


AFRICA ON THE RISE

From art shows to design exhibitions, the continent is having a moment, says **Peter Browne**

We all know about its endangered wildlife, open plains, towering mountains and pounding oceans. But we don't hear much about Africa's cities, other than complaints about potholes and corrupt politicians. Yet many of the continent's most vibrant urban outposts, from Accra and Dakar to Nairobi, Johannesburg and Cape Town, have emerged as crazy-intense incubators for creative expression. Africa now has a larger middle class than India, and a whole generation of smart, innovative and prolific thinkers unshackled from out-of-date prejudices

and preconceptions. Africa is influencing the world in ways we probably never anticipated, through art, design, photography, fashion and architecture. Last year, Nigeria-raised Okwui Enwezor became the first African curator of the Venice Biennale; Tanzania-born architect David Adjaye has designed the National Museum of African American History and Culture for the Smithsonian in Washington, DC. And a major touring exhibition is showcasing furniture designers alongside film-makers such as Ghana's Frances Bodomo. Senegalese

photographer Omar Victor Diop, who created this image for his ALT+SHIFT+EGO project, once worked in corporate communications and describes himself as 'a middle-class, well-travelled, professional black man.' The cultural paradigm has shifted; Africa is in the driving seat. Next year the most ambitious art project on the continent—the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa—opens in a converted grain silo on Cape Town's V&A Waterfront. As a statement on Africa's role on the global stage, it vibrates with defiant positivity. 



PHOTOGRAPH: OMAR VICTOR DIOP; ALT + SHIFT + EGO N°3, 2013; ALT + SHIFT + EGO SERIES © OMAR VICTOR DIOP
COURTESY MAGNIN-A GALLERY, PARIS