

tonic

ANISSA AIDA



FRESH FROM HER DEBUT RUNWAY SHOW AND MAKING WAVES IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY WITH HER FIRST COLLECTION, WE CAUGHT UP WITH ANISSA MEDDEB, FOUNDER OF FASHION BRAND ANISSA AIDA, TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE STORY BEHIND THE DESIGN.

INITIALLY INSPIRED BY TUNISIAN CULTURE, HER FIRST COLLECTION DRAWS ON THE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN CULTURES AND THE TRADITIONAL GARMENTS WHICH REPRESENT THEM. MARRYING ANCESTRAL ELEMENTS WITH MODERN CUTS, STRUCTURE, COLOUR AND MATERIALS, ANISSA IS ABLE TO BREATHE NEW LIFE INTO CLASSIC DESIGNS. HER INTRIGUE AND APPRECIATION FOR DIVERSE CULTURES EVIDENT IN THE VISUAL DIALOGUE OF THE COLLECTION, IT REPRESENTS NOT ONLY

A CULTURAL EXCHANGE BUT HER OWN UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE OF THE WORLD.



What is your personal and professional background?

I was born in Paris and then grew up in Tunisia, as both my parents are French Tunisian. I later returned to Paris to study at L'Ecole du Carrousel du Louvres for three years, where I learned about art and design history, colour theory and drawing. I then moved to America and studied at Parsons School of Design and later interned for Marc Jacobs accessories and ThreeAsFour, which is a group of designers who founded a line together about twenty years ago. It's very futuristic and avant-garde. Most recently I founded Anissa Aida and my first collection was Spring/Summer 2016.

When did you first discover your interest in fashion?

I always wanted to do fashion, I don't know exactly when I discovered that passion but I remember that I was always drawing and sketching in sketchbooks. Recently I found a little notebook in my parent's house from when I was six years old, full of drawings of dolls in different outfits!

Do you think that living in a variety of different cultures ultimately influenced the way you look at fashion?

DEFINITELY. I ALWAYS FIND INSPIRATION FROM TRADITIONAL GARMENTS FROM DIFFERENT COUNTRIES. FOR INSTANCE, I COME FROM NORTH AFRICA SO I LOOK AT A LOT OF KAFTANS, DJELLABAS AND SAROUEL PANTS AND I LIKE TO MIX AND MATCH THEM WITH EASTERN AND WESTERN SARTORIAL INSPIRATION, TO CREATE SOMETHING NEW, PEACEFUL AND UNEXPECTED.

Your first collection aims to reflect the interaction between clothes and culture, can you talk about this?

I have a Tunisian background and on top of that, I am also really inspired by Japanese culture and how minimalist yet perfectionist it is. My collection really represents this mix and match of cultures; Japanese, North African and Western, and includes a lot of tailoring which is very sharp, whilst at the same time being very zen. I also use fabric from different cultures, all of which are 100% natural cotton, linen, and wools. For example, I use British Oxford cotton and indigo dyed Japanese linen, as well as silk which is hand-woven by Tunisian craftsmen.

You also talk about civilisational inflow and how that lead to similarities in traditional garments. How was Tunisian culture affected and influenced in this way?

Tunisian culture was colonised by the French, so the way people dressed completely changed after the French arrived in 1881. So the way Tunisian's dress now is a mix and match of traditional and Western influence.

How do you think you bring these traditional shapes and styles into the modern world?

I'M REALLY INTERESTED IN VOLUME, SO MY WORK IS A REFLECTION OF THAT AND I TRY TO BRING SOMETHING VERY MODERN AND PURE INTO THE DESIGNS. MY IDEA IS THAT YOU CAN ALWAYS CREATE SOMETHING NEW, FRESH AND INSPIRING FROM FUSING DIFFERENT CULTURES. POLITICALLY THERE'S BEEN A LOT OF PROBLEMS RECENTLY WITH PEOPLE NOT UNDERSTANDING OTHER CULTURES, AND SO MY

IDEA IS THAT ALL THE CULTURES CAN FUSE TOGETHER TO CREATE SOMETHING NEW, THAT EVERYONE CAN LEARN TO ACCEPT.

Can you talk me through your design process?

So it always starts with a lot of research, I like going to libraries and bookstores and collecting images from newspapers and magazines. I start collaging them and doodling on top of them. Once I have the research aspect done, I start making shapes out of it and sometimes by making shapes, my whole design ideas change and I learn to go with the flow and do what feels right.

Each piece of the collection is derived from a foundational concept, can you explain the concept behind one of your favourite pieces?

The tailored kimono is one of my favourite pieces, it's a jacket but it has the shape of a kimono, but at the same time, it's perfectly tailored so it shows a lot of Western influences. It's made in recycled denim which shows a concern for sustainability, and it's also very comfortable to wear as it's lined with Chinese silk inside. The pieces are all meant to be wearable at the same time, they're both art pieces and pieces you can wear in everyday life.

So would you say sustainability is an important factor for you?

I'm really concerned about sustainability and making something beautiful out of natural materials and respecting the environment.

You recently showed your collection at London Fashion Week, how was that experience for you?

It was really exciting. It was the first time I have shown during Fashion Week. I was sponsored by Fashion Scout in London, each season they choose four 'Ones to Watch' designers and they help them organise a runway show. They gave us a space at The Freemasons' Hall in London. It was such a great opportunity for visibility.

What kind of response have you had to the collection so far?

It's been received really well. I showed the first six looks of the collection for the first time six months ago at a gallery in Tunisia. Initially, I thought it was just going to be a collaboration with this gallery, because I designed the first six looks for the exhibition. It went really well and step by step a lot of people started asking me about the collection. So I applied for different competitions and one of them was the Fashion Scout opportunity to present a whole collection. So I developed more looks and it went on the runway and it's really made me want to continue and do more collections. Right now I'm designing the Autumn/Winter collection for 2017.

Will the new collection stay on a similar path of blending tradition with modernity?

Definitely. This time it's going to have some more African vibes, I've been looking at the photography of two photographers from Mali, Seydou Keita and Malick Sidibe, and I'm mixing those inspirations with images of Western outfits.

What's been the most challenging aspect for you of starting your own brand?

Everything is challenging! I have a strong design background but the whole business aspect behind it is very difficult to understand and it's not always easy to make the right decisions. For example, deciding whether to sell the clothes in boutiques or sell online – step by step I'm learning.

What ultimately inspires you to create and pursue your passion?

The beauty in everything; in life, friendship, family, all of this really inspires me and drives me to continue to pursue my passion. I'm not just passionate about fashion but also about art in general, I love going to museums, listening to music and going to concerts. Living in New York is so inspiring, you meet so many people who have stories to tell and who inspire you.



IMAGE BY ANISSA AIDA
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