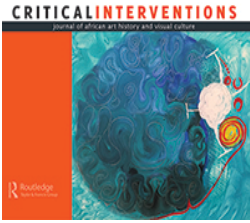


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INSTITUTIONALISM, PUBLIC SPHERE, AND ARTISTIC AGENCY: A CONVERSATION ON 32° EAST UGANDAN ART TRUST

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In 2003, Koyo Kouoh (2013, p. 17) posed the following question: “How is Africa, after fifty years of independence, really determining its artistic landscape?” This issue arises as a central concern in order to confront some of the most decisive elements in play in contemporary African art. Kouoh’s question echoes a general concern about the role of cultural policies and institutional dynamics in producing sustainable engagement within artistic and non-artistic communities and effective interventions into the African public space. At the core of her words lies an interest in exploring the potentiality of organizational and collective agency in shaping cultural agendas both locally and transnationally. The complexities derived from operating simultaneously at different levels, as well as from dealing with agencies and agendas that in some cases have no previous exposure to contemporary art, force us to reconsider the terms under which infrastructural activist projects (Smith, 2012, p. 251) are critically framed.

Kouoh’s question also raises inevitable issues of autonomy, social relevance, and sustainability. Although the conversations on institutional and infrastructural artistic practices have gained momentum recently (cf. Diouf & Fredericks, 2014; Harney, 2004; Kasfir, 2013; Makhubu & Simbao, 2013; Okeke-Agulu, 2010; Okeke-Agulu & Hassan, 2008; Pinther & Smooth, 2015), histories of African art have traditionally focused more on discourses and representations rather than on institutional and instituent modes and practices. In that sense, the activity of alternative

platforms and institutions has been fundamental in complicating the limitations of a critique based fundamentally on discursive and representational achievements. If, as Mamdani (1996, p. 4) argued, institutionalism is “that part of the colonial legacy [...] which remains more or less intact,” this fully applies to artistic production. Confronting this legacy means paying attention to how economic and cultural constraints often thwart African creative platforms and independent institutions. In the same text, Kouoh (2013, p. 17) defined African alternative art institutions as “power stations” that “question hegemonic viewpoints, canons and narratives of art, and develop and manifest approaches of knowledge production outside state institutionalization.” My main objective in this essay is to understand the potential and limitations of those power stations and what kind of forces they set into motion.

The following interview with the current staff of 32° East Ugandan Arts Trust (Teesa Bahana, Fred Batale, Nikissi Serumaga) summarizes the exchanges I held in Kampala during a month-length research stay in November 2016 (Figure 1).¹ Although Bahana and Serumaga joined the institution fairly recently, they were involved in previous activities in various ways. The conversation hinges intentionally on practice and decision-making, attempting thus to challenge any clean and bureaucratic memory of the initiatives organized by 32° East. By stressing practical questions over intentionality and identification, it attempts to show how initiatives such



Figure 1. 32° East Ugandan Art Trust Space in Kansanga, Kampala. Copyright Carlos Garrido Castellano.

as 32° East couple theory and practice, aesthetic and social interventions (Kester, 2015).

Founded in 2012 by Rocca Gutteridge and Nicola Elphinstone, 32° East has been behind much of the development of contemporary Ugandan art taking place in the last five years. More oriented toward processual than to exhibitional activities, the Trust offers a residency for artists and curators, a workplace for the local artistic community, and an open area for meetings and discussions. The project's space also functions somehow as an archive, gathering catalogs, visual material, and press releases of its own and other spaces' initiatives. This is especially important in a context with no tradition of documenting cultural activities, and which seriously lacks archival and written records concerning contemporary art.² In that sense, the Trust documents the experiments produced in relation to it, including those that took place in public locations. This is made evident both by the center's library, the only one in the city focusing on contemporary African art, and by the 32° East space itself, where many of the artworks developed by artists in residency are kept and integrated into the organization's grounds.

Alongside that archival purpose, 32° East has attempted to transcend the elitism with which contemporary art is still associated in Uganda, despite the emergence of a concern for and interest in socially driven collaborative practices and public art.³ This has been done through two initiatives: the *Artachat* program and the KLA Art Festival. The first consists of a series of talks taking place at 32° East's space in the Kansanga district, and focusing on a wide variety of topics, among them public art, cultural industries, art policies, entrepreneurship, and Kampala's public space as an artistic venue. Initially developed by Gutteridge in Scotland before 32° East was founded, the initiative became located in Kampala in 2013, where it began to address pressing matters for the local community.⁴ Although the discussions were followed primarily by people already interested in visual arts, the thematic scope of the debates has widened the reach of collaborators in order to include other "creatives" and publics not necessarily linked to the academy or the gallery worlds. Limited as it is, the experience has been valuable in bringing to the fore key issues on urbanism and accessibility, public culture, civic engagement, and resource management, and it has therefore expanded considerably the scope and focus of contemporary art, while continuing a trajectory of politically charged aesthetics.⁵ Whereas those debates are connected with former debates on authenticity, identity, and representation held above all at Makerere University (Kyeyune, 2003), they also attempt to enhance contemporary art's social relevance, addressing at the same time the contradictions derived from the impact of neoliberalism in post-dictatorial Uganda. Against the backdrop of collapsing national institutions and a gallery-driven art panorama, the emphasis on processual and collaborative practices over artistic production we find in 32° East's activities evidences a

certain malaise with Ugandan cultural policies. This leads to experimenting with forms of creativity bound to the contradictions of present-day Kampala. 32° East addresses this issue by diversifying their activities in order to reach multiple audiences and serve as a nexus for contemporary art in the city (Figures 2–5).⁶

The second initiative fueled by 32° East is the KLA ART Festival, whose third edition is programmed for 2017. KLA ART was first produced in October 2012. In its first edition, the

festival consisted of a public art exhibition called *12 Boxes Moving*, which resulted from the joint collaboration of eight local institutions, among which 32° East was represented.⁷ After launching an open call for artistic projects, 12 were distributed in an equal number of containers sparse throughout the city.⁸ The choosing of the containers as artistic venue holds a strong symbolism in the Ugandan context: containers evoke transi- tiveness, mobility, and multipurpose usage; they refer to the transit and exchange of goods, but

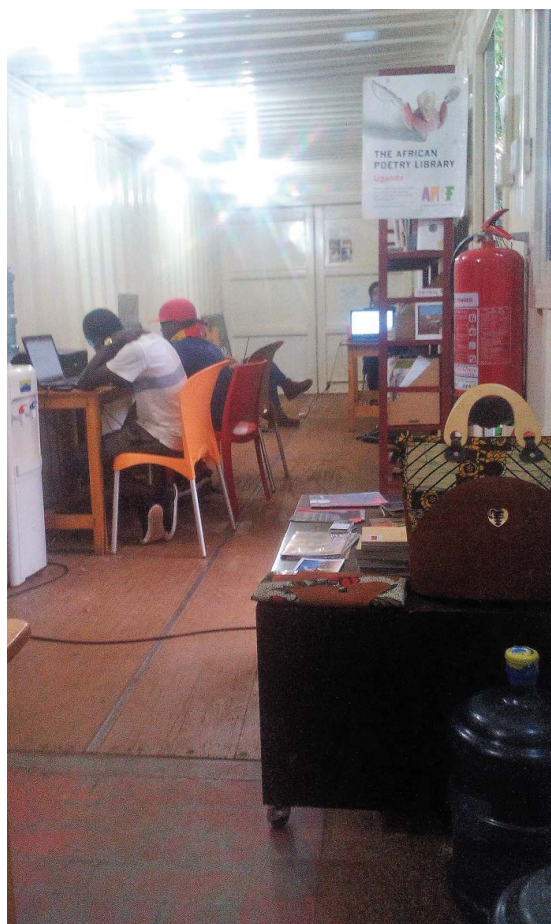


Figure 2. 32° East Library and Media Center. Copyright Carlos Garrido Castellano.



Figure 3. 32° East Library on African Art. Copyright Carlos Garrido Castellano.



Figure 4. Detail of a sculpture made by an artist in residency in 32° East, now part of the regular display. Copyright Carlos Garrido Castellano.

also to the informal economies within the city landscape, where they are a common sight. The idea behind this choice, furthermore, was to raise public awareness of contemporary art, a phenomenon Ugandans usually identified with gallery spaces and government-ruled museums. In that sense, the accomplishment varied from project to project: some aimed for interactivity and performativity, while others were simply limited to hanging the artworks inside the space.⁹ Whereas some criticism focused on the fact that the containers were also “enclosing” art and containing it in public spaces already exposed to “cultural forms,” the festival did challenge the public’s views



Figure 5. Detail of 32° East’s library, studios, and workshop space. Copyright Carlos Garrido Castellano.

on art’s purposefulness, ownership, and relevance. It also initiated a lasting dynamic of institutional collaboration binding together public and private stakeholders. Katrin Pieters (2015, p. 65), who recently dedicated a long essay to public art in Uganda, mentions that “KLA ART 012 was a pilot, an experiment in many ways, from the outset with the intention of following editions in two or three-year intervals. The main aims were to create new physical and mental spaces for visual art projects and to interact with new and different audiences. The festival was strictly non-commercial to allow for ideas beyond a direct saleability.” She added that “the festival had a visionary, experimental aspect, attempting to open up a space for new artistic but also curatorial approaches” opposed to the long tradition of solo shows motivated mostly by marketable ends.

KLA ART 14, the second edition of the event, was coordinated by 32° East and brought interesting novelties to the Ugandan artistic arena. Titled *Unmapped*, the festival attempted a more intensive projection into the public space. In order to achieve that, the initiative was split into three interrelated projects: a more conventional exhibition that took place at the Uganda Railways station in Central Kampala,¹⁰ a series of studio visits highlighting the workplaces of local artists,¹¹ and a set of interventions called *The Boda Boda Project*. The latter, which was not intended to be the nucleus of the event nor the depository of the major part of the funding, outnumbered the regular gallery exhibition in terms of visitors and critical response. All the local newspapers and cultural journals dedicated a space to the event, and the *Contemporary* online platform published a special focus on art in Kampala.¹² The initiative consisted of a series of collaborations between Ugandan artists and the *boda boda* drivers, whose vehicles were customized and then used regularly throughout the city.

The *boda bodas*, motorbikes providing taxi services, are the most common mean of transport in Uganda and East Africa. They also constitute a cornerstone in Kampala's popular culture and informal trade network.¹³ Choosing them both as artistic venue and as target community to collaborate with acknowledges their role in configuring Kampala's urban landscape and recognizes their legitimacy (Figures 8–10). At the same time, it raises questions about the capacity of one-time artistic interventions for raising awareness of regulatory and customary issues. Participation in KLA ART was framed through the customization of already existing *boda bodas* (Figures 6 and 7).

The interventions, again, varied from project to project, but in this case the terms of the dialogue were now more balanced and horizontal, with each artist interacting with the drivers in a sustained way. *The Boda Boda Project* also functioned differently in terms of space, trading the relatively controlled locations where the containers were installed in KLA ART 2012 for more daring routes patronized by *boda boda* drivers.



Figure 6. Workshop at 32° East space linked to the preparation of the *Boda Boda Project*. Image courtesy of Teesa Bahana.



Figure 7. Detail of one of the performances integrating the *Boda Boda Project*. Image courtesy of Teesa Bahana.

In a recent article, Angelo Kakande (2016, pp. 18–25) showed how Ugandan artists are increasingly adopting partisan positions concerning the influence of extralegal forms of violence in the definition of the debates on Ugandan public space. The projects belonging to *The Boda Boda Project* make evident that concern. Among the issues raised were everyday violence against marginalized groups, for example, in the artistic projects of Adonias Ocom Ekuwe and Xenson,



Figure 8. Detail of one of 32° East's containers during an exhibition opening. Image courtesy of Teesa Bahana.



Figure 9. Artchat flyer. Image courtesy of Teesa Bahana.



Figure 10. Detail of one of the art conversation sessions held at 32° East's yard. Image courtesy of Teesa Bahana.

the liability of passengers and drivers alike and the lack of respect for passersby, which was the case of the projects of Ronex Ahimbisibwe, Petro, Babirye Leilah Burns, or the invisibility of *boda boda* workers despite constituting a central sector of Kampala's economy, as Kino Musoke, Enock Kalule Kagga, and Sandra Suubi did. Other artistic projects celebrated Ugandan popular culture and vernacular creativity such as Stacey Gillian Abe's, Joshua Kagimu's, Katumba Simon Peter's, Ogwang Jimmy John's, or Kizito Mbuga's. Finally, yet a third group of projects stressed the choosing of the individual or collective with whom the collaboration took place over the production of symbolic value: Derrick Komakech

chose to work with one of the few female *boda boda* drivers, while the Disability Art Project Uganda (DAPU) developed a wheelchair to be attached to a motorbike, attempting at a time to deal with social recognition and urban exclusion. In this last case, artists and audience join forces from the conceptualization of the project to its final development and materialization¹⁴ While many of the interventions arose with a central topic on mind that was supposed to develop into a mobile artwork related to it,¹⁵ the format allowed for more complex and interesting forms of collaboration. The 2014 edition of KLA ART generated mostly positive critical responses (see Namakula, 2014; Serubiri, 2015), and it was perceived by many of those interviewed as the beginning of a “new mood” in contemporary art, in terms of its projection into the public space and deepening of the terms of collaborations set into motion.

Besides operating at a local level, 32° East has also attempted to redefine the geopolitics of Ugandan art at a regional and transnational level through several initiatives. To the already mentioned partnership that led into KLA ART 012 we can add its participation in the East African artistic exchange program, a residency network linking Uganda, Kenya, and Ethiopia, the collaboration in African and intercontinental platforms such as PAN!C or ArtsCollaboratory,¹⁶ and the elaboration of joint curatorial experiences such as the *Boda Boda Lounge* project.¹⁷ 32° East’s participation in those platforms has brought new questions into the debates on art in Uganda, some of which are addressed in the conversation that follows: the role of art residencies in the development of regional solidarities, the possibilities and limitations of external funding in determining the artistic autonomy of local initiatives, and better ways of producing a sustained engagement with the local community while at the same time

addressing multiple and heterogeneous audiences. Those elements are at the center of the following conversation. The interview has been transcribed as is to preserve the voice and syntax of the speakers.

Castellano: Hello Teesa, Fred, Nikissi. All of you joined the 32° East Project recently. What brought you here?

Teesa Bahana: Fred has been around for a longer time, I started in January and Nikissi two months ago.

Fred Batale: Good question. I had just finished school, and I saw on the Internet that 32° East was doing KLA ART, and they wanted volunteers. So, I wanted to get exposed to the art outside from the school settings, because I had finished, I wanted to explore what was happening, so I applied to volunteer with KLA ART. There were twelve containers, so each volunteer was going to work with one artist on one container, and then the task of those volunteers was opening those containers, which had artworks inside, talking to people about the exhibition, so you had to be knowledgeable about the works and the artists. They accepted me, Lillian Nabulime was participating,¹⁸ and she wanted me to work further with her. We worked at Kampala International University, it was there where our container was located, and then later after the festival 32° East was establishing, they started putting containers, studios, and so on, so I went ahead to know which organization put up this exhibition, and I came here to know more about 32° East and the

opportunities they had. That's how I came and engage with them. When I talked with Rocca [Gutteridge, one of the project's founders], she saw an opportunity of me coming to work with them, she was happy with the work I did. I went ahead and applied, when she showed me out, she mentioned there was going to be a library, I asked who was going to be the librarian, there was nobody, so I saw that as an opportunity. I applied to be a librarian, and I started covering some tasks, we collected interesting books, we engaged the artists asking them to suggest readings which we could buy for the library.

Castellano: Was it in 2012?

Batale: Yes, it was KLA ART 012, it happened in October, but I started working here in February 2013.

Bahana: I met Rocca from a friend, we had some conversations, and she asked me what are you interested in, what do you like, and questions like that. That was over a year, she was bringing these up really often. I was working at that time with a woman who ran an NGO and a consulting, I was doing communication for her, and then on the side I was working with music festivals, I was on the team in charge of making it happen. Through that experience I enjoyed being in touch with creative spaces, but I also acknowledged that I am not that creative. I had been thinking about doing my master's [degree] after the job with that woman, a program in creative cultural entrepreneurship. It was what I

wanted to do, a sort of organizational/business thinking, but in creative spaces, that was perfect. But then I met Rocca and she invited me to work at 32° East, she originally said it was going to be operational tasks, but in fact, she wanted me to take over from her. I did not know if I could do that, the project was very big and I do not have a background in art, which made it kind of intimidating, but then I thought about all the other reasons why I wanted to do this master's degree, and I saw it as practical application of that. It was giving me the opportunity of putting into practice the ideas that you have. I had been at 32° East a few times before, when I came back to Uganda in my free time while I was living outside of the country. I started finding out what was going on in the art community, about the different galleries and people around. First of all, I enjoyed the space, which is very much a heaven in crazy Kampala, and I also thought it as a base for a lot of things to happen outside of it, a platform for other people's creativity.

Nikissi Serumaga: My background is in film production and film festivals (I am right now a bit out of work. . .). I have been working for a festival, I discovered that this position was available and I wanted to apply, but I had also developed a connection with 32° East before, because I really never lived far from the space, so I used to come here quite often to see what was going on, and then also one of the projects I have been working on came to 32° East, so there was a lot of interaction with it beforehand. I also saw

it as an opportunity on a personal level to be able to move back to Kampala and to stay here for a long period of time, and really get to be an observer of the art scene in a much long-term way.

Castellano: What differentiates 32° East from other spaces in Kampala? What does the “trust” structure bring to the organizational scheme of the project?

Bahana: I think the reason of it being a trust is very random. When it was founded it was a way of giving the project this air of legitimacy, the fact that it was founded by two British women who were trying to say we are here for a while, we are the Ugandan art trusts, we want to play this role. . . The name at first was a bit deceiving, but it has been helpful in some ways, not so helpful in other ways. I think for being in Uganda, it’s particularly useful when it comes to finding local support, working with the Kampala Capital City authorities. . . But then, for Arts Collaboratory,¹⁹ which is the network we are in and it is really about post-colonialism, anti-structure, and so on, being a trust is strange. The name of the project thus sort of speaks to different personalities and the way we have found our place here.

The other spaces in Kampala are either galleries or studios, so for us it was really about the artists, about thinking what does an artist need most in terms of developing personal capacities, and providing opportunities. Part of the project is the studio, another is exhibition space, then you have the library. . . It is a mix of things.

Castellano: How would you consider the relation with the project’s funders? To what extent is external funding determining the program and the objectives?

Bahana: The founders of 32° East did not really put much of their own funds into the organization, but had networks, a lot of friends who were able to help, they did a crowdfunding to get the studios opened and to create the library, so that made it possible to set the project up. However, once an organization moves from being funded in that sense and becomes bigger, it is hard to find economic support beyond personality and family (Rocca’s mom did a lot, for example). Some people stayed supportive because they believed in the mission, and others thought they did not know the people anymore. But luckily the founders did a lot to get long-term support, one of our founders is based in the Netherlands, that’s how we entered Arts Collaboratory, which has been really helpful.

Batale: When they created this space, the objective was to promote visual arts in Uganda. They thought how best this can be done, so they came with this idea of a residence. You have many known artists who are already promoted, so those ones they do not need much support. The point was how could we bring those young artists who needed it, so we attempted to make a mixture: you had graduate artists and those just starting working together with established artists at the same time. That was the aim. Each time you could have three artists. In our

first year, we did not get many applications. Another aim was to bring art to a broader public, that's how we came with KLA ART, and somehow artists could connect with the artists to get feedback, or to think about their practice, but also for the public it made possible a contact with art.

Castellano: What about arts collaboratory? How would you describe that partnership? What does it bring? In what ways does it restrict 32° East's Autonomy?

Bahana: Arts Collaboratory brings immense value to 32° East. It connects us to twenty-three different spaces, exposing our artists to residency opportunities in places they never knew existed. This is both in terms of general application and more intentional efforts to have some kind of artistic exchange. For example, Más Arte Más Acción in Colombia worked with the Ministry of Colombia on an open call that allowed a 32° East member and curator to travel to Colombia for research. This year, we welcomed a video artist from Colombia. These kinds of international exchanges between countries with similar contexts but weak direct connections would not otherwise be possible. In addition, as an organization we are directly connected to our peers around the world facing similar struggles or existing as models that we can emulate. Arts Collaboratory is an incredibly open network and we have been able to learn so much from our counterparts. I really cannot say that it's restricted our autonomy in any way.

Castellano: Were the external funders asking for any kind of conditions to apply?

Bahana: It was a very lengthy application, about thirty pages. You had to show what your organization is classified as under the government, whom your stakeholders are, and sort of prove that you have an impact, but beyond that. . . I think part of what Arts Collaboratory was looking for as well is that the founders had an idea of how to run the organization locally. They wanted local leadership, whatever that looks like.

Castellano: How does the residency program work? What kind of applications do you receive?

Bahana: I think it also varies over the years, probably now since we are a bit well known, the quantity has increased. Quality also varies a lot, some applications are very detailed, explaining what they want to do, while others are not defined at all. We meet, revise all the applications, and then we decide. We plan on a year-to-year basis.

Batale: When we had just started in 2013 it was totally different. I think people here are just starting to understand the benefits of residencies. At first only established artists understood it, but they did not need our support. Young artists did not know how to handle it. The first year we even filled blanks with some friends. The following year we had few applications as

well. Then the number increased and we had to select carefully.

Castellano: How difficult was it to maintain the programs you have?

Bahana: There are some programs that started and have not been continued, like the *Tackling Texts* initiative, a program based on theoretical discussion. It is easier to maintain those programs that people follow more.

Batale: But some of those programs needed extra funding, which we could not raise, but also the vision and the persons working here changed. The Ekyoto program, in which people used to share drinks and conversation around a fire (a tradition coming from our grandparents, who normally used those moments to talk about history, how can we behave, how can we develop, and so on), was also discontinued.

Castellano: How would you define your audience? Is it the same as those in art galleries or the Kampala Biennial?

Batale: For me, there is a mixture of different audiences. When we did KLA ART, we saw *boda boda* guys interacting with the art pieces, we saw government officials interacting as well, they came to collaborate with us through the public pieces in town. So, I think there is a mixture. Each category works differently, there are those who are interested in what are we planning, those who attend our activities, and then we have another group which is happy just supporting the art, coming onboard particular projects.

Castellano: How does that support work in terms of public art projects?

Batale: Being an art center working with different artists, each of them brings a different approach on how they want to work. It depends on what each artist is interested in doing. We try to facilitate the process.

Castellano: Now you mentioned the artists, what proportion of Ugandan artists do you usually have in your residencies?

Bahana: It varies. If you look at the program and the funding we have, the majority of residents are Ugandans. If international artists have their own funding and want to apply, then we can support them with the application, but we do not have a budget for that. The exception is the East Africa Exchange Program, which is founded by the British Council. Through it we can send artists to Kenya and Ethiopia, and they can come. Arts Collaboratory also brings specific funding, but it is something sporadic. The ratio would be two international artists for each five national ones.

Castellano: How does the East Africa exchange program work? Is there any visibility in the home country of the projects developed through the residencies?

Bahana: Again, it varies. We still have some pieces, some of them because artists cannot move them. Immy [Mali],²⁰ for example, who went to Ethiopia, worked on a bed project and she could not bring

it back. But then, when she came back, Eyob Kitaba from Ethiopia was still here and then we had discussions about both experiences. During that time, we also had an open studio with him. We also had a Kenyan artist here at the same time, and she had a very different experience, and I think part of it has to do just with personality. In Ethiopia, there is now no art space such as 32° East, so when artists were there they were working at a school, so the experience was different as well, but they had an exhibition there. In Kenya, they have an exhibition at the Circle Art Gallery, which is the most successful commercial art gallery in East Africa, but we have not had anything that put together artists from the three countries in the same place, at the same time, although the British Council wanted to do a joint exhibition and to have the pictures of the residencies online.

Castellano: What kind of comments have you received about the fact of 32° East being a space for residencies and not for selling?

Batale: Some artists think this is good, because it helps them to prepare themselves before they enter the commercial world. For others, it would be nice to have production and selling together. I think it is good to have spaces like this, concentrated in developing and collaborating. But for other people it should be our work to drive them to the commercial world.

Castellano: Can you think about any antecedent to 32° East in Uganda?

Bahana: There have been different art initiatives in sort of community spaces, but not focusing on a permanent residency and contemporary art. Fas Fas, for example, used to be like a restaurant where everything was designed by artists, and they had discussions there and held exhibitions. But nothing had the objective of supporting artists on a long-term base.

Castellano: Within the institution's space, there are many activities not directly related to visual arts? Is that common in other projects in Kampala? What does this variety bring to the initiative?

Bahana: We used to share this plot with a dance NGO. Before you constantly had dance classes, kids in the space, which brought more activity, but now those spaces are rented for many different purposes. We coexist. If we have resources to support other initiatives, we support them, but our focus is on visual art, because we are essentially the only art organization not oriented to commercial ends. Most spaces are single-issue, or they are rented for everything.

Serumaga: As somebody who has arrived very recently to 32° East, I could say that the fact that the project has so many different kinds of activities going on introduced me to the space. You find many different catching points to see what is going on. The *Boda Boda Lounge* exhibition we had in November 2016, for example, created a collaboration in which some people continued interacting with 32° East besides the exhibition,

and made many people know about the space. For me that gives a strong feeling of community.

Batale: We focus on visual art, but we are also trying to move visual arts further. We bring on board many people, so they know what we are doing, and that facilitates the engagement with them.

Castellano: Why did you choose the Kansanga neighborhood? How do you engage the people living around?

Batale: Kansanga is close to town and Nassa Road, where you find all the artistic material, printing... It is a busy place, we are connected to it, but we offer a quiet space where artists can sit and think.

Bahana: We do not get drop-ins very often. There are some people curious about the rentals, but people do not usually come to see what is inside. Some people know about us outside in the near area, those even collaborated with us.

Batale: We had a screening outside the space that brought people, but not a lot. We have just started here. Whenever we have an event, we use to spread it through the social networks. . .

Castellano: Let me go back to KLA ART. The first edition was part of a bigger project coordinated from abroad by Simon Njami and David Adjaye. To what extent do the initiatives organized

from outside the project fit the objectives of 32° East? Do they work differently than those you conceive and develop?

Serumaga: It depends. For example, the *Boda Boda Lounge* was a collaboration that came from Vansa,²¹ and was very useful. We would never be able to cover so many different countries and to process so many different applications and then be able to adjudicate them all. It is a lot of work, so sharing it was positive. We were fifteen organizations sharing the project.

Batale: KLA ART showed how differently things can be produced and how interesting they can be, what are they bringing in terms of local impact. The two editions show different ways of approaching audiences. In 2014, the event was fairly understandable and communicated to many people, as it was intending to do, whereas in the 2012 event, so many people did not understand why the containers were placed on those roads apart from the artists who knew about it. Visitors started asking why the containers, what were we trying to do, but in 2014 it was easier, because it related to things they interact with like the *boda bodas*. The approach was also interactive, and that moved many people to participate. For example, Kajimo's piece, *Boda Boda Theater*, had drumming, performances... and had a very good impact. The people working at the organization tried to connect with issues of interests. We even incorporated people on bicycles who sharpen people's knives.

Castellano: How was the festival organized?

Batale: It was hectic. Too much work, it needed team collaboration, and it was actually because of working together that KLA ART got funding. It was not easy, there were disagreements within the partnering organizations. . . as everywhere.

NOTES

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Color versions of one or more of the figures in the article can be found online at www.tandfonline.com/rcin.

- ¹ The 32° East art initiative is often referred to as “32” in Uganda.
- ² The main sources on contemporary Ugandan art are the unpublished Ph.D. dissertations of the Art History Department at Makerere University. The need to produce a visual and critical memory of exhibitions and other artistic activities has been addressed only recently, when some galleries (AfriArt Gallery, Makerere Gallery, AKA Gallery) began producing elaborate exhibition brochures and commissioning critics to write about those initiatives.

- ³ Besides the initiatives I commented on in this article, we should consider as important the creation of an art biennial, the functioning of *Start Journal*, an online magazine devoting to critical evaluation of contemporary Ugandan art, or curatorial projects such as Simon Njami’s *AtWork* (2015). More information about the latter can be found at <http://www.contemporarvand.com/magazines/the-kampala-episode/>.
- ⁴ The insistence of public art and the public’s interest for monuments, festivals, and the occupation of the public space in Kampala is eloquent on that regard.
- ⁵ On that trajectory, see Kakande (2008). One of Kakande’s most productive conclusions has to do with asserting how Ugandan artists have always tended to adapt their political criticism to the weakness of civil society. The current interest in the public can be seen as a decisive shift, one that Kakande summarizes by saying that in the 21st century “the visual arts are making significant inroads on the political scene” (p. 326).
- ⁶ A strong precedent in that sense is the Ngoma International Artists’ Workshop Uganda, a project started in 1995 by Rose Kirumira Namubiru. See Namubiru (2008, 2014).
- ⁷ Besides 32° East, the organizing institutions included Makerere University, AKA Gallery, Nommo Gallery, the Ugandan Museum, Alliance Française Kampala, and the Goethe-Zentrum Kampala. The partnership worked not only at the level of raising funding, but also at the level of curating and decision-making.
- ⁸ The chosen artists were Bwambala Ivan Allan, Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa, Eria Nsubuga “Sane,” Eric Mukalazi, Lilian Nabulime, Ronex, Ruganzu Bruno, Sanaa Gateja, Stella Atal, Waswad, Xenson, and Sue Crozier Thorburn (a British artist living in Uganda and the only foreigner in the show).
- ⁹ The case of Lilian Nabulime could be a good example of the first. Her project was a continuation of the activity she developed since the early

2000s, when she started experimenting with sculpture as a way of generating social awareness about HIV/AIDS among illiterate communities in Uganda. Having already a vast experience in artistic collaboration, for her intervention in 2012 Nabulime stood in front of her container, dialoguing with the audience about the meaning of her sculpture and the social relevance of AIDS.

10 Closed in 1992, with KLA ART the station was recovered for the first time since then for public usage.

11 This element was original in Ugandan art. Besides “placing the artists into the map,” it served to encourage a climate of dialogue among the community of creators and the festival’s audience.

12 See <http://www.contemporaryand.com/magazines/kla-art-puts-east-african-art-on-the-map/>.

13 It is essential to remark here on the existence of a strong tradition of customizing and diversifying *boda bodas*, *matatus*, and other vehicles dedicated to informal transport. KLA ART 014 seconds this phenomenon, using art to channel some of the—again—already existing aspirations for social recognition and improvements in security conditions of the sector, while benefiting from the vibrant visual inventiveness of Kampala’s vernacular scene. It in no way initiated this context of practice.

14 On DAPU, see <http://www.freetocharities.org.uk/dapu/aboutus.html>.

15 The *boda boda* project was not exempt from a surprising and flashy effect. For many, the artistic customizations of *boda bodas* might have been perceived as crazy objects amid the rows of vehicles populating Kampala. While that gimmicky dimension was present in the relations between artists, drivers, and audiences, it cannot account for the whole diversity of experiences and exchanges engendered by the initiative.

16 See <http://panicplatform.net/>; <http://www.artslaboratory.org/>.

17 The *Boda Boda Lounge* project is a biennial video festival linked to African urban practices. Since

its first edition in 2014, it has itinerated across several African countries, activating a number of side events and initiatives in the different contexts where it lands.

18 See <https://cedat.mak.ac.ug/staff-profiles/lilian-mary-nabulime>.

19 See <http://www.artscollaboratory.org/>.

20 See <https://immymali.wordpress.com/>.

21 See <http://vansa.co.za/>.

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