

Christian Benimana: Architects don't have to be local to think local

By [Katie de Klee](#)

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Rwandan architect Christian Benimana believes that the built environment should catalyse positive systemic change.

“Architecture is not a product, it is a process,” says Kigali-based architect Christian Benimana. “It’s not what we make in the end that becomes what we do – it’s what we do to get there and the impact, the long lasting impact that creation of the built environment is going to have.”

Benimana is the Rwandan programme director for MASS Design Group. Their work in Africa and around the world is defined by their strong sense of the built environment’s ability to have a transcendental effect on its users: hospitals can help heal patients and the architecture of a school can help its student learn better.

The MASS projects are designed to have a huge impact on the local communities, who are always employed and trained as artisans on the construction sites. Each of the MASS projects is unique and driven by a achievable impact.

Benimana is also the champion of the African Design Centre, a two-year project-led fellowship programme based in Kigali, Rwanda that opened up for applications in April 2016. The motivation behind the ADC programme is the need to train

creative leaders on the continent who will be able to help design a more sustainable future.

“It is not important to have local architects, but it is important for architects to think locally,” says Benimana. “The thing about globalisation and the world becoming a village is that all of us live on one planet.”

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