



Berlin, 23 August 2019

THE DESIGNERS AND THEIR WORKS

Kulturforum, Kunstgewerbemuseum

Connecting Afro Futures. Fashion – Hair – Design

24 August – 1 December 2019

Ken Aïcha Sy

Ken Aïcha Sy was born in Dakar of a French-Martinican journalist mother and Senegalese father, who works an artist. After studying design, art history, and spatial design in Paris, she returned to Senegal. She created the cultural platform Wakh'Art to promote Senegalese culture, followed by the label Wakh'ArtMusic in 2012. *Baadaye* is a project by Ken Aïcha Sy in collaboration with KhaleeBi Prod, Oyalviews, Mauaya Jua, Moulaye, Aïda Ndiaye, and Judith Kiangebeni Wolo.

Baadaye

The title of the work *Baadaye*, "future," is borrowed from Swahili, the most spoken language on the African continent. *Baadaye* undertakes a photographic and videographic research into Afro-futuristic visions for the African continent: What will Africans of the year 2200 look like?

The photographic work takes the form of a triptych which, alluding to Adam and Eve, presents a man, Djissene, and a woman, Awa, in three different stages of their lives: Childhood, youth and old age. As a result of the collaboration with various artists from Dakar, this exploration of the creation process draws a vision of future Afro descendants.

The videographic part of *Baadaye* consists of interviews with visionaries from fashion design, music, literature or economics who discuss the topic of "Afro Futures" from their perspectives.

Will the future be fruitful or apocalyptic? *Baadaye* does not offer a utopian, but an optimistic view of the future.

José Hendo

José Hendo was born in Uganda. She studied at the Paris Academy and the London College of Fashion. After starting her career in the bridal industry, she founded her own label in 2008. Believing in a zero waste philosophy, she is an activist for sustainability in the fashion industry.

Signs of the Now

This collection is in direct response to what is happening in the world at the present time. Land II space running out, the plastic in the oceans, the melting glaciers and polar ice, the list goes on... If we do not act now, when? Responsibility lies with everyone all along the supply chain including the end user.

All items in this installation are made from different shades of terracotta and black barkcloth. The traditional African cloth is made from the bark of the Mutuba tree, native to Uganda. In 2014, José Hendo founded the initiative Bark To The Roots (B2TR), to promote the use of barkcloth world-

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wide and help preserve the knowledge surrounding the material's use and production, which is recognized as an intangible cultural heritage by the UNESCO. José promotes planting of more Mutuba trees within B2TR in support of the environment. Following the overarching motto of José Hendo's work R3 – Reduce Reuse Recycle, the three stripes on the garments act as a call to action. Keeping with that, the mannequins in the installation were chosen based on what was already at hand in the museum.

Three of the garments are in direct response to the dumping of second hand clothing from Europe and America in Africa. José Hendo is demonstrating how African people can utilize what they already know to turn the situation into an advantage by means of upcycling, turning waste into raw material or traditional techniques such as hand-weaving.

Lamula Anderson

Lamula Anderson was born in Uganda and moved to London to study fashion design. She is currently the creative director of her own label, Lamula Nassuna (Nassuna is her mother's name), which produces capsule collections and bespoke pieces and aims to be a sustainable fashion label.

The Perfect Stereotype

"You should wear bright colors because you are dark," were words some relatives and friends of the family would say. I guess there's nothing wrong with anyone of any skin tone wearing whatever colour(s) they wish; however, in my case, the concern was that I was influenced to believe that because of my dark complexion it was a must to wear contrasting colours. I always wondered if this was a result of colourism, or just me not fitting in the traditional box.

The Perfect Stereotype (TPS) is about opposing and challenging social rules that emerge from our own communities, but also ones that we impose on ourselves. In this collection the colour black can be read as a statement for self-expression and opposing the norm. The use of Afro hair is connected with the designers own Ugandan heritage, celebrating its historical value and starting a dialogue that normalizes Afro hair.

Diana Ejaita

Diana Ejaita is an illustrator and textile designer in Berlin. What sets her illustrations apart is a combination of dramatically contrasting black-and-white areas and soft patterns and textures, which creates images that attest to the power of femininity. Of Nigerian origin, she was born in Cremona, Italy, and her aesthetic pays homage to this background.

QYA #1

Diana Ejaita's work is influenced by both her Nigerian and Italian origin. She incorporates geometric and organic forms as well as ancient African symbolism. Playing with dramatically contrasting black-and-white areas and soft patterns and textures, she is able to create images that attest to the power of femininity.

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Meschac Gaba

Meschac Gaba is a Beninese conceptual artist based in Rotterdam and Cotonou, whose installations of everyday objects juxtapose African and Western cultural identities and commerce. In 1997, he launched the Museum of Contemporary African Art, exploring perceptions of African art, the politics of museum display, and the roles of artist and visitor. Over five years, he installed twelve “rooms” of this nomadic museum at institutions across Europe; in 2013, it was acquired by the Tate Modern. His work has been shown at the Venice Biennial (2003), Centre Georges Pompidou (Paris), Mori Art Museum (Tokyo), and Studio Museum Harlem and MoMA PS1 (New York).

Perruques D’Architecture

As enigmatic signs, both hair and architecture are firmly anchored in modern culture. Both cultural products are part of our everyday life and create identity; the identity of an individual, of a society or of an entire era. Meschac Gaba’s hair architectures showcase traditional African braiding techniques, which are transferred through the sculptural form into the capitalist urban space. As part of the wig series that the artist began in the early 2000s, the sculptures shown here recreate well-known Berlin buildings – including the Czech embassy, the water tower in Prenzlauer Berg, and of course the TV tower. With playful clarity, the works navigate the space between tradition and globalization, national and transnational identity, Berlin and Africa.

Bull Doff

The designers behind Bull Doff are Laure Tarot, a native of Avignon with a background in photography, and hip-hop dancer Baay Sooley. They met for the first time in Dakar in 2010. As a creative alliance they founded the brand Bull Doff in the same year.

Sëru Demb – Téry – Suba

The traditional woven cloth (“pagne tissé”), commonly known in Senegal as “Sëru Njaago”, has an important socio-cultural dimension in African societies. As a companion from birth to death, it is used in all the great ceremonies that mark the stages of life. It protects people and brings luck.

At birth, the newborn is wrapped in the cloth offered by the aunt on the father’s side to protect the baby from evil spirits; at the wedding, the bride is taken to the house, that is covered with the cloth, thus attracting success to the new household; at the funeral, it is considered the blanket for the last journey.

The technique of the “pagne tissé” has been passed down from generation to generation for several centuries. The cloth is characterised by a very precisely coded design of colours and patterns, which differ according to the people or geographical area. In traditional Ghanaian Kente weaving, for example, the square pattern represents the woman and in Ghanaian Adinkra patterns the ladder represents death.

But what about contemporary codes or those that are still being developed? Can we now create a new reading of these cloths adapted to the world, techniques and materials around us? Bull Doff’s installation offers a

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contemporary reading of the cloth that combines traditional and technological know-how. By reinterpreting the past and the present, Bull Doff reflects on what could be tomorrow and invites the future to the present of Africa.

Adama Paris

Adama Amanda Ndiaye is a Senegalese fashion designer born in Kinshasa. She studied economics and worked briefly at a bank before devoting herself to fashion, taking classes in Paris and launching the brand Adama Paris. Her goal is to promote African women and female entrepreneurship, and Made-in-Africa fashion for the world.

Afro Xpression

My hair has always been a big concern in my life. It was a long process that taught me about myself and the perception that others had of me. For more than ten years now, I've been "nappy," meaning that I wear my hair natural and don't use chemicals to relax it. This allows me to play with hairstyles and to add external elements like a wig, a hairpiece, braids, etc. to my own hair. I'm no longer hiding it as before, but rather sublimating it, transforming it, giving it new life. With each new hairstyle, I reinvent myself; I am a new version of me. Ultimately, Afro hair becomes an adornment I can wear proudly, no longer ashamed and not hiding behind it. Because, while I may not be my hair, this hair is me.

Shamless Afro Hair

As Africans, we owe it to ourselves to be committed to our art, fashion, design, etc., especially when commitment can change the perception of things. Wearing Afro hair naturally is often considered a political action. Women who adopt this style are seen as being closer to their black or African culture, in contrast to women who feel obliged to comply with dominantly Caucasian aesthetics in order to blend in and advance more easily in society. Is Afro hair only about natural hair, or can hair extensions known as weaves, braids, and wigs also be considered part of it? This debate has been going on since slavery was abolished. This project is devoted entirely to Afro hair, to change the story, to express a new aesthetic, that of a beauty without any complexes. A way of seeing Afro hair without shame.

Tondo

Tondo was founded by two brothers, Mulindwa Adinan and Ali Musinguzi in Kampala in 2015.

Abalagilwa

Officially launched in 2018, the brand Tondo focuses on its *VOUAFF* (visions of urban African future fashion) style, bridging the gap between traditional African fashion and current fashion trends on the urban scene. Ugandan traditions, like the culture of the Bakiga or the legend of the warrior Kibuuka, once upon a time god of war in the kingdom of Buganda, remain a prime source of inspiration for the designers behind the clothing line Tondo. Promoting environmentally friendly fashion, Tondo has launched a garment recycling programme in order to contribute positively to climate change.

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FASHION x HAIR x DESIGN

Njola

Nabukenya Allen, aka Njola, is a Ugandan multimedia artist, founder of the brand Njola Impressions and co-founder of Compose Collection. She works with recycled industrial waste and follows a community based design practice.

Muyunga

Njola's design process starts with collecting old tires, plastic bags and discarded sandals in places where poor garbage disposal contributes to a toxic and sometimes dangerous living environment – mainly in the slums of Kampala. Using the skills she learned from her mother, who worked as a traditional weaver of palm mats, she finds beauty and potential in the undervalued and misunderstood, giving waste a new life by the method of recycling. She is able to pass on her vision of a sustainable future by educating communities about waste management and recycling through workshops organized by the Njola Recycling Initiative.

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