



READER'S CORNER



THEATRICALS

Inspired by French philosopher, Michel Foucault and the phenomenon "Worlds inside the World", two German artists Janina Janke and Maurice de Martin have done an artistic investigation of the United Nations headquarters in Vienna, New York and Nairobi and their host communities, writes BRIAN MUREITHI

In a move aimed at understanding different cultures, two German artists Janina Janke and Maurice

Creating knowledge through art

de Martin have embarked on an art project dubbed "Unknown Spaces". The project seeks to generate knowledge through art from diverse cultures.

It is funded by the Austrian Science Fund and is inspired by renowned French philosopher, Michel Foucault and the phenomenon "Worlds inside the World".

The two artists narrowed down to discover the world of the United Nations and endeavoured to

answer several questions such as the host community cultures, customs and geographical location influence to a UN officer to make decisions for the world, how the officers relate to their immediate surroundings and how people in the outside world relate with the officers and their influence on them.

The artists started the project three years ago and earmarked the UN headquarters in New York, Vienna and Nairobi as their "worlds". From 2011 onwards, they collected a total of 66 interviews from the three headquarters conducted with a wide spectrum of UN staff and people from the "outside", in which they are telling their per-

sonal life story.

After having exhibited the work in Vienna, the exhibition now travels to Nairobi. They will make presentations of the findings and exhibit photos, artworks and videos relayed in large projections at the Goethe Institut auditorium and UN offices in Gigiri, Nairobi. This will later be complemented by a workshop.

Here in Nairobi, in addition to the exhibition at the Goethe-Institut in the city centre, the two artists also present the results of their investigation as a lecture-performance at UN headquarters in Gigiri and hold a two-day workshop with orphans from the Agape Hope Centre in Dagoretti.

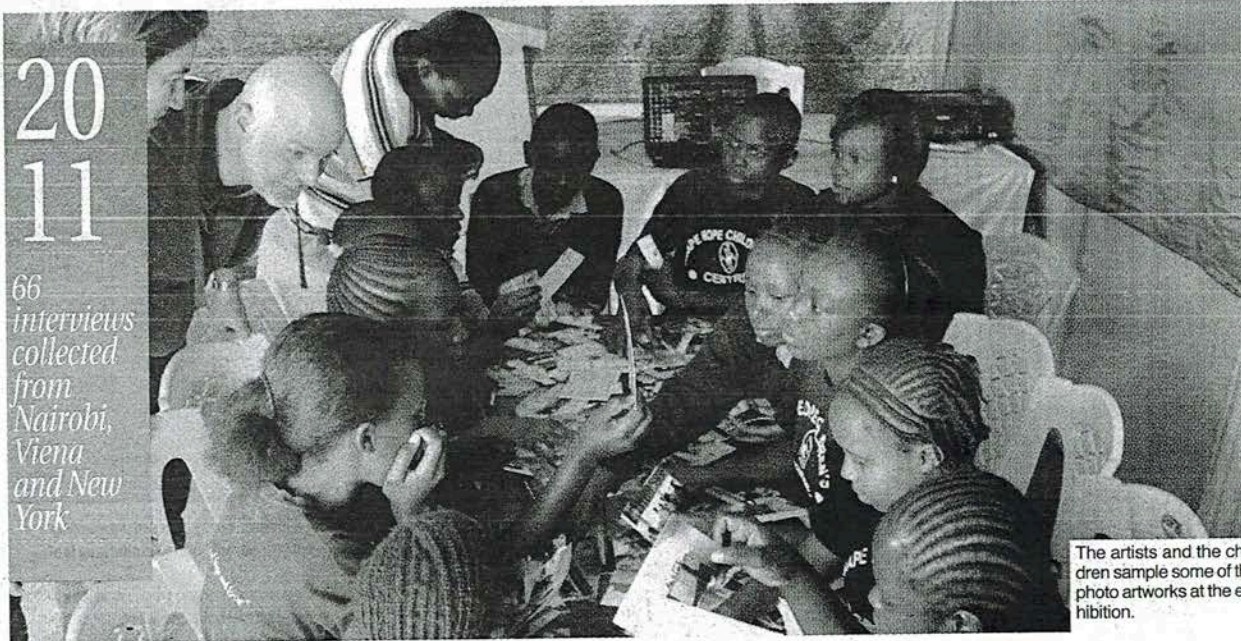
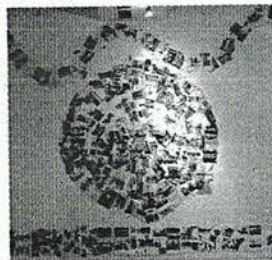
The children will use the photographs taken by the duo in their research to make different patterns of the UN member states flags in each of the headquarters.

They also wrote different messages based on their creativity and imagination of the culture of the UN staff. The resulting children's artwork will be integrated into the exhibition at the Goethe-Institut.

Intensifying reality

"We were motivated to create empty spaces where people can meet in an artistic context and interact by intensifying reality and the phenomenon that is already there and put it in a way that is not there. This is by bringing people to come together and share in an informal way about their experiences," says Maurice, describing this as what distinguishes arts from sciences.

Art can do that and more. It creates something that has not been there. It creates knowledge," he added. The artists presented the first art project in Vienna last year and will be in Nairobi up to next week for the same. Their next stop is New York in October.



The artists and the children sample some of the photo artworks at the exhibition.

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interviews
collected
from
Nairobi,
Vienna
and New
York