

OBJECT LESSONS

Architecture & Design News

Design to Save the World: A Kenyan Engineer's Solar-Powered LED Lamps Are Going On Sale at Friedman Benda



If you're reading this, light is likely a ubiquitous resource in your life; it literally appears at the flip of a switch. Elsewhere, however, this isn't the case, which creates serious obstacles in the way of literacy and safety in parts of the world where energy is scarce or prohibitively expensive. Designers lately have taken notice, using tools like solar power, LED lights, and kinetic energy to address the problem. The latest in the line of low-cost, low-energy lighting

Zara, Janelle. "Design to Save the World: A Kenyan Engineer's Solar-Powered LED Lamps Are Going on Sale at Friedman Benda," *ARTINFO*. April 16, 2013.

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solutions is Kenyan engineer **Evans Wadongo**'s MwangaBora, going on view tomorrow at Chelsea gallery **Friedman Benda**.

Unlike **Olafur Eliasson**'s Little Sun or the Indiegogo-funded GravityLight (two brilliantly innovative lighting solutions that originated in Western Europe), Wadongo's MwangaBora (Swahili for *good light*) is an invention spurred by personal experience. During his schoolboy days in Malava, Kenya, Wadongo competed with his older brothers for use of the family's kerosene lamp, the fumes of which ultimately complicated his eyesight. The permanent damage to his vision did little to hinder his education, however: He went on to earn a degree in Electronic and Computer Engineering at **Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology**. He was only 19 when he invented this solar-powered LED lamp in 2004. And fittingly, he was Kenya's torchbearer at the 2012 Summer Olympics.

Tomorrow, 1,000 of Wadongo's lamps go on sale at Friedman Benda's **Reed Krakoff**-designed exhibition to benefit **Sustainable Development For All Kenya (SDFAA--Kenya)**, Wadongo's Nairobi-based non-profit for education and development in Africa. The sale of 1,000 lamps in New York makes the distribution of 20,000 possible through Africa. It's a short show, running from April 17 through 19, so we recommend setting aside some time in your weekend now.

"Evans Wadongo: MwangaBora" is on view at Friedman Benda April 17-19.

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