



Tabara N'Diaye

FOUNDER OF LA BASKETRY

In our digital world of instant gratification, where anything from groceries to a new outfit is just a click away, and our attention spans have shrunk to the length of an Instagram caption, a revolution is quietly taking place. Instead of rampant consumerism and cheap, anonymous, mass-produced goods, we're turning towards arts and crafts, handmade with love, like the meditative process of weaving grasses into an intricate basket.

"More and more, people are embracing a slower lifestyle," explains Tabara N'Diaye, founder of La Basketry. "This year we've all had to, in a certain way, and there's something really beautiful in reconnecting with the earth and what you put in your body, soul and in your house." It's a philosophy Tabara has embraced since 2017, when she launched her online boutique. A celebration of all things woven, La Basketry stocks exquisite pieces designed by Tabara and handmade by skilled Senegalese artisans, as well as inspiring people to weave their own creations.

Vibrantly coloured and intricately patterned, the brand's wares are a tangible connection to Tabara's Senegalese heritage. "As a child, my family travelled regularly to my parents' hometown of Thies and I always loved visiting the bustling markets packed full of incredible handmade crafts," she recalls.

Returning during her thirties, while working in event management, Tabara was mesmerised by the sight of local women weaving traditional baskets under the baobab trees and the "joyful sense of community" underpinning the experience. The memory followed her back to London, where woven baskets filled the shelves of trendy homeware boutiques, yet with little acknowledgement of their origin and makers – and the idea for La Basketry was born.

For a Black business owner, launching a brand in a crowded, competitive and traditionally White-dominated interiors market was always going to be challenging. However, La Basketry has not just survived but flourished over the past three years, driven by a combination of Tabara's passion for craft and changing consumer attitudes. As Tabara points out: "The fashion industry has been under a lot of scrutiny since the collapse of the Rana Plaza factory in Dakha, and it's great to see shoppers across all industries now wanting to know where and how what they buy has been made. I'm very proud to have built a platform showcasing Senegalese craftsmanship on a bigger scale."

Since spending more time in Senegal, Tabara has also embraced the art of weaving herself. "My attention span had really shrunk before I started crafting and I love how basket-making peacefully allows me to zone out," she says. "Hours pass and all I care about is transforming some grasses into a beautiful object. I can forget about my phone and my to-do list and just focus on the present moment." She's also channelled her love of handicrafts into a guidebook, alongside basket-making courses and DIY weaving kits – the perfect lockdown activity.

So how does she juggle it all? "Running a business on your own is extremely gratifying but it is also very daunting," Tabara admits. "On the same day, you can go from being the accountant to the marketing manager, while also doing customer service and dispatching orders. You're wearing many hats and have to make a lot of decisions by yourself. Ultimately, though, I'm really proud to have carved out a business that brings me joy every day."