

Nigerian Designer Reni Folawiyo Pushes 'Afro-Lux' Onto the Global Fashion Stage

Published on 30 Aug 2025 | By IFI Correspondent



Nigerian Designer Pushes 'Afro-Lux' Onto the Global Fashion Scene

In the heart of **Lagos**, **Nigeria's economic capital**, sits **Alara**, West Africa's first fashion and design concept store. With its striking architecture—defined by latticework inspired by traditional Yoruba *adire* textiles—the space is more than a boutique. It's the **epicenter of "Afro-lux"**, a movement pioneered by Nigerian entrepreneur **Reni Folawiyo**.

For over a decade, Folawiyo has been redefining African luxury, blending **tradition with modernity** and positioning African designers alongside established global names. "I felt very strongly that these objects and these people had value," she says, describing her mission to elevate African craftsmanship from rural handiwork to international acclaim.

? The Rise of Afro-Lux

Inside Alara, curated collections of upscale African labels stand next to international brands, books, and art—presented not as novelties but as equals. Designers like **Eki Kere** and **Salu Iwadi Studio** find space alongside global heavyweights, signaling a shift in how African design is perceived.

The architectural tribute to Yoruba heritage reinforces Folawiyo's core philosophy: **celebrating African culture while making it globally relevant**.

? Music Stars as Style Ambassadors

West African design has been thrust into the spotlight recently, thanks to cultural ambassadors like **Burna Boy, Tems,** and **Ayra Starr**, who all made waves at the **Met Gala** in designs by British-Ghanaian couturier Ozwald Boateng.

But for Folawiyo, true recognition lies in sustainable representation. She emphasizes **strategic collaborations with global institutions**, pointing to Alara's pop-up at the **Brooklyn Museum** and an exhibition with the **Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA)**.

? Design Across Borders

While Yoruba aesthetics are her foundation—rich in textiles, color, and ceremony—Folawiyo's Afro-lux vision pulls from across the continent:

- The rugged artistry of Senegal
- The refined sophistication of Ivory Coast
- · The celebratory spirit woven throughout African culture

Together, these influences shape what Folawiyo calls her own vision of "a celebration of Africa."

? Culture Through Cuisine

Extending beyond fashion, Alara houses **NOK**, a restaurant led by celebrated Senegalese chef **Pierre Thiam**, who has been instrumental in introducing West African cuisine to the U.S. While Alara's retail pieces can fetch prices upwards of hundreds of thousands of naira, NOK offers a more accessible entry point into Afro-lux lifestyle, balancing exclusivity with inclusivity.

? The Bigger Picture

Reni Folawiyo's journey is as personal as it is cultural. Born into Lagos's elite, she has used her platform to craft a new narrative for Africa: one where **African luxury design is not just admired but respected**.

With Afro-lux, Folawiyo isn't just selling clothes or furniture—she's building a cultural legacy.

DISCLAIMER: THE VIEWS/CONTENTS EXPRESSED/PRESENTED HEREIN, WITHIN THIS ADVERTORIAL AND PROMOTIONAL FEATURE ARE THE SOLE AND EXCLUSIVE RESPONSIBILITY OF INDIVIDUAL CLIENTS/EXPERT/THEIR AUTHORISED REPRESENTATIVE/VISHAL KHAIRNAR, TO WHICH EFFECT, PUBLICATION HOUSE/ITS REPRESENTATIVES/AFFILIATES ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE/LIABLE WHATSOEVER.