

# T O L U C O K E R

## WINTER 25 "ORI - UPON REFLECTION"

ORI: òrí (noun) – A Yoruba metaphysical concept signifying one's spiritual intuition, destiny, and the essence of self. More than just the literal "head," ori is the inner self, the guiding force that shapes purpose and existence.

Visionary designer Tolu Coker presents "ORI – Upon Reflection", an evocative Autumn/Winter 2025 collection that transcends the boundaries of fashion, offering a profound dialogue between past, present, and future. Drawing inspiration from Yoruba spirituality and its diasporic migration, the collection explores dress as ritual, as memory, and as an extension of self.

Examining the intersection of spirituality, community, and identity through dress, Coker reimagines clothing as a medium for storytelling and cultural preservation. Each garment is imbued with memory, emotion, and significance, urging wearers to reflect on the deeper meanings behind what they choose to wear.

"Clothes are not simply garments - they are archives of memory, carriers of culture, and markers of identity. To wear is to honour the past, embrace the present, and shape the future." – Tolu Coker.

Coker embraces the structure of uniformity, contemplating how dress codes evolve across generations and geographies while retaining root codes. The collection pays homage to the flowing white garments of Aladura churches from Lagos to London, the ceremonial dress of Candomblé, Lucumí, and Santería across Brazil and Cuba, and the ritual attire of Black spiritual traditions in Louisiana and Haiti. The influence of classic European tailoring is woven throughout, shaping the dialogue between ceremonial and the everyday, the sacred and the structured. This interplay extends to fabric choices, where deadstock wools and gaberdines become materials of deeper exploration, while tartans, poplins, and crisp collars nod to quintessentially British sartorial codes, drawing upon the designer's London roots.

With meticulous craftsmanship and a dedication to sustainability, Coker employs hand-dyed and upcycled textiles, intricate jacquards, and meticulous tailoring to highlight the interconnectedness of craftsmanship and spirituality across the African diaspora. Printed reclaimed satins, reworked denims and eco-leathers carry deep symbolism, drawing from archival research, oral histories, and ancestral craftsmanship. The collection continues Coker's ongoing collaborations with silhouettes by Manolo Blahnik appearing throughout the collection, and sculpted hats designed by Coker and crafted by Virna Pasquinelli bring an elevated, historically inspired yet forward-thinking array of headwear.

Sustainability remains central to the collection's philosophy, reaffirming fashion as heirloom rather than disposable commodity. Upcycled textiles, deadstock leathers, and reclaimed satins merge with the brand's signature denim houndstooth jacquards, while garments from previous collections reappear, layered into the narrative of longevity, continuity, and legacy. Coker integrates fabrics infused with personal and collective histories, ensuring that every material choice adds depth to the overarching narrative of cultural continuity and re-imagination. The collection challenges the dominant trend cycles, advocating instead for an intentional, thoughtful approach to fashion, one that prioritizes longevity, heritage, and the importance of meaningful craftsmanship.

The collection asks, "What gives clothing value? How do garments gain meaning beyond materiality?" By examining the homogenising effect of uniforms, 'ORI – Upon Reflection' contemplates the intangible aspects of fashion, examining how garments serve as vessels for legacy, memory, and identity across generations.

The idea of sustainable storytelling extends beyond fabric choices, embedding itself in the ethos of creation. Every material is chosen with intention, every stitch a reflection of heritage, craftsmanship, and longevity. By resisting disposability, Coker redefines fashion as an evolving archive—an intimate dialogue between the wearer and the world they inhabit.

For AW25, Coker departs from the traditional runway format, opting instead for an immersive studio presentation at London Fashion Week - a decision rooted in transparency, collaboration, and a desire to slow down and savour the process of creation. Employing the execution of set designer Maureen Kargbo and producer Michelle Smith, Coker's atelier transforms into a communal space, inviting press, buyers, and industry figures to witness the ritual of making firsthand. This unique setting allows audiences to engage deeply with the collection, exploring its philosophical, historical, and artistic foundations.

At the centre of the space, a live atelier reveals the hypnotic rhythm of making, bridging the intangible and the tangible, the seen and the unseen. A live band at the 'altar' of the set mirrors the act of creation, composing the collection's soundtrack in real time, led by Grammy-winning producer Gaetan Judd, continuing Coker's close collaboration with music as both vessel and transporter of memory. A lookbook shoot unfolds within the space, documenting the collection's transition from process to permanence. Above, suspended archival imagery from the designer's late father serves as both reference and invocation - a conversation between history and the present, between personal memory and collective experience.

“ORI – Upon Reflection” is not merely a collection; it is an experience blending fashion with multi-sensory storytelling, performance, and sound direction where garments serve as living canvases, accompanied by a carefully curated sonic landscape and visual installations that transport the audience through time and space. Positioning clothing as a deeply cultural and historical medium, the immersive environment is designed to provoke introspection, encouraging audiences to reconsider their personal relationship with fashion, heritage, and self-expression.

Tolu Coker redefines fashion as ritual, narrative, and resistance. The collection is an offering, a conversation, and an invitation to reflect on the enduring power of craftsmanship, culture, and self-expression through clothing. Through this latest offering, Coker cements her role as a leading voice in contemporary fashion, seamlessly blending cultural storytelling with cutting-edge design and sustainability. The collection serves as both a tribute to ancestral legacies and a vision for a more thoughtful, connected future in fashion.

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## ABOUT TOLU COKER

Tolu Coker is a West London-born, British-Nigerian designer and multidisciplinary artist. Currently a 2025 LVMH-Prize Semi-Finalist and recipient of the British Fashion Council’s NEWGEN award, Coker is a graduate of Central Saint Martins. Having trained in the design studios of J.W. Anderson, Maison Margiela, and Celine, she continues to challenge the boundaries between fashion, art, and storytelling, carving a distinct voice in contemporary design.

## CREDITS

CREATIVE DIRECTION AND COLLECTION DESIGN: TOLU COKER  
SPECIAL COLLABORATION AW25 SHOES: TOLU COKER X MANOLO BLAHNIK  
COLLECTION PHOTOGRAPHY: RASHIDI NOAH  
STYLING: JEANIE ANNAN-LEWIN  
STYLING ASSISTANTS: ANNIE TSHICHIMBI & LIBBY HAMES  
CASTING: DANIELLA D’AIUTO  
MILLINERY: VIRNA PASQUINELLI  
SHOES: MANOLO BLAHNIK  
HAIR: EFI DAVIES USING TONI & GUY  
RUNWAY MAKEUP: BEA SWEET USING LOOK FANTASTIC  
NAIL ARTIST: DANIELLE BRIGHT ANSON  
MUSIC BY: GAETAN JUDD  
BAND: IFEOLUWA OGUNJOBI, LAMAR OCHEN, JORDAN BIKILA  
SHOW PRODUCTION: BLONSTEIN  
SHOW PRODUCER: MICHELLE SMITH @ RAGE FILMS  
CO-PRODUCER: MEGHAN WILLCOX  
ASSISTANT PRODUCER: LODINA AGYEMAN  
PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS: FLOELLA ALTO  
SET DESIGN: MAUREEN KARGBO  
SET PARTNERS: 180 STUDIOS & PROPORTION LONDON  
FLORISTRY BY: LORELLE MYKOO OF FLEURELLY FLOWERS  
SHOW PR: VILLAGE  
IN HOUSE- PR: ERNEST BOATENG  
BTS & VIP PHOTOGRAPHY: JEBA MARRI, HARRIET BETH, KYD, JANELLE TETTEY, YEM LOU  
PRESENTATION PHOTOGRAPHY: HENRY JAY KAMMY  
VIDEO PRODUCTION: RAGE FILMS  
SHOW VIDEOGRAPHER: JEANIQ AMIHAYA  
BTS VIDEOGRAPHY: JORDAN MALONGA & NANA KING AKWABOAH

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