

MWENDI NTAI – WALKER OF THE PLAINS

by Sally Minoo

Concept Summary

Mwendi Ntai is a transformative outerwear concept inspired by the rich cultural heritage of Kenya's Maasai and Akamba Communities. This modular leather coat symbolizes the spirit of movement, resilience and cultural fusion between these two vibrant pastoralist peoples.

Crafted from ethically sourced cow leather, the design reflects the strength and versatility of leather, a material integral to Maasai life from cattle to their iconic manyatta homes. The garment features a transformative aspect, allowing it to transition from a full length trench to a shorter jacket via a concealed fastening system, providing adaptability for various environments and occasions.

Intricate embellishments draw on Akamba beadwork motifs, celebrating craftsmanship and storytelling passed down through generations. The piece honors sustainable practices through the use of natural materials, thoughtful construction and an emphasis on longevity and ease of recycling.

Mwenda Ntai is more than a coat, it's a wearable narrative of cultural identity, movement and modern expression rooted deeply in tradition.

Design Inspiration & Cultural Context

- **Maasai Influence:** The coats structure and material selection pay homage to the Maasai's enduring relationship with cattle and their traditional manyatta huts. Leather, a material integral to Maasai life is utilized to reflect strength and resilience.
- **Akamba Influence:** Decorative elements are inspired by Akamba beadwork patterns, applied through embossing techniques to maintain the integrity of leather while honoring artisanal heritage.
- **Modular Design:** The innovative fastening system allows the garment to adapt to various environments, reflecting the dynamic lifestyles of the communities inspiring the piece.

Materials & Sustainability

- **Primary Material:** Ethically sourced cow leather, chosen for its durability and cultural significance.
- **Decorative Elements:** Embossed beadwork patterns inspired by Akamba traditions, applied using sustainable techniques.
- **Sustainability Focus:** Emphasis on natural materials, longevity and ease of recycling to honor environmental responsibility.

Storyboard



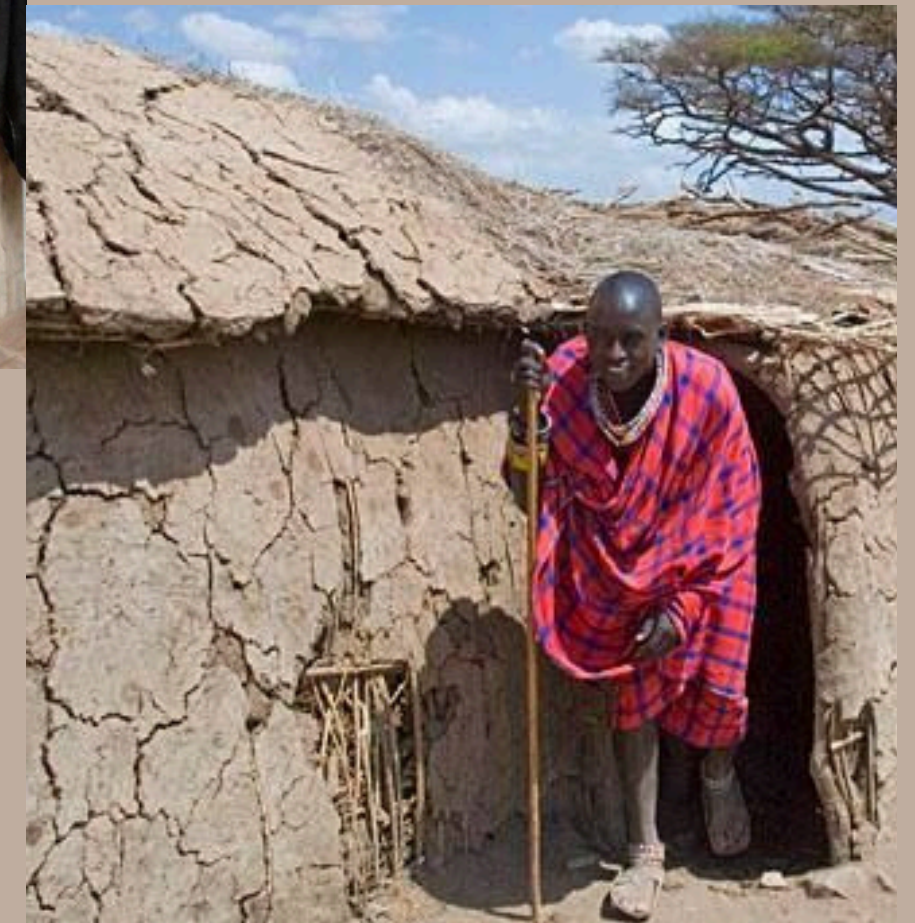
Maasai Herdsmen
contrasting with their
hut in the
background as a
visual representation
of the juxtaposing of
textures

Akamba
Beadwork
color scheme
and layout
reference for
adornment
part of the coat



Cow Hide as the
base material
for the Coat

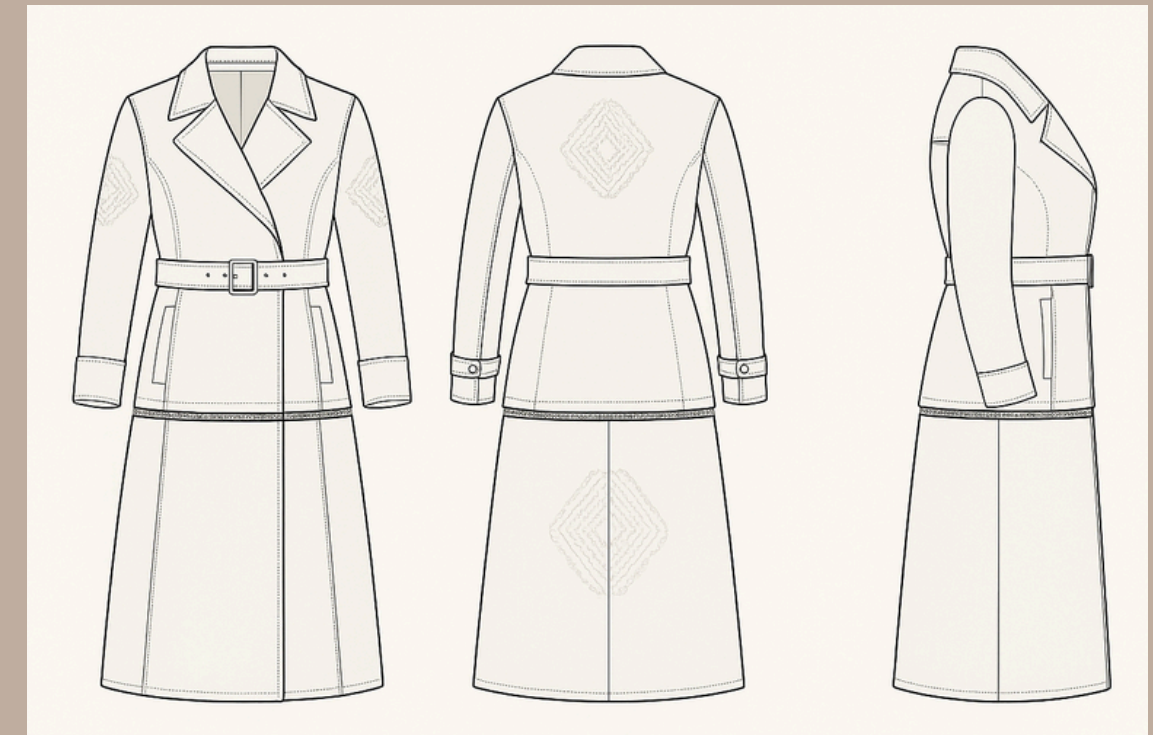
The texture of
the Maasai hut
walls and roof to
be incorporated
into the feel and
texture of the
coat



Concept Sketches



A sketch representation of the basic trench design and transformation to a smaller coat showcasing the versatility of the piece's design.



Technical Overview

The *Mwendi Ntai* coat employs a concealed fastening system that allows seamless transformation between a trench coat and a waist-length jacket, ensuring functional versatility.

Handcrafted embossing replicates Akamba beadwork motifs without compromising the leather's durability. The leather offers a natural breathable and durable shell that matures beautifully with wear.

The design emphasizes ease of recycling and disassembly, with materials selected for their biodegradability and environmental compatibility.