

Most Beautiful Object in South Africa voting opens

Design Indaba is running the Most Beautiful Object in South Africa competition until 12pm on 28 February 2020 and online voting is officially open.



Seth Shezi and Zizipho Poswa's 'Zenande' | Credit: Hayden-Phipps Sculpture

Ten industry mavens nominate 10 objects that stand out for being not only aesthetically pleasing, memorable and zeitgeist-capturing, but also socially impactful, sustainable, functional, relevant and even humorous.

The competition gives the public a chance to ponder the notion of beauty and select which object is worthy of the coveted title. Houtlander's Interdependence II bench scooped the award in 2019.



Houtlander's curvilinear Interdependence II bench voted Most Beautiful Object

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All the Most Beautiful Object in South Africa nominations will be on show as part of Nightscape, which takes place at the Artscape Piazza in Cape Town from 26-28 February. Gates open to the public at 16:00 and entrance is R30 if you book ahead via Webtickets or R50 at the gate, where there will be cashless payment systems only.

“It’s a marvellous opportunity to celebrate beauty,” says lifestyle strategist and creative director Seth Shezi, one of the cultural icons who has nominated an object for the Most Beautiful Object in South Africa. “It engenders a sense of community by involving the public to cast their votes.”

Multidisciplinary artist Manthe Ribane says the Most Beautiful Object in South Africa celebrates the melting pot that is South Africa. “It’s incredible to have a platform that encourages artists and creators to keep on creating,” she asserts. “This opportunity creates more awareness on how important it is to follow your dreams. It inspires creatives to stay true to their calling.”

The 2020 nominations and their nominees are:

1. GQ’s Best Dressed Man for 2018, Seth Shezi, has picked ‘Zenande’ from Zizipho Poswa’s Magodi Series. The series of monumental ceramic sculptures is inspired by traditional African hairstyles. “It’s one of my favourites from the series because of its beauty, variety of techniques, and lovely uncertainty and discomfort in the proportions (which I love). I took my mother to the gallery where it was displayed, and she also loved it – she saw it as a celebration of the complicated subject of natural hair,” says Shezi.
2. Urban strategist Rashid Fataar, founder and director of Our Future Cities, has opted for the Soroban installation at FYN restaurant, a collaboration between Tristan du Plessis and Christof Karl. “The abacus-inspired bead feature is made up of thousands of recycled wooden discs and spans the entire restaurant. It adds to the African and Japanese design aesthetic. The chandelier was inspired by the Japanese abacus – it’s aesthetically pleasing and functional, in that it fills the space to reduce the noise level,” he says.
3. Manthe Ribane, performer and creative director for ArteBOTANICA, has selected local designer Thebe Magugu’s ‘Dawning’. This installation, which was launched at Somerset House during London Fashion Week, was intended to represent South Africa. The impactful presentation used text from the South African constitution as a centrepiece, while celebrating African women forging their own path. “For me, this piece is about being true to who you are and sharing your truth and your gift with the world,” says Ribane.
4. High-flying fashion designer Lukhanyo Mdingi has chosen Rich Mnisi’s Nwa-Mulamula Chaise. “Commissioned by Southern Guild for its 2018 exhibition Extra Ordinary, this object marks Mnisi’s breakthrough into collectible furniture,” says Mdingi. “The designs pay homage to his late great-great-grandmother, whose teachings have lived on in his family (Nwa-Mulamula means ‘guardian’ in the Tsonga language). Their rounded, sensual forms represent a central matriarch and pay tribute to the often-unsung role African mothers play. It’s visceral and real.”
5. Internationally acclaimed South African-born actress Jodi Balfour has chosen a series of photographs from Tiaan Nagel’s Summer 19/20 campaign ‘Remember You Are’. “Inspired by a piece of writing from Ntokozi Mbokazi, these images are deeply moving – they feel poetic, expansive and calming, but also invoke real drama,” says Balfour. “The play of light, richness of colour and environmental mood are truly remarkable.”
6. Elana Brundyn, founding CEO of the Norval Foundation and former Director of Institutional Development and External Affairs at Zeitz MOCAA, has selected William Kentridge’s ‘Open’ (part of his ‘Why Should I Hesitate’ sculpture exhibition at the Norval). “I love the fact that the object shows not only form and beauty but also process (the plaster original would transfer into the monumental bronze). It’s dynamic and somewhat confrontational, ready to engage the world around it. I love the coming together of art history, the personal and the political,” she says.
7. Charl Edwards, editor of House & Leisure magazine, has picked Chommies’ ‘Dog’. “It’s a special design. It originated as a literal brand extension to display Chommies’ animal accessories, and I fell in love with the story of Robinson the raffia dog,” he explains. “I chose this object because it sparks immediate joy for its comical yet very realistic

interpretation of this dog breed. Every Chommies product is handcrafted by talented local artisans – in this case, a maker in Hout Bay.”

8. Artist and activist Blessing Ngobeni has chosen Izandla Zethu African Jewellery’s ‘Delicate Bracelet’. “I like the fact that it’s made from corrugated iron sheet, a piece of material South Africans are very familiar with,” says Ngobeni. “The material got me thinking about the meaning of beauty, and how art should be honest and truthful. I like the fact that this piece has been handmade from recycled material. ‘Izandla Zethu’ means ‘our hands’ in isiXhosa, and the object inspires young people to open their eyes to existing opportunities in their immediate environment, and use their skills to help combat youth unemployment.”
9. Well-known film director Sunu Gonera nominated Trevor Stuurman’s self-portrait as his most beautiful object. “To me, this image is the most beautiful – not the chair, or the background, or the fashion, but the African artist who has come into his own, found his own voice, and brings the light of Africa to the world through our unmistakable aesthetic,” says Gonera. “The image shows a creative king, someone who represents the progress African artists have made on the world stage.”
10. Textile designer and ethical manufacturer Sindiso Khumalo has chosen Githan Coopoo’s sculpted earrings. “I chose a design piece that’s timeless, non-trendy, and has a sense of boldness and courage about it,” she says. “It’s a beautiful handmade product that feels like a piece of art worn on the ear. There’s something special about crossing boundaries between art and fashion, and Githan does it so well – his work is elegant and also rooted in craft and his own personal narratives.”

The overall winner – as decided by public vote – will be announced at Nightscape on the evening of 28 February 2020. Cast your Most Beautiful Object in South Africa 2020 vote here: [DesignIndaba.com](https://www.designindaba.com).

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