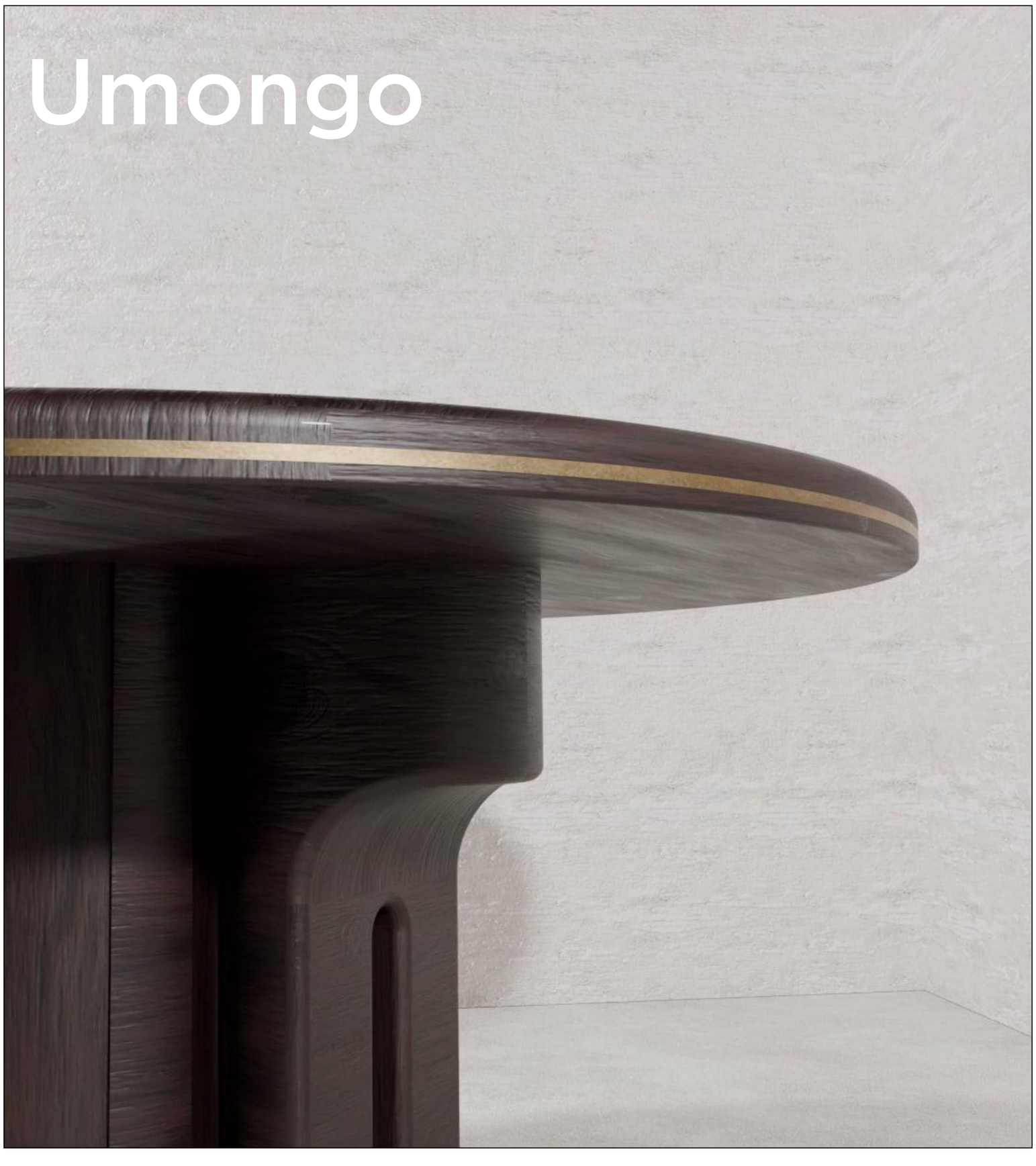

UMONGO
CATALOGUE 2025/26





Umongo – From the Marrow of African Imagination

At its core, **Umongo** is a design philosophy carved from the marrow of African life. Drawing its name from the isiXhosa word for *bone marrow*—that most nourishing and hidden essence—Umongo positions itself not merely as a brand, but as a vessel for transmitting the intangible richness of African thought, culture, and memory through contemporary design.

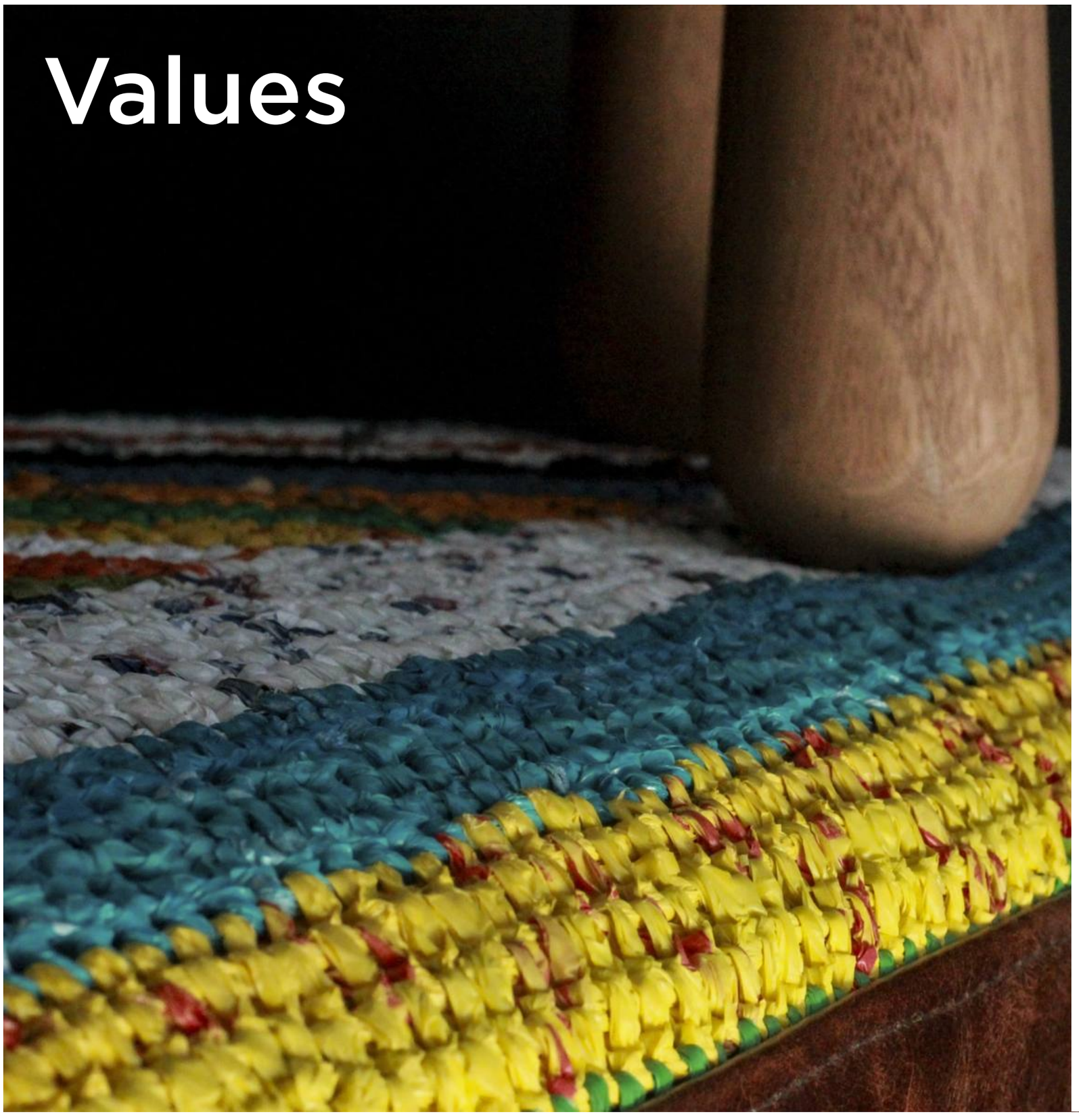
Founded by **Mlondolozi "Mlo" Hempe**, Umongo is rooted in a belief that design should speak with the same depth and complexity as the oral histories, ancestral wisdoms, and everyday rituals that shape African lived experience. It is a brand that does not borrow from Africa—it **breathes Africa**, carrying forward the textures of community, the geometry of indigenous knowledge systems, and the emotional resonance of objects imbued with purpose.

At a time when design is often stripped of context in pursuit of trend, Umongo insists on **authenticity as a design principle**. Its creative process is layered, collaborative, and sensorial—seeking not only to function or to beautify, but to **feel**, to remember, and to provoke. This is design that aims to awaken the marrow within us all: our longing for connection, meaning, and rootedness.

Umongo's objective is clear—to contribute to a global design language that is unmistakably African in origin, yet universally human in emotion. Through its work, it imagines a future where African narratives are not aestheticised, but **central**, where craft is not commodified, but **honoured**, and where design becomes a site of both cultural memory and innovation.

In essence, Umongo is not simply about what is seen. It is about what is **felt**, what is **remembered**, and what is **carried forward**.

Values



At Umongo, we believe that design must begin with truth. That means anchoring every creation in authenticity—drawing from the marrow of African life, not to decorate, but to **honour**.

We are deeply committed to cultural integrity, ensuring that the stories, materials, and symbols we work with are treated with the care and reverence they deserve. Collaboration is central to our process—whether it's working with artisans, fellow designers, or communities—because we know that design is most powerful when it is shared. We design to move people.

Our pieces are created not just to be used or admired, but to be **felt**, to awaken memories, to start conversations, and to remind us of who we are and where we come from. For us, innovation is not about abandoning the past—it is about listening to it and allowing heritage to shape the future in new and surprising ways.

Sustainability, for us, includes the **preservation of cultural knowledge**, of techniques passed down and ways of thinking that the world desperately needs to remember. Above all, we believe in collectibility with purpose—creating design that holds emotional, cultural, and intellectual value. Our work is a celebration of the soul of Africa, shared with the world through timeless, intentional design.

Imbadu Bench

An Ode to Collective Making

The Imbadu Bench is a visual metaphor for unity through difference. Inspired by the philosophy of the Imbadu Collective—where communities gather, share, and build from what they have—this piece celebrates the power of collaboration. Each leg of the bench is distinct in form, colour, and character, yet together they uphold a single surface, reminding us that strength lies in diversity.

By sourcing and combining varied elements, the design transforms everyday parts into a sculptural whole—unexpected, playful, and deeply symbolic. The Imbadu Bench invites reflection on how we create meaning not in isolation, but through **togetherness**, storytelling, and shared imagination.

It is more than a seat—it is a conversation about **community**, about the beauty that emerges when many hands shape one vision.

Specifications :

Materials: Recycled A- grade Sleeper wood I Ash I Walnut

Size : L - 2300 mm I Width - 340 mm I H - 420 mm

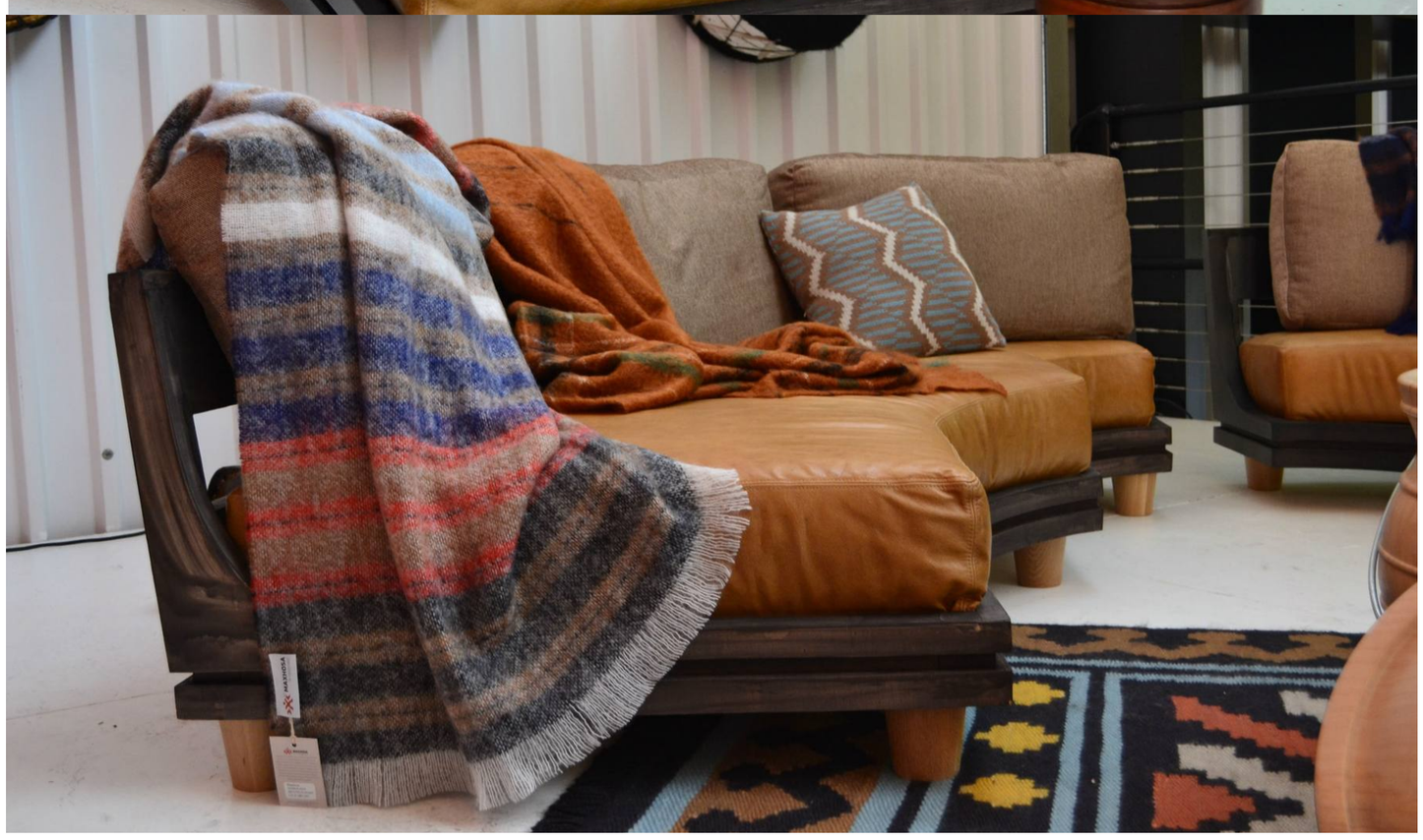
Cost : R 70 000.00 Exl.VAT

Made to oder see T&C's on lead times and payment procedure




Inkundla Sofa





Designing for Dialogue

In Xhosa tradition, the circle is sacred—a space of gathering, dialogue, and shared wisdom. During ceremonies, men sit together in a formation known as the **Inkundla**, where the act of sitting in a circle fosters eye contact, trust, and open communication.

The **Inkundla Sofa** draws from this cultural practice, translating its spirit into a contemporary seating arrangement that brings people closer—literally and emotionally. Designed to encourage face-to-face interaction in domestic spaces, it reimagines ancestral ways of convening for the modern home. This is not just furniture; it is an architecture of connection, where the shape itself invites engagement, presence, and human warmth.

Specifications :

Materials: Oak l Walnut l Ash l Leather l Tweed

Size : Depth - 2100 mm l Width - 3340 mm l H - 620 mm

Cost : R 250 000.00 Exl.VAT

Made to oder see T&C's on lead times and payment procedure



Wooden Potjie

A Ceremony Reimagined

Rooted in the rhythms of rural life, the **potjie** is more than a cooking vessel—it is a symbol of togetherness, tradition, and ritual. Found in many homes and central to communal gatherings, it carries stories of nourishment passed down through generations.

In this reimagining, the **Wooden Potjie** transforms a deeply familiar cultural object into a contemporary design piece. By elevating its form and crafting it from unexpected materials, the potjie becomes both homage and evolution—honouring its ceremonial value while introducing a new aesthetic language. It is a quiet tribute to the sacred ordinary, where utility meets memory, and tradition is given new life through design.

Specifications :

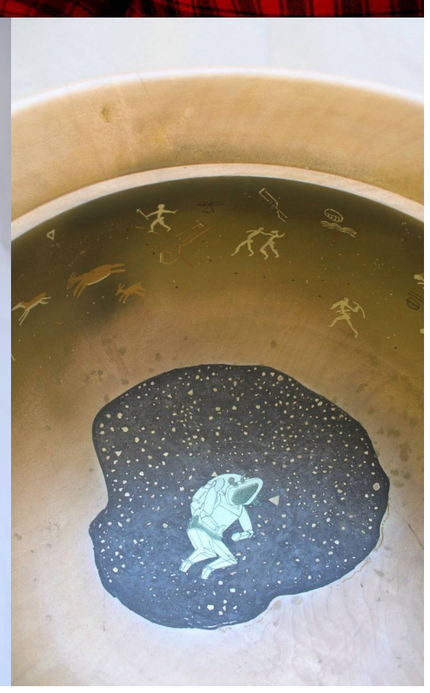
Materials: Poplar wood

Size : Dia - 500 mm l H - 550 mm

Cost : R 85 000.00 Exl.VAT

Made to oder see T&C's on lead times and payment procedure





Chaise Dream Chair













Specifications :

Materials: Oak I Walnut I Leather I Cow hide

Size : L - 2500 mm I W - 800 mm

Cost : R 185 000.00 Exl. VAT

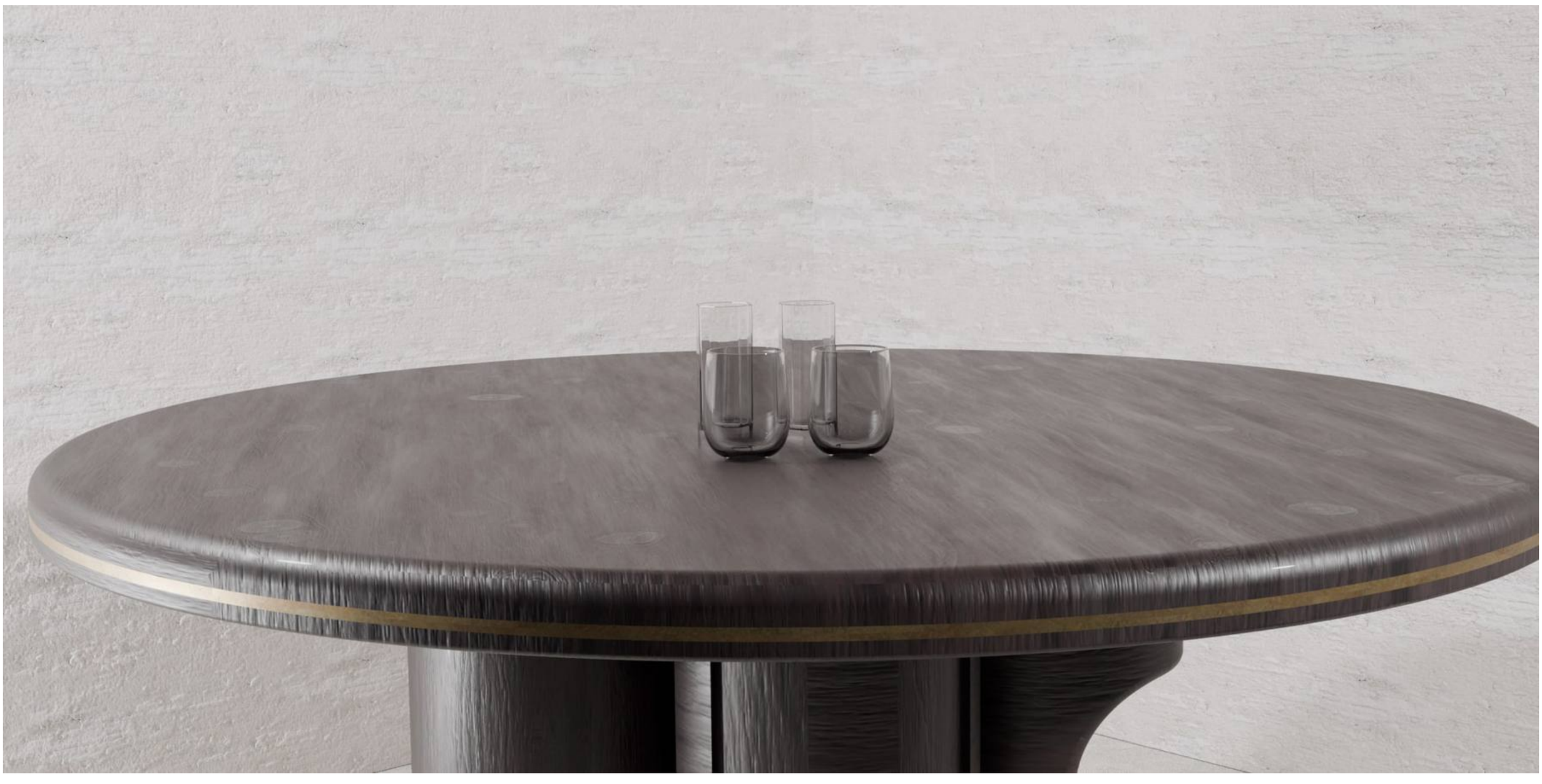
Made to oder see T&C’s on lead times and payment procedure

Ancestral Echoes in Form

Born from a shared love of music between designers **Mlondolozi Hempe** and **Andile Dyalvane**, the **Dream Chaise** is a poetic interpretation of sound, memory, and spiritual connection. Its form draws inspiration from the elegant silhouette of a traditional **African harp from Nigeria**, discovered through the work of legendary Langa-based musician and ethnomusicologist **Dizu Plaatjie**.

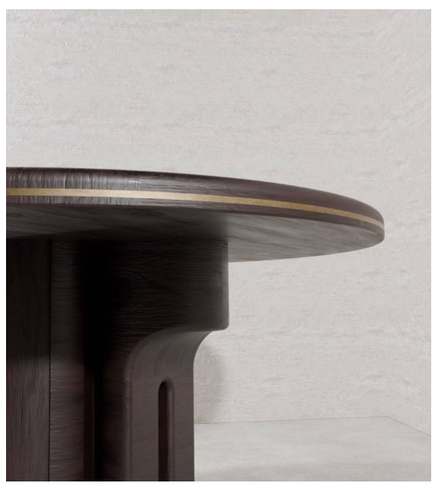
In many African cultures, dreams are portals—spaces where we commune with ancestors, receive wisdom, and reconnect with the unseen. The Dream Chaise embodies this belief, offering a place of rest that evokes the stillness and resonance of the dream state. It is both a sculptural homage to musical heritage and a meditative object designed to bring us closer to that which is eternal and unspoken.

Kumnandi Dining Table











A Gathering of Spirit and Structure

In many African cultures, the table is more than furniture—it is a stage for stories, meals, rituals, and reconciliation. The **Kumnandi Dining Table** is born from this understanding. Its form is both grounded and monumental, echoing the carved geometry of traditional structures—granaries, kraals, and ceremonial enclosures—where community finds its centre.

The robust base, sculpted with interlocking forms, evokes a sense of architectural rhythm—each volume a pillar of support, each negative space a breath for dialogue. The generous round top, subtly adorned with a contrasting brass inlay, invites circularity not just in form but in meaning—**eye contact, equality, and shared presence.**

This is not just a place to dine. It is a space to remember, to honour, and to imagine—a modern altar for gathering, where the weight of memory and the lightness of joy coexist in balance.



Specifications :

Materials: Oak I Walnut I Ash I Brass

Size : Dia - 1500 mm I H - 750 mm

Cost : R 140 000.00 Exl.VAT

Made to oder see T&C’s on lead times and payment procedure

Kumnandi DiningChair



A Seat of Celebration

Crafted to complete the communal spirit of the **Kumnandi Dining Table**, the **Kumnandi Chair** is a vibrant expression of joy, rhythm, and identity. Its bold upholstery—a patchwork of colour, geometry, and ancestral echoes—mirrors the layered conversations that take place around the table: stories passed down, laughter shared, wisdom exchanged.

The chair's rounded back embraces the sitter like a ceremonial gesture, while the central circular cut-out becomes a metaphorical **portal**—a space for light, for openness, for the unseen energy that moves between people when they gather with intention. Resting on a solid, fluted base, it blends strength with playfulness, memory with modernity.

This chair is not merely functional—it is **symbolic**. A throne for everyday rituals. A celebration of **pattern, presence, and place**.

Specifications :

Materials: Oak l Walnut l Ash l Fabric

Size : W - 550 mm l H - 850 mm

Cost : R 30 000.00 Exl.VAT

Made to oder see T&C's on lead times and payment procedure









Ancestral Architecture Reimagined

The **Djenné Server Unit** is a sculptural homage to Africa's architectural grandeur—most notably, the earthen majesty of the **Great Mosque of Djenné** in Mali. With its rhythmic symmetry, modular language, and earthen gravitas, this piece bridges the lineage of sacred space and contemporary function.

Its rounded form and gridded façade echo the mosque's pierced towers and clustered protrusions—once scaffolding, now ornamental—symbols of resilience, ritual, and craftsmanship. The lattice-cut cabinet doors allow light and shadow to dance across its surface, recalling the filtered light within adobe interiors. Resting on a base of bulbous, turned wood feet, the structure feels grounded yet elevated, monumental yet human.

Designed as both a server and a ceremonial object in the modern home, this piece speaks to continuity: **how the past informs the present**, how utility can coexist with reverence, and how design can carry the architectural soul of a continent forward—quietly, boldly, beautifully.

Specifications :

Materials: Oak I Walnut I Ash I Brass

Size : D - 450 mm I W - 2200 mm I H - 1900 mm

Cost : R 200 000.00 Exl.VAT

Made to oder see T&C's on lead times and payment procedure







Isiphambano Coffee Table















A Geometry of Gathering

The **Isiphambano Coffee Table** is a sculptural celebration of symmetry, ritual, and reverence. Its flower-like base unfurls into a radial form that evokes traditional African cosmograms—spiritual diagrams representing the cycle of life, movement, and connection between realms.

Crafted from layered wood, dyed finishes, and crowned with a floating glass top, the table invites both visual play and communal pause. Each undulating leg curves inward like a heartbeat—distinct yet unified—symbolising the many voices and paths that converge around a shared centre. The vibrant lower gradient, ranging from **earth greens to ocean blues**, grounds the piece in the colours of African land and sky, while the gold banding glows like a sunlit horizon.

Far more than a functional surface, **Isiphambano** is a contemplative object. It brings **balance to the room**, honours the **ritual of gathering**, and transforms everyday living into sacred geometry.

Specifications :

Materials: Oak I Walnut I Ash I Brass I Leather or Suede I Glass

Size : Dia - 1000 mm I H - 350 mm

Cost : R 75 000.00 Exl.VAT

Made to oder see T&C's on lead times and payment procedure

Isango Console Table





A Threshold Between Worlds

The **Isango Console Table** draws its name and meaning from the isiXhosa word *“isango”*—a gate, threshold, or doorway. In African cosmology, the threshold is never just a passage—it is a moment of transformation, a space between the seen and unseen.

Balancing asymmetry and harmony, this piece is a meditation on duality. One leg is sculpted from stacked, mossy green cylindrical forms—textural and grounded, like carved stone totems found in sacred spaces. The other, a brushed brass arc, is slender and refined—an architectural gesture reminiscent of ancient entrances. Together, they support a sleek, organic tabletop in warm timber tones, suggesting the confluence of nature, structure, and soul.

The **Isango Table** is a quiet monument—a meeting point of materials and memory, designed for spaces where reflection and reception take place. Whether placed in a hallway, gallery, or ceremonial room, it becomes a symbolic host, welcoming what enters and blessing what leaves.

Specifications :

Materials: Oak I Walnut I Ash I Brass I Marble or Stone

Size : Dia - 1000 mm I H - 350 mm

Cost : R 100 000.00 Exl.VAT

Made to oder see T&C’s on lead times and payment procedure



Umthi Coffee Table

Where Roots Become Structure

The **Umthi Coffee Table**—*umthi* meaning “tree” in isiXhosa—is a tribute to nature not just as inspiration, but as collaborator. This piece reimagines the table not simply as a surface, but as **a living gesture**, rooted in the language of land and growth.

One leg of the table is sculpted as a vessel, designed to cradle a living plant. It transforms flora into a structural component, blurring the line between the built and the botanical. The opposing leg—cut from blackened steel and adorned with a geometric African motif—speaks of **ancestral rhythm**, of continuity, of design as visual language.

Together, the earthy mass and the patterned steel form a poetic balance—**organic and architectural, grounded and elevated**. The wooden tabletop stretches between them like a canopy, offering rest, reflection, and presence.

The **Umthi Coffee Table** is not just an object—it is a system of relationships. Between people and place. Between memory and matter. Between what is grown and what is made.

Specifications :

Materials: Oak I Walnut I Ash I Clay I Steel powder coated

Size : W - 500 mm I H - 560 mm

Cost : R 70 000.00 Exl.VAT

Made to oder see T&C’s on lead times and payment procedure

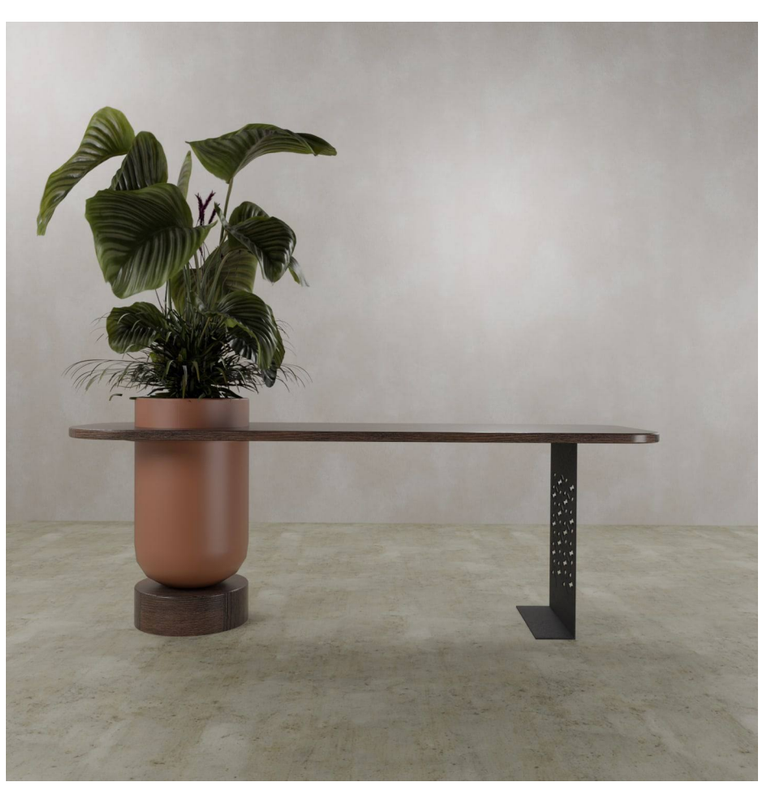












Ingobozi Side Table



The *Ingobozi Side Table* is where the story of the tree and the craft of weaving meet. Its solid, cylindrical base is inspired by the texture of bark and the rhythm of woven baskets—both layered, repetitive, and full of memory. Like a tree rooted deep in the earth, the form grounds the space it occupies, while the woven pattern represents the interconnection of life, lineage, and tradition.

Each horizontal band that wraps around the base evokes the act of weaving—an ancient practice that, like the rings of a tree, carries time within it. The marble top rests like a canopy above the trunk, a reminder of the balance between organic strength and considered refinement.

Through this table, we tell a story of rootedness and unity. It honours the African tree as a meeting place and source of wisdom, and the weave as a gesture of care, labour, and community. The *Ingobozi Side Table* becomes not just an object, but a vessel of history, process, and growth.

Specifications :

Materials: Oak I Walnut I Ash I Clay I Marble or Stone I Brass

Size : Dia - 450 mm I H - 480 mm

Cost : R 45 000.00 Exl.VAT

Made to oder see T&C's on lead times and payment procedure





Manufacturing Terms & Conditions

All our products are **made-to-order** and handcrafted by skilled artisans using carefully sourced materials and considered techniques. As a result, we work on an **8–12 week lead time** from confirmation of deposit payment to completion.

Please note the following terms:

- A **50% non-refundable deposit** is required to initiate production.
- The remaining **50% balance** must be settled **before delivery or collection**.
- Lead times may vary depending on material availability, production schedules, or customisations, but we will communicate any delays promptly.
- Due to the handmade nature of our work, **variations in tone, texture, and finish** are part of the natural character of each piece and should not be seen as defects.
- **Cancellations, changes, or refunds** are not accepted once production has begun.
- **Shipping and delivery** are quoted and billed separately, based on location and scale of the order.
- It is the client's responsibility to ensure **site access and delivery conditions** are suitable prior to dispatch.

By placing an order, clients acknowledge and accept these terms and the bespoke, handcrafted nature of our production process.

Project-Specific Design Services:

Bespoke design adaptations and product development for interior, hospitality, or architectural projects are available upon request. This includes material substitutions, dimensional alterations, or entirely new designs inspired by existing collections. A design fee may apply based on scope and complexity.



