

TOTEMISM

memphis meets africa

A Design Indaba project curated by Li Edelkoort,
presented by Woolworths



A BETTER WORLD THROUGH CREATIVITY



WOOLWORTHS

EDELKOORT EXHIBITIONS

CALL FOR ENTRIES

**Please send your submissions via WeTransfer to Leanie van der Vyver
at leanie@interactiveafrica.com**

deadline: 15 January, 2013

Over the past few months, here and there, small signs have emerged that show a renewed interest in the Memphis design movement from the 1980's. Somehow it seems that this revival with a taste for bolder colours is already influencing the most avant garde designers who create citations irreverently. The Italian master Ettore Sottsass would have agreed; Memphis, he said, "is everywhere and for everyone". Yet he also is known for saying that Memphis was "like a hard drug" and therefore one couldn't take too much of it!

The hunch I have about the revival of a Memphis-style is fired by new the colours used by Scholten and Baijings and the humorous masks by Bertjan Pot, as well as a chance encounter I had at London Design Week with colourful glass stacking by a brand called Rebay – they simply buy coloured glass plates and bowls and layer them in a wonderful homage to the Memphis movement.

Sottsass founded Memphis in December 1981 and named it after a song by Bob Dylan. The pharaonic connotations did shape the movement to some extent, infusing it with historical references. They desired to break with Modernism's industrial functionalism and the Italian way of glamorous and pompous design. They wanted once to create decorative arts and therefore combined art deco inspirations with Pop-Art, street art and kitchen kitsch from the 1950's. The group included Alessandro Mendini, Adrea Branzi, Michele de Lucchi, Matteo Thun, Shiro Kurumata, Michael Graves, Javier Mariscal and many other designers from different countries. They set themselves free with colourful and patterned laminates, historical form, wild animal materials, printed glass, loud celluloid, neon tubes and metal plates finished with spangles and glitter. They revindicated the fact that design was not for eternity and could be just for fun, adhering to the principles of Pop-Art. The colourful furniture was sensational and considered bizarre, once even described as a blend of Bauhaus and Fischer-Price.

The movement coincided with the reign of disco dancing and pop icons like Grace Jones dressed and moved like Memphis in loud colour-blocked outfits (already making a major comeback in fashion). Jones was photographed by her then-lover, the graphic artist Jean-Paul Goude, in excessively graphic style, cutting up her length and limbs to become a totem of desire. Sometimes she would be performing dressed like a gorilla in her world-renowned musical videos.

During the same roaring '80s, South Africa was still struggling with Apartheid and it was only in 1994 that the country became the democratic nation we now know and love. Straight after the end of Apartheid, young designers and decorators of the country set out to create a South African style using contemporary elements mixed with folkloric and iconic African aspects such as spears, zebra, wooden masks and African stools. Bars, restaurants and early boutique hotels invented this first funky South African design language.

However that movement was quickly saturated and the South African design community turned to arts and crafts and textiles in stead. These trends developed in a great outpour of rustic and organic style, including architecture, design and food, celebrating the well-being of South African life.

Now these long-lasting trends can gain inspiration from new ideas working with colour, craft and pattern, liberating themselves in pretty much the same way that Memphis did. Working on my trend forecasts for 2014 and beyond, it suddenly became very clear to me that there is a kinship between the Memphis ideas and South African style, between shantytown colours and Italian kitchen laminates from that period. The use of tactile matter, coloured patterns, wild animal skins, fringes and finishes, lightbulbs and neons are all reason to believe that we can expect an '80s inspired revival of some magnitude.

YET WHAT MAKES THE MEMPHIS MOVEMENT SO AFRICAN IN FEELING?

I believe it is the stacking and layering of colour and materials that deliver a totemic quality to designs. One of the most iconic design objects ever is the Carlton Cabinet by Sottsass that looks and acts like a totem, with a strange African vibe, going in all directions and stretching out its arms to the world. Mendini's vases are also totemic constructions with an African echo.

Therefore in this PDF, we have pulled historical design references, contemporary citations and iconic African designs together to create mood boards to set the vibe, forcing us to reconsider having fun while working! We want to create a buzz of international magnitude that will be able to travel the design world and reach out to other continents that are also fond of fantasy, like South America and southern Asia. We would like you to take these inspirations for what they are, just inspirations! Feel free to toss them around and toy with them...

Keep in mind to oversize your pieces, to use African pattern wherever you can, and to use black and white or animal skins and patterns almost as neutrals. The use of local matter should be encouraged such as grasses, earth and mohair and the use of local customs could be revisited. Especially the potjie culture will be a focus point to draw from, redesigning pots, stoves, plates and bowls as well as cutlery; with the colour black as a guiding principle and with heavier steel and recycled aluminium as prime materials.

Textile will keep on talking with wilder patterns, stronger colours and nobler fibres. Especially rugs will make a remarkable comeback, acting as oversized art pieces for our floors. Nomadic influences will turn to portable and transportable items with tray tables, folding furniture, blankets and cushions.

**Stack, store, build and construct new African totems and thus create icons that are at the forefront of the design discipline; the world is looking to Africa to be inspired!
Like slaves to the rhythm!***

Lidewij Edelkoort

November 7th 2012 (the morning of Obama's victory)

*** also the title of Grace Jones' seventh album (1985)**

DESIGN BY RODRIGO ALMEIDA



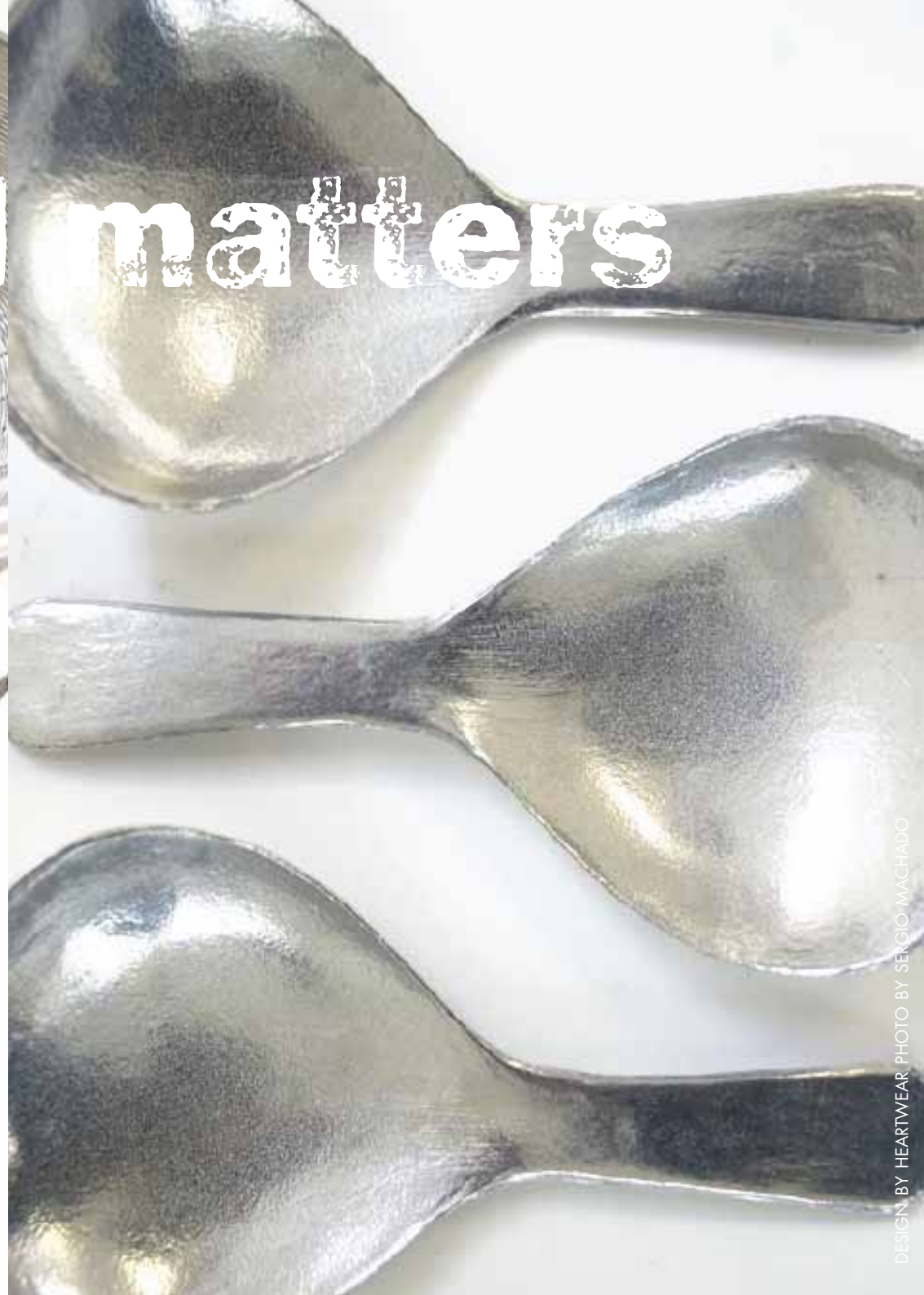
an african identity

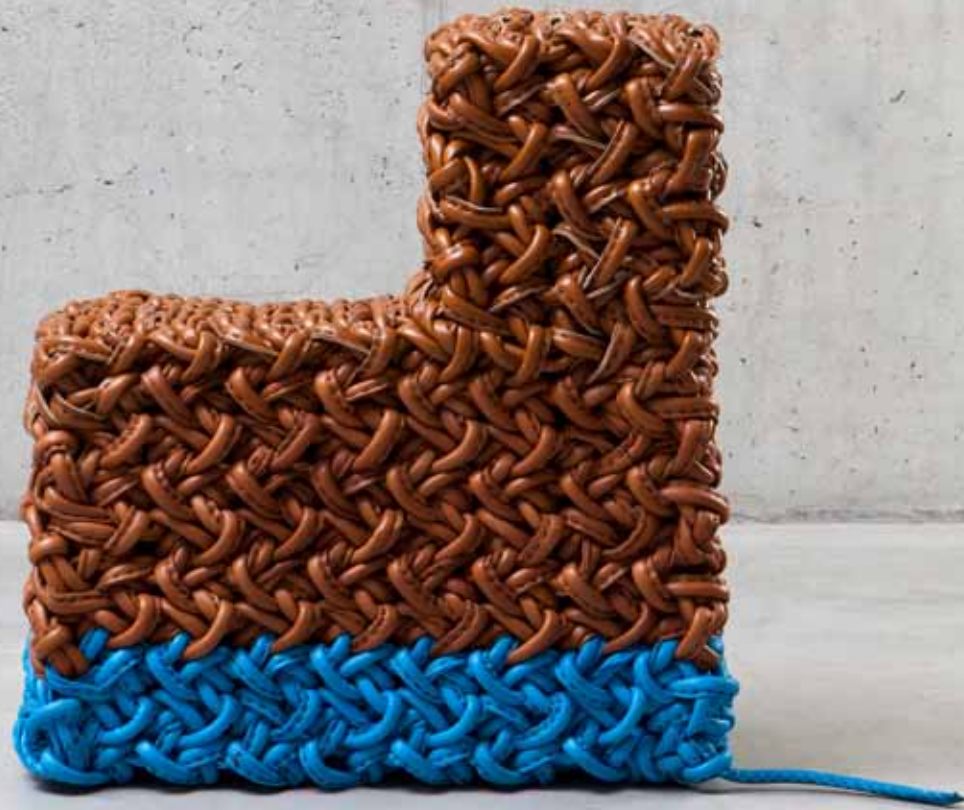
DESIGN BY BERTJAN POT



handmade items

recycled matters





fetishistic form



of accumulated beauty



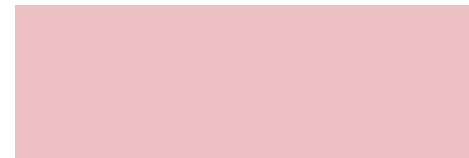
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PANTONE 638 C



PANTONE 5845 C



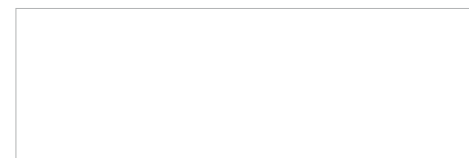
PANTONE 693 C



PANTONE 172 C



PANTONE 492 C



WHITE



assembling patterns



PANTONE 7404 C



PANTONE 423 C



PANTONE 484 C



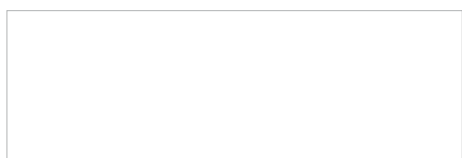
PANTONE 653 C



PANTONE 5763 C



PANTONE 426 C



WHITE



form follows fantasy



ENJOY!

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