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DESIGN

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jewellery designer*

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From above: Ifeanyi Oganwu; the Cityscapes ring; the Splice chair

A FUTURISTIC CRAFT

In his work Nigerian London-based artist and designer Ifeanyi Oganwu fuses digital technology, craftsmanship and material culture

“I’m inspired by the everyday as well as the extraordinary, including travel, art and typologies,” says Ifeanyi Oganwu, a Nigerian born architect currently based in London and founder of Expand Design Ltd, a company that operates at the intersections of art, architecture, design and technology. Known for his minimalist and futuristic pieces, Oganwu’s modernist vision draws from his education at the Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago; the Architectural Association, London and Columbia University in New York. He considers himself a “world citizen” who is constantly on the road drawing from a wide range of cultural and artistic influences. He’s collaborated with the design studio of designer Hussein Chalayan, the architectural firms of John Ronan and Zaha Hadid as well as the structural engineering firm AKT II.

“Growing up in Nigeria, alongside my father’s architecture and urban planning practice, I had an early desire to pursue a creative career as an architect,” says. “As I teenager, I was passionate enough about the subject to spend time in his studio where I was able to observe and learn directly. I enjoyed the collaborative aspect of practice and dreamt of working across many disciplines.” Expand Design Ltd, which is founded in 2008, serves as “a conduit to explore and realise projects driven by digital technology and craftsmanship as well as material culture.” His work is at once sculptural, functional and adapted to the human scale. “The projects I work on range from the architectural scale through to furniture and objects, installation and jewellery,” he adds.

Of particular fascination to Oganwu are aerodynamic forms that appear in many of his creations. There’s ‘Splice’, an aluminium stool, which was exhibited at the Vitra Design Museum during the *Making Africa: A Continent of Contemporary Design* exhibition in 2015, and the ‘Contoured Crater Desk’, which has a comma shape and is made from 50 slices of multi-ply birch that stretch amidst two stainless steel blades. “I’m inspired by investigating how typologies are morphed or extended,” he adds. “Central to this is the genealogical specificity of typologies and how they are marked and have evolved over time.”

Upcoming projects include a collaboration with Elisabetta Cipriani Gallery and several private commissions. “I plan to extend the Cityscapes collection of jewellery for larger works in new metals, revisiting the studio catalogue of project to reimagine the current proposals in new materials,” he explains. “I am also carrying out an extensive research on metal printing, together with a colleague. We expect that this will create opportunities to work at a larger scale of production.”

Ifeanyi Oganwu’s work will be on view at Elisabetta Cipriani Gallery during PAD London (30 September to 6 October) ■



WORDS: REBECCA ANNE PROCTOR; ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF IFEANYI OGANWU