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R & Company Presents

Grains of Paradise

March 24 – April 30, 2015

Opening Reception:
Tuesday, March 24, 6-8pm

New York, NY (February 4, 2015)—R & Company is pleased to announce *Grains of Paradise*, an exhibition of contemporary African design in collaboration with the Cape Town gallery Southern Guild. The exhibition features new and never before seen works from South African designer Porky Hefer, husband and wife design team Dokter and Misses, the design collective Ardmore, and Senegalese designer Babacar Niang. *Grains of Paradise* will be on view from March 24 through April 30, 2015, with an opening reception on Tuesday, March 24 from 6-8 pm.

The title of the exhibition is inspired by *Aframomum melegueta*, a West African spice and species of the ginger family, prevalent in African cuisine and commonly known as grains of paradise. In West African folk medicine, grains of paradise are valued for their warming and digestive properties. Among the Efik people of Nigeria, they have been used for divination and ordeals determining guilt and are also used in voodoo rites in the Caribbean. Historically, it was imported by caravan through the Saharan Desert and then distributed to Sicily and the rest of Italy, from where it was introduced to the Western world. The *Grains of Paradise* exhibition alludes to this history, where a collection of works that are exotic, precious and unique, with exciting stories to tell, travels from Africa and is presented in the United States.

Southern Guild principals Trevyn and Julian McGowan approached R & Company after their GUILD International Design Fair last year and the exhibition developed as a three-way dialogue between the designers and the two galleries. Of the collaboration with R & Company, Trevyn notes, “We’ve had the experience of working together in smaller ways over the past two years, and during that time we’ve started exploring the possibility of doing something bigger, more meaningful – a dream that is now resulting in the Grains of Paradise exhibition. Our ethos is totally aligned with theirs and we could think of no one better with whom we’d want to show this body of work. There’s a connectivity between these works that allows for a great dialogue. We feel that R & Company’s audience is perfectly literate to comprehend how meaningful this exhibition is.” R & Company principal Zesty Meyers adds,



“There is an energy among designers from the region that is creatively stimulating for us in incredible new ways.”

African design is currently experiencing a renaissance of interest, with collectors and museums turning their attention there with greater frequency. The designers selected for this exhibition represent a range of styles, backgrounds, narrative and materials. Together, their works offer an overview of this exciting design community.

About Porky Hefer

Porky Hefer focuses on conceptual precepts that manifest in three-dimensional forms, from public sculptures and installations to product and furniture design. Fascinated by the reactions and energy a piece can generate in a space, he embraces Africa and the skills and processes that are readily available indigenously, rather than trying to emulate foreign processes. Hefer strives to produce work that elicits a smile and sticks in your head.

About Babacar Niang

Senegalese-based designer Babacar Niang uses available, repurposed carved wood and braided leather to create sculptural seating and tables with an almost animated energy and distinctly human sensuality.

About Dokter and Misses

Husband and wife team, Adriaan Hugo and Katy Taplin make up South African design duo Dokter and Misses, based in Johannesburg. Inspired by the idiosyncrasies of their surroundings, their modernist furniture pieces with angular lines have a boldly upbeat energy that makes them immediately accessible and desirable examples of the contemporary South Africa design scene.

About Ardmore

Ardmore Ceramic Art was established by Fée Halsted on Ardmore Farm in the foothills of the Drakensberg Mountains of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. The artists from the Ardmore studio are given training, direction, materials, a studio and a guaranteed market for their work, supported by a skilled marketing and administrative team. Over the years, Ardmore's artists have won numerous awards and have been exhibited widely in South Africa and around the world. Ardmore artworks are included in leading collections, including the Museum of Art & Design in New York, the Museum of Cultures in Basel, Switzerland, and the Tatham Art Gallery in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

About Southern Guild

Trevyn and Julian McGowan established Southern Guild as a forum for South African designers to challenge and support each other, unified by national origin, but with diverse views and voices, and the collection now has a reputation for innovation, excellence and a truly fresh perspective.

On an annual basis, they invite a selection of the very best local designers, artists, architects and upcoming talents to produce and premier original pieces for the Southern Guild collection that year. They often pair designers together, with extremely dynamic results, and



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consistently choose people whose work engages the viewer, breaks new ground, shakes things up a bit. As the sole gallery representing South African limited-edition design, they find that many international curators and critics hear the unique voice South Africa brings to the world through their gallery, which offers something grounded in social and political realities, narrative, a true bond with nature and a sense of human connectedness. They have far less interest in trends or in the highly polished, technologically driven visions of design prevalent elsewhere. In fact, dancing to their own design tune, really valuing and exercising their uniqueness, has become their prime directive. It's where the gallery believes its future lies. Through collaboration, cooperation, alliance and refining its unique perspective, it aims to build and mature this arena in relevant and fascinating ways.

About R & Company

R & Company represents a distinguished group of historical and contemporary designers whose work is among the most innovative and finely crafted of their time. Zesty Meyers and Evan Snyderman founded R & Company in 1997 to realize their combined goal of promoting a closer study, appreciation and preservation of 20th and 21st century design.

Meyers and Snyderman have garnered international acclaim for their groundbreaking exhibitions and publications and for their commitment to preserving history through their extensive archives, library and private collection. Consistently, Meyers and Snyderman exhibit an extraordinary acumen for discovering and bringing designers to the forefront of the rapidly escalating design market.

R & Company is currently developing exhibitions and publications on the designers it represents -- a diverse program that includes work from North America, South America, Europe and Asia produced between 1945 and today. In addition to the exhibition program and showroom in New York, Meyers and Snyderman offer the work of R & Company designers internationally, contribute widely to publications, and lecture frequently about design.

www.r-and-company.com

IMAGE: Unique, custom Nest sculpture in natural three bark and braches. Designed and made by Porky Hefer, South Africa, 2014. Photograph courtesy of the artist.

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