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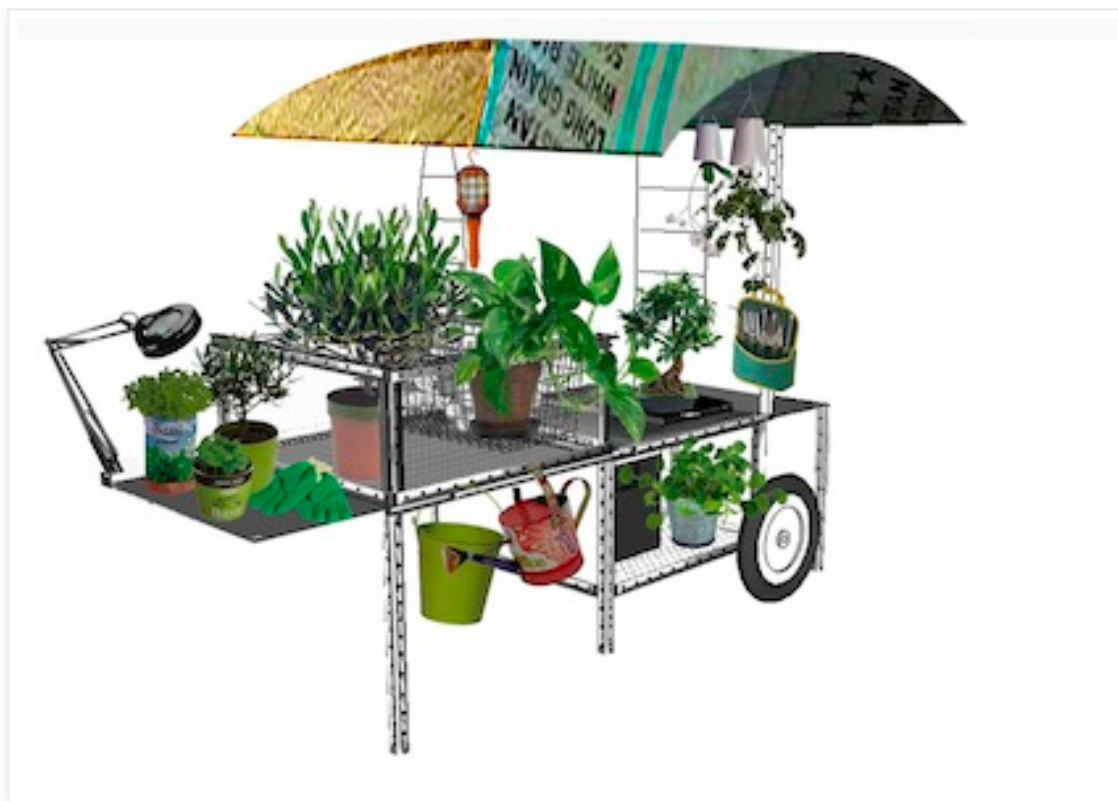
Crafts, Design, Food and Arts inspired by Africa

6 June 2013

Signé Ambulantage







During the last Christmas market at the French Cultural Center in Dakar I bumped at a fancy vendor cart designed for wax fabric outfits. I did not know what I fancied the most, the cart or the clothing neither did I realize that the cart itself was part of a project designed for the Cultural Center gardens for and with women working in fashion in Dakar. Ambulantage project, named after street vending, was in fact run by two french designers from WOS "Agence des Hypothèses"; Claire Dehove and Julie Boillot-Savarin. Itinerant vendors known as "marchands ambulants" are very much part of Dakar's city spectrum, Claire first explored the field of street stalls in Saint-Louis in 2010. The project was originally called "Diapalante", which means mutual aid in Wolof. Claire has worked with Xhar-Yalla women's Association. These women make and sell various products in Diamaguène market in Saint-Louis. Through exchanging at their workplace, Claire gathered their desires and suggestions; that's how the first

prototype of stalls was designed. After going back to France, she shared her experience and developed a "Diapalante" antenna on the campus of Paris HEC (Business School). This antenna was a sort of laboratory where students experimented. The collective was later given a new direction known as Ambulantage. The concept addresses the current expansion of informal trade, Claire and Julie wanted to be supportive and actresses of this inventiveness. They uncovered new and interesting insights with the French Cultural Center and its garden's hosts.

While this project was entirely designed and run for the French Cultural Center with a targeted group, I think it is the harbinger of street vending solutions for cities like Dakar where the informal sector generates 97% of new jobs in a country with high unemployment rate and a high illiteracy rate; reaching 59.2% of the total population. In his PhD thesis "marketing approach applied to the informal street vendors' system and wholesalers' case in Senegal", Abdoukhadir Djily Gaye argues the informal sector is considered a class that can play a key role in the transition to democracy. He also believes that the market economy is a major player in obtaining employment and income for the vast majority of the Senegalese population. This reminds me of a discussion I had with Dr Oumar Cissé while I took part in curating for "Design 4 People" at the last Dak'Art Biennale. Dr Cissé who's an advocate of inclusive design, argues that street vendors are part of the city scenery, we should design solutions with them and for them. And according to Gaye, the informal sector in Dakar produced 552,4 billion FCFA of goods and services with an estimated added value of 380.9 billion FCFA value which represents 11.4% of GDP. Such figures show the importance of the informal sector in a city like Dakar. The last raid to displace vendors was difficult, some of them do not agree with the temporary location and

perhaps a project such as Ambulantage project could be developed for the Dakarois street vendor; an opportunity perhaps to change the city landscape.


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Libre Ambulantage à Dakar
Du 08 Juin au 15 Juin 2013
At Institut Français Senegal

Courtesy
Wos/ Agence des Hypothèses

Sources
Cybergéo Revues
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