

# **Peace-making through Art Workshops, Talks, Murals, and Shows in South Sudan and Uganda**



**Summer 2015**

**Project Report**

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## Project Report Summary

This summer I traveled to Kampala, Kiryndongo, Bweyale refugee camps in Uganda, and Juba in the Republic of South Sudan to conduct workshops designed to educate participants on the role of art in self-advocacy, peace-making, employment, and basic therapy. Close to 200 participants attended these workshops in total, and they included urban and rural refugees, established artists, and young students from different ethnic groups, regions, religions, and genders. All had experienced the hardships of war and many suffered trauma. These workshops taught participants artistic skills, opened their eyes to career opportunities, caused them to reflect on their past, present, and future, and encouraged them to collaborate and learn from ethnic groups unlike their own.

The workshops in Kampala focused on how refugees can apply artistic skills to different art disciplines as well as careers in medicine, engineering, farming, and other commercial practices. It is especially important to educate refugees on how they can be in control of their financial lives because they do not have many resources for finding jobs and often depend on NGOs in all aspects of their lives. The workshops also asked participants to use watercolor to make a self-portrait illustrating their past, present, and future. At the end of the three days, we hosted a show to display the works of the participants. We were also able to establish contacts with two artists from Makerere University (one of them also affiliated with UCASDR, a university in Uganda) who assisted in the workshop. Both artists were willing to advise participants about further education after the cession of the workshops.

26 mid-level to established artists, from different ethnic groups, regions, religions, and genders, attended the workshops I conducted in Juba. The workshops developed their techniques, conceptual thinking, and cooperative skills. The technical and conceptual components were addressed through slide presentations, and the cooperative skills were instilled through a collaborative mural. The participants' goals were to create a piece of work that recognized unity, harmony and cooperation, personal healing, and to work towards a mutual aesthetic value. Members of the workshop had to incorporate elements from another tribe into their work and learned to give each other articulate feedback and constructive criticism. This mural was revealed through a public opening, and was received well by visitors.

I also led workshops at the Banyodoli Secondary School in the Kiryndongo Refugee Settlement and the Godwin Elementary School. The Banyodoli workshop covered peace-building techniques focusing on the visual and environmental arts, and focused on using natural materials such as plants, rocks, water and sand as art materials. During the Godwin workshop, students learned problem-solving and collaboration skills by working together to braid a rope.

Along with the workshops, I gave talks for Kampala at the Makerere University and the Nommo National Gallery on the role of art in peace and community building, art and art therapy, and my work on both. While in Juba, I met with the Minister of Culture, Antiquities, and Sports, and the Deputy Speaker of the Parliament. I discussed the importance of arts in nation building, and asked for their support for South Sudanese artists. I did 4 radio interviews, a TV interview, and three interviews for various newspapers. I met with USAID, and with faculty and students of Juba University to discuss curriculum. I also led a one-day workshop for an elementary school that asked not to reveal any information about their students or location.

## Introduction

From June 24<sup>th</sup> to August 21, I traveled to Uganda – Kampala, Kiryndongo, Bweyale refugee camps in Uganda, and Juba in the Republic of South Sudan to conduct workshops designed to educate participants on the role of art in self-advocacy, peace-making, and basic therapy. In addition, I engaged the community in art shows in order to display the positive relationship between community members and art. I hope going to art shows and viewing art will become a norm in these societies, as this will facilitate nation building and strengthen peace making affords.

This report will highlight the scope of work and opportunities for refugees to utilize art for overcoming future difficulties such as trauma and community development. The people I worked with in these workshops came from different ethnic groups, regions, religions, and genders; however, all experienced the hardships of war and many suffered trauma. These art workshops compelled participants to collaborate to complete a project and support each other's process. Furthermore, the workshops taught students how to express themselves through the language of art and effectively communicate their experiences to their viewers. The workshops also aimed to allow participants to apply the skills they have learned to job development.

Although my original plan was to travel to Kampala, Juba and the refugee camps in the borders of South Sudan and Sudan to follow up with communities that I worked with last summer, I had to change some of these locations due to security restrictions at the time. I am pleased, however, that I was able to outreach to new communities and widen my perspective on community building. Despite this change, I was able to maintain communication with the people I worked with last summer through email and the internet. I have also developed a few active websites to facilitate our communication and more to come. It is important to me that the effects of these workshops are long-term, and continue to benefit the community after they have ceased.



## Workshops

### *Workshops in Kampala (July 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup>)*

The participants of the Ugandan workshops varied from urban refugees to those of traditional refugee settlements. The majority of the attendees were from Sudan and South Sudan; however, some were also from Somalia, the Republic of Congo, and Uganda. These participants were attracted to the unique way art fulfill their needs and curiosity for new language of expressions. I expected 20 people to attend but I received 72 attendees.

The workshops in Kampala addressed two themes: 1.) careers in the arts and 2.) developing a self portrait. The first theme allowed participants to think about the way art can take shape in their new urban communities and how they can utilize art to pursue their ambitions for the future. I developed this material as specifically as possible to the situation of refugees in Kampala. The second theme compelled participants to reflect and present their past, present, and future using visual arts.



### *Careers in the arts for refugees*

The aim of this unit was to inspire participants and give them ideas about how to develop their artistic skills and eventually make a living. Refugees do not have many options for finding jobs and often depend on NGOs in all aspects of their lives. In general, they rely on the help of outsiders and are not in control of their lives. This workshop inspired talented refugees and gave them hope. It showed them they are worthy, and that they can use their skills and talents to make their situation better. Not only would they improve their daily lives, but they would invest in their

daily lives, but they would invest in their future lives.

The presentation showed examples of artists from around the world who work in different art disciplines and successfully make a living. In addition, we explored how artistic talent could be applied to many professions such as medicine, engineers, farming, and other commercial practices.

The format of this unit was presented through a slide presentation. The presentation explored the following topics:

What is art; why art?

What can I as a refugee do with art while I do not have enough food, clothing, running water, or even a home?

Can I make a living as an artist if I am a refugee?

What are the different disciplines in the art?

Gardening, advertisement, animation, interior design, architecture, photography, fashion design, hair styling etc...

Globalization and technology

Utilizing the internet

Issues of art in different art fields and how to communicate your talents in these fields

How art can be used for personal fulfillment and enjoyment of life

### **Kampala Career in the Arts Project Outcome:**

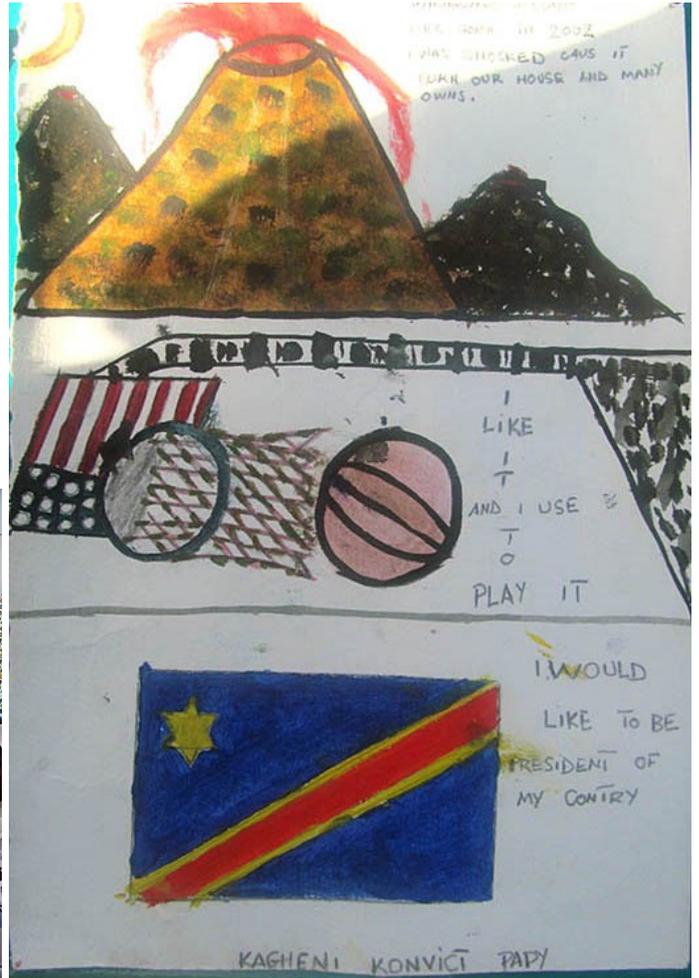
The outcome of this unit was quite successful. The workshop opened people's eyes to the different career possibilities. Many showed a strong interest and commitment to pursue a career in the arts. Many of the girls were excited about fashion design, and a few boys expressed interest in photography. Both were willing to explore animation, architecture, as well as graphic design and advertisement. The workshop helped the students think in a future-oriented manner, and gave them more confidence to pursue their goals. They learned their artistic talent, interest, and knowledge can make them a decent living no matter what career they choose to go into. They were able to picture themselves as leaders in their own lives and in control of their financial future. Lastly, we made links with working artists in Kampala and Makerere University students who offered future support and education for the refugees.

*My self-portrait, my past, my present, and future*

In this unit, I asked students to create a self-portrait that included elements of their past, present and future using watercolors. The works students illustrated were beautiful, expressive, inspiring, and reflective. Many of their experiences had to do with war and it's impact. Their futures, however, were generally optimistic (paintings of houses, swings, flowers, schools, and lots of greens spaces).

At the end of the three days, we hosted a show to display the works of the participants. Two artists from Makerere University assisted in the workshop. One of them is a performer and writer and contributed to the workshop by addressing creative writing potentials with individuals with the interest. Both artists promised to give the participants access to tour Makerere University at a later date. It was wonderful we were able to establish contacts so that participants could have access to these resources after the workshops have ended.







### **Kampala Self Portrait Workshop Outcome:**

Students were able to practice their artistic skills as well as create a comprehensive piece that communicated their identities and stories. They were able to display these images and learn from each other's work as well as express solidarity towards each other. They created an event that engaged and delighted the community, which included people who had never been to an art show. Lastly, we were able to establish a rapport with the Makerere University so that students may continue practicing their skills after the workshop is over, and above all think about college and perhaps a career in the arts.

### *Talks in Kampala:*

I also gave two relevant talks during my visit. The first was at Makerere University on June 26. This talk was organized by the Art Department of Makerere University. The second was at the Nommo National Gallery on August 20. This talk was organized by the Uganda Visual Artist and Designers Association. The two talks shed light on the role of art in peace and community building as well as art and art therapy and my work on both. The talks also included some introduction to international art movements. Both talks were well attended by artists, educators, students and humanitarian workers.

### *Workshops in Juba (July 21, 22,23,24)*

This workshop took place at the Nyakuron Cultural Center. The Juba workshop was attended by 26 mid-level to established artists. This workshop took place during an intense quest for peace between the different South Sudanese factions that fight on tribal and regional bases. The unfortunate increase in fighting during the month of July was an opportunity for the artist to reflect and advocate for peace making. This context gave the theme of the workshop more meaning, gave the artist who participated more power to address all who interacted with them during the different events, and gave them more hope through their work. This workshop addressed three components: technical, conceptual, and cooperative artwork that include both.

#### *Technical*

This component was addressed by two slide presentations designed to enhance the skills of artist who, to create a successful artwork, needs to incorporate visual composition, and address elements and principles of art that include drawing ideas, color mixing. The presentation also emphasized missing articulated academic knowledge on the basics such as lines, shape, mass, space, texture, and pattern as well as applying the concept of unity and variety to different work. Furthermore, I showed the works of different international artists such as that of French impressionists as many have great interest in landscape painting or structure. I demonstrated how to paint with different styles, how to mix paint, and how to create space.

#### *Conceptual*

The artists were asked to express subject matter through personal experiences. All the artists who participated in the workshop had encounters with the war. Sharing individual experiences and stories had a great impact on the diverse group . Their thinking about the war, addressed personal experiences and visually brought rich images and complex critiques to the cultural discourse in the emerging South Sudan cultural scene. The process of engaging in the art making allowed the participants to recognize the ideas of the others and all inspired to reflect on their own and their fellow artists experiences. Our assignment required each artist to include a visual element from a different region or tribe. Discussion made it easier for participants to include some visual elements from another tribe or region or religion into their work. Throughout the workshop, artists gave sincere and caring feedback about how they saw themselves in each other's work. The exercises was a great challenge at first, however, the final results are overwhelmingly successful. This was evident by the cooperation of the collective and the positive encouraging energy among the participants.

#### *Cooperative Artwork-Mural*

This project aimed to create a piece of work that recognized unity, harmony and cooperation, personal healing, and worked towards a mural that displayed a mutual aesthetic value that emphasized the following:

How to use to create a cohesive piece that is clear in what it tries to convey and also is aesthetically pleasing.

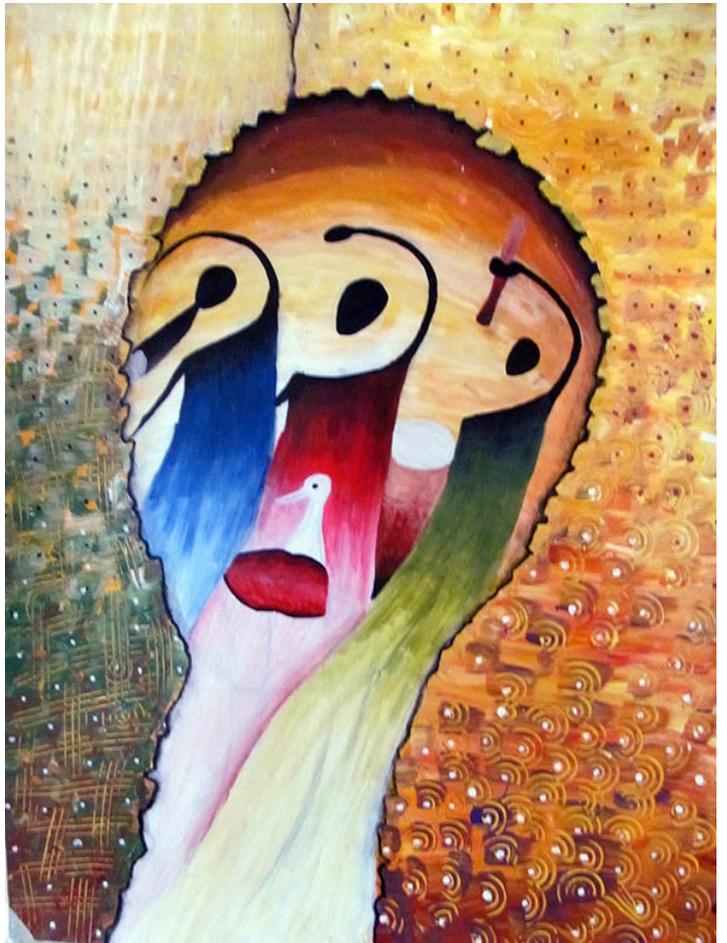
Using visual art to promote coexisting, tolerance, peace building, accepting the other's ideas and concepts, accepting their inputs, and the process:

a.) Planning

b.) Executing

Using one's hands to apply paint onto canvas (the process)

c.) Displaying





### **Workshop outcome:**

The artists were able to talk about the concepts and process among each other and during the final opening with visitors. They developed a larger artistic vocabulary and were able to give each other articulate feedback and constructive criticism. Furthermore, they were able to incorporate elements from another tribe into their work and expand their subjects. They created a comprehensive piece that communicated ideas of unity and nation building. Their work was received well by the general public and all had so much fun!

*Other Activities while in Juba*

During my visit I also met with the Minister of Culture, Antiquities, and Sports, as well as the Deputy Speaker of the Parliament. I discussed the importance of arts in nation building, and asked for their support for south Sudanese artists. I also suggested a bill to support the welfare of artists. I did 4 radio interviews, a TV interview, and three interviews for various newspapers. I also met with USAID. Furthermore, I met with faculty and students in the Juba University and discussed curriculum. I also led one-day workshops in an elementary school that asked not to reveal any information about their students or location.

The Juba workshops created a rich and dynamic atmosphere where up and coming intellectuals met and discussed the South Sudan's art scene. As a result, many rich and ingenious ideas emerged. I am confident that this workshop will have a significant impact on a strong and positive art movement.

*Kiryndongo Refugee Settlement Workshop (August 10)*

This workshop took place at the Banyodoli Secondary School. Kiryndongo Refugee Settlement is a traditional refugee camp located in central north of Uganda.

The workshop covered peace-building techniques focusing on the visual and environmental arts, and introduced the work of the artist Andy Goldsworthy and others that focused on natural materials such as plants, rocks, water and sand. This setting was remote, the students did not have access to traditional western art materials so we mainly used natural materials from our surroundings.







### **Kiryndongo Refugee Settlement Workshop Outcome:**

This workshop demonstrated how art is accessible, relevant, educational, meditative and fun. Students were able to create beautiful works with materials readily available to them. Using rocks, branches, earth and flowers and bare hands, participants was able to create exciting installations. They were also able to reflect on peace and community building. It was an activity that brought the students together, created hope and uplifted the spirit of the camp.

### *Godwin Primary School Workshop*

During this workshop, about 30 students worked together to make a rope. This activity taught students the collaborative nature of problem-solving.



## **Conclusions**

By the end of the Juba workshops, I am confident to claim that we were able to launch a movement. The workshops provided a platform to begin nation building using the tool of art. Artists were able to express themselves, share their personal experiences, and create artwork the general public could identify themselves in. They gained advanced thinking, knowledge, and sensitivity for art making. They were able to utilize their imaginations and apply art to problem solving and other fields. In addition to learning technical skills, they also developed a sensitivity towards other artists with different visions. Participants developed their ability to discuss and be patient in conversation, especially with people they originally had problems with. They realized how to see the needs of people they were in conflict with before. Furthermore, the projects compelled students to explore the ideas of other tribes and groups. The workshops emphasized the value of individual narratives and brought to light the power of images to provoke and challenge the consciousness of the audience.

After discussion about all the artwork, the collective opinion formed a demand for peace and moving towards a civilized era where people can debate via all forms of communication including the visual arts. Visual arts can combine all aspects of life in a new nation.

## **Recommendations**

It is important to recognize and value the artists of Sudan and South Sudan and their role in nation building. Many participants indicated that these workshops were the best event in their lives. We must continue the reach out and support them. Future projects and follow-up projects should continue to introduce youth at risk in the region to the arts and opportunities in different art fields. In addition, these projects should continue to enhance the skills of professional artists and break the isolation of professional working artists by continuing to interact with them. These projects should have a larger budget, an expanded local staff, and more ambitious goals such as: local, regional, and international venues for art exhibitions that display professional artists' work to legitimize their product and encourage the production of future artwork, longer workshops, the tracking of individual progress, performance as another component of the workshops, and more art therapy sessions. We should develop things such as the HOPE society, which is a collective of artists, writers, and performers with the aim of bringing peace and hope through the arts. Furthermore, we should support and sponsor public visual arts events which engage the general public in constructive dialogue.

## **Partners**

Many institutions and organizations partnered with these projects and showed interest to continue their support:

Hope Society; Juba, South Sudan

Institute for Training and Research; Juba, South Sudan

Makerere University; Uganda, Kampala

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College of Social Sciences and Humanities, Boston

## **Sponsors**

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