



SWEET SALONE

YEAR	2016 -
AMOUNT	Ongoing
AREA	Sierra Leone

Sweet Salone

Sierra Leone, like many other African countries, boasts a rich craft making tradition including woodcarving, textiles, basket weaving, and pottery. Tailoring and fashion design are also thriving. However, actual design in Sierra Leone is nevertheless very much in its infancy and most fashion designers are self-made and uneducated. While we know for a fact that Sierra Leone boasts some well-educated architects who have all studied abroad the same seems to be true in other branches of design.

The decade-long civil war that ended in 2002 severely curtailed production and all crafts work. In 2014 Sierra Leone was hit by the Ebola outbreak that further reduced output. Production is slowly building up again and young people are starting to learn from their elders.

We at Aurora Foundation believe in the power of design and art to enhance the quality of life. To this end, Aurora – through our daughter fund Aurora Design Fund – has generously supported designers in Iceland over the past 10 years, establishing a strong knowledge base and network.

For some time, we have wished to link Icelandic and Sierra Leonean designers and craft makers towards establishing a cooperative platform where both parties can learn and benefit from one another. Sierra Leone and Iceland could not be more different, yet we believe that opposites attract for a reason. By introducing designers from this northern country of abundance to the artisans and craftspeople of one of the poorest places in the world, we hope to raise awareness of the courageous people of Sierra Leone and simultaneously broaden the horizons of the Icelandic designers. We wholeheartedly believe that through sharing ideas, working together and learning from one another we can make a profound impact and improve lives.

It all began with a research project investigating the types of production going on in Sierra Leone; household goods, furniture, clothing, jewelry, art etc. At the same time, we mapped the makers; materials used and the traditions concerning production and methods. Following these first steps, we

started partnering with Icelandic designers. Designers and owners of labels *As We Grow* and *Kron by KronKron* visited Sierra Leone in September 2017, followed by a visit of the Nordic design team *1+1+1*, all of them teaming up with various arts and craftspeople. The goal of the Icelandic designers was to select products for further development and production and to design new products together with local craftspeople. Key to the designers' approach is sensitivity to the existing traditions of craft production methods in Sierra Leone, understanding the current technical know-how and knowledge of the available materials to ensure practical solutions. Working together with the local designers and craftspeople of Sierra Leone was crucial to the design process.

All products born of this project will be produced under the label, *Sweet Salone*. Salone meaning Sierra Leone in Krio, one of the main languages spoken in Sierra Leone, and Sweet Salone is the nickname the locals have given their own country. Each product's label will additionally introduce the person responsible for making the respective good.

Products and ideas resulting from this bilateral design initiative have far exceeded either party's dream. The quality of products produced by the local craftspeople has significantly increased while the Icelandic designers have managed to push the local craftspeople well beyond their comfort zone. Together they have produced new products in a traditional Salone manner from almost entirely local materials that directly reflect their country of origin yet are based on Icelandic design

By means of this project, we hope to support the design and crafts industry in Sierra Leone and to help protect traditional craft making skills and materials that might otherwise disappear. We believe in supporting the craftspeople of Sierra Leone so that they can afford a decent life and simultaneously broaden the horizons of the Icelandic designers. Last, but not least, our goal is to create beautiful and valuable objects from sensitive and smart design.

While the products will initially be sold in Iceland, it is our great desire that these products will have a much broader appeal and eventually be found all over the world. It is our utmost desire that that sale of these products marks the beginning of something much bigger down the line.

Aurora directly supervised and oversaw the project with support from the project manager, Sigridur Sigurjonsdottir. Aurora funded the Icelandic designers to make this journey possible and provided the start up capital for the first products.

All the *Sweet Salone* products can be found in the following stores:

1+1+1 in Geysir, Home in Skólavörðustígur and in a special show in Mengi, Óðinsgötu 2 during Design March 2018

As We Grow in BÍUM BÍUM Síðumúla 21 and the museum shop in Museum of Design and Applied Art, Garðatorgi 1

Kron by Kronkron in the Kronkron shop, Laugavegur 63

Below you can see more of the beautiful products sold under the Sweet Salone project – designed by KronKron and AsWeGrow and handmade by our various counterparts in Sierra Leone

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