



The Cowrie Shell in African Fashion: A Symbol of Everyday Resistance

AUTHOR Joelle Firzli

COLLECTION EDITED BY Joseph H. Hancock II

COLLECTION

Fashion and Personal
Style Studies

EDITION

1st edition

MARKET

College/higher education
and Professional and
scholarly

This course reading...

- Follows the history of the cowrie shell and its use from its origin to contemporary use.
- Explores the role of the cowrie shell in African fashion design and how it has been reclaimed to express identity, and craft new narratives that dismantle bias.
- Is ideal reading for students of Fashion and Personal Style Studies, Fashion Design, Design Studies, Museum and Curation Studies, History, African Studies, Postcolonial Studies, and Cultural Anthropology.

What is the history of the cowrie shell and what role does it play in contemporary African fashion design?

Tracing the cowrie shell from its origin in the Maldives to the coast of West Africa, author **Joelle Firzli** examines how the shell's purpose transitioned from ornament to currency, and a symbol of identity formation through spirituality and adornment.

Inspiring European fashion designers, such as Yves Saint Laurent and Azzedine Alaïa, ***The Cowrie Shell in African Fashion*** marks a shift in the shell's cultural value and usage outside Africa. Subsequently reclaiming the shell and deviating from historical European appropriations, discover how African designers now use it to craft narratives that express joy, triumph, and perseverance embodying a profound connection to culture and memory in postcolonial Africa.

Highlighting how an object can act as a catalyst for change and symbol of resistance in African fashion, this book is ideal reading for students of Fashion and Personal Style Studies, Fashion Design, Design Studies, Museum and Curation Studies, History, African Studies, Postcolonial Studies, and Cultural Anthropology.

Joelle Firzli is a multicultural independent fashion scholar, and a part-time faculty at Parsons School of Design.

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