

OS KUDURISTAS

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OS KUDURISTAS

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CLIENT: Da Banda International, Luanda, Angola

PROJECT : Os Kuduristas Campaign: The Angolan Quintal, 'Best Of' Dance Battles, and Cross-Cultural Student Music Exchange Program



BACKGROUND

Da Banda is an Angolan entertainment and media company that produces Africa's competitive dance TV show, 'Bounce,' owns the Elite Models franchise for Africa, and manages Kuduro MC's and dancers.

Kuduro is Angola's most popular youth culture movement that has been around for more than 15 years. The music is characterized by its 140 bpm frenetically driving electronic beats that are accompanied by gravity, flexibility and speed defying dance moves that incorporate the story of Angola's recent civil war that ended just a decade ago. Kuduro is more than just music and dance, it's a lifestyle that incorporates fashion and a 24/7 attitude.

Os Kuduristas is the experiential live and on-line platform we created to introduce western audiences to kuduro music, dance, lifestyle, and education. It included street dance battles, 5-day pop up multi-media "Quintal" installations, and a peer-to-peer educational cultural exchange program between high school students in Brooklyn, Queens, and Luanda.

Events were held in Paris, Amsterdam, Stockholm, Luanda, New York, and Washington, DC.

We conceived, produced, branded all facets of the campaign, and wrote original content including press releases, bios, positioning statements, media kits, flyers, playbills, poster copy and copyedited curated materials written by experts in Angola including A Brief History of Angola, About the Quintal, Kuduro in a Nutshell, Kuduro Technology, and more, by historians, artists, and journalists.



BRIEF

Create a brand platform to promote Kuduro, develop a Kuduro fan-base in Europe and the US and educate younger generations about Kuduro culture while creating partnership opportunities across various categories.

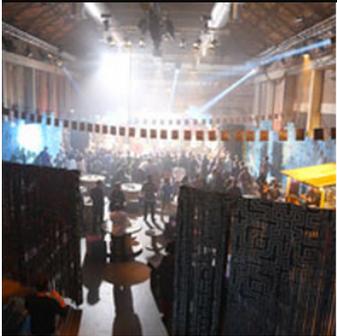
CONCEPT

Inspired by Kuduro's inclusive and participatory nature, we developed a brand new platform Os Kuduristas (translated from Portuguese "we who make Kuduro") to promote Kuduro that is authentically Angolan.

To launch the campaign, we brought the Os Kuduristas dancers to Stockholm, Amsterdam, and Paris to battle local crews, and host workshops at dance schools. This set the stage and built buzz and excitement for the pop-up Quintal installations in Paris and Amsterdam. We then brought them to New York and Washington DC where they battled some of the best crews in the world. Our up-close-and-personal video content captured the journey .

In Angola, a quintal (backyard) is to kuduro what the block party is to hip hop. It's where all things happen. To give audiences a taste of the sights and sounds of Angola, we created a 5-day pop-up experiential journey that featured music, dance, art, fashion, design, and Angolan-inspired cuisine (including the requisite post-Saturday partying, caldo, funge, and fresh ginger juice). The quintal was designed by internationally-renowned installation artist Sebastien Leon Agneessens.

Travelling with the Os Kuduristas crew gave new meaning 'talent wrangling' as we were caravanning 60 people across Europe, by train!



We created a cross-cultural music exchange program between high school students in Brooklyn and Queens and in Kilamba (Angola) where they learned about kuduro/hip hop and each other's countries and culture. Students in New York then recorded their own tracks. Following a 6-week exchange program, the Os Kuduristas dancers came to New York to participate in the beat making and dance workshops. Converse's Rubber Tracks Studio donated studio space to record and engineer the tracks that was then followed by a presentation of their music and dance to school-wide assembly.

Film students from Frank Sinatra School for the Arts created their own short-form documentary, "Kuduro NYC" which won the 2013 Dance on Camera/Capture Motion Student Competition Film Festival at Lincoln Center and screened at the 2013 Tribeca International Film Festival.

Throughout the program students in both countries shared their experiences via social media.

RESULT

- Facebook 33,000,000+ Twitter 800,000+ YouTube 13,000+ views
- Developed a new platform for the international promotion of Kuduro music, across 5 program channels.
- Built online community across Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram to host custom content.
- Created an Os Kuduristas website (after the campaign the client took it down) that included:
 - A dance dictionary showing and explaining Kuduro dance moves and an interactive dance sequencer where users can create their own Kuduro dance combination
 - A brief history of Angola
 - About the Quintal
 - Kuduro in a Nutshell
 - Kuduro Technology
- 5,000+ pieces of branded collateral including t-shirts, postcards, beanies, hand warmers, thermoses and caps.



For Immediate Release

Os Kuduristas Kicks off Angolan Kuduro Backyard Party Series in Europe, September 2012

Catching ears around the world—from M.I.A., Björk and Diplo to Buraka Som Sistema, Mastiksoul, DJ Gregory and Gregor Salto — Kuduro’s energy and insistent positivity echoes the West African country of Angola’s stunning cultural and economic renaissance. Angola is filled with palpable optimism, opportunity, and excitement.

Born of Angolan renaissance in the Information Age, Kuduro, which translates to “Hard Ass,” is the cultural expression of a new international and post-war generation. This movement draws inspiration from a variety of sources and mixes them into a highly energized, innovative form that incorporates dance, music, fashion, lifestyle, and attitude. Culturally savvy, cheeky, colorful, and bold, Kuduro is a unique and provocative genre that bridges the gap between Angolan and global cosmopolitan identity.

Drawing on their personal, sometimes gritty experiences—Kuduristas point first and foremost to their roles as cultural provocateurs, inciting growth and bountiful creativity.

“Kuduro is life. It's dance, it's music, it's joy, it's Angola.” - Cabo Snoop

“Kuduro is art, it is music. Kuduro is life!” – Os Namayer: President Gasolina & Principe Ouro Negro

“Kuduro + Angola = Africa! With Kuduro I am never alone!” Francis Boy

“It’s not like you develop a tolerance for watching people move their bodies like that. It’s going to brighten your life every time.” –MTV Iggy

Os Kuduristas, a global initiative designed to introduce Kuduro internationally, is bringing Kuduro’s powerful form of expression to cities in Europe through interactive events and programs in **September and October 2012**. From an educational musical exchange program between students in New York and Luanda, to staging street dance battles and inviting participants to experience Kuduro first-hand at live events; Os Kuduristas will introduce some of Kuduro’s hottest choreographers, wildest performers, and distinctive fashion design to the Western world.

Beginning in September, top Angolan dancers will challenge local dance crews at **dance battles** around each city introducing the experience of Kuduro. In late September and early October, Os Kuduristas will bring the Quintal (the Angolan

backyard) to Amsterdam and Paris for five days of entertainment in each city. **The Os Kuduristas Quintal will offer the sights and sounds of Angola through an experiential journey that includes music, dance, art, fashion design, film, and Angolan inspired cuisine.** These events will immerse the public in Kuduro, inspiring visitors with the depth of authentically Angolan music and dance. Creative studio by day, party and concert space by night, the Quintal will provide a unique, exciting opportunity to explore Kuduro and a piece of Angola.

Featured Quintal performers include some of the biggest names in Angola's Kuduro scene: the groundbreaking dancer and choreographer, **Manuel Kanza (winner of the 2008 hit Angolan television dance competition, "Bounce")**, underdog sensation **Cabo Snoop**, Kuduro heartthrob **Francis Boy**, and quirky local favorites **Os Namayer: President Gasolina & Principe Ouro Negro**. **DJ Silyvi**, who is a staple on Angola's electronic music scene, will be the house DJ for Os Kuduristas, and take on battle challenges with local DJs in Paris and Amsterdam.

"Our mission, the mission of a Kudurista is to bring joy and harmony to our audience. It doesn't matter if it is onstage or offstage," says President Gasolina of Os Namayer. "We have to always be ready to make our fans happy, to make them dance, to make them smile. We have to be creative, and continually come up with something new."

Os Kuduristas has the same mission, and aims to spread the energy of Kuduro and the Angolan renaissance on a global scale.

The Quintal also boasts a fashion show by Angola's award-winning fashion designers Projecto Mental. The ground breaking fashion duo, comprised of Tekasala Ma'at Nzinga and Shunnoz Fiel, have been at the forefront of the revival of Angolan fashion and creativity for the past ten years. Projecto Mental has received international attention on runways around the world and has appeared in international publications including GQ Brazil, British Vogue, and Women's Wear Daily. Currently, Projecto Mental is opening its second retail location in Luanda, Angola.

The Os Kuduristas Quintal is designed by Sebastien Leon Agneessens, a New York-based French musician and installation artist. Over the past twelve years Sebastien has conceived multi-faceted installations for museums, theatres and corporate clients. Currently, he is finishing Golden Horn, a permanent outdoor brass sculpture climbing a thirty-five-story tower in Istanbul, and touring museums around the world with an pipe organ-inspired installation, composed of two thousand pipes commissioned by Swiss watchmaking company Audemars Piguet.

STREET BATTLES:

Stockholm, September 13 – 16

Amsterdam, September 17 – 20

Paris, September 21 – 25

THE QUINTAL EVENTS:

Amsterdam Quintal, October 3 – 7, Transformatorhuis @ Westergas

Paris Quintal, October 10 – 14, Parc Villette Enchantée

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CABO SNOOP – MC

Born in Luanda, Angola, in 1990, Cabo Snoop rose from humble beginnings to become a kuduro sensation and the winner of the 2010 Best Lusophone Artist at the MTV African Music Awards. One of twelve brothers, Cabo started helping his family by selling water in a local market at the tender age of 10. At school, he avoided the ubiquitous gangs in his neighborhood by joining a dance group called “The Crazy Boyz” and diving into long hours of rehearsal.

Excited by the entertainment industry, Cabo went to work as an assistant at Power House, a top video production company and record label in Luanda. It was there that he was given the name Cabo Snoop. Cabo is derived from the word for (military) corporal, and Snoop from Snoop Dog, because they are both tall and slim. At Power House he was surrounded by kuduristas for the first time and started to appreciate the style of the late producer I.V.M. Beatz and Dr. Hochi-Fu, who took him under their wings. While mentoring him as a performer, they helped instill in Cabo a sense of responsibility to both help inspire Angolan youth and advance the style.

In 2010, Hochi-Fu asked Cabo to sing to a beat he had made with I.V.M. The result was “Windeck,” his first release, which became an instant hit and led to international buzz, winning Cabo that year’s Best Lusophone Artist at the MTV African Music Awards. The song was an inspiration for a telenovela for Angola television TPA’s entertainment channel Canall 2. The same year, Cabo released his first album, *Bluetooth*, through Power House Records. The album featured three hit songs: “Prakatatumba,” “Zagala Guduma,” and “Windeck.” The video for “Zagala Guduma” was shot with the Massai in Kenya and Tanzania.

Cabo Snoop has won over fans across West Africa and has received many accolades in his young career, including being named the Best African Artist at the Ghana Awards (2011) and the Best Kuduro of the Year (2011) by Radio Luanda as well as winning Radio Escola’s Top Kuduro Award by Radio Escola in 2011.

MANUEL KANZA – DANCER/CHOREOGRAPHER

Dance sensation Manuel Kanza has been making his mark in Angola since 2008 when he won the hit TV competition, Bounce (produced by Semba Comunicação), which scouts top dance talent from all over Angola. This honor earned him an apprenticeship in Portugal at the country’s top dance studio with one of the country’s leading dance crews. Last year after being featured as a choreographer on Bounce’s third season, Semba awarded him a scholarship to further his study of dance in Brazil at the prestigious Angel Vianna dance university and train at the famous Debrah Colker Dance Company Movement Center, including with Deborah herself.

Born in Luanda in 1987, Kanza, as he is best known, moved to Zimbabwe with his family when he was nine, and didn’t return to Angola until he was eighteen, to attend university. His family left Angola during the civil war. “I have memories of wartime, of having to change houses and moving from place to place,” he recalls. “Luanda was the

safest part of the country but I remember hearing gunshots, which is why my parents sent us kids away.”

Kanza fell in love with dancing kuduro and hip-hop in Angola in 1995. “My uncle recorded me dancing and I participated in a lot of competitions, but never studied dance. At quintal (backyard) parties, I danced to get the party going and people would throw money at me. When I got to Zimbabwe the same thing happened so I kept dancing for fun, although I really wanted to train and become a better dancer,” he recalls.

In 2008, Kanza heard about auditions for Angola’s first dance competition television show. He entered and competed against thousands to win the top prize. Kanza then went to Portugal for three months to take his first dance classes before returning to Luanda where he began working as a choreographer. “I finally knew that I would become a professional dancer when I was brought on as choreographer for Bounce in 2011. I never danced with the intention of making money doing it; I always danced because I loved it. Now to be able to have what I do be my profession is an amazing dream come true. I’ve been dancing my whole life. It is who I am.

“As a choreographer, I like to make it fun so people express themselves freely. I tell people they don’t have to try to move exactly like me because our bodies are different. When people ask me to teach them to dance, I always say everyone already knows how to dance. All we need to have is rhythm. Sometimes even professional dancers are missing rhythm—they may have technical skills but not rhythm. I tell people they can already dance, because if they can touch a glass of water, walk downstairs, or stand still, they are dancing in a way,” he says.

Kanza has been dancing kuduro since shortly after he started walking. “Kuduro is a way of showing our happiness. There is no party in Angola without kuduro. It’s the fun part of our lives. Everyone in my life in Angola dances kuduro, even my father. I can’t explain what kuduro is to me; it’s like trying to say what love means. I don’t think it’s possible to give a clear-cut explanation of love. For me kuduro is love, it is a way of life. A way of life is something I don’t need to worry about learning the skills for; I can just do it anytime I want. Whether I practice or not, I can still do kuduro. Even if I stay still for a year I can always dance kuduro.

“It’s a way of life because I am free to express the style the way I want to. With each new kuduro song that comes out, there are new dance moves that are created, so it is constantly evolving and staying fresh. We are all so programmed to having to do things ‘right,’ but with kuduro you can dance the way you want to, move your body the way you want to, and be crazy. Kuduro is about being your inner self—the person that you are inside that you can’t show other people. When the music starts you can be that crazy person. Everyone has a crazy person inside. This is why I say kuduro is a way of life.”

Kuduro dance has evolved to a point that there is now a distinction between old- and new-school kuduro. Kanza explains, “Old-school used to be more crazy styles with dancers climbing up walls, using lots of props, touching everything, and tearing up their clothes. Now people are more choreographed and do cleaner moves. Kuduro wasn’t something that we ever thought would be choreographed because it was just

something we did. If other dancers liked your style, they'd copy you. Now it's become stricter. You have to learn moves, steps. It's more technical.

“Like in traditional African dance, the way men dance isn't the way women dance. Men are more technical and women more simple, suave, and sexy. There is room for women to do the more athletic moves, but those moves require a tremendous amount of energy. Men are more used to having to use a lot of power in everything that they do, while women are more concentrated, calm, and calculated.”

In addition to kuduro, Kanza's other area of expertise is popping. “I like the power of popping. It makes me feel good. It is very technical, unlike kuduro, which has become more technical over the years but still allows you to be very free in the ways you express yourself. In kuduro, no one will tell you it's not the way you should do it, but in popping you have to know the basics. Since it's not a style from Angola it's more difficult to invent anything. You have to learn. Kuduro is Angolan so I just do what come naturally.”

In Brazil, Kanza is studying for his Bachelor's Degree in Contemporary Dance at Angel Viana Faculdade de Dança in Rio de Janeiro, and receives academic dance training at Deborah Coker Movement Center. “Academy lessons are contemporary and ballet to improve my skills. At the university it's more about getting to know your body, philosophy, anatomy, and other music lessons, but they don't focus much on the dance. It's about the mind and preparation for dance. Deborah is more for you to be fit and complete when it comes to actually dancing.”

With Os Kuduristas, Kanza's childhood dream of coming to the U.S. is being fulfilled. “When we were kids we always dreamed of going to the States to meet Michael Jackson and Usher. That dream stayed with me. I always had faith that good things would happen for me, as they have throughout my life, particularly since Bounce. Good things always come at a time when you don't expect them, when you're already used to something else. Through dance I've been able to experience different cultures in Brazil and Portugal, and now I'll get to experience more.

“I want people to know about Angola and about Africa. We can share our power and our knowledge with the world. We are open-minded people even though we don't have much. I want people to know about our culture and dance and way of life, and that we're happy. There are many creative people in Angola who just need the chance to share their knowledge with the world. Through dance, I will show people that we have something special to share and just need a chance. That's what I'd love the world to know.”

Kanza is married with two children, age 5 and 3. His family currently lives in Namibia where his wife is in university.

FRANCISCO ALEXANDRE, AKA FRANCIS BOY – MC

Francisco Alexandre, best known as Francis Boy, is Angola's kuduro heartthrob. He started in hip-hop but found his home in kuduro. He combines the roots of his native malange with funky beats, an Afro-futuristic aesthetic, and his own brand of swêguê.

Francis Boy became interested in music at a young age and by 17 was deeply immersed in kuduro music and dance through the support of some of Angola's top DJs, including DJ Znobia, DJ Demony, DJ Kebrado, and others. He recalls, "At that time I had several friends and a neighbor who sang and danced, including Mabaia (a backing dancer for Dog Murras) and Puto Português, but the major driver was DJ Znobia because he was the best kuduro DJ and he has continued to produce hits.

"I was first drawn to kuduro because of the dancing, energy, strength, and talent that are required. My main influences—the artists from kuduro and hip-hop who helped shape who I am today—include 50 Cent, Chris Brown, Trey Songz, Michael Jackson, and several Angolan stars, such as Big Nelo, SSP, Kalibrados, Tony Amado, Sebem, Dog Murras, and many others."

Francis Boy adopted his stage name in order to be different, but, he says, "I wanted my new name to maintain ties to my family and roots. Francis is the abbreviated form of my name, and 'Boy' came about because I was a little boy when I changed my name."

For Francis Boy, kuduro is special because of the dance component, the way it is sung, and how far the genre has come in such a short period of time. "I also love that it crosses all age barriers; virtually everyone loves kuduro in Angola. The kuduro sound is amazing, because each day it has a different vibe. It's a mixture of techno, house, pop, hip-hop, and Afro beats. The BPM is incredibly fast—between 129 and 140—so there is no way to not dance. In short, it's Afro-beat and it's spectacular!"

Francis Boy became a big star in Angola even though he hasn't released an album. His first real hit was "Itocota," a track he created with the famous DJ Kapiro -- a fresh mix of kuduro, infused with a little flavor from Francis Boy's hip-hop background as well as new-wave African house.

"Itocota" quickly spread and became a hit among the DJs and clubs in Luanda and across the country. The track grew in popularity through 'kandogueiros,' Angolan communal taxis, which are the main promoters of Angolan music and a major part of how kuduro music is shared.

The video for "Itocota" also became a huge hit after being released on the popular television shows Sempre a Subir and Tchilar and through social media. Francis Boy's follow-up single, "Mboio," achieved similar popularity and acclaim. On this track, Francis Boy sings in his distinct Afro-futuristic kuduro style and raps in four different languages: Kimbundu (spoken in the north central region of Angola), Umbundu (spoken in the southern and central regions of Angola), English, and Portuguese.

Francis Boy's first international exposure came with his participation in the Kuduro Sessions Berlin in 2011 followed by a hit performance at the 2012 Elite Model Look Mozambique competition finals.

Reflecting on his rise to stardom, Francis Boy says, "My life has changed a lot. I am respected as an artist and my work is appreciated by the media and the public, for which I am extremely happy. Kuduro has helped change the course of my life. I love the

rush of adrenaline that it gives me; it keeps me feeling young, and with kuduro I am never alone.”

Francis Boy expresses gratitude for the contributions of certain kuduro artists and producers: Bruno de Castro, who created the first main kuduro beats, and Camilo Travassos; the dancers Maquina do Inferno, Fogo de Deus, Mabaia, Miguel, Mil Toques, Bailarinos da Ultima linha, Ti Bonhonho, Salsicha, and Vaca Louca, as well as Tony Amado’s backing dancers; and the singers Tony Amado, Sebem, Pai Diesel, Virgílio Fire, Os Lambas, Bruno M, Bobany King, W-King, Zoca Zoca, Puto Português e Nacobeta, Puto Português, Fofando, and Noite e Dia. “These are the people who, in my opinion, have propelled kuduro forward,” he says.

Francis Boy seeks to use his fame to inspire young people to “stand firm and complete all that they set out to do. I encourage them to strive for their goals and dreams, and am always trying to pass along a positive message in multiple languages, including Portuguese, Kimbundo, Umbundo, and English.”

Francis Boy was born in 1988 in Malanje Province, the land of the Palanca Negra Gigante (Giant Sable). In addition to his musical career, he says, “I am a normal young man: I study, sing, laugh, and hang out with friends.”

He hopes to spread the message to foreigners that Angolans “are a friendly people, beautiful, simple, and very inviting, and we are waiting for you here, in the birthplace of kuduro. Kuduro + Angola = África!”

CELESTINO AGOSTO BALI, AKA BM – DANCER

Celestino Agosto Bali, a k a BM, learned to dance kuduro in a *quintal* (back or front yard). BM was born in 1990 in the Luanda neighborhood of Sambizanga. His family later moved to another area, Rangel, where he encountered kuduro for the first time: his new next-door neighbor’s life revolved around dancing kuduro. When BM was a teenager, he and his friends sat around for hours in his quintal watching in awe and learning the moves. “He was one of the great inspirations. It was the time when you danced underground. When you danced *da tuga* and *cara feia*, you danced like that,” BM remembers.

In the early days, BM recalls, kuduro dance was very limited. Each neighborhood had its own way of dancing. In Viana (a neighborhood in Luanda), BM used to dance a lot with his legs and called that “combo.” This was typical to Viana, with fewer dance moves but a lot of legwork. “We began with choreographed moves but then broke into individual dancing. Kuduro evolved so that full dances were choreographed. We used to pick a topic like crime, and say, ‘stop crime.’ When kuduro became strong in Luanda, a lot of people stopped drinking and as a result we had less violence. Drinking is a great enemy of the dancer. It is hard to find a dancer who drinks; you can count them. Drinking makes kuduro and ndombolo very difficult because they require a lot of flexibility and strength.”

BM stopped dancing when his neighbor passed away at a young age, and he didn’t resume until he started freestyle rapping and took on the artist name BM. The Angolan

singer Bruno M —famous for the songs, “Não Respeita, Né?” and “I am”—and his backing dancer Tictac inspired BM’s return to dance. He remembers, “Bruno M had a dancer called Tictac, and because of him I started dancing. This dancer was a great inspiration for a lot of dancers in Luanda. He was the first dancer I remember to record a video that people shared on their cell phones through Bluetooth. I learned from him; I copied the dance moves that he did.”

After Tictac came on the scene in 2005, “Kuduro developed in a very extraordinary way,” says BM. “There was dance everywhere, like a fever, with dance battles on every corner. All ages were dancing. At that time kuduro dance moves were limited. They were regulated. You had to imitate famous dance moves because you didn't have the authority to create your own.”

Tictac and other dancers who emerged at the time found ways to innovate old moves, revolutionizing some of the most popular kuduro dances and, for the first time, shared their dances via Bluetooth. “Another dancer appeared, Cobra G, who perfected the strong leg moves *jogo de perna*, and he also started recording videos on his cell phone. The videos spread from cell phone to cell phone, and then onto the Internet. After Tictac left the scene, kuduro became the direct experience through the dance battles.”

Dancers organized these battles, or *bilo baila*, at schools, in squares, and in playgrounds. Onlookers would egg on the dancers, telling one dancer he or she was better than the other and that a challenge should ensue. “We danced without music. You would dance and your friends would clap their hands and *adoçar* (make it sweet). This is the practice of clapping your hands and spurring your team partners on verbally by saying how well they dance and calling out names of dance moves. We danced more with *adoçamento* (sweetening) than with music, because it seemed that with sweetening you had more power and danced with more bite.”

BM grew up battling the top dancers, and still does, including Turma Fecha, King (creator of the mangaba, a very famous move that imitates a disabled person as a remembrance of the war), and Fofinho. He also danced with the group Tropa do Panico, the Kuduro band Os Mais Potentes, and his brother’s dance group, Staff do Milindro.

In addition to battling and teaching dance, BM is a second-year student at Universidade Técnica de Angola (UTANGA). He has been able to pay his tuition through the money he has earned dancing. Although he never charged his students, most insisted on paying him. “My students called me *kota* (older one), which is a sign of respect. Age is very respected in Angolan culture and is usually associated with knowledge and wisdom. Although some students were older than me, I was older in terms of dance. There are so many great dancers in Angola. I hope that one day they all get the recognition they deserve. It hurts me to see some people who dance extremely well not recognized. Above all, I am grateful to God the Almighty for giving me the gift of life and the gift of dance.”

PROJECTO MENTAL - Fashion Designers

Shunnoz Fiel and Tekasala Ma'at Nzinga are Projecto Mental, an Angolan brand that is linking Angola to the world through fashion.

Projecto Mental has received international attention on runways in Japan, London, and Lisbon. The pair's designs have also appeared in top publications, including GQ Brazil, British Vogue, Women's Wear Daily, and many others. Currently, Projecto Mental is opening its second retail store in Luanda, Angola.

Tekasala is a 37-year-old artist, with dual cultural and artistic identities: he was born in Angola but raised in London, England, where he fell in love with fashion and visual self-expression. After studying anthropology and African studies, he returned to Angola and made a commitment to fashion.

At 36 years old, Shunnoz is one of the most talented minds that Angola has ever produced. He blends his creative talent in fashion with being a master poet, writer, communicator, performer, model, musician, and lyricist. He studied theology and psychology and worked in telecommunications before realizing that fashion was his true love.

For the past 10 years, Tekasala and Shunnoz have been at the forefront of the revival of Angolan fashion and creativity. Projecto Mental won Designer of the Year at Moda Luanda (Luanda Fashion Week) in 2007 and 2008 and was runner-up for the prize in 2009 and 2010. In October 2011, the pair received an award at Belas Fashion Week in recognition of their contribution to the promotion of Angolan fashion domestically and abroad.

Tekasala and Shunnoz formed Projecto Mental in 2003 with the initial goal of using fashion and art to help reshape Angola's cultural image in the wake of a 27-year civil war that ravaged the country and destroyed its entire infrastructure.

After the war, Angola emerged as a rich country in terms of its natural resources and the raw energy of its youth movement. The war had denied generations of Angolans the opportunity to shape the future of their country or express themselves artistically. "We created Projecto Mental, in part, to help fill this void," the two have stated.

Since its founding, the brand has grown exponentially, with a clientele of all ages that includes artists, musicians, politicians, businessmen, bankers, and members of the general public.

"We hope that our work and international exposure will help open doors for talented young Angolan designers and artists," they say.