

AFRICA & LATIN AMERICA Rising Design / Design Emergente

The names Africa and Latin America denote precise geographical areas and still reverberate with the echo of ancient and noble civilisations. Increasingly these days, however, they encapsulate the many distinctive singularities contained within their interiors. The **AFRICA & LATIN AMERICA Rising Design / Design Emergente** exhibition, conceived by Marva Griffin, is intended to bring this vast multiplicity of marks and meanings to light. Each of the two sections has therefore been entrusted to people familiar with the vastness of their own countries.

The renowned Brazilian designers **Fernando and Humberto Campana**, founders of the no-profit Campana Institute, which aims to transform society through design, have taken on **Latin America**. The **African** side has been entrusted to Moroccan designer **Hicham Lahlou**, founder of the Africa Design Days and a member of the Board of Directors of the WDO (World Design Organisation) for the two-year period 2017/2019.

The exhibition sets the scene for the overarching theme of *SaloneSatellite 2018*. It will therefore come as no great surprise not to see any objects on exhibit. In order to avoid creating overlaps and hierarchies with the pieces being showcased by the SaloneSatellite protagonists, the **36 studios and designers** selected by the curators, and the curators themselves, appear on video.

This method uses stills and moving images to provide an overview of how designers communicate today and, especially, how they transmit their own identities, as well as their traditions and culture of origin. A means of presenting the designers “live”, talking about the places where they work.

In line with the aim of the exhibition – conceived to rekindle interest in the **influence** that products from the African and Latin American are generating, **in terms of both style and ideas** – the exhibition takes an eye-catching, totemic approach.

A pair of light **twin totemic structures** – one for **Africa** and one for **Latin America** rise up to around 10 metres from a base lower down in which a “tape” monitor is housed, relaying videos, images and moving texts. Each base includes a small seating area, furnished with chairs by **Magis** and **Riva1920**, behind a wall made of ceramic pieces from **Patricia Urquiola**’s Celosia collection for **Mutina**.

The **18** designers from **Africa**:

Ahd Benzidan Casablanca (Morocco), **AMWA Designs** London (UK), **Charles O. Job, Design & Architecture** Zürich (Switzerland), **Damola Rufai** Lagos (Nigeria), **Design without Borders Foundation** Oslo (Norway) and Kampala (Uganda), **Dzeta** Tunis (Tunisia), **Expand Design** London (UK), **Fatyly** Dakar (Senegal), **Fleury Atallah architects agency** Toulon (France), **La Marsa** (Tunisia), **Idir Messaoud** Yakouren (Algeria) and Marseille (France), **Jean Servais Somian Design** Grand Bassam (Ivory Coast) and Paris (France); **Jomo** Fairfax, Washington DC (USA), **Mabeo** Gaborone (Botswana), **Noumbissidesign** Paris (France) and Douala (Cameroon), **People of the sun** Blantyre (Malawi) and The



Hague (Netherlands), **Studio Lani** New York City (USA), Lagos (Nigeria) and Toronto (Canada), **Tekura** Accra (Ghana), **Vakay** Sfax (Tunisia).

The **18** designers from Latin America:

Alexandra Agudelo Bogotá (Colombia), **Anabella Georgi** Caracas (Venezuela) and Berlin (Germany), **Carol Gay Studio** Sao Paulo (Brazil), **Cincopatasalgato** San Salvador (El Salvador), **Cristián Mohaded Studio** Buenos Aires (Argentina) and Milan (Italy), **Estudio Guto Requena** Sao Paulo (Brazil), **Frontis 3D** Bogotá (Colombia), **Gloria Cortina** Mexico City (Mexico), **GT2P (Great Things to People)** Santiago (Chile), **Hechizoo** Bogotá (Colombia), **Menini Nicola** Montevideo (Uruguay), **Moble** San Paolo (Brazil), **MT Objects** Mexico City (Mexico), **Rodolfo Agrella Design Studio** Caracas (Venezuela) and New York (USA), **Studio Tetê Knecht** Sao Paulo (Brazil) and Lausanne (Switzerland), **Thierry Jeannot** Mexico City (Mexico), **Tributo** Guadalajara (Mexico), **Tu Taller Design Studio** Medellín (Colombia).

They answer the following three questions in the **video selfies**: *Do your connections to your own country and its traditions influence your work? How do you express this connection? Overall, do you think it important to affirm a **cultural identity in design**?*

The panoply of voices, faces and settings, as well as the way in which they have chosen to present themselves, makes for a dense, interesting melting pot of ideas and reflections, providing innumerable points of view and opportunities for exploration. It's a **message** for the SaloneSatellite and the Salone del Mobile.Milano designers and public, a "postcard" sent from all these countries, committed to the stylistic and entrepreneurial renaissance of design.

The video interviews are mounted like short video cards, showing the **designers' work**, focusing on a single piece, created ad hoc for the exhibition or chosen for the connection with the identity and country of origin it conveys. **There are also institutional videos** and videos created by designers and studios, harnessing what has now become the common medium of moving images as a communication tool to demonstrate their work processes.

Creativity is explored in the round. The studios selected, aside from those working at the crossroads where **design, art and craftsmanship** meet – where self-production and limited editions rule – include a Colombian **architectural** practice that uses 3D modelling to create architectural façades (Frontis 3D), a Tunisian **eyewear** brand (Vakay) and a **no-profit association** (Design Without Borders Foundation) with offices in Norway and Uganda, that harnesses design to implement growth and development in middle-income countries.

The presence of a large number of women is particularly striking. Not just designers (Anabella Georgi, AMWA Designs), but also committed **businesswomen** (Fatyly, People of the sun, Studio Lani, Tekura), amazing artists (Alexandra Agueldo, Carol Gay Studio, Gloria Cortina, Studio Tetê Knecht, Tributo) and women whose work **spans design and architecture** (Dzeta, Fleury Atallah Architects Agency).



Alongside the more affirmed **designers are some recent faces** on the design scene (Ahd Benzidan, Idir Messaoud, Jomo), who are already stirring up some well-deserved interest.

Aside from these crosscutting “categorisations”, each of the designers in the show is a bringer of important **specific qualities** and innovative thoughts, more obvious in some, yet latent in all of them: **a new African minimalism** (Charles O. Job, Design & Architecture); the birth of **totally new interpretations of design** (Jean Servais Somian Design, Noumbissidesign, MT Object); the **coming together of craftsmanship and the digital world** (Damola Rufai, Cincopatasalgato, Expand Design, Estudio Guto Requena, GT2P, Tu Taller Design Studio); the communicative potential of design in **social issues and activities** (Rodolfo Agrella Design Studio, GT2P) and **environmental** ones (Thierry Jeannot); the expression of **history** (Cristian Mohaded Studio, Hechizoo, Menini Nicola, Moble); entrepreneurship seen as **regional development** (Mabeo).

Together they are leading us along some of the furthest geographical byways, providing an analysis of contemporary thought that starts or travels across Africa and Latin America to meld with the rest of the world.

Marva Griffin:

“I’ve been saying for the last three years or so: *Africa is on the air!* The exhibition Making Africa, at the Vitra Design Museum in Weil am Rhein in 2015, which I had the pleasure of visiting was a first, wonderful surprise for me. For the first time ever, it gave a realistic overview of the huge creative buzz on the African continent, but from a contemporary perspective. Since then, everybody seems to have been gripped by what’s going on in Africa. Exhibitions have thrived. Fashion derives constant inspiration from it. The Smithsonian National Museum of African America History and Culture, in Washington DC, which won the 2017 Design of the Year award, seems to have cemented and intensified interest. The museum was designed by Ghanaian architect David Adjaye and inaugurated by Barack Obama, in his last appointment as President of the United States. The decision to take Africa as the theme for the 2018 edition of SaloneSatellite came of its own accord and was reinforced after I took part in the Africa Design Day last June in Rabat, Morocco. Meanwhile, I had been becoming increasingly conscious of an equally great buzz in the Latin American countries, Brazil first and foremost, which has been making itself felt for some time. If it is true that the world’s culture stems from Africa, it is equally true that the pre-Colombian civilisations predated the birth of Western cultures by a long way. That informed the idea of bringing them together for the overarching theme, as a sort of reflection on this great, almost simultaneous dawning of consciousness and the idea for an exhibition that would set the scene. I immediately decided to entrust two curators with selecting designers who would be capable of narrating, by way of example, what was going on. The Campana brothers and Hicham Lahlou immediately sprang to mind. The Campanas, because of their sensitivity and because they are firmly acknowledged masters and spokespeople for Brazilian and Latin American design. Lahlou, who is also a designer, has particular insight into with African design thanks to his involvement with the Africa Design Days (& Award). Our hope is that the thirty-six designers in the exhibition can do their bit to make this interest into more than a passing trend, a vibrant reality against which design today should measure itself.”



Fernando and Humberto Campana:

“We want to create beautiful design with a powerful conscience, but we also want to be part of passing on the passion for creation, for development and for the wonderful things that manual skills can achieve. The technology of the future will be able to replicate human skills with even greater precision, but there will always be something missing. The passion that comes with creating a certain part of an object is as important as the passion that one generates for the great masters. The passion to learn, to create, to trigger emotion, because fear will always come knocking when it comes to presenting new ideas. These are the things that matter and this is what has sharpened our focus. We’ve put a huge amount of thought into our selection and we wanted to give a little something back to those with the ability and sensitivity to share a design that is fluid. Only fluid elements can permeate and trickle into the deepest corners of the coldest hearts. It is our job to warm them up.”

Hicham Lahlou:

“Design has a fundamental role to play in the interests of us all to better anticipate the future. Future projects will have to weigh up and respect the sum of all the particularities, stories and past patrimonies and living heritages of this continent that make up a true wealth of values to be honoured by generation after generation. Imagining tomorrow in the region, it is our task to work out the best combination of function, use and beauty to pass on to future generations. We must appreciate the need to transmit these core values and instil them in emerging African designers, while giving them the opportunity to forge their own paths and do their own bit to fuel the momentum of the continent with their creativity, their common sense and their civic commitment.”

Porzia Bergamasco:

“What comes out of the exhibition is cultural heritage, meaning something that manifests itself quite unintentionally, even when one no longer lives in one’s country of origin. When it finds its outlet in design, becoming bound up with the universal culture of design, it becomes a finely tuned instrument for communication and innovation. A knowledge tool, built of influences and specifics, which is a declaration of belonging.”

Ricardo Bello Dias:

“We designed a totemic structure for the exhibition to set the scene for a primitive recollection, inspired by the cultures of these countries, that was also a contemporary allegory. A virtual meeting point where videos, images and the stories of the 36 designers flow along an electronic tape.”

Credits

AFRICA & LATIN AMERICA Rising Design / Design Emergente

17th-22nd April

Salone del Mobile.Milano

Pav. 13-15, Fiera Milano, Rho

A multimedia exhibition

SaloneSatellite 2018



Salone del Mobile.Milano

Press

Conceived by

Marva Griffin Wilshire
Founder / Curator SaloneSatellite

Curators

Hicham Lahlou (Africa)
Fernando and Humberto Campana (Latin America)

Coordination

Porzia Bergamasco

Exhibition Design

Ricardo Bello Dias

Catalogue

Studio Legrenzi

Video Montage

Ermanno Menini

Materials and Furnishings

Magis
Mutina
Riva 1920

Installation

Way Spa

Produced by

Salone del Mobile.Milano

Milan, 17th April 2018

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