

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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*Hotel Ivoire, Abidjan (Cote d'Ivoire), designed by Fenchel and Thomas Leiterdorf, 1962-70
Photography: © Iwan Baan*

Architecture of Independence – African Modernism **February 16 – May 27, 2017**

Nearly 80 buildings explore the use of modernist architecture as a tool for expressing national identity in five Sub-Saharan African countries.

New York, NY, January 10, 2017 – The Center for Architecture is pleased to announce the first NYC showing of ***Architecture of Independence – African Modernism***, opening on **Thursday, February 16, 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM**. Featuring nearly 80 buildings, the exhibition explores the complex history and legacy of architecture in Ghana, Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya, and Zambia during the 1960s and 1970s. Curated by **Manuel Herz** and organized by the **Vitra Design Museum**, *Architecture of Independence* includes contemporary photography by renowned photographer **Iwan Baan** and award-winning South African humanitarian photo-documentarian **Alexia Webster**.

Between 1957 and 1966, 32 countries – almost two thirds of all African nations – gained their independence from colonial powers. In these budding nations, including the five featured in this exhibition, technology and development, including modernist architecture, became tools of liberation and instruments for expressing national identity. The daring and ambitious designs of new buildings, from state banks to convention centers and stadiums, mirrored the optimism and aspirations of the newly liberated states.

While architecture served as a means of expressing a break from the colonial past and positioning themselves on the global stage, only a few local architects, including Pierre Goudiaby Atepa, Chiekh N’Gom, and Pierre Fakhoury, were actually commissioned to design these projects. The architects mainly came from Western countries, including former colonial powers England and France, the United States, Scandinavia, and Israel, and later Eastern Bloc nations like Poland, Hungary, and Yugoslavia. These contradictions reflect the complex nature of post-colonial construction, with myriad sources providing design services and planning expertise to these new nations in collaboration with local planning bureaus, builders, and designers.

Presenting over 700 photographs, as well as archival materials, historical photos, newspaper clippings, postcards, videos, plans, and sketches, *Architecture of Independence* documents the ambivalences of decolonization, its contradictions, and inconsistencies, but also its ambitions, aims, and aspirations.

The exhibition is based on the book project *African Modernism: Architecture of Independence* by Manuel Herz in cooperation with the Vitra Design Museum in Weil am Rhein, Germany.

Vitra Design Museum

RELATED EVENTS

Exhibition Opening

Thursday, February 16, 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Remarks by Manuel Herz, Curator, *Architecture of Independence*

Lecture – African Modernism: Iwan Baan

Wednesday, March 15, 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

With Iwan Baan, Photographer

Symposium – Architecture of Independence

Saturday, April 22, XX – XX

SPONSORS

This exhibition and the public program featuring Iwan Baan are supported as part of the Dutch Culture USA program by the Consulate General of the Netherlands in New York.



This exhibition has received funding through a grant from the Netherland-America Foundation.



This exhibition is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.



About the Center for Architecture

The Center for Architecture is the premier cultural venue for architecture and the built environment in New York City, informed by the complexity of the City's urban fabric and in dialogue with the global community. The Center shares a home with the AIA New York Chapter and has the unique advantage of drawing upon the ideas and experiences of practicing architects to produce thought-provoking exhibitions, informative public programs, and quality design education experiences for K-12 students. It also leads New York City's annual month-long architecture and design festival, Archtober. The Center for Architecture's aim is to further public knowledge about New York City architecture and architects, foster exchange and collaboration among members of the design, development, building, scholarly, and policy sectors, and inspire new ideas about the role of design in communities by presenting contemporary and practical issues in architecture and urbanism to a general audience. <http://cfa.aiany.org>