



# TO THE T2A9 FUTURE OUR TIME IS NOW!

REFLECTIONS ON AFRIKA'S  
IDENTITY AND DESIGN  
CONFIDENCE



**PADI**ADD2020



An abstract geometric design featuring a large, thick red line that starts from the bottom left and extends towards the top right. This line is intersected by several other red elements: a horizontal line at the top right, a vertical line segment, a zigzag line, and two solid red circles. The overall composition is minimalist and modern.

# CON TRIBU TORS

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Juliet Kavishe (South Africa)  
Felix Ofori-Dartey (United Kingdom)  
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# AFRIKA DESIGN DAY 2020





# “What do you think is the strength of our Afrikan identity and How can we develop creative confidence and resourcefulness among all Afrikan citizens?”

It's been six months since PADI's Afrika Design Day celebrations in Johannesburg, South Africa and since then we have all experienced various levels of a global pandemic through loss of loved ones, isolation via quarantine measures, psychological and monetary strain and the never-ending virtual meetings.

However, similarly, what it has done, is bring us closer as a human race. Consideration for fellow man has increased through understanding that one has lives over and above their rigorous 9-5, brought to light by screaming toddlers during zoom meetings, varying levels of internet connection during virtual classes, the discomfort of wearing a face mask just to prevent the spread of a deadly disease and the almost unnatural need for social distancing.

As a design community whose sole mandate it is to promote design on the African continent, coupled with design thinking, we asked a few of the attendees of this year's celebrations to reflect on that

day and answer two pertinent questions, What do you think is the strength of our Afrikan identity and How can we develop creative confidence and resourcefulness among all Afrikan citizens?

What was exciting were the responses as to the way forward, Professor Saki Mafundikwa in his article states that:

**“A huge part of the work that needs to be done is writing! We have to write books about Afrikan Design so as to provide the younger generations with resources that they can reference...”**


He goes on further to quote the Nigerian Designer Lemi Ghariokwu to enforce this idea and ends his article by encouraging us to tap into our innate rhythms in music, pattern dance and design to regain our confidence in self as an Afrikan.

Mr. Sam Nii Adjaidoo painted a beautiful picture of the location, energy and outfits worn by the participants that day, further encouraging us, the readers to tap into our everyday routines, cultures and languages and trust that we have the capacity to adjust, adapt and evolve to continuously share our creativity with the world.

Furthermore, Dr. Vikki Eriksson, reminds us that the Afrikan design identity may not solely rely on pattern and color but a

**“...spirit of innovation across the continent and an authentic understanding that all Afrikans must work together to ensure a prosperous future”**





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Mr. Peter Ekanem encourages us to tap into our Indigenous Knowledge systems noting that until we as Afrikans view ourselves as contributors to society and furthermore the Afrikan design pedagogy, we will face challenges in improving our continents quality of life.

We asked PADI board member Mr. Felix Ofori Dartey and PADI member Mr. Mohammed Jogie of Morning Star Design to give their views and this is what they had to say:

**Q: What do you think is the strength of our Afrikan Design Identity?**

**M.J:** There is a saying in isiZulu that epitomizes this strength of Afrikan Identity. 'Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu' - A person is a person because of people. This wisdom guides us to unity. Unity of purpose, unity of voice, shared experiences and care for each other.

**F.O.D:** From a reflective point of view of those of us in the diaspora, Afrikan design identity spans from fashion, sculpture and graphic art to the cultural upbringing of our children. Most Afrikan homes have either an Afrikan sculptural piece(s) or a graphic art poster displayed in the lounge or sitting room. Most Afrikan families also love to wear Afrikan inspired fashion especially at social events like parties, church services and as a fashion statement especially during the summer months.

From observation, families who take pride in their Afrikan design and culture, raise children that are both proud and comfortable with their Afrikan heritage and confident in embracing their specific Afrikan identity be it through design expression, use of their African languages, and promoting the wearability of our specific fabrics. This somehow impacts their interaction at school and their academic work.

**Q: How can we develop creative confidence and resourcefulness among all Afrikan citizens?**

**F.O.D:** Having had a lived experience of both Afrikan and Western cultures, I realized that in order to develop creative confidence in our people, a lot of education on Afrikan Design Identity needs to be embarked upon. On Afrikan soil we live and breathe the Afrikan Design Identities everyday through our way of life, however, we have taken this for granted and hence do not really value and appreciate it as our unique contribution

to the world of design. In my opinion, in order to develop creative confidence and resourcefulness in our people, we have to educate our people more about the value of Afrikan design identities and also have role models the youth can look up to, and this is where PADI comes in as we are embarking on educating, acknowledge our greats and encourage them to be mentors.

**M.J:** Creative confidence requires a holistic approach that envelopes all aspects of Afrikan citizens' lives. Robust, democratic political systems that create stable societies. Access to resources and platforms that allow ideas to blossom and flower into practical solutions. Stable societies that are equitable without huge chasms between rich and poor. Economies that support radical ideas, allow for dissent, and embrace a culture innovation and technological advancement. This will allow Afrikan resourcefulness to shine through.

All in all, we as designers based on the Afrikan continent are encouraged by our peers to be more vocal and proud of our identity, for it stems from a position of richness in culture, religion, patterns, habit and language. There is a strength to be garnered from our diversity and through this a variety of creative outputs.

Do enjoy the following articles from our Afrikan thought provokers who, though diverse in background, race, age and gender are truly unified in the promotion of the Afrikan Design agenda.

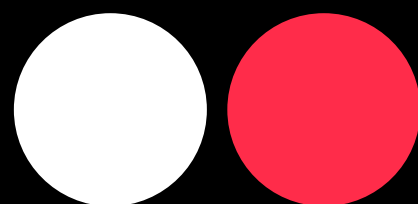


**By Juliet Kavishe**  
*PADI Publications  
Committee Editor  
Interim Board  
Member 2020*



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# On Developing Creative Confidence and Resourcefulness



*By Prof. Saki Mafundikwa  
Interim PADI Board  
Member 2020*

During PADI's maiden Afrika Design Day in Johannesburg this past February, I was part of a panel that included Juliet Kavishe, Sam Nii Adjaidoo, and Peter Ekanem and moderated by Felix Ofori Dartey. We interrogated the concept of "Afrikan Design" and concluded that what Afrikan designers lack is "confidence" in their work. This is mainly caused by the widely held notion that design is a "Western" concept. There is a reason why this is so: up until recently, most design pedagogy was Western. Students from around the globe went to school and were taught European design and if they were to be regarded as "good" designers, why, they had to master the grid, know Swiss design, be adept at the Roman Alphabet and be admirers of the Bauhaus and Modernism. Those were the rules and if you ignored them, you flunked as a designer. Period.

Afrikan design was marginalized, attracting labels like "primitive", "tribal", "craft", "Folklore", etc. This is true for design from those parts of the world referred to as the "developing world".





*We interrogated the concept of “Afrikan Design” and concluded that what Afrikan designers lack is “confidence” in their work. This is mainly caused by the widely held notion that design is a “Western” concept.*

Students from advanced and older traditions of design like China and Japan, had to re-learn design from a Western perspective if they were to pass or excel in the Western design classroom. The 21st Century has seen a retreat from that approach and seen the emergence of different voices in the design fields – a trans-disciplinary approach where there really are no discernable boundaries between the disciplines. The term of choice for that movement is “Decolonization”. That’s the buzzword du jour and it’s spreading like wild fire especially on college campuses across the globe. It is a good thing because it also stands for freedom from the yoke of political colonization, from which the masses from the developing world have suffered.

We are bombarded with Western standards of beauty and propaganda in every form of life – education, but mostly the media! We never see ourselves on TV (although to be fair, that is changing albeit very slowly with many countries encouraging the creation of local content – Nigeria is leading that charge with the much acclaimed “Nollywood”). We see a definite lack of confidence especially by our women who straighten their hair or wear the hair of dead Asian and Brazilian women (weaves), which is a multibillion dollar industry! Even women from countries that are characterized as “poor” – they will find the money to buy these weaves from mostly Asian (Chinese) shops. Yet, in the not-too-distant-past, Afrikan women used to wear their hair in natural styles and designs that were incredibly beautiful. There were distinct Afrikan hair styles, whose designs were distinctly Afrikan.

At the PADI celebration during my talk, I emphasized the importance of our **Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS)** that are our wealth in terms of innovation, ingenuity, intellectual capital and creativity. That is our **Intellectual Property (IP)**,

therefore our inspiration and for us to reference as we work on our designs. The West has countless books that students of design can reference; our libraries are the old people in our families and communities who are the custodians of our IKS and IP – the gatekeepers and the living libraries. We also must lay to rest the myth that Afrika had no writing – Afrika invented writing! Afrika invented civilization! Ancient Egypt was ruled by Afrikans who are responsible for all these achievements. This knowledge spread southward to Nubia and much later to the other parts of Afrika. There are monuments in different parts of Afrika that are visible evidence of this. On top of this, Timbuktu gave humanity its first university and there were manuscripts that survived up to this day that attest to this feat, but unfortunately, many of them were burned and destroyed by Islamic extremists just mere years ago during the “Al Qaeda” murderous rampage in Mali and environs. Turns out, these were just war games engineered by the West to destabilize the region so they could go in and loot the mineral wealth of that region. The more things change, the more they remain the same.

Then there’s another huge area where we lost our confidence: religion. Before the arrival of Europeans on a mission to colonize Afrika, we had our own spirituality, we knew of the existence of a supreme being and had a name for him/her: Mwari, Mudhimu, Mulimu, etc, there’s no group in Afrika that doesn’t have a name for this being. So, in order to subjugate us, all those belief systems were deemed “savage” and “heathen” – Christianity was forced upon us in order to control and to brainwash us. We were dissuaded from playing our drums, having our ancestor worship ceremonies and so forth. Imagine how much those Afrikans must have felt to be stripped of everything, their identity and culture: is it any wonder that we lack any confidence today?



It was ingrained in us that we were inferior, that our beliefs and practices were backward. The Afrikan psyche was destroyed but it is my firm belief that we can regain everything that was taken away from us. But, one has to be ready to do the work. And, there's a lot of work to be done!

A huge part of the work that needs to be done is writing! We have to write books about Afrikan Design so as to provide the younger generations with resources that they can reference. Western Design has volumes written by them for them, now it's time we write books for us, by us: FUBU. It's imperative that if we are to speak of Afrikan Design, we also have to provide the resources to guide the youth. This is what I heard mostly from young designers from home and those in the diaspora, especially after my **TED2013 Talk**: "Professor, you talk of us looking within, but when we do, we don't find anything." I realized there and then that it is an urgent need to create those resources. I had mooted a book project that I tentatively titled, "The Afrikan Design Textbook" that had piqued the interest of a major UK publisher, Thames and Hudson, but unfortunately, one of the co-writers who had signed on to the project passed away unexpectedly. That put some brakes on the project, but it is a much-needed project. It has to be a book on DESIGN in Afrika, all the design disciplines have to be represented. The idea was to have three writer editors then have essays submitted by designers from the different disciplines. A truly collaborative effort – the African way.

My very good friend, the Nigerian designer, Lemi Ghariokwu made a statement on his website blog: **"I AM NOT BLACK, I AM AFRIKAN"** which to me is the boldest statement of pride I've heard from an Afrikan artist in the public domain. He says:

**"My name is Lemi Ghariokwu and I am not black. I am an Afrikan.  
I do not call Indians brown or the Chinese**

**pale yellow or any color for that matter.**

**Why then should I be seen as 'A Black Man? I am not BLACK.**

**Strip the color from the label. I do not believe in labels but if you must label me please call me Afrikan. The fact that my skin is dark is a blessing. It's proof that I can endure tough situations and come out unscathed.**

**When the skin is stripped off, what color is the skeleton? Is it different from yours? I am a human being first, then I am Afrikan, born, bred and buttered in Lagos. I am proud of my culture. I am not ashamed to be seen as Afrikan because only I determine how you treat me.**

**I have broken free from the slavery mentality. I tell you my name is Lemi Ghariokwu and you call me Lemi Ghariokwu. Now, I am telling you I am not black, I am Afrikan and you must address me accordingly."**

There was a debate very recently on the PADI whatsapp group about some Black people (Afrikan Americans) taking issue with being referred to as "Afrikans" preferring instead the label, **Black Americans**. They have every right to making that choice, just as much as Lemi has every right to his own preference. From my vantage point, Lemi is the better off for his choice – he has the whole continent of Afrika to garner inspiration from and as his work attests, he does that incredibly well! He is a true Afrikan designer with an amazing body of work that is unapologetically Afrikan. Lemi is best known for the album covers he designed for the King of *Afro Beat*, Fela Anakulapo Kuti. Fela's music was also unapologetically Afrikan – biting social commentary and fearless attacks on government corruption – all sung in pidgin! Of course, he paid a heavy price as he suffered severe beatings and imprisonment for his militant stance, but he led the way for us woke Afrikans.

# *create local content*

*We are bombarded with Western standards of beauty and propaganda in every form of life – education, but mostly the media! We never see ourselves on TV (although to be fair, that is changing albeit very slowly with many countries encouraging the creation of local content – Nigeria is leading that charge with the much acclaimed “Nollywood”).*



He showed us that one can create their own genre of music and use their art to critique society and government corruption.

I give these examples to show what can happen when our artists have that unflinching confidence – they blaze new trails and become legends of their time. We used to have this confidence in pre-colonial times. Just look at the kingdoms of Afrika – the Ashante Kingdom, Nubia, the Baganda Kingdom, the Munhumutapa Kingdom that gave us the Great Zimbabwe, the Dogon, Timbuktu, Egypt... the list goes on. Those kingdoms were created by proud and confident Afrikans whose contributions still stand today as testimony to Afrika's creative genius. We gave the world mathematics, astronomy, the first university, and civilization itself! The only way to attain and regain that confidence is **SANKOFA**. We have to go back to our glorious past so that we can build a great future.

A very good example of that journey to the past is Zina Saro-Wiwa, daughter of Ken Saro-Wiwa, the slain environmental leader and poet of the Ogoni people of the Niger Delta, Nigeria. In place of a lecture that she was supposed to give in person at The Center for Afrikan Studies at UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles) this year, but couldn't due to COVID, she made a film presentation instead: **"Worrying The Mask: The Politics of Authenticity and Contemporaneity in the Worlds of African Art (2020)"**

It's a beautifully shot, hour-long film in which she decides to leave the comfort of her Brooklyn home to visit her ancestral home – which she had left as a child. A successful journalist, this time she says she was simply looking for culture and she finds plenty; authentic, pure and hardly influenced or touched by the West. She

zeroes in on one Promise Lagiri, a sculptor and carver of masks whom she likes a lot both as a person and as a superlative artist. "There's a refinement and potency in his work, a sense of connection to something profound that is revealed in its lines and proportions. I consider this breed of contemporary traditional Ogoni art hugely important. It is the product of a fascinating history." That history was preserved by Geography – the Ogoni live in the delta far from the coastal areas. "So, whilst other coastal people have experienced generations of Christianity and Western education, the Ogoni have maintained far more of our pre-colonial culture than many other peoples of the area and this is evident in the uniqueness and potency of our artistic production." She explains further why she loves Lagiri's work, "His sculptures are living embodiment of a connection to land and environment... they are a vivid part of our Art ecology encoding something powerful." In this lecture she exudes pride and confidence in her culture and the history and artistic excellence of her people – an excellence that is purely African.

In conclusion, I offer another video to bolster my oft-held contention that Afrikans are naturally endowed with rhythm and they can use this rhythm in their work. We all know that you can create rhythm with the way you design: this could be typographic use in layouts, furniture layout in interiors, building layout in architecture, textile design in fashion, and so on and on. This rhythm is best illustrated in the clip **FOLI**. What you can do in music, dance or any other creative endeavor, you can translate to design. This way, our work will be imbued with Afrika and we will most definitely regain that confidence and resourcefulness in our work. Asé.

# Creative Confidence in Afrika; a source of self-identity and resourcefulness.



**By Sam Nii Adjaidoo**  
*Interim PADI Board  
Member 2020*



In February, 2020, I was blessed to be in the midst of good spirits in a creative space full of diverse cultures and identities. Graced with the opportunity, as a young design advocate and a panel member to share ideas with global design giants like ico-D executives, IF Design Foundation and some of the leaders of PAN Afrikan Design Institute such as Prof Des Laubscher and Prof. Mafundikwa, it was a call in time, a historic evening towards the future of good design in Afrika.

Prof Mafundikwa, a renowned TED Talk speaker with an Afrika identity whose talks resonate the need to recognize our identity as Afrikans was symbolic in his regalia. He was not the only representational identity but the walls, textures and smiles on the faces of different shades of color and tones beamed with colorful reflections of light...this was home, yes this was Afrika. Not only did it feel awesome to be an Afrikan, it was also a blissful moment to share our story to the world of design that our identity as Afrikans is not only an outward display of colourful visualizations but a reflection of an inward awareness that we are to evolve.

Hearing such Afrikan voices in a room bathed in hope and confidence, a candle lit in me as I listened and observed the international opinions on design in Afrika. The lights were soft on the eyes but so bright and clear; the time had come for us Afrikans to gift the world with our culture, diversity, courage, kindness and colour. This time, it will be through our design philosophies, values, styles, processes, products and services.

Globally, we live in uncertain times and living in Afrika gives you a vivid collage of the uncertainties. Our cities are getting choked, our people are dying due to poor healthcare, poverty, corruption and insecurities stare us in the face. Our streets are unsafe and our future leaders are unclear about our identity as Afrikans due to the silent infiltration of foreign influences through imported educational systems. Even in this context,

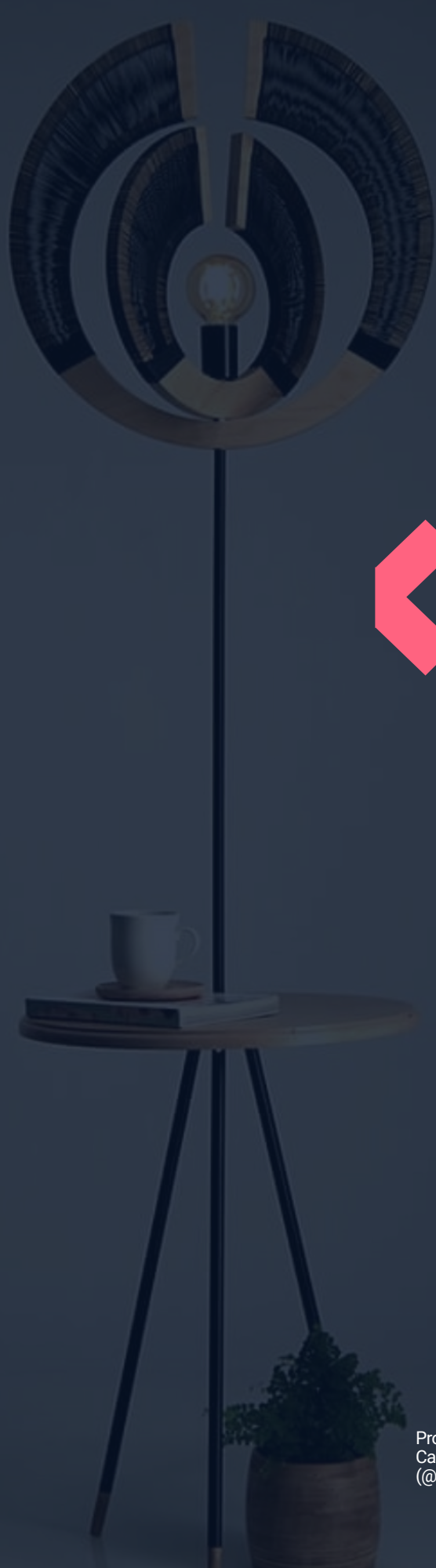
**“This has been  
and will forever  
be our identity:  
diverse in one,  
resourceful,  
resilient and  
ubuntu”**

we have what it takes to exhibit our confidence as Afrikans.

With my little experience in design business and education over the past decade, to design is to evolve, and to develop creative confidence is to be bold and free to adapt and respond to one's daily problems. Based on these definitions, it is evident that the Afrikan has his/her roots in design. Afrikans still strive to do well even in difficult times, revealing the fact that we are resilient, courageous and hard-working individuals who seek to solve our own problems and evolve our continent. We are faced by the turbulent effects of today's global economy with corruption rife in our lands but we are not dead yet, that is something vital to note: our skin is thick and tough to weather the storms; to change the narrative. We need not be fooled to think otherwise!


We are raised to be creative enough to feed ourselves, confident enough to get up every day and face the world not knowing what will bring us joy at sunset. We are born to fight, evolve and solve our wicked problems. Afrikans can get more to laugh about, create more innovations and be highly inspired to change the narrative about Afrika with our own impactful stories. The good news is good design is the only way to lead us to the future we seek; **a continent with happier, healthier and confident people**, this I believe is the essence of our great ancestors and we must rise to sing their songs now.



A modern floor lamp with a circular, textured shade and a small table with a cup and books. The lamp has a dark blue frame and a circular shade with a textured, woven appearance. The table is a small, round, light-colored wooden surface on a tripod base. On the table, there is a white cup on a saucer and a stack of books. A small potted plant is on the floor next to the table. The background is a dark blue gradient with various geometric shapes: a white semi-circle at the top, a blue chevron pointing right on the left, a pink chevron pointing left on the right, a white semi-circle at the bottom right, and a pink circle at the bottom left.

This is our time as  
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both young and old  
to leverage on our  
diversity; be it  
cultures, languages,  
philosophies and  
human capital, to  
design better  
solutions for our  
communities and  
spaces.

Product Design by  
Candice Lawrence  
(@modern\_gesture)



We must agree and be inspired with Sir David Adjaye, British-based architect of Ghanaian descent that ***"Africa is an extraordinary opportunity at the moment."*** Afrika has always been a source of pioneering innovations and stories. This has been and will forever be our identity: ***diverse in one, resourceful, resilient and ubuntu.*** This is our time to explore and make good use of such great opportunity; contributing to making Afrika and the world a better place.

This is our time, to not only design with our natural resources or our rich history which has been distorted and misrepresented, but a time to develop ourselves and bless the world with all that we are and have. This is our time as Afrikan designers, both young and old to leverage our diversity; be it cultures, languages, philosophies and human capital, to design better solutions for our communities and spaces. We do not lack the resources for good design. We need to nurture our creative potential and serve our own as good citizens of the continent. We all have what it takes to design a better Afrika and share that story with the world.

Our ancestors had the will to change and improve on their stories in creating healthier communities; their Afrikan blood still runs in our veins. From our mud (thatch-roofed) houses to today's sky-rises, from our rich ideograms like Adinkra and Nsibidi symbols, from our subsistent farming to today's large agricultural exports to Europe and the Americas, from our calabash cup to today's interior products, this is our time to aspire for greatness, for we have what it takes to make our continent and the world smile again.

**At PADI ADD, 2020, Johannesburg, the experience and voices in the room had one message: all are born with the capacity to learn, adapt and evolve. Afrika, this is our time to rise as good local/global citizens, to share with the world what we are blessed to be; AFRIKANS!!!**

# Reflections on Afrika Design Day 2020



*By Dr. Vikki Eriksson  
Interim PADI Board  
Member 2020*

In today's world we do not often have time to pause. To pause, listen, think and discuss that which is most dear to us. For me, that would be seeing how design can play a part in shaping inclusive and responsive policies, systems and civic services. I believe that we have a responsibility to those around us to ensure that the frameworks that support their development and govern their access to needed services are accessible and appropriate. Design, as a process, is less and less concerned with the triviality of novel products and frivolous aesthetic pursuits. Instead, design offers an opportunity to find contextually appropriate solutions to complex problems - that acknowledge and celebrate the human element. The 2019 Afrika Design day filled me with both optimism and joy. Optimism - because I was privileged to hear the opinions and thoughts of a new generation of Afrikan designers - and joy because I could share in the reflection and wisdom of my own design generation.





As I listened to young panel members at the Johannesburg Afrika Design Day celebrations, I felt a growing sense of excitement. These were thinkers, designers, makers and academics, who not only saw the potential of design in Afrika, but they were actively pursuing it and forging a new Afrikan design identity through their actions. This Afrikan design identity is not grounded in pattern, colour or shape. This identity speaks to a spirit of innovation across the continent, and an authentic understanding that all Afrikans must work together to ensure a prosperous future.

The ingenuity that comes from working with limited resources and within a complex context, and the spirit of community which permeates Afrikan innovation are contributing factors to what I believe could be the principles of our Afrikan design identity:

**Design which celebrates humanity, not ego.**

**Design which includes authentic communities, not just stakeholders.**

**Design which is inspired by tradition and indigenous knowledge, not only trends.**

**Design which thrives in complexity, not in conformity.**



**Design which praises relevance, not merely uniqueness.**

**Design which works in harmony with nature, not in opposition to nature.**

**Design which leverages the potential of technology, not the limitations thereof.**

**Design from Afrika, not for Afrika.**

As I see it, the biggest challenge is to inspire Afrikan designers and makers to apply their creative thinking to the challenges being experienced on the continent. Professional designers have the ability to share their knowledge with local communities, thus empowering change-agents within these communities to explore their own ideas and solutions. The battle against hunger, poverty, inequality and disease is one such contextual challenge. But this battle can only be won if affected individuals and communities are part of the process. Creative confidence can be ignited through collaboration and engagement, and the fear of failure can be replaced with the courage to experiment creatively, to learn and to flourish. A safe, nurturing environment is where creative experiments are encouraged, and there trusted leaders can be catalysts to set the creative spark in all Afrikans ablaze. The speakers at DD2019 provided me with the assurance of being trusted design guardians – who will nurture Afrika into its vivid future.

**...actively  
pursuing  
and forging  
a new Afrikan  
design identity  
through our  
actions.**



# My Experience at the Afrika Design Day 2020



**By Peter Ekanem**  
*Interim PADI Board  
Member 2020*

The late Nigerian Novelist, Poet, Professor, and Author, Chinua Achebe, once said, that until the lions have their historians, stories of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.

As I share my experience at Afrika Design Day I couldn't help but bring up that proverb not only because it reminded me of the need to tell our own stories, but more importantly because storytelling is part of our culture, part of who we are, how we learn, how we teach, and how we project our identity as people.

For years Afrika has been known for wars, military coups, poverty, dictatorship, unstable economies, disease, and wildlife. This is a common story told by the media in some parts of the world, a story many of us are all too familiar with, and sadly the story they want us to believe about ourselves, but this is only one side of the story, and in some cases not the true story at all.

So for us as designers and design enthusiasts under the umbrella of the Pan Afrikan Design Institute (PADI) having seen the bias and having recognised that there is more to our vast, beautiful continent than that; we realised that we are a strong positive people – we are makers, creators, inventive, assertive, and resilient.

Even though we see and acknowledge some of our challenges, we also see tremendous opportunities and have come together to solve our own problems and to tell our own stories using design as a tool, because we know that our time is now!

That was part of the mind-set with which the PADI ADD event was marketed and with which I participated. It was a week-long event which began on the 17th of February and culminated in grand style on the 21st of February in Johannesburg, South Africa.

PADI Afrika Design Day in my view was the day for us as designers in Afrika to tell our own story to the rest of the world and to celebrate design in Afrika, whether as visual designers, product designers, fashion designers, interior architects, and so on; and how we have and can contribute to solve some of the socio-economic problems facing us as a people in the continent, so as to restore the dignity of our people, and improve the quality of life for all. Which is why I was so delighted as a privileged participant and representative of PADI from Nigeria at the grand event in Johannesburg SA to showcase a few selected works of designers from Nigeria.

When I was informed that I would be a part of the panel discussion session I was very excited and a bit nervous at the same time. Excited because I knew being part of the panel would give me the opportunity to share what was in my heart. Nervous because, I would be sitting next to two of my favourite design heroes: the legendary designers Saki Mafundikwa and Felix O. Dartey. It was one of those moment you wish you sat in the pews to learn and take it all in but you have the call of duty placed on you to speak, and am glad I took the opportunity. As I sat in the panellist seat and looked through the crowd and saw the beaming eyes of people who had come from various countries outside of Afrika, all genders and races, I remembered the words of Kwame Nkrumah, who once said,

**“I am not African because I was born in Africa but because Africa was born in me.”**

I could see unity in theirs and was convinced beyond reasonable doubt that we all wanted the same thing. We all wanted to tell the world that we have something to put on the table. Something in us that people in other parts of the world can learn and benefit from.

The panel session featured some members of PADI, IID, and as well as Ico-D: Saki Mafundikwa, Sam Adjaidoo, Juliet Kavishe, Ana Masut with Felix O. Dartey as chair and moderator.

During the session I had the opportunity to share my perspective on the impact of design economy and of particular interest to me was the question on how design can help meet the UN sustainable goals through design. That question brought back memories of the journey to becoming part of PADI.

Education has always been an area I take keen interest in. As someone who has witnessed the impact of education in our part of the world I really felt this is an area in which we are not doing enough and which design can really make tremendous impact for good.

I shared my perspective and also pointed out that for us to achieve the sustainable development goals and for us to really develop our Afrikan people we must do it by design. Starting point is to consider what Afrika has and tap into our **Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS)** and identify ways in which our people have contributed and can contribute to the development of human society and how that can help develop the continent further.



We must teach our people to value what they have and not see themselves as mere recipients rather as contributors so we can restore confidence in our identity as a people and do our part to improve the quality of life for all.

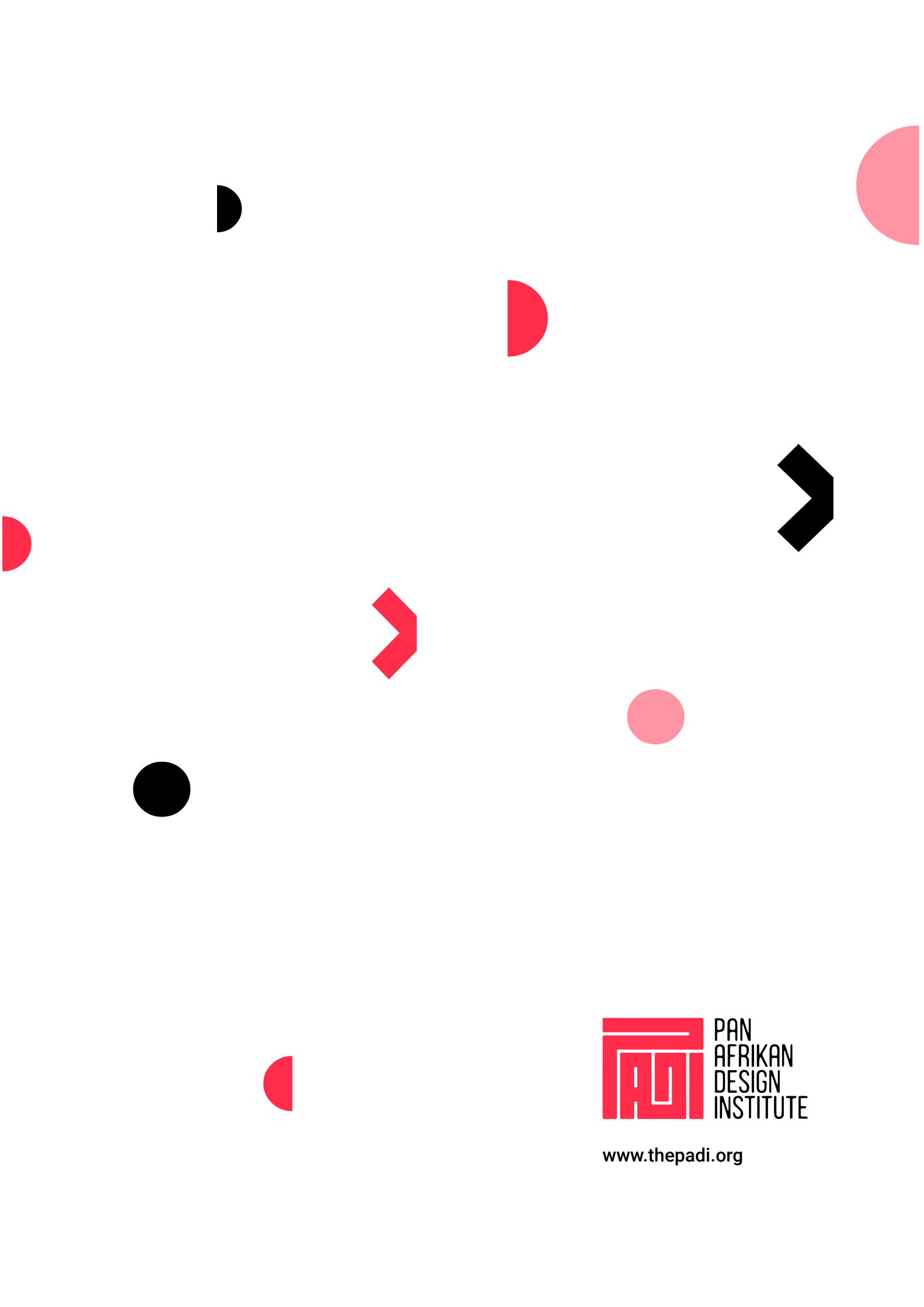
The event was indeed a memorable one for me as an individual and I believe for many others especially seeing the level of participation mostly of designers from different parts of the world coming together to listen, learn, be a part of the event and showing great interest in what we are doing through PADI and lending their support in diverse ways which tells me our time is now!

**"Africa's story has been written by others; we need to own our problems and solutions and write our story". President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, 2013.**

There is no doubt that as designers - whether visual, product, fashion, or interior, etc.. we are all storytellers. Storytelling is part of our Afrikan culture, part of who we are, and part of how we learn, teach, and project our identity as a people.

That is why we as designers of Afrikan descent must celebrate the Afrikan Design Days because we recognise that as Afrikans with the spirit of Ubuntu, we through our contributions can improve the quality of life for all through design.

The PADI Afrika Design Day held in Johannesburg on February 21 was the a grand event of a week long program celebrating design in Afrika that was held throughout the continent with individual events organised in various countries by different chapters of PADI to celebrate design from the Afrikan perspective. It was a well-timed event in my perspective because the year 2020 incidentally also marks the anniversary of the year of Afrika.



[www.thepadi.org](http://www.thepadi.org)