that promises care for her and adoption services for her unborn child. What initially appears to be a sanctuary quickly reveals itself as a sinister baby farm where women are trapped, systematically abused, and forced to bear children for adoption. Any sign of Rebellion or attempts to leave is met with brutal consequences, leaving the women hopelessly entangled in a cycle of exploitation.

Onyinye Odokoro, already recognized for her roles in *Princess on a Hill*, *Unwanted*, and *Dilemma* carries the emotional weight of this story with brilliance. Her performance in *Baby Farm* is gripping, capturing her character's journey from hope to despair and, finally, to a fierce determination to fight back. Odokoro draws the audience into her character's struggles, making us empathize with her pain and root for her as she fights for her freedom. Her portrayal solidifies her as one of Nollywood's finest talents, showcasing a growing mastery of her craft. Interestingly, beyond her acting, Odokoro is also a book enthusiast and runs a book club, 'Pages and Pals'. The movie intricately intertwines her story with that of a celebrity couple (played by Joseph Benjamin and Rita Dominic), desperate to adopt a child. Their pursuit leads them to the same facility, where they become entangled in its dark secrets. This parallel narrative adds depth, exploring how societal pressures and personal desperation can drive even the privileged into morally questionable choices. From a sociological perspective, *Baby Farm* raises critical questions about systemic failures and the exploitation of vulnerable women. It sheds light on chilling realities, including:

The commodification of human life under the pretense of care and charity, with the facility serving as a metaphor for how desperation and inequality are manipulated for profit.

The questionable operations of some foreign or locally-run charities and foundations, who evade scrutiny because of their powerful connections.

The societal neglect and lack of proper care for young women facing pregnancy with no hope or support.

Langley Kirkwood and Jenny Stead deliver standout performances, breaking the mould of Nollywood's often miscast foreign actors. Their characters feel authentic and integral to the story, adding depth rather than serving as superficial set pieces. Beyond its sociological commentary, *Baby Farm* critiques the flawed adoption process, the stigma surrounding teenage pregnancy and adoption, and the ethical dilemmas faced by those desperate to build families. It challenges viewers to question the current systems in place and the untold stories behind glossy facades. *Baby Farm* is a bold and necessary film. Onyinye Odokoro's stellar performance anchors the narrative with both heart and tenacity. By shedding light on the hidden horrors of baby farms, EbonyLife Films has sparked a much-needed conversation about societal vices and the neglect of the vulnerable. Here's hoping that more stories like *Baby Farm* continue to find their way to our screens.



TIA ADEOLA BRINGS IT HOME: A DECADE OF FASHION, ROOTED IN HERITAGE

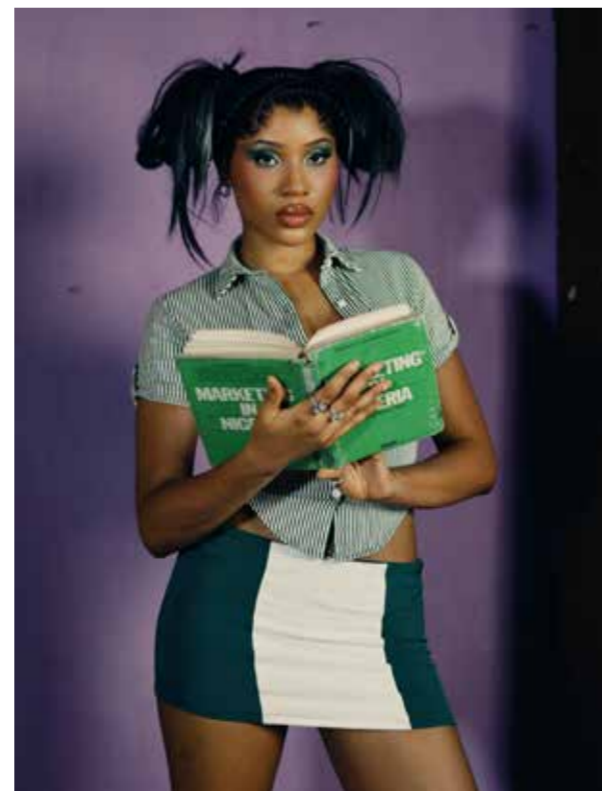
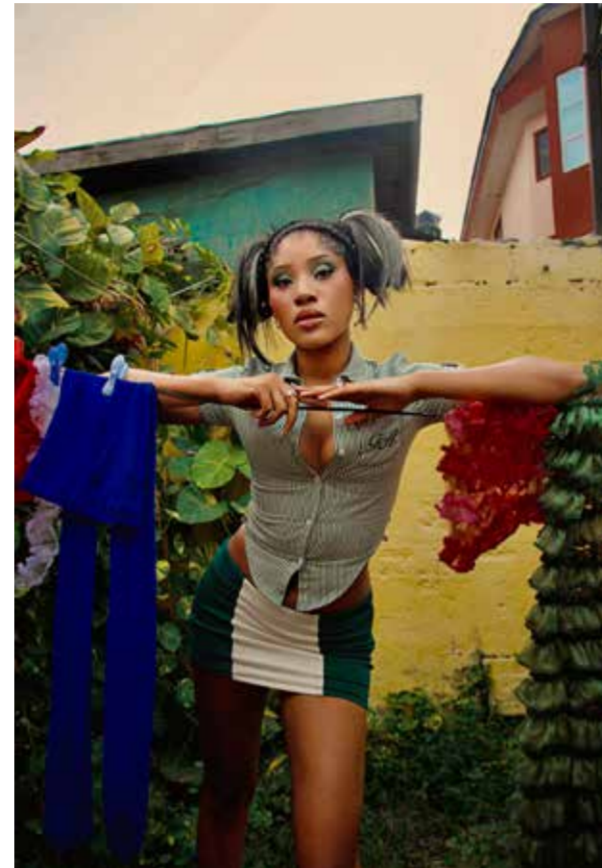
Ten years after launching her label with little more than a bold vision and a flair for the dramatic, Tia Adeola has come full circle. Her latest campaign, captured through the evocative lens of photographer Danielle Mbonu, is set entirely in Lagos — not just as a backdrop, but as a heartbeat. It's a celebration of return, reconnection, and rich influences that have quietly shaped Adeola's work from the beginning. It unfolds across familiar Lagosian landscapes — textured, sun-drenched, and full of character. The styling is unmistakably Adeola: models move through the spaces wearing pieces that echo both the past and the now. There are nods to tradition, yes, but everything is filtered through the lens of a designer who has grown sharper, more introspective, and even more daring with time.

Her signature spiral earrings — those bold, sculptural pieces now synonymous with the brand — make a strong return in this shoot.

This shoot is more than just a visual statement—it's a homecoming, says Tia Adeola. "Lagos has always lived in my work, in my approach to fashion and storytelling. Now, I get to fully embrace it in a way that is both deeply personal and creatively defining."

Over the past decade, Tia Adeola has carved a space that's hers alone — one where fashion converses with art, culture, and history. But this latest body of work feels different. It's less about looking out and more about looking inward. About allowing herself to be seen, fully, through the prism of her own heritage.

A decade in, Tia Adeola isn't just reflecting. She's redefining. And Lagos — layered, electric, and full of soul — is right there with her.



THE SURVIVORS

By Dr. Kemi DaSilva-Ibru



Dear Reader,

Welcome to the WARIF Survivor Stories Series, a monthly feature where stories of survivors of rape and sexual violence are shared to motivate and encourage survivors to speak their truth without the fear of judgment or stigmatisation and to educate the public on the sheer magnitude of this problem in our society. The Women at Risk International Foundation (WARIF) is a non-profit organisation set up in response to the extremely high incidence of rape, sexual violence, and human trafficking of young girls and women in our society. WARIF is tackling this issue holistically, covering health, education, and community service initiatives.

WARIF aids survivors of rape and sexual violence through the WARIF Centre — a haven where trained professionals are present full time, 6 days a week, including public holidays, to offer immediate medical care, forensic medical examinations, psycho-social counselling, and welfare services, which include shelter, legal aid, and vocational skills training. These services are provided FREE of charge to any survivor who walks into the Centre.

A 25-year-old Woman's Journey through Pain and Resilience

I live with my mother, a widow, and my siblings. After my mom and I reported a case of sexual abuse to the police, I came to the WARIF Centre to receive medical assessment, treatment, and psycho-social support.

It was about two years ago, during a church convention in Lagos, that I first met Charles. He wasn't alone—his friend Kendrick was with him. I had gone to the convention with a friend, just looking forward to the worship, the messages, and the peace those gatherings usually brought.

Charles approached us with a warm smile. He seemed friendly and easygoing, and soon we were exchanging pleasantries. After a brief chat, he asked for our contacts—mine and my friend's—and we gave them to him without much thought. Kendrick, on the other hand, kept more to himself. He didn't say much, but he was polite throughout.

A few days after the convention, Charles reached out to me. Our first phone call lasted hours—we talked about everything and nothing, the way people do when they're just getting to know each other. He had a way of keeping the conversation light, engaging, and friendly.

Not long after, he invited me to visit his church. It was a well-known one in my city, a place I'd often heard of but had never attended. His invitation felt like the perfect opportunity, and without much hesitation, I said yes. It seemed innocent enough—a chance to worship, connect, and maybe build a new friendship.

Since I didn't know where his church was, Charles offered to meet me at a familiar location so he could take me there himself. It seemed thoughtful at the time. But instead of heading to the church, he mentioned he had just gotten off work and needed to freshen up—he said he wanted to change into something more appropriate. He asked if I wouldn't mind stopping by his house for a moment. I didn't think much of it and agreed.

When we got to his place, he went straight to take a bath while I waited. Afterwards, rather than getting ready so we could leave, he brought out a juice drink. He poured me a glass, saying we should toast to a new friendship. Then he stepped into the kitchen to get a glass for himself. We clinked glasses, and I took a few sips.

Not long after, he excused himself to pick up something from his room. That's when everything started to feel strange. My head grew heavy. I felt dizzy. Then everything went dark. I drifted in and out of consciousness. The next thing I remember was feeling his hands on me. He carried me to his sofa... and began pulling off my clothes and raped me.

I woke up in the middle of the night with a headache and felt pain in my vagina as I tried to stand. When I came to, he wasn't in the room. My body felt heavy, but I gathered what strength I had, got up, and slowly made my way to the sitting room. There, I found Charles and Kendrick casually watching a movie—as if nothing had happened. My heart was pounding, but I didn't confront him in front of his friend. Instead, I asked Charles to join me back in the room.

When we were alone, I looked him in the eye and asked him, quietly but firmly, why he had sexually abused me. He didn't deny it. Instead, he broke down, apologising repeatedly, saying he didn't know what had come over him. He begged for my forgiveness.

After a while, worn down by the shock and the weight of the moment, I said I forgave him. Then I asked him to take me home. But he said it was too late—it was already midnight—and insisted it wasn't safe to be out on the road. Reluctantly, I agreed to stay the night. Still, I needed to reassure my mom, who had called earlier, worried that I wasn't yet at the church program. So, I called her and told her I was okay.

What I didn't know at the time was that Kendrick had overheard everything—the confrontation, the apology, all of it. Later that night, while Charles was in the bathroom again, Kendrick quietly pulled me aside.

He looked at me with a seriousness that caught me off guard. "I heard what happened," he said. "You need to be careful. Charles isn't who he pretends to be."

His words stunned me. I was just about to ask what he meant when Charles walked in and caught the end of our conversation. His expression changed instantly—his face twisted with anger. He didn't say much. Just turned to Kendrick and ordered him to leave the house. Kendrick didn't argue. He simply got up and left.

A few days later, Charles finally took me home. The entire ride, he kept pleading—saying sorry again and again, trying to explain himself, trying to win back my trust. That didn't stop after he dropped me off. Throughout the week, he kept calling, sending messages, and checking in constantly.

A month passed. I was still processing everything, trying to make sense of it all. Eventually, I told him I had forgiven him. Maybe part of me wanted closure... or just peace.

Soon after, he invited me out again—a "make-up" date, he called it. I agreed. He picked me up, and we went to a restaurant. The evening felt calmer and lighter as if he was trying to do things right this time. After the meal, he suggested we go back to his place to watch a movie. And for reasons I still wrestle with, I said yes.

At his house, he set the mood for the movie and then brought out drinks. I was sceptical about drinking with him, and when he noticed my hesitation, his mood changed. I apologised and reluctantly drank. That turned out to be a mistake. He had laced the drink again, and I began to feel drowsy. I was semi-conscious as he slowly undressed me, laughing, and then violated me three times until he was satisfied. Afterwards, he fell asleep.

I woke up exhausted while he was still asleep. I felt like stabbing him, but that would mean taking the law into my own hands. So, I quietly left for my house that same night.

This time, no amount of pleading could change anything. I got home and told my mom everything. We went to the police to report the case, and I took them to his house, where he was arrested. The police then referred me to the WARIF Centre. The case was charged to court, and I am hopeful that he will be punished for the crimes committed against me.

At the centre, I received free medical assessments, treatment, laboratory tests, and counselling services. I am so grateful that I had access to all these services at no cost, especially the counselling sessions because they were lifesaving. The counsellor at the centre assured me that it was not my fault and helped me to regain my hope and confidence. I was also taught coping mechanisms.

I attended the Group Therapy sessions counselling sessions where I developed a sense of belonging with other survivors whom I met in the Group. I found comfort in knowing I wasn't alone, and we learnt new techniques that helped me to heal better. The counselling sessions helped me the most, and I'm proud of my progress. I have resumed school at my university for my final semester, where I am studying pharmacy and doing well academically.

At my last follow-up visit to the centre, I felt emotionally, mentally, and psychologically balanced. My goal is to become the best version of myself and be an advocate against gender-based violence.

Many thanks to the WARIF Team. You are the best!

**Real name of the survivor changed for confidentiality*

Dear survivor, please know that you are not alone and it is not your fault. Help is available. If you have been raped or you know someone who has, please visit us at:

**The WARIF Centre
6, Turton Street, off Thorburn Avenue, Sabo, Yaba or call our 24-hour confidential helpline on 0800-9210-0009
For questions or more information please contact: info@warifng.org**

STYLE Q&A: FROM VOLUMINOUS SILHOUETTES TO SNEAKER CULTURE

-YOUR MOST PRESSING FASHION QUESTIONS, ANSWERED

Getting dressed in Nigeria is no small feat. Between the heat, the pressure to slay at every occasion, and the ever-shifting trends, style can feel like a full-time hustle. One day, it's Ankara at a naming ceremony; the next, you wonder if wearing sneakers to a black-tie wedding is okay. So, we threw open the fashion floodgates and asked our readers to send in their most pressing style questions—and wow, you didn't hold back.

From navigating the fine line between comfort and chic to styling all-black outfits without disappearing into the shadows, we've tackled it all—no fashion police here—just real, stylish advice to help you stay effortlessly on point.



LATASHA NGWUBE

Q: I've noticed sneakers creeping into almost every corner of fashion—brunches, boardrooms, even black-tie weddings (gasp!). Are we living in a world where sneakers go with everything, or has the pendulum swung too far?
— Tonia, Ikoyi

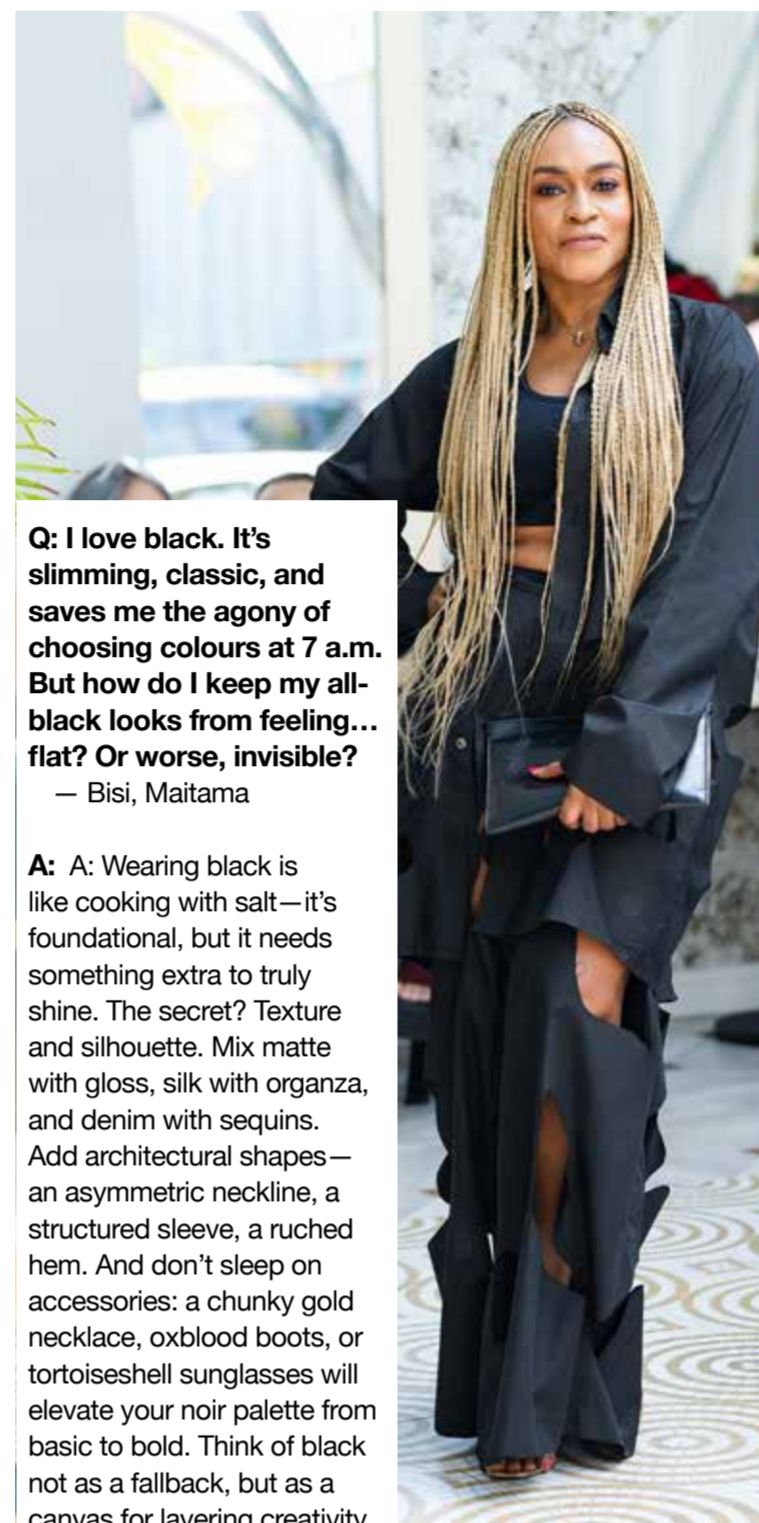
A: You're not imagining things—sneakers have broken out of their leisurewear cage and are now lounging comfortably across all style categories. The reason? They've evolved. Today's designer sneakers come with architectural soles, unexpected textures (hello, velvet), and sculpted silhouettes that make them runway-worthy. The trick is in the styling. Pair sleek leather sneakers with wide-leg trousers and a blazer for "boardroom casual," or match minimalist white kicks with a slip dress for an art opening. But if you're attending a wedding and thinking sneakers, make sure it's fashion-forward—not fashion faux pas. Bottom line: sneakers are welcome—but only when they're intentional, pristine, and paired with confidence.

Q: Can one look elegant and feel like their ribs aren't being punished? Or is "comfort" still a polite way to say "gave up" in fashion speak?
— Ada, Abuja

A: Hmm...elegance vs ease. Let's put this to rest—comfort is no longer synonymous with compromise. Today's tailoring is clever: elasticized waistbands hidden beneath pleats and breathable fabrics cut like couture. Loungewear has also found its passport into formalwear, and kaftans are now more structured than sleepy. Look to brands that understand how to drape, not just design. When clothing moves with you and not against you, you exude a calm, assured elegance that no corset could ever fake.



RENI ABINA



Q: I love black. It's slimming, classic, and saves me the agony of choosing colours at 7 a.m. But how do I keep my all-black looks from feeling... flat? Or worse, invisible?
— Bisi, Maitama

A: Wearing black is like cooking with salt—it's foundational, but it needs something extra to truly shine. The secret? Texture and silhouette. Mix matte with gloss, silk with organza, and denim with sequins. Add architectural shapes—an asymmetric neckline, a structured sleeve, a ruched hem. And don't sleep on accessories: a chunky gold necklace, oxblood boots, or tortoiseshell sunglasses will elevate your noir palette from basic to bold. Think of black not as a fallback, but as a canvas for layering creativity.



MIMI ONALAJA

Q: Matching sets used to be a lazy-day solution. Now, I see them at cocktail parties and fashion week. Are they still relevant, or am I just late to the set party?
— Funke, Victoria Island

A: You're not late—you're just in time for the remix. Matching sets are the grown-up version of the jumpsuit: equal parts coordinated and cool. But today's sets aren't just matchy-matchy—they're mood-driven. Think head-to-toe jacquard, linen with exaggerated cuffs, silk sets that whisper luxury. The magic lies in the tailoring and the attitude. Also, pro tip: styling them with mismatched shoes, layered jewelry, or an offbeat bag keeps things current. Bonus? You can wear the pieces separately and get triple the wear. Lazy? Never. Smart? Always.

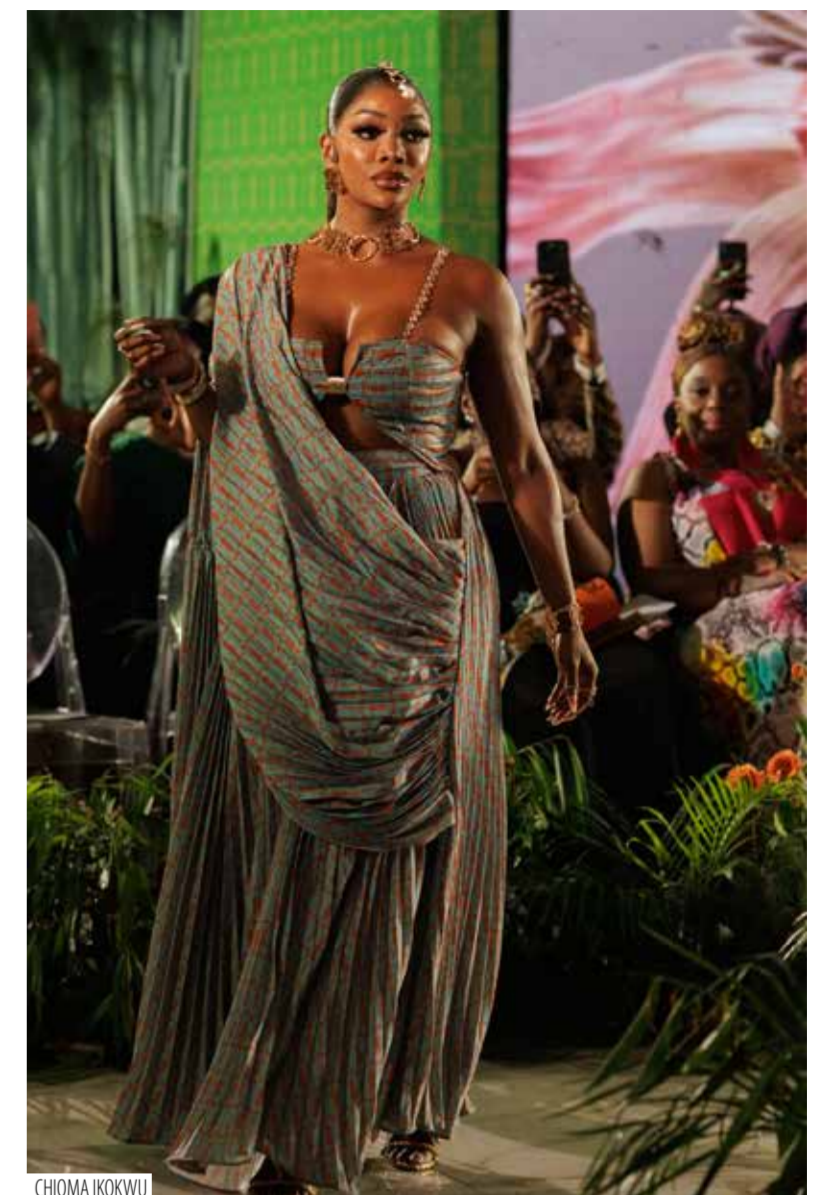
Q: Voluminous silhouettes seem to be everywhere. While I admire the drama, I worry about being swallowed whole. Is there a way to wear volume without disappearing into it?
— Zainab, Kano

A: Volume should be worn, not endured. The trick is balance and structure. If you're doing an oversized top, keep the bottom tailored—or vice versa. A billowing dress? Cinch the waist or show a bit of ankle. Think proportion, not overwhelm. And remember: volume doesn't hide the body—it frames it differently. A great tailor can also tweak a voluminous piece so it flatters you specifically. Done right, volume makes a whisper feel like a statement.



Q: What's the one accessory that can completely shift the tone of an outfit—even if the rest of it was picked in a 7-minute frenzy?
— Ify, London via Lagos

A: Sunglasses. Hands down. They're like punctuation for your outfit—add the right pair, and suddenly, you've said something without uttering a word. Oversized frames say, "I'm important." Cat-eyes say, "I have secrets." Tinted lenses? "I'm in on the joke." Other honourable mentions include: a statement belt (to bring life to a lazy silhouette) or a bold brooch (yes, they're back). But nothing tops the quiet authority of sunglasses. Even your messy bun looks deliberate with the right frames.



CHIOMA IKOKWU



EZINNE CHINKATA

Q: WI have a few events on my calendar—cocktails, art shows, and dinner parties. What's one foolproof outfit formula I can rely on without repeating myself?
— Enitan, Accra

A: You can never go wrong with the "elevated neutral + statement detail" formula. A midi dress with a statement silhouette. Or a crisp white shirt tucked into a pleated midi skirt with bold earrings. Let your outfit do 70% of the talking, and leave the rest to shoes, jewellery, or a standout bag. It says: "I care, but I didn't try too hard." Which is always the sweet spot.



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Famous Looks Celebrating Women of Power & Impact!

If the 2025 ARISE Gala and Awards Ceremony was a tribute to 80 formidable women who are reshaping the world, then the red carpet was its glittering love letter to fashion—a runway of ambition, legacy, and unapologetic glamour. Set against the grand backdrop of the Eko Convention Center in Lagos, the night wasn't just about powerful speeches and lifetime achievements; it was a visual masterclass on how to dress like you run the world.

This year's gala blurred the lines between ceremony and spectacle. Nigeria's most stylish women—and the men who know how to hold their own—arrived ready for a fashion showdown, and let's just say: no one came to play. What we witnessed was less of a red carpet and more of a power parade. Think sparkle, structure, and swagger—every look a personal manifesto. Let's take you through all the unforgettable moments, the glitter, the bold statements, and the subtle nods to culture that made this year's ARISE Gala red carpet one for the books.

SEQUIN NATION: *Sparkle Like You Mean It*

The night shimmered with conviction, and sequins were merely the beginning. Guests came dressed in full-throttle dazzle mode—from mirror-like metallics that caught the camera flash just right, to liquid satins that moved like magic with every step. Add in a few high-gloss silks, and it became clear: Shine wasn't just a trend; it was the mood.

It wasn't about blending in—it was about owning the spotlight. Sparkle became the unofficial dress code, and no one resisted. The red carpet became a constellation of stars in human form, and we were all here for it.



AMINA MAINA IN ODIIO MIMONET



ROLAKE AKINKUGBE FILANI



BARBARA JAMES



BOLANLE AUSTEN PETERS



OLATORERA ONIRU



KATE ISA



DEOLA BALU



OJY OKPE

COVER

The Return of STRUCTURED DRAMA

If there's one thing fashion does best, it's drama—and the ARISE Gala embraced it with open arms and sharp tailoring. Structured gowns took centre stage, offering architectural brilliance that defied gravity and commanded attention.

These weren't just dresses; they were sculptures, engineered to wow.

Bold silhouettes and exaggerated cuts created high-impact looks that didn't whisper elegance—they shouted it from across the ballroom. Guests who opted for these looks didn't just walk the red carpet; they took ownership of it.



MAY AGRAMUCHE MBU



OZINNA ANUMUDU



CHOMA UDE

SHEER POWER: Transparent but Make It Bossy

There's sheer, and then there's the ARISE Gala version of sheer—confident, creative, and commanding. This wasn't about soft nude illusions or barely-there fabrics. Instead, guests played with transparency layered in bold prints, abstract designs, and tribal motifs, giving sheer a whole new attitude.

These looks were all about balance: seductive but not overt, feminine without the frills, daring yet dignified. The result? An assertive, fresh take on the classic sheer moment. Fashion diplomacy at its finest.



AMINA ISA



MRS ALI



EMAMOKE ASASA



TOSIN ADEFEKO

All Hail the HEADGEAR

No Nigerian red carpet is complete without headgear, and this year's interpretations elevated tradition into wearable art. Oversized, sculptural, and unapologetically bold, the headpieces at the ARISE Gala weren't just accessories—they were headline acts.

Think bejewelled turbans, silk-wrapped crowns, oversized bows, and floral-inspired fascinators. Each one made a statement of its own, fusing cultural heritage with high fashion drama. It was regal, theatrical, and utterly unforgettable.



AINA DAVIES



CHANTAL JOSEPH



HADIZA BALA USMAN



ADESOMO EDO OSAGIE



NIKE DAVIES



RENI FOLAWIYO AND NAOMI CAMPBELL



SHADE OKOYA



SUNBO ODUNSI

COVER

COLOUR THERAPY: *Bold and Beautiful*



This was not the night for playing it safe. Neutrals quietly stepped aside as a kaleidoscope of bold colours took over. Royal purples, metallic greens, oxblood reds—each hue chosen and worn with full confidence. It was a celebration of vibrance, a riot of colour that mirrored the spirit of the women being honoured.

Even those who wore black didn't keep things simple. Whether it was with dramatic necklines, feather flourishes, or metallic undertones that danced under the lights, black had its own shimmering moment. At the ARISE Gala, every shade had a story to tell.



FOLAKE AKINDELE

JULIET EHIJUAN

ADAABI NWAPA

JUMOKE ODUVOLE

MENSWEAR MOMENT: *Not Your Average Suit*

The women brought the fireworks, but the men? They showed up and suited up. Classic black tuxedos made a triumphant return, tailored to perfection and worn with confidence that said, "Yes, I'm that guy." The lesson? You can never go wrong with a well-cut black suit.

But the real twist of the night came courtesy of Ruth Osime, who rewrote the rules entirely in a bold red suit that instantly became iconic. Fierce, feminine, and flawlessly styled, it was a standout look that proved once again that power dressing is not gendered—it's a mindset.



BOVI UGBOMA

CHIKE OGEAH

ADE LAOYE



RUTH OSIME

Exaggerated SILHOUETTES

If there was ever a moment to leave subtlety behind, this was it. The red carpet was a theatre of volume—dramatic sleeves, flowing gowns, and silhouettes that could only be described as fashion architecture.

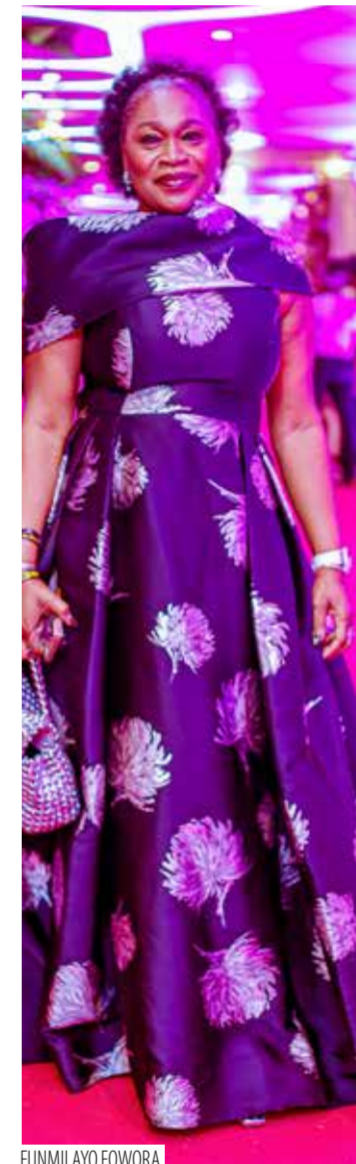
Then there were the sweeping boubous—generous, ethereal, and effortlessly elegant. Embroidered, sheer, or layered with drama, they floated down the red carpet like wearable poetry.



EMEM USORO



ENIAFE MOMODU



FUNMILAYO FOWORA



NKIRU ANUMUDU



JOKE BAKARE



NKIRU ANUMUDU



PROF OKONEDO AND MRS ALIYU



TOKUNBO GEORGE TAYLOR

COVER

TRADITIONAL *Meets Modern*

At the ARISE Gala, some women embraced traditional attires in their most classic forms—rich fabrics, bold patterns, and timeless silhouettes. Even some of the men followed suit, donning regal agbadas and intricately embroidered kaftans. It was more than a nod to heritage; it was a reminder that in Nigerian fashion, classic doesn't mean outdated—it means powerful, elegant, and enduring.



ADESUA DOZIE



DEMOLA OJO



OBY EZEKWESILLI



GOV. BABAJIDE SANWO-OLU



HALIMA BUGA



KADRIA AHMED



MODELE SARAFAYUSUF



EX-PRESIDENT GOODLUCK JONATHAN



PROF. OGUNSADE OGUNSOLA



LIZOMA DOZIE

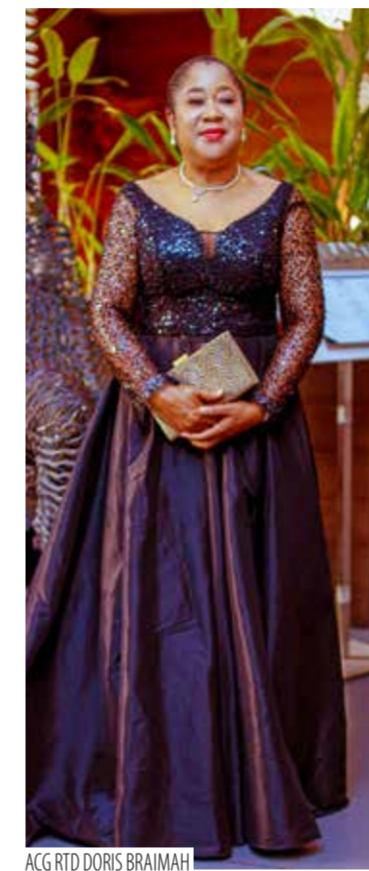


TUNDE RAHMAN

ALL BLACK EVERYTHING —But Make It Interesting

Black is often seen as the 'safe' option. But not at ARISE. This time, black was anything but basic. With imaginative cuts, sharp tailoring, layered textures, and rich fabric choices, these all-black ensembles were a study in elegance and edge.

Think sheer overlays, dramatic slits, lace, leather, and velvet—all used to elevate and deepen the classic colour. Guests proved that when done right, black can be every bit as daring as a highlighter-pink gown.



AGG. RTD DORIS BRAIMAH



YEMISI IPAYE



JULIANA EDEWORTHOMAS



MIRIAM OLUSANYA



OYIN ADENUGA OLUFeko

SHOULDER SHOW-OFFS

Call it clavicle couture or the art of the subtle reveal, but bare shoulders had a major fashion moment at the gala. And we're not talking about summer wedding vibes—we're talking about commanding red-carpet energy. Off-shoulder gowns, strapless corsets, asymmetric necklines, and one-sleeve wonders offered that perfect blend of elegance and allure. Among the standout moments?

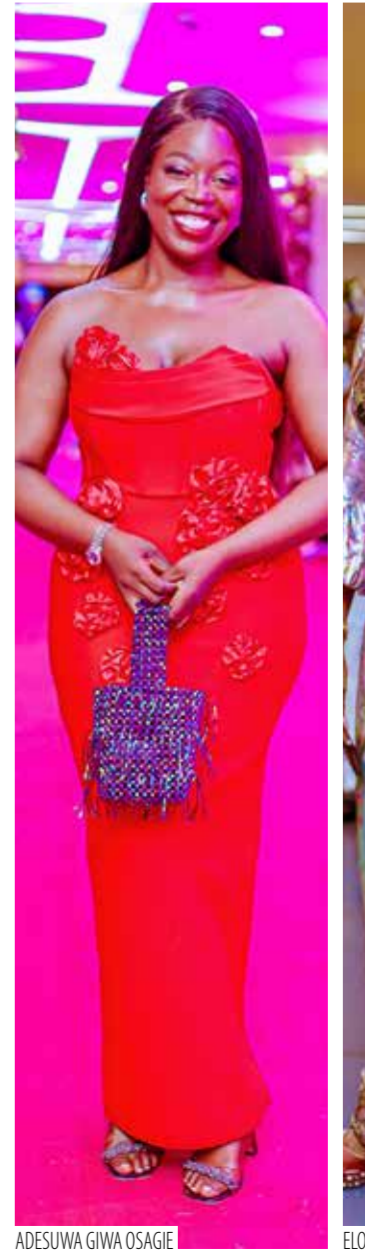
Femi Akinsanya, glowed in a breathtaking white satin gown that swept across her chest and left both shoulders bare. It was refined, radiant, and proof that sometimes, simplicity steals the spotlight.



ADEFEMI AKINSANYA



CHIKA UCHE OKEKE



ADESUWA GIWA OSAGIE



ELOHI UDOH

THE SKINCARE RULES EVERY IT-GIRL FOLLOWS

There's something about It-Girls—they walk into a room, and the spotlight follows. Not just because of their outfits or who they're dating but because they've mastered the art of looking effortlessly put-together. And at the core of that magic? Skin that glows. Skin that whispers, not screams. Skin that says, "I take care of myself—and yes, I drink my water." But make no mistake: that glow is not accidental. Behind every seemingly casual selfie or makeup-free brunch shot is a sacred skincare ritual that could pass for religion. Whether it's Onyeka Ugwu's doughnut glaze glow, Temi Otedola's always-camera-ready face, or Ayra Starr's soft glam radiance, these are the skincare rules the modern It-Girl swears by—and spoiler alert, it's more than just slathering on some SPF.



ANGEL ANOSIKE AND DEBBIE BEEKO

1. Cleanse, but don't strip

The It-Girl knows better than to be harsh. She's gentle with her skin (and her energy). That means double cleansing at night—first with an oil cleanser to melt off makeup and sunscreen, followed by a hydrating gel or cream cleanser. In the morning? Sometimes, just a splash of water. Stripping the skin barrier is so 2012.

2. Hydration is not optional

Every It-Girl is basically one hyaluronic acid serum away from being a mermaid. Dry, flaky skin isn't chic, and they know it. From mists to essences to dewy moisturizers, hydration is layered like fashion. And yes, they'll spritz rosewater during flights or Zoom calls—hydrated skin is happy skin.

3. SPF every damn day

Even when it's cloudy. Even when they're indoors. Even when Mercury is in retrograde. Sunscreen is non-negotiable in every It-girls skincare line-up. And not just slapped on—the two-finger rule applies. They reapply. They don't mess with the sun. Why? Because premature wrinkles are not part of the aesthetic.

4. Skin cycling is the new black

They don't use every active ingredient every day. Retinol, AHAs, BHAs—they're on a schedule, not a free-for-all. The modern It-Girl understands balance. Monday might be exfoliation night, Wednesday is for retinol and Friday? Recovery with barrier repair creams. Overdoing it is so passé.

5. They listen to their skin, not trends

Sure, snail mucin might be trending on TikTok, but the It-Girl knows what works for her. She's done the trial and error, she's met her skin halfway, and she's not afraid to break up with a hyped product that just isn't serving her. The skincare shelf may look cute on Instagram, but results matter more.

6. They invest in their face like it's a Birkin

Let's be honest—It-Girls are not here for cutting corners when it comes to skin. Facials? Monthly. LED therapy? Absolutely. Lymphatic drainage massages? Already booked. Skincare is self-care, and they treat it like a ritual. A form of love. A moment of stillness in a chaotic world.

7. They never sleep with makeup on

Ever. Not even after a party. Not even when they're too tired to take their shoes off. Cleansing wipes are a last resort (and used only with a side of guilt). That post-club cleanse might be brief, but it always happens. Because dull skin is the enemy of the aesthetic.

8. Diet, but make it dewy

You won't catch the It-Girl chugging soda and calling it cute. She drinks water like her life depends on it, adds collagen to smoothies, and swears by antioxidant-rich fruits and vegetables. Skin is an inside job, and she knows it.

9. They embrace skin—real skin

The ultimate rule? The It-Girl doesn't chase perfection. She embraces her skin's cycles—pimples, dark spots, texture, all of it. She's not obsessed with filters, she's into glow. Not porcelain, just healthy. Not flawless, but real. And somehow, that's what makes her skin all the more captivating.

10. Barrier Health is Priority Number One

Forget glass skin—healthy skin is the real flex. The It-Girl is obsessed with her skin barrier. She's that friend reading the ingredient list, avoiding harsh sulfates, and reaching for barrier-loving ingredients like ceramides, squalane, panthenol, and Centella Asiatica. If the barrier is compromised, nothing else works.

HAS SOCIAL MEDIA DILUTED PERSONAL STYLE?

By the time your thumb has scrolled through a hundred reels, TikToks, and mirror selfies this morning, chances are you've seen the same corset top styled in ten different ways, the same Wannifuga dress on ten different bodies, and the same "clean girl" bun on countless heads. Everyone looks great. But also—everyone looks the same. And it makes you wonder—has social media, with all its glitz, filters, and algorithms, diluted personal style?

To even ask that is to wade into murky waters. After all, the digital space has given a voice to people who previously had no access to fashion's elite circles. Suddenly, a girl in Lagos can inspire a girl in New York. A thrift-lover in Surulere could become a micro-influencer, and the Arise Fashion Week front-row style could go viral from a 30-second video. That's powerful. That's progress. But let's not ignore the irony: When everyone has the chance to stand out, more people are choosing to blend in. We now live in the age of aesthetics—hyper-curated looks designed to fit neatly into hashtags: Y2K aesthetic, barbiecore, soft life, baddie, and everything in between. What was once a diverse and deeply personal expression of identity has become a trend carousel. You hop on, you hop off, you switch filters. You become a mood board. You become content. "There was a time when personal style was about discovering

what made you feel like you," says fashion retailer Ozinna Anumudu. Now, it's about discovering what makes your audience double-tap." Scroll through Instagram, and you'll notice how algorithmic fashion has become. Outfits are chosen less for how they feel and more for how they perform. Colours that pop on feed. Silhouettes that cinch for reels. Even the way people pose—back slightly arched, chin tilted, phone angled high—is part of the uniform. It's not just influencers—ordinary folks feel the pressure too. One Lagos-based university student confesses, "Sometimes I buy outfits not because I love them, but because I know they'll get likes. I know what my followers expect from me. I don't want to disappoint." It's exhausting. And it's a bit tragic. Because true style—raw, experimental, sometimes chaotic—is often forged in solitude. It's the magic of pairing clashing prints because it feels fun. The joy of wearing something no one else would dare to. That kind of individuality doesn't always photograph well. It doesn't always go viral. But it's real. That's not to say social media hasn't birthed style icons. It absolutely has. But they tend to rise not because they follow trends, but in spite of them. Think of someone like Wisdom Kaye, the Nigerian-American model whose boundary-pushing menswear looks made him a standout on TikTok. Or even a few Nigerian fashion bloggers who mix Ankara with thrift finds in a way that's so uniquely them that they practically invented their own genre. It's not about avoiding trends altogether. Trends are fun. They can be a part of your style story. But when every closet starts to look like an Instagram clone—white linen shirts, boxy blazers, strappy heels, neutral tones—you start to wonder if we're dressing for ourselves or for a grid. Still, there's hope. The younger generation, particularly Gen Z, seems to be swinging the pendulum back toward individuality. They're obsessed with thrifting, remixing vintage, and wearing outfits ironically or rebelliously. They're not afraid to look "weird." They're reclaiming style as something less polished, less perfect, and a little more punk. And maybe that's where we find the sweet spot: between trend and truth. Between inspiration and imitation. Because style isn't just what you wear—it's how you wear it. It's the story behind the outfit. The confidence in the stride. No algorithm can teach that. No reel can replicate it. Because the most fashionable thing you can be in a world full of copies—is yourself.



DABOTA LAWSON



OLIVIA ARUKWE



OZINNA ANUMUDU



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