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Together. Zusammen. ONU. Wildling Shoes launches collaboration “NKWO X Wildling – curated by Beatrace Oola” & limited edition summer shoe

Driven by the goal to lead the fashion world towards a more sustainable future, Nkwo Onwuka and Wildling - curated by Beatrace Angut Lorika Oola, initiator of Fashion Africa Now in Hamburg - have joined forces and developed the limited edition summer shoe ONU, limited to 5,000 pairs, as part of their eye-to-eye collaboration. The word "Onu" is a term from the Igbo language spoken predominantly in southeastern Nigeria and means "together" - because this is the only way to achieve long-term change in the fashion industry. As of now, ONU is available in sizes 23 to 48 from Wildling's own online store at www.wildling.shoes. Depending on the size, the price is between 129 EUR and 159 EUR.

The cooperation is the first collaboration between a German sustainable label and a designer from Nigeria and provides a platform for addressing sustainability from an African-Afrodiasporic perspective. Christina Eckert, Circle Lead Brand Interaction at Wildling Shoes, met Beatrace Angut Lorika Oola for the first time at the Fashion Changers conference and was inspired by her words and the new perspective it gave her. Excited by the idea of a regenerative collaboration, Beatrace brought Wildling together with Nkwo Onwuka. As a curator, Beatrace Oola is one of the global pioneers of the African Fashion Movement and stands for inclusion, representation and diversity in the fashion industry. Nkwo is considered one of Nigeria's leading sustainable fashion designers. The result is a collaboration that aims to create connections where for too long there have been divisions, between Europe and Africa, between fashion and minimal footwear, between conventions and visions of the future. And it is an invitation to everyone to participate in this discourse and collectively create new narratives.

"It's time for a change of perspective and rethinking to give space to the view of marginalized creatives and create long-term partnerships. For decades, elements of African lifestyle, fashion and culture have been part of Western pop and everyday culture. A dynamic design scene has emerged in Africa and the diaspora in recent years that is no longer content to be merely a source of inspiration. With their innovations, they are changing the global fashion landscape and dispelling clichés. African Fashion is a visualization of transformed traditions, representing the African lifestyle from an African-Afrodiasporic perspective. It reflects culture and identity," explains Beatrace Angut Lorika Oola.

"Wildling Shoes has set its goal on regenerative business. It's a long road, a big goal. There are many building blocks to work on and redefine. For example, we had a lively discussion about the problem of cultural appropriation in marketing and product design and stopped with 'There's got to be another way to do this.' As part of the Fashion Changers conference in Berlin, I got to know Beatrace and her initiative Fashion Africa Now. She was clearly a place for me to go to learn and find answers for new ways in fashion. 'After our first conversation it was clear very quickly - let's collaborate, provide a platform, work together at eye level. Because regenerative business only works that way - through collaboration,' adds Christina Eckert.

"To decolonize fashion, power and control must be shifted away from dominant Western perspectives and practices, and the voices and experiences of marginalized communities must be brought into focus," says Beatrace Oola. "These are problems and challenges that we can only work together to find solutions to. Because everything starts with a first step," adds Nkwo Onwuka.

Together, the three collaboration partners have developed the ONU summer shoe, limited to 5,000 pairs. "Onu" is a term from the Igbo language spoken mainly in southeastern Nigeria and means "together". ONU stands for collaboration, community and cohesion. "The collaboration has created a new interplay that is about more than just producing shoes with a designer of African descent. It's about communicating unheard, marginalized content through new narratives and giving space to narratives around fashion from Africa and the Diaspora," explains Beatrace Angut Lorika Oola. ONU's all-over print bears the distinctive signature of Nkwo Onwuka and is inspired by the DAKALA™ CLOTH she developed. Starting at size 29, ONU is embellished with a special design element: a fan made from 100% biodegradable sisal fiber from eastern Nigeria, upcycled by the NKWO Transform Women initiative and highlighting the collaborative approach to regenerative action.

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ONU

Limited Edition



ONU, 129 - 159 EUR

The upper material of ONU is made of 100% cotton (from controlled organic cultivation) and applications of sisal fibers from Nigeria. ONU's white and blue all-over print bears the unmistakable signature of designer Nkwo Onwuka and is inspired by the DAKALA™ CLOTH she developed. Available in sizes 23 to 48, the summer shoe is limited to 5,000 pairs.

ABOUT NKWO ONWUKA

Nkwo Onwuka is considered one of Nigeria's leading sustainable fashion designers. Her interest in fashion is sparked in her childhood when her mother teaches her to sew. What starts as a hobby eventually leads to the founding of her label NKWO in 2007. Rebranding five years later, she focuses on preserving local crafts, reducing textile waste and upcycling. Transforming Nigerian textile practices such as weaving, hand-dyeing and embroidery in a modern way, NKWO developed the

DAKALA™ CLOTH, made from recycled textiles and waste, bringing a refreshing shade of blue to the fashion world. With her creations, the designer achieved international fame and received a number of international awards. For example, she represented Nigeria at the 2018 Commonwealth Fashion Exchange Exhibition at Buckingham Palace, won the 2022 CNMI Sustainable Fashion Award, and was part of the Africa Fashion exhibition at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London. With her brand, Nkwo Onwuka pioneered making the Nigerian fashion industry increasingly sustainable over the past decade.

ABOUT BEATRACE OOLA

Beatrace Angut Lorika Oola is a creative consultant, advocate for African Fashion and interdisciplinary curator focusing on fashion installation, performance and editorial. She has been working in the cultural and creative industries since 2010, promoting the visibility of Black creatives, as well as access for German creatives furthermore she consults companies and institutions with her creative agency (APYA) and is, among other things, a guest lecturer for the department of design theory at the Hochschule für Künste in Bremen. In 2013, Beatrace established the first high-end fashion event in Germany (Africa Fashion Day Berlin) as part of Berlin Fashion Week. Since its relaunch in 2016, it evolved into Fashion Africa Now, an international platform based in Hamburg that celebrates Black Culture by breaking stereotypes and telling a new narrative. In 2022, it received the „Kultur- und Kreativpilot*innen Award“ by the German government.

ABOUT WILDLING SHOES

Wildling Shoes has been creating, producing and distributing minimal shoes for children and adults that allow for natural movement since 2015. In doing so, the company wants to break new ground: Wildling Shoes sees itself as a pilot project for regenerative business management and relies on collaboration to break down and redesign old systems. Fair production conditions, sustainable and innovative materials, renaturation projects and New Work are their foundation to work regeneratively on all levels. According to the remote-first principle, almost 220 employees throughout Germany are working towards this goal. As an actor of transformation who is particularly committed to sustainable development in business and society, founder Anna Yona was one of the prize winners of the B.A.U.M. e.V. Environment and Sustainability Award in 2022. Furthermore, Wildling won the 15th German Sustainability Award for companies in the transformation field "supply chain", which Anna Yona accepted not without criticism at the award ceremony.

www.wildling.shoes