



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Creative partnership between Southern Guild and BMW South Africa generates just over R1 million in design commissions**

When BMW South Africa and Southern Guild launched their partnership in May last year, they initiated a series of unique creative collaborations that paired luxury-class motoring with the best of South African design. This translated into just over R1 million in commissions and work that directly benefited the design community.

Among the 14 activations that Southern Guild oversaw were a number of limited-edition artworks produced for exhibitions and events. Designer Charles Haupt made a digitally inspired sculpture in bronze of the BMW i8 Coupe, as well as 55 miniature versions for collectors. Master glass-blower David Reade produced 410 faceted vases inspired by the crystal-clear dynamism of the X7, each one of them unique. Gallery co-founder Julian McGowan conceptualised a large-scale relief sculpture inspired by the work of American Colour Field painter Frank Stella that showcased paint colours from BMW's archives.

The most recent commission was a BMW X4 adorned with hand-drawn illustrations by artist Atang Tshikare for the gallery's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary exhibition, *SGX*. Using his characteristic graphic line drawings, Atang captured milestone moments in Southern Guild's history, including the most iconic works launched over the years and the global design fairs the gallery has exhibited at. The car was an embodiment of the decade-long trajectory from the inception of African collectible design to the world-class status it now holds.

**\*Note to the editor: Our video *SGX – A Decade of Iconic Design* is available for publication alongside this story.**

The X4 collaboration presented an opportunity to reflect on how much the gallery has accomplished in its first decade. "We started Southern Guild because we wanted to create a platform that encouraged artists to be brave, to push forward, to give them the courage to go further than they might have gone on their own," says Trevyn McGowan, who along with her husband, Julian, established the gallery in 2008.

In just 10 years, Southern Guild has spearheaded the collectible design category in Africa, propelling artists and designers to make spirited, challenging and complex work. Its rigorous programme has shaped global perceptions of African design and forged a unique vernacular in the marketplace. What began as an annual collection shown at events such as the Johannesburg Art Fair became a permanent gallery with its first premises in Woodstock in 2015, followed by its new 450 sqm home in the V&A Waterfront's flagship Silo District.

Southern Guild was the first African gallery to present at Design Miami in 2011, and the first to be featured at Christie's London's annual design auction in 2015. The gallery shows regularly at Design Miami in Basel and the US, and at other design fairs around the world. It has had work from its collections included in Vitra Design Museum's *Making Africa* exhibition and *Beauty-Cooper Hewitt Design Triennial* at the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.

2018 has been a year of new milestones. The gallery curated seven exhibitions, all of which launched new work, and was featured in *The New York Times*, *Elle US*, *Wallpaper*, *Architectural Digest* and *Dezeen*. It partnered with Schiff Fine Art Advisory in New York to co-produce *Endangered* by Porky Hefer, a series of giant tactile sculptures that raised almost \$160,000 (approximately R2.1 million) to protect endangered species through the Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation.

The gallery also made its debut at the Salon Art and Design fair in New York City, whose executive director Jill Bokor hailed its artists' uncommon use of colour, materials and form. "I have always been impressed by the breadth and diversity of its designers and by the overall aesthetic of the gallery," she said.

2018 was also a record year of sales thanks to a growing international collector base, which now comprises 60 percent of the gallery's market, up from 20 percent five years ago. Museums have also knocked on the door in the past year with the placement and commission of new pieces for the Zeitz MOCAA in Cape Town and institutions in Los Angeles and Melbourne.

"South African collectible design has never been in as strong a position as it is today," says Julian McGowan. "The momentum we have gained is proof of the world's growing interest in the unique and storied work being produced by designers on the African continent."

At a time when retail markets are under immense pressure globally, BMW's support of Southern Guild demonstrates a nimble understanding of the role that design can play. With its focus on excellence, innovation and high-performance design, the car brand has stimulated the production of new work and had a tangible impact on the local industry.

Looking ahead to 2019, new developments beckon: participation in PAD London, a boutique-style fair accepting only the most prominent international galleries; five solo

shows at its Cape Town gallery; and close collaboration with BMW South Africa on a number of intriguing and relevant activations.

Says Trevyn: “We’re not just a gallery that sells beautiful things. We’re the custodians of a movement – and we’ve only just begun to tell our story.”

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