
Alice Cappelli

Social Enterprise ATELIER

IUAV International postgraduate degree

KIST + Umutako Iwaco

NYANZABIJOU

ATELIER RWANDA project

Co-creation. Regualification of Rwandan crafts

ELLES PEUVENT project



Social Enterprise ATELIER

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Social Design

In the beginning of 2013, I was invited by the *Atelier* cooperative to run a project aiming to create a new line of production for their collection. *Atelier* cooperative is a tailoring workshop, based in Florence, that works with vulnerable woman helping them out to improve their life through labour.

They wanted me to come up with a new project that could be associated to their exiting one, called *Penelope*. *Penelope* re-uses advertising banners made of 100% cotton commonly seen in the Florence streets (municipal law). This collection of the *Atelier* cooperative takes out the most beautiful pieces of the artwork of those banners but

discards other less interesting parts, as logos, slogans and other images.

Then I came up with the idea of creating a new line from *Penelope* scraps avoiding unnecessary waste, and hence, exploiting the entire banner for the two different collections.

I conceived the project through a didactic program workshop in which the woman could learn some topics of design process – from the concept to the final product taking into account the idea of brand.

The educational goal was to stimulate design thinking, skills and knowledge to each woman that attended the workshop. Tailoring

techniques and tools were used to decompose the artwork (logos, pictures, slogans) hiding the advertisement.

The backside of the banner was flipped out, creating a “new” pattern, becoming the actual side of products and at the same time it highlights the texture of the cotton.

The outcome is a household linens collection (bedcover, pillow, plaid, tablecloths). Each piece in the collection emphasizes the detail of the material and the beauty of the diverse tailoring techniques.

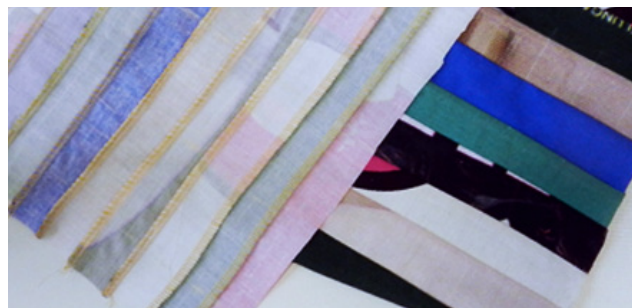
Eventually, the *Atelier* craftswoman had the opportunity to express themselves through their tools along

with design thinking principles that were applied during the workshop. Any single product developed in this project is more than a mere object. Its a source of inspiration that springs from the understandings of the design process of the product.

The outcome of the workshop was exhibited during the *Terra Futura* fair in Florence, between 17th-19th March.

Designer and Consultant in this project that took part in Florence, Italy. It was an *Esprit tre* project funded by Regione Toscana and Unione Europea.







IUAV International postgraduate degree

Education

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The goal of the International postgraduate Degree in Design for Cooperation and Sustainable Development was to teach future professionals in international design cooperation field and consultants for aid programmes. The Master had intention to convey know-how in the manufacturing reality of developing countries in the world, by exploiting traditional local craftsmanship and the natural materials already present in the environment. Didactic activities was characterized by a multidisciplinary approach to fit the complexity of the themes involved.

Apart from the regular disciplines covered in

the project, particular attention was given to local development, informal economies and their relationship with the formal economies, anthropology, market trends (critical consumption), technology (in relation to specific sectors) and the organization of production.

The activities of the Master's course was articulated in four didactic modules of intensive integrated courses (workshops and seminars), lasting one month each in Rwanda, Morocco, Italy (Geneva and Venice).

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The Master activities focused on particular aspects of innovation in production processes that lie between craftsmanship and industry:

1. Industrial standardization and the development of handcrafted components. The identification of industrial components that can be assembled with handcrafted or locally produced components, so as to improve and expand the productive potential of craftsmanship.

2. Experimentation of the most suitable techniques to allow for the manufacture of products or product components using natural materials.

3. Improvement of product quality by intervening in continuity and the environmental improvement of the same, by increasing the value of its salient qualities (manual capacity, diversification, etc.).

4. Improving the formal qualities of products without losing continuity with local traditions, updating and brew them more suitable to international markets.

Assistant Lecturer and Project Manager (in the one-month workshop in Rwanda) at the IUAV International postgraduate Degree in Design for Cooperation and Sustainable Development.







Education

The main goal of the didactic program was to introduce the students to their cultural and productive environment and make them understand the benefits of design research in that context.

At the Fibres & Fabrics laboratory and the Design Material lesson the students were guided to approach materials and techniques. The educative goal was to combine theory and practice in order that the students can create a design mindset.

By studying textile weaving we realized frame loom and by making basketry weaving we worked in collaboration with the Umutako Iwaco Cooperative. Working

with this cooperative, the students had an opportunity to make experiments with several materials: clay, metal, wood, fabric and banana leaves. The non-stop confrontation between theory and practice allowed the students to verify in a critical way their ideas of design and feasibility, developing their manual skills and stimulating their mind.

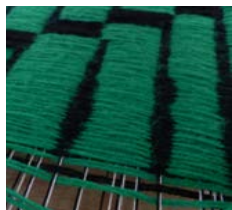
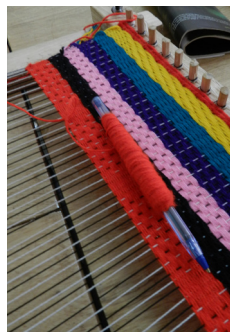
The lack of a pre-university education for what concerns drawing, technique and materials in Rwanda, set off the choice for practical studies and the *learning by doing* approach. Moreover, the direct approach to the artisans during the course triggered off a reflection on the relationship between design and

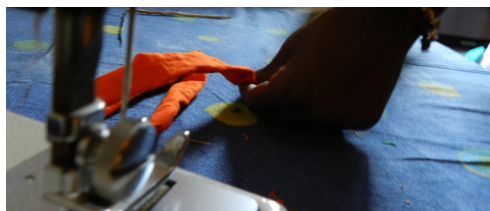
craftsmanship.

The result came up with a series of products realized by the students with the support of the artisans. From that moment on, some of the students started out to work with Umutako Iwaco Cooperative and to sell their own products.

Lecturer at the 1st year in the Creative Design department, FAED (Faculty of Architecture and Environmental Design), KIST, Kigali, Rwanda.
Photo: a student and an artisan exchanging knowledge.









The work at *Agatako Rwanda* cooperative, took place in Kigali, in a project between *UNESCO* and the *Soroptimist Club* of San Marino. The goals were training focused on technical innovation, design a new collection of jewelry using *Uruhindo* technique and to create a cooperative specialized on that technique.

Crafts in Rwanda are heavily characterized by the use of natural fibre and nowadays basket weaving remains their most characteristic material expression with both aesthetically and functional purposes. So, that training course for young craftswomen aims to exploit work based on vegetable fibre to improve local manufacturing skills of the craftswomen themselves.

The first research about Rwanda's handcrafted has identified an ancient royal technique that has been getting lost over time. It is named *Ububoshyi kubohesha uruhindu* and is the most representative of Rwandan craft knowledge. The collection of the new jewels should recover this ancestral technique, reinterpreting it in terms of contemporary design.

The development of project led to the creation of a cooperative with ten women and it is divided into four key step training: technical training, technical innovation training, management training, define a value to the marketplace and the identity corporate design.

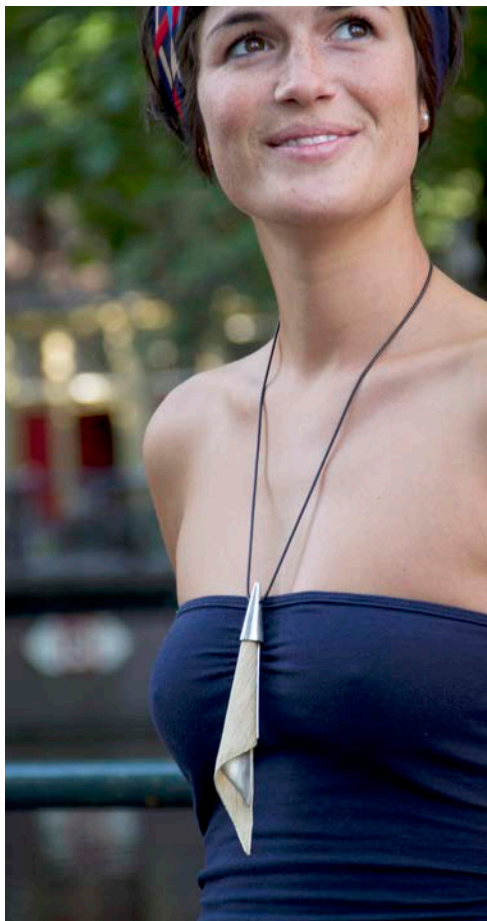
From this project borned *nyanzabijou*, a new rwandan brand of jewels made by crafts women of *Agatako Rwanda* and *Camk* cooperative. The jewels combine the skills and patience of artisans that rearrange an existing knowledge of Rwandan materials to create uniquely refined pieces.

The first jewelry collection is named *NDI* which means "I am" in Kinyarwanda, the local language of Rwanda, and came out in the marketplace in 2012.

In the same year, *Agatako Rwanda* won the first price as the best cooperative in Rwanda on fibre work, with *NDI* collection, by the Rwandan Ministry of Commerce.

Brand Designer, Product Designer and Project Manager for *Agatako Rwanda* cooperative of Kigali.







Atelier Rwanda is part of the scientific collaboration program between the University *Iuav* of Venice and the *KIST* of Kigali, Rwanda, program that was having local research and formation workshops, with common and exchange activities between students teachers and craftsman.

Main goal of *Atelier Rwanda* workshop was to promote activities related to the use of local materials and techniques.

Both Design and Architecture were involved in phases of experimentation during the workshops that took place from 2009 till 2010. A research and formation program with common and exchange activities in order to:

- Promote efficiency

and sustainability of activities relate to natural fibres developing innovative products made with local materials

- Improve the production possibilities of local craftsman strengthening the role of craftswoman.
- Promote the development and trade of local products and resources.
- Promote cultural exchange between Europe and Africa in the field of architecture and design.

The workshop activities were:

- Training courses for young craftswoman
- Didactic modules on design and self-construction with vegetable fibres
- Researches on valorization of vegetable fibres.

As an end of the collaboration program Rwanda participated for the first time with a pavilion to the *12. International Architecture Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia*. The results of the two years work have been display during the big Venetian event at the *Claudio Buziol Foundation* and at the *Magazzini Ligabue* of University *Iuav* of Venice.

Assistant Lecturer and Project Manager in Rwanda of the *Atelier Rwanda* international workshops.

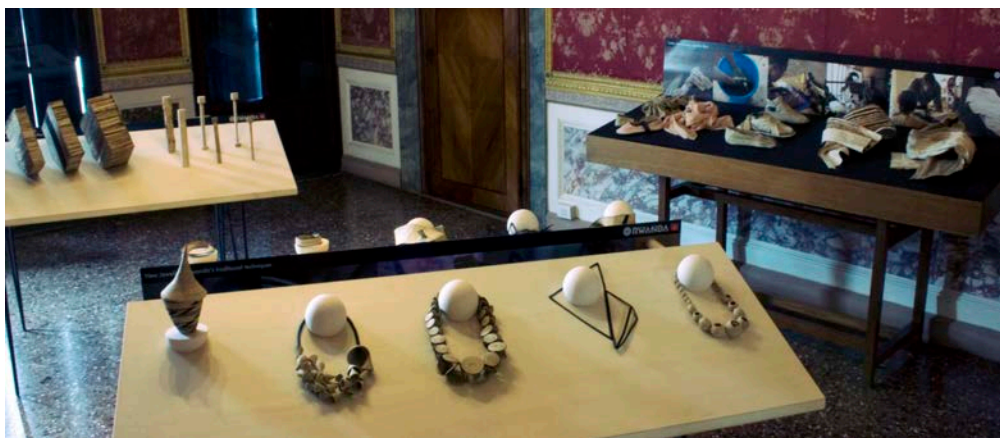
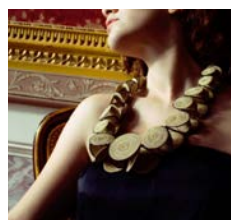
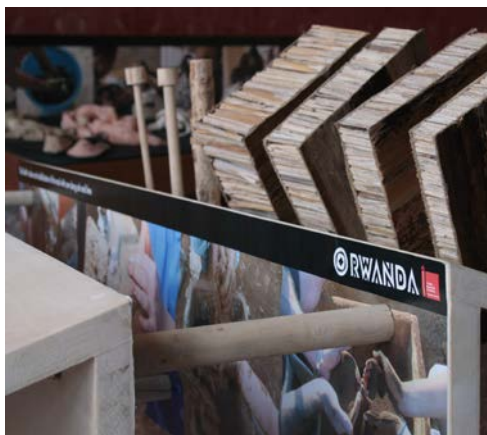
Trainer on traditional techniques innovation during the research workshop on vegetable materials and local traditional techniques.

Project Manager for the final exhibition: Tradition and innovation in vegetable fibres design about the first *Atelier Rwanda* workshop result, for the participation of the Republic of Rwanda to the *12 International Architecture Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia*.

Co-curator of the publication *Rwanda. Tradition and Innovation in Vegetable Fibres Design*, printed for La Biennale di Venezia 2010.

Producer of documentary *YEGO!* by Leandro Lisboa







This research project underlines the strategic role of Design for concrete activities of internationalization, through the identification and realization of innovative and socially sustainable processes in developing countries.

A project of International co-operation between Italy and Rwanda, to promote the economic development of the country.

The activity comprises recovery and re-qualification of the local artistic, cultural, craftsman heritage through the artisans professionalism improving. The partnership was *Bottega Solidale of Genova*, Italy and *COPABU*, artisans' cooperative of Butare, Rwanda. We are talking about a micro-intervention based on beneficiaries direct participation with a *bottom-up* approach, that means starting a strategy from the local people needs and skills. Research and experimentation are the main characteristics of these projects, that can be called seed projects.

The experimentation phase has led to the creation of prototypes in collaboration with artisans to explain the design approach based on four main methodologies:

1. Formal and functional innovation of the products and artisans' technique through the project procedure;
2. Different materials mix in new products through interaction of peculiar skills in a market oriented perspective;

3. New technique testing and their subsequent transfer to different products in a relational view of shared skills inside and outside the country. This aspect has underlined the lack of appropriate tools.

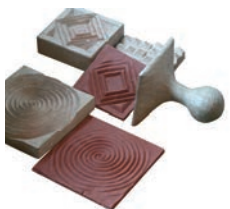
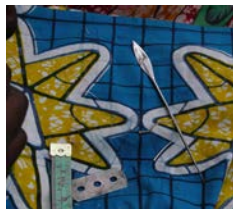
4. Processes identification to create a system inside a specific community and then outside it, to strengthen and improve the handmade production.

These four methodologies, singularly or linked each other, are to be seen as guidelines for the designer and for international co-operation projects.

Following this way, the designer will understand the cultural values of the community in a global contest and will play an active role in the socio-economic development of the country.

Master Degree in Product Design, Iuav University of Venice.

Thesis project: Co-Creation. Requalification of Rwanda craftsmanship.





Elles Peuvent was an International co-operation project between Italy and Morocco, that aimed to improve the economic development of the Province of Zagora.

The goal was to preserve the skills and local craft techniques related to the palm trees (a core element in life of the region). This project drew on design as a tool to enrich the local craftsmanship and the development of the community.

The project team was created by different partners that worked on *TaeD* (Architecture and Design technologies department), *CSM* (Furniture experimental centre) and the local association *ADEDRA* (Association de

Développement de la Vallée du Draa).

Five Italian students of design (including myself) mixed up their design thinking with the artisans skills to create new products.

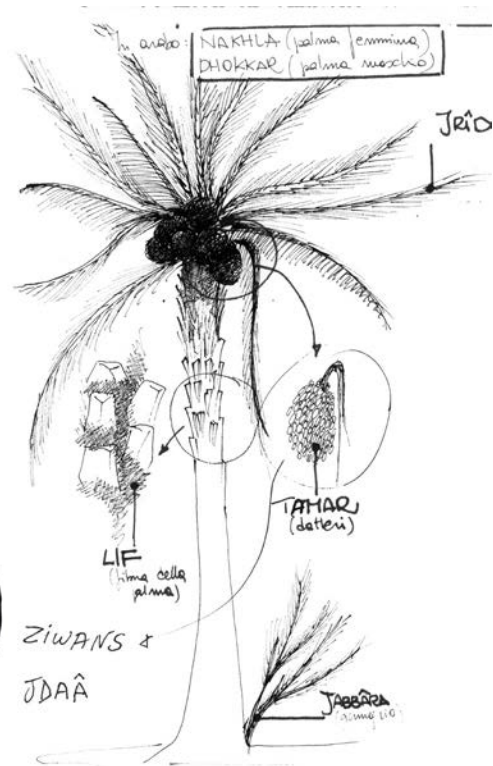
In my case, I got impressed how the Moroccan people use the ground as space to accommodate everyday goodies, eat, drink tea or just as meeting spot. Then, I came up with a small table built with palm fiber and reused plastics for personal use.

The affordance shape of this small table easily enables the person to embrace it with the legs and thus, make his daily activities with comfort. Its package is also made with local fabrics that turns to a comfortable

carpet in the moment of usage.

Bachelor Degree
in Product Design,
University of Florence,
2006.

Thesis project: Elles Peuvent. Valorisation Project of Drâa Valley craftsmanship.



Thank you!



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