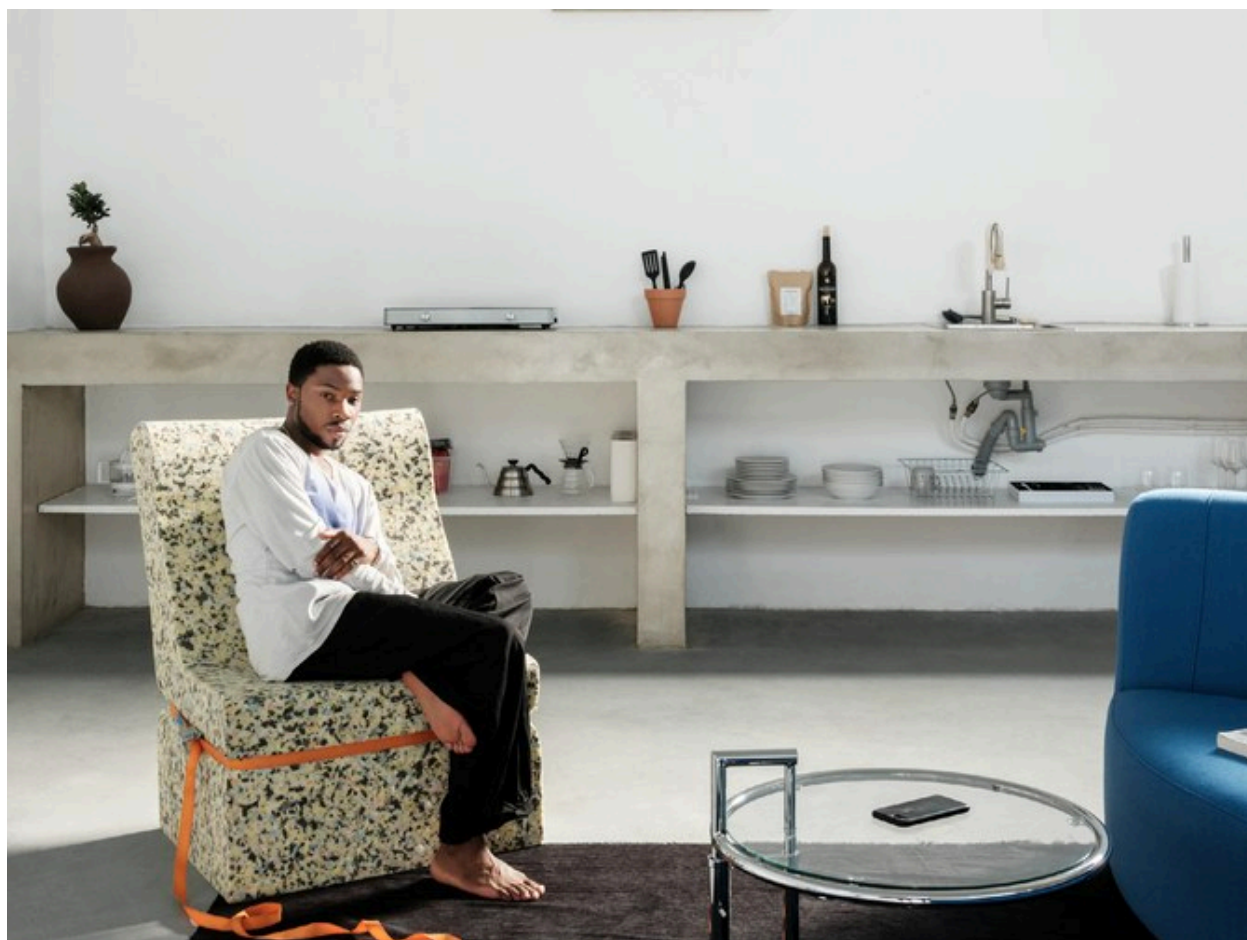


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## Discover The World OF Dozie Kanu

From his new home studio in rural Portugal, the Houston-born design star is gearing up to make a statement this month in Miami

Text: Hannah Martin | Photography: Luis Díaz Díaz | Posted November 12, 2018



This is a farming community," Dozie Kanu says over FaceTime, flipping his phone camera around to show off his new home—a vast warehouse in the middle of rural *Portugal*, not far from Lisbon. "Those neighbors grow olive trees. Across the street, it's cucumbers." The rolling hills and endless

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sky may look serene, but Kanu is stressed. His own crops, of the aesthetic variety, are due for harvest.

Just back from Switzerland, where he was awarded the Hublot Design Prize, the 25-year-old Houston native is busy finalizing a new body of work. The metal skeletons of seats and lights in progress are scattered across his studio floor. Within a week he'll slather them with gritty concrete to render rough, sculptural forms that will be shipped off to Design Miami.



"I'm trying to reinvent myself," Kanu says, reflecting on his departure from the clean lines and poured-concrete surfaces that have defined his work for the last few years. "It's kind of early in my career to be doing that, but I think it's necessary." Shape-shifting comes naturally to Kanu, who moved to New York in 2011 to study film at the School of Visual Arts. He started making furniture (or, as he describes it, "art with a layer of functionality") somewhat by accident, when his interest in set design led the way to gigs with interior designer Carol Egan, design purveyor Matter Made, and the creative agency Bureau Betak. His senior year, he created two chairs—a black frame and a

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white frame, both tubular steel. They were presented stacked, as one, black on top. "It was a gesture of dominance," he says. "An internal pep talk for myself against white supremacy."



*Table On 84's*, 2018, uses a car rim as a base.

Image courtesy of the artist and Salon 94 Design.

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*Chair [I], 2016.*

Image courtesy of the artist and Salon 94 Design.

Photographed by his friend the fashion designer Matthew Williams, and featured on Nick Knight's blog, SHOWstudio, the piece caught the attention of design dealer Paul Johnson, who then placed one of Kanu's works—a concrete bench supported by steel car rims—in Salon 94 Design's 2017 group show at Lever House. "Using the rims was my way of both rejecting and paying homage to my upbringing," Kanu says, referencing Houston's famous car (a.k.a. "slab") culture.

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Kanu with a new stool outside his home.

He has since earned a coveted spot on the Salon 94 Design roster, and will bring his new work to the gallery's Design Miami booth come December. Meanwhile, he's also been selected to create the Miami Design District's annual holiday installation. There, bird feeders will hang from palm trees, and climbing structures—made of rebar and automotive equipment coated in candy-colored car paint—will stand on bases of melted-down gunmetal. The shimmering structures—a collaboration with the Caliber Foundation, an American nonprofit that supports victims of gun violence—are each engraved with the serial numbers of decommissioned firearms and bullets, confiscated from criminals. Says Kanu: "I wanted to make pieces that were familiar to children but had a deeper meaning." dozie.studio

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