

Background to the Kampala Biennale concept

Preparing the 4th edition of the Kampala Biennale, it appeared that it was primordial to think a new format for that artistic rendezvous, dedicated to the audience.

Kampala Biennale challenges to make people understand how the Visual Arts are useful to change our societies and change our minds. As artists, art organizers and art writers we have been luckily introduced to this domain; we aren't afraid to visit a show because we aren't afraid that there will be many things that we won't understand, we have discovered many ways to become free, and become active citizens in our communities.

A Biennale, especially in Uganda, can't be just a showroom of paintings, photographs, performances, video or sculptures, before closing doors. We believe it has the mission to change people's life, like it changed our lives. Art opens our minds; we can learn other ways of resistance, in our own neighbourhood in Kampala as well as in an Ecuadorian ghetto or in the Parisian bourgeoisie.

Since last edition, we invited the internationally acclaimed Cameroonian curator Simon Njami to come up with a perspective that would make our home a place of knowledge and sharing. He decided to invite international artists, considered as masters in their field to give workshops to younger artists, from Uganda, Africa and the world.

We moved thus a step higher, from when we decided to launch such an artistic rendezvous in Uganda in 2014. We learned, through the exchanges that took place in Kampala and the artworks produced, that more than exhibitions – even though exhibitions are important to celebrate a communion between artists and audience as well concerts have the same role -, that sharing knowledge, experiences, techniques, etc., forms the essential part of Art endowment. We wish to show Art power to give us all the tools to make a better life for each of us.

Simon Njami chose for this edition a music written by Peter Tosh and Bob Marley in 1973. It is an invitation to get up, stand up for our rights. The song encourages us to look for our rights on this earth. It talks about a certain religious oppression which teaches us that the paradise isn't in our world but elsewhere, while the accomplishment of our humankind and our well living is right here, right now. This call concerns any rights: political, racial, economical, gender, social, health, free thoughts, etc.

Within the two coming years, KAB20 will actively work to share those values and experiment them through the prism of Art.

A Biennale has no reason to exist if it is not thought for local people. This new invitation, **Get up Stand up**, as the title of KAB20, concerns every people from our neighbourhood, Kampala City.

Education activities and workshops are the key of our programme. By the past editions, our education programme concerned an audience of children, in partnership with schools. We won't forget them but we are going to enlarge this asset to young people, teenagers and young students & workers. They are the ones who are ready to change our future.

This beginning of 21st century is the theatre of political and social hopes for many African countries. Today Algeria is moving an old military regime. Citizens all over Africa, Zimbabwe, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Tunisia, etc., are moving the lines. On the other hand, gender fights are stronger every day, for women and gay rights. It doesn't have demonstrative revolutions but activists and individuals are slightly moving the bars.

Religious oppression is still everywhere on the planet getting stronger but in front it makes people think more and more. Ecology is also the fight some people chose as their own mission. Peasants are at the front, but they don't have any mediatic voices; activists and organizations help us to understand that it is a common struggle we can't avoid.

While by the past, Visual artists mainly served some masters (kings, commissioners, priests), today contemporary art carries another purpose: Art talks and spreads information about the things we cannot accept any more if we wish to live all together on this earth.