



Droog at Decameron. Conceito: FirmaCasa

SHOP DESIGN TO DECOR

Explore Rua Oscar Freire, São Paulo's equivalent to 5th Avenue. Coffee at Santo Grão Café (number 413). Next-door is American Apparel (number 433) where I bought a charcoal stonewashed snoody that I will never wear. Lacoste (number 678), Dior (number 914) and the airy, below-ground atrium Havaianas store (number 1116), designed by Isay Weinfeld.

Rua Oscar Freire is not the only place for high fashion. São Paulo has some of the world's most astoundingly posh shopping centres called "shoppings" by Paulistanos. For interiors Al. Gabriel Monteiro da Silva has the country's most exciting design offerings. FirmaCasa's design studio is walled in by a Mother In Law's Tongue carapace and across the road Conceito: FirmaCasa is their delightful furniture showroom. The Decameron showroom stocks their own brand's furniture as well as Dutch brand Droog in a magical shipping container structure, designed by Marcio Kogan. The low-tech, neon pink and orange structure opens at both ends creating a breezy sunlit cloister and garden.

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Decameron, Al. Gabriel Monteiro da Silva 2136, www.decamerondesign.com



ZAHIRA ASMAL

TEXT ALEXANDER MATTHEWS



As a nation constantly looking ahead, embroiled in the latest outrages that shape our angry news cycle, SA doesn't often pause to take stock. The World Cup cost billions, dominated conversations, changed landscapes and lives. But little over two years later, it is a fading memory. It's just as well, then, that we've been blessed with Zahira Asmal who has assembled thought leaders, editors and academics to explore and evaluate the tournament's legacy. The result, launched last month at the halfway mark between the South African and Brazilian World Cups, is *Reflections and Opportunities: Design, Cities and the World Cup* — an ambitious and incisive assessment of the tournament's impact on our nation.

The idea for the book first took root when Asmal was assisting London-based architect David Adjaye on his book *African Metropolitan Architecture*. She became "really intrigued about apartheid's influence on our design and architecture and separation so I wanted to do a report on that". While working on the ExperimentaDesign Bienal in Lisbon she encountered several media editors who asked what SA was doing to prepare for the World Cup. "I said, 'let's find out'," she says, realising that she could combine the two projects as government had made clear its intention to use the World Cup to address apartheid's legacy. She was excited by the organisers' desire to use the World Cup for "nation-building, nation branding and infrastructure," she says.

Asmal's research on the World Cup's preparations had shown that "design had touched everything, from graphic elements to signage on the streets to tourism and how people were being welcomed to the country, to the actual stadiums." With support from SA Tourism, Brand SA and other partners, she hosted media titles from across the world, including *Design Week*, *Wallpaper** and *Novum* in the run up to, during, and after the World Cup.

The features written by these journalists, covering everything from graphic design to architecture and urban planning form the foundation of the "reflections" component of the book. "On one side I wanted this media perspective, international and local, and on the other to ground the information and give it

perspective from an academic point of view." Four essays by leading design thinkers such as Edgar Pieterse and Henning Rasmuss assess the opportunities created by the World Cup, such as nation brand repositioning and the implementation of integrated transport networks.

"The point of the book is that the World Cup is a departure point; it's certainly not an end but rather the start of many things. I urge South Africans to see it that way," says Asmal. "The World Cup had shown us that designers worked closely with government to not only deliver this event but to re-imagine our cities. So how can we apply that same kind of gusto and energy to our other mega projects like housing and education?"

"I found that while working on the book, that firstly there was huge interest internationally for what South Africans were doing — the government as well as designers — and those stories needed to be told." This realisation led her to establish DESIGNING_SOUTHAFRICA, a "curatorial information advocacy platform" with a continuously updated website featuring multimedia resources about design's intersections with the World Cup. "Secondly, I realised that government feels that we don't have the design expertise here; and we do, but designers feel they don't have access to government. So I want to be that bridge. By the end of this year I want to be able to take a manifesto to government and to designers to say, DESIGNING_SOUTHAFRICA will be that platform."

As Brazil's World Cup and Olympics loom, Asmal has also turned her energies westward. She says many Brazilians have no knowledge of SA "so how do we as informed people share our country with Brazilians?" The launch of DESIGNING_BRAZIL aims to answer that — a platform she hopes will share South Africa's knowledge and experiences with the Brazilians, fostering dialogue for the mutual benefit of the two countries.

A Nation Under Construction, Asmal's exhibition on design and the World Cup, is on show until 15 July as part of the British Council's International Architecture & Design Showcase. Reflections and Opportunities can be purchased from designingsouthafrica.com/book for R300.