

# Inside Business

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### Chesapeake designer finds home in Selden Market

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Rakiyt Zakari opened her cultural clothing, accessories and food shop in the new Selden Market on Oct. 4. The shop is one of 12 storefronts in the market.



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Rakiyt Zakari arranges stacks of clothing on a display at the front of her shop.



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Food Clothing + Shelter in the Selden Market in Norfolk is Rakiyt Zakari's first storefront for her brand The Original David. She hopes to use the shop and her merchandise as tools for the community to experience culture together.

Norfolk native Rakiyt Zakari neatly folded shirts into precise stacks as a slight buzz of people walking past and shoppers bustling in and out of shops filled the new Selden Market in downtown Norfolk. It's a sound that has become familiar to her and made the market feel like home.

Zakari, now a resident of Chesapeake, and her multicultural shop Food Clothing + Shelter are part of the first group of tenants for the newly-designed market space. She designs and sells clothing, accessories, food and household items. Household items include mugs and pillows and food items such as chips, cookies and other snacks from places like China, Germany and Italy line shelves in the shop.

Unlike the past few years, it's the first time Zakari has a storefront for her brand – The Original David.

“I really wanted to do a space that incorporates different cultures and explores them through different means,” Zakari said. “So with Food Clothing + Shelter, what we're trying to do is take people on a journey with us. It's like a passport to the nations.”

Zakari has been creating her brand of clothing since around 2005 and opened the Selden shop Oct. 4. She earned a bachelor's degree in fashion merchandising from Howard University in Washington, D.C., and a certificate in experimental design from Central Saint Martins, an arts and design university in London.

Zakari moved to the D.C. area at 13 years old and later started her career by designing dresses and eventually switching to more casual designs after a runway mistake in Miami.

“For one of my shows, I had to have a certain amount of looks and I didn’t have that. So I put some T-shirts in there and that’s where Original David (brand) started – from really necessity (and) trying to fill out a runway show that was looking real skinny at the moment,” she said.

For the most part, Zakari has been self-employed and collaborates with other companies. Some of these projects have included speaking to aspiring entrepreneurs through the Department of State or designing T-shirts and bracelets for National Geographic, Nike and Amnesty International.

Unlike most retail shopping, Zakari said she wants her customers to have a cultural experience when they enter her shop.

“We’re going to be doing food tastings, DIY projects where people can really experience other cultures, and I’d say our store is like the green zone,” she said. “So you can come and experience it without feeling like you don’t belong. ... We want everybody to come in here and be a part of it.”

Zakari attributes her design inspiration to her Nigerian roots, D.C.’s culture, books she’s read, and a variety of music.

“Music tends to be like – it’s just kind of in my bones. It helps me work. If I have the right music on, then I can actually create stuff. I feel like I see colors in music. ...” she said. “Color is hands-down the biggest design principle for me. So the colors have to match.”

Zakari has a six-month lease at Selden with the option to renew. Food Clothing + Shelter is one of 12 storefront tenants in the market, along with several pop-up businesses.

The concept and structure of Selden allows tenants to learn about entrepreneurship from one another, as well as work out the kinks of their business while paying low rent, Zakari said.

“I would love to be so set that I’m ready to move out into my own space and whatnot. But you can’t beat this. You get marketing; you get help,” she said. “They (Selden officials) guide you and help you be a better retailer. ... They just gave us a big, fat present to be here.”

Food Clothing + Shelter is open from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday; noon to 5 p.m. Sunday; and closed Monday.