

WORLDMAKING THROUGH FASHION LANGUAGES

COMMUNITY-BASED PRACTICES OF RECOMPOSITION, NAMING, AND REPAIR IN KAMPALA

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Abstract

This article examines how community-based fashion practices in Kampala generate fashion languages through material recomposition, naming, participatory pedagogy, and repair. Focusing on Seamline Atelier's *Suubi Collection* and Sanvra's *Olugoye Lwo*, it approaches both initiatives as situated practices that produce meaning through garments, words, materials, and public encounters. Seamline Atelier reworks worn school uniforms into craftivist garments that address education, aspiration, memory, and youth futures, drawing on the lived experience of Suubi Solomon and spoken-word collaboration with Geof d'Poet. Sanvra transforms pre-consumer textile waste into wearable art that foregrounds Luganda language, Ugandan craftsmanship, ecological responsibility, and community engagement, extending fashion into community-based environmental pedagogy and practices of reuse. Drawing on studio visits in Kampala, exhibition observation at *Kwetu Kwanza* during the Nyege Nyege Festival in Jinja, documented conversations, and the co-conceptualization of hybrid symposium formats for *WORLDMAKING MATTERS. Sustainable Fashion, Design and Arts* in Salzburg, the article analyses how these practices speak from lived realities often excluded from dominant fashion discourse. It argues that fashion languages emerge through material afterlives, local naming, storytelling, participatory formats, and repair, challenging abstract sustainability claims and Global North-centred narratives of fashion innovation. By foregrounding Kampala-based practices as sites of knowledge formation, the article contributes to debates on fashion discourse, sustainability, and decolonial design. It proposes fashion as a pluriversal communicative ecology grounded in collaboration, care, and material responsibility, positioning worldmaking as a practice enacted through situated fashion languages.

Keywords: *Fashion languages; Worldmaking; Community-based fashion; Material recomposition; Participatory fashion practices; Repair and care; Decolonial fashion discourse; Sustainable fashion; Kampala.*

INTRODUCTION: WORLDMAKING THROUGH FASHION LANGUAGES

This article begins from encounters with two Kampala-based fashion practices – Seamline Atelier and Sanvra – whose work speaks through worn school uniforms, textile offcuts, Luganda naming, craftivist storytelling, and public forms of exchange. Rather than approaching fashion primarily through its dominant self-descriptions – as image, trend, spectacle, market, or commodity – these practices invite attention to fashion as a situated language of making. Their garments do not only appear as designed objects; they carry educational histories, waste economies, community relations, and ecological responsibilities into artist-researcher encounters and public discussion. Fashion language

is understood here not only as written or spoken discourse, but as a material, visual, curatorial, and participatory practice through which garments, names, stories, exhibitions, and encounters produce meaning within broader postcolonial fashion debates that understand garments, textures, and wearing cultures as sites where power, knowledge, and material histories are negotiated (Gaugele & Titton, 2019; Jansen, 2020).

The focus on Seamline Atelier and Sanvra emerged from research and curatorial engagement with community-based artistic practices, cultural sustainability, and ecological approaches to fashion and design. Both initiatives work from lived realities often excluded from dominant fashion discourse: colonial and postcolonial educational

infrastructures, youth futures, textile waste, local craft knowledge, and the environmental consequences of global fashion systems. Seamline Atelier's *Suubi Collection* reworks worn school uniforms into craftivist garments that address education, aspiration, memory, and social transformation, grounded in the story and participation of Suubi Solomon and extended through spoken-word collaboration with Geof d'Poet. Sanvra's *Olugoye Lwo* transforms pre-consumer textile waste into wearable art that foregrounds Luganda language, Ugandan craftsmanship, ecological responsibility, and community engagement, while also developing community-based textile actions that turn recycling, upcycling, and environmental awareness into participatory practice. Their work does not primarily speak through fashion media, commercial branding, or abstract sustainability claims, but through recomposition, naming, participation, and repair. The article asks how fashion speaks when its language is produced from lived realities rather than from dominant fashion self-description: what terms the makers use, why they name garments and projects in particular ways, and how these words, materials, and stories challenge conventional narratives of fashion innovation. These practices can be understood in relation to what Lotman describes as the periphery of the semiosphere, where established meanings are unsettled and new semiotic configurations become possible (Lotman, 1991). In Kampala, Seamline Atelier and Sanvra do not simply add local examples to global fashion discourse; they generate vocabularies through which fashion can be rethought as care, critique, and worldmaking. This relational understanding of worldmaking resonates with curatorial practice as a non-linear, relational, and processual mode of worldmaking, grounded in encounters that embrace difference, opacity, and transformation (Posch, 2025, p. 6). Both initiatives engage fashion as a communicative and relational practice (Glissant, 1997) grounded in everyday making, reuse, collaboration, and public address. Seamline Atelier transforms worn school uniforms into garments that address histories of education, social ordering under colonial governance, aspiration, and youth futures. Sanvra, in turn, begins from textile waste as a material condition through which responsibility, local language, and ecological awareness are made publicly discussable.

In both cases, garments do not merely represent social or environmental concerns; they materially compose them through afterlives of reuse, stitched traces of recomposition, naming practices, and acts of public address.

The analysis follows four interrelated fashion languages: recomposition, naming, pedagogy, and repair. It draws on studio visits, exhibition observations, documented conversations, photographic material, and curatorial collaboration. Conceptually, it engages selectively with Arturo Escobar's reflections on pluriversal design, particularly his question of "how does one design for a complex world?" (Escobar, 2018, p. 26). His concepts are used to clarify how the practices discussed here connect material transformation, collaboration, and worldmaking.

The analysis proceeds from garments, makers' terms, material configurations, and performative and public encounters before turning to theory. The article thus asks not only what fashion is or should be, but how it speaks from specific places, through particular materials, and in relation to concrete social worlds.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH AND POSITIONALITY

The study draws on qualitative, community-engaged, and practice-oriented research conducted through studio visits, exhibition observation, documented conversations, photographic material, recorded guest inputs, and curatorial collaboration across Kampala, Jinja, Karlstad, and Salzburg. The empirical material includes encounters with Seamline Atelier and Sanvra in Kampala, observation of their presentation at *Kwetu Kwanza* in Jinja, and sustained online and hybrid exchanges during the concept phase of *WORLDMAKING MATTERS. Sustainable Fashion, Design and Arts*. The methodological approach is grounded in attention to how knowledge emerges through making, dialogue, situated observation, and public circulation, and aligns with approaches that understand practice as a site of knowledge formation shaped by relational processes, situated accountability, and collaborative meaning-making (Chilisa, 2019; Haraway, 1988; Smith, 2012; Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021).

The research process began with a pre-conception phase in Uganda in November 2023, through encounters in Kampala and Jinja with transdisciplinary artistic, performative, spatial, and

material practices.¹

The focused empirical engagement with Seamline Atelier and Sanvra took place in November 2024 through studio visits in Kampala and exhibition observation in Jinja.² *Kwetu Kwanza*, presented by IGC Fashion as Uganda's largest sustainable fashion event, provided a public framework through which *Olugoye Lwo* and the *Suubi Collection* could be encountered as material and discursive interventions around natural materials, traditional techniques, and rethinking waste (IGC Fashion, 2024).³ Data collection combined reflective field notes, exhibition materials, photographic records, and recorded guest inputs and artist conversations. Conversations were held with Asiimwe Brian Sanvura of Sanvra and with Edward Muyizi, Eria Tamale, and several Seamline Atelier team members, focusing on material sourcing, naming practices, craftivism, education, community engagement, textile waste, heritage, and sustainability. These exchanges were approached as dialogical encounters in which concepts, terms, and narratives were co-articulated (Chilisa, 2019; Smith, 2012).

In relation to Seamline Atelier, the research also followed the contributions of collaborators such as Suubi Solomon and spoken-word artist Geof d'Poet. Suubi Solomon's testimony foregrounded the lived contradictions between educational attainment, youth unemployment, migration, and the struggle for sustainable livelihoods, while Geof d'Poet's spoken-word contribution translated these concerns into an affective and publicly accessible

form of address.

Their contributions are treated as empirical and artistic material, because they shaped how the *Suubi Collection* was articulated across studio, exhibition, and symposium contexts.

In Sanvra's case, the research further traced community-based waste actions connected to *Olugoye Lwo*, particularly textile clean-up activities in Kibuye, Kampala, where discarded clothes were collected, discussed among designers, team members, and communities, and revalued as possible material for upcycling rather than burning or disposal.⁴

Working at the intersection of research and curatorial practice, the author approaches knowledge formation as situated and relational, shaped by uneven access to resources, infrastructures, visibility, and institutional platforms across Global South and Global North contexts. The co-conceptualization of the symposium inputs formed part of a collaborative process in which artistic, curatorial, and academic forms of knowledge were brought into relation (Cizek & Uricchio, 2022; Posch & Nyaoro, 2025).⁵ Following Haraway, this requires acknowledging partial perspective rather than claiming detached neutrality (Haraway, 1988; Chilisa, 2019; Smith, 2012; Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021; Tuck & Yang, 2012). This positionality also resonates with Whitty, Dong, and Yuan's reflection on what it means to "meet in difference" and their call for "the inclusion of diverse ontologies" when addressing environmental issues (Whitty et al., 2025, pp. 161–162). Quoted material derives primarily from recorded *WORLDMAKING MATTERS*, guest inputs and artist conversations and is cited by speaker, shortened session title, year, and

1 The 2023 pre-conception phase included encounters with transdisciplinary artistic and cultural practices in sound, music, dance, urban space, performance, recomposition, upcycling, and public artistic interventions across festival, studio, artist-residence, clubbing, and urban contexts in Kampala and Jinja. The 2023 research stay was supported by Paris Lodron University Salzburg, Austria; the 2024 empirical research stay in Uganda was supported by the Centre for Geomedia Studies, Karlstad University, Sweden.

2 The focused empirical engagement included several visits to the studios and working contexts of Seamline Atelier and Sanvra in Kampala in November 2024, as well as observation of their exhibition and presentation at *Kwetu Kwanza* during the Nyege Nyege Festival's *Afrogalactic Carnival Edition: Back to the Future* in Jinja, Uganda, from 14 to 17 November 2024.

3 *Kwetu Kwanza* 2024, organised by IGC Fashion, presented Ugandan sustainable fashion through exhibition themes including "Resurgence of Natural Materials," "Returning to Traditional Techniques," and "Rethinking Waste." The exhibition foregrounded traditional and natural materials such as Olubugo / barkcloth, Obuso / raffia, Nsimbi / cowrie shells, and Matembe, as well as natural dyeing, upcycling, and the reuse of discarded textiles. Participating designers and labels included Seamline Atelier, Sanvra, Nakimuli Crochet Everywhere, Motley Minds, Quill Clothing, Maisha by Nisiria, Amylia Clothing, IGC Fashion, My Fashion Biography, Masa Mara, and ORM Streetwear (IGC Fashion, 2024, pp. 3–4).

4 The community-based waste actions connected to *Olugoye Lwo* also involved proactive engagement and participation by members of the Seamline Atelier team, showing that the practices were not strictly separate in the field but at moments intersected through shared environmental and material concerns.

5 The collaboration continued throughout 2025 through online and hybrid exchanges connected to Karlstad and Salzburg, taking place approximately every one to two months, both separately with each practice and, at moments, in shared formats. These conversations supported the preparation of the symposium inputs, the selection and contextualisation of visual and material examples, and the translation of Kampala-based fashion practices into academic, artistic, and public discussion without losing their situated vocabulary, material specificity, or community-based orientation.

timestamp.⁶ Unrecorded field conversations are treated as contextual research material rather than directly quoted interview data. The symposium is therefore treated not only as dissemination, but as a site of shared articulation.⁷ Figures 1–4 are read as analytical material, making visible stitched traces, fragments, exhibition contexts, material afterlives, and modes of address.

MATERIAL RECOMPOSITION AS FASHION LANGUAGE

Material recomposition is central to both practices. Garments begin not with new textiles or seasonal trends, but with materials that already carry social histories: worn school uniforms in Seamline Atelier's *Suubi Collection*, and pre-consumer textile offcuts, surplus fabrics, and discarded remnants in Sanvra's *Olugoye Lwo*. These materials are treated as carriers of memory, institutional experience, ecological damage, and community knowledge. Through cutting, layering, stitching, naming, and exhibiting, both practices transform existing textiles into garments that speak from the conditions of their previous use.

Recomposition is therefore not only a design technique; it is a communicative practice through which fashion addresses education, waste, responsibility, and future-making.

SANVRA: REWORKING TEXTILE WASTE AS ENVIRONMENTAL AND PEDAGOGICAL ADDRESS

In current fashion discourse, consumption has gained renewed significance in response to social,

6 For readability, subsequent in-text citations abbreviate the recorded symposium input titles as follows: *Wear* refers to *Wear your story, wear your heritage: Weaving Tales of Identity, Culture, and Creativity through Fashion* (2025), and *Craftivism* refers to *Craftivism in Fashion: Creative Practices as Tools for Social Change* (2025).

7 A further stage of research unfolded through the preparation and realisation of *WORLDMAKING MATTERS. Sustainable Fashion, Design and Arts*, an international multi-day symposium held on 15 December 2025 and 16–19 January 2026 at the W&K-Atelier, KunstQuartier, Inter-University Organization Arts & Knowledges in Salzburg, Austria. Conceived, organised, and hosted by the author, the symposium brought together designers, artists, researchers, students, cultural workers, and wider publics through guest inputs, artist conversations, workshops, screenings, and discussions. Seamline Atelier's hybrid session, *Craftivism in Fashion: Creative Practices as Tools for Social Change*, and Sanvra's session, *Wear your story, wear your heritage: Weaving Tales of Identity, Culture, and Creativity through Fashion*, emerged from the preparatory exchanges and were developed as formats of shared articulation rather than as isolated presentations of finished work. The symposium created a space in which the Kampala-based fashion practices, artistic methods, curatorial mediation, academic reflection, and public conversation could meet and remain in productive tension.

cultural, economic, and ecological transformations. Iannilli and Spagnoli describe consumption as involving “the reduction to nothingness of tangible or intangible elements,” rendering them unusable “through the very act of use” and exposing the “inherent tension between use and waste” (Iannilli & Spagnoli, 2024, p. 9).⁸

Sanvra's practice begins precisely at this tension, where textile waste is usually treated as the end of fashion's life cycle. Yet in *Olugoye Lwo*, destruction is not accepted as final. Offcuts and factory remnants are re-entered into cultural and aesthetic circulation, not to erase their damaged status, but to make their material histories visible.

Sanvra frames fashion as a communicative tool rather than a commodity.

As Sanvra explains, fashion is “something that I can use to speak to the world,” and transforming waste becomes a way to create impact “to my society, to the community, to this world” (Sanvra in *Wear*, 2025, min. 00:36:15–00:36:52). This framing connects to critical accounts of waste as a material, ethical, and social category rather than inert residue (Hawkins, 2006; Norris, 2019). In this sense, *Olugoye Lwo* takes waste not as an endpoint, but as its material and communicative starting point.

The project is described as “born from the unlikeliest of sources”: pre-consumer textile waste offcuts and discarded textiles that would otherwise risk entering landfill (*WORLDMAKING MATTERS.*, 2025–2026). In Sanvra's practice, waste becomes a material starting point for wearable art, ecological awareness, and Ugandan craftsmanship. Sanvra's practice also extends beyond sourcing industrial remnants into community-based waste actions. In Kibuye, Sanvra encountered residents preparing to burn discarded clothing and intervened by opening a conversation about pollution, reuse, and creative possibility.

These moments situate fashion pedagogy outside formal institutions: learning emerges in response to a concrete ecological situation rather than through abstract sustainability discourse. Sanvra also developed material experiments to demonstrate the persistence of textile waste. By burying discarded garments to observe whether they would

8 Iannilli and Spagnoli also situate this destructive dimension within broader social, cultural, economic, and ecological transformations in fashion, including technological change, increased environmental awareness, shifting individual values, and growing recognition of the fashion industry's environmental and social impact (2024, p. 9).

decompose, he produced material evidence of textile persistence after disposal,⁹ thus enabling their re-use. Figure 01 foregrounds this logic of recomposition. The garments are composed from pre-consumer textile waste and recomposed textile fragments. The assemblage of offcuts, stitched traces, irregular seams, and layered surfaces refuses the clean visual language often associated with sustainable fashion. The garment does not conceal waste; it makes textile excess perceptible and turns discarded matter into an address to the viewer. As Sanvura states, “The scars, the mismatched edges – they are not flaws. They are the story of how fashion produces excess” (Sanvura in *Wear*, 2025, min. 00:47:10–00:47:42). These visible traces function as fashion counternarratives, exposing the material realities of overproduction and refusing the polished aesthetics through which sustainability is often made marketable (Hawkins, 2006; Tsing, 2015, p. 25). The figure should

⁹ Sanvura states in the same session, “Even if you throw your clothes, it will be there. It will never dissolve” (Sanvura in *Wear*, 2025, min. 00:18:40–00:18:49).

therefore be read alongside Sanvura’s community waste actions: its layered surfaces do not only show upcycling as a design technique, but carry the memory of discarded textiles collected, tested, and reintroduced into public visibility (Fig. 01). This practice connects to Niinimäki’s argument that “extending the use of clothes is one key issue in sustainable development” (2020, p. 20).¹⁰ Sanvura’s work shifts this circular vocabulary beyond technical reuse. The offcut does not only gain a longer material life; it is re-signified as a site of address, a surface of memory, and an invitation for community reflection. Circularity is therefore treated here not as a universal metric, but as a locally articulated material language.

¹⁰ Niinimäki argues that textile manufacturing causes significant environmental problems when waste is not properly treated, affecting workers, neighbouring communities, and environments (2020, p. 14). She also observes that even bio-based textiles often compost too slowly for municipal composting systems, making technical recycling cycles more likely in the fashion sector (2020, p. 17). In Sanvura’s practice, this circularity is not treated only as a technical solution, but as a situated material language of awareness, reuse, and community reflection.



Fig. 01

SEAMLINE ATELIER: REWORKING SCHOOL UNIFORMS AS EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL CRITIQUE

Seamline Atelier's *Suubi Collection* works through a related but distinct form of recomposition.

Here, the central material is not industrial waste but the school uniform: an institutional textile marked by education, aspiration, discipline, colonial histories, and personal memory. Within Seamline Atelier's broader practice of "Edu-fashion" (IGC Fashion, 2024), education and fashion are interwoven to communicate social concerns and to use fashion as a platform for dialogue and change.¹¹ School uniforms are therefore approached as charged material archives whose meanings are shaped by colonial and postcolonial histories of discipline, social ordering, and educational aspiration (Gaugele & Titton, 2019; Jansen, 2020). Seamline Atelier exhibits and narrates as a socially conscious Ugandan fashion brand that uses fashion and design as tools for storytelling, empowerment, and social transformation, with the *Suubi Collection* framed as a project that sparks dialogue around education, opportunity, and the challenges faced by educated yet unemployed youth (WORLDMAKING MATTERS., 2025–2026).

The collection is inspired by Suubi Solomon, whose lived experience foregrounds the tension between educational aspiration and structural unemployment in Uganda. The *Suubi Collection* reimagines fashion's role in addressing high unemployment among Ugandans, linking repurposed uniforms to the struggles of educated but unemployed youth. Seamline Atelier described Uganda as being shaped by "a generation of degrees" that nevertheless "lack opportunities," linking the collection to the silenced struggles of educated but unemployed youth.

Suubi Solomon's involvement is crucial because it prevents the collection from functioning as a symbolic representation of youth unemployment alone. His presence situates the project within lived experience and relational knowledge (Glissant, 1997) rather than abstract social commentary.

The *Suubi Collection* materialises the gap between childhood promises of success, formal educational

achievement, and the limited opportunities available to many young Ugandans.

Geof d'Poet's contribution clarifies the transdisciplinary logic of Seamline Atelier's practice. Reflecting on the process of translating Suubi Solomon's story into spoken-word performance, he states, "Let's embrace collaborations. They really give better niche and outreach to what we do" (d'Poet in *Craftivism*, 2025, min. 02:17:41–02:18:39). His poetic aim "to speak to the downcast, speak to the hurting outcast" further resonates with the *Suubi Collection's* concern with educated but unemployed youth and the unheard social struggles connected to Uganda's education system (d'Poet in *Craftivism*, 2025, min. 02:19:42–02:20:20). Spoken word here does not simply accompany fashion; it extends the garment's language into voice, affect, and public listening. By disassembling and reworking previously worn uniforms, Seamline Atelier transforms garments associated with regulation and standardisation into craftivist fashion artefacts. The uniforms are repurposed garments donated by local communities, giving the collection a material trajectory that begins in everyday educational life rather than in newly produced fabric. These textiles have already been worn, washed, repaired, outgrown, and remembered before they enter the design process. The collection therefore does not merely recycle fabric; it reopens the meanings attached to schooling, childhood, learning, and future possibility. The designers describe this process as a reclamation of stories:

"These materials... they carry the story of the children who wore them, of a system that promised futures but often fell short. We are reclaiming those stories through fashion" (Muyizi in *Craftivism*, 2025, min. 00:45:12–00:45:42).

The *Suubi Collection's* transformative acts operate within what may be understood as a "creative act," understood by Lotman as a moment in which established sign systems are destabilised and reconfigured (Lotman, 1991, p. 14).

Each garment retains traces of prior use, embedding institutional histories and individual narratives within new forms that resist fixed meaning. "By recomposing uniforms, we're allowing multiple stories to emerge – the children's, the community's, and the makers' – all in one piece of clothing," as Edward Muyizi explains (Muyizi in *Craftivism*, 2025, min. 00:50:22–00:51:05). In this way, garments act as semiotic interfaces through

¹¹ Seamline Atelier describes itself as a versatile fashion label working across ready-to-wear, bespoke creations, avant-garde, and costume outfits. Its practice is grounded in a commitment to using fashion to raise awareness of socioeconomic concerns. Their concept of "Edu-fashion" interweaves education and fashion as a means of communicating social messages, including sustainability through upcycling and sustainable sourcing.

which plural histories and futures are negotiated (Rovine, 2015; Pilyarchuk, 2024).

Material strategies within the collection further enact critical intervention. Rather than erasing traces of use or repair, Seamline Atelier foregrounds seams, folds, and signs of previous life. “You can see the lines, the folds, the stitches... they are not mistakes. They are the lives of the students, the stories of the classrooms,” Eria Tamale notes (Tamale in *Craftivism*, 2025, min. 01:18:40–01:19:05). This refusal of polished invisibility aligns with Escobar’s call to redirect design away from “modernist unsustainable and defuturing practices” toward “other ontological commitments, practices, narratives, and performances” (Escobar, 2018, p. 15). Visibility here becomes political, making infrastructural labour and social conditions perceptible.

Figure 02 makes this transformation visible: the school uniform is not presented simply as an object of schooling, but reconfigured as a surface through which education, colonial discipline, aspiration, and collective memory become legible. The retained fragments of uniform fabric allow the garment to speak from its previous institutional life while entering a new field of fashion, critique, and possibility. On the blackboard behind the models, the sentence “Education was key to success” is written in white chalk. In the foreground, two models wear garments from the *Suubi Collection*. The chalk sentence recalls a deeply internalised educational promise, while the recomposed uniforms expose the fragility of that promise in relation to unemployment, migration, and the struggle for sustainable livelihoods. Text and textile together form a scene of critical reflection on education, labour, and future-making (Fig. 02).

RECOMPOSITION ACROSS MEDIA AND PUBLIC ENCOUNTER

The distinction between the two practices is important. Sanvra works from the material afterlives of production waste, while Seamline Atelier works from the institutional and biographical afterlives of educational textiles. Sanvra foregrounds ecological and community-based re-signification of textile remnants; Seamline Atelier foregrounds social and educational re-signification of uniforms through lived experience and transdisciplinary collaboration. Both practices redirect materials shaped by larger systems – fast fashion, schooling, colonial legacies,



Fig. 02

and economic inequality – toward other forms of meaning, use, and public discussion.

At *Kwetu Kwanza*, material recomposition entered a public exhibition context shaped by questions of labour, origin, and accountability. Exhibition reflections such as “Who made my clothes?” and “What’s in my clothes?” placed Sanvra’s textile remnants and Seamline Atelier’s school uniforms within a wider vocabulary of material afterlives, local knowledge, and ecological responsibility (IGC Fashion, 2024).

This is where recomposition becomes a mode of address. Waste becomes “your garment” in Sanvra’s *Olugoye Lwo*. Uniforms become *Suubi*, hope, in Seamline Atelier’s collection. Offcuts become evidence of excess, while school textiles become archives of education and future-making. The practices challenge abstract sustainability language because they do not rely on claims of responsibility alone. They make responsibility visible in the garment’s construction: in seams, fragments, scars, layers, and retained traces of previous use.

In Escobar's terms, ontologically oriented design "contributes to creating the languages that create the world(s) in which people operate" (Escobar, 2018, pp. 133–134). Seamline Atelier and Sanvra do this materially: they create fashion languages in which discarded textiles are not silent, uniforms are not fixed, and sustainability is not a slogan but a situated practice of recomposition.

NAMING, WORDS, AND LINGUISTIC PRACTICES

If material recomposition shows how textiles speak through their afterlives, naming reveals how fashion further articulates meaning through words, titles, local terminology, and spoken narratives. Naming is not an explanatory add-on to garments; it is a constitutive fashion language through which garments enter social relations, public discourse, and collective imagination.

SANVRA: NAMING RESPONSIBILITY THROUGH LOCAL LANGUAGE

Sanvra's project title *Olugoye Lwo* – a Luganda phrase meaning "your garment" or "your cloth" – constitutes a deliberate mode of address. Rather than framing the project through market-oriented branding, the title addresses the wearer and the community directly, foregrounding an inclusive understanding of shared responsibility.

As Sanvura explains, "Your garment – it's not mine, it's not yours alone. It carries all our hands and histories" (Sanvura in *Wear*, 2025, min. 00:50:12–00:50:45). The choice of Luganda situates the project within a local linguistic ecology and positions fashion knowledge within a specific cultural and social context.

Sanvra further expands the meaning of the term by explaining that *Olugoye Lwo* refers not to a single dress, but to "your clothing, your clothes" as a collective field of garments (Sanvura in *Wear*, 2025, min. 00:52:28–00:53:26). Naming therefore does not simply reference the project; it gathers clothing, responsibility, ownership, and material afterlives into a shared linguistic space. By addressing clothing as "your garment," responsibility is relocated from abstract sustainability discourse to everyday practice.

Waste is no longer someone else's problem; it is linguistically returned to the wearer.

By insisting on Luganda, *Olugoye Lwo* interrupts English-dominated fashion discourse and positions local linguistic knowledge as a site of

fashion meaning-making (Gaugele & Titton, 2019; Pilyarchuk, 2024). The garment is not framed as a universal object of style, but as a relational artefact embedded in community, labour, and material afterlives. Naming thus becomes an epistemic and relational practice through which fashion knowledge is locally articulated.

This linguistic grounding is inseparable from Sanvra's repeated framing of fashion as a voice. Against dominant associations of fashion exhibited for marketing purposes or consumption, Sanvura states that "fashion is a voice... you can use fashion as a voice to speak to the world" (Sanvura in *Wear*, 2025, min. 00:19:13–00:19:54).

In *Olugoye Lwo*, naming and voice converge: garments speak by naming responsibility and by making waste publicly discussable.

In this sense, fashion as voice is enacted through community clean-ups, upcycling practices, shared learning, and ecological responsibility.

SEAMLINE ATELIER: NAMING EDUCATION, MEMORY, AND HOPE

Seamline Atelier's linguistic strategies operate differently, yet with comparable implications.

In the *Suubi Collection*, naming is tied to education, biography, and memory. The Luganda term *suubi*, meaning "hope," anchors the collection in an affective and ethical vocabulary. The name gains further resonance through its connection to Suubi Solomon, and the educational contradictions discussed above. Naming here is not symbolic branding but relational address: a linguistic gesture that binds personal biography, collective youth experience, and material practice. In this sense, *Suubi* names both a garment-based collection and a lived contradiction.

As Solomon explains during the symposium, the project carries the hope that his story can create "more hope for people" who may feel that their lives, struggles, or frustrations cannot be spoken about (Solomon in *Craftivism*, 2025, min. 01:40:30–01:41:42). The name therefore does not refer to optimism in general. It emerges from a context in which education is deeply valued, yet degrees, discipline, and skills do not automatically secure livelihoods. Hope is positioned here as a critical and collective language for speaking about youth futures, unemployment, migration, and social possibility.

In the *Suubi Collection*, garments are also named after school subjects and examination

structures, explicitly referencing the educational system from which the uniforms originate. The designers describe this naming as a form of “visual storytelling,” in which each design recalls subjects or educational thresholds that structure career pathways and social expectations (Muyizi in *Craftivism*, 2025, min. 02:00:02–02:01:09).¹² Through this naming system, Seamline Atelier turns the education system into a wearable vocabulary. School subjects no longer remain abstract curricular categories; they become garments, memories, and invitations to conversation. Naming functions simultaneously as memory work and critique.

SPOKEN WORD AND TRANSDISCIPLINARY FASHION LANGUAGE

Spoken language further extends these naming practices. Sanvra frames fashion as a voice for waste, creativity, and responsibility, while Seamline Atelier works with Geof d’Poet to translate Suubi Solomon’s story into public address. He repeatedly returns to the language of uniforms, hope, education, and betrayal, making the garment’s narrative audible as well as visible (d’Poet in *Craftivism*, 2025, min. 02:05:45–02:10:30). Building on the transdisciplinary collaboration discussed above, spoken word here transforms naming into public address. Spoken word, fashion, and public dialogue therefore become mutually reinforcing practices of transmission. This supports an understanding of fashion as worldmaking in which “fabric, form, and affect converge to construct alternative grammars of the social,” not as abstract theory but as material intervention in the here and now (Villar & Alaminos-Fernández, 2025, p. 30).

NAMING AS WORLDMAKING

In the practices discussed, naming, storytelling, and spoken performance generate fashion languages that reconnect garments to education, waste cultures, heritage, and communal responsibility. These linguistic practices do not isolate garments within aesthetic or commercial frames. Rather,

they allow garments to enter broader conversations about what education promises, what waste reveals, and how fashion can speak from specific places and social worlds. Naming and linguistic practice therefore operate as forms of worldmaking: they do not simply describe garments, but shape how fashion is imagined, who is addressed, and which realities are made present.

PEDAGOGICAL AND PARTICIPATORY FASHION LANGUAGES

Pedagogical and participatory formats show how fashion languages are learned, negotiated, and collectively produced through making, exhibition, conversation, and public encounter.

In Seamline Atelier and Sanvra, learning takes place through sewing, touching, questioning, storytelling, listening, disagreement, and collective reflection.

SEAMLINE ATELIER: EDUCATION AS LIVED PEDAGOGY

Seamline Atelier’s *Suubi Collection* foregrounds pedagogy through its engagement with school uniforms and educational histories. The garments are made from materials associated with classrooms, discipline, aspiration, and institutional belonging. Yet the project does not simply represent education; it turns educational textiles into tools for rethinking how learning happens and what education promises. In workshops and public encounters, participants are invited to handle the uniforms, observe traces of wear, and imagine how fixed institutional garments can become otherwise. As Muyizi describes, “People discover their own creativity while handling the uniforms. They see that something fixed and familiar can become new – it’s a way of learning by doing” (Muyizi in *Craftivism*, 2025, min. 00:53:10–00:53:45). Craft here becomes a mode of distributed knowledge formation, resonating with Fletcher and Grose’s understanding of craft as “political and democratic” because skills and authorship are distributed rather than centralised (Fletcher & Grose, 2011, p. 149). Suubi Solomon’s participation gives this material recomposition a lived and relational ground. As he explains, “[f]ashion is not only about creating or crafting the different clothes, but we can still use it for dialoguing and passing on information” (Solomon in *Craftivism*, 2025, min. 01:47:22–01:47:52). His statement situates education within lived experience: the challenge is not that education

¹² Specific pieces in the *Suubi Collection* are named after school subjects and educational structures such as General Paper, Two Principal Passes, Mathematics, Geography, Economics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Agriculture, and History, linking each garment to educational pathways through which futures are imagined (Muyizi in *Craftivism*, 2025, min. 02:23:35–02:28:42).

has no value, but that many young people acquire skills, discipline, and degrees without finding pathways toward sustainable livelihoods (Solomon in *Craftivism*, 2025, min. 01:37:16–01:40:30). The upcycled school uniform therefore becomes a material reminder of both promise and pressure: the promise that education will lead to a better future, and the pressure placed on young people and families who invest in that promise. Solomon's account of migration reframes mobility not as failure, but as resilience: "Moving out is not about giving up... it is showing resilience" (Solomon in *Craftivism*, 2025, min. 01:37:16–01:40:30). In this sense, the recomposed school uniform carries not only educational memory, but also the afterlives of migration, family responsibility, and survival. Geof d'Poet's spoken-word collaboration extends this pedagogy into affective and performative space. By translating Suubi Solomon's story into voice, rhythm, and narrative, fashion becomes part of a broader educational ecology. Pedagogy shifts from instruction toward dialogue, where lived testimony, poetry, and textile recomposition function as modes of collective inquiry rather than top-down explanation. Figure 03 shows one of Seamline Atelier's textile recomposition entering the exhibition space at *Kwetu Kwanza*.¹³ In the exhibition setting, the recomposed school uniform becomes available for collective interpretation as a proposition about education, memory, and future possibility.

SANVRA: ENVIRONMENTAL PEDAGOGY AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Sanvra's participatory practice is differently situated, but equally pedagogical. *Olugoye Lwo* emerged through direct engagement with textile waste, local communities, and practices of environmental awareness. In Kibuye, Kampala, Sanvra encountered residents preparing to burn discarded textiles and intervened by opening a conversation about reuse, pollution, and creative possibility. Learning here takes place outside formal institutions, responding to a concrete ecological situation rather than abstract sustainability discourse. Sanvra's pedagogy begins with a material problem and transforms it into a shared question: what else can this waste become?

Community members initially did not recycle or upcycle household or waste-site materials, yet through collective handling and explanation, perception shifted toward recognition of creative and ecological value. Fashion communication in this context is not mediated through branding or marketing, but through face-to-face dialogue, collective action, and visible transformation of waste. At *Kwetu Kwanza*, *Olugoye Lwo* extended this environmental pedagogy into public visibility. Textile waste was presented not as an abstract environmental issue, but as something local, material, and discussable. The exhibition format thus extended community-based learning into a wider public arena. Figure 04 situates *Olugoye Lwo* within this public pedagogy. The garment renders waste legible as ecological, cultural, and ethical matter rather than as residue to be hidden or exported.



Fig. 03

¹³ The figure demonstrates how the collection circulates beyond workshop and studio contexts, functioning as a public site of learning and dialogue.

PARTICIPATION, PERFORMANCE, AND PUBLIC LEARNING

The practices discussed here resonate with co-design approaches in fashion, particularly where collaborative and participatory design involves users as active contributors rather than passive consumers. Maciejko, Iberbuden, and Lecuna describe collaborative-participatory design as a process of designing “with the user as an active contributor to each step of the design development process” and argue that such approaches can support shifts in consumer behaviour toward sustainability (2025, pp. 86–87). This article uses that reference to contextualise participation, while shifting the emphasis from consumer participation toward community-based awareness and material responsibility.

In Sanvra’s case, participation includes residents, waste cleaners, makers, and audiences who encounter the afterlives of textiles.

In Seamline Atelier’s case, participation involves designers, educators, artists, students, and publics



Fig. 04

who engage with school uniforms as pedagogical objects. These participatory formats are approached as situated encounters in which differences in access, languages, geography, and institutional support remain visible rather than resolved.

Across *WORLDMAKING MATTERS*. and *Kwetu Kwanza*, fashion is articulated not only through objects, but through dialogue, translation, and collective reflection.¹⁴ These formats demonstrate that participatory fashion practice generates languages for sustainability and social engagement not through consensus, but through encounter, difference, and negotiation. Pedagogy is not external to fashion; it is one of the ways fashion becomes meaningful, critical, and publicly accountable.

REPAIR, CARE, AND CIRCULAR FASHION TERMINOLOGY

Repair sustains these fashion languages through care, visible mending, and circular responsibility. In Seamline Atelier and Sanvra, repair is not a minor technical intervention or a compensatory gesture within an otherwise extractive system. It is an ethical, pedagogical, and semiotic practice through which relationships to materials, histories, and communities are reconfigured. By foregrounding repair, both practices challenge fashion narratives that privilege novelty, seamless, and disposability.

SANVRA: REPAIR AS ENVIRONMENTAL ACCOUNTABILITY

In Sanvra’s *Olugoye Lwo*, repair does not restore textiles to an imagined original state; it keeps damage and fragmentation visible as conditions to be worked with. Pre-consumer textile remnants and discarded garments are assembled in ways that make their heterogeneity legible. Visible joins, layered surfaces, and stitched traces of recomposition make care perceptible. Sanvra’s repair is inseparable from environmental pedagogy. Because discarded garments do not simply disappear, repair becomes a way of

¹⁴ Such formats echo Whitty, Yuan, and Dong’s call to “come together” through the inclusion of diverse ontologies, suggesting that environmental and fashion futures require relational spaces in which different knowledge positions can meet without being absorbed into a single framework (Whitty et al., 2025, p. 162). They can also be understood as temporary nodes that bring together different media, disciplines, generations, and publics, enabling plural modes of being, listening, and sensing to coexist without assimilation (Posch, 2025, p. 16).

re-entering into social and ecological relations rather than allowing them to accumulate in landfill. By reworking waste into garments that circulate publicly, repair becomes both a slowing of material lifecycles and a form of environmental accountability.

This approach resonates with critical accounts of circular fashion that emphasise the need to confront, rather than obscure, the material consequences of fast fashion systems (Niinimäki, 2020; Shirvanimoghaddam et al., 2020). Niinimäki's argument that "extending the use of clothes is one key issue in sustainable development" is particularly relevant here (2020, p. 20). Extending the use phase of garments is one of the most effective sustainability strategies, yet only when material responsibility remains visible. In *Olugoye Lwo*, extending use matters because material responsibility remains visible rather than abstract. Crucially, repair here is collective. Community cleaning actions in Kibuye situate repair within shared responsibility rather than individual thrift. Sanvra thus contributes to forms of community care that resonate with the idea of "caring communities" (The Care Collective, 2020, p. 45).¹⁵ Repair is not framed as a consumer duty imposed after purchase, but as a community practice that addresses pollution, creativity, and care together. In this sense, repair becomes a material language through which fashion speaks about ecological limits and shared obligation.

SEAMLINE ATELIER: REPAIR AS SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL CARE

In the *Suubi Collection*, repair is inseparable from memory and education. School uniforms are often already marked by mending, fading, and wear – traces of everyday care performed by families, students, and communities over time. By working with uniforms that might otherwise be discarded after limited period of use, Seamline Atelier questions the short lifecycle of educational textiles and extends them into sustainably crafted garments for renewed everyday wear. Seamline Atelier does not erase these traces. Instead, the designers amplify them through patchwork, visible stitching, and recomposition.

¹⁵ The Care Collective describes "caring communities" as grounded in mutual support, public space, shared resources, and local democracy (2020, p. 46). The term is used here to clarify how Sanvra's community-based waste actions situate repair within shared responsibility rather than individualised consumer ethics.

Repair here becomes a reflective practice that connects past experience with future possibility. The recomposed uniform holds together childhood memory, family investment in education, institutional discipline, and the uncertainty of post-school life. In this sense, repair operates not only at the level of material reuse, but as social and educational repair. The garment becomes a site where fractured promises of education are acknowledged and held through care. "These uniforms are not just scraps. They carry histories. By reworking them, we care for those histories, for the materials, and for the people," Muyizi explains (Muyizi in *Craftivism*, 2025, min. 00:56:30–00:57:05). This understanding aligns with Fletcher and Tham's conception of care as "everything that is done to maintain, continue, repair 'the world' so that all can live in it as well as possible" (Fletcher & Tham, 2019, p. 27).

Repair thus becomes not only visible, but audible and relational when extended through spoken word and public listening.

REPAIR BEYOND TECHNICAL CIRCULARITY

Repair in the practices of Sanvra and Seamline Atelier also functions as a critical response to dominant circular economy narratives.¹⁶ While circular fashion models often focus on efficiency, recycling technologies, and closed loops, the practices discussed here foreground the social and affective dimensions of circularity.

Repair, as practised here, is slow, situated, and relational. It involves time, attention, skill, and dialogue, and it resists the acceleration that characterises fast fashion.

At *Kwetu Kwanza*, repair was framed as part of a broader rethinking of waste and material heritage. Exhibition texts emphasised that reusing discarded garments, while not resolving the dominance of synthetic materials, remains preferable to allowing textiles to join the vast volumes of waste

¹⁶ This response to circular economy narratives is particularly relevant in a fashion context in which sustainability communication is frequently compromised by greenwashing. Shield defines greenwashing, following TerraChoice, as "the act of misleading consumers regarding the environmental practices of a company or the environmental benefits of a product or service" and argues that both greenwashing and greenhushing can produce uncertainty and scepticism around sustainable practices in fashion (Shield, 2025, p. 372). Sbordone, Amato, and Cecere argue that the prevailing economic model fails to recognise the values emerging from circular economy principles, while ecological degradation and global warming accelerate the deterioration of ecosystems (2025, p. 441).

ending up in landfill (IGC Fashion, 2024). In this setting, repair becomes legible as cultural practice, reconnecting discarded materials to local practices of making and meaning and resisting forms of waste colonialism that externalise environmental harm (Brooks, 2025; The OR Foundation, 2020). Ultimately, repair in the practices of Sanvra and Seamline Atelier is not framed as a moral obligation imposed on consumers. It is presented as a shared cultural practice through which fashion can be reimagined. Rather than using repair as a metaphor alone, both practices enact it materially through stitching, layering, recomposing, public discussion, and community engagement. In doing so, they articulate a language of care that challenges disposability.

WORLDMAKING THROUGH FASHION LANGUAGES: SYNTHESIS AND IMPLICATIONS

Taken together, recomposition, naming, pedagogy, and repair demonstrate how Seamline Atelier and Sanvra enact worldmaking through fashion languages. These forms of fashion communication are produced not only through media, branding, or institutionalized fashion discourse, but through garments, words, materials, performances, community actions, exhibitions, and public encounters. Fashion becomes a situated practice of meaning-making through which social, cultural, and ecological realities are made visible, negotiated, and reimagined within broader debates on postcolonial and decolonial fashion discourse (Gaugele & Titton, 2019; Jansen, 2020).

This article has examined how community-based fashion practices in Kampala generate fashion languages through material recomposition, naming and linguistic practice, participatory pedagogy, and repair. Seamline Atelier and Sanvra are approached as practices in which language, materiality, and social relations are co-produced. Seamline Atelier's *Suubi Collection* reworks school uniforms into narrative surfaces through which educational memory, youth aspiration, structural unemployment, migration, and future-making become discussable. Sanvra's *Olugoye Lwo* begins from textile waste, community cleaning, and the ecological persistence of discarded garments, transforming waste into a material language of accountability.

Naming further extends this argument. *Olugoye Lwo*, meaning "your garment" or "your

cloth," relocates responsibility from abstract sustainability discourse to everyday ownership, asking wearers and communities to recognise clothing waste as connected to their own habits, environments, and relations. *Suubi*, meaning "hope," gains its critical force through Suubi Solomon's story and through the collective experience of educated but unemployed youth. Naming, in both practices, does not simply describe garments; it creates relational fields in which garments speak to people, histories, and futures. Pedagogical and participatory formats show how these practices circulate socially and publicly. Workshops, community encounters, exhibitions, spoken-word performances, and symposium-based exchanges do not simply communicate finished design projects; they produce spaces in which fashion becomes a mode of learning. Repair, finally, sustains these languages through care: in Sanvra's practice as ecological accountability, and in Seamline Atelier's practice as material, social, and educational repair.

Circularity is therefore treated not only as technical process, but as a material, ethical, and ecological practice grounded in care, reuse, and shared authorship (Hawkins, 2006; Norris, 2019). Read together, these practices illustrate how fashion operates as a pluriversal communicative ecology rather than a singular system of meaning. In Escobar's terms, ontologically oriented design "contributes to creating the languages that create the world(s) in which people operate" (Escobar, 2018, p. 133).

Seamline Atelier and Sanvra enact this proposition materially, linguistically, pedagogically, and curatorially. Their garments do not merely represent alternative values; they actively compose worlds through recomposition, naming, storytelling, and public encounter. Their work also shows that fashion's significance lies not only in what is made, but in how garments are made, repaired, circulated, narrated, and collectively encountered. In this sense, their practices resonate with an understanding of fashion as "a speculative infrastructure of worldmaking," where materiality, memory, and affect challenge dominant aesthetic regimes and open other social grammars (Villar & Alaminos-Fernández, 2025, pp. 28, 30).

These practices are also shaped by the infrastructures through which they circulate. The movement from Kampala-based studios and community encounters, through *Kwetu*

Kwanza in Jinja, to the hybrid symposium setting of *WORLDMAKING MATTERS*. in Salzburg shows how locally grounded practices can enter transnational conversations without losing their locally grounded vocabulary or material specificity. These exhibition, symposium, workshops, artist conversations, and curatorial formats function not only as dissemination, but as sites where fashion languages are translated, contested, extended, and collectively reflected upon.

For fashion practice and pedagogy, the findings suggest that sustainability cannot be reduced to technical solutions, circular metrics, or market-oriented communication.

Sustainability emerges here as a relational practice enacted through language, care, shared making, and collective engagement.

The article therefore contributes to decolonial fashion discourse by foregrounding Kampala as a site of knowledge formation rather than as a peripheral source of raw material, inspiration, or evidence. By attending to fashion languages grounded in schooling, waste, heritage, craft, unemployment, migration, community lived realities, and artistic collaboration, the analysis challenges Global North-centred narratives of fashion innovation. Rather than offering universally applicable solutions, these practices weave ecological awareness, social justice, and cultural heritage through locally grounded negotiations of material, social, and ethical relations (Escobar, 2018; Mbah & Ezegwu, 2024).

By grounding fashion in collaboration, repair, and lived material realities, Seamline Atelier and Sanvra open space for plural futures in which fashion operates not as a self-referential system of style, but as a medium of care, critique, and collective worldmaking. Their work invites attention to what fashion is for, whom it serves, and what kinds of worlds it helps to bring into being – opening space for plural futures in which garments, communities, and ecologies are mutually implicated in the continuous creation of worlds otherwise.

CAPTIONS

[Fig. 01] Sanvra; *Olugoye Lwo*. Credits: Asimwe Brian Sanvura, 2025.

[Fig. 02] Seamline Atelier; *Suubi Collection*. Credits: Edward Muyizi and Eria Tamale, 2025.

[Fig. 03] Seamline Atelier; *Suubi Collection*, presented at *Kwetu Kwanza*, Nyege Nyege Festival, Jinja, Uganda. Credits: Doris Posch, 2024.

[Fig. 04] Sanvra; *Olugoye Lwo*, presented at *Kwetu Kwanza*, Nyege Nyege Festival, Jinja, Uganda. Credits: Doris Posch, 2024.

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