

KAUMÄARTS

THE
KAUMA
BRIEF ENCOUNTERS
MANIFESTO

2022

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FOREWARD by Mercy Nabirye

As I write, the world is navigating an extraordinary period with a triple crisis, of health, economy and race relations, exacerbated by global events; the COVID-19 pandemic, the lockdown and and the global amplification of the Black Lives Matter movement in response to the killing of George Floyd.

We are going through a change reflecting and reassessing how we work, connect and live.

For the creative, it is good ground for testing the viability and tenacity on many levels.

For Kauma Arts, this timing is a necessary 'pause'.

This is a summarised narrative of how we entered the crises and how we turned the uncertain times to positive manifestations. It is also a call to action for policy makers, influencers and funders to reflect on, intervene and take more risks and provide the readiness and sustainability required for the arts to continue to impact lives globally.

Dr Mercy Nabirye, Founding Director of Kauma Arts

INTRODUCTION: BACKGROUND

Kauma Arts has been pursuing its aim of creating a supportive connected community for black artists working in any artistic genre in any part of the globe since it was established in 2019. It has also been offering consulting services to those working in the cultural and creative sectors and initiating as well as collaborating with partners on projects with charitable aims.

Spurred by the desire to bring people together to connect, converse and share practice at dinner tables, the idea of producing facilitated KBEs, albeit starting online was born. Mercy Nabirye and her team decided to curate a series of intentional and provocative conversations between black artists and creatives from different countries or regions of the world, alongside developing the context of engagement for the membership of Kauma Arts.

The pilot edition which took place in July 2020 confirmed that not only would this initiative benefit the membership of Kauma Arts, but it had possibility to contribute to the generation of cultural and institutional policy on a wider scale. Kauma Arts sought funding from the Arts Council England and produced four more KBEs between November 2020 and November 2021 to spotlight eight cultural leaders in various fields. The recommendations offered are drawn from these conversations from Africa and the African Diaspora as well as questions and lines of inquiry raised by listeners from small group discussions. Nevertheless, these are seen as part of an on-going discussion. This is therefore a blueprint and working document summarised in a framework that should spark further critical thinking and collaboration.

WHY A MANIFESTO?

The world, not simply the cultural and creative industries, is in a state of turmoil. The last two years have seen uprisings against racism, protests against climate change and experienced the impact of a global pandemic with its death toll, economic hardship and disruption. The sense of urgency this has brought about is causing many to re-examine how they live, organise themselves and show up in the world. This manifesto is published with the belief that cultural workers and artists are well positioned to be leaders in developing ecosystems that promote resilience and create pathways towards a more equitable and joyful future. Kauma Arts in its projects to promoting the exchange between artists in Africa and the Diaspora aims to contribute to developing this context. The discussants whose conversations undergird this manifesto have between them many years of experience of tackling social and artistic issues of various types.

A main aim of this manifesto is to promote collaboration between African and Diasporic artists and organisations and to encourage them to formulate ways of contributing to the development of the arts sector as well as seeking wider support. This will aid the agenda of decolonising knowledge production, education and industry which is now a remit of cultural organisations the world over. The manifesto offers ideas and opinions that might be used to formulate lines of research, action plans and initiate policy reform at various levels and in various locations.

We will see the full impact of this initial KBE season in the coming years following the publication and dissemination of versions of this creative exchange manifesto. We hope to impact cultural policy and change in artistic practice.

TARGET AUDIENCE

This manifesto has several audiences. The target audiences of the manifesto include black artists and those engaged in producing and developing the context of the work of artists from Africa and the Diaspora globally. It hopes to be useful to those who support international collaborations, production and networking as well as those who support cultural and artistic activities in black communities. Independent artists and arts organisations who are considering collaborations with each other or who might be setting up conversations with institutions might find this text a useful reference. Arts organisations and institutions that support cultural and artistic production of black artists or international work might consider this a useful starting point for policy reform. Cultural and government agencies that work internationally with African, Diasporic and multiracial participations in various countries are welcome to use this document as well as academic researchers and organisations interested in engaging with black-led organisations and cross-cultural initiatives. The citation of this document is on the contents page.

THE KBES: THE PROVOCATIONS AND THEMES

To put the KBEs in context, they bring together creatives and key leaders in public physical and digital spaces to engage and connect in a closed, safe and neutral space to discuss, share and exchange ideas, cultivate collaborations, and deepen the artistic value for artforms within the African Diaspora and Africa. The primary aim is to provide a platform that spotlights the work of creatives to intentionally facilitate their connection with other artists nationally and internationally. The topics could range from dance, music, literature, film, performing arts, theatre and more.

We curated five KBEs and all encounters took place online due to the movement restrictions caused by the current pandemic and due to the distance between the locations of the participants. Each encounter involved two discussants in conversation enabling them to speak from their area of expertise and some times across art forms.

Each event had specific provocations relating to the theme, which was a framework for the networking discussions. During the KBEs, we invited the audiences to contribute their perspectives on best practice for international creative exchanges; allowing us to gain insight from lived collaborative experiences which would help to build a foundation for our manifesto research.

The audience members consisted of Kauma Arts Creative Hub members, creatives from Africa and across the African Diasporas, venue/platform managers, producers and curators, global businesses, and the audiences/stakeholders of the featured artists. Breakout sessions at each event enabled audience members to also share their views. The final section of the KBE was a return to the larger group to listen to summaries from each of the breakout rooms. Below is how the five KBEs were focused including the names of the key presenters, the themes of their discussions and a corresponding provocation which each participant responded to, from their own perspectives.

As a direct result of the connections made during the KBEs, Kauma Arts continues to be invited to collaborate with new partners to deliver bespoke networking encounters. The timeline on the following page was a starting point to a journey we hope continues.

“

It was an interesting conversation for me and the highlight of the event was meeting new people who shared a mutual interest for connecting and development. Their submissions and suggestions about the next steps stuck with me.

July 2021 KBE Participant

KBE TIMELINE

The strategy used to support featured artists to reach new audiences was through a 'Meet The Tribe' campaign which included: week-long Instagram takeovers, Instagram Live events, social media adverts, and a website page specifically designed to feature each artist on Kauma Arts website. This campaign was strategically designed to highlight each individual and introduce them to our audience (and theirs to us) before their KBE session.



SUMMER 2020 • MEET THE TRIBE: MAY & JULY KBE: 29 JULY 2020



Theme: Film, Theatre and Festivals

Featuring: Samuel Tebandeke (Kenya/Uganda) and Kenneth Uphopho (Nigeria)

Provocation:

What is most important for us to achieve as Africans and people of the African Diaspora to make a step-change in the arts; in the short-term, mid-term and long-term?



AUTUMN 2020 • MEET THE TRIBE: SEPTEMBER & NOVEMBER KBE: 24 NOVEMBER 2020



Theme: Rooted Practice, Building Communities

Featuring: Carolyn Lilly (UK) & Sandra Golding (UK)

Provocation:

What is the value of all that we do in building resilient communities? How do we embrace the richness of our cultures to build communities through creative exchange?



WINTER 2021 • MEET THE TRIBE: JANUARY & MARCH KBE: 30 MARCH 2020



Theme: Who's Next? Young Leaders in the Arts

Featuring: wivdrawn (London-based collective) & Afro Van Connect (Vancouver-based collective)

Provocation:

How do we support and collaborate with young leaders to connect internationally, intergenerationally and across art forms?

KBE TIMELINE



SUMMER 2021 •

MEET THE TRIBE: MAY & JULY
KBE: 25 & 27 JULY 2021



Theme: Education & Training within African, Caribbean and Diasporic Dance Styles

Featuring: Beverley Glean MBE (UK) & David Blake (UK)

Provocation:

How do you maintain social and community responsibility whilst uplifting the organisation to develop the professional arm?



AUTUMN 2021 •

MEET THE TRIBE: SEPTEMBER & NOVEMBER
KBE: 4 DECEMBER 2021



Theme: International Partnerships

Featuring: Denise Saunders-Thompson (USA) & Vivine Scarlett (Toronto, Canada)

Provocation:

How do we create a level playing field for creative exchange across diasporas and the Continent?



Also, I have not come across anyone who is doing this in the same way that we do this as Kauma Arts. Dedicating a whole month to shining a spotlight on specific creatives across the globe, with an aim for them to connect with each other and with other creatives they meet because of this platform is a winning way. The KBE is a stepping-stone where we get to witness the bonding in process for real – not just hearsay or a ‘maybe.’

July 2021 KBE Participant

RECOMMENDATIONS: AREAS OF FOCUS

Five areas of focus emerged from an analysis of the discussions that took place during the KBEs. However, the issues that arose in discussion could be categorized into five key messages. Kauma Arts has issued a recommendation for each area. We have also listed some paraphrased and anonymised statements relating to each of these areas of focus.

- 1. Leadership and Management:** Leadership should focus on a specific area of the field for development, set specific aims and objectives and deliver activities using a pan-Africanist approach and making room for consultation.
- 2. Lobbying and policy reform:** Enter into conversation with leaders of cultural organisations about their programmes and how they are produced taking into consideration their limitations.
- 3. Developing new formats of exchange, funding and finance:** Form collectives, identify areas of needs, engage stakeholders and supporters and focus on supporting needs of the collective or bring change to the wider arts ecology. Seek expert advice. Looking into your networks for expertise and support each other in-kind if there are limited finances.
- 4. Rethinking education/training/supporting young practitioners:** Training organisations should collaborate with arts organisations to nurture the link between education and the workplace. It should be a two-way discussion.
- 5. Making space for self-care and community-care:** Listen to your own needs and those of others and create spaces for recuperation. Develop forums for this specifically.

1. Leadership and Management

Recommendation: Leadership should focus on a specific area of the field for development, set specific aims and objectives and deliver activities using a pan-Africanist approach and making room for consultation.

Selected paraphrased statements

- Infrastructure - The time is now to build a more powerful infrastructure as a collective. The artistry is not so much the issue. We need to build trust both ways to initiate work and to carry it out.
- Aims and Goals - Specific aims and objectives are needed to guide the achievements as it is an enormous ask.
- Networking - Take a Pan Africanist approach to create international links.
- We need to go beyond conversations and take the next step to initiate collaborations.
- Stakeholders should align with your vision and understand the changes in society and how they affect said vision.
- We should track our achievements which is our cultural capital.
- Give others a voice at various levels and generations. It is not easy to walk into any space as most often don't have a lot of appropriate support needed.

2. Lobbying and policy reform

Recommendation: Enter into conversation with leaders of cultural organisations about their programmes and how they are produced taking into consideration their limitations. Looking into your networks for expertise and support each other in-kind if there are limited finances.

Selected paraphrased statements

- Government regulations - These are different in each country. We need to find collective ways to navigate certain things like waiver fees from artists to pay before they do the work, opening up spaces that are locked up for artistic use, not needing to request permission from the government to present work, etc.
- Ensure that we empty the spaces we occupy as a starting point.
- We need to build a framework for us to connect and create without an authoritative entity getting in the way.

3. Developing new formats of exchange, funding and finance

Recommendation: Form collectives, identify areas of needs, engage stakeholders and supporters and focus on supporting needs of the collective or bring change to the wider arts ecology. Seek expert advice.

Selected paraphrased statements

- Funding - Find a way to collectively solve funding issues both in the Diasporas and the African continent. For example, improve Government support for artistic work more so on the continent. Creatives are faced with the dilemma of what comes first - performance first in order to get the funding or seeking funding before the performance.
- Who is doing the work? What bodies are doing the work? What are you carrying into the room?
- Initiating work now - Playing with exchange formats and creative models of collaborative works like using the digital space to create webisodes, collaborating by commissioning scripts/other work from the continent for performers in the diaspora to present and the reverse (to cut out travel and government or other restrictions).
- We need to create hubs - digital and physical (have a community where people get together but they don't have to be from the same city).
- Artists need to build support structures around them to handle the business and sustainable strategies so that they can focus solely on the art; be that family, friends or those with expertise.
- We need to listen and reflect on the needs of the community and meet those with our vision, 'which is not solely ours' to make.

4. Rethinking education and training/developing young practitioners

Recommendation: Training organisations should collaborate with arts organisations to nurture the link between education and the workplace. It should be a two-way discussion.

Selected paraphrased statements

- Include young people - take small steps and build-up.
- The sector is missing a network of performance/showcase platforms, skilled production crews and administrative personnel. We need to start earlier in education systems to train young people to take on these careers beyond being on stage.
- The academic material for African Diasporic Dance is 'not there', how did this evolve over time?
- The structure of learning needs to change, the approach will be different for each dance style; one format does not fit all.
- How can we approach each dancer and their background in a democratic way; open flow learning as a solution.
- Hearing the voices of other leaders is a course/training to take on within our own practice.
- We need to question 'How do we centre justice in our training & education?'
- Give the younger generation opportunities to lead.

5. Making space for self-care and community-care

Recommendation: Listen to your own needs and those of others and create spaces for recuperation. Develop forums for this specifically.

Selected paraphrased statements

- Ensure that we are consistently connecting with each other.
- Incorporate healing in the spaces.
- Artists need rest and restorative work. They cannot always be in a season of production.
- We need to restructure how people view leaders. Some of the expectations held by the communities they lead can do more harm than good to the collective or individual artist.

TIME-SCALE CONSIDERATIONS

In addressing complex problems deciding on order of actions and deadlines for carrying them out is challenging. For this reason, the concept of the short, medium and long term was broached during the KBEs. The issues that emerged from the KBEs cannot easily be ordered one after the other in terms of priority. Most areas overlap and cannot be separated; for example leadership is relevant to every area. We have therefore refrained from suggesting what should be done in the mid to the long term.

We however recommend that in the short term there should be a focus on new forms of exchange, coming together, discussion, self-care and community-care. The rationale for this is that the meetings and networking will create a context for strategic planning and action planning around each of the areas of focus that have been identified. We hope that individuals, organisations and groups might want to take up the advocacy of one of the forementioned areas.

KAUMA ARTS: NEXT STEPS

In keeping with this manifesto, Kauma Arts will continue to focus on creating room for exchange and meeting with its membership and beyond. We envisage developing discussions on some of the areas of focus listed above. We also hope to identify areas amongst those outlined here to develop strategic and action plans in those fields. We are particularly interested in policy reform. This is a collective effort and we hope to be working with you on this journey.

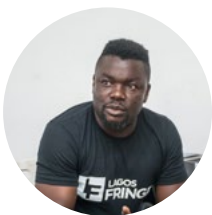
BIOGRAPHIES OF FEATURED ARTISTS



Sam Tebandeke • <https://kiasitv.vhx.tv/>

Sam is a Ugandan based creative in Nairobi, Kenya. An alumnus of the Maisha Film Lab (2008 & 2009), Samuel has gone on to write for TV and film. His debut short film, Another Beautiful Day, released mid-2017 was screened at Durban International Film Festival 2019. His short film, Ten O'clock screened In Competition at PÖFF Shorts Film Festival 2019 in Estonia.

Sam is the founder of PageSix Management, the largest database in the East African region of film professionals working in front of and behind the camera.



Kenneth Uphopho • www.thelagosfringe.org

Kenneth is a Director, Actor, Writer, Festival Director, and Acting Coach.

He has practiced as a professional dancer & choreographer for over 7 years before committing to theatre & festival management. With an incredible team, he runs PAWSTUDIOS, Lagos Fringe, and Abuja Fringe.

He loves spending time with Family, Books, Nature, and Travel.



Carolyn Lilly • www.feeltherhythmproductions.com

Carolyn Lilly has been a dancer for 20 years with experience in many styles; African, African Contemporary, Caribbean, Horton, and Jazz. She is the director of Feel the Rhythm Productions and has promoted African Dance in the Diaspora for over 12 years in the UK.

Since forming Feel the Rhythm Productions (FTRP) in 2007, Carolyn has developed a vast network of artists exploring the Diasporic genres in the UK, pioneering a market for the work in London.

Carolyn has brought some great names to London and has worked with Merlin Nyakam, George Momboye, Lolita Babindamana, Dr C. Kemal Nance, and many more. Through her work with FTRP, she has developed and solidified a reputation as a producer of high-quality work within the community.

BIOGRAPHIES OF FEATURED ARTISTS



Sandra Golding • www.movingtubalance.co.uk

Sandra Golding MA RSMT is the U.K's leading African Holistic Dance Practitioner, CEO of Moving Tu Balance.

She is an advocate for the healing power of African Holistic therapeutic movement, bringing dance medicine into every home. Her dedication and passion for the survival of African and Caribbean dance has resulted in the development and delivery of African holistic dance a complementary therapeutic dance, movement education within the community, with a focus on the Health and wellbeing of the individual and their relationship with their bodies and connection with nature.

Sandra currently teaches online, community dance, and wellbeing classes; running participatory events for those 50 years plus.



Beverly Glean MBE • www.iredancetheatre.org

Beverley Glean MBE is the Founder and Artistic Director of IRIE! dance theatre. She has worked in the field of Dance of the African Diaspora (DAD) for over 30 years. She has trained and worked alongside artists from the Caribbean, West Africa, Europe and the USA. Beverley founded IRIE! dance theatre in 1985.



David Blake • www.blakearts.org

David Blake is an international performer, director, choreographer, educator and producer. He is the founder and creator for Blake Arts, an arts collective that offers holistic artistic development and training as well as content creation, focused on the stories of artists from the Afro Caribbean Diaspora. David is a 2020 Black British Theatre Awards (BBTA) recipient for "Best Teacher for Performing Arts as a Subject" and is currently playing the role of "Banzai" in Disney's The Lion King in London's West End.



wivdrawn Collective • @wivdrawn on Instagram

leaders of the unknown.



wivdrawn is a collective of creative individuals including directors, artists, producers, and engineers, hailing from North, North West, and West London, UK.



As a collective, wivdrawn covers all areas within the media industry. Music artistry ranges from R&B, Trap, Rap to international sounds.



wivdrawn includes: Wildboy – a platinum producer and engineer, Teeeezy C – a director and videographer, Joey Cuban – an upcoming bilingual artist, and Wivdrawn Kolumbia – a creative director and artist.

BIOGRAPHIES OF FEATURED ARTISTS



Afro Van Connect • www.afrovanconnect.com

Afro Van Connect was founded in 2019 as an artist collective focused on creating platforms for creatives of African descent to come together and express themselves. The organisation empowers the voices of African descent youth through conversation, collaboration, creation, and performance.

They bring together young vibrant creative minds dedicated to innovating authentic solutions, to increase the visibility of the underrepresented diaspora communities.

They offer a creative capital platform where shared opportunities and resources are designed to support liberating education and community sustainability.

Afro Van Connect is based in Vancouver, Canada, located on the unceded traditional territory of the Sk̓wxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), Tsleil-Waututh, and xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) First Nations.



Denise Saunders Thompson • <https://www.iabdassociation.org/>

Denise is the President & CEO of The International Association of Blacks in Dance (IABD), a non-profit service organization that preserves and promotes dance by people of African ancestry or origin. Since beginning her tenure in 2010, she is responsible for growing the organization's annual operating budget from \$200,000 to \$1.5 million and more than doubling the Association's membership to over 6,800 in the last five years. Most recently, Saunders Thompson secured the organization's largest single individual gift, totalling \$3 million.



Vivine Scarlett • <http://www.danceimmersion.ca>

Vivine is Founder and Executive Director for dance Immersion, an organization that supports dancers and dances of the African Diaspora. Her inspired journey continues to provide a variety of platforms that serve Canadian artists of African ancestry, with opportunities that have laid a foundation for continued growth and representation.

BIOGRAPHIES OF KAUMA ARTS TEAM



Mercy Nabirye • Founding Director

Mercy Nabirye FRSA, FWL, formed Kauma Arts following her tenure in a series of leadership and management positions across the creative industries. Her career spans over 30 years in leadership roles across artforms, developing and implementing flagship programmes for change and strategic development. She is inspired to push boundaries.



Heather Benson • Project Manager and Consultant • www.heatherstarbenson.com

Heather Benson is a dance artist, producer, and lecturer that has worked within the USA, UK and beyond. Now residing in London, Heather – a former company member of Dallas Black Dance Theatre II, Urban Bush Women and Philadanco!, serves as a Horton Technique lecturer at Roehampton University and Company Manager of Tavaziva Dance. In addition to her performance and teaching experience, Heather supports individuals and organisations as a project manager, strategic consultant and creative producer.



Jess Choi • Communications and Marketing Consultant • hello@jess-choi.com

Jess Choi is a communications and marketing consultant and graphics and web designer. She has extensive experience in fundraising, communications, and sales working with non-profit arts and cultural organisations. She specialises in developing commercial partnerships, individual giving, event management, website design and development, digital marketing, and creating integrated fundraising and communications strategies.



Freda Morrison • Support Administrator

Freda Morrison is a college student, soon embarking on university studies in the field of Digital Marketing and Business Management. She supports the team with administrative logistics on projects online and also updates useful data for its members in the digital hub. She stays motivated to push boundaries, stay creative, & build a foundation for her future career.



'Funmi Adewole Elliot • Advocate

'Funmi is a practitioner-researcher with a background in performance, journalism and education. Her research interests include Contemporary African culture, Modernity, Interculturalism, Dance as a profession and Choreography.

THANKS

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We wish to thank all our featured artists, presenters, attendees, partners, sponsors, co-facilitators, and the Kauma Arts Team.

VERSIONS OF THIS MANIFESTO WILL BE PRODUCED AND AVAILABLE AS NECESSARY.