

PROJECT TITLE:

THE LIGHT YOU CARRY (WILL BE RETURNED)

A Two-Piece Contemporary Garment Celebrating Kenyan Tribal Roots

Two-Piece Cultural Fashion Fusion Design.

Designer:

GIDEON MUNYAO.

EDUCATION LEVEL: Under-graduate student,

University of Nairobi.

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DESIGN OBJECTIVES:

1. To create a two-piece garment (Tops & bottoms) that:
 - Honors and integrates the Maasai, Agikuyu, and Akamba cultural identities.
 - Uses symbolic materials like leather, denim, Maasai beads, brass, and glass.
 - Fuses traditional elements with contemporary fashion.
 - Pays homage to community labor forces, such as Akamba farmers and Agikuyu blacksmiths.
 - Lessen waste in environment by recycling some of the materials used.
2. To foster cultural preservation and educate through wearable storytelling.
3. To contribute to the dialogue around sustainable and heritage-based fashion on the African continent.

BACKGROUND AND DESIGN PURPOSE:

The Light You Carry project aims at merging traditional Kenyan tribal craftsmanship and identity with contemporary design aesthetics. Drawing upon the various ancient techniques, the design piece aims to honor ancestral artistry while

creating a fashion-forward statement that resonates both locally and globally. Simultaneously, the design aims at telling Kenyan

cultural stories through textile, beadwork, metalwork, and silhouette, serving both as a wearable narrative and an ode to the artistic, spiritual, and functional genius of it all.

TARGET AUDIENCES:

- Fashion-forward individuals seeking culturally rooted luxury.
- Curators and buyers interested in Afro-futurist, heritage-focused, or cultural couture collections.
- Academics and enthusiasts of African textile history, mythology, and design.

DESIGN COMPONENTS:

1. Leather & denim top with Maasai-Inspired Beadwork.

- Silhouette: Sleek and modular; features countable glass beads.
- Materials: Cotton denim (upper & lower bodice), Leather mid-bodice with Maasai bead patterns.
- Symbolism: Beads represent warriorhood, community.

2. Leather Skirt with Bead and Metal Hardware Adornment

- Silhouette: Sleek, curve-hugging, edgy.
- Materials: Locally tanned leather, glass beads, buttons.

- Symbolism: Fertility, resilience, initiation rites, blacksmith reverence.

CULTURAL INFLUENCES:

Agikuyu:

- Known for blacksmithing heritage (Uturi) and leather softening with castor oil.
- Values tied to ritual discipline and ancestral wisdom.

Akamba:

- Honored through cotton denim, celebrating agricultural pride and labor.

Maasai:

- From bone sculpting techniques, glass beads were also able to be produced locally and also as a result of the coastal trades with Arabs.
- Beads reflect identity, courage, rites of passage and African Spirituality.

Key Messages:

- Cultural convergence can be couture.
- Ancestral roots are living guides to modern creativity. and African spirituality.modern creativity.
- Power tapping into ancient inspired designs can be a route to revolutionary fashion sustainability as ancient craftsmanship was mindful of environment sustenance.

Color & Material Palette:

- Garment Leather-Crimson white
- Denim- Indigo Blue
- Maasai glass beads-Gold, blue & black.
- Glass beads- blue
- Metal hardware- Predominantly Gold.

Deliverables:

- Technical fashion sketches.

(Free hand sketches & a digital
design sketch)

- Mood boards.
- Cultural annotations.
- Garment prototype.

Success Indicators:

- Strong symbolic storytelling.
- Respectful and researched integration.
- Considered cultural feedback.