



## Hamed Ouattara's Bolibana Reimagines Disposability + Possibility

By Kelly Beal  
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*Afrika*

Burkinabé multidisciplinary artist and designer [Hamed Ouattara's](#) first American solo show – [Bolibana](#) – is currently on exhibit at [Friedman Benda](#). Known as one of the most prominent voices in contemporary African design, Ouattara's new body of high-design work has been unveiled in a residential setting in the Hollywood Hills. In the Bamana language of West Africa, 'Bolibana' refers to the unusual end to a journey, or a transformation. Ouattara is known for upcycling discarded industrial materials – like his signature oil drums – into colorful art that uses the debris to tell the end to the story of waste and global trade.

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Ouattara's work combines the spirits of artisanal and industrial to create a culturally significant and visually striking result, questioning the disposability and reimagining the possibilities of material and design. Throughout the Bolibana exhibition, he celebrates traditional techniques and craft, with each work's accumulated patina telling a story of its past.



Ouattara approached the work in two ways – first by focusing on the reuse of waste from the increasingly industrialized Burkina Faso, and second by re-engaging with the craft and knowledge that's been lost due to these same changes. The latter drew influence from the Sudano-Sahelian architecture of mythic cities, such as Timbuktu, Djenne, and Bobo Dioulasso, marking an exploration into new territory.

Created and repurposed entirely by hand, the pieces of Bolibana are made using indigenous and ancestral metalworking techniques. Due to a limited supply and access to resources, all hinges, nails, and tools necessary to bring these works to life were crafted in Ouattara's workspace, [Studio Hamed Ouattara](#).

Founded in 2002 in Ouagadougou, the studio uses materials that highlight patterns of trade and reflect the state of local development and economy. The studio collaborates with artisans in Burkina Faso to shine a light on these issues and more, like overconsumption, use of resources, the environment, and sustainability.

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*Djeli (Tradition Teller)*



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*Budu (Ethnicity)*



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