

NYOKABI: THE MOON CARRIER

Project Summary

- **Concept:** *Nyokabi* is a sculptural leather handbag inspired by inherited identity, migration, and the historical integration between the Maasai and Kikuyu communities in Kenya. Rooted in a personal family narrative, the piece transforms themes of coexistence, continuity, and emotional inheritance into a contemporary luxury form.
- **Purpose:** The project explores how cultural memory and personal heritage can be translated into modern leather craftsmanship through restraint, symbolism, and sculptural design. The bag functions both as a premium luxury accessory and as an heirloom object carrying emotional significance across generations.
- **Intended Use:** Designed as a contemporary luxury handbag for everyday and occasion wear. Its structured silhouette and ergonomic circular handle balance functionality with artistic expression, allowing the piece to exist both as a wearable object and as a collectible design statement.
- **Sustainability Thinking:** The project emphasizes longevity, slow craftsmanship, and responsible material choices through the use of full-grain, vegetable-tanned leather, selected for its extreme durability and ability to develop a beautiful patina over time. The design prioritizes timelessness over trend-driven consumption, encouraging deep emotional attachment and long-term ownership. Hand-finishing techniques—including the hand-painted leather gradient and burnished edge work—celebrate artisanal skill and minimize reliance on mass industrial processes. By focusing on permanence, repairability, and enduring material quality, the piece promotes a thoughtful, sustainable relationship between object and owner.

Concept Narrative

"I was named Nyokabi after my grandmother. Her name carried a history larger than herself."

My great-grandfather was Maasai. During a period of migration and settlement, he moved into Kikuyu land, where he married a Kikuyu woman. Their union represented far more than a marriage; it was an act of coexistence, adaptation, and the blending of two distinct identities that had long existed side by side through trade, shared borderlands, and alliance.

When their daughter was born, she was named *Nyokabi*—a name historically given to honor Maasai-Kikuyu integration within Kikuyu naming traditions. Generations later, I inherited that name. This bag is the physical interpretation of that inheritance.

Design Philosophy

The bag explores the premise that identity is never singular. It is layered, inherited, and carried through memory, migration, and human connection.

- **The Silhouette:** The circular moon silhouette symbolizes continuity—a form with no beginning and no end—representing lineage, womanhood, emotional wholeness, and

generational passage. Its sculptural structure feels protective yet open, carefully balancing structural sharpness with organic softness.

- **The Asymmetrical Handle:**
 - One side remains smooth and restrained, reflecting the grounded elegance, permanence, and earth-centered heritage associated with Kikuyu agricultural landscapes.
 - The opposing side is wrapped and highly textured, inspired by the resilience, movement, structural adornment, and strength associated with Maasai cultural traditions.
- **The Intersection:** At the apex, both sides are joined through a masterfully braided leather intersection. This details a story of unity rather than division. Not fusion through erasure, but coexistence through preservation. Two identities carried forward in one continuous form.

Material & Craftsmanship Narrative

The piece is constructed entirely in premium leather to honor durability, memory, and the beauty of aging.

- **The Hand-Painted Yolk Panel:** Inspired by shifting earth landscapes, historical migration paths, and the emotional layering of identity. Rather than serving as superficial ornamentation, the painted treatment acts as a quiet record of movement, echoing the journeys and intersections that shaped the story behind the name *Nyokabi*. Each panel is completed individually by hand using warm, restrained earth pigments that reference the Kenyan landscape. Subtle variations in tone, depth, and texture ensure that every single piece remains unique.
- **The Interior:** Concealed within the bag's clean exterior structure is a finely detailed lining executed in a sketched rendering of traditional **Maasai Shuka** textile patterns. This choice serves as a striking structural interior surprise, ensuring that the vibrant core of Maasai cultural identity is protected inside the bag's literal heart.
- **Finishing:** Every edge is painstakingly hand-finished, burnished, and sealed as an act of absolute care, elevating the bag from an accessory to a true heirloom object meant to survive generations.

Emotional Statement

This piece is deeply personal.

It is a conversation between communities, between ancestry and modernity, between softness and strength, and between movement and permanence.

Above all, it is a tribute to the generations of Kenyan families whose identities were shaped not by separation, but by connection.

I carry the name Nyokabi. This bag carries its story.

Mood board

NYOKABI

THE MOON CARRIER

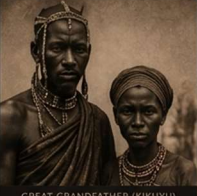
A UNION CARRIED FORWARD

Inspired by the story of my name. Born from the union of a Kikuyu man and a Maasai woman, Nyokabi symbolizes integration, respect, and the beauty of two worlds becoming one without losing themselves.

This collection honors the women who carry legacy, who hold families, cultures and memories with quiet strength—shaping the future while grounded in their roots.

TWO IDENTITIES.
ONE JOURNEY.
ONE CONTINUOUS FORM.



ANCESTRY



GREAT-GRANDFATHER (KIKUYU) & GREAT-GRANDMOTHER (MAASAI)


A Union of Cultures. The union of traditional Kikuyu settlement for a Maasai woman, the plains representing the a Maasai figures in the distancing the southward borderlands.

MIGRATION & CONNECTION





Different paths.
Shared purpose.
One continuous story.


WOMANHOOD & LEGACY



SCULPTURAL INSPIRATION



THE MOON: A SYMBOL OF CONTINUITY



Cycles. Protection. Femininity. A light that guides, never losing itself, always returning. Holding space. Connecting time, generations and stories.







KEYWORDS

- INTEGRATION
- CONTINUITY
- EMOTIONAL INHERITANCE
- INHERITANCE
- CONNECTION
- MEMORY
- UNITY
- QUIET STRENGTH
- HEIRLOOM

I CARRY HER NAME. I HONOUR HER STORY. I DESIGN OUR FUTURE.


MATERIAL LANGUAGE

Leather as memory. It holds time. It ages with you. It becomes you of your story.

VEGETABLE-TANNED LEATHER HAND-PAINTED FINISHES BURNISHED EDGES & CRAFTSMANSHIP WRAPPED TEXTURES & PROTECTION ANTIQUE BRASS DETAILS PATINA, TIME, BEAUTY.

COLOR STORY



COGNAC CLAY BURNT SIENNA ESPRESSO OXBLOOD SMOKE BEIGE WARM SAND ANTIQUE BRONZE

ROOTED IN HERITAGE. SHAPED BY CONNECTION.

CRAFTED TO BE PASSED ON. MADE TO ENDURE.

Sketches & Measurements

PHASE 1: IDEATION - FORM EXPLORATION

Exploring the circle. Breaking down the form to establish balance, proportion and structure.

PHASE 2: CULTURAL INTEGRATION & TEXTURE

Integrating Maasai heritage through beadwork patterns, wrapping techniques and joinery.

PHASE 4: HANDPAINTED YOLK

Applying handpainted earth landscape inspiration and gradient to the yolk (central panel).

PHASE 3: FUNCTIONAL PROTOTYPING & REFINEMENT

FRONT VIEW

SIDE VIEW

BACK VIEW

TOP VIEW (OPEN)

TOP VIEW (CLOSED)

BOTTOM VIEW

MATERIALS & COMPONENTS LIST	
<p>LEATHER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-grain vegetable-tanned leather (body) • Full-grain vegetable-tanned leather (handle) • Full-grain vegetable-tanned leather (wrapped detail) • Full-grain vegetable-tanned leather (painted yolk panel) • Full-grain vegetable-tanned leather (lining trims) <p>HARDWARE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Antique brass zipper • Antique brass rivets (structural) • Antique brass feet (base protection) <p>INTERIOR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maasai shuka lining (large squares pattern) • Interior zipper pocket <p>CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-strength bonded nylon thread • Leather adhesive • Edge paint & edge sealant • Reinforcement board / stiffeners • Non-woven reinforcement interfacing 	<p>DIMENSIONS (Approx.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Height: 24cm (9.4 in) • Width: 24cm (9.4 in) • Depth: 9cm (3.5 in)

A. HANDLE WRAP TRANSITION

B. BRAIDED JOINT DETAIL

C. BASE & STRUCTURE

D. ZIPPER CONSTRUCTION

E. INTERIOR VIEW

F. TESTING BASE STIFFENERS

G. EXPLODED CONSTRUCTION