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product design



COVER

# PRODUCT DESIGN

Expand Designs: Ifeanyi Oganwu talks art, design and Africa

## Tell us about your studio, Expand Design

My operation is quite slim and retains a startup attitude. The concept behind Expand is borrowed from the Expanded Arts movement of the sixties and seventies when this group of artists practiced across disciplines in order to open up new possibilities and modes of expression. A typical scenario within this group would involve a music composer making sculpture or a vice versa. I've adopted this approach in order to develop a multidisciplinary studio practice working with several specialists from a range of industries. It also gives me a lot of flexibility to incorporate multiple technologies into the making process without the need for a large physical infrastructure

## What is your design philosophy?

I aim to use the least means possible to express the relationship between a material and its encounter with a given typology at the moment in time.

## Your designs have caught the attention of both the art and design worlds, what inspires you?

I'm inspired by conversations as well as visual data, I find travelling very rewarding so I spend as much time as possible taking in art and being outdoors. It's been noted that you work with specialized manufacturers as opposed to big brands, why? The big brands uphold the twentieth century notion of industrial production which has several advantages as well as limitations. I'm quite happy to retain the experimental spirit of my practice while staying open to a dialogue that explores the areas where both cultures intersect.

## What new projects are you working on?

I'm always excited about developing new projects as they provide a space to revisit previous challenges and to invent new ones, both of which contribute to the studio's evolution. At the moment I'm exploring pattern and interference with my French gallery, developing a range of wearable structures in-house and working on a large interactive installation composed of planar surfaces for a commission in Asia. I'm also thrilled to be collaborating with a pair of European textile houses to produce new collections of soft furnishings.

## Do you have any future projects lined up in Africa?

Over the past year I've been developing a solo show concept with a Lagos-based curator. I very much looking forward to seeing our work materialise in the near future.

## What do you think is the future of design in Africa?

International exhibitions such as Vitra Design Museum's 'Making Africa', where I'm presenting my Splice chair, successfully break down the distinction between the creative disciplines to present new forms of engagement in art, architecture and urbanism. There's certainly a future in this multilayered approach to making aspects of the everyday and built environment unique experiences.

