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IAM... LAURENCE KANZA, DESIGNER - UNITED KINGDOM



<http://www.iam-africa.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/I-AM-LPC-003-e1458723345526.jpg>

IAM... a Woman of Art: during the month of March, IAM highlights 8 women active in the arts, fashion and design. After Emilie Regnier, Eve De Medeiros, and Majida Khattari, Nana Oforiatta-Ayim, and Farah Khelil, discover Laurence Kanza's founder of 'La Petite Congolaise'. British born of Congolese descent, Laurence Kanza's childhood homes were a blend of Congolese artefacts, hand-carved chairs, and European furniture. This early introduction to design informed her decorative style which was further honed through years of international travel. She is the founder of 'La Petite Congolaise', an accessories label offering a contemporary twist on accent colours for the home.

IAM: In a hyper-connected and ever smaller world, what does it mean to you to be a designer?

Laurence Kanza: As a designer, it means information and opportunities. Our hyper-connected world has given me greater access to people and places (and vice versa) at incredible speed, without having to travel. Based in London and contacted by people from places such as Sweden, India, Australia, South Africa, USA and Japan is wonderful. These opportunities are made possible through our hyper connected world.

IAM: How would you define your work?

L.K.: African accents for contemporary interiors. Layering and personalising with colour and texture. My work adds touches and elements that reflect my customers' personal style and personality.



Photo: Stefano Dadoan / © La Petite Congolaise®

IAM: Who comes first to your mind when thinking of an artist / fashion designer / designer who have particularly influenced your work and why?

L.K.: Tricia Guild (founder of Designers Guild), I admire the way she has grown her business from one shop on the Kings Road in London into an international home and lifestyle company. The architect David Adjaye (Adjaye Associates) for his holistic approach to design and his creative use of materials, whether designing a public building, a private home or art installation projects.

IAM: What are your plans for the next months?

L.K.: The next few months are going to be enjoyable, hectic yet engaging: I'm collaborating on a series of short films; creating new sections on my website; a new collection; and God-willing some travel ... exciting to say the least!



IAM: Which art event should we not miss in 2016?

L.K.: That's a difficult one. 2016 is proving to be an inspiring year for art events, asking me to limit it to one event is like asking a mother to choose her favourite child. I simply cannot limit my choice to just one, so I'm offering a selection – have your passports ready because my picks involve travel:

- Chefs-d'oeuvre d'Afrique (now – 17 July 2016) at the Musée Dapper in Paris.
- El Anatsui at the October Gallery in London (4 February – 2 April 2016). Actually, any exhibition featuring El Anatsui is a must. His pieces need to be seen in person. The intricacy and craftsmanship is incredible – pictures don't do his work justice.
- Le Regard De Keïta at the Grand Palais in Paris (31 March – 11 July 2016) is a must. Seydou Keïta's work is stunning and timeless.
- Dakar 66 at the Musée du quai Branly in Paris (16 February – 15 May 2016).
- Dak'Art 2016 – The Biennale of Contemporary African Art (3 May – 2 June 2016) in Dakar, Senegal.
- 1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair in New York (6-8 May 2016) and in London (5-9 October 2016).
- The London Design Festival 2016 (17-25 September 2016) in London.
- The opening of the National Museum of African American History and Culture (24 September 2016) in Washington D.C. designed by David Adjaye.

IAM... Blessed, fortunate and grateful to be doing what I love.

23.03.2016 – Interview by IAM – Images, Stefano Padoan

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