



## **TOKYO (09 Sept. 2019)**

**Awa'Tori, along with sponsors and partners, UNITED ARROWS LTD., and ITC Ethical Fashion Initiative announce the FACE.A-J 2019 selection of designers; Thebe Magugu (South Africa), Kenneth Ize (Nigeria), Anyango Mpinga (Kenya), COYOTE (Japan), Wataru Tominaga (Japan) and Sulvam (Japan) .**

The designers participating in 'Fashion & Culture Exchange Africa-Japan' (FACE.A-J), to be held during the Rakuten Fashion Week in Tokyo have been confirmed. On Wednesday, October 16<sup>th</sup> 2019, six emerging designers from Africa (**Thebe Magugu** the most recent LVMH Prize winner, **Kenneth Ize** and **Anyango Mpinga**) and Japan (**COYOTE**, **Wataru Tominaga** and **Sulvam**) will be showcasing their designs at the STARRISE Tower Studio. This unique fashion presentation will include an installation by Nigerian artist **Kadara Enyeasi**, followed by a panel discussion on October 18<sup>th</sup> (information available soon).

The following week in Lagos, the group will be presenting their work during Lagos Fashion Week at ALARA, the leader of high-end luxury multi label retail store on the African continent.

This cross-cultural exchange and exhibition will be the first of its kind. FACE.A-J is an initiative managed by Awa'Tori and supported by UNITED ARROWS LTD. and ITC Ethical Fashion Initiative (funded by the European Union), to promote culture and creativity from Africa and Japan. Using Fashion, Art, and Culture to transcend politics, social conflicts and inequalities, FACE.A-J aims to create a platform that presents alternative views of Africa and Japan, bridges the gap between both creative markets, and fosters economic and cultural development.

## **THE DESIGNERS**

### **Thebe Magugu (South Africa)**

The winner of the 2019 LVMH PRIZE and the first African designer to win the prestigious title, Magugu was born in South Africa, studying at Johannesburg Fashion Design School & Retail Education Institute before launching his first collection in 2015. Since, he has collaborated with renowned designers such as Richi Mnisi, showcased in London and Paris where he was nominated for the LVMH PRIZE. His work is inspired by culture, tradition, contemporary art and experience, giving another view on how the aesthetics of the African apparel industry is perceived. He currently has stockists in South Africa and France.

### **Kenneth Ize (Nigeria)**

One of the two African designers to be nominated for the 2019 LVMH PRIZE, born in Nigeria, Ize graduated from the University of Applied Arts in Vienna and launched his brand in 2013. Working with local artisans and textile manufacturers combining traditional craftsmanship with contemporary concepts, he is known as one of the trailblazers of the African fashion luxury market. Ize has stockists in Austria and Nigeria.

### **Anyango Mpinga (Kenya)**

Born in Kenya, coming from a communications background, and no official fashion education, Mpinga followed her passion and launched her brand in 2015. She has since showcased her works in Kenya, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Mozambique and France; she has also been twice nominated for the Kenya Designer of the year and received the International Design Award by She Trades Collective. Her collections are inspired by culture, a passion for art, and narratives that touch on social issues in Africa. Her pieces are currently only sold online.

### **COYOTE / Coconogacco (Japan)**

COYOTE is a group of designers from the Coconogacco, an independent fashion school in Tokyo. Founded in 2007 by the winner of the Tokyo Fashion Award, Yamagata, the designer behind Writtenafterwards - a brand that has successfully held two exhibitions in Paris as well as being nominated for the LVMH Prize in 2015. Through Coconogacco, Yamagata aims to educate and develop the next generation of designers from the school, with the goal of creating a global fashion brand. COYOTE is a group of

### **Wataru Tominaga (Japan)**

From Kumamoto, Wataru Tominaga is graduate of Central Saint Martins College of Art & Design and the winner of The Grand Jury Prize Premier Vision Grand Prix at the 31st edition of the Hyeres International Festival Fashion and Photography. His bold and sometimes chaotic prints and designs are reminiscent of the 60s and 70s, the main inspiration behind his collections. Tominaga also explores the deconstruction of stereotypes in fashion and textile, and constantly seeks to create clothes which put together go against traditional representations and rules on gender, race, and age.

### **Sulvam (Japan)**

A former pattern maker for Yohji Yamamoto. multiple award winner, and shortlisted for the 2017 LVMH Prize, Tepei Fujita launched Sulvam in 2014. At the same time, he won the Tokyo Fashion Awards, and the “Who is on Next? Dubai” contest in 2015. Experimenting with patterns, prints, textures, and colors, Fujita’s work challenges conventional fashion and the concept of genderfluidity, which is prominent in his collections. His unconventional way of developing his collection, allows him the freedom to exceptional pieces that are avant-garde, but wearable.

## **THE ART**

### **Kadara Enyeasi (Nigeria)**

A 24 year old fine art photographer from Lagos, Nigeria, Enyeasi’s work is influenced by an understanding of form, space and perspective, mostly due to his training as an architect. His early influences stretch from the high concept layered order of the ‘five points’ postulated by Le Corbusier, to the classic avant-garde portraits of early West African photographers. Driven by a narrative, his eye, through the camera always sees something that wills the audience in; the images seeming to riff with the shadows of a serene everyday sexual provocation. His work moving forward will focus strongly on gender and sexual rights vis-a-vis institutions and these institutions’ culpability in promulgating specific rights-exclusive agendas.

## ABOUT

### Awa'Tori

Awa'Tori, meaning "Our Story" in Pidgin (widely spoken language across Africa). Translated in Japanese, we still portray the same story, almost like *Awa* - 合わせ + *Tori* - 通り: bridging markets and helping tell their stories.

Founded in 2018 by Bukky Adejobi and Seiko Mbako, Awa'Tori is a platform that is passionate about the African and Japanese creative industry. Each of us has a story, about our experiences born of political situation, culture, and life experiences. As such, Awa'Tori believe that creatives in Africa and Asia have stories worth telling, expressed in the form of fashion, arts, music, or film. Cut off from certain parts of the world, Awa'Tori is passionate about helping tell these stories, beyond borders and without limitations.

With the overarching mission to contribute socioeconomic development in Africa and Japan, Bukky and Seiko, both of African descent, believe in the power of such a synergy. Through partnerships with stakeholders from the supply chain and collaborations with third part organizations, Awa'Tori aims to develop and facilitate projects that foster sustainable partnerships that bridges the gap between the Creative Industries of Africa and Japan.

### UNITED ARROWS LTD.

UNITED ARROWS LTD. operates multi-brand shops that market a broad mix of designer brand products, private label brand men's and women's clothing and accessories, and miscellaneous items that have been sourced in Japan and overseas in keeping with our distinctive sensibility.

The source of our competitive advantage is our all-out effort, grounded in Our Way—All for the Customer—to hone the three elements of customer satisfaction: service, products, and places. By continually improving these three elements, we seek to realize our mission “to continually create, with sincerity and a sense of beauty, new tomorrows for our customers that set the standard for lifestyle culture.”

In 2014, UNITED ARROWS LTD. First ventured into the African market through a collaboration with the International Trade Center's Ethical Fashion Initiative. Through this collaboration, the brand TÉGÊ UNITED ARROWS, was born with the mission to support the development of the African craftsmanship and fashion industry. As FACE.A-J, aligns with the TÉGÊ mission, UNITED ARROWS LTD. has come on board as a partner and sponsor. Find out more about TÉGÊ UNITED ARROWS, and the brand as a whole at <https://www.united-arrows.co.jp/en/shop/> or on Instagram [https://www.instagram.com/unitedarrows\\_official/](https://www.instagram.com/unitedarrows_official/)

### The Ethical Fashion Initiative

EFI is a flagship program of the International Trade Centre, a joint agency of the United Nations and the World Trade Organization. For the Ethical Fashion Initiative, lifestyle choices impact livelihoods. EFI creates and strengthens social enterprises in emerging economies to connect discerning international brands in fashion, interiors and fine foods with talented local designers, artisans and micro-producers. Savvy investors, pro-poor champions and mindful consumers find value in a virtuous circle that creates not just premium products, but also stable, dignified work, and creative and resilient women, men and communities.

The EFI's Design Mentorship program showcases the creativity and talent of African Designers, as well as encouraging manufacturing with African artisans. Exhibiting African design at top industry events, and providing mentoring and guidance from industry experts, the EFI has helped to put Africa on the global fashion map. Find out more at <http://www.ethicalfashioninitiative.org> or on Instagram [@ethicalfashion](https://www.instagram.com/ethicalfashion). This EFI design mentorship program is funded by the EU.

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