

# BLACK-OWNED BRANDS ACCELERATOR



[vol 01]

[2024]

@Gravalot

## [THE BRANDS]

BAPTISTE    EMEKA    EMILE VIDAL CARR  
GRAVALOT    IMI & KIMI    LARALLAN    OMÔL

zalando | A D / N

# BLACK- OWNED BRANDS ACCELERATOR

Welcome to the inaugural brand lookbook for the Black-owned Brands Accelerator, designed by Zalando in partnership with ADAN.

The Black-owned Brands Accelerator is a six-month programme designed for small fashion brands looking to expand their business to major e-commerce platforms such as Zalando. As part of Zalando's ongoing desire to become a partner of choice for fashion brands that cater for or stem from underrepresented groups, this accelerator aims to support fashion brands, designers, and owners from the Black community.

Among 27 applicants, seven brands caught the interest and excitement of our respected jurors: Allie Bangura, founder of ADAN; Lena-Sophie Röper, General Manager Designer at Zalando; Barbara Kenney Brown, co-founder of Fashion Minority Alliance; Stella Jean, fashion designer

and Jean-Claude Mpassy, editor and stylist. What stood out about these brands was their overall strong brand identity and market potential due to the creativity and innovation of their assortment, compelling storytelling, and brand values. The seven participating brands, BAPTISTE, EMEKA, Emile Vidal Carr, Gravalot, IMI & KIMI, LarAllan, and OMÔL, will embark on a six-month upskilling journey, guided by Zalando tutors. At the end of the programme, these brands will be equipped with the right knowledge and skills to be onboarded on major European e-commerce platforms.

In this lookbook, we invite you to discover each brand and its founder's story, the style identity and design process behind their collections, and dive into the designers' creative worlds.

@bob\_accelerator  
@bob\_accelerator\_2024





BAPTISTE is a luxury British womenswear brand that showcases bold design and handmade artistry. It offers visionary collections in limited series that reflect an elegant use of graphic features and deluxe textures. Its timeless designs carry an assured spirit, ensuring enviable quality through a focus on cut, fabric, and craft.

Founded by Jenine Baptiste, a London-born British designer, Jenine's cross-cultural perspective blossomed when she embarked on an international journey of travel and design exploration through India, Thailand, New York and Hong Kong.

She has worked for brands such as Victoria Beckham, Erdem, Doi Tung, and trained in Savile Row tailoring under Maurice Sedwell and Chittleborough & Morgan. Her journey to becoming the creative director of BAPTISTE was a natural progression as she established a playful language that celebrates colliding cultures with a passion for modern innovation.

©BAPTISTE

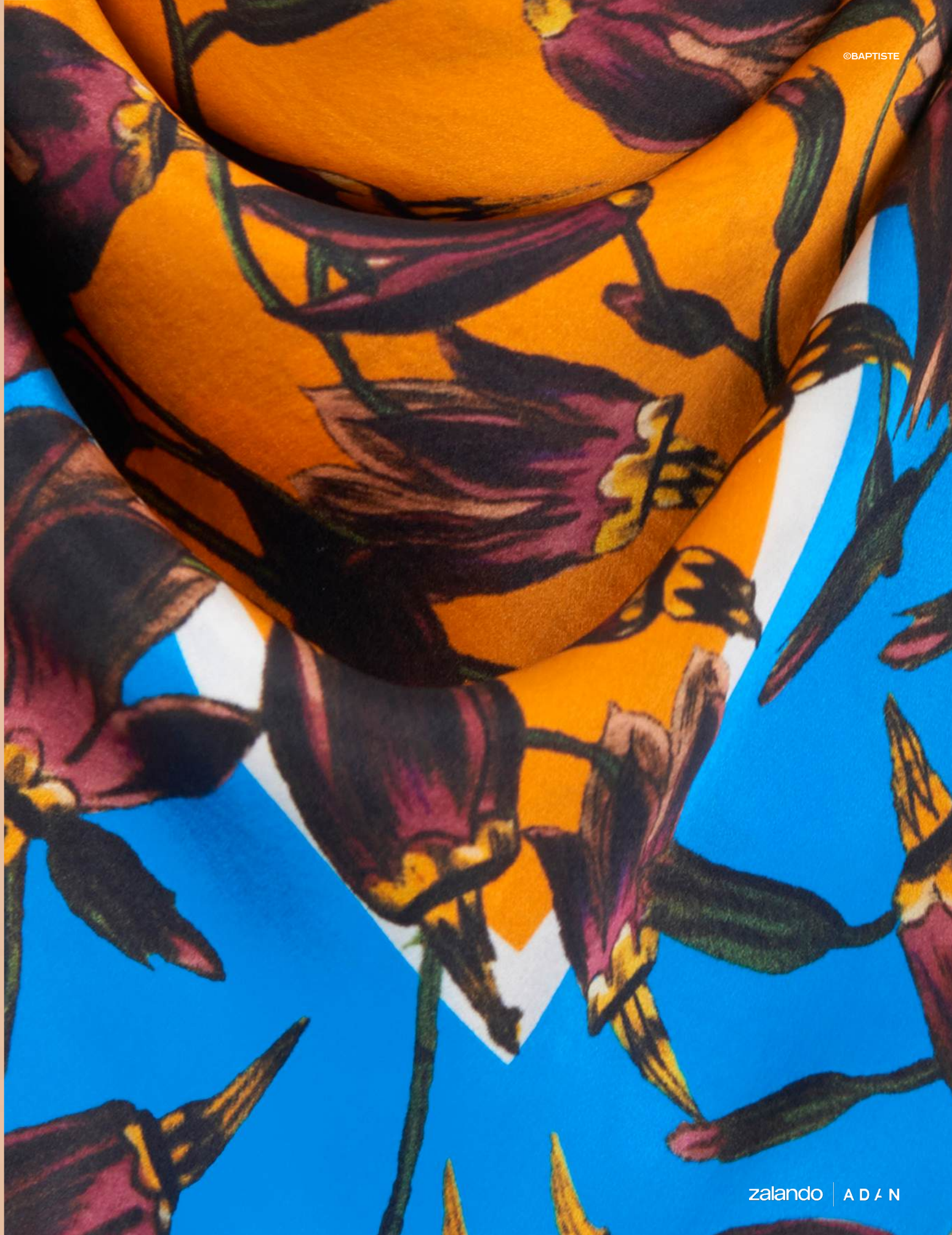
# BAPTISTE

# JENINE





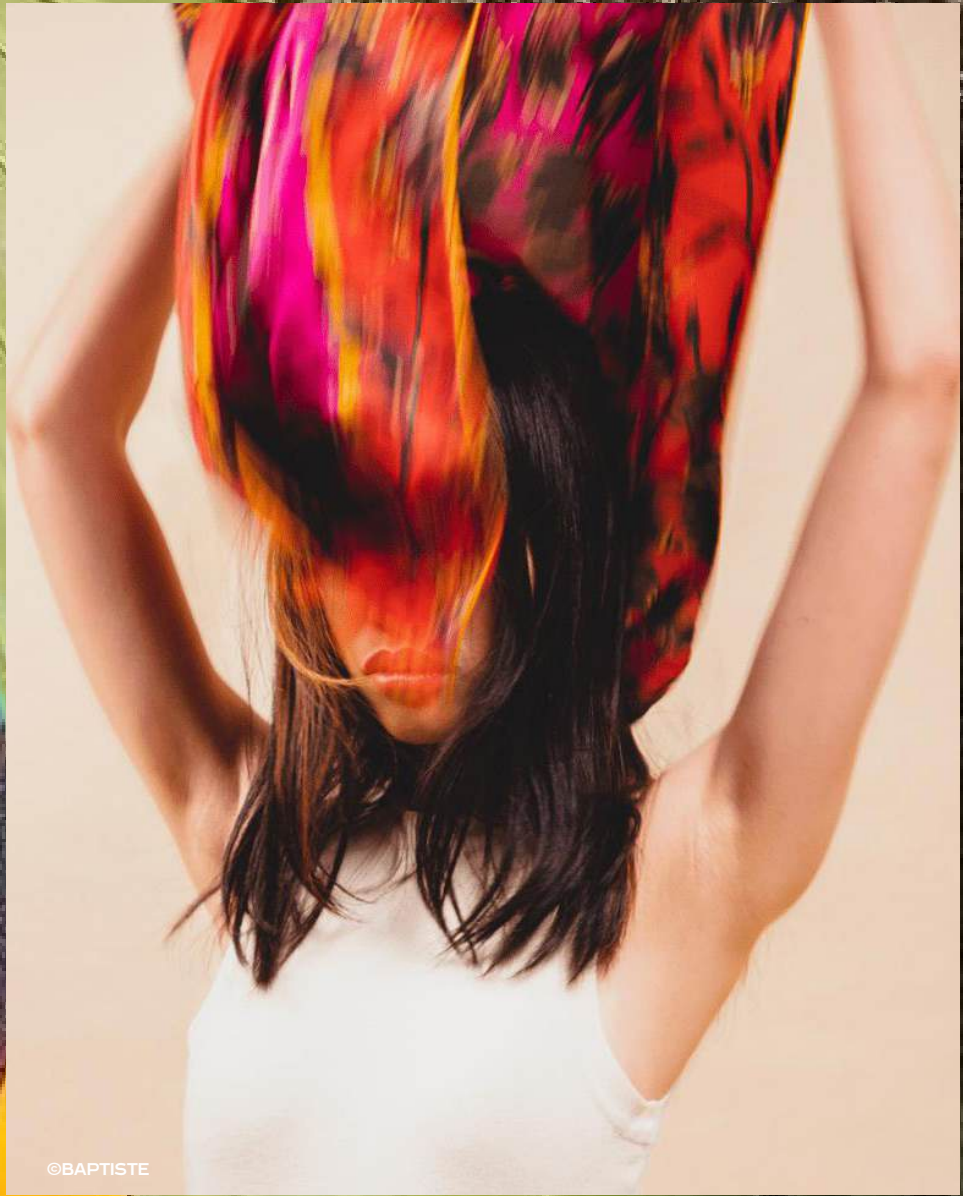
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Pasque Print Silk Satin Scarf - Pink



100% Silk Satin





"BAPTISTE" derives from a Greek word meaning "to immerse." Jenine's vibrant British and Caribbean background influences her artistic prints, immersing the wearer in the colours and silhouettes of different cultures and environments. Her commitment to craftsmanship and colour is central to the brand's story. The brand believes craftsmanship connects them to the past and fosters collaboration, preserving history while infusing strength and vibrancy into everyday life through its designs.

BAPTISTE's meticulous pieces are crafted for the confident modern woman who celebrates her individuality while living her life to the fullest. It is for the woman who wants to be seen and remembered. In Jenine's words, "Fashion is a continuous space of creation and experimentation for me. The joy I experience when realising something beautiful from my imagination is what I want to share with the world."





In 2019, EMEKA Founder and Creative Director, Sydney Nwakanma, went to Nigeria to visit his family. He met up with his cousin, who told him that he was struggling to find work despite having a good education—a common problem in West African countries. Sydney and his cousin sat together and decided to create the job opportunities they lacked. They wanted to start a fashion brand that brought employment to the African people. This was the beginning of EMEKA.

But EMEKA turned out to be more than that. It quickly became a bridge between Europe and Africa, a way to connect African craftsmanship to the European market. It became a new way of looking at equality and sustainability through the lenses of creativity and fashion.

# EMEKA



# SYDNEY



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URBAN GARDENER COLLECTION



One of one  
Circular suit hand-made in Kenya  
from upcycled curtains.





EMEKA integrates methods of upcycling into its business to create truly circular clothing. It starts where other clothing ends and aims to bridge the gap between waste and its reinvention. "In many ways, our outfits are trash, and we are proud of that," says Sydney.

Simultaneously, EMEKA creates job opportunities for local craftsmen in Kenya and Ghana. The brand believes that the African continent and its people have a lot to offer to the world; as well as how the Global North can learn great lessons from the Global South regarding sustainability practices.

Sustainability is a challenging arena, but one that informs the ethos and strategy of EMEKA's plans. "Currently, there is no way to be entirely sustainable and circular. Products are shipped around the world, chemicals are used, and carbon is emitted. No matter how hard we try as a brand or as consumers, it is very likely that our actions have some form of negative footprint on the world. It will take some time until we have collectively come to a state of environmental equilibrium. But we must keep inventing new methods, enterprises, and ways of living to lead us towards a more sustainable, greener future. It is a long journey, but at least we are heading in the right direction."  
- Sydney Nwakanma





Emile Vidal Carr is an international womenswear brand that creates highly engineered signature garments. Using technical principles derived from other disciplines, such as art and architecture, Emile Vidal Carr combines unusual textures and modern silhouettes to create vivid experiences for his clientele.

Emile graduated from the London College of Fashion in 2003. In his early 20s, he designed a range that was stocked by market leaders Topshop, ASOS, and Allders. In 2008, he had the opportunity to showcase a collection as part of New York Fashion Week.

The brand was formally founded in 2013 after a 5-year career in the high street and an equal number of years working with some of the world's most prestigious fashion houses, such as Alexander McQueen, Roland Mouret, and Ralph & Russo. In 2019, the British Fashion Council chose Emile Vidal Carr as a finalist for the DHL Fashion Potential Award.

# EMILE VIDAL CARR

# ENMILE







©Emile Vidal Carr



©Emile Vidal Carr



Ladiv Multiway Concept Evening Gown



Wool Crepe Fabric  
Dry Clean Only

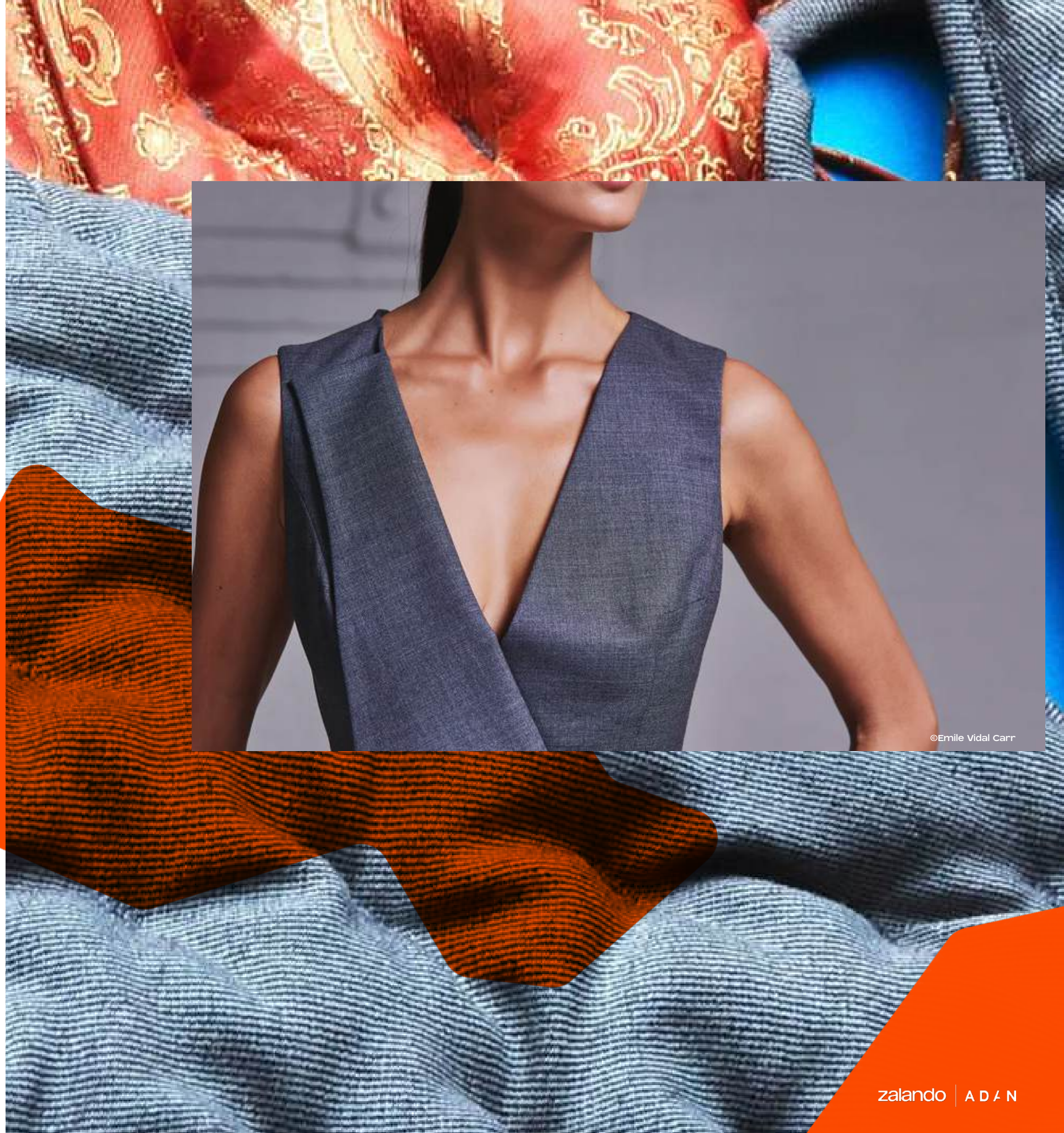




Emile Vidal Carr's innovative approach to fashion design is a testament to his artistic vision and dedication to his craft. He highlights the beauty and complexity of femininity by contrasting elegant silhouettes with utilitarian and geometric fabrications. Inspired by the spontaneity and authenticity of hip-hop, Emile's design process is inspired by multidisciplinary creativity and artists such as Jay Z.

The brand builds treasurable garments on site at its London studio and atelier. While other brands rely upon other factories to make their products, Emile Vidal Carr can prioritise quality assurance and bespoke services by crafting his garments in-house. The spirit of sustainability is core to Emile's vision. The atelier offers lifetime repairs as a way of encouraging consumers to shop wisely.

Emile's legacy also includes supporting young budding designers by giving them access to the atelier's highly specialist machinery twice a month, an opportunity that wouldn't be achievable under normal circumstances. This also gives them the opportunity to be guided by Emile Vidal Carr himself, enabling him to be closer to the generation that will lead fashion in its next wave.





Gravalot is an Afro-Contemporary menswear label that centres on the historical exploration of Black cultures. With the help of local artisans, they craft sharply tailored garments using modern and traditional materials, producing contemporary designs ready for the international stage.

Founders Onye Anuna and Prince Comrie launched Gravalot's first menswear collection in 2014 and have since distinguished the brand through their preservation of craftsmanship and projection of Black cultures in a progressive frame. The duo embeds deeply held philosophies into the brand's DNA. They believe in purpose over consumption, emphasising business practices that demand sustainable initiative, fair pay and efforts toward net-zero emissions.

# GRAVALOT

# ONYE







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Aina Orange Stripe Trousers



Hand made in Nigeria  
100% cotton  
these trousers showcase the exquisite  
artistry of handwoven Asó-Oké fabric



©GRAVALOT



Community is at the core of everything Gravalot stands for. The brand pays its partners, suppliers, and artisans fairly in accordance with local prices and rejects practices such as slave labour or the deprivation and displacement of local communities. The nature of their work means that the brand is always in contact with a diverse array of peoples, tribes, cultures, communities, and customs.

Preserving long-held crafts passed through generations, such as weaving, dying, embroidery, leather work, metal work, and fabrication, is a key component of the business. Their affirmation "No longevity in mediocrity" is a testament to this, and they ensure that locally designed products are developed by skilled local craftsmen, benefiting the local economy and the environment at large.

Providing products and services that preserve and sustain the environment has always been a core driver of Gravalot's ethos and business model. Some of their ongoing efforts to reach net-zero emissions include removing plastics from all business areas, short production runs, choosing suppliers with sound environmental practices, and using fabrics and components with minimal ecological impact. Unsold stock is also distributed to local clothing banks.





IMI & KIMI is, above all, the will of one man, Henri-Philippe Maïdou (HP). A former professional basketball player, HP's sports career led this Parisian, son of a Central African diplomat, to play in the United States, Spain and Italy. It also taught him how to be intentional and meticulous in his approach to life. When HP decided to end his basketball career, he had in his suitcase a pluralistic identity where African, American and French cultures blend and entangle endlessly, a triptych that is felt in the stylist's work.

From the African continent, HP has retained the culture of transmission and the undeniable importance of history.

From his experience in the United States, the pioneering spirit that blazes new trails and is not afraid to innovate. And from the French influence, a natural elegance. IMI & KIMI has made this fusion of different cultural traits the core of its identity. The brand emphasises craftsmanship using noble natural fabrics and innovative designs that focus on the body through unisex cuts that enhance every figure.

# IMI & KIMI

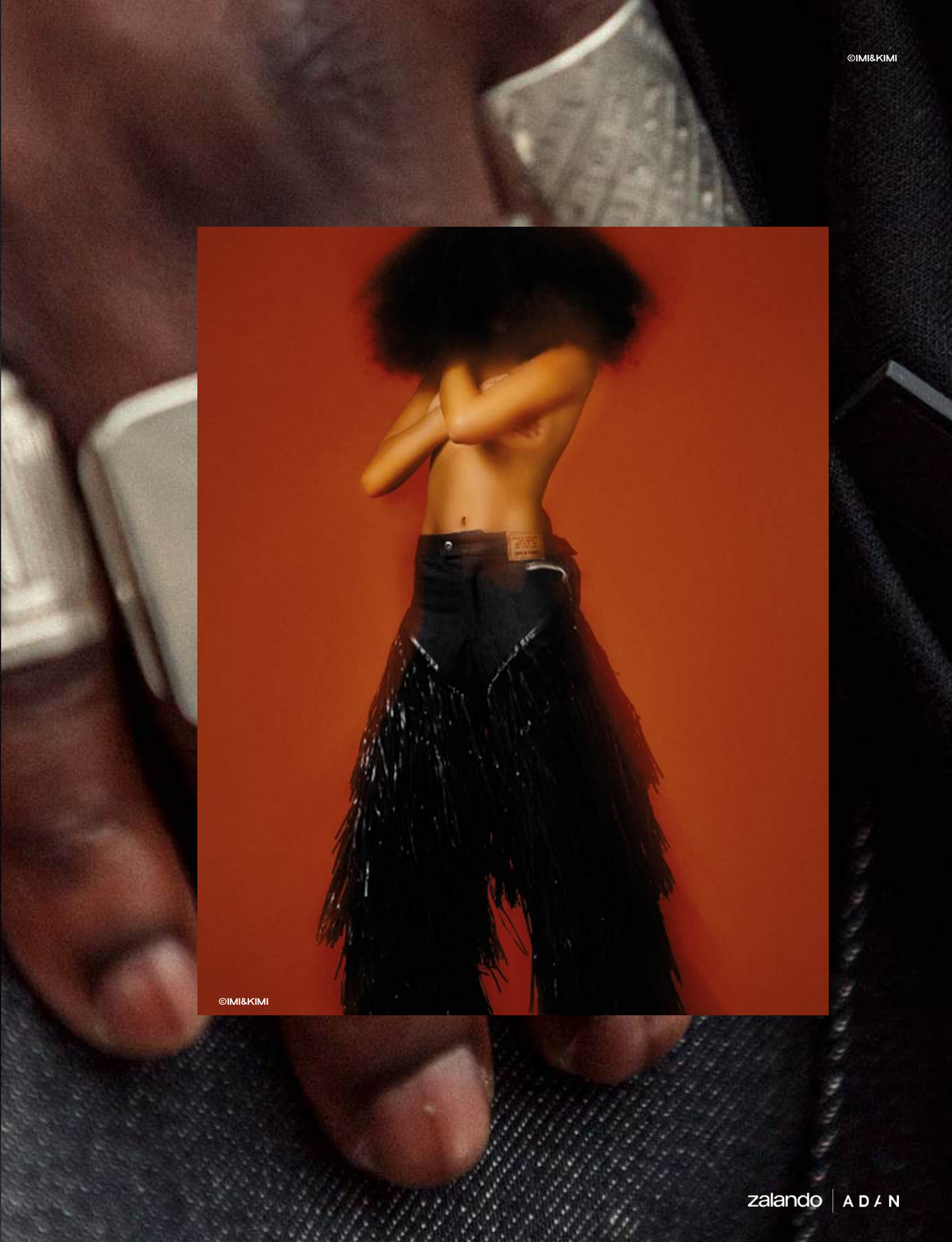


# HP











**BANGUI**  
Pantalons en jean à frange



Jean à franges en lamelles cuir  
Pattes de serrage sur les côtés  
Logo en cuir à la ceinture  
Cuir végétal





IMI & KIMI draws inspiration from the powerful storytelling tradition of 'message-carrying wax,' a fabric that has long been a vehicle for political, social, and cultural expression throughout Africa. Each creation communicates strong ideas via messages woven into garments. By embracing this philosophy, IMI & KIMI transform fashion into a form of activism. Their garments embody a political voice that speaks to identity, community, and empowerment and goes beyond mere style expression.

IMI & KIMI creations are designed to be a mix of genres that can be utilised by both women and men. This vision of clothing for all corresponds to a more global philosophy: that of free fashion, which gives the wearer nuance and flexibility. This is often expressed through their use of colour. IMI & KIMI can be fresh and bright, other times understated with muted tones that carry a refinement, such as khakis and greys.





LarAllan is a slow-fashion accessories brand for the mid-level luxury consumer. They create covetable handbags that signal elegance without compromising quality or affordability. Their ethos involves three central commitments: function, statement, and price accessibility. LarAllan works with best-in-class artisans to deliver evening and everyday bags that start a conversation.

LarAllan was founded by Lara Olutunbi, a Nigerian-born designer based in London. Lara's love for design stems from childhood. In boarding school, she would doodle at the back of the class, designing outfits and looks for the holidays. Although she initially pursued a career in finance, Lara continued to explore her interest in design, taking courses at Central Saint Martins in fashion, fabrics, and interior design.

The brand's name combines her and her late father Allan's names and each collection is a celebration of women who take the lead in life.

# LarAllan







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@LarAllan

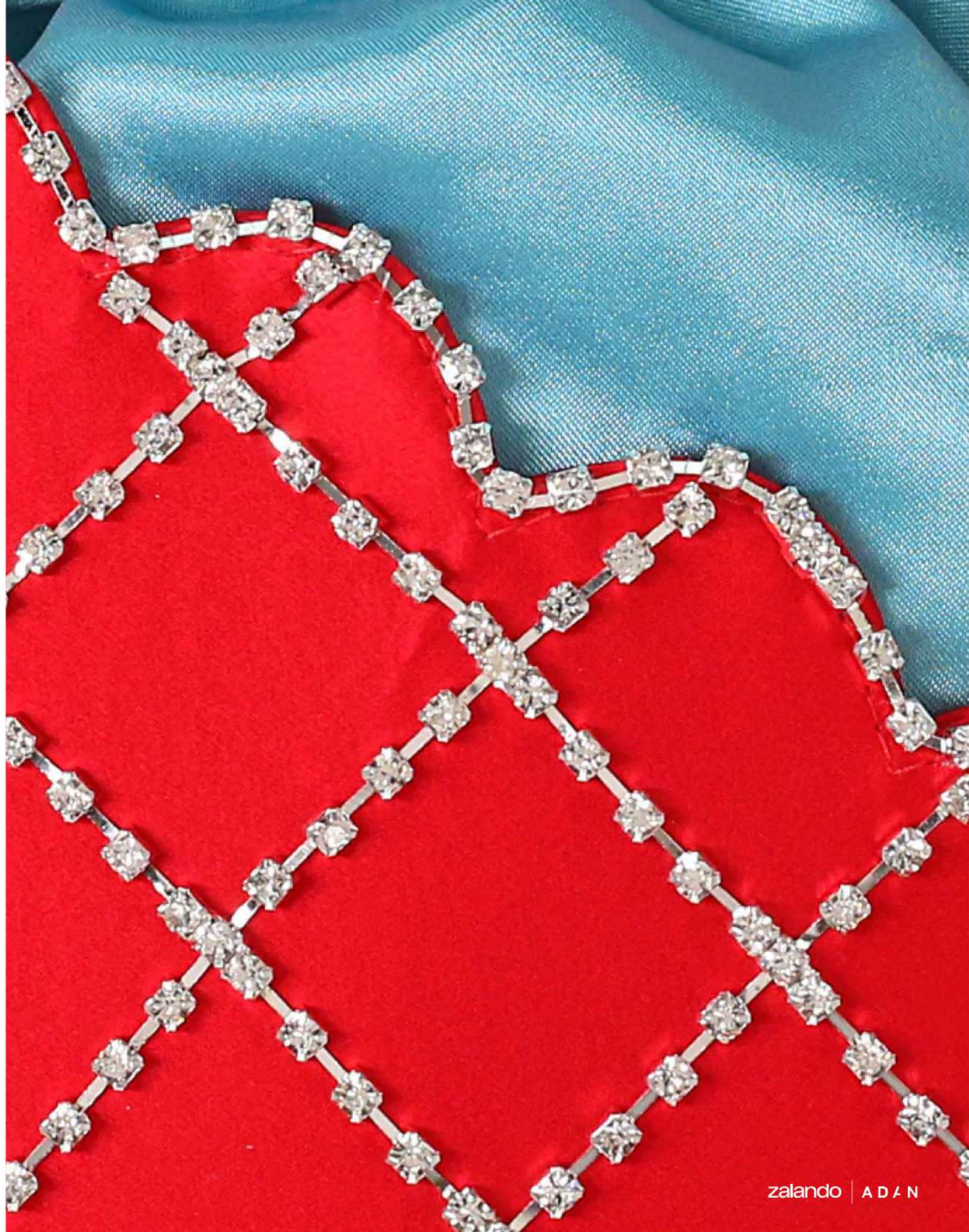


Priscilla



Red satin scalloped Asymmetrical Top Handle Bag w/ Diamond Clear Crystal Pattern

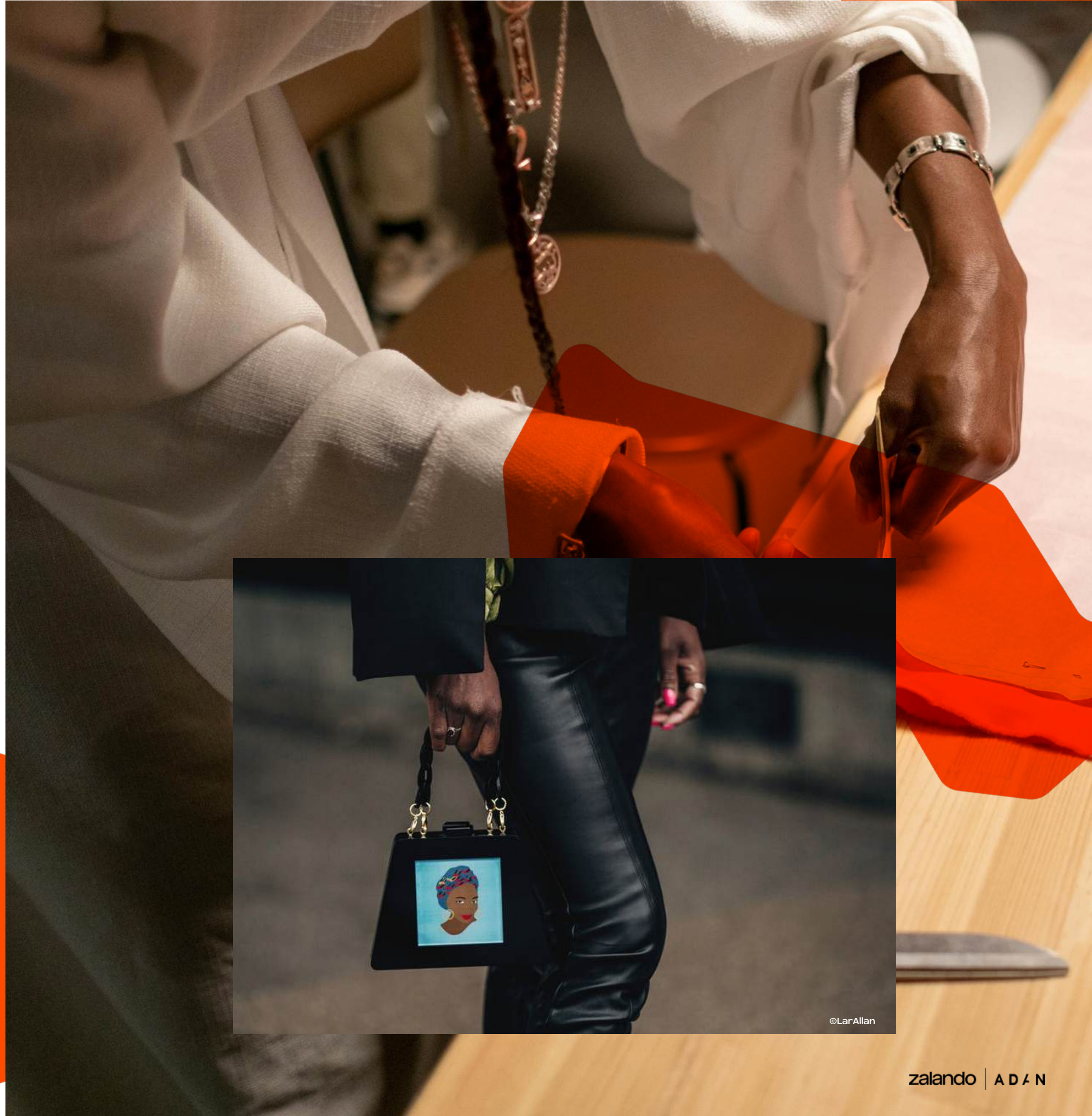
©LarAllan





LarAllan believes there is elegance in every woman, and the brand aims to help her express her inner beauty on the outside. The LarAllan woman has a penchant for detail, enjoys standing out and is a connoisseur and collector of tasteful accessories. She looks for quality, originality and a certain "je ne sais quoi" in every design.

Lara draws inspiration from eclectic sources, including furniture and everyday objects, and aims to offer unique perspectives on form while incorporating functionality into her designs. She likes to give a different point of view to an existing shape and play with colour combinations and textures in an unexpected way. Her bags include clutches, totes, and cross-body bags in distinctive colourways and materials, including highly structured acrylic displaying beautiful graphic tableaux. The final outcome separates her designs as more than just statement pieces. They are works of art.



©LarAllan



OMÔL believes that fashion should be bold, expressive, and, above all, empowering. Statement prints, textures, and eye-catching accessories are the brand's signature. In their seasonless, limited series, every garment is designed to reflect the strength and dynamism of women worldwide and uplift the individuality of the wearer, creating a modern-day wardrobe for a multicultural community.

Nathalie Moth is the designer behind OMÔL, a brand deeply inspired by her Cameroonian heritage. From the vibrant colours to the rich craftsmanship, OMÔL celebrates memories in every stitch. OMÔL, meaning "Mademoiselle" in her father's language, isn't just a brand; it's a celebration of heritage, a cultural journey, and a homage to the artisans who infuse their soul into every piece. Each creation tells a story, echoing the spirit of Cameroon's diverse cultures and traditions. Drawing on traditional techniques and modern aesthetics, each piece embodies the spirit of cultural richness.

# OMÔL

# NATHALIE





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The Totem 1.1 sandals | Red



©OMÓL



At OMÔL, celebrating African heritage and fair treatment of artisans and workers is at the heart of the business's ethic. The brand established their first workshops in Cameroon, where teams of craftsmen create garments they are proud of. Each piece is signed by the artisan who crafted it. The brand navigates at the intersection of traditional and modern Africa, identifying local talents in tailoring to develop their unique pieces. The end goal is to produce in other countries of the continent and to apply these same ethics wherever the brand goes.

OMÔL represents a sustainable and conscious vision for fashion. "For us, a fabric that pollutes less is one that already exists. We source our fabrics and materials from end-of-line stocks around the world and in local markets to create small series of timeless designs. We avoid significant impact per metre purchased by choosing to reuse instead of produce new." Nathalie elaborates. Importantly, OMÔL does not believe in seasons or collections, notions that differ from one place to another globally.

Since 2022, OMÔL has partnered with a Spanish textile platform that focuses on circular fashion. This collaboration not only brings sustainability to their business model but also helps to tackle the issue of transparency and assessment of impact. Beyond this, the brand continually searches for sustainable and conscious solutions to new challenges.



©OMÔL





## About ADAN Impact

ADAN Impact GmbH, founded in 2021, is the first company to promote career equity for Black and People of Color (BPoC). The company bridges the gap between BPoC professionals and global employers, addressing underrepresentation in various sectors. Its digital platform, ADAN.Careers, serves as a job portal, content hub, and resume database, allowing companies to reach BPoC talent directly. ADAN Impact also organises the largest annual career fair exclusively for BPoC: the ADAN Career Day, which attracts around 1,000 participants to Frankfurt. In addition to recruiting, ADAN Impact also advises companies on strategic projects that empower Black and People of Color, helping them build inclusive environments that foster diversity and drive innovation.

## About Zalando

Founded in Berlin in 2008, Zalando is Europe's leading online multi-brand fashion destination. The company is building a pan-European ecosystem for fashion and lifestyle e-commerce, along two growth vectors: Business-to-Consumer (B2C) and Business-to-Business (B2B). In B2C, Zalando provides an inspiring, high-quality, multi-brand shopping experience for fashion and lifestyle products to nearly 50 million active customers across 25 markets. In B2B, Zalando leverages its logistics infrastructure, software, and service capabilities to support brands and retailers in managing and scaling their entire e-commerce business, both on and off the Zalando platform. Through its ecosystem vision, Zalando aims to enable positive change in the fashion and lifestyle industry.



