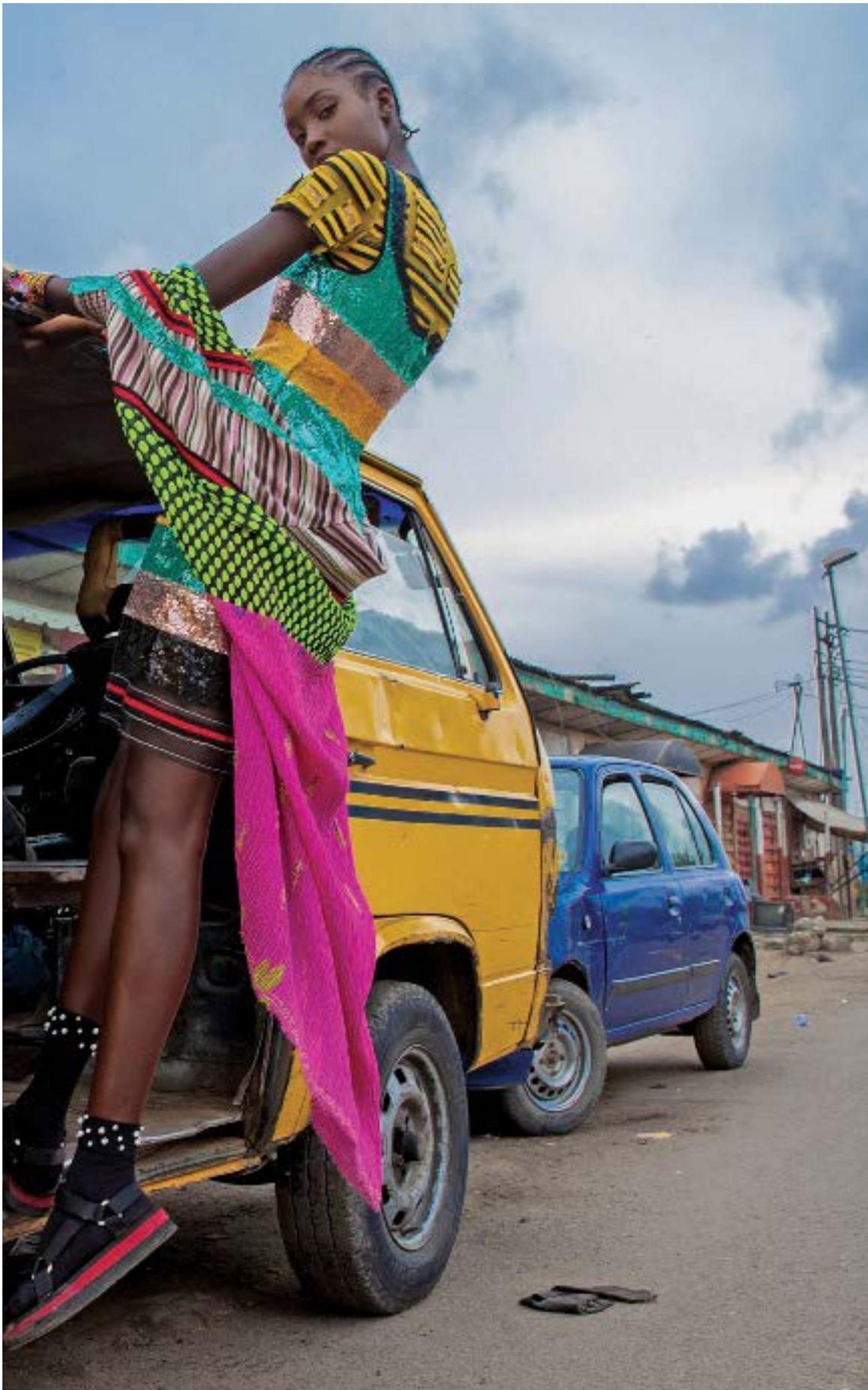




HIT THE SPOT

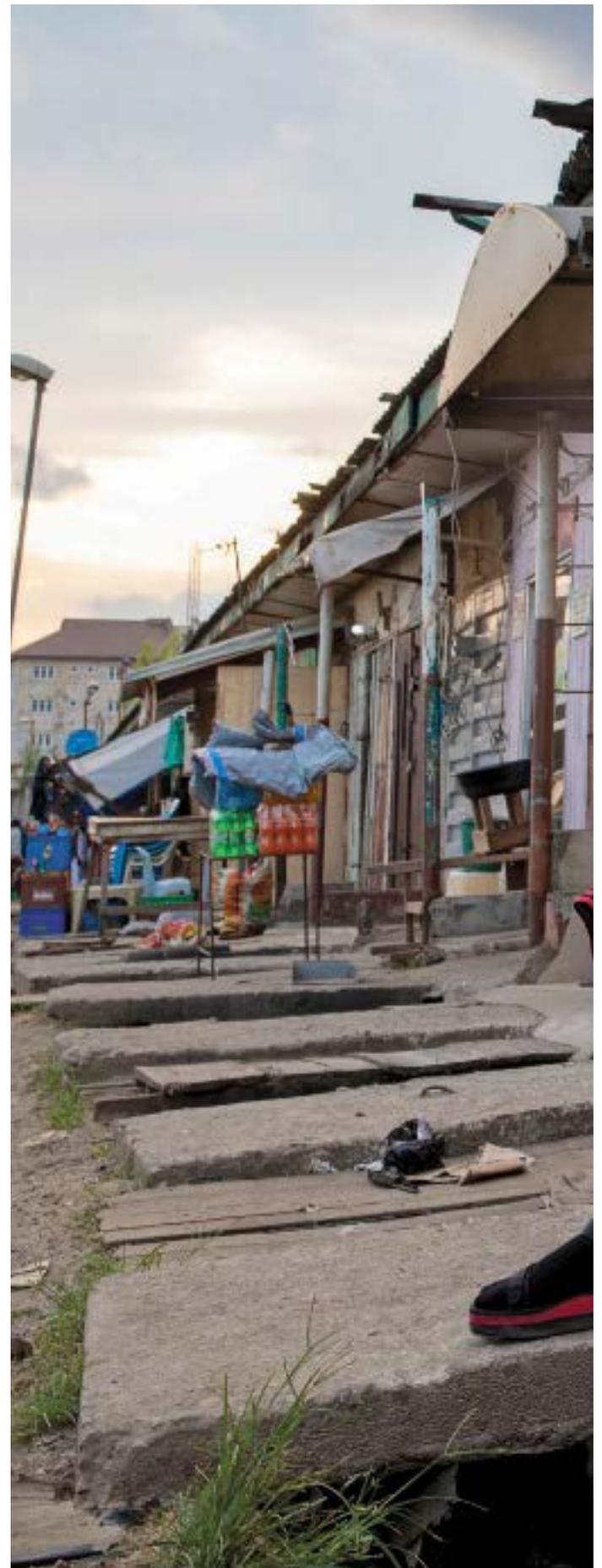
Leopard Frock Rocks: South African Fashion



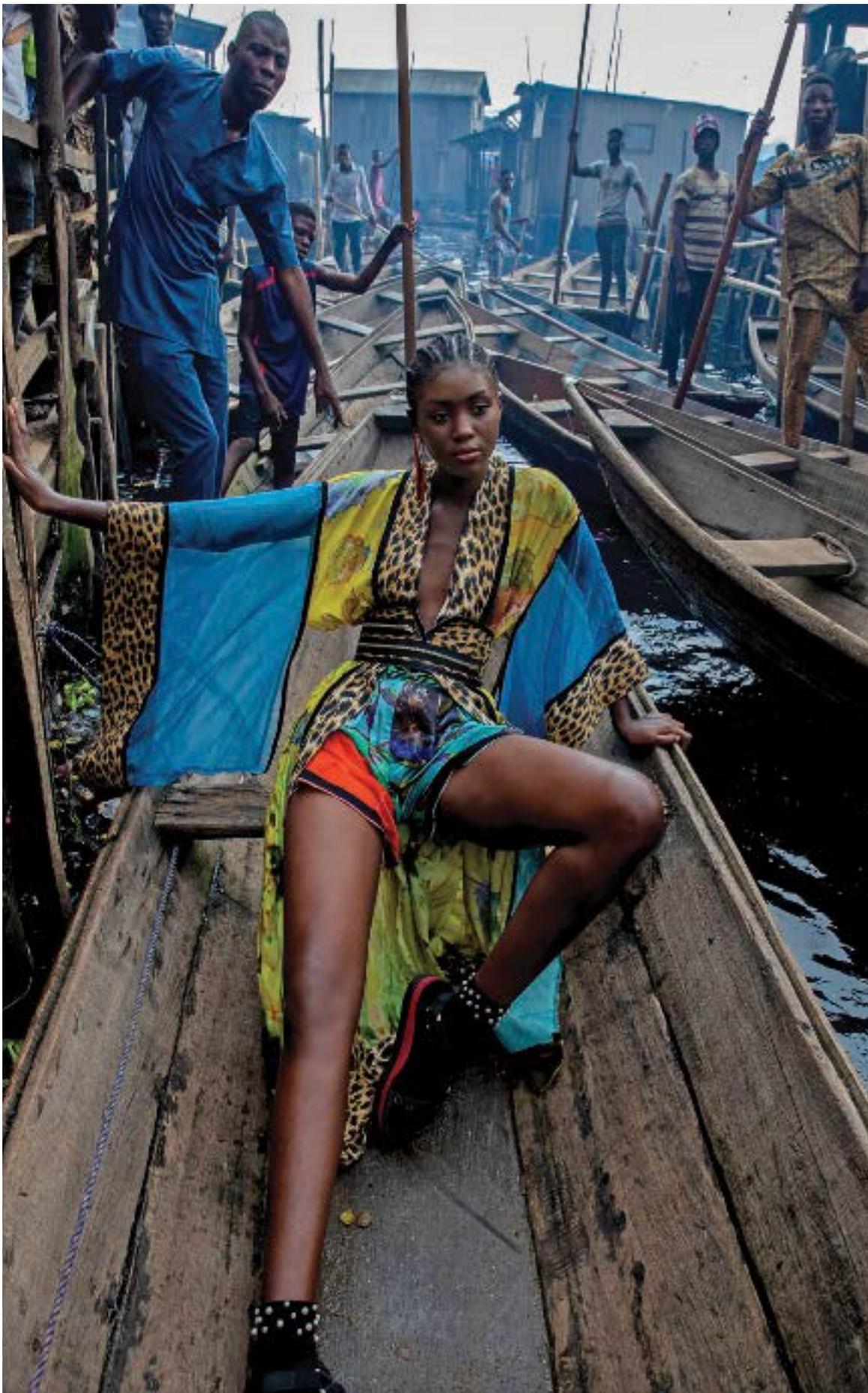
South African Fashion Week (SAFW) has been celebrating twenty-one years of showcasing the country's designers with a book and an exhibition that reflect the bold and diverse style that South African fashion has become known for. The book, *Twenty-One Years of South African Fashion Week*, chronicles the talent of the country's designers, while the exhibition *21 YEARS: Making Histories with South African Fashion Week* at the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa in Cape Town, highlighted key fashion moments from the late 1990s to 2018, and showed outfits from both established and emerging designers.

Adding to the energy of the African fashion scene are rumours of the possibility of *Vogue Africa*, a publication that would encompass the entire sub-Saharan continent. There is talk of the magazine being overseen by Edward Enninful, British *Vogue*'s Ghana-born editor-in-chief, who seems well-placed to oversee such an ambitious project. The aim would be to bring Africa's designers, photographers and journalists to world-wide attention, but one problem is the vast nature of this continent and its 54 countries. Where would such a title be based? South Africa seems a natural choice as it is home to many publishing houses and possibly has the most advanced fashion industry within Africa. But cities such as Cape Town and Johannesburg are a long way from the East and West African capitals.

Whatever the plans for *Vogue Africa*, the time is clearly ripe for raising South Africa's profile ▶







within the international cultural scene. Of course, fashion is part of business as well as culture, and the significant growth of the fashion industry is related to the increasing upper middle class, especially evident in Africa's largest cities. This robust fashion market would not be possible without the creativity of the designers, whose work is often underpinned by narratives that draw on the continent's distinctive identity, history and culture. The outcome is bright colours and clashing prints that have become synonymous with an African look. Combined with an emphasis on the hand-made, architectural silhouettes, challenging constructions, and a vibrant streetwear influence, the result is aesthetically powerful.

Iconic designer Marianne Fassler, featured in the SAFW exhibition and book, embodies this look. With individuality and vitality, she mixes animal prints, stripes and tartans, in clothing that communicates both rawness and sophistication. Based in Saxonwold, Johannesburg (one of the oldest parts of the city), the name of her label *Leopard Frock* conveys her playfulness.

Fassler studied Fine Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, before changing to Art History and Afrikaans/Dutch Literature. It was during her university days that she began making clothes for herself and friends, discovering a passion that exerted a pull on her imagination that fine art did not. Learning classical couture from a Hungarian woman led her to a career spanning more than four

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