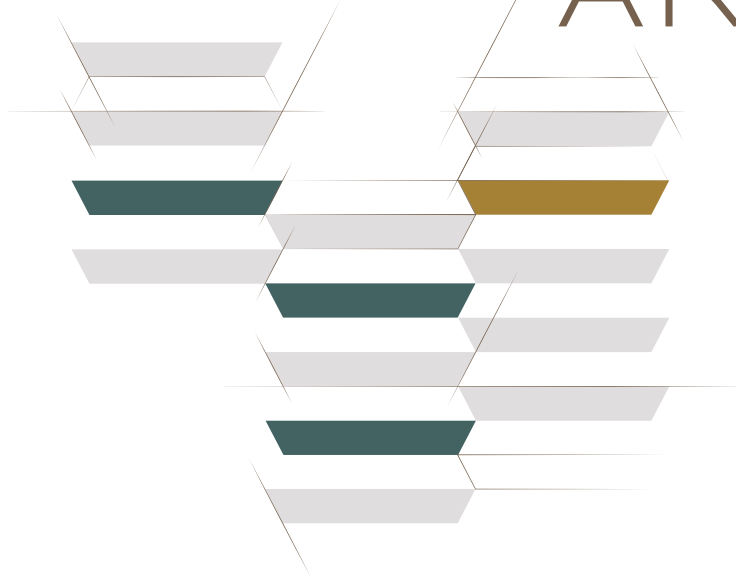


ROLEX & ARCHITECTURE



ROLEX MARKS FOURTH TIME AS PARTNER OF THE INTERNATIONAL ARCHITECTURE EXHIBITION – LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA, AS 2021 EDITION OPENS

VENICE, 20 MAY 2021 – Rolex will serve as Exclusive Partner and Official Timepiece of the 17th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, for the fourth time since 2014. This year the Biennale Architettura, the world’s premier architectural event for new ideas, opens on Saturday 22 May in Venice and extends until 21 November 2021.

In supporting architecture and the Biennale Architettura, Rolex adheres to an ongoing motivation to strive for timeless innovation, technological advancements, precision and the best use of form and space that have symbolized Rolex watches from the brand’s earliest days.

In defining the theme for the 17th International Architecture Exhibition, Curator Hashim Sarkis has posed the question: “How will we live together?” He calls on architects to imagine spaces in which we can generously co-exist and act together as a planet facing crises that require global action.

“Rolex has long championed ideals that encourage human ingenuity and the ability to achieve the highest standards of performance,” said Arnaud Boetsch, Rolex Director of Communication & Image. “Rolex’s support of the Biennale and what it represents is also manifest in the company’s forward-thinking approach as reflected in architecture through the optimization of space and the creation of sustainable buildings.”

THE ROLEX PAVILION

Featured at the Rolex Pavilion in the Giardini – replicating the design of a solid foundation offset by a fine, transparent structure with a faceted surface, which recalls the fluted bezel, a signature aesthetic style on some of the brand’s iconic watches – is an exhibit of a project by Mariam Kamara from Niger. She is the protégée of renowned Ghanaian-British

architect Sir David Adjaye in the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative, a programme that invests in the future of architecture by fostering young talents. Renderings, two models and films bring to life Kamara’s plans for a new cultural centre in Niger’s capital, Niamey. The project, which incorporates traditional methods of building, reflects two key concerns of both architects and Rolex – precision and sustainability. At the invitation of Hashim Sarkis, Kamara will also present an installation in the *As Emerging Communities* section at the Arsenale.

The environmentally sound approach taken by architects Onsitestudio with the refurbishment of the Rolex Italy headquarters, Rolex Italia S.P.A., in the heart of Milan, will also be featured at the Rolex Pavilion. With a renewed emphasis on light and space and the use of sustainable building materials, the 19th-century landmark was transformed into a contemporary structure, while maintaining a connection between past and present.

ROLEX AND ARCHITECTURE

In the construction of its own buildings over many years, Rolex has embraced innovative ideas put forward by leading architects. Two of the most recent projects that adhere to environmental standards are a tower housing Rolex’s sales and service centre in Dallas, Texas, by Kengo Kuma, and the plan for the redesign of the Rolex USA headquarters in New York by Sir David Chipperfield, curator of the Architecture Biennale 2012.

Other iconic architects Rolex has commissioned to design its worldwide offices and facilities include Michael Graves (Lititz Watch Technicum, Pennsylvania, US), Fumihiko Maki (Rolex Tokyo building) and SANAA principals Ryue Nishizawa and Kazuyo Sejima (the Rolex Learning Center for EPFL in Lausanne, Switzerland). Sejima also served as a mentor in the Rolex Arts Initiative along with fellow mentors Alvaro Siza, Peter Zumthor, Sir David Chipperfield and Sir David Adjaye; while Nishizawa was also an advisor along with Alejandro Aravena, Vishaan Chakrabarti, Lord Norman Foster, Frank Gehry and Daniel Libeskind.

ABOUT ROLEX
AN UNRIVALLED REPUTATION
FOR QUALITY AND EXPERTISE

Rolex is an integrated and independent Swiss watch *manufacture*. Headquartered in Geneva, the brand is recognized the world over for its expertise and the quality of its products – symbols of excellence, elegance and prestige. The movements of its Oyster Perpetual and Cellini watches are certified by COSC, then tested in-house for their precision, performance and reliability. The Superlative Chronometer certification, symbolized by the green seal, confirms that each watch has successfully undergone tests conducted by Rolex in its own laboratories according to its own criteria. These are periodically validated by an independent external organization. The word “Perpetual” is inscribed on every Rolex Oyster watch. But more than just a word on a dial, it is a philosophy that embodies the company’s vision and values. Hans Wilsdorf, the founder of the company, instilled a notion of perpetual excellence that would drive the company forward. This led Rolex to pioneer the development of the wristwatch and numerous major watchmaking innovations, such as the Oyster, the first waterproof wristwatch, launched in 1926, and the Perpetual rotor self-winding mechanism, invented in 1931. In the course of its history, Rolex has registered over 500 patents. At its four sites in Switzerland, the brand designs, develops and produces the majority of its watch components, from the casting of the gold alloys to the machining, crafting, assembly and finishing of the movement, case, dial and bracelet. Furthermore, the brand is actively involved in supporting the arts and culture, sport and exploration, as well as those who are devising solutions to preserve the planet.

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A HISTORY OF
DESIGN EXCELLENCE

FOSTERING A COLLECTIVE IMAGINATION

Over the decades, Rolex has made a unique and lasting contribution to culture by supporting exceptional artists and cultural institutions. As part of its ongoing commitment to strive for continuous innovation, technological advancements, precision and the best use of form and space, the company is supporting the International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia for the fourth time since 2014 as Exclusive Partner and Official Timepiece.

Rolex's continuing support for the Architecture Exhibition reflects the company's deep interest in architecture. The brand has long acknowledged a connection between watchmaking and architecture which both require a blend of aesthetics and functionality that springs from innovative thinking and creativity at the highest level. For more than 60 years, Rolex has commissioned the finest buildings, designed by renowned architects, who today employ the principles of sustainability in their work.

The 17th Biennale Architettura, which runs from 22 May to 21 November, has the theme “How will we live together?” in light of widening political divides and growing economic inequalities and highlights the reliance society has on new ideas and what Curator Hashim Sarkis calls “the collective architectural imagination”. Rolex's support of the International Architecture Exhibition is part of a long-standing objective to contribute to both society and culture, of which great architecture plays a key role.

The design of the Rolex Pavilion, which recalls the fluted bezel – a signature aesthetic style on some of the brand's iconic watches – further emphasizes the strong connection between architecture and watchmaking. Like the movement of an Oyster, a building adheres to a precise set of codes and a clear message that is expressed through design and functionality.

Rolex has long acknowledged a connection between watchmaking and architecture, which both require a blend of aesthetics and functionality that springs from innovative thinking and creativity at the highest level.



THE ROLEX PAVILION RECALLS THE FLUTED BEZEL, A SIGNATURE AESTHETIC STYLE FOUND ON SOME OF ROLEX'S MOST ICONIC WATCHES.

First designed by Rolex for the 2018 Biennale, the Rolex Pavilion in the Giardini will this year feature young architect Mariam Kamara's most ambitious project, designed with the guidance of her mentor, Sir David Adjaye, within the framework of the 2018–2019 Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative – the nearly two-decade-old mentoring programme that has enabled dozens of the world's artistic masters to foster a rising young practitioner in their discipline. Such transmission of knowledge and new ideas is integral to Rolex whether in its watchmaking or in its support of architecture.

Kamara has worked closely with Sir David developing plans for a new cultural centre in Niamey, capital of her homeland, Niger. She will present renderings and models of the ecologically appropriate cultural centre at the Rolex Pavilion.

Also featured at the Rolex Pavilion will be a presentation of the refurbished Rolex Italy headquarters in Milan. With a renewed emphasis on light and space, the historic building reflects the design excellence and exceptional working conditions indicative of the company's Geneva headquarters and worldwide operations.

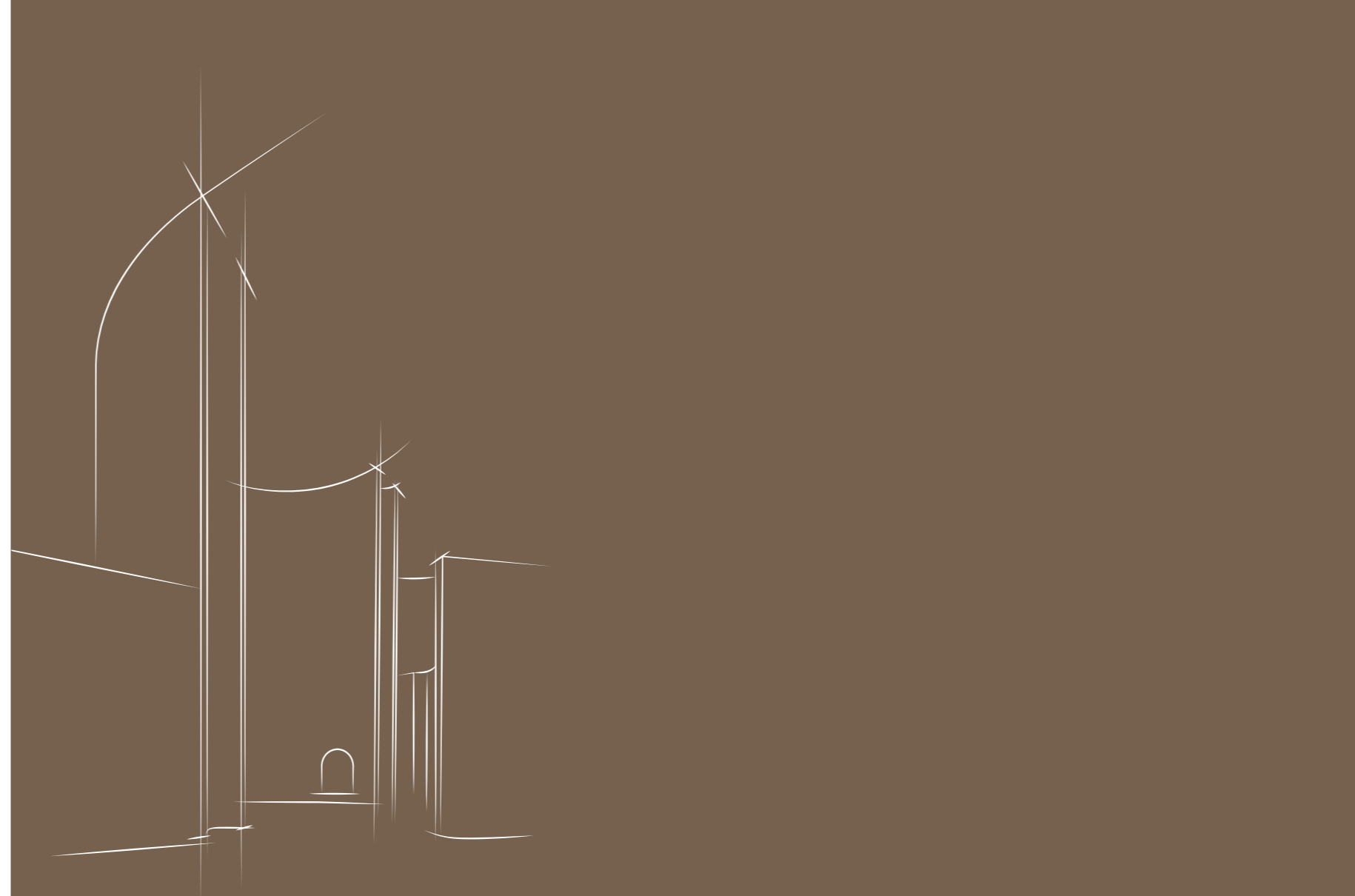
The stories behind these two diverse projects follow.



FOR MORE THAN 60 YEARS,
ROLEX HAS SUPPORTED
THE FINEST ARCHITECTURE.

FROM LEFT:
THE ROLEX LEARNING CENTER
AT EPFL IN LAUSANNE, SWITZERLAND,
BY **KAZUYO SEJIMA AND RYUE
NISHIZAWA OF SANAA**; TWO
PERSPECTIVES OF ARTLAB AT EPFL
BY **KENGO KUMA**; ROLEX TOYOCHO
BUILDING IN TOKYO, JAPAN, BY
FUMIHIKO MAKI; ROLEX BUILDING
IN DALLAS, TEXAS, BY **KENGO KUMA**;
AND THE LITITZ WATCH TECHNICUM IN
PENNSYLVANIA, BY **MICHAEL GRAVES**.

DEVELOPING AN
AFRICAN ARCHITECTURE



MENTOR AND PROTÉGÉE COLLABORATE ON A NEW CULTURAL CENTRE

“A lot of my practice has become an exercise in listening,” says architect Mariam Kamara. “It is important you consult before you pick up a pencil. I fundamentally believe that architecture is about people. We make space for people to inhabit, to socialize, to live in, to feel good in.”

This belief has driven the way she set about creating a design for a new cultural centre in her home city of Niamey, in Niger, an ambitious project that is the fruit of her participation in the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative. From the beginning of Kamara’s time with her mentor, the Ghanaian-British architect Sir David Adjaye, they both knew they wanted to work together on a public project.

“I felt Mariam was yearning to have a public voice,” Sir David says. “This was an opportunity for her to get involved in a significant making. My role was to encourage her to find her authorial voice.”

Their relationship over the two-year collaboration fell into two distinct stages. The first year allowed Kamara, who is based in Providence, the capital of Rhode Island, US, to see Sir David, who has offices in Accra, London and New York, at work around the world, while discussing their ideas about architecture. He gave her advice on how to expand her practice, atelier masōmī, in Niamey.

But the turning point was when they went together to Niger, travelling to the village where Kamara grew up, to the desert, and also to the ancient city of Agadez, where people still live in houses built in the 14th century, among other places. This journey became the foundation of the development of the plans for the cultural centre, which seeks to enhance the creation of a public, cultural space in a city that lacks such amenities.



SIR DAVID ADJAYE AND HIS
PROTÉGÉE **MARIAM KAMARA**
VISIT NIGER, WHERE KAMARA
HAS A PRACTICE, ATELIER
MASŌMĪ, IN NIAMEY.

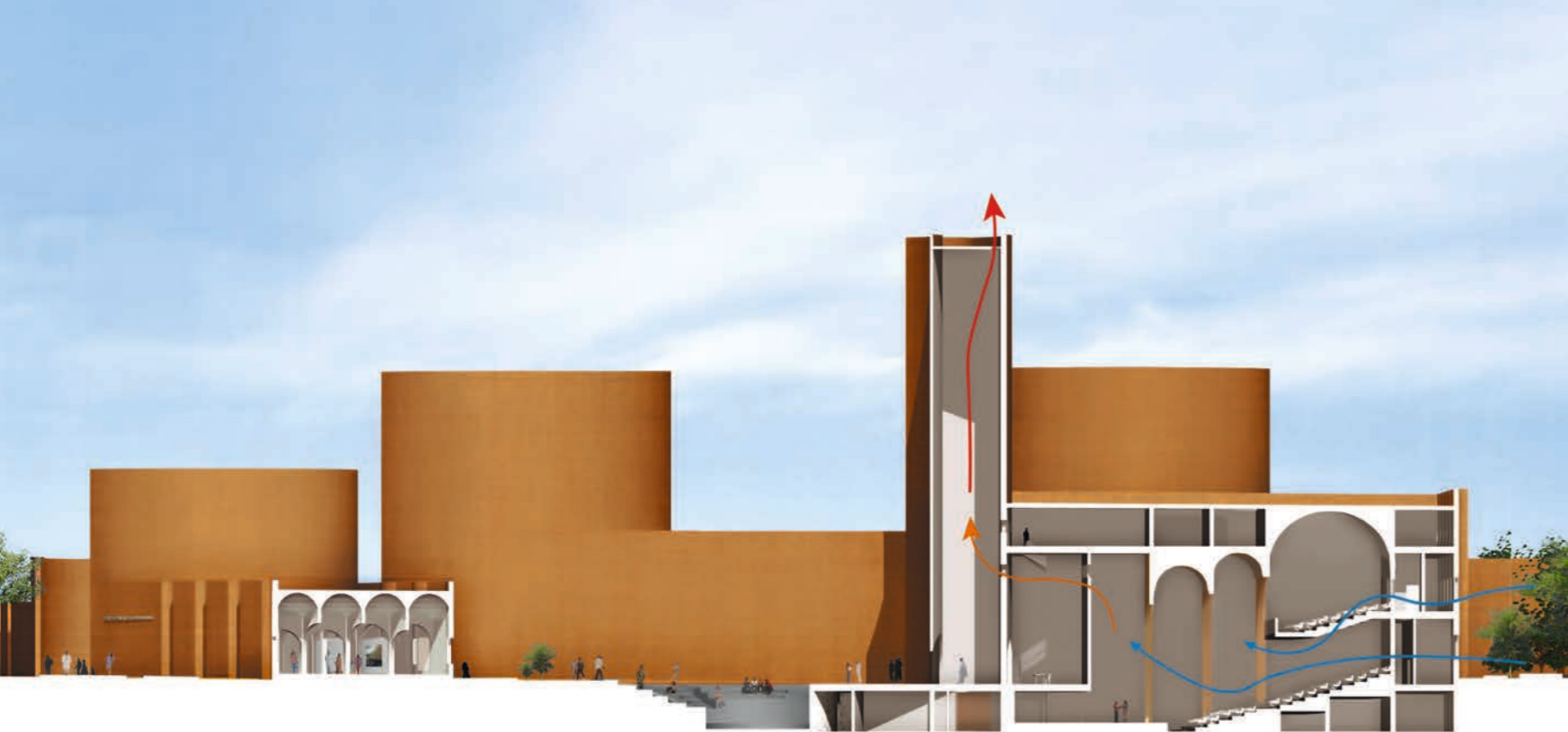
“I felt Mariam was yearning to have a public voice,” Sir David says. “This was an opportunity for her to get involved in a significant making. My role was to encourage her to find her authorial voice.”

Kamara’s planned site for the cultural centre is in a valley that once divided the French sector from the local population. After colonization ended in 1960, the rift remained, with the elite living on the French side, and the socially disadvantaged on the other. The current administration, however, is trying to bridge those gaps by creating amenities such as sports stadiums and educational and cultural establishments. The Rolex project feeds into these ambitions for finding the best use for this site by turning it into the main public space of Niamey.

Kamara drew up the plans according to the principles that guide her entire architectural practice. She organized workshops with interested parties, young and old, from high school students to artists and performers, to find out what they cared about and what their aspirations were for the city in which they lived.

“In a desert city, they worried about green spaces and places they could go for peace; and if it’s green, it is probably cooler too. They also wanted a place that would reflect local traditions,” she says.

This last point took on particular significance. As countries on the African continent have developed, modernity has come to be equated with Eurocentric architectural designs. The new generation of African architects is beginning to challenge this, looking to the past to build for the future. It was, naturally, one of the subjects Sir David and Kamara most discussed. “The continent’s modernity, unfortunately, has been about importing models of the metropolis that haven’t really grown with the way in which people have become metropolitan,” Sir David explains. “There are many huge cities now, but you feel the architecture is out of kilter with the community.”



ARCHITECTURE MENTOR
SIR DAVID ADJAYE AND HIS
PROTEGÉE MARIAM KAMARA
WORK ON PLANS FOR A
CULTURAL CENTRE IN NIAMEY,
A CITY THAT LACKS THIS KIND
OF AMENITY.

THE NEW
GENERATION OF
AFRICAN ARCHITECTS
IS BEGINNING TO
CHALLENGE THIS,
LOOKING TO THE
PAST TO BUILD FOR
THE FUTURE.



“I think that for my generation, and definitely Mariam’s generation, who are interested in Africa and who understand the technology of the modern world, making this make sense for the communities in Africa is the most extraordinary opportunity. To define, potentially, the direction that a city could go.”

Kamara – whom Sir David describes as a “trailblazer” – has experienced this dislocation first-hand. “I studied architecture in the US and learned European architectural history so I have had to teach myself the history of architecture in Niger, which is the place I came from. Then I had to try to figure out what to do with that.”

Her design for the Niamey cultural centre embodies many of the principles she works by. She wanted to create a space where people could come together and explore; she didn’t want the building to be intimidating, but to encourage people to sit in the shade provided by its towers, and perhaps venture inside to a library or a performance space. “In a country where 70 per cent of the population are illiterate, you might feel you didn’t belong there. So it was important to create a building that you could happen by and walk through. I wanted to create a continuous experience where you get transported from one world to another.”



SIR DAVID ADJAYE AND HIS
PROTÉGÉE MARIAM KAMARA VISIT
A MOSQUE SHE CO-DESIGNED IN
DANAJI, NIGER.





SUSTAINABILITY IS KEY

Sustainability is being built into the structure from the beginning. The shape and height of the towers create shade; they also allow ventilation, a cooling system and water retention; they are built from locally-manufactured bricks. “Building out of earth is really important to make it sustainable, but also to be liveable without having to use air conditioning inside,” Kamara adds. “With that comes the opportunity to use local masons; the space may look different but it uses the same principles they are used to, without having to bring in outside expertise.”

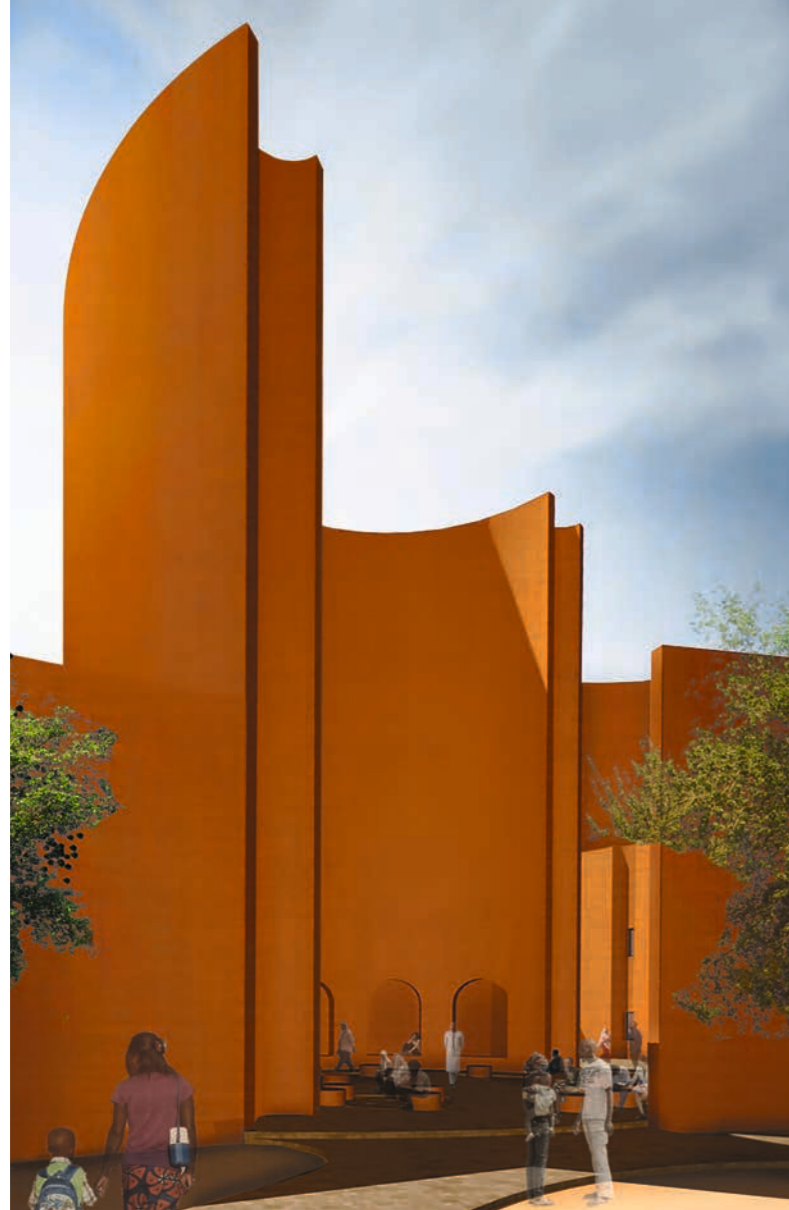
As she developed her ideas, she sent sketches and notes to Sir David and he responded but never gave her direct instructions. “I don’t think that would have been interesting for him. I think he was much more interested in seeing where my head was and what I wanted to do. Then he would just say things like, okay this is good, but you said you wanted to do this, and that’s not what you sent me. He’d just push me on.

“Working through this project with David has allowed me to trust my design instinct more. This has allowed me to confirm my voice and not apologize for it.”

Sir David talks of Kamara’s achievements with great pride. “She’s really grown incredible wings,” he says. “I look forward to her maturing in the world and I am so happy to have been at this critical moment with her. I look forward to her journey, I really do.”



A RENDERING, MAP AND PHOTOGRAPH OF THE SITE OF THE NEW CULTURAL CENTRE IN NIAMEY DESIGNED BY MARIAM KAMARA, WITH THE GUIDANCE OF SIR DAVID ADJAYE.



THE CULTURAL CENTRE'S TOWERS WILL BRING SHADE AND ASSIST VENTILATION, HELPING PEOPLE TO DEAL WITH THE HEAT.



NIAMEY'S CULTURAL CENTRE WILL BE A PUBLIC SPACE BUILT WITH A TRULY **AFRICAN AESTHETIC**.



FOR MARIAM KAMARA, IT IS IMPORTANT **TO CREATE AN ARCHITECTURE** THAT SERVES THE NEEDS OF LOCAL PEOPLE.

SIR DAVID TALKS OF KAMARA'S ACHIEVEMENTS WITH GREAT PRIDE. "SHE'S REALLY GROWN INCREDIBLE WINGS," HE SAYS.



“I think I have allowed her to understand she has a very important contribution, to take the time and have confidence in her own judgements,” Sir David says. “It’s been life altering in so many ways,” Kamara agrees. “It wasn’t just about architecture. We talked about aspiring for things for the future.”

The transmission of knowledge and support that has characterized their relationship is likely to continue into the future, as they both grapple with the challenges facing architects on the continent. “I think I have allowed her to understand she has a very important contribution, to take the time and have confidence in her own judgements,” Sir David says.

“It’s been life altering in so many ways,” Kamara agrees. “It wasn’t just about architecture. We talked about aspiring for things for the future. I was thrilled to be selected for the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative because I wanted to be a true architect, I wanted to be good.

There’s always a sense working in Africa or Asia that you don’t need much. You just go and make a box and it’s better than what people had before. But I always had the inverse belief. Because there are so many challenges working as an architect in Africa, I wanted to be better. I want to do something of value. That’s what I wanted and that’s what David gave me.”

SIR DAVID ADJAYE AND
MARIAM KAMARA VISIT **THE
REGIONAL MARKET** DESIGNED
BY KAMARA IN DANDAJI, NIGER.

ROLEX AND THE TRANSMISSION OF KNOWLEDGE

Inspired by the ethos of its founder Hans Wilsdorf, over the decades, Rolex has made a unique and lasting contribution to culture by assisting in the transmission of knowledge across generations. This tradition of supporting and perpetuating excellence is exemplified in the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative. Created in 2002, the programme seeks out gifted young artists in a variety of disciplines from around the world and pairs them with artistic masters for a period of mentoring and creative collaboration. In keeping with its tradition of supporting excellence, quality and performance, Rolex gives these emerging talents time to learn, create and grow. The interchange between Mariam Kamara and Sir David Adjaye is emblematic of Rolex's dedication to facilitating this cross-generational transfer of knowledge.

Architects who have been involved as mentors and protégés in addition to Sir David Adjaye and Mariam Kamara are Álvaro Siza with Sahel Al Hiyari, Kazuyo Sejima with Yang Zhao, Peter Zumthor with Gloria Cabral and Sir David Chipperfield with Simon Kretz. Architect advisors to the programme – those who have helped select the mentors – are Alejandro Aravena, Vishaan Chakrabarti, Lord Norman Foster, Frank Gehry, Daniel Libeskind and Ryue Nishizawa.



ARCHITECTURE MENTORS
AND PROTÉGÉS IN THE ROLEX
ARTS INITIATIVE.

FROM LEFT:
**KAZUYO SEJIMA AND
YANG ZHAO** (2012–2013),
**PETER ZUMTHOR AND
GLORIA CABRAL** (2014–2015),
**SIR DAVID CHIPPERFIELD
AND SIMON KRETZ** (2016–2017),
**ÁLVARO SIZA AND
SAHEL AL HIYARI** (2002–2003).

TRANSFORMATION OF
ROLEX ITALY'S
HEADQUARTERS IN MILAN



TIME, PRECISION, SUBSTANCE

Time and precision are two key concerns of architects – just as they are qualities integral to watchmaking. In architecture, the concept of precision takes on a dual meaning as it relates to both the actual construction process and the clarity with which a building expresses the very essence of why it was built and how it will be used.

Milanese architects Onsitestudio understood that as Rolex is universally known as a company that bases its success and reputation on the reliability and precision of each and every component of its watches, the quality of these timepieces must be reflected in the architecture housing its operations.

In setting out to update and renovate Rolex Italia S.P.A.'s headquarters at 5/A Via Alessandro Manzoni in the centre of Milan – conveniently located near Teatro alla Scala and the cultural and financial heart of the city – the architectural team recognized its responsibility to adhere to Rolex's defining principles of refinement and durability, while establishing a link between past and present.

“The careful refurbishment of this 19th-century edifice designed by Giuseppe Sommaruga, master architect of the Art Nouveau style, had to enhance the building's special qualities without destroying them,” says Angelo Lunati, Onsitestudio partner along with Giancarlo Piretti. “Such enhancements demand respect and the precision for which Rolex is renowned.

“They must be simultaneously radical and discreet. Like a fine watchmaker assembling components in a watch case, we removed, modified and replaced elements of the structure with precision and care.”

In addition to honouring the historic design of the neoclassical building, reconstructing the architecture from the inside without substantially altering its external characteristics, the architects were particularly aware of its setting in Milan. Although a dense urban environment, rather than being defined by its public spaces, Milan is, unusually for a major city, characterized by the private spaces of its passages and courtyards.

TIME AND PRECISION
ARE TWO KEY
CONCERNS OF
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AS THEY ARE
QUALITIES INTEGRAL
TO WATCHMAKING.

THE ROLEX BUILDING, MILAN

Onsitestudio introduced the principal architectural component of the new design by adding a central courtyard, a typical feature of the city's historical urban fabric. Significantly, the glazed courtyard has enabled natural light to penetrate the interior, opening it up to the outside and enhancing working conditions for Rolex employees. In addition, by improving circulation around the courtyard and repositioning the lifts and staircase, it was possible to increase the building's surface area to accommodate more product display and technical facilities, as well as space for events and other social activities.

"Light and space are the key elements that the project brought to this pre-modern building," says Angelo Lunati. "Through the glass courtyard – an area of considerable size – the building gained an environmental quality it did not previously possess."

With these improvements, the building has been transformed into a contemporary structure, both from a technological and energy-efficient point of view. Rolex had requested that its Italian headquarters, once renovated, obtain the highest-level energy certification; and, based on its energy-saving properties, it has been awarded a prestigious Leadership in Energy Environmental Design (LEED) Gold Historical Building Restoration certificate. Factors including the use of renewable energy sources such as groundwater and solar power helped contribute to this achievement.



LIGHT AND SPACE, AS WELL AS SUSTAINABLE BUILDING MATERIALS, ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS IN THE RECENTLY REFURBISHED ROLEX ITALY'S HEADQUARTERS IN MILAN.

The architects ensured that by using the best, as well as the most sustainable building materials, Rolex's philosophy of excellence and precision is manifest in the design.

Along with these energy-saving assets, the building boasts a palette of noble but discreet materials: bronze for the casements and balustrades, walnut for the facings and furnishings, marble and terrazzo for the floors. The architects ensured that by using the best, as well as the most sustainable building materials, Rolex's philosophy of excellence and precision is manifest in the design.

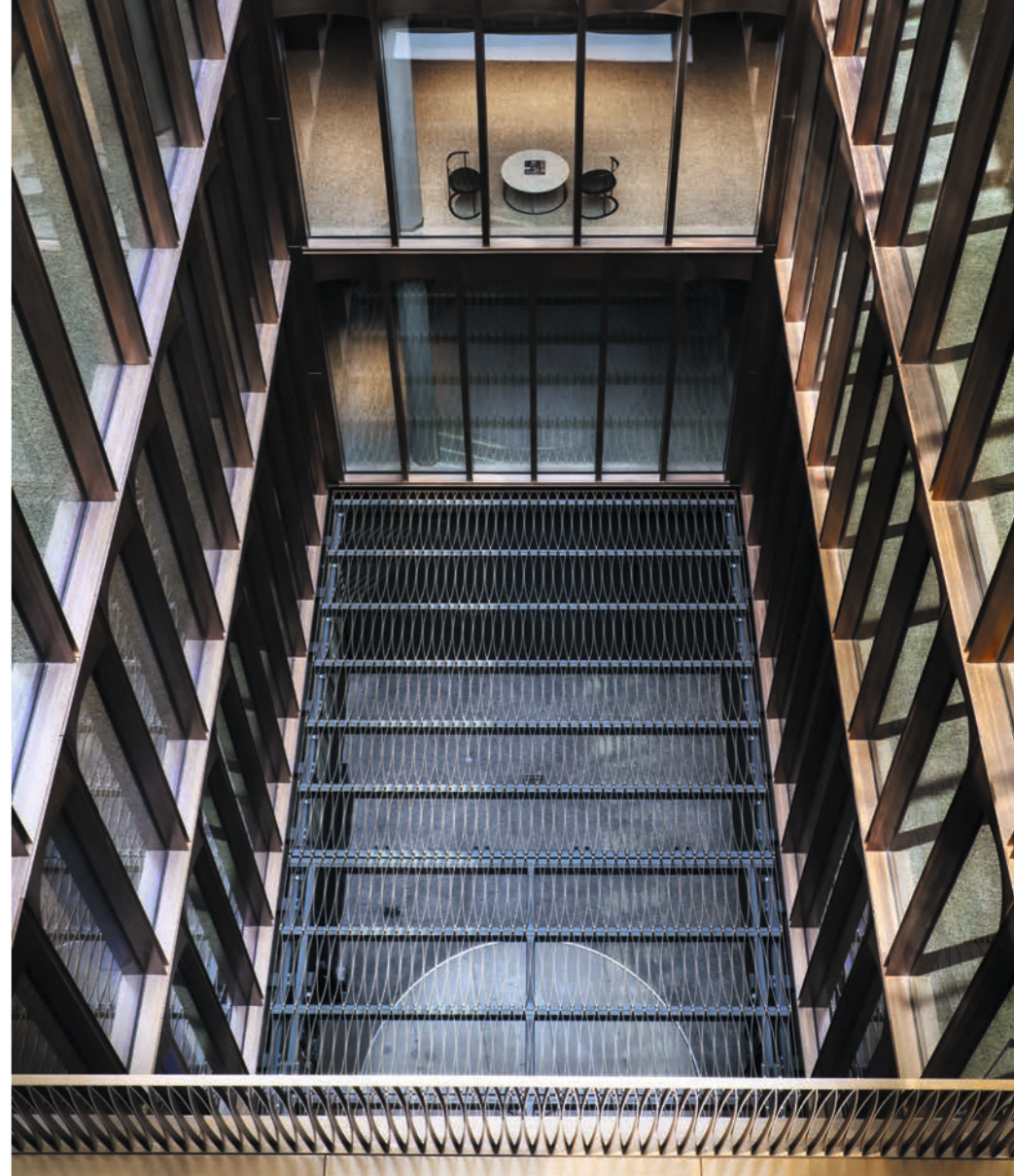
"We are confident that the newly refurbished Rolex Italia headquarters on Via Manzoni will meet the needs of the company well into the future," says Lunati. "I quote Sir David Chipperfield, who himself was a mentor in the Rolex Arts Initiative and, therefore, played a key role in handing down the highest architectural principles to a younger practitioner.

"His words sum up what has been accomplished with the redesigned Rolex building in Milan: 'As architects we must both be part of and stand apart from the culture within which we operate. To be effective, we must embrace power, but also distance ourselves; we must engage in dialogue and we must refuse to listen; we must explore the familiar and the unfamiliar; we must embrace history and reject it. Finally, we must resolve our ideas into matter and form.'"



THE 19TH-CENTURY BUILDING
IN MILAN HAS BEEN SENSITIVELY
TRANSFORMED INTO A
CONTEMPORARY STRUCTURE.

**THE NEW GLAZED CENTRAL
COURTYARD** OF ROLEX ITALY'S
MILAN HEADQUARTERS HAS
ENABLED NATURAL LIGHT TO
PENETRATE THE INTERIOR.





ONSITESTUDIO'S REFURBISHMENT
OF ROLEX ITALY'S MILAN
HEADQUARTERS BOASTS
**A PALETTE OF NOBLE BUT
DISCREET MATERIALS.**





ROLEX'S PHILOSOPHY OF
EXCELLENCE AND PRECISION
IS MANIFEST IN THE DESIGN
OF THE MILAN BUILDING.



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