THISDAY STYLE

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

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 30 2025

Abiodun OLAKU

LEGACY AND THE ARTS

LISA FOLAWIYO @ 20

BELLA DISU

IN SELF DISCOVERY

CONTENT

COVER NOTE

Business Leader, Bella Disu, received a standing ovation at TEDx Ikoyi after delivering a powerful talk titled "Say Yes Now: Why Readiness is a Myth."Her message was simple but arresting: we do not become ready before we begin — we become ready by doing. In the talk, she explores why people and organisations hesitate at the very moments that require bold action. Drawing from business cases, she explained how Kodak stalled, how Blockbuster dismissed innovation, and how Apple accelerated — not because it was the largest, but because it acted with clarity and conviction.

Lifestyle & Fashion



THISDAY Style

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EDITOR'S LETTER

December, At Last

It's almost hard to believe — tomorrow is December. The final month of the year, the last page of 2025. Somehow, we're here again, standing between fatigue and festivity, trying to make sense of how quickly the months folded into each other. There's always something about December that feels like a collective exhale — the moment the country decides to loosen its tie and breathe a little.

Yes, the year has been heavy. We've lived through headlines that felt like déjà vu, watched the price of things climb like they had personal ambition, and, of course, faced security concerns that continue to shadow our collective peace. But Nigerians have always had this strange, almost defiant instinct to dance in the middle of the storm — to find joy even when the skies don't look promising. Maybe that's our strongest superpower.

Speaking of storms, have you seen The Herd? Daniel Etim Effiong's film has been the talk of the moment — and for good reason. It begins with joy, a wedding, that familiar bubble of Nigerian celebration, before everything collapses into chaos. It's unsettling, raw, and painfully familiar. Some have called it divisive, an attack on one tribe or another. I disagree. What I saw was a mirror — one that forces us to look at the country we've become. It's not tribal, it's national. It's the story of a people grappling with fear, faith, and the fragile illusion of normalcy. You should read our piece on it, Etim Effiong's The Herd Is a Brutal Mirror of a Society Unravelling. It's the kind of story that lingers long after the credits roll.

But December isn't all introspection. It's also the month where Lagos becomes its most electric self — the traffic doubles, flights fill up, and everyone seems to be in a permanent state of "outside." Events, concerts, weddings, pop-ups — it's a full calendar of glitter and good intentions. Our feature this week, Your Guide to Event-Season Dressing, is your compass for surviving it all with style. Because even if the year didn't quite go according to plan, at least your wardrobe still can.

Also, somewhere between the excitement and exhaustion, find a moment to pause. To take stock. The quiet kind of reflection that doesn't always come with New Year resolutions but with gratitude — for what survived, for who stayed, for what still feels possible.

Here's to light, laughter, and the magic of endings that promise new beginnings.

Love,

Konye

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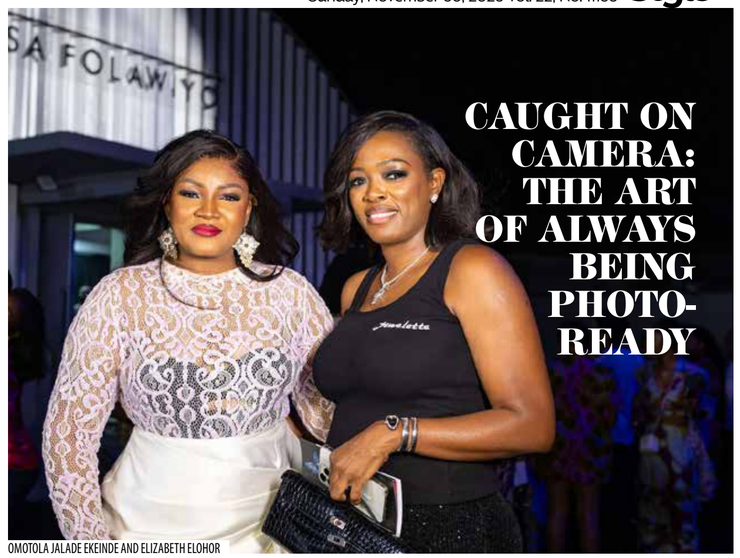


OMOTOLA JALADE EKEINDE AND ELIZABETH ELOHOR

There was a time when "getting ready" meant an event was coming up. Now, the event could be anything — a friend dropping by, a quick video call, a candid moment your sibling decides to post. You can literally be at home, wearing pyjamas and eating chin-chin, and somehow still end up on someone's feed. Welcome to the era of the unplanned photo moment — where the camera doesn't ask permission, and your best shot could happen on an ordinary Tuesday afternoon. But being photo-ready today isn't about perfection or performance. It's about being prepared, always — in small, subtle, real-life ways. Here's how to live ready for the lens — without living like you're in a commercial.

1. Stay Camera-Friendly, Even Off-Duty
It's no longer about "outside clothes." These days, your homewear deserves its own glow-up. Swap the faded tees for soft matching sets, throw on a lightweight robe that flatters you, and keep your skin hydrated enough to glow under kitchen light. The new rule? Dress for you — but stay prepared for surprise visitors, deliveries, or spontaneous selfies.

2. Let Light Be Your Everyday Accessory
Nothing does more for a face than good light. If you're working from home, angle your desk toward a window. If you're taking a quick call, move closer to it. Warm lighting is softer, kind lighting. We're done letting harsh bulbs betray us.

3. Small Grooming, Big Difference
Being photo-ready starts with habits that outlast makeup. Well-kept brows, even skin, moisturised lips. Keep hand cream nearby, because unkempt hands show up in pictures more often than you'd think. It's less "beat face," more "baseline polish."

4. Keep a Tiny Fix Kit Nearby
A lip tint, a hair brush, perfume, and a clean scrunchie — that's all it takes. A quick swipe, a spritz, a tidy bun, and you instantly look awake and intentional. Think of it as the new adult version of "school assembly ready."

5. Comfort Is the New Confidence
Forget that old "pose like you mean it" mantra. What photographs well today is ease — the comfort of someone who isn't trying to perform. Whether you're lounging at home or out to lunch, comfort has a quiet beauty that translates on camera. It's the new kind of confidence — calm, not curated.

6. Move With Awareness, Not Anxiety
We all know that one friend who always looks good in photos. Here's their secret: they're aware, not obsessed. They sit up straight without stiffening, smile when it feels natural, and don't scramble when someone shouts "let's take a picture." Awareness is the middle ground between self-care and self-consciousness.

BUNMI TEJUOSHO

7. Be the Energy, Not Just the Image
The best photos are rarely about styling — they're about vibe. That unguarded laugh, that moment you look away, that spark that says, "I'm fine right here." You can't fake that. You can only live it.

SOFT GLAM FOR EVERYDAY LIFE: HOW TO NAIL THE EFFORTLESS LOOK THAT WORKS ANYWHERE

There's a reason everyone is talking about soft glam. It's that perfect in-between look—less "I'm off to a red carpet" and more "I just happen to look this good all the time." It's polished, glowy, and easy to wear whether you're heading to brunch, a meeting, or even just running errands. It's the kind of makeup that makes people say, "You look amazing!" without being able to tell exactly why. So, how do you pull off soft glam without it looking flat or taking two hours? Here's your step-by-step guide to looking effortlessly put-together every day.

1. Start With Skin That Looks Like Skin

The secret to soft glam starts long before the foundation—it begins with skincare. You want skin that glows naturally, not one that looks glazed over. Cleanse, exfoliate gently, and hydrate with a lightweight moisturiser. If your skin feels good, your makeup will sit better.

Before foundation, use a dewy primer or serum to give your skin that lit-from-within effect. Think of it as setting the tone—soft glam is about freshness, not flatness.

2. Pick a Foundation That Breathes

Soft glam isn't about full coverage. The goal is realistic skin with a hint of polish. Reach for a light to medium coverage foundation or even a tinted moisturiser. Blend it in with a damp beauty sponge or brush until it melts into your skin. If you need more coverage, apply a bit of concealer only where necessary—under the eyes, around the nose, or on small blemishes.

3. Think Creamy, Not Powdery

Everything in soft glam land is creamy, blendable, and natural-looking. Swap heavy powders for cream blush, bronzer, and highlighter. These products melt into the skin, giving you a dewy finish rather than a cakey one. If you are light skinned, a rose-toned blush adds a healthy flush, while a touch of cream bronzer warms your complexion. Add a subtle highlighter to the high points of your face—your cheekbones, nose bridge, and cupid's bow—but resist the urge to go overboard. You want glow, not glare.

4. Neutral Eyes That Still Pop

Soft glam eyes are all about soft-focus definition. Think warm browns, champagne golds, or dusty pinks—shades that blend easily and complement your skin tone. Sweep a medium tone through your crease, add a shimmer to your lid, and define your lash line with a smudged brown pencil.

Finish with mascara—two coats if you're feeling fancy. False lashes are optional, but if you wear them, pick styles that look like your lashes, only fuller.

5. Brows That Frame, Not Shout

Overdrawn, ultra-arched brows? Retire them. Soft glam brows are feathered, lifted, and natural. Brush them up with a spoolie, lightly fill in sparse areas, and set with a clear or tinted brow gel. The trick is to keep them looking like hair, not ink.

Your brows should balance your face—not dominate it.

6. Lips That Whisper Softness

For lips, stay away from harsh lines or overly matte finishes. Instead, think buttery and blurred. Outline your lips with a nude pencil that matches your natural tone, then fill them in with a satin lipstick or tinted gloss. Soft pinks, beige nudes, or peachy corals work beautifully for day-to-day wear.

If you want a little more drama, choose a deeper nude or rose shade—but keep the edges soft.

7. Hair and Outfit: Keep It Cohesive

Soft glam doesn't stop at makeup—it's an entire vibe. Pair your glowing skin and neutral tones with hair that feels just as effortless. Think loose curls, a low bun, or a slick ponytail.

When it comes to clothes, this look loves neutrals, pastels, and soft fabrics. A crisp white shirt with jeans, a flowy midi dress, or even a monochrome co-ord can all complement your makeup beautifully.

8. Don't Forget the Attitude

Here's the thing: the real secret to soft glam isn't makeup—it's energy. It's the quiet confidence that comes with knowing you look good without trying too hard. It's that "I'm not rushing, but I'm not waiting either" kind of poise.

BALLET FLATS ARE BACK — AND THEY'RE SUDDENLY THE COOLEST SHOES IN THE ROOM

Some trends return loudly. Others come back like they never left—just a little sleeker, a little wiser, and a lot more stylish. Ballet flats fall into the second category. One minute, they were the forgotten pair at the bottom of your shoe rack, the "I'll wear them when my feet hurt" option. The next minute, they're front-row material, popping up on runways, street style blogs, and weekend brunch outfits like they own the place.

What makes this comeback interesting is that ballet flats aren't riding on nostalgia alone. Yes, we all remember the early 2010s era of skinny jeans and rounded-toe flats, but today's ballet flat has evolved. The silhouette is sharper, the finishes are richer, and the styling is bolder. They're no longer a backup plan—they're the outfit.

Part of their revival comes down to where fashion is right now. Everyone's craving ease. We want pieces that move with us—not against us. We want to look chic, but we also want to feel our toes. After years of platforms and skyscraper heels, there's something refreshing about a shoe that doesn't demand pain for style. Ballet flats slip into that sweet spot: feminine, effortless, and versatile enough to go wherever the day leads.

And the best part? They go with almost everything. Don't believe us , keep reading.

The Tailored Pairing

Start with the simplest formula: sharply tailored pieces plus clean ballet flats. Think straight-leg trousers, a tucked-in shirt, a structured blazer. A sleek flat grounds the look, making it refined but approachable. Perfect for the office, pitch meetings, or those days when you want to look intentional without announcing it.

KESSEINA ODUNSI AND EKU EDEWOR

IBRA

Short Hemlines, Big Energy

Mini skirts, pleated skorts, floaty dresses—ballet flats pair beautifully with shorter pieces. They give that polished, airy feel you'd see on a stylish girl weaving through a city street with iced coffee in hand. It's playful, feminine, and surprisingly confident—no heels required.

Denim's New Best Friend

If your closet is heavy on denim, ballet flats are about to become your new uniform. Cropped jeans show them off effortlessly. Wide-leg denim makes the combination cool and contemporary. Even slouchy boyfriend jeans get a chic upgrade when styled with a pointed flat. It's the kind of pairing that feels thrown-together in the best way.

Dressed Up, But Relaxed

Evening flats are having a moment. Satin finishes, crystal embellishments, metallic textures—they bring a quiet luxury to nighttime dressing. A slip dress and sparkly flats? Elegant. A black jumpsuit with a pointed pair? Understated but unforgettable. It's glamour without the wobble.

The Sock Situation

It sounds bold, but socks and ballet flats are everywhere right now. Sheer socks, lace-trimmed socks, even playful ankle socks—it adds personality and a hint of editorial flair. If you love experimenting, this pairing is your playground. If you don't, skip it. Ballet flats aren't bossy; they adapt.

ANGEL ANOSIKE

Styles Worth Trying

There's a whole new world beyond the classic rounded toe:

Pointed Flats: Elongating, modern, and instantly polished.

Square-Toe Pairs: Minimal and architectural.

Mesh and Sheer: A little daring, very fashion-forward.

Slingback Flats: Effortless French-girl energy.

Embellished Options: Perfect for nights out that don't need heels.

Colour is part of the fun too. Black is timeless, but red ballet flats are having a major moment. Metallics are popping up everywhere. Pastels feel sweet and nostalgic, while patent leather adds edge.

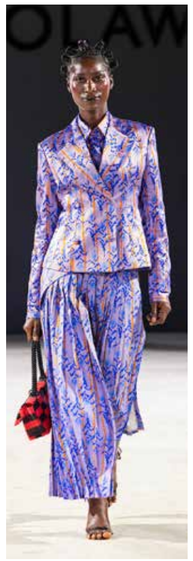
A Few Styling Notes

- If your outfit feels too serious, flats soften it.
- If your outfit feels too sweet, choose a pointed or structured style.
- Balance volume—flowy pieces look great with slim, clean silhouettes.
- Don't be afraid of texture: velvet, mesh, croc, patent, satin.
- Neutrals are a smart entry point, but a bold colour can lift a simple look instantly.

CAPTURING A LIFE IN COLOUR —

LISA FOLAWIYO @20

For twenty years, Lisa Folawiyo has shaped the language of modern African luxury — one hand-sewn bead at a time. Her latest collection, Capturing A Life in Colour, marks a milestone not just for her eponymous label, but for the movement she helped inspire: a generation of Nigerian designers proving that local craft can sit confidently on the global stage.



When Folawiyo launched her label from her Lagos home in 2005 — then known as Jewel by Lisa — she was a young law graduate with a deep love for textiles and a mind buzzing with possibility. At the time, Ankara was often viewed as casual and commonplace, beautiful but unrefined. She imagined something more. By hand-embellishing wax prints with crystals and sequins, pairing them with precise tailoring, and presenting them as modern, ready-to-wear pieces, she reframed the conversation.

What had once been seen as local suddenly felt luxurious, cosmopolitan, and entirely new. That quiet act of reimagination became the foundation of a career that would take her from Lagos to international acclaim. Over the years, her designs have appeared on global red carpets, she has been listed among The Business of Fashion's influential BoF 500, and she has remained one of the few Nigerian designers to achieve both longevity and cultural resonance.

Yet for all her global recognition, Folawiyo has kept her brand deeply personal — built on emotion and the language of craftsmanship. In a 2023 interview with The Nation, she said: "When I started … I just wanted to design beautiful clothes for women to wear."

That same truth anchors Capturing A Life in Colour. The collection, shown recently in Lagos, draws directly from the brand's own story. For the Spring/Summer 2026 lineup, Folawiyo reworked some of the brand's earliest motifs and materials — including a reimagined version of her once-iconic corn motif, now rendered in textured raffia. Leather appeared again, this time hand-painted with Ankara-inspired patterns, and colour — always central to her vision — moved softly across the collection, sometimes vibrant, sometimes muted, like emotions stitched into fabric.

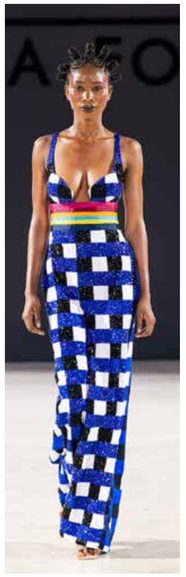
"This collection is a love note, "she says. "A thank-you to every moment that shaped me; every colour, every stitch, every lesson. I wanted to bring my past forward with kindness."

The runway itself was minimalist — a deliberate choice. No elaborate set pieces, just soft photography lights framing a clean white runway, creating the intimacy of a portrait studio. The simplicity drew attention to the clothes: the interplay of texture and silhouette, the quiet conversations between past and future. Each look felt like a snapshot of the brand's journey.

Beyond the physical show, the brand also unveiled The Archive Edit, a newly launched digital experience on its website, featuring one-of-a-kind re-imagined pieces from the house's past two decades. It's a thoughtful nod to both nostalgia and sustainability — a reminder that innovation can coexist with reverence for one's own history. For collectors and long-time admirers, it offers a glimpse into the evolution of a designer who has spent twenty years mastering her own language.

Lisa Folawiyo's story has long mirrored the evolution of Nigerian fashion itself. She emerged when "Made in Nigeria" was still struggling for international validation, and helped transform it into a mark of pride. Her success signalled a shift: African fashion was not a trend, but a force. What she built quietly from a home studio has now become part of a wider ecosystem — one where Nigerian designers are showing in Paris, collaborating globally, and shaping fashion conversations from Lagos to London.

Two decades on, her power lies not in reinvention for its own sake, but in how she continues to evolve without losing her core.



THE POST-BREAKUP GLOW 10 QUIET WAYS PEOPLE GROW AFTER A RELATIONSHIP ENDS

Relationships are beautiful. They give rhythm to our days, comfort to our routines, and a sense of partnership that feels grounding. Two people learning, trying, building — it's one of the most meaningful human experiences. But sometimes, as sad and uncomfortable as it sounds, even something beautiful reaches an end. Not because anyone failed, or because love wasn't real, but because growth shifted, timing changed, or peace became harder to sustain.

And after the dust settles — after the difficult conversations, the quiet nights, and the awkward process of learning how to be on your own again — something subtle begins to happen. Not a celebration. Not a sudden transformation. Just a gentle shift. A glow that isn't flashy or performative, but rooted in growth, clarity, and emotional maturity.

Here's what that glow really looks like:

1. You Develop a New Kind of Self-Awareness

Breakups make you pause in a way that daily life rarely allows. You start asking deeper questions: What did I need? What did I ignore? How did I show up? It's not about assigning blame — to yourself or the other person — but about understanding patterns. That kind of introspection sharpens how you move through the world, how you communicate, and what you choose next. Awareness has its own quiet shine.

2. Your Routine Begins to Stabilise

Relationships create shared rhythms — calls, plans, habits. When they end, your routine can feel disoriented. But slowly, you rebuild. You sleep better. You wake clearer. You find new structure, new rituals, even new pockets of calm. There's something grounding about having a day that belongs entirely to you, and that stability starts reflecting in how you speak, think, and carry yourself.

3. You Reconnect With Your Interests

Not out of spite or reinvention, but curiosity. You remember the hobbies you paused, the books you abandoned, the passions you postponed. You start exploring again — maybe cooking, travelling, studying, or rediscovering creativity. It reminds you that you're a full person, not just one half of a pair. That rediscovery brings a sense of fullness that naturally shows up in your energy.

4. You Handle Emotions More Honestly

In relationships, people often downplay feelings to keep the peace or prioritise someone else's comfort. After a breakup, you sit with your emotions differently — not suppressing them, but acknowledging them. You learn to name what you feel, instead of running from it. That emotional honesty makes you calmer, more thoughtful, and more grounded in future decisions.

5. Your Relationships With Others Deepen

Heartbreak has a way of clarifying who genuinely supports you. Conversations with friends and family become more intentional. You show up more authentically, and you let others show up for you. Instead of small talk, there's vulnerability. Instead of distraction, there's connection. That deeper social grounding strengthens you in ways a relationship sometimes unintentionally overshadowed.

6. You Make Clearer Decisions

Without navigating a shared future, your choices become more focused. Career plans, finances, travel, lifestyle changes — they're guided by your priorities alone. You think more independently, and surprisingly, more confidently. It's not impulsiveness; it's clarity. The kind of clarity that comes from knowing you're steering your own ship.

7. You Grow Comfortable With Your Own Company

At first, silence can feel heavy. Then, slowly, it becomes peaceful. You learn how to enjoy your own presence — a movie alone, a solo lunch, a quiet evening. Solitude stops feeling like loneliness and starts feeling like self-trust. There's a noticeable confidence in someone who feels whole on their own.

8. You Start Prioritising Peace Over Performance

No more trying to be "less," "more," or "different" to fit a dynamic. You begin valuing emotional safety — both in yourself and in future connections. You become gentler with your boundaries, kinder with your expectations, and more honest about what you can and cannot carry. That calmness softens your edges — in the best way.

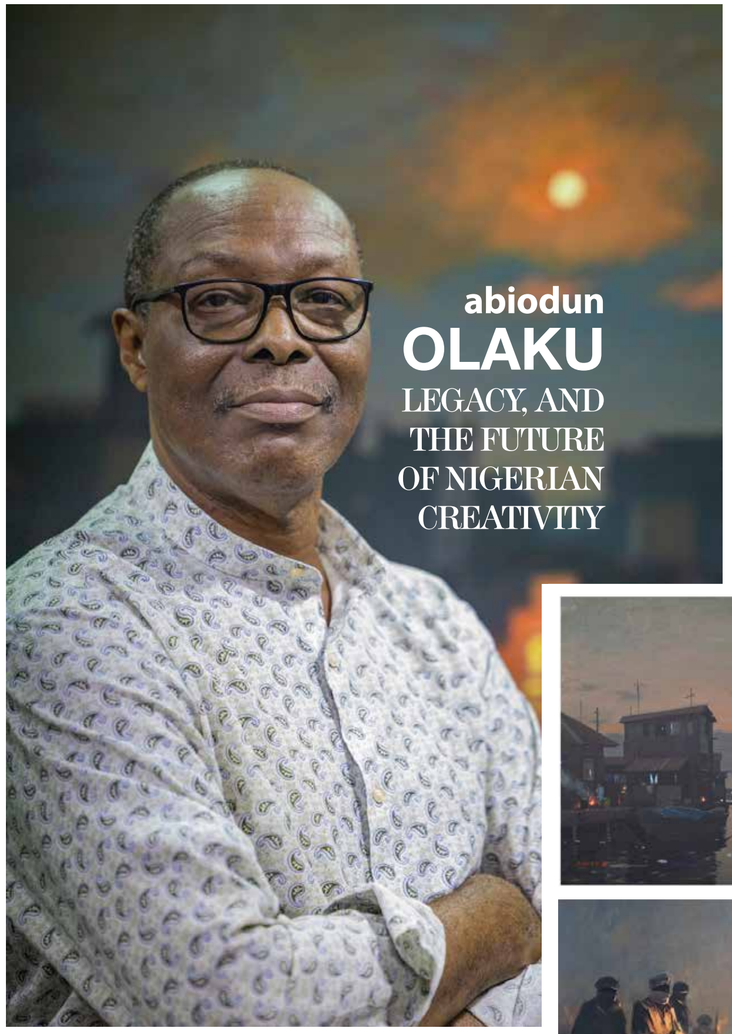
9. You Learn to Set Boundaries

Not walls — boundaries. Healthy, respectful limits that protect your time, energy, and mental space. Maybe you didn't know how to set them before. Maybe you never felt you could. Now you do. And that maturity shows up in how you work, love, and relate to others.

10. You Become Hopeful Again

Not immediately. But eventually, the future stops feeling like a blank page and starts feeling like a possibility. You don't rush into replacements or distractions. You simply recognise that life still holds joy, softness, companionship, and growth. Hope, when it returns, brings a quiet radiance that no one can fake.

By **Funke Babs-Kufeji**



abiodun OLAKU
LEGACY, AND THE FUTURE OF NIGERIAN CREATIVITY

Abiodun Olaku, born in Ibadan in 1958, stands as one of Nigeria's most distinguished contemporary realists. A graduate of Yaba College of Technology, where he earned his Higher National Diploma in 1981, Olaku began his career in the Federal Civil Service while steadily cultivating his artistic voice. After seven years of balancing both worlds, he resigned in 1989 to pursue full-time studio practice—a decision that marked the start of his enduring influence on the Nigerian art landscape. Drawing inspiration from masters such as Leonardo da Vinci, Rembrandt van Rijn, Claude Monet, Yusuf Grillo, Kolade Oshinowo—his former teacher—and Ben Enwonwu's Onitsha pantheon masquerade series, Olaku developed a signature style rooted in calm realism and a masterful command of light and shadow. Working from dark to light, he builds forms through subtle tonal shifts over gray underpaintings, culminating in luminous highlights that heighten the drama and emotional depth of his canvases. His evocative use of shadows and half-lights remains central to his acclaim, with the period between 1984 and 1989 proving pivotal in shaping his craft.
Olaku's contributions to Nigerian art are extensive. He completed major portrait commissions of former Nigerian leaders Generals Olusegun Obasanjo and Yakubu Gowon for the National Gallery of Art. His first major exhibition, Offerings from the Gods in 1985—organized by the Lagos chapter of the Society of Nigerian Artists—launched him into a prolific exhibition career both locally and internationally. He is a member of the Society of Nigerian Artists (SNA); a founding member, inaugural vice president, and trustee of the Guild of Professional Fine Artists of Nigeria (GFA); and a founder and trustee of The Universal Studios of Art at the National Theatre, Lagos.
In this interview with Funke Babs-Kufeji, Olaku offers an intimate look into the mind and journey of one of Nigeria's master painters.

You've been a major figure in Nigeria's art scene for decades. How would you describe the current state of visual art in Nigeria today compared to when you started?
Life is a continuum, offering different reactions to different situations at different times. In that sense, there has been a clear shift from what we experienced as young artists to what we see today. Life isn't static, so change is expected but some of these shifts are significant. They greatly impact the industry, because the artist's well-being and state of mind directly influence the work he produces, especially for professionals whose lives are tied to their art.
Today, the space is far more vibrant almost restless. The players and activities operate at hyper levels, and younger artists are coming in with strong contemporary energy. What concerns me, however, is that many are rushed onto the stage before they're fully prepared. They may not realize this, especially compared to the kind of mentorship and guidance we received.
We were taught that after formal or informal training, there was another essential phase we called "school after school", a period of self-discovery. It was the time to apply what you had learned, chart your own path, and reveal your unique artistic identity.
That process is now greatly reduced, if not entirely bypassed. Many artists are pushed directly from training into the marketplace. And this isn't accidental; there are agents who manipulate the system and take advantage of these impressionable young artists for their own benefit rather than for the artists' growth.

You say a lot of artists out there are most times prematurely rushed into the market and centre stage. What do you think can be done to correct these premature entries into the industry?
We have been drumming it into the ears of those who care to listen, a kind of silent advocacy that mentoring is important when they are just starting out or are budding artists. You need to be properly guided from that stage of innocence to awareness, because where you are heading is a very serious space. It is part of the economy, and whatever you encounter there will dictate what's going to happen to you in the future.
You have to have proper staying power. So, the foundation is important. You need to be built from scratch for that assignment. But most times now, I don't know whether it is the market space that beckons on them or they are the ones who are really eager to go and participate. But it tells us that there is a cutting across all levels of stakeholdership in the industry.
So, there's a lot of room for improvement in terms of knowledge and its acquisition for all the players starting from the schools, to the brokers who connect the creators, the consumers, to the recorders, the art historians, critics, researchers, individual and corporate collectors or patrons and all.

You spoke about mentorship and community among artists. What does mentorship mean to you personally, and how has it shaped your own artistic journey?
Mentorship made the journey easier for me that is the essence of mentorship. When you're just starting out, you're green; you're not familiar with the terrain. Sometimes you're not even sure where you're going. You're just moving forward by intuition, without much conscious direction. But if you have a mentor, whether officially assigned or not, you can latch onto someone from a distance, even without them knowing. You can consciously decide to study this person, even from afar, and you are bound to gain something. That person can make your journey of progress, development, and growth much easier.

You feel strongly about how things are being done in the industry today, so I'd really like to know your thoughts on the Nigerian art industry as it stands now?
It's an industry without any real legislation. Once someone feels they can make art, they can call themselves an artist. They're not breaking any law, but it shouldn't be that open. The industry isn't protected by any statutes, so anyone formally trained, informally trained, or not trained at all can jump in. That is a major challenge. There's no system to separate true talent from charlatans, interlopers, or pretenders.
Unlike in our time, the system then truly tested you. Even if you simply wanted to participate, your claims were scrutinized. Art is talent driven almost a divine endowment and it takes proper processes to nurture that raw talent.
Let me give an example from our era. If you applied to art school and met the basic criteria, the first test in most schools was a practical one. A live model would be set before you, and you had to draw from direct observation—no gadgets. It was one of the key ways they assessed the depth of your talent.
In my own case, during the admission process, supervisors would walk around as we drew. If they saw potential, they marked your work as having passed to the next stage. A shortlist would then be released, and those selected moved on to the second stage, where your portfolio was requested. Whether it was a formal portfolio or simply a collection of drawings, they wanted to see what you created in your spare time. They understood that a true artist always has the urge to create.
So it was: "Bring whatever you've done; let's see if you show the stirrings of an artist." Some of us brought only a few sheets, while others had thick portfolios, but the evaluators knew exactly what they were looking for. If you passed that stage, then you presented your academic qualifications your O-Level results, which usually came last. What mattered first was the raw talent revealed through those initial steps.

So are you saying the art space is one that should be regulated because everyone now calls themselves an artist simply because they can put pen to paper? Obviously, to be a doctor, you must undergo proper training. To be a lawyer or an architect, you must go through specific professional requirements. But art has become so informal that everyone and anyone can call themselves an artist?
I will now take it from the broader spectrum, because it means you're talking of the space of creativity. It could be visual, it could be literary, it could be performing arts. How many successful musicians actually studied music? So, it has that amorphous space that is almost borderless. Lagbaja had a different background. Wizkid was in secondary school when he started making impact. Davido's father had to force him to finish school.

But I think visual arts is more intellectual?
Yes, it is probably more intellectual. It is almost like literary arts because, for example, if you're going to hold your own in literary art, there are core subjects you must excel in. English is one, since it is our lingua franca—unless you're using a local language or any other language you speak.
And there's a scientific side to everything. There is science in English through the use of grammar. Everything has its own scientific approach. You must be well-versed in certain things to excel, because those are the tools you deploy in creating your work.
Art, as I understand it, must manifest early. The rawness of it must be seen and felt. Then you are taken through the process of burnishing.
If you don't attend art school, you might serve under a master who will take you through that developmental process.
Abroad, they have ateliers and academies where you undergo rigorous training. That's how the old masters trained you were attached to a master and spent years learning the tricks of the trade. Then, when you gained independence, your own spirit emerged in your work over time, like a fingerprint.
But today, it's different. When you want to go to art school, there are no tests to reveal whether you're truly talented for what you want to pursue.
We know this because of what we offer here at the Universal Studio of Arts. We receive and train a huge number of students every year from all kinds of institutions that teach art across the country universities, technical colleges, and colleges of education.
I have seen semi-graduates struggling. I meet people who are about to graduate but can't produce the kind of drawing I made in my first year, or anything close, yet they are graduating. We talk to our peers and contemporaries in the system and ask, "What's going on? How can you help change this?" But everyone plays safe. They don't want to get involved or ruffle feathers.
We, who serve as intermediaries, have to struggle to get the best out of them, so we do what we can. It's difficult when people lack that foundation; it's hard to build on top of it. And this is what we encounter regularly in the industry at large, even at the professional level.

So what can be done at this point?
We tried to get some regulation, to put some statutes in place. Through the National Assembly, working in collaboration with the National Gallery, there is an Act that guides this industry. But you wouldn't know that some of those things exist, but they do.
Sorry to say the Nigerian factor again in play. We were lucky, those of us who operated under provisional bodies for artists like the Center of Nigerian Artists, which is the main umbrella body. We have the Guild of Fine Artists. The full name is Guild of Professional Fine Artists of Nigeria, shortly known as GFA, which we formed. But because of the liberal nature of this contemporary time, the checks and balances have been reduced, and there is a lot of hype. We are trying our best to guide those we can, especially those who come to train with us.

So let's talk about African art and the Nigerian art space. We can say that African art is gaining attention, but many of our artists still face challenges. What are these barriers, and how can they be addressed?
I would have loved to know the specific barriers to start with. Some may be real, but others are merely perceptions some even self-imposed. One thing I've learned in my development as an artist is that what truly carries you through any situation is building a solid brand rooted in competence, and showing PVD: proficiency, versatility, and dexterity. These qualities are like the cutlass you use to clear the bush whatever stands in your way gets cleared.
When we started, nobody knew us. Today, there are many issues out there confusing the younger artists.
You mentioned African art and Nigerian art. I believe Nigerian art falls under the umbrella of African art. And beyond African art, what other art exists? We can't talk about African art in isolation. If we call it African art, then what category are we contrasting it with? Asian art? Because ultimately, art is art. Your work must be able to hold its own—it must transcend time and space.
We have always been Africans, even before technology made it easier for us to access images and records through books and pictures. That's how we encountered the Mona Lisa and other great European works. From other parts of the world, we came to know about Impressionism and all the "isms" and "schisms." They became part of our knowledge base—things we needed to be aware of.
In this part of the world, we only began documenting recently. Before then, our history was mostly oral. That made the content vulnerable and easy to distort. Anyone telling the story could twist it to suit their agenda. That's how our history became so muddled, with multiple versions of many things.
In the Western world, documentation was much easier because technology advanced earlier. Books, prints, and other media helped them preserve their narratives. But here, even up till now, we still argue about Ife and Benin art. Everything remains muddled.

Let's talk about technology and how it's changing the way art is seen and sold. How do you feel about the rise of digital art, NFTs, and online exhibitions? What are your thoughts on all of that?
I never really understood what was propelling NFTs. I was invited to some NFT platforms, and people used to make a lot of money from them. I think it was driven mostly by money almost like a form of laundering. Because when you have a work you can't physically enjoy, something you can only view on your system, it feels neither here nor there. And after a while, where is it now? It has gone down.
I think these things overlap cryptocurrency and all that. Now we're talking about AI. AI is tied to the production of everything, including art and music. But I don't see it as a final destination. I believe we may eventually return to some of the old rules. When we talk about fine art, the human touch will still matter. It will be distinctly different. Whatever is generated by AI will be identifiable as AI-produced, and the work created through human labour and intellectual input will stand apart.
So ultimately, it will come down to choice. People will choose what they want, and each form will have its own audience and its own value.

As an artist and a mentor, what gives you the most satisfaction when you're creating your own work? What is that feeling that makes you say, "Aha, this is it," personally?
For me, it's when the work manifests the way I originally envisioned it. Because sometimes creating is like throwing darts—sometimes you hit the bullseye, sometimes you miss. It's the same with art. When you begin, you have an idea inside you, but you don't always know how it will end. Along the way, there are moments of frustration. If you're truly a genuine artist, you're going to experience those feelings.
Sometimes I look at a piece and say, "This isn't really what I wanted." But at the end of the day, you don't have to throw it away. You can accept it as a competent work. Other people might admire everything you create, but you, as the creator, know what you intended. And sometimes the outcome misses the mark. Maybe the next attempt will be better and that's why we keep working. Even the spark of an idea is enough to push us forward.

So finally, what is your advice for the next generation of Nigerian artists hoping to make work that endures both locally and globally?
The first advice I'll give is one I received from my own master. He said only three things matter: the first is work, the second is work, and the third is don't stop working. You have to train your mind. Stop focusing on the environment in a negative way. Stop feeding negativity, because negativity is acidic. Instead, embrace positivity. People focus too much on what's wrong with Nigeria.
I always use this as a prime example: many won't tell you how many billionaires we have, or how much opportunity exists here. Nigeria is a land of opportunities. Stay focused and seek guidance for what you want to become and for the goals you're aiming at. There are people who can guide you, so you don't dissipate your energy in the wrong direction.

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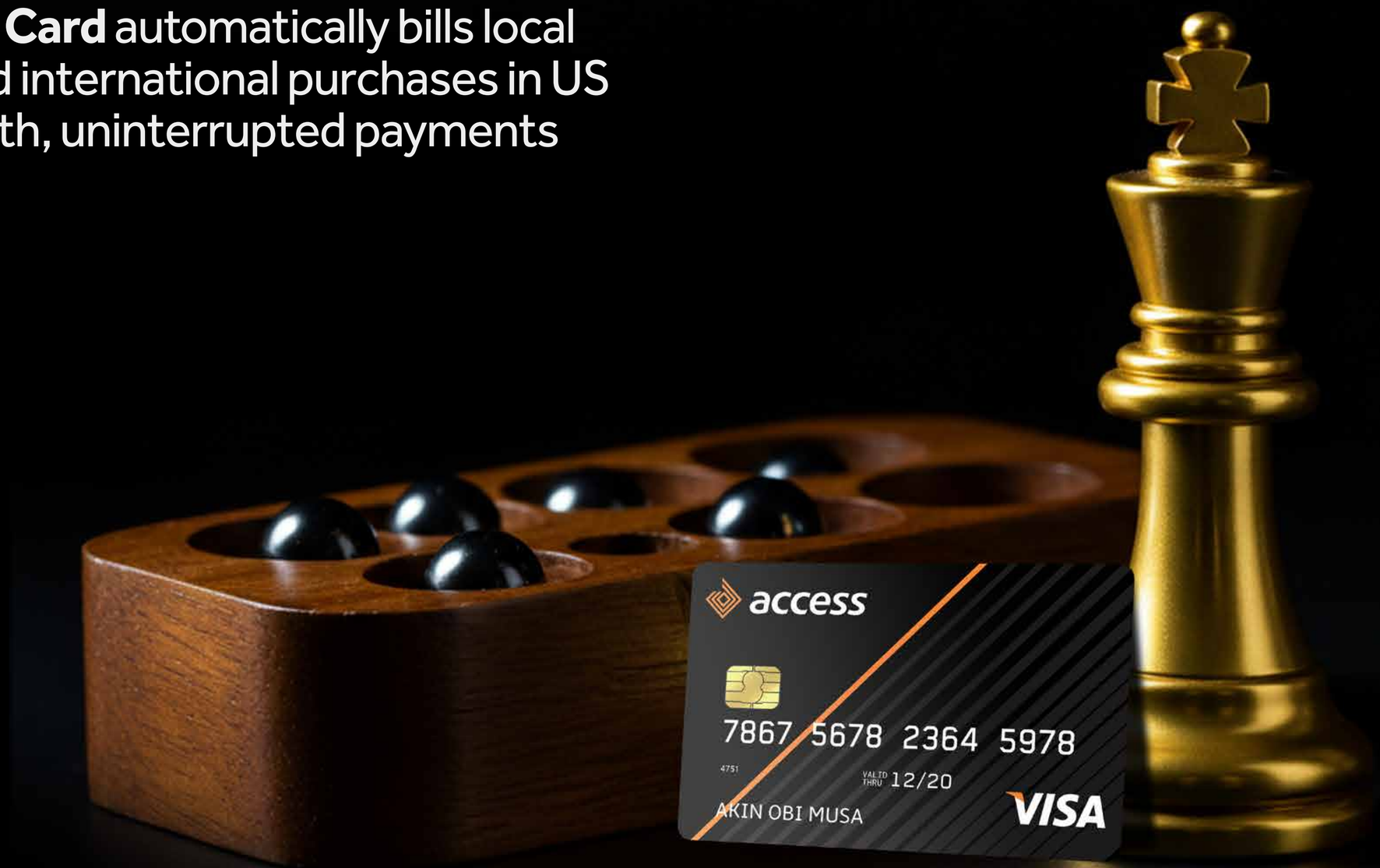

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COVER

TEDx IKOYI

BELLA DISU

SAY YES NOW: WHY READINESS IS A MYTH

Business Leader, Bella Disu, received a standing ovation at TEDx Ikoyi after delivering a powerful talk titled "Say Yes Now: Why Readiness is a Myth."

Her message was simple but arresting: we do not become ready before we begin — we become ready by doing. In the talk, she explores why people and organisations hesitate at the very moments that require bold action. Drawing from business cases, she explained how Kodak stalled, how Blockbuster dismissed innovation, and how Apple accelerated — not because it was the largest, but because it acted with clarity and conviction.

Disu shared a deeply personal reflection on meeting her "whole self" at 38 — the creative, changemaker, lifelong learner — not in a moment of perfect readiness, but in a quiet decision to stop walking within familiar walls.

"Readiness is not a destination," she says. "It is a posture. Every meaningful shift begins with a single yes — sometimes inconvenient, often uncomfortable, always transformative."

Her message is already resonating across leadership and personal development circles, echoing a universal truth: courage is contagious, and when one person moves, others feel permitted to begin.

Watch the TEDx Ikoyi talk here:
https://youtu.be/msW3ysulAGg

SAY YES NOW: WHY READINESS IS A MYTH
BELLA DISU
TEDXIKOYI

Indeed, when I look back at every important shift in my life, it began with a small yes, often inconvenient, sometimes uncomfortable, occasionally irrational. Saying yes to tennis at 38, saying yes to learning again. Saying yes to growth when it would have been easier to just stay still. But here's what I didn't expect. Saying yes never ends with you.

I was 38 when I finally met my whole self. Bella used to be the change-maker, the creative, the lifelong learner. The woman who was afraid to keep evolving. It's interesting though, I didn't meet her in a moment of perfect readiness. I met her after I got tired of constantly walking within the same walls. Today, I'd like to share the story of how I stopped waiting, what it taught me, about why we hesitate, and what happens when we finally say yes. A while ago, I decided to try something new, not in business, but in my years-long fitness journey. At one point, I weighed 110 kilos; at another, 64. By my mid-thirties, I found a rhythm: 160 G, approaching a day of strength training 4 times a week, 10000 steps daily, slight work, right? I had three walking pads, one in my bedroom, one in my study, and one in the office. Don't ask. I've never been one for small measures.

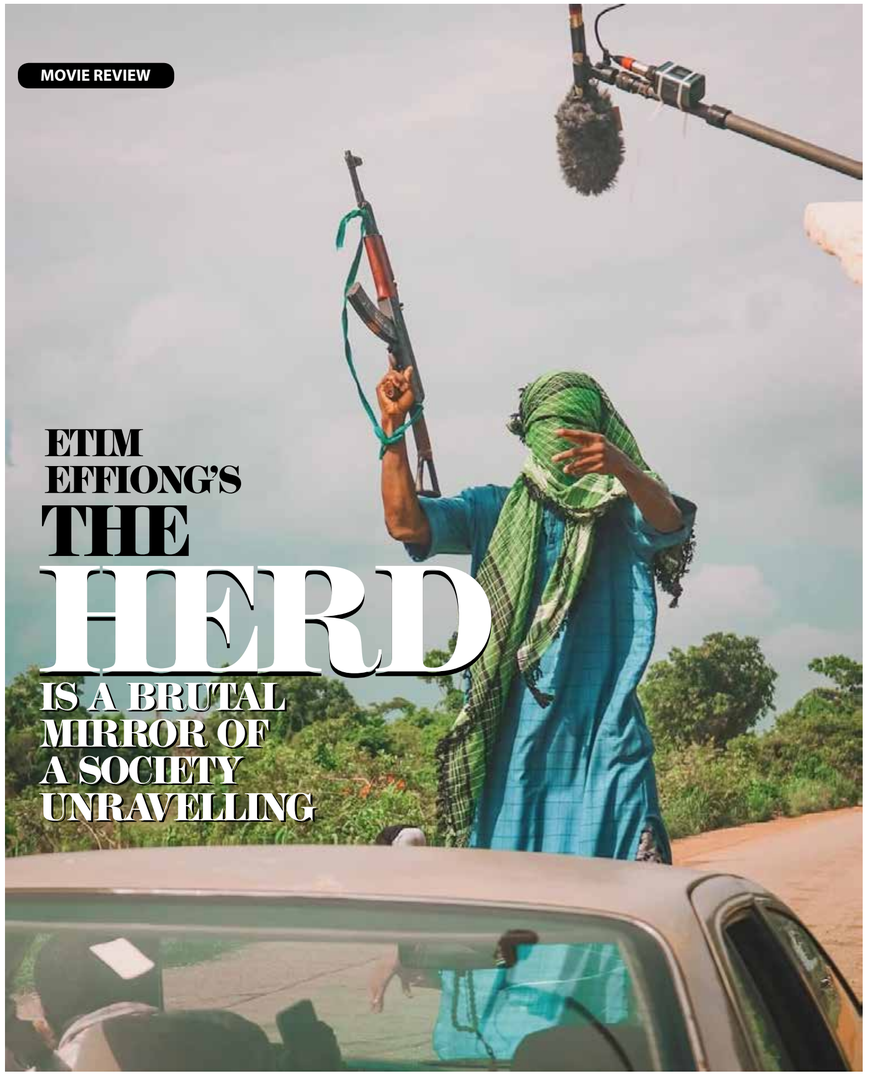
But it worked. Of course it did. Until one day I realised this is my life walking in place and staring at the same walls. So I thought, maybe it's time to move differently. Maybe I should learn tennis. Yet. As soon as the thought came into my mind, I hesitated. I asked myself, should I do it? Should I wait? Wasn't it too technical? Too hard. Too late. After all, who starts tennis at 38? Despite not feeling quite ready, I found a coach, showed up on the court, and soon I was playing tennis three, sometimes four times a week. And then, to my horror, I discovered that tennis doesn't even give you that many steps. All those side-to-side moves don't count. But by then, it wasn't about steps anymore. I was hooked.

And now I'm often amazed at the physical and mental growth that has happened since, or because of, one small decision. I asked myself, should I do it? Should I wait? And something in me answered, Say yes. But I thought about why I hesitated in the first place, and it's that, for years, I thought I had to wait for the right moment to gain more qualifications for a different version of myself. Psychologists call it destination addiction, the belief that happiness lives at the next milestone. So a certain weight, title or degree. And I know I'm not alone. How many of you have asked yourselves, Should I do it? Should I wait? What if I fail? We all know that familiar voice that whispers. Not yet. So if the antidote is that simple, say yes. Now, why don't we all do it? We don't, because hesitation is a conundrum. It wears the mask of readiness. And I used to mistake readiness for a finish line.

Then, in 2014, I met a coach I had invited to facilitate an inter-session. And after the session, he said, So tell me about Bella. I froze. I really did. I could talk about my work, my father's mentorship, even my wedding, which was probably my biggest claim to fame at the time. But about me, I-I really didn't have much to say, so I was thankful when he offered me a complimentary session and said, Let's talk to Bella from ten years ago. What would you tell her? And ten years ahead, who is she? To be honest, that future Bella was hazy, but his questions drew interests and passions I once buried. So he then said, "I'll stop you from going after them." It can be many things at once. So I said a mental yes to his words, and it opened doors to pursuing diverse interests. The first master's, later an MBA, writing and publishing, my first children's book, impacting lives by building a foundation and gaining the courage to walk into rooms that once intimidated me. You see, each step reinforced something critical. Readiness is not a destination. It's a posture. And we become ready by doing today, I'm no longer a woman hesitating in life or business, and that transformation has seeped into the organisations I lead. I've led through this comfort many times. I've restructured the board and redesigned corporate strategies. And I've dealt with the late nights, the doubts and that familiar restlessness that keeps leaders awake thinking we have to make this change. Yet conviction, grounded in facts, gives me a sense of urgency. And that's what leadership is to me: seeing what could be and moving towards it in the moment, as a journey towards clarity, not chaos.

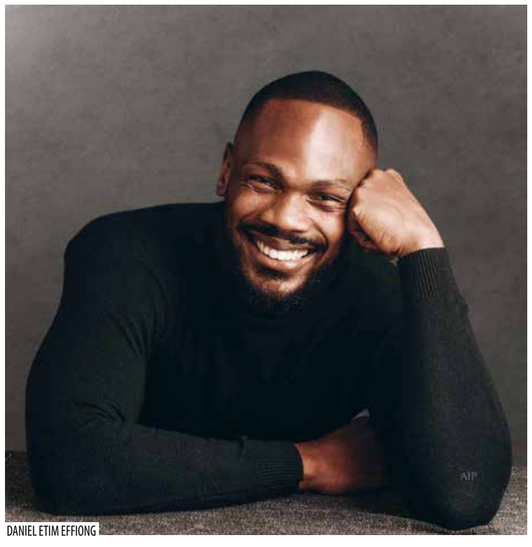
And this is particularly important because organisations wrestle with hesitation, just like individuals do. Some companies choose to wait for perfect timing and lose their moment. Others say yes now and change industries. I'm sure you all are familiar with these three companies that sat at the same intersection in the 1990s. Remember Kodak? Kodak saw digital images coming and froze. Blockbuster saw Netflix and laughed. Why? Organisational loss aversion is the fear of letting go of a successful past to pursue an uncertain future. In contrast, Apple saw the same digital future and accelerated the difference. Two companies chose to protect their past and failed. One chose to create its future and thrived. And that story isn't foreign. It's happened right here at home, too. Just think of how we went from seeing the glory days of a popular, quick-service restaurant that defined our childhoods to the success and triumph of newer ones like Chicken Republic and Kilimanjaro. We've also seen the rise and agility of Fintechs pushing banks to challenge their long-held ways of doing business, and in doing so, opening entirely new markets and customer segments. The companies that say yes now prove that courage and speed matter more than size and comfort. Therefore, the companies that thrive, the leaders who excel, the people who grow, they all share one thing. They've come to recognise the mask of hesitation and take it off. When hesitation says, not yet. They know that doing creates readiness. And when comfort offers this gentle cage, they choose the discomfort that leads to growth.

Indeed, when I look back at every important shift in my life, it began with a small yes, often inconvenient, sometimes uncomfortable, occasionally irrational. Saying yes to tennis at 38, saying yes to learning again. Saying yes to growth when it would have been easier to just stay still. But here's what I didn't expect. Saying yes never ends with you. My teams learn to challenge comfort because I did. The women I mentor raised their hands because they saw me raise mine. And my daughter Paris picked up a racket because I picked up courage. Every yes we give ourselves becomes a light, and tells someone else it is safe to begin. So right now, in this room, someone is sitting on an idea, starting a new business, changing roles, writing that first page, booking that class. Maybe you're waiting for the perfect timing, asking yourself, ' Should I do it? ' Should I wait? You already have your answer: the traffic light is green, so move. Say yes, but most of all, say yes. Now, thank you.



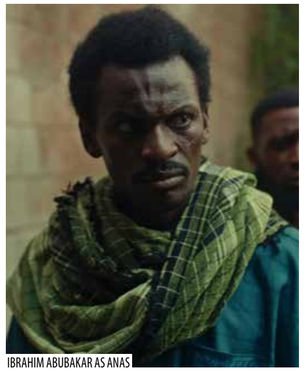
MOVIE REVIEW

ETIM EFFIONG'S THE HERD IS A BRUTAL MIRROR OF A SOCIETY UNRAVELLING



DANIEL ETIM EFFIONG

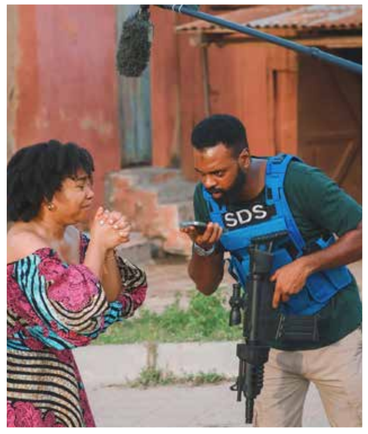
There are movies that entertain, and then there are movies that confront. The Herd, now streaming on Netflix, does both—gripping you with its story while forcing you to look squarely at all-too-familiar pains. Directed by and also starring Daniel Etim Effiong, the film is a bold, unflinching work that captures Nigeria's present condition with unnerving precision. It opens in the most Nigerian way possible: a wedding: the joy, the colour, the noise. For a moment, it feels like we're safe inside the kind of celebration that makes life here worth living. Then, in an instant, it's gone. A highway ambush. Gunfire. Confusion. Blood. The party is over, and so is the illusion of safety.



IBRAHIM ABUBAKAR AS ANAS

AMAR UMAR

DERIN (GENOVEVA UMEH) AND GOSI (ETIM EFFIONG ,



DERIN (GENOVEVA UMEH) AND FOLA (KUNLE REMI)

THE STORY

Derin (Genoveva Umeh) and Fola (Kunle Remi) are newly married, eager to escape their intrusive families for a honeymoon. Their best man, Gosi (Effiong himself), tags along for what begins as a light-hearted journey through the countryside. But what lies ahead is a descent into terror.

An ambush on a quiet stretch of road turns their joyride into a nightmare. Fola is killed during an escape attempt; Derin, Gosi, and others are dragged into a forest by a gang of kidnappers led by Anas (Ibrahim Abubakar). Back home, families scramble to raise N50 million in ransom while police investigators chase false leads, one of which is deliberately sabotaged by a Pastor (Lateef Adedimeji) who bought butchered dead bodies from the kidnappers. Gosi's wife, meanwhile, battles illness, judgment, and the humiliation of begging for help in a society that punishes vulnerability.

A Society Rotting from Within

Etim Effiong's greatest triumph as Director is that The Herd doesn't treat evil as something distant—it's domestic, familiar, and disturbingly logical. The film is filled with faces we recognise from real life:

The old Yoruba woman who lives in the same community where the kidnappers host their victims, instead of alerting the authorities, warns them when the police draw near. She's just as complicit—a portrait of the ordinary Nigerian who protects danger because she fears disruption more than justice.

Gosi's parents, polished and upper-class, are consumed not by grief but by resentment toward their daughter-in-law. Even as their son's life hangs by a thread, they debate how to erase her from his life. It's a brutal take on how class, ego, and tribal prejudice often outweigh empathy in the Nigerian hierarchy of emotions.

Then there's Habiba, the kidnapper's wife, herself once a victim who was never rescued. Her quiet resignation is haunting. She's not just surviving; she's adapting.

Her story speaks to the cruel continuity of trauma—how the lines between victim and perpetrator blur when the system fails everyone.

And finally, the pastor. A man of God who buys human parts from killers while preaching redemption to his flock. It's the most damning portrait in the film, a reminder that the collapse of morality in Nigeria often begins where we least expect it. These aren't random characters. They are Nigeria in microcosm—a web of complicity, silence, greed, and self-preservation.

Realism that Feels Too Real

Every frame feels lived-in—the forests, the kidnappers and the victims. The decision to blend Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo with English makes the fear universal—it's not a northern problem or a southern tragedy; it's a Nigerian one. Effiong's dual role as Director and lead gives the film its heartbeat. His performance is weary, desperate, and believable. Ibrahim Abubakar's Yakubu is terrifyingly human—his violence anchored in hopelessness rather than spectacle. Even the unknown Hausa actors lend the film a realism so sharp it feels documentary-like. From the editing to the sound design, nothing feels forced. Even the smallest details — the echo of gunfire, the sound of the forest holding its breath — feel exact.

Our Take

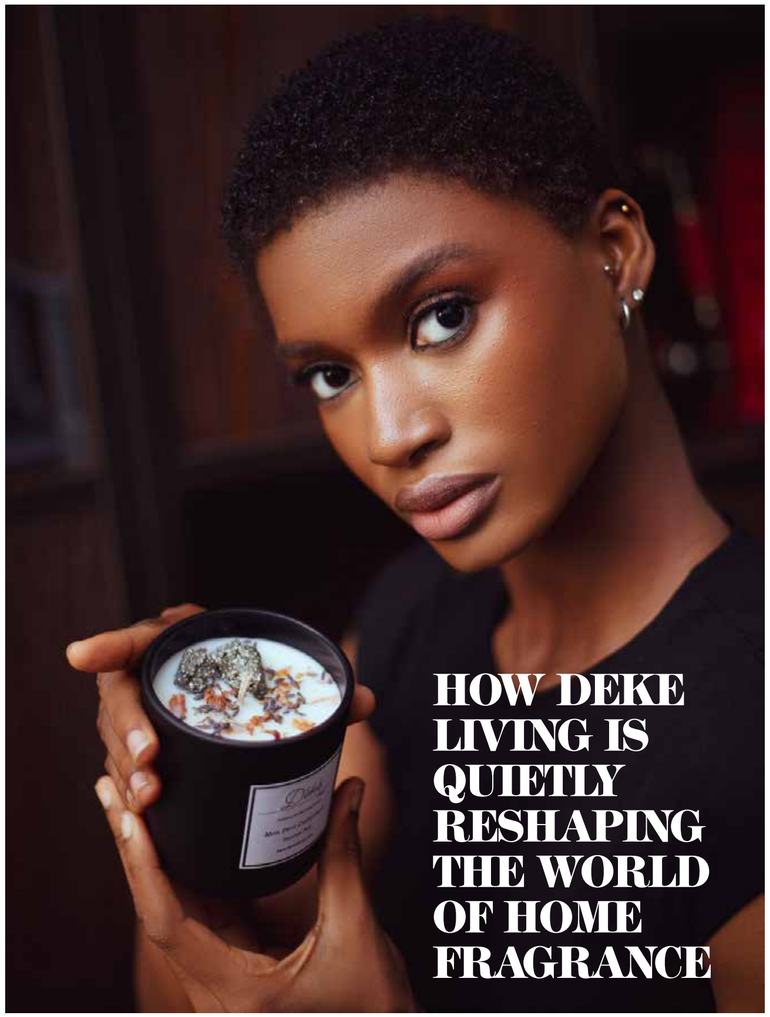
The Herd is not just a thriller about kidnappers; it's a parable about a country slowly losing its soul. It forces us to confront uncomfortable truths — that evil doesn't always come with guns, that silence is its own weapon, and that the lines between sinner and survivor blur more every day. Etim Effiong doesn't give us heroes or villains; he gives us people. Ordinary, frightened, sometimes cruel — all products of a system that has stopped working.

The result is a film that feels less like fiction and more like confession. It lands at a moment when Nigeria is reeling from fresh abductions in Kwara, Kebbi and Niger States — proof that The Herd is not timely by coincidence but by design.

If you're looking for escapism, this isn't it. But if you're ready to see Nigeria for what it has become — and what it risks becoming — watch The Herd. It's not comfortable, but it's necessary.

Rating: 8/10 — Bold, painful, and unshakably real.

There's a particular kind of joy that comes from stepping into a space that smells incredible — not loud, not artificial, but quietly intentional. The kind of scent that makes you exhale without thinking, makes a room feel lived-in, loved, and somehow more complete. That experience, once reserved for boutique hotels and impossibly curated homes, is becoming more mainstream. And in Lagos, one of the quiet forces behind this shift is Deke Living.



HOW DEKE LIVING IS QUIETLY RESHAPING THE WORLD OF HOME FRAGRANCE

What makes Deke Living interesting isn't just that they make candles and diffusers — the market is full of those. It's the way they've managed to make scent feel like part of a lifestyle rather than a decorative accessory. Their products are understated, almost calm in their appearance: matte tones, clean silhouettes, nothing competing for attention. And yet, once they're in your space, you feel the difference. The room softens. The atmosphere shifts. The environment feels a little more grown, a little more cared-for. Deke Living is one of the brands pushing Nigerians to rethink what home fragrance can be. Gone are the days when a scented candle was an afterthought or a random supermarket buy. There's an evolving culture of intentionally scented homes — diffusers on consoles, candles layered into evening routines, fragrances

matched to mood or décor. You can walk into a modern apartment in Lagos today and almost expect a particular kind of ambience, the same way you expect good lighting or textured throws. That wasn't always the case.

Part of the brand's appeal is that they don't try too hard. There's no excessive branding, no dramatic packaging, no overcomplicated storylines. The scents do the work. And they feel grown — creamy, airy, warm, sometimes coastal, sometimes sweet, always refined. There's a richness to the way their fragrances fill a room that suggests they weren't created to impress but to settle into everyday life. It's the difference between a fragrance that announces itself and one that becomes part of the room's character.

And the design choices matter too. Their candles and diffusers look like objects that belong — not trendy pieces that will age out, but timeless staples you can move from a living room to a bedroom without disrupting the visual flow. That blend of design and scent is part of why they stand out.

What they've done, perhaps unintentionally, is reshape the expectation of what a Nigerian fragrance brand can look and feel like. There's a quiet confidence in their approach. You don't get the sense they're trying to imitate a global brand or chase a trend. They're simply responding to the evolving taste of people who want their homes to smell as beautiful as they look, and who recognise fragrance as an essential part of atmosphere.

And then there's the emotional element. Scent is personal — more personal than most décor choices. It ties to memory, mood, even identity. A good candle becomes part of your daily ritual. A good diffuser becomes the scent people associate with you. Deke Living leans into that emotional connection by offering fragrances that feel familiar without being predictable; comforting without being cliché.

They've essentially helped normalise the idea that scent is self-care for the home. A tiny luxury that changes how you feel when you walk through your door. A quiet upgrade that somehow makes the entire space more welcoming.

Now, speaking of upgrades — November is not too early to think about Christmas shopping. In fact, it's the smarter, calmer time to do it. Before the rush. Before the sold-outs. Before December becomes the Olympics of last-minute panic.

And if you're curating a thoughtful, stylish holiday list, here's why Deke Living deserves a place on it:

1. They make beautiful, meaningful gifts.

A Deke Living candle instantly feels thoughtful — not just "I picked something up on the way." It's the gift you give a host, a boss, your stylish friend, your mother, your neighbour, even yourself. And during the holidays, people appreciate gifts that add warmth to their home.

2. Their packaging already feels like a present.

Minimal, polished, elegant — you don't need to add much else. A ribbon, a note, and you're done. It's Christmas-ready without the stress.

3. Home fragrance is a holiday essential.

The season is full of gatherings, dinners, slow mornings, and cosy evenings.

A diffuser in the hallway or a candle burning beside the tree transforms the entire atmosphere. And Deke Living scents have that perfect holiday balance: comforting without being cloying, fresh without being sharp.

4. You're supporting a rising

Nigerian luxury brand.

There is something particularly special about gifting a brand that reflects craft, intention, and the evolving sophistication of Nigerian design. It's a small way of saying, "We see you. We support this."

5. It's the gift that keeps giving.

Long after Christmas, long after the decorations come down, long after the guests have gone, the scent remains. And every time it fills the room, it reminds the recipient of you.

RICH SLEEP BY IDIA AISIEN: WHEN FASHION MEETS EVERYDAY EASE

Idia Aisien has always had an instinct for style that feels lived in. Whether it's her effortless red carpet moments, her sleek on-screen presence, or her effortless personal elegance, she's one of those women who make fashion feel both aspirational and accessible. So when she decided to build something of her own, it was only natural that it would reflect that same balance. Her new venture, Rich Sleep, is a sleepwear and loungewear brand that bridges comfort and sophistication — the kind of pieces that make home feel like your favourite hotel suite. Designed for women, men, and children, the line takes the idea of rest and elevates it into a lifestyle. "I wanted to create something that felt luxurious but familiar," Idia says. "We spend so much time investing in what we wear outside, but I wanted people to also feel beautiful when they're just at home."

That idea — of redefining private style — runs through the DNA of Rich Sleep. It's not just about what you wear to bed; it's about creating small, intentional moments that feel good. The debut collection captures that sentiment through simple, well-made pieces: silk-blend pajamas in understated tones, soft cotton robes, and coordinated family sets designed to bring warmth and connection into the home.

But what's perhaps most refreshing about Rich Sleep is how grounded it feels. Every piece is made in Nigeria, a choice Idia describes as non-negotiable. That decision gives the brand an authenticity that feels rare in a space often dominated by imported labels. It also reinforces a growing shift in the Nigerian fashion industry — where local design is meeting international standard without losing its identity. For Idia, this move into entrepreneurship isn't a sharp detour from her media career; it's an evolution. After years as a model, television host, and actress, she understands image from the inside out. She's built a brand rooted in presentation, but she's also grown

to appreciate what happens behind the lens — the work, the structure, the vision. Rich Sleep is where both worlds meet: business and beauty, form and function.

It's also perfectly timed. The global fashion conversation has shifted toward wellness and intentional living, with more people investing in what makes them feel comfortable — both physically and emotionally. Rich Sleep slides effortlessly into that dialogue too, offering not just clothes but a point of view.

Idia's entry into this space signals something bigger: a growing confidence among Nigerian women redefining what entrepreneurship looks like. Not everything has to be grand or loud. Sometimes it's as simple as finding a gap — and filling it beautifully.

8 WAYS TO MAKE YOUR NEXT TRIP TRULY HEALING

Travel didn't officially sign up to be our therapist, but life quietly handed it the role. Somewhere between burnout, heartbreak, overthinking, and the constant pressure to "be on," hopping on a plane became something more intentional. Not just a getaway — a reset. A soft landing. A chance to unclench your mind. But here's the thing: travel only becomes therapeutic when you treat it that way. A packed itinerary, frantic photo ops, and trying to "do it for the gram" won't give you the peace you're chasing. Healing travel is conscious. Deliberate. Soft. So, if you want your next trip to actually fix your mood — or at least lighten the load — here's how to let travel do what therapy does so well.

1.Choose Your Destination Based on Your Mood, Not Trends

Healing starts with honesty. If you're overwhelmed, you don't need a hyper-social city break in London. If you're heartbroken, maybe avoid the couples' resort your ex always wanted to visit. Pick a place that matches the emotional temperature you need — calm beaches, cosy towns, wide-open landscapes, or a city whose energy you can borrow.

2. Slow Down on Purpose

Every trip doesn't need to be an itinerary marathon. Healing happens in the pauses — the morning coffees, the long walks, the nowhere-to-be moments. Give yourself free days. Cancel plans guiltlessly. Allow a destination to unfold instead of attacking it.

3. Create Phone Boundaries (Even Small Ones)

A trip can't be therapeutic if your notifications follow you like unpaid debts. You don't need a complete digital detox — just small rules. One hour every morning without your phone. No emails after 7 pm. Photos only, no scrolling. Teach your mind how to be quiet again.

4. Do One Thing Just for Your Soul

Not for content, not because it's recommended online — but because something in you wants it. A pottery class in Accra. A sunrise hike in Cape Town. A long, unnecessary boat ride in Zanzibar. A museum in Paris, even if you're not "a museum person."That one soul-feeding activity stays with you long after you return.

5. Eat Like You're Curious, Not Rushed

Food is therapy — especially on holidays. Don't just "grab something." Sit down. Try something you've never heard of. Ask locals what they eat. Taste slowly. Meals anchor you in the moment, and sometimes the best healing starts with not inhaling your food between errands.

6. Travel With People Who Don't Stress You Out

A peaceful trip with the wrong person becomes a punishment. Choose companions who match your energy — the friend who doesn't mind silence, the cousin who doesn't overplan, the partner who knows when to lean in and when to give you space. The company you keep determines 80% of your peace.

7. Let Yourself Feel Things

Therapeutic travel works when you stop performing. If a view makes you emotional, let it. If a market overwhelms you, step away. If a moment reminds you of something painful, breathe through it. Being soft is healing — and travel gives you permission to be softer than you allow yourself at home.

8. Bring Something Back That Isn't a Souvenir

Bring back a habit, a mindset, a new boundary, a new curiosity, or simply a lighter way of seeing your life. Travel isn't a magic fix, but if you return with even a tiny shift — more patience, a clearer head, a reminder of who you are when you're not overwhelmed — then the trip did what therapy does: it opened a window where there was once a wall.

SHARON MUNDIA

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