Ethiopian design history being mapped

A university in Ethiopia has embarked on a ground-breaking initiative to digitise and provide widespread access to the country's design history.

The ambitious research is being conducted at the Ethiopian Institute of Architecture, Construction Management and City Development (EiABC) by the chair of CAD and geo-informatics.

Ayele Bedada, Principal research conductor at the chair says: "Through conducting this research we intend to look back at our heritage and trace its significance to the development of the local industry. Many attributes of our historic design have the potential to predict how Ethiopia's design landscape will evolve in future."

Over and above capturing the history, the project's main goal is to provide widespread digital access to Ethiopia's unique furniture and utensil design, including textures and patterns through specialised software applications.

The project began three years ago, when Bedada prepared the initial research. It has now expanded to involve several members of academic staff and a number of interested students.

The team have been using Autodesk Revit 2012, 2013 and 2014 software to model everything on this digital database.

"The Building Information Modelling (BIM) methodology was a source of inspiration during the modelling phase of the research, and Revit was used with great success in the implementation of this stage to produce parametric models of traditional Ethiopian objects," says Bedada.

The use of this software was also critical, in that it had the ability to

translate the different cultural and design nuances of various Ethiopian artefacts into an understandable, cohesive format. Ethiopia has numerous cultures, and each culture has design details unique to its community. As the research covers the entire country, it requires a tool that can organise a wide variety of data collection and modelling activities.

The results of this research will have a significant impact on Ethiopian design. The research will also market Ethiopia's design to a wider platform. Bedada concludes: "In conducting this research, we will promote Ethiopia's skill in design to the international community."

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