

Musée des Arts Décoratifs adds SA designer's work to permanent collection

Thabisa Mjo of Johannesburg-based product design studio, Mash T. Design Studio, has become the first South African designer to have her work form part of the permanent collection at the renowned Musée des Arts Décoratifs (MAD) in Paris, France.



Mjojo cabinet

The Museum of Decorative Arts was founded in 1905 and its permanent collection is dedicated to the exhibition and preservation of the decorative arts. The museum houses over 150,000 objects that epitomise the art of living and illustrate the heights of craftsmanship.

The museum's collection stretches from the Middle Ages through to modern times, and includes contemporary pieces by the likes of legendary designers such as Le Corbusier and Philippe Starcke.



Tutu 2.0 lamp

MAD has acquired two of Mjo's pieces: the Tutu 2.0 lamps and an eye-catching Mjojo cabinet.

Both pieces came to the museum's attention because they were part of an exhibition of Mjo's work at the Bonne Espérance Gallery, located in the centre of Paris, which ran from 19 June to 10 August 2019.

Bonne Espérance Gallery showcases work that is unique for its originality and diversity, and represents artists and designers hailing from the creative geography of South Africa and its neighbouring countries, Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana and Namibia.

This is not the first time that Mjo's work has been noticed internationally. Her products are featured in Nando's restaurants across the globe. In 2019, she curated an exhibition of her own and other designer pieces at Milan Design Week, an initiative that was sponsored by Nando's and mentored by Nando's Design Programme creative director, Tracy Lynch.

Mjo first rose to local fame by jointly winning the first Nando's Hot Young Designer (HYD) talent search, a competition that is now in its third iteration, with a new winner to be announced in November 2020. Mjo was chosen as the inaugural HYD winner for her Tutu 2.0, a lamp inspired by *xibelani*, the traditional garment worn by Tsonga women. It is this very same piece that has been acquired by MAD, Paris. The Tutu 2.0 then went on to win the Design Indaba's 'Most Beautiful Object in South Africa' award in 2018.



#DesignIndaba2018: Thabiso Mjo's Tutu 2.0 light voted Most Beautiful Object in SA

26 Feb 2018



The second piece acquired by MAD, Paris, the Mjojo cabinet, has a shape inspired by a brand of commonly used vertical water storage tanks called JoJo Tanks. But it is also play on the Xhosa word *umjojo*, which can be loosely translated to mean something that makes one shy away from attention.

This word is the complete opposite of her intention with the cabinet, says Mjo, because the Mjojo "invites people to look at it because it is so wacky. It's so interesting to me to see other people being intrigued by this wacky cabinet, because for me, it was just this outlandish idea that I had, and really I wanted to satisfy my own curiosity to see if it could work."



Nando's Hot Young Designer Talent Search 2020 finalists revealed

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"I am completely thrilled to have my work represented on the international stage and as part of an important permanent collection, following my earlier exhibition at Bonne Espérance," states Mjo.

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