

UHURU BAG

By Ochieng' Griffiths

For RLSD Africa 2026



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Dimensions

Element	Dimension	Notes
Overall Height	40 cm	Excluding handles
Overall Width	34 cm	At widest point
Overall Depth	16 cm	Side to side
Top Flap Depth	13 cm	Overhangs front face
Front Pocket Panel Width	22 cm	Centred on front face
Front Pocket Panel Height	18 cm	With sunburst flap
Bottom Shoe Compartment	11 cm height	Full-width zip access
Side Bottle Sleeve	8 cm W × 22 cm H	Right side, net enclosure
Side Umbrella Slot	6 cm W × 28 cm H	Left side, internal
Top Handles Rise	10 cm above bag	Rolled leather
Shoulder Strap Length	90–120 cm adjustable	Detachable
Strap Width	3.5 cm	Weight-distributing
Estimated Weight (empty)	~1.1 kg	Full-grain leather construction

Materials & Specification

COWHIDE LEATHER SURFACE COVERAGE. COMPETITION REQUIREMENT: MIN. 50%

72%

PRIMARY EXTERIOR MATERIAL

Full-grain cowhide leather

Front face: deep oxblood / Side panels: near-black, both full-grain, vegetable-tanned. Accounts for 72% of total exterior surface area. Vegetable tanning ensures durability, natural patina development, and reduced environmental impact versus chrome tanning.

BOTTLE SLEEVE

Natural cotton net

Open-weave, breathable. Accounts for approx. 6% of exterior surface.

STRUCTURAL BASE

Recycled cardboard + cotton interfacing

Bag base and frame panels. Gives structure without adding excessive weight.

STITCHING

Waxed linen thread

Tone-on-tone on oxblood panels. Contrast cream on near-black side panels. Saddle-stitch construction for strength.

PROHIBITED MATERIALS

None present

No fur. No exotic skins. No synthetic leather on exterior surfaces. Fully compliant with RLSD Africa 2026 material rules.

INTERIOR LINING

Burnt amber satin

Contrast lining – warm amber against oxblood exterior. Stain-resistant finish. Interior pocket panels in matching cotton canvas.

HARDWARE

Polished gold brass

Zipper pulls, D-rings, strap adjusters, sunburst button, base feet. Solid brass, gold-plated. Anti-tarnish coated.

SHOE COMPARTMENT LINING

Brushed microfibre

Grey microfibre lining in base shoe compartment. Protects both shoes and bag interior. Wipeable surface.

Colour & Finish Board

Finish Specifications

Exterior Finish:

Matte with natural sheen

Interior: Burnt amber satin, wipeable

Hardware: Polished gold, anti-tarnish

Stitching: Waxed linen, tone-on-tone (oxblood) + contrast cream (black panels)

Base: 4 solid brass feet.

Signature Detail

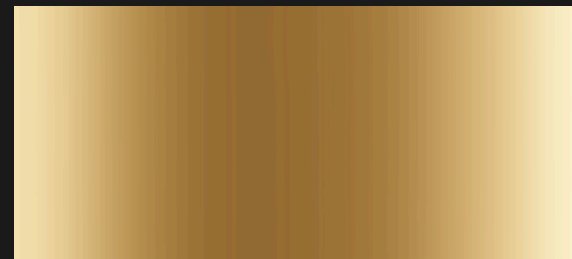
Radiating sunburst in polished gold, front pocket flap. Represents the invisible weight women carry, worn as decoration.

Texture Callouts

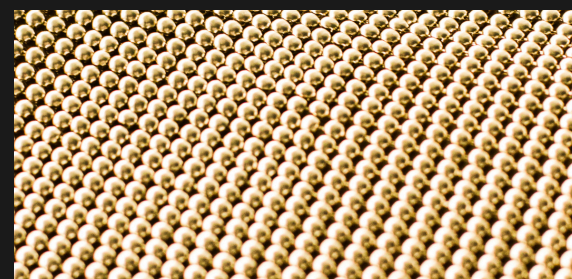
Full-grain Cowhide
Vegetable Tanned



Polished Brass Hardware



Natural Cotton Net
Bottle Sleeve



Four Colour Swatches

Deep Oxblood
Front Exterior

Near-Black
Side Panels

Polished Gold
Hardware

Burnt Amber
Interior Lining

CONCEPT STATEMENT

The Weight We Carry

The Uhuru Bag begins with a woman. She is thirty years old. She lives in Nairobi. She rarely goes out — but when she does, she arrives completely. She carries her sketchbook, her novel, her umbrella, her second pair of shoes, her perfume, her water. She boards a matatu. She navigates crowded streets, clutching her bag against her chest. She arrives somewhere and transforms. The key criteria are functionality, classiness, and security for the woman in transit in the busy streets of Nairobi.

"Uhuru means freedom, but this freedom is not given. It is structured, prepared, and carried on her shoulder."

The bag takes its name from the Swahili word for freedom, and from Nairobi itself. Uhuru Park. Uhuru Highway. A city built on independence, still negotiating what that word means for its women every single day.

The design draws from Nairobi's defining duality: concrete and green, urban density and open horizon, the Ngong Hills. The exterior moves between two leather finishes, deep oxblood on the front face, near-black on the sides, creating a shift in register, like the city changing as you move through it.

The signature detail is the radiating sunburst on the front pocket. The lines emanating from a single polished gold button. It represents what women carry that no one sees: the preparation, the performance, the expectation of readiness. On the Uhuru Bag, this invisible weight becomes decoration. It becomes the most beautiful thing in the object. We do not hide what we carry. We celebrate it.

The bag is built for real use with a bottom zip compartment for a second pair of shoes, an exterior net sleeve for a water bottle, a front security pocket for transit, a fully organised interior, and a dual-carry strap system for shoulder and front-clutch modes. Every pocket earned. Every strap is considered. Nothing decorative that is not also functional.

Leather is the right material for this object because leather remembers. It develops a patina with use; it records every journey, every street, every transformation. The Uhuru Bag will not be the same bag in five years that it was on the first day. Neither will its owner. That is the point.

DESIGNER STATEMENT

About the Maker

Ochieng' Griffiths, Nairobi, Kenya

I am a student of design. I was trained to design spaces for people, to understand how a human body moves through an environment, what it needs, what it fears, what makes it feel at home. I have spent years thinking about containment: what a structure holds, what it protects, what it reveals.

The Uhuru Bag is an extension of that thinking at a different scale. This bag is for me and what I need, instead of carrying so many bags for different items. A bag for my umbrella, my water bottle, documents, a section for a set of shoes, and my books. For me, a bag is a statement representation of myself and my personality. It serves as an identity of women like me, not to blend in but stand out and yet serve a universal function.

It is architecture for the body in transit. Every decision: the dual carry system, the shoe compartment, the radiating front detail, all came from observing how I usually move to and from Nairobi and asking: what does this object owe her?

I designed this bag for the woman who carries everything and makes it look effortless.

I designed it for Nairobi, a city I know intimately, a city that demands both toughness and elegance simultaneously. And I designed it in leather because I wanted to make something that gets better the longer it is used.

In a world of disposable things, that felt like the most radical choice I could make.

The Uhuru Bag is the first object I have designed at this scale outside of architecture.
It will not be the last.