



Ethical
Fashion
Initiative

POLIMODA

Polimoda partners with the Ethical Fashion Initiative's Accelerator to award scholarships to Kenyan fashion designers

The Kenyan designers will participate in 8 weeks of tailor-made training at the institution's renowned campus in Italy.

January 19, 2022 - Ethical Fashion Initiative and Polimoda have announced a partnership that will award scholarships to 3 Kenyan fashion designers, building links between the fashion industries of Florence and Nairobi.

As part of this collaboration with the Florence-based fashion school, three Kenyan EFI Accelerator designers received scholarships for eight weeks of specialised training at Polimoda's campus. Katungulu Mwendwa (Katush) and **Mohamed Awale (Suave)** have just arrived in Italy, and this week they will start attending classes at the Florentine fashion school and connecting with the Polimoda international creative community, while **Louise Sommerlatte (Hamaji)** will join them in February. World-known for its excellence in fashion education, the institute offers a series of undergraduate, graduate, and short courses ranging from Fashion Design to Fashion Business and Fashion Art Direction, including the most up-to-date topics of the fashion industry such as Sustainable Fashion, Fashion Styling, Creative Direction, Trend Forecasting, and many others.

The EFI Designer Accelerator is a 2-year programme **designed to propel selected brands towards success in the global marketplace.** The Accelerator covers all aspects of running a fashion label, from sourcing and building sustainable supply chains to storytelling and finance, and brands are financially supported to bring their collections to market. With dedicated mentorship led by a team of industry experts, it's a unique opportunity for emerging brands and designers on the African continent to grow their businesses. **The chance to study at Polimoda now further amplifies the opportunity.**

"We are very proud of this first for the fashion industry, a partnership between the UN and a world-renowned fashion institution. The designers in our Accelerator have the solid foundations of craftsmanship and sustainability, and this scholarship will push the designers to innovate, grow and create an impact. This is the next generation of fashion talent and with EFI and Polimoda they will reach new heights." - **Simone Cipriani**, Head of the Ethical Fashion Initiative and Chair to the UN Alliance of Sustainable Fashion.



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"We are honored to have been chosen by the UN as a training partner for the Ethical Fashion Initiative project. Talent needs to be continuously nurtured by knowledge and cultural exchange, and we are here to make it possible. We welcome these Kenyan designers to our international community of creative talents, with the hope that innovative ideas related to sustainability and inclusiveness can arise from their experience at Polimoda." - **Massimiliano Giornetti**, director of Polimoda.

This edition of the EFI's Designer Accelerator is witness to the growth and success of three brands- **Katush, Hamaji and Suave**- since the programme's start in July 2020. Focused solely on Kenya-based designers that had a distinct interest in sustainability and eco-conscious fabrics and methods, the Accelerator opted for brands that had a proven track record of energy efficiency, work with natural fibres, and upcycled or recycled fabrics. The emerging brands were chosen for their talent, connection to African heritage, commitment to responsible sourcing and capacity to scale. A striking focus on traditional craftsmanship and a celebration of African artisanship in their collections is what links these brands together, noting their Kenyan roots as the inspiration behind their work.

Thanks to the partnership with Polimoda, the designers will gain increased global exposure and further access to the fashion community around the world, building bridges between two fashion forces in different continents: Africa and Europe.

Designer Quotes

It's an incredible privilege and honour to have this opportunity to go back and learn and develop new skills amongst the top emerging fashion designers and fashion industry leaders. I'm very excited! - **Louise Sommerlatte**, [Hamaji](#)

How cool is this?! Really looking forward to the opportunity to be surrounded by creative minds and talents. Polimoda is such a renowned institute offering some of the world's most talented and skilled fashion focused teaching in the world and here I am being given access to this wealth of knowledge...and then it's in Florence?! Excited! - **Katungulu Mwendwa**, [Katush](#)

I'm really ecstatic to be joining Polimoda for the Master in bag design. Learning from the best in the industry and coming back to apply it to



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the brand will be an amazing experience! I am really looking forward to it! - **Mohamed Awale**, [Suave](#)

ABOUT EFI

For the Ethical Fashion Initiative, lifestyle choices impact livelihoods. EFI creates and strengthens social enterprises in emerging economies, connecting discerning international brands in fashion, interiors, fine foods and the arts with talented local artists, 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. Active in ten countries worldwide, EFI is a flagship programme of the International Trade Centre, a joint agency of the United Nations and the World Trade Organization.

ABOUT POLIMODA

Polimoda is known worldwide for its independence in thinking and action by combining business and design across all departments. Considered one of the best fashion institutes in the world, Polimoda balances the know-how of Italian design and production with an international vision. The undergraduate, master's and short courses offered at Polimoda connect the legacy of the past, with new research and creativity. Professors offer experience-based learning, adapting courses to the changes in the industry as they happen, which is nurtured inside the Renaissance-style building of Villa Favard and in the state-of-the-art laboratories at the Design Lab and the Manifattura Tabacchi. With 70% of students from countries outside Italy, Polimoda is a cultural force in the heart of Florence.

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