

KOSIBAH

Couture Bridal & Evening Wear

Kosibah at Flare 2011

Yemi Osunkoya, the designer behind the Kosibah label, delivered the following introductory remarks before the main fashion show at Flare 2011. The event took place at Eko Hotel, Lagos, Nigeria on 8 April 2011.

First of all I want to say that it's a great pleasure to be with you all tonight and a great honour and privilege to share the same stage as the legendary Preston Bailey. I want to congratulate Ayiri and the team at Oaken for organising a fantastic event. I think we can all be very proud that the Nigerian wedding industry is truly world class.

I myself have been lucky enough to play a small part in that success story: this year marks twenty years that Kosibah has been in business. I owe a big debt of gratitude to my forward-thinking parents who encouraged me to pursue my dream even though fashion wasn't an orthodox career for a Nigerian back then. And a special vote of thanks is due to my mother who loaned me the money to set up in business and in whose honour I named the company.

Ayiri wanted me to give you a quick introduction to the dresses you'll be seeing shortly on the catwalk. So here are some pointers.

Let's start by acknowledging my African heritage in my designs. I was lucky enough to receive a thorough education in the classical techniques of haute couture and I still make all my own patterns and handcraft my gowns at my studio. But if you look carefully at the gowns as they come down the catwalk you'll see two aspects that I think really show my roots: fabric and shape.

First of all fabric. I know that this audience won't have any problem spotting the kente and aso oke fabrics in my collections. I mix those with traditional western fabrics such as organza, textured tulle, zibeline, lace and chiffon. My classical training comes into play with the embellishments: Swarovski crystals, beading, embroidery, appliqué.

Secondly and more subtly there's shape. All of my gowns have at their heart the hourglass silhouette. The models today all have enviable svelte figures but if you take a look at my website at www.kosibah.co.uk,



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you'll see that celebrating real women and real women's shapes is really what inspires me. Over the years I've really honed my technique in corsetry and draping. The inner structure of my dresses sculpt the body while providing support and comfort. That's where I think my artistry, such as it is, lies. And I think that is due to my African background too. I know that every woman wants to look her very best on her wedding day and so I do my utmost to maximise each individual client's best assets. I attend a lot of my client's weddings and the best reward I can get for my work is to hear the bride being praised for how beautiful she looks on her special day.

Finally and especially for the photographers. Always think about how a dress looks from the back. A bride spends a lot of time with her back to the congregation. I try to make the back view as exciting and interesting as the front.

With these few thoughts, it is my great pleasure and honour to present to you, the Kosibah evening and bridal wear collection. Thank you.

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