



Onome Ekeh

# Future Fashion Week

*Future Fashion Week is an ephemeral event. A noetic device designed to capture your attention and attune it to a greater purpose than merely enhancing your sartorial experience (even though this is also important and instrumental to our cause).*

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You find yourself wandering purposefully into a darkened gallery, there had been an invitation of sorts—you can't remember how/when, but here you are. Somehow this is meant to be a fashion show? Why you are here is questionable, perhaps fashion is not quite your thing, or it is, but not the consumer/brand-hysteria side of things et cetera... At any rate, where's the show?

In the midst of a dark room you and several others behold a luminous floating cube, an outsize Rubik's Cube forged out of chromatics, casting dappled rays, patterned surfaces illuminated onto the walls: is this a QR code or an enlarged fingerprint/bio-signature of the designer? The spectacle, unexpected and indecisive, keeps you entranced for a while. When you leave, you neither recall when you entered the room, or why.

A week later (or maybe several, depending), the experience vaguely surfaces as the faded precipices of a dream: elusive and just out of reach. This is when you happen upon a paragraph which triggers an urgent sense of *déjà-vu*:

This collection pays homage to the elegant and mysterious crew of the *Sahel Star*, the *Pan African Express (PAX)* train line that runs from Dakar to Djibouti. The train's crew is known as *Les Ombres*, a moniker of unclear origins, either emanating from "*Les Bijoux Sombre de l'Etoile du Sahel*"—as in "*the Dark Jewels of the Sahel Star*"—or simply *les ombres*, as in "*The Shadows*." Both names fit, equally approximating both their allure and ambiguity. For example, the rumor that the crew of the *Sahel Star* are androids persists, perhaps because they do not appear to age or rankle, and are also somewhat androgynous. On the other hand, according to the lore, their age, rank and experience can be gauged by the deepening hues of the Naga gem embedded just above the space between their eyebrows. *Les Bijoux Sombre* cloak themselves in luxurious midnight-blue

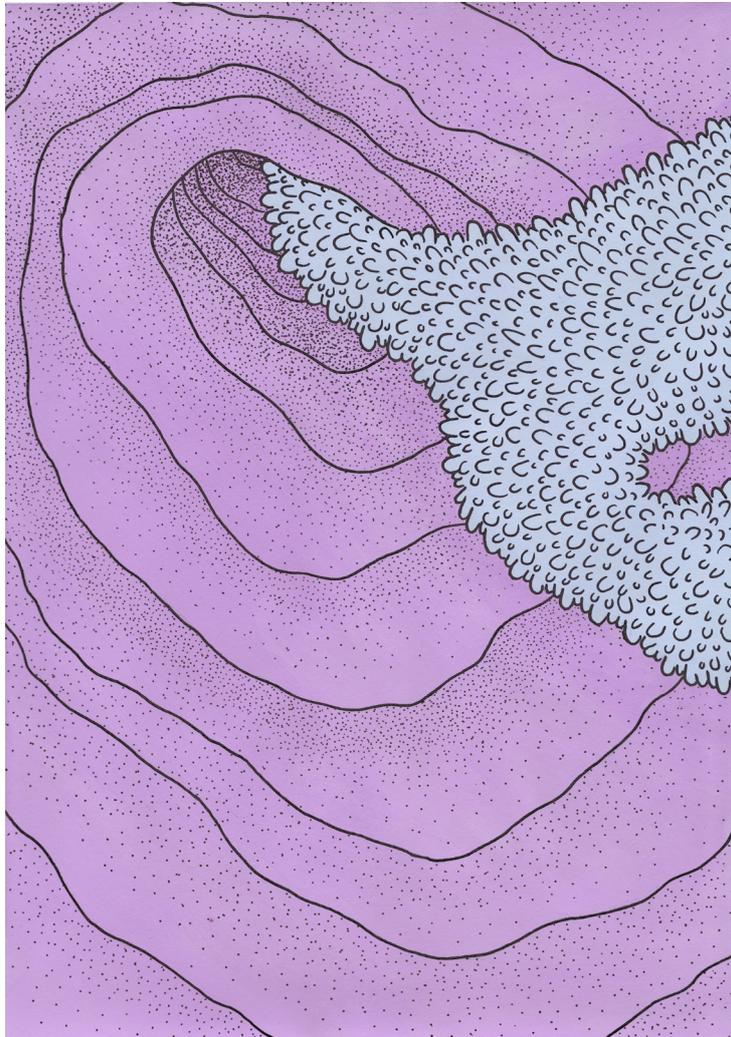


tracksuit djellabas that drape, flow and shift from ascetic elegance to warrior execution as needed.

While not the most popular of the *Pan African Express* lines (this distinction falls to the *Savannah Royale*, an equatorial route that begins in Lagos, dips into the Congo and terminates in Mombasa), the *Sahel Star* is the most romantic and cryptic with its dreamlike traversal through the mystical desert-scapes of the Sahel Corridor, punctuated with vivid pit stops in lush oases along the route.

As you read, you surprise yourself by calmly resisting the urge to startle. When the words transform into flames, rather than wake from the dream, you awaken within the dream.

Congratulations, this first step towards lucidity has unlocked an outer layer of the puzzle box known as Future Fashion Week. Do I have your attention now? If so, I will answer your questions:



*What exactly is Future Fashion Week?*

An ephemeral event. A noetic device designed to capture your attention and attune it to a greater purpose than merely enhancing your sartorial experience (even though this is also important and instrumental to our cause).



*And what cause might that be?*

We have captured your attention in the service of embedding the Future. Well, *your Future*. Much like celestial bodies we transmit with delay. You are receiving this decades, maybe even centuries or millennia before the event (don't ask what century we inhabit, the calculus is dodgy). On the other hand, everything is happening now. We transmit to the past to create a memory base for our present. The cube you witnessed in the gallery is a luminous compression of the world we seek to create. The light code imprints on your nerve endings triggering phosphenes and brainwaves. In short you become a generator for our reality.

*This sounds iffy, if not exploitative—*

We're hoping for a collaboration, and that in time you will also master this tech and use it to transmit into your own past. You would be joining a lineage of adepts who issue timeline correctives. As for the "iffy" part, you have to realize that for this conversation to take place, there have been countless tries. Not everyone gets to this stage.

*Are you saying I've done this several times before?*

Yes, many times. We try with everyone, but only a small fraction of the population is able to respond to the invitation, and an even tinier portion advances to the post-cube stage. This action requires extreme subtlety, time must be taken to finesse our audience into acquiring the sensibilities that allow them to awaken within the dream construct, not out of it.

*I get this intuitively, but could you explain how you send a fancy glow-y cube back in time? How does that work?*

We could call it "dreamtime," but perhaps a more accurate explanation is that we all inhabit the same quantum continuum, which some of us have learned to manipulate. In your local time, couture houses employ teams of artisans, seamstresses, "les petites mains," to the end of creating singular couture experiences. In the spacetime we transmit from, it is the meditators and civil dream servants who do such heavy-lifting—crafting exquisite dreamspaces and inserting them into past-flowing mindstreams.

At some point in human civilization, we realized we didn't need any more gadgets, rather what was essential was the deepening of attention span to absorb and experience the quantum dimensions as they began to open up. Attention is the only real currency.

The continuum exists as a quantum field of infinite possibility, only collapsing into a particle-incident beneath the gaze of two or three witnesses. You see this in biblical scripture, as a means



of cementing timelines: two or three angels are dispatched as observers at significant node points, to ensure the birth of novel events. Relative to this is the phenomena of the anthropologist who “discovers” a remote preceding culture—otherwise existing peacefully in the quantum wake of their own dreaming, now condemned to extinction beneath the override of a Western gaze...

The *Pan African Express*, credited with bringing peace and stability to the Continent and modifying the need for nationhood, is itself an artefact gifted to us from the Future. We have myriad stories, anecdotes and historical accounts of how it came into being—however, if we are being honest, we can admit these memories and historical accounts are implants. A case in point. We don't fully understand the technology behind the *PAX*: we grasp the premise that each line runs off the energies inherent in the different terrains through which it travels, hence every route operates at a distinctly different pace and with a distinctly different character. For example, the *African Odyssey*, the longest of all the routes, which runs from Cairo to Cape Town over the course of six weeks, undergoes mysterious psycho-mechanical shifts as it crosses certain topological nodes such as the Great Rift Valley or the Equatorial Line. The passengers are said to weather, under the guidance of the *Odyssey's* taciturn crew, the deep geological stresses nested in the heart of the Rift, so profound that those who make it to the end of the line are said to be so internally transfigured as to no longer resemble their former physical selves. They also never embark on a journey back home.

The engineering behind *PAX* is shrouded in a mystery we have come to accept. We accept this mystery because the world we inherited was bereft of hope and resources. It was only a transmission from our Future that intimated the loom of spacetime and the onus upon us to weave different outcomes. Hence we rethread, reloop the weft of the past to engender new myth.

*This all sounds very complex. Where's the fashion?*

As your capacity for attention deepens, you will unlock more levels to this game. It will be subtle at first, just a trickle of impressions, aesthetic slants seeping into your daily life... Then the rush of profound recall overtakes, an onslaught of sensory impression: taste, smell, color...

New yearnings arise, mystical proclivities emerge—a sudden desire for wide open spaces, the night skies become hypnotic with blinking star emissions. In conversation you find yourself attending to the contours rather than the content of what is spoken, immersing in assonance, dissonance, resonance... A desire for sparseness coupled with a thirst for verdant lushness; you suspect it is your imagination, but it is true that streets and supermarkets crowd with scents, strange luxuriant fare: dates, kumquats, Tunisian olives, turmeric, kefir, cinnamon sticks,



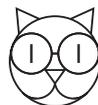
myrrh, cardamon... Everywhere there is a sudden propensity for dark dramatic eyeliner, you yourself feel inspired to shave your head, adopt dark-hued blues, a draped minimalist aesthetic....

You in fact are becoming a Dark Jewel of the *Sahel Star*. Indeed it is believed the Dark Jewels invoked themselves into existence by scanning the embers of the deep desert skies and inciting them into flame, into pattern, into strange attractors... A dynamic system interpreting itself in different timescales, an influx of time flowing in all directions: past future present, parallel, corrective, imaginary, novel, pocketed; unfolding itself as a luminous chromatic cube in a darkened gallery, a fiery déjà vu of a fashion collection, and now as this conversation.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, we appreciate your engagement and hope you will forge your way deeper into this dream, unlocking the time-puzzles you encounter. Our wish is for you to reach adept-hood, using this device to transmit into your own past and issue correctives. This world will become as we dream it.

## BIO

Onome Ekeh, born and raised on both sides of the Atlantic, is a writer and designer of speculative spaces. She teaches at the Institute Art Gender Nature HGK Basel FHNW.



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