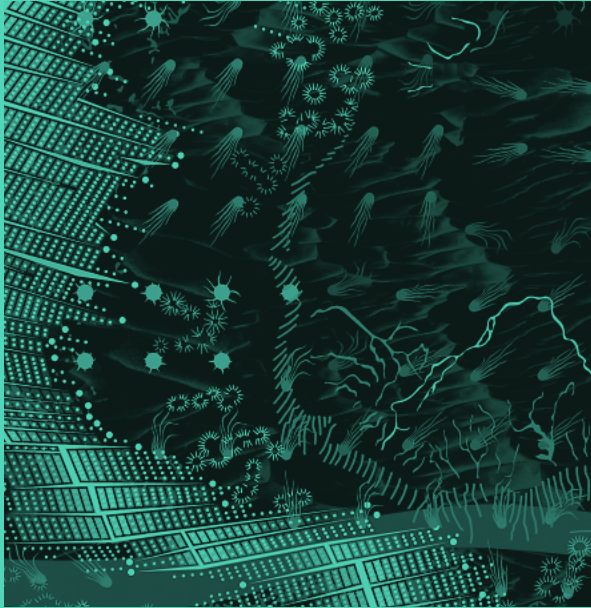


2022 Spotlight Award

AD—WO



Clockwise:
Detail of drawing for tapestry, *Planetary Scar*, 2020.
Jen Wood and Emanuel Admassu, Founding Principals, AD—WO.
Portrait by Rachel Hulin.
Wiregrass WAHO, 2020.
Detail of installation, *ATL Bricks*, 2020.

When AD—WO talks about their work, one senses that they are profoundly deliberate with words; they see architecture as a “discipline that disciplines” and explore architectural “content and containers.” The recipients of RDA’s 2021 Spotlight Award, they study the embedded and often unnoticed relations of language that shape how we conceptualize and make our spatial surroundings.

Founded in 2015 by Jen Wood and Emanuel Admassu, the art and architecture practice AD—WO is based in New York City with projects ranging from Melbourne to Addis Ababa—the hometowns of Wood and Admassu, respectively. Their work takes the form of art installations, research projects, and buildings: they participated in MoMA’s 2021 exhibition *Reconstructions: Architecture and Blackness in America*; *Two Markets*, a series of drawings, investigates African marketplaces; and they designed Bole Rwanda, a multi-family residence in Addis Ababa.

During their RDA lecture, titled “Immeasurability,” the awardees shared their preoccupation with methods of determinacy: If the acts of delineation are bound up with Western notions of measurement, ownership, and enclosure, how does one represent that which is immeasurable? AD—WO finds “meaning not through forms but events that facilitate them,” as they wrote in a contribution to *Survivance*, a collaboration between the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and e-flux Architecture. Similarly, their representations prize active blocks of color beyond the traditional formats of linework and perspective.

AD—WO’s work is both worldly and academic. An interest in postcolonial studies and Afrodiasporic spaces informs their investigations. Currently Admassu is an assistant professor at Columbia University GSAPP; he previously taught at RISD Architecture and Harvard GSD.

AD—WO accepts that architecture, like any discipline, is a learned practice with expectant audiences. Their contributions invite us to rethink our training as designers and boldly lays the groundwork for, as they wrote for *Survivance*, “ways of seeing another world.”

—Tiffany Xu

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