Ashesi University College, University of the Arts London and Victoria & Albert Museum present:

AFRI_DESIGN_X

AFRIDESIGNX: DESIGN FUTURES IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA
ASHESI SESSIONS

Event information

With second wave industrialism increasingly a principle of the past, thinking about *design* has dramatically changed over the last few years. Concepts like sustainability, experience, interaction, algorithmic, digital fabrication and human-centredness have become fundamental to studying and understanding contemporary design practices. Design today - as its remit expands into fields like robotics, anthropology, entrepreneurship and even politics - often stands as a challenge to design's more traditional links to home interiors, automobiles and commercial products.

As young designers on the African continent, we may well be asking ourselves - what is design, what it can be, who can we look to for inspiration and where are the centres of innovation? We tend to think of design innovation as happening in the high-tech laboratories of American industrial research institutes, elite design schools in Europe or large-scale industrial plants in Japan or China. However, in what is being called a transformative Digital Revolution, the African continent now hosts one of the fastest growing tech hubs in the world (the East African 'Silicon Savannah'), a Pan-African robotics network (AFRON), burgeoning space programmes and a proliferation of digital innovation hubs.

Acknowledging this, AfriDesignX and Ashesi University brings together scholars and practitioners from Ghana, Uganda, Togo, Rwanda, South Africa and the UK to discuss their practices and to explore:

• What challenges and opportunities do a 'digital revolution' offer to the young African designer today?

• How the combination of computer coding and digital fabrication is resulting in new typologies of design in Sub-Saharan Africa?

• What composite communities are organising themselves around these new digital models?

• How might we begin to define our practice as designers when the field is expanding so exponentially – and what might be our role as designers on the African continent?

Speakers - in order of appearance:

Cher Potter (design, curation)
Cher Potter is V&A/LCF Senior Research Fellow in 'Design Futures'. Her research interests include contemporary design on the African continent, and 'post western' models of curating and research. Prior to joining the V&A, she curated the 2013 European Impakt Arts Festival which explored 'post western' futures; and lead global cultural research at WGSN, the world's largest design and fashion trends bureau, coordinating research into design tendencies across 22 countries including 8 African capitals. She was recognized as one of twelve 'Future Visionaries' by the 2013 Wellcome Trust Visioneers series.

Dela A. Kumahor (design)
Dela A. Kumahor is a User Experience and Interaction Designer and founding partner of The Cobalt Partners, a business consulting firm. His career has spanned the design and development of projects from Web, IPTV and smart meter interfaces to office furniture systems and mHealth applications. Most recently, he has been leading the User Experience team on the design of a mobile phone-based product to improve the lives of smallholder farmers in Ghana. He has also lectured in Design, Human-Computer Interaction and e-Commerce at Ashesi University.

Dr Ayorkor Korsah (computer science, robotics)
Dr Ayorkor Korsah of the Computer Science Department at Ashesi University College is co-founder of the African Robotics Network (AFRON), a community of institutions, organisations and individuals engaged in robotics in Africa. Her academic interests span algorithm design, artificial intelligence, and robotics. She is passionate about educating computer scientists for development in Africa and using robotics as a tool to excite students about science, technology and engineering.

Yaw *DK Osseo*-Asare (architecture, design)
DK Osseo-Asare is co-founding principal of Low Design Office (LOWDO), an architecture studio based in Texas and Ghana. He is a Fulbright Scholar, Global TED Fellow, Design Fellow at the Kokrobitey Institute and Lecturer in Design at Ashesi University, where he helps run the Ashesi Design Lab. His research spans design innovation, open-source urbanism, digital fabrication and architecture robots. Most recently, he led urban design for Anam City and Koumbi City new town projects in Nigeria and Ghana, and co-founded the Agbogbloshie Makerspace Platform (AMP), winner of the Rockefeller Foundation's Centennial Innovation Challenge award.

Solomon King Benge (DIY robotics, entrepreneurship)
Solomon King Benge is Founder of Fundi Bots, an amateur robotics hub based in Kampala, Uganda that uses robotics training in African schools to develop a new generation of problem-solvers. Fundi Bots supports the development of local practitioners building solutions to Ugandan problems. He is also Founder & Creative Director of Elemental Edge, a leading Ugandan visual effects production house that produces immersive, interactive experiences across physical digital media.

Jorge Appiah (electronics engineering, entrepreneurship)
Jorge is the founder/Executive director of Creativity Group (Cg), a supporting platforms for students across disciplines who seek to turn their innovative ideas into prototypes and businesses. He is also the Co-founder/CEO of Kumasi Hive; a multi-space innovation hub providing co-working spaces, a makerspace, and event space to support start-ups and the entrepreneurship ecosystem in Kumasi, the first of its kind. Jorge is also a World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Shaper and the curator for the Kumasi Hub of the Global Shapers Community.

Francis Kokoroko (photographic journalism)
In *The Drone Scrap Program 2054*, Kokoroko turns the clock forward to 2054, taking a look at the socio-economic and political factors present in Ghana that could one day be detrimental to the country's development. Related artists: Yaw P, Steloo, AccradotAlt, etc. Ghanaian photographer Francis Kokoroko believes there is an immeasurable amount of potential locked in his home country.

Sénamé Koffi Agbodjinou (architecture, anthropology)
Sename Koffi Agbodjinou is an architect, a researcher in anthropology, and an ICT supporter. He created the platform 'L'Africaine d'architecture' which aims to explore the possibilities of an alternative architecture based on the line "modernity rooted" which aims to enhance vernacular aesthetics and resources. In 2012 he identified a correspondence between the hacker ethic and values of traditional African societies and developing the concept 'LowHighTech'. The smart city project "Hubcité Africaine"; WoeLab – the first African Space of Technology Democracy; and W.Afate – the first 'Made In Africa & with e-waste' 3D printer are today the best ambassadors of this vision of society**.**

Christian Benimana (architecture)
Christian Benimana is an architect based in Kigali, Rwanda, working for the non-profit design studio MASS. He is currently working on the launch of a local apprenticeship based design education program - the 'Africa Design Centre' - which he describes as the *Bauhaus of Africa*, to be begin in Rwanda and over the next 10 years train a generation of impact driven human centered designers throughout the continent. The Centre is tasked with training a new generation of African architects and designers, a workforce certain to be indispensable as Africa enters a period of unprecedented urban growth

Dr. AshiteyTrebi-Ollennu (robotics engineering)
Dr. AshiteyTrebi-Ollennu, FIET, FRAeS, FGA, SMIEE,PMP, is the Product Delivery Manager, for the InSight Mars Mission Instrument Deployment System, Instrument Deployment System operations Team Chief and a technical group lead in the Robotic Manipulation & Sampling group at NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology. Dr. Trebi-Ollennu received the 2008 NASA Exceptional Engineering Achievement Medal for his contributions to the Mars Exploration Rover mission. He is also the founder of the Ghana Robotics Academy Foundation (GRAF) that won the prestigious Google RISE Award 2013.

AfriDesignX is a Leverhulme-funded network that brings together designers, technological innovators, curators and material culture scholars from five different cities – Dakar (Senegal), Accra (Ghana), Nairobi (Kenya), Cape Town (South Africa) and London (UK) – to investigate new design typologies and visual strategies emerging from African megacities. The AfriDesignX network is co-ordinated by curator Cher Potter and supported by London College of Fashion/University of the Arts and the V&A Museum, London.

Project Partners:

University of the Arts London, UK
Victoria & Albert Museum, UK
University of Oxford, UK
University of Nairobi, Kenya
Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa
Université Cheikh Anta Diop, Senegal
Ashesi University College, Ghana

For more information visit: **www.afridesignx.com**

AFRI DESIGN X

Ashesi Sessions – Conference Agenda

A partnership between Ashesi University College, University of the Arts London London and Victoria & Albert Museum

WHEN

Thursday, 19 May, 2016

TIME

10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

WHERE

Ashesi University College
The Norton Motulsky Hall
1 University Avenue
Berekuso, Eastern Region.
Ghana, Ghana

CONTACT

Cher Potter
Project Lead and Organiser
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Agenda

10.00 Welcome

Part 1: Designing for New Realities
10.10   Cher Potter
   Project Lead 'AfriDesignX: Design Futures in Sub-Saharan Africa', LCF/V&A Senior Research Fellow
10.35   Dela A. Kumahor
   User Experience and Interaction Designer, Founding Partner at Cobalt Partners
11.00   Dr Ayorkor Korsah
   Department of Computer Science at Ashesi University College, Co-founder of African Robotics Network (AFRON)

11.30 Tea Break

Part 2: Local Resources + Digital Craft
11.50   Solomon King Benge
   Founder of Fundibots Kampala, Founder of Elemental Edge digital media studio
12.15   Yaw DK Osseo-Asare
   Founding Architect of Low Design Office (LOWDO), lecturer in Design at Ashesi University College
12.40   Francis Kokoroko
   Documentary photographer of 'Ghana's Millennial Avant-garde'

13.10 Lunch Break

Part3: Spaces and Communities of Design
14.10   Sénamé Koffi Agbodjinou
   Founder of the platform 'L'Africaine d'architecture' and Lomé Woelab makerspace
14.35   Jorge Appiah
   Founder of the Creativity Group and the Kumasi Hive makerspace
15.00   Christian Benimana
   Architect at MASS Studio Rwanda, currently launching the 'Africa Design Centre'

15.30 Tea Break

Part 4 KEYNOTE: Mars Mission / Man-machine interactions
15.50   Dr Ashitey Trebi-Ollennu
   Robotics Engineer for InSight Mars Mission Instrument Deployment System at NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology

17:00 Drinks Reception