

**S P I N N I N G
T R I A N G L E S :
I G N I T I O N O F
A S C H O O L
O F D E S I G N

K I N S H A S A
06.04.-14.04.2019**

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**S A V V Y CONTEMPORARY
THE LABORATORY OF FORM-IDEAS**

TANKWA



P R E S S R E L E A S E

On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Bauhaus, SAVVY Contemporary seeks to challenge and act against the inherent, neocolonial power structures in design practices, theory and teaching with its project “Spinning Triangles”. It takes up the founding moment of the Bauhaus one hundred years ago and starts from its reality as a school of design to reverse and reshape it. Departing from a critical perspective on the heritage of modernism and its link to colonialism, we want to propose a school of design that may well become an “un-school,” and emerges through a process between Dessau, Kinshasa, Berlin and Hong Kong.

After the project’s first chapter in Dessau, complexifying and challenging the Bauhaus celebration, the ignition of this school will take place in Kinshasa – the capital of a country without which the contemporary smartphone-modernity, creative economy and data collecting mania is unthinkable but which also bears the highest costs: the past twenty years alone have amassed six million corpses caused by the ruthless mining of minerals and its associated conflicts in order to feed electronic apparatuses all around the world – official numbers that can be deemed as cautious estimations.

C H A P T E R 1 Dessau

The longterm project started in Dessau, where Van Bo Le-Mentzel opened a new Tinyhouse, the “Wohnmaschine”: a miniature clone of the workshop wing of the Dessau Bauhaus building. Behind the iconic facade hides a fifteen square meter apartment with an elaborate interior design and exhibition possibilities. SAVVY Contemporary did not only inhabit these four walls during that time, but also invited guests in order to negotiate space and property and question the complex heritage of modernity. Interventions by various protagonists activated this mobile “world heritage site” and thus opened its living room to the public as an “academy of the fireside”, with contributions by Mouctar Bah, Decolonizing Design (Luiza Prado and Pedro Oliveira), Lamin Fofana, Saskia Köbschall, Lambert Mousseka, Henrike Naumann, Ahmet Ögüt, VorOrt Haus (Alexander Lech and Katja Petry). We faced the relations of coloniality and design as well as its various visibilities and invisibilities in the city of Dessau and the Bauhaus. Shortly after, the “Wohnmaschine” moved to Berlin on the occasion of the “100 years of bauhaus” opening festival. The project now continues towards its next chapter — in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

C H A P T E R 2 Kinshasa

Here, the thinking and design process will accelerate through an intensified exchange during a four day conference and several workshops, bringing together a

multiplicity of generations, regions, and expressivities, from Kinshasa and elsewhere, with the aim to conceive a school of design. Together the core question of the project is raised:

How in a world where all too many modernist master-plans have failed, do we conceive, and through which philosophies, our everyday environments in order to make any kind of collective future possible at all?

Design has power. It creates our environments, our interactions, our being in the world. We form and we are formed by the externalizations of life philosophies that transpire in our spaces, objects and communicative codes. If we listen to their presences closely, we can deduce historical, political, economic, social and other forces from the materials in use as well as their formal and aesthetic aspects. We can indeed hear the noise of the relationships of necessities, wishes, possibilities and impossibilities that define how these forms are conceived and realized. As we live in a world of constant negotiation of these relationships, we can indeed decide to reproduce or subvert them.

Part of the process in Kinshasa is the initiation of a design research group, which is now called “Banka” — “Ba” expressing the plural in Lingala and “nka” meaning “alert”, appearing for instance in everyday phrases like “Kinshasa mboka banka” (“Kinshasa, land of the alerted”). They proclaim that we “need an archeology of language as a base for Africans and others, as well as a decolonized vision in cultural practices. It’s time to pull ourselves together and question all there is around ourselves. This is even more true for the african context, where ‘modernity’ is proclaimed but rarely conceived or defined from its own context”.

By raising the question of a common future on this planet, we start from a deep concern, born from the observation that the project of “modernity” and its vision for a uniform progress, twisted by the forced hyper-productivity of our century, is a largely destructive and unequal project. Today, “modernity” is a multi-faceted and pluriform building. But whether it is the African, Asian, Antarctic, Australian, European, North or South American continent, it always carries the charge of the imbedded violence of colonial thought and practice, in its continued perpetuation. Starting from here, how can we activate a common life defying and resisting the dogmas of this “modernity” and the canon of progress that mainly profits the overdeveloped world, even by hybridizing material and immaterial cultures? How to question, rethink and literally “re-form-ulate” this modernity to spin the power relations and propose

other daily realities?

It is here, from these reflections, that we want to propose a turning around, that we want to take up the gesture of the founding of a school of design as a departure, a beginning — an “ebandeli”. By which we want to ask a) what is and can be a school and b) what is and can be design and c) what is and can be the combination of both?

Is it possible to found such a school, or “unschool,” that could propose a way to share knowledges in thinking and making to redo the power relations of contemporary modernity, by reconceptualizing our everyday? What would be its philosophy, how could it sustain itself in the long run? What form would it take?

In order to circle around these questions, a conference is held 06.–09.04.2019 in Kinshasa where several perspectives, questions and potential answers encounter each other and will be debated along four central topics:

1. “Beginning in the middle of things” — a beginning with three perspectives on our contemporary condition, as well as performative discourses and a festive get-together at the artists’ residency “Ndaku” in Matonge. (06.04.2019, Académie des Beaux-Arts et Ndaku, 15:00–03:00)
2. “Habits, Desires and Necessities” — a multi-faceted day that guides us to the profound relationships at work within objects and the histories that they communicate. (07.04.2019, Académie des Beaux-Arts and Ndaku, 15:00–20:00)
3. “Educative polyphony and spaces for knowledges” — a day where multiple views and experiences in the domain of education confront each other to exchange perspectives, questions, experiences and visions. (08.04.2019, KinArt Studio, 15:00–20:00)
4. “Mingling bodies, spatial clashes” — a day where the contributors bring us to the world of spatial conceptions — architectural ideas, their influences on our everyday life and the bodies that inhabit them, as well as urban provocations. (09.04.2019, KinArt Studio, 15:00–20:00)

The workshops take up these thematic axes:

1. “Segregated cities, networked cities. Five things to unlearn from modernist architecture.” — on the way modernist architects and urbanists conceived city spaces and houses according to categorizations and segregations. This workshop proposes designs for “inbetween”-spaces with Van Bo Le-Mentzel at Académie des Beaux-Arts, 26.–29.04.2019
2. “Hechizos and humble offerings from the Grand Marché”, where the circulation and use of objects are questioned, reinvented and enchanted in order to reflect and change attitudes and situations that the participants wish to transform around them, with Eliana Otta and Nada Tshibuabua at Timbela Batimbela Yo, Grand Marché, 08.–09.04.2019

3. “Design for Impact” on the spaces of knowledge exchanges, starting from architectural practices and design strategies with Jean Paul Seubhayi Uwase, Jonathan Bongji and Jean Kamba in Bon-Marché, 10.–14.04.2019

“Spirits and Matter-Bodies” on contemporary materiality, its spirits and its relation to the human body, resulting in an engagement with ways of clothing and scenography, instigated by Lambert Mousseka, in partnership with Malaya Rita and Elie Mbansing at Espace Masolo in Ndjili, 10.–14.04.2019

“The Street as Laboratory of the Possible” on daily activities of human life (like sleeping, sitting, eating) and the objects that sustain these activities with Cheick Diallo and Jean Jacques Tankwey at Ndaku in Matonge, 10.–14.04.2019

From this process will emerge a concept for a school of design, developed by the participants of the workshops and the research group “Banka”. This school may well become an unschool, its form and format still needs to emerge — and this is also the moment where its potential reality is thoroughly questioned: What are the possibilities of its long term and real existence, the eventual cooperation with existing entities, a form and structure that is viable. What is its form of activation, where lies its performative force? What is certain is that its first actualisation will be in Berlin (22.07.–18.08.2019), the second in Hong Kong (08.10.–12.10.2019).

C H A P T E R 3 Berlin

From 22.07.–18.08.2019, SAVVY Contemporary–The Laboratory of Form-Ideas will temporarily make place for a school of design led by five “masters” who will transfer knowledges. Here forty students will “unlearn” and “learn.” A new form of sharing and co-living will be negotiated among the participants. The infrastructure of studios and workshops in Berlin-Wedding will serve as a cooperative base for students. Every week, three public lectures, or in its widest sense “contributions” (performances, DJ-Sets etcetera) are held by practicing artists and designers from around the world. The school will have open days in which the public has access to the space and can potentially talk to students and staff. These open days can also be used by students to present their work.

Thus, words and actions aim to challenge and transform Bauhaus traditions and narratives of modernity and modernism, before the school moves to Hong Kong in October 2019.

C H A P T E R 4 Hong Kong

In Hong Kong we will further engage with narratives of modernity and modernism and its relationship to coloniality. The school will challenge its presuppositions performatively by simply actualizing itself in the context of Hong Kong.

T E X T Elsa Westreicher, on the basis of the project concept of S P I N N I N G T R I A N G L E S, discussions with the S A V V Y Contemporary team and the continued dialogue with “Banka”, research group on design in Kinshasa (Jonathan Bongji, Jean Kamba, Elie Mbansing, Malaya Rita, Jean Jacques Tankwey), as well as the conference and workshop contributors.

MORE INFORMATION

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S A V V Y Contemporary – The laboratory of form-ideas is an art space, discursive platform, place for good talks, foods and drinks – a space for conviviality. S A V V Y Contemporary situates itself at the threshold of notions of the West and non-West, to understand and deconstruct them. S A V V Y Contemporary has realized a kaleidoscope of art exhibitions, performances, film screenings, lectures, concerts, readings, talks, dances. S A V V Y Contemporary has established a participatory archive on German colonial history, a performance arts documentation centre, a library, a residency program, as well as educational projects with schools. The art space engages in its neighborhood's history and socio-political realities which are entangled with the reflections and discourses of the project.

S A V V Y Contemporary is Elena Agudio Antonia Alampi Jasmina Al-Qaisi Sasha Alexandra Artamonova Lynhan Balatbat-Helbock Bona Bell Marleen Boschen Federica Buetti Pia Chakraverti-Wuerthwein Raisa Galofre Johanna Gehring Monilola Ilupeju Anna Jäger Kimani Joseph Laura Klöckner Cornelia Knoll Kelly Krugman Nathalie Mba Bikoro António Mendes Kamila Metwaly Wilson Mungai Arlette-Louise Ndakoze Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung Abhishek Nilamber Jeff Obiero Beya Othmani Elena Quintarelli Marleen Schröder Jörg-Peter Schulze Lema Sikod Lili Somogyi Fanny Souade Sow Jorinde Spletstößer Laura Voigt Elsa Westreicher

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