CALL FOR PAPERS

AFRIDESIGNX - NAIROBI SESSIONS: AFRICAN DESIGN AND DIGITAL STORYTELLING

NOW ACCEPTING SUBMISSIONS

This event forms part of the AfriDesignX conference series dedicated to African design, run by curator Cher Potter and supported by London College of Fashion/University of the Arts and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. AfriDesignX is a network that brings together designers, technological innovators, curators and material culture scholars from six different cities – Dakar (Senegal), Accra (Ghana), Nairobi (Kenya), Cape Town (South Africa), London (UK) and Oxford (UK) – to investigate new design typologies and visual strategies emerging from African megacities.

Nairobi Sessions Conveners: Cher Potter, Dr. Lilac Osanjo, Mugendi M’Rithaa
Contact: submissions@afridesignx.com

RATIONALE

Design has long been understood as a medium for translating our human stories – whether this is through the formulation of a product solution to an everyday problem, through a specific garment that illustrates our engagement with traditions and customs, or through the narratives told in digital design mediums such as graphic animation or video games design.

By extension, the idea that the world’s leading design manufacturers today are also the globally recognized storytellers of the 21st century has given rise to contentious debate. Data Librarian Olayinka C. Fatoki, working with specific reference to the Nigerian knowledge context, claims that digitization has the potential to make Africans producers and exporters of indigenous stories and knowledge, rather than passive consumers of imported knowledge (Fatoki, 2005).

The conference AfriDesignX – Nairobi Sessions: AFRICAN DESIGN AND DIGITAL STORYTELLING, hosted and supported in collaboration with the University of Nairobi, explores the stories embedded within design, with particular reference to the Kenyan and larger African context. The conference will offer insights into local Kenyan product design, wearable technology and video games and explore the relationship between developing a local market, a local audience and local narratives within design.
TOPICS

The conference seeks to incorporate papers from academics grappling with the concept of African design and its possible definitions, as well as from design professionals across disciplines outlining models of practice within an African context. The AfriDesignX conference organisers invite submission of academic conference papers, conference reports, surveys, presentations of designed objects or experiences, and manifestos for practice. Ultimately the conference will include a combination of longer, academic papers (4,000-7,000 words incl. references) and shorter presentations in more diverse formats (up to 2,000 words) including images, illustrations, diagrams, gameplay excerpts, animation segments, and more. All submissions that help to document and advance the notion of design and African storytelling are welcome.

Topics of interest include but are not limited to:

• Methods of storytelling in the context of design on the African continent, and how this might act as a means of challenging western hegemony
• The development and role of African superheroes in contemporary visual arts and design on the African continent
• How contemporary video and computer games transform the plot structures of oral storytelling into interactive, multimodal environments
• How indigenous characters and motifs used by African designers contribute to the growth of local audience and consumer markets
• The ideological role of design in preserving local cultural heritage and values in and beyond Kenya

PAPER AND PRESENTATION PROPOSALS

Paper proposals should consist of a title and a 500-word extended abstract that specifies and motivates the research question, describes the methods and data used, and summarises the main findings.

Short presentation proposals should consist of a title and a 300-word abstract that specifies the nature and purpose of the presentation, the design practice involved and the methods used (a maximum of 3 images, audio files or animated excerpts may be included).

All authors of accepted proposals are expected to submit full papers or presentations by August 15th for compilation into a printed and illustrated hand-out for use within the conference.

IMPORTANT DATES

• Launch call for papers: week of 5th December 2016
• Extended abstract submission deadline: 24th February 2017
• Decisions on abstracts: 15th March 2017
• Full paper / poster submission deadline (for accepted abstracts): 15th August 2017
• Conference dates: 27th – 28th September 2017

Please feel free to circulate this in your networks.

We look forward to hearing from you,
Cher Potter (LCF/V&A Senior Research Fellow)
BY SUBMITTING YOUR ABSTRACT TO US, YOU WILL BENEFIT FROM:

- Open Access – all conference papers and a selection of shorter presentations included in the conference will be published online and freely available to view and download from the afridesignx.com website, an online archive for African design supported by University of the Arts London, Victoria and Albert Museum London, University of Nairobi, University of Oxford, Ashesi University Accra, L'Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar and Cape Peninsula University of Technology Cape Town.
- An invitation to present amidst like-minded academics and design professionals, both physically and virtually.
- Retaining the copyright to your contribution.
- In addition, selected papers from across the Nairobi Sessions (September 2017) will be included in the peer reviewed Journal of Digital Creativity (tbc) published by Taylor and Francis.

SELECTED PAPER REFEREE PANEL:

- **Mugendi M’Rithaa**, President of the World Design Organisation, Lecturer in Industrial Design at Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Cape Town South Africa
- **Dr. Lilac Osanjo**, Head of Design at the University of Nairobi Kenya
- **Cher Potter**, London College of Fashion/Victoria and Albert Museum Senior Research Fellow, University of the Arts London UK
- **Dr Lorraine Amollo Ambole**, School of Arts and Design, University of Nairobi Kenya
- **Dr David Pratten**, Lecturer in Social Anthropology of Africa, University of Oxford UK
- **Dr Jane Harris**, Professor of Digital Design and Innovation, Associate Dean of Research, London College of Fashion, London UK
- **Dr Ralph Borland**, Founder African Robots, Cape Town South Africa
- **Dr Kamau Gachigi**, Executive Director of the Gearbox; former Head of the University of Nairobi (UoN) Science and Technology Park, Nairobi Kenya
- **Olayinka C. Fatoki**, Data Librarian, University of Ibadan Nigeria