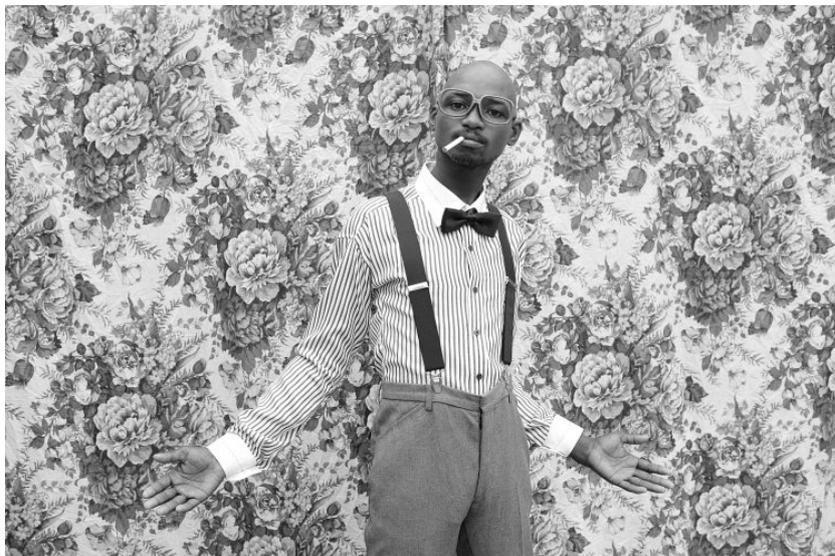


“Making Africa” Strikes Gold With a Landmark Exhibition of Contemporary Art & Design

Kunsthall, Rotterdam, presents “Making Africa: A Continent of Contemporary Design,” introducing a new generation of artists and designers to the global stage.

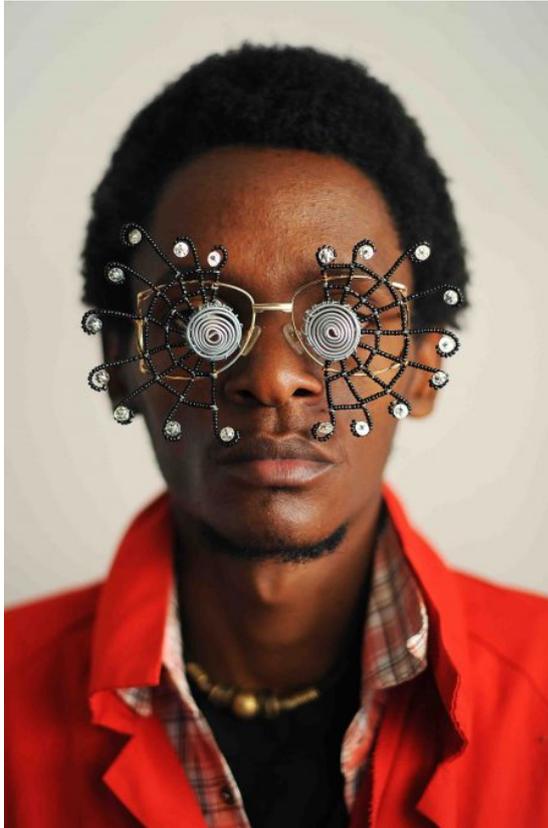
by [Miss Rosen](#), Dec 23rd, 2016



Artwork: *ário Macilau, Alito, The Guy with Style, 2013 from the Moments of Transition series, photo: © Mário Macilau, Courtesy Ed Cross Fine Art Ltd, London*

Since its launch last year at the Guggenheim Bilbao, [Making Africa: A Continent of Contemporary Design](#), has been touring the world, showcasing contemporary African design in an extraordinary new light. Now on view at [Kunsthall](#), Rotterdam, through January 15, 2017, this landmark exhibition features the work of more than 120 artists and designers working today, introducing a new generation of creators to the global stage.

Featuring object and furniture designs, graphic art, illustration, fashion, architecture, urban design, handicraft, video, film and photography, *Making Africa* reveals how design relates to and reflect the economic changes across the continent today. Many of the artists featured work in different disciplines and skillfully break with conventions to create an entirely new approach that is equal parts innovative and compelling.



Cyrus Kabiru Caribbean Sun, 2012 image from the C-Stunners photography series © Carl de Souza AFP/Getty Images

Making Africa features “C-Stunners” a series of eyewear sculptures by the Kenyan Cyrus Kabiru, who was showcased in the 2016 Armory Show. The works, made from objects found on the street, speak to the blinkered view we have of Africa, while simultaneously overcoming misguided beliefs. **There are also a selection of lush color photographs by Dakar native Omar Victor Diop, which integrate the rich African traditions of studio portraiture and fashion to perfection.**

Making Africa is divided into four themes: “Prologue,” which features Western images of Africa, examining our preconceptions of the planet home to Original Man and Woman; “I and We,” an exploration of how design becomes a tool to communicate ideas of the self and connect them to larger social and cultural developments across the continent; “Space and Object,” a mediation on the individual and the influence of their immediate environment; and “Origin and Future,” concluding with a look at the relationship between historic traditions and artifacts and contemporary African life.



Omar Victor Diop Aminata, 2013, Photograph from the series *The Studio of Vanities* © Victor Omar Diop, 2014, Courtesy Magnin-A Gallery, Paris

Making Africa taps into the “African Boom,” examining the ways in which various economies are developing faster on the continent than anywhere else in the world. This can be seen in the 650 million mobile phones in Africa, more than in the USA or Europe. These devices provide a gateway to the world that is fueling the transformation and influence of these artists and designers.

The influence of technology as a vehicle of communications is a natural extension of the power of media. *Making Africa* links contemporary design with examples of magazines and photographs from the years around 1960: “The Year of Africa,” when 17 countries liberated themselves from European overlords. This connection reminds us of the way in which the past informs the present, particularly around times of freedom, independence, and self-liberation. Such themes are evergreen sources of inspiration and strength, providing the blueprint for success and revealing the sacrifices it will take.

Taken as a whole, *Making Africa* is like striking gold, coming up with diamonds and rubies, then realizing the greatest treasures of the continent are the people themselves.



Vigilism, Idumota Market, Lagos 2081A.D., 2013 from the Our Africa 2081A.D. series, illustration for the Ikiré Jones Heritage Menswear Collection © Courtesy Olalekan [vigilism.com] and Walé Oyéjidé [ikirejones.com]

[Miss Rosen](#) is a New York-based writer, curator, and brand strategist. There is nothing she adores so much as photography and books. A small part of her wishes she had a proper library, like in the game of Clue. Then she could blaze and write soliloquies to her in and out of print loves.

Read more at <http://www.craveonline.com/art/1186023-making-africa-strikes-gold-landmark-exhibition-contemporary-art-design#ETvS6VSLfcGL4Fcz.99>