

LIFESTYLES  
**FASHION**  
& FITNESS



Newsday Photo / Ari Mintz

**"When you make something to clothe another person, you are also clothing yourself"**  
— Babatunde Olujimi "Jimi" Gureje



Photo by Lee S. Weissman

**"Art in Africa is functional. That is an enormously common thread."**  
— Madona Cole

THE

**FABRICS**  
OF THEIR LIVES

By Katti Gray  
STAFF WRITER

**T**he reversible waist-length coat that Jackie Asare chose was made of tapestries imported from Europe, stitched together to give the effect of a patchwork quilt, lined with quilted satin and closed with one button made of bone.

As with every design by Brenda Brunson Bey, founder and president of the Tribal Truths Collection, the jacket's final touch was a few slivers of ornamentation: gilded cording, cowrie shell (once currency in West Africa) and beads painted to resemble mudcloth from Mali. Strung together, they dangled from the center of the coat's back panel.

"I call it my talisman," Brunson Bey said of the ornament, as Asare, an entertainment industry publicist, checked herself out in a full-length mirror. "It's based on the African tradition," Brunson Bey said. "It's for protection and good luck. . . . It's my way of finishing a garment and really putting part of me in it."

Brunson Bey launched her business nearly 30 years ago in her living room; nine months ago she opened her first boutique, on South Oxford Street in Fort Green, Brooklyn. The artistic touches and Africanized themes are what attract clients such as Asare, who that day had a purse sewn of kuba cloth from the Congo slung over one shoulder. Born in Ghana and a full-fledged New Yorker now, Asare said she rarely leaves home without some bit of her mother continent on her body.

Customers with a like mind are finding a growing coterie of boutiques catering to their needs. At Tribal Truths, at Gureje, a year-old boutique in nearby Prospect Heights; at Madona Cole Originals, a 20-year-old home-based shop in Bellmore; and elsewhere, designers are offer-

**Designers trace their roots with Afro-centric fashions**



Newsday Photo / Bruce Gilbert

**"I feel these clothes. They are who I am."** — Brenda Brunson Bey

By Anne Bratskeir  
**Polishing the Pumpkin**

Alchemy is offering two new pumpkin varieties without a hint of acid orange. There's Alchemy's Pumpkin Nail Potion (\$10) for that super-shiny, burnished manicure and pedicure and Alchemy's Pumpkin Cream Lipstick (\$16) that offers long-lasting coverage and contains vitamin E, avocado oil and natural sun filters. The warm, rich hue is available at [www.alchemycosmetics.com](http://www.alchemycosmetics.com) and at select Sephora stores.



**For Your Other Skins**

Danier Leather, makers of leather and suede clothing and accessories, has entered the "skin-care" market with a new line of products designed to preserve and renew your leather and suede garments. "If you never leave the house without moisturizing your face, why wouldn't you do the same for your most prized leather jacket?" asks Danier chief executive Jeff Worstman. To this end, the company has developed three special sprays — a refresher, a spot cleanser and a protector — as well as a renewal lotion containing vitamin E, aloe vera and mink oil to rejuvenate leather and a touch-up cream to conceal worn areas and renovate black leather. Two tools, a cleansing cloth and suede brush to remove dirt, complete the line. The products are \$2.98 to \$8.98 and are available at the stores in Roosevelt Field and Walt Whitman malls, or at [www.danier.com](http://www.danier.com). ■

*Anne Bratskeir is a regular contributor to Part II.*