

WWD

WOMEN'S WEAR DAILY

TODAY'S DIGITAL DAILY

MY ACCOUNT

BUSINESS / MARKETS


CB2 Unveils Black in Design Collective

Crate & Barrel sister company CB2 shines a light on the lack of Black talent in interiors, home and design with its latest launch celebrating the strength of the Black diaspora.

By **SOFIA CELESTE**

JULY 13, 2023, 9:00AM





The Black in Design Collective features 10 new designers, brought together and mentored by Evan Jerry of Studio Anansi. COURTESY OF CB2

MILAN – CB2, the **design**-forward brand, has launched a collection of works designed exclusively by Black artists and designers around the globe – from the streets of Paris and Lagos to the shores of the Caribbean.

The Black in Design Collective features 10 new designers, brought together and mentored by Evan Jerry, the designer and artist behind CB2 cult favorites like the T Marble side table and the Marisa Burl wood desk.

“We are still celebrating the same **design** names over and over again. It’s time to add new ones from a galaxy of backgrounds, ethnicities and perspectives,” said Jerry, whose practice Studio Anansi has garnered acclaim for propelling Black storytelling through design.

Having spent a large part of his career in Toronto and London, he emphasizes just how global the network is and how many vibrant cultures have woven their own storytelling through this collection.

“This project was conceived to allow space for designers to explore and present some of the many perspectives in which people connect and identify as Black through objects, something many designers never had the opportunity to explore or express previously,” he added.



Élan Byrd's Luana Woven Basket is an homage to basketry and the connection between earth and land, just one of the many crafts, symbols and architectural elements featured in this collection.

CB2, which was launched in 2000 as a brand where younger, budget-minded customers furnishing their first apartments could find affordably priced pieces, has made an effort over the last few years in launching **collaborations** with Lenny Kravitz, retailer Fred Segal and Gwyneth Paltrow's Goop, among others.

Designers involved in the landmark collection are Jerry, who is based in Nova Scotia, Canada; Luam Melake, based in Harlem, New York; Garth Roberts of GarthTM, based in Berlin; Monet Masters and Tavia Forbes of Forbes Masters, based in Atlanta; Sandra Githinji of Sandra Githinji Studio, based in Naarm (Melbourne), Australia; Jerome

Byron, based in Los Angeles; Élan Byrd, based in Miami; Lani Adeoye of Studio Lani, based in both Lagos, Nigeria and New York; Jean-Marc Bullet of Atelier Bullet, based in Martinique, and Dimitri Zephir of Dach + Zephir, based in Paris and Guadeloupe. Across the board, natural materials featured prominently, many items shaped with futurist lines, calming curves, enlivened with cultural elements that come to life through pottery, ceramics, basketry and textiles that celebrate Black heritage.



Ori globe floor lamp by Sandra Githinji from the Black in Design Collective.
COURTESY OF CB2

Byron, an architect and designer who works out of his studio in Echo Park, said propelling Black designers requires active engagement, active outreach, monitoring

platforms and providing support around fabrication, production and marketing. “Many companies made statements of support, but there is greater transparency now around who is backing up these statements with significant time and resources. In some ways, it’s easier than ever to hold folks accountable,” he said.



Architect and designer Jerome Byron is based in Los Angeles. COURTESY OF CB2

This new collective of designers creates a body of work that represents the Black diaspora and informs a more diverse view of high design. It also supports CB2's commitment to the Fifteen Percent Pledge, a movement to create sustainable and supportive ecosystems for Black-owned businesses, with a goal of having 15 percent of products and collaborations represented by Black businesses, artists and designers by 2024.

Melake, who is known for her handwoven sculptures and **furniture** designed for positive social interactions, said her studio work is not normally focused on racial identity, but is instead invested in the concept of Black aesthetics. "I live in Harlem and probably moved here because of how big the aesthetic idea of 'Harlem' existed in my mind for much of my life, through authors like James Baldwin and Langston Hughes, Blaxploitation films, Dapper Dan and hip-hop fashion....I thought it would be interesting to use this opportunity to represent Harlem through design," she said.



Designer Luam Melake is based in New York. COURTESY OF CB2

“It’s really refreshing to see an international view on what Black aesthetics mean to different designers. It’s important to show that there is an enormous amount of diversity of thought and perspective since Black people represent a wide range of cultures – globally, of course, but even within the same country.”

The Black in Design Collective is available exclusively at cb2.com, featuring 66 unique models across living, lighting, textiles, decor and entertainment categories ranging in

price from \$9.95 to \$3,999.

For Byron, overlooking designers of color is a missed opportunity for companies and consumers, not to mention the artisanal heritage, the many cultures the Black diaspora has to offer.

“Many, many industries, including **furniture** companies, realized that they were not only overlooking Black designers for their talent and perspective, but also missing their chance to connect with consumers and audiences who want to spend their dollars on products created by Black designers.”



Toi ivory bouclé sectional by Axel Mert from the Black in Design Collective.
COURTESY OF CB2

WWD NEWSLETTERS
WOMEN'S WEAR DAILY

SIGN UP

Sign up for WWD news straight to your inbox every day

WWD RECOMMENDS



CELEBRITY NEWS