

## FINDING EDUN

The label's new designer, Danielle Sherman, seeks out a vision for ethical fashion made in the heart of Africa. Photographed by Inez van Lamsweerde and Vinoodh Matadin.



**C**apturing the dilapidated grandeur of the Beit el Mtoni, the oldest and largest Arabian palace in Zanzibar, is no small feat even for the most skilled photojournalist, much less a young fashion designer. “This place has been sitting on my mood board forever,” says Danielle Sherman, pointing the lens of her Kodak toward a row of crumbling archways overlooking the Indian Ocean. “But the symmetry and

balance of it only really hit you in person.”

As the newly appointed creative director of Edun, Sherman, 31, is charged with bringing a new vision to the label, which counts Africa as a kind of second home, and the inspiration trip she made in June with her fiancé, photographer Todd Selby, and cofounder Ali Hewson **VIEW**>194

**FINE PRINT**  
 MODEL CHRISTY TURLINGTON IN EDUN CROP TOP (\$895), TANK (\$98), TRENCH COAT (\$1,298), AND SKIRT (\$1,498); SELECT BARNEYS NEW YORK STORES AND EDUN.COM.

# VIEW African Odyssey



## SETTING SAIL

FROM LEFT: SHERMAN VISITS A FISHING COMMUNITY NORTH OF STONE TOWN IN ZANZIBAR; WITH LABEL COFOUNDER ALI HEWSON.



**VISION QUEST**  
SHERMAN SHOOTING  
INSPIRATION IMAGES  
OUTSIDE THE MARUHUBI  
PALACE RUINS.

marked her first time on the continent. Launched by Hewson and her husband, Bono, in 2005 with the help of fellow conscious-fashion advocate

Rogan Gregory, the line had been under the supervision of Irish designer Sharon Wauchob until Sherman took the reins earlier this year. “Matching the design mission to the ethical one is an exciting challenge,” says the L.A.-born New Yorker. “I think at a certain point you want to be part of something that is bigger than you.”

Fast-forward to Sherman’s stellar Edun debut at September’s New York Fashion Week and a bigger picture comes into focus. “When I joined the company, Bono told me to concentrate on building a creative community around me,” she says, and the artisanal inner circle of her far-flung family of experts is the result. Raw-opal pendants that swung at the neckline of sleek cotton tunics and chunky made-in-Madagascar knits are hewn in an atelier in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, where Maasai warriors greet visitors at the door and twine is spun in the same time-honored way as the local fishermen’s line. Horn buttons on trench coats owe their irregular beauty to the handiwork of an endlessly resourceful craftsman in a tiny studio in Kibera, Nairobi, one of Africa’s largest shantytowns,

where even the city’s waste is swiftly repurposed—discarded padlocks are melted down and recast as shiny brass jewelry, for example.

The impetus to forge responsible trade partnerships on the continent appears to be ever expanding, as labels like Maiyet, ASOS Africa, and Suno have also committed to tapping into a workforce both skilled and energized. And given that six out of the ten fastest-growing economies on the planet are located in Africa, production capabilities are poised to skyrocket. “Having intimate relationships in an industry that feels so disconnected is very rewarding,” Sherman says. “When we find a new partner, we’re often sent handwritten thank-you notes from every single person on the factory floor—and we’re always thinking about who we can collaborate with to make a difference.”

Stripped bare of any extraneous bells and whistles, Edun’s collection displays a carefully considered purity and sense of ease that connect directly with the way stylish women want to dress right now. As one of the founding members of The Row and a former design director of T by Alexander Wang, Sherman understands the subtle power of a meticulously cut basic. (Coincidentally, the very idea for The Row came when Sherman and her childhood friends Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen wanted to create a shirt for Red, the campaign launched by Bono to fund AIDS and HIV initiatives in Africa.) Many of her most eye-catching pieces—low-slung slit skirts and geometric cropped jackets in leather that echo the basket-woven roofs of sardine shacks along the shores of Zanzibar—are made to sing with the cool precision of a crisp cotton tee. For Hewson, the label’s twin missions of desirability and sustainability are in sync as never before. “I was always concerned about how people were being looked after in the process,” she says, slipping on an elegant collarless blazer from a rack of samples in the label’s newly redesigned New York showroom. “Because you want to feel good about what you are wearing, not just look good.” With its beautiful, understated designs, Edun is giving the idea of ethical fashion a longer, chicer view.—CHIOMA NNADI