



30 of the very top African designers,
from 15 countries throughout the continent,
brought together for the first time,
for the DNA, exhibition and workshop.

The Danish Center for Culture and Development with funding from DANIDA is initiating a Network Program linking producers of outstanding design from East, West and Southern Africa. The 36-month program aims to establish authentic interaction between 30 renowned design companies from throughout the continent, who produce beautiful, contemporary work, revolutionizing the perception of African design in the global marketplace

Source, the leading exporters of Southern African design and directors of the DNA program, are launching the project with a four day workshop and exhibition, 24-27th of September 2011, at Arts on Main, in the Maboneng Precinct, Johannesburg.

With assistance from curators PACE, an exhibition of work from DNA members will be showcased and will include pieces from additional leading African designers.

This selling exhibition is intended to encourage collaboration between participants and to promote the designers' work to the industry and general public. The exhibition opens at 9.00am on Sunday 25th September at Arts on Main in Johannesburg, to be followed by an official launch at 18h00 at the same venue. The exhibition will remain open on the 26th and 27th September and can also be viewed by appointment by buyers*.

The program members have been selected to include a range of media and geographic regions on the continent, and include many of the continent's finest designers.

CheickDiallo (Mali), HamedOuattara (Burkina Faso), OusamaneM'Baye (Senegal), AissaDione (Senegal), Aida Duplessis (Mali), BoubacarDoumbia (Mali), Kpando Pottery (Ghana), Josephine &KwekuForson of Tekura Designs (Ghana), Muya (Ethiopia), Gahaya Links (Rwanda), Kitengela Glass (Kenya), Mabeo (Botswana), Haldane Martin (SA), BabacarNiang (Senegal), Dokter & Misses (SA), House on Fire (Swaziland), RonelJordaan (SA), Imiso (SA), OkechukwuEchere (Nigeria), Adele Dejak (Kenya), Doreen Mashika (Tanzania), Heath Nash (SA)SanaaTamu (Tanzania), ArtesMondlane (Mozambique), Marj Wallace (Zimbabwe), Mutuba (Uganda), Marianne Montaut (Mali) Zienzele (Zimbabwe) and Gone Rural (Swaziland).

The long term view for the project over the following two years includes: Holding workshops in other African countries, securing attendance at various design or art fairs in Africa and Europe and encouraging ongoing collaboration, mentorship and interaction between the members.

As a better understanding is gained of each member company and their unique needs and requirements, specific work will be done to assist with product development, marketing, business acumen, production capabilities and other areas that would benefit from assistance. In a grassroots, business focused approach the DNA Program will aim to aid each member company in the specific area that they most require assistance, rather than a generalized approach to problem solving.

A curated collection of new products from all members will represent the program and will be showcased on a branded website, which will be actively marketed to worldwide press and targeted at leading retailers around the world. The aim will be to highlight the work of the program but more

importantly to direct a new market towards each member category and produce a measurable result from the DNA program

It is our great hope and belief that due to its scale and substantial time-frame, this program will revolutionize the way African design is perceived in the global market, facilitating a long overdue shift from its role as curio to desirable and contemporary product that stands on its design merit alone – rather than on its ethnic origins. Because of the ripple effect of job creation in Africa, the program has the potential to impact on thousands of lives.

While many development programs come and go, key factors set this one apart: The 36-month commitment, which is likely to be extended, allows for a sustainable impact. Because the members have been encouraged to present the program with what they perceive as their greatest challenges – rather than having a prescribed outcome, the program will address real problems with the only criterion of success being a measurable improvement in the businesses of the members. A growing and inclusive alliance of partners (among them: African government bodies, retail partners and a wide range of NGOs) will be enfranchised in the problem solving process to this end.

“On many occasions, in various African countries, a need for a network between designers has been expressed. Designers often struggle with problems like access to market, management, materials, general problems concerning the business part of design, and often they do that in splendid isolation although the problems are the same. They express a need for learning together with their peers and they want to widen their horizons by establishing contacts with colleagues in other parts of the continent. The proposed three-year design programme is expected to contribute to a strengthening of regional networks between designers. It is therefore our challenge to create a situation where designers get out of their isolation, exchange ideas and learn from each other, receive inspiration and not least, where possible, act as mentors for each other. Design is one of the fastest growing sectors in the global economy and through this contribution to we hope to enable the selected design companies to be inspired and assisted to make good business out of good design.”

Danish Center for Culture and Development | DCCD

This inaugural exhibition will function as a pilot to a PACE Fair, intended as an annual event in Johannesburg and Africa’s only Contemporary Design Fair. The choice of the Maboneng Precinct for this event is strategic for various reasons – not only does it facilitate onsite interaction between the members who will be accommodated in the precinct, it will allow visitors to view the site for the

proposed Museum of African Design (MoAD) in the precinct which is set to open in early 2012.

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*Please consult the DNA website for schedules of specific walkabouts by the designers and curators

