

# AD

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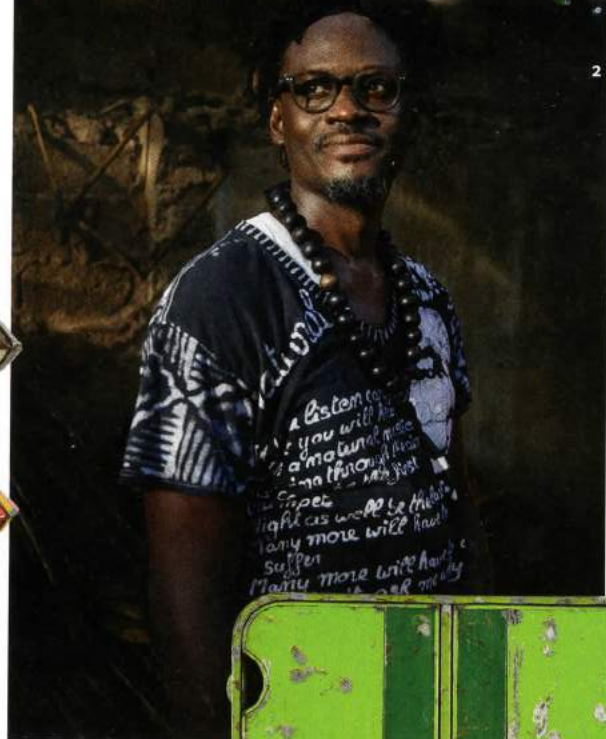


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# DISCOVERIES

1. DIOULASSOBA (DIOULA'S TOWN), A SHELF MADE FROM DISUSED OIL BARRELS BY HAMED OUATTARA.
2. OUATTARA IN HIS BURKINA FASO STUDIO.
3. JIMENA SOUGRI (FORGIVENESS).
4. TOMBOUCTOU II (TIMBUKTU II).



## EXHIBITIONS

### Forge Ahead

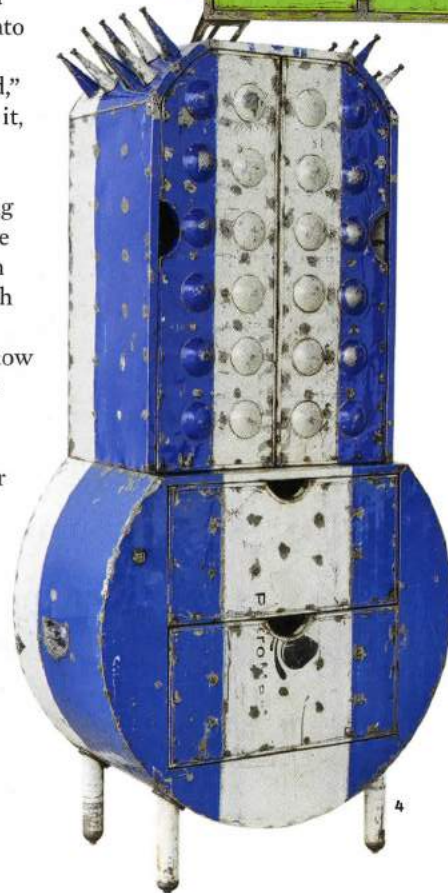
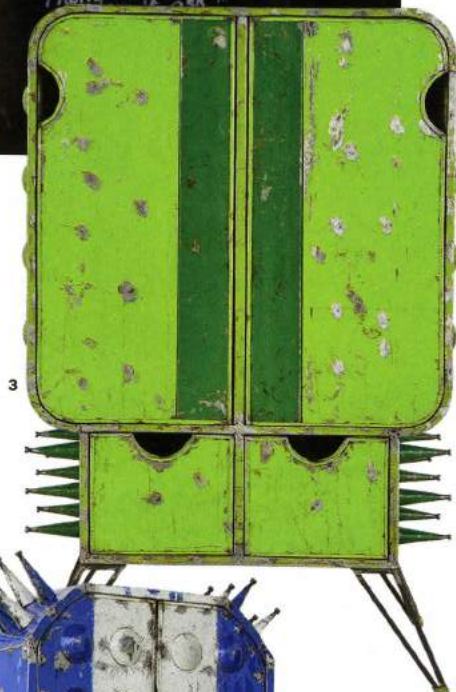
Burkinabe artist *Hamed Ouattara* upcycles an unlikely material to spotlight vernacular traditions

In landlocked Burkina Faso, where there is no domestic fossil fuel production, oil arrives by the truckload, leaving a wake of emptied steel barrels. Many people reuse those containers as trash cans or water storage. But Hamed Ouattara takes a different approach, transforming the industrial waste into fantastical functional sculptures. “This material reflects the economic dependency of the country and its relationship with the rest of the world,” explains the Burkinabe artist. “By integrating it into my creations, I can elevate it, give it a more noble life.”

With the help of his 15-person team, Ouattara deconstructs the colorful barrels—harvesting their sheet metal to then carve, bend, hammer, or rivet using traditional metal-forging techniques. The resulting Afrofuturist forms reference local Sudano-Sahelian architecture, both real and imagined. “I draw inspiration from the great medieval buildings of Africa, the stories of heroes associated with mythical cities, and the grand mosques and palaces,” he explains.

Intricately constructed and often richly textured, his latest body of work is now on view at Los Angeles’s Friedman Benda gallery in “Bolibana,” the artist’s first American solo show. (The title references the Bamana word for the end of a journey or transformation.) The pieces look simultaneously like rough-hewn spacecrafts and architectural follies, with references to West African vernacular wet-mud construction techniques. The riveted bodies of the *Bobodioulasso* (*Burkina Faso Town*) and *Tombouctou II* (*Timbuktu II*) cabinets, for example, mimic the pattern of wood stakes that stud the exterior of those structures. Meanwhile, the conical antennae on the acorn-shaped *Boulonda* (*Ancestors hut*) nod to earthen forms often found atop mosques.

“I hope to demonstrate that indigenous skills are still relevant and important,” says Ouattara, who would like to introduce young people to these traditions by establishing a design education program in Burkina Faso, where pipelines to the field are limited. Simply put: “My purpose is to share my expertise and contribute to the development of this creative industry in my country.” [friedmanbenda.com](http://friedmanbenda.com) —HANNAH MARTIN



1, 3 & 4. TIMOTHY DOYON/FRIEDMAN BENDA AND HAMED OUATTARA. 2. COURTESY OF FRIEDMAN BENDA AND HAMED OUATTARA.