

# DREAM TEAMS

As collaborations gain popularity IN TODAY'S creative circles, A TRIO OF homegrown partnerships SHOW THE IMPACT that such pairings CAN HAVE ON global design

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## PROJECT: LINEAGE CABINET

**Collaborators**  
Wiid Design x Lionel Smit

### Connection

Furniture designer and manufacturer Laurie Wiid van Heerden and famed local artist Lionel Smit first collaborated three years ago on a signature Wiid Design bench that was shown at GUILD 2014. Painted by Smit with his highly sought-after large-scale faces, it sold before the show even opened.

'I love being involved in something that takes me out of my usual environment and places my work in a different context,' says Smit. 'It makes you see the work differently.' Following the success of their first venture, the two are currently collaborating on their third bench, having recently completed the Lineage cabinet.

### Creation

While Smit applies thick layers of paint with varied visual texture, Van Heerden sees to the technical specs, covering all design details with precision and in turn giving Smit the freedom of artistic expression. Lineage, a cork-and-steel cabinet weighing close to 550kg (it dissects into three parts for easy installation), finds its harmony in a historical narrative – gables reference Cape Dutch architecture, while the Cape Malay women painted on the aluminium doors speak of the Western Cape's rich cultural heritage.

'I've always been fascinated by cabinets,' Van Heerden says. 'In Europe, they are

heirloom pieces that can be viewed in museums, and are carved with so much symbolism in the imagery.' His idea to create one such collectible piece fashioned in a way that it would present itself as an artwork in a grand entrance hall resulted in three-and-a-half months of fastidious design work before Smit was sent the doors on which to paint, having to swap out his usual oil colours for car paint.

'I enjoy Laurie's approach of taking old ideas and recreating them into something new,' says Smit. 'I like the cork on this scale – it becomes almost sculptural on its own.'

### Debut

Lineage will make its grand debut this year at Southern Guild's inaugural show in its new GUILD location at Cape Town's V&A Waterfront Silo district, and will be on view for sale from June to August. [southernguild.co.za](http://southernguild.co.za); [wiiddesign.co.za](http://wiiddesign.co.za); [lionelsmit.co.za](http://lionelsmit.co.za)

## PROJECT: PAKA HANGING LIGHT

**Collaborators**  
AAKS x Pichulik



### Connection

As a member of Design Network Africa, Ghanaian handbag designer Akosua Afriyie-Kumi of AAKS was offered mentorship time with South African jeweller Katherine-Mary Pichulik.

Although the five days spent together in Accra and Kumasi were geared to assist Afriyie-Kumi with systematic processes, pricing and marketing strategies for her new business, a meaningful friendship was struck between the two entrepreneurs, and a collaborative concept was hatched.

### Creation

'We both have an interest in interiors, and wanted to play with our individual methods and language to see what dialogue we could create,' says Pichulik. Combining their affinity for natural materials, the two developed a range of four hanging lights that would combine AAKS' raffia expertise with Pichulik's distinctive rope work. 'I love how Akosua has reinterpreted traditional Northern Ghanaian weaving methods and natural dyes in a modern way,' Pichulik says. 'She incorporates humour and an interesting play of proportions.'

Working with her weavers, Afriyie-Kumi developed the main structure of the lights and freighted them to South Africa, where Pichulik and her team decorated the bold surfaces with coils of blue and gold rope. 'I've always liked Pichulik's use of colour, and her work complements mine so well,' says Afriyie-Kumi. 'Through her, I've learnt the importance of getting to know my audience and adapting a style for different environments. She encourages me to have fun with my work.'

### Debut

The Paka Hanging Light premiered with Design Network Africa at Maison & Objet 2016 in Paris alongside three others from this collaboration, and it was an instant hit, selling immediately on opening day. There are plans to further develop the Kumasi light collection into modular totemic light assembly pieces that also play with proportion and colour. > [aaksonline.com](http://aaksonline.com); [pichulik.com](http://pichulik.com)

### THIS SPREAD, CLOCKWISE

#### FROM OPPOSITE PAGE

The Lineage cabinet by Lionel Smit x Laurie Wiid van Heerden of Wiid Design; Laurie Wiid van Heerden; Lionel Smit; Katherine-Mary Pichulik; Paka Hanging Light by AAKS x Pichulik; Akosua Afriyie-Kumi of AAKS.



**PROJECT: AFREAKS**

**Collaborators**

**The Haas Brothers x Monkeybiz**

**Connection**

When LA-based Niki and Simon Haas of The Haas Brothers visited Cape Town in 2014, they came across the quirky beaded animals of non-profit organisation Monkeybiz. Even more impressive than the pieces' skilful construction were the creators behind them. 'Being hyper meticulous in our own material application, we could relate to the focus in Monkeybiz's process,' Niki says. 'We also recognised that the beading was undervalued in its current application.'

Fast-forward three-and-a-half years and 16 of these beaders are now known as the Monkeybiz Haas Sisters and form part of the Afreaks project, a design collaboration.

**Creation**

The Afreaks series, made up of mountains, mushrooms and make-believe animal-like characters, is designed by the twin brothers in LA, emailed to Monkeybiz in Cape Town and brought to life by South African artisans, with the characters 'dressed' by the Sisters' beading skills.

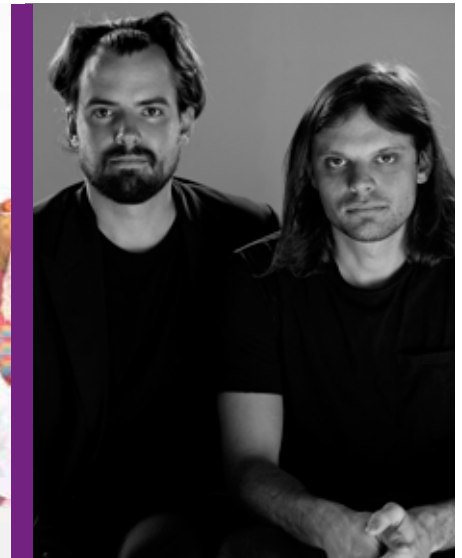
Says Monkeybiz manager Kate Carlyle, 'There has been an awakening of creativity in our team. New ideas and methods have emerged, some of which were initially mistakes but are now seen as techniques.' She talks of how the women, who had been beading at home and bringing ad hoc pieces in to Monkeybiz to sell, are now valued as world-class artists, receiving an almost permanent salary from the project. Niki adds, 'Collaborating with Monkeybiz has

opened our eyes to what can be achieved when individuals are empowered with the responsibility of expression.'

**Debut**

Afreaks showed for the first time at GUILD Design Fair 2015 in Cape Town, and the full series exhibited at Design Miami later that year. In 2016, the body of work formed part of Beauty-Cooper Hewitt Design Triennial at New York's Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, the opening of which was attended by some of the Monkeybiz Haas Sisters, who were visiting New York for the first time. If the opening night itself wasn't a career highlight for the team, then being photographed amid their exhibition with Beyoncé and Jay Z definitely was. □

**monkeybiz.co.za; thehaasbrothers.com**



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The Monkeybiz team; Simon (left) and Niki (right) Haas of The Haas Brothers; animal-like sculptures and furniture pieces from the Afreaks project by The Haas Brothers x Monkeybiz.