

# Creative Force NEWSLETTER

Cultural and visionary encounters Africa-Sweden,  
a Swedish Institute initiative • October 2009

Si.  
Swedish Institute

## MAKING CULTURE MATTER

The Swedish Institute will take part in European Development Days in Stockholm, October 22–24. Why is it important to be seen there?

European Development Days is the biggest single event focusing on development and foreign aid during the Swedish EU presidency. It will be a major shop-window and meeting point, and will enable us to show that the Swedish Institute occupies a broad and unique role as an aid actor. For those of us concerned with Creative Force, it is particularly important to emphasize the vital role of culture in this sphere.

### Which speakers has Creative Force invited to take part?

Two strong, creative partners will be coming to give their views on our joint projects. Joy Mboya from the Kenyan cultural organization GoDown Arts Centre will be talking about 'The Economy of Creativity,' the purpose of which is to link together the creative industry and the business sector. Unemployment is high in Kenya, but they've managed to create jobs in the cultural sector. Investors in culture are few, however. The fact that little public funding is available there means that bringing together cultural workers and investors is even more important. And the business community must dare invest in literature, films and music – a sector that continues to grow even at times of financial crisis.

Aminata Kamara, who runs the Empire des Enfants orphanage in Dakar, will be describing its cooperation with the organization Djef Djel/Fan-attics, who have trained a number of the young people to become circus artists and trainers themselves. The idea is to help them live on their talent after leaving school.

### What will your African cooperation program involve in 2010?

Following the film delegation's trip to Burkina Faso, a lot will be happening on the cinema front. Several film festivals in Sweden will have African themes. The Göteborg Book Fair, too, will focus on the African continent next year. Also, the show African Cinderella will open in Ghana. Being able to present such a lively, entrepreneurial Africa is a great feeling.

## MARIA KRON

Welcome to the SI stand, D4, in the Swedish pavilion at the Stockholm International Fairs Exhibition Center. Meet Joy Mboya and Aminata Kamara on the Swedish stage on October 22 at 15:15.  
[www.eudevdays.eu](http://www.eudevdays.eu)



PHOTO: ANNA-LENA AHLESTRÖM

PHOTO: PRATIK VITHLANI



GoDown Arts Centre, Kenya.

## The Art of living on Art

**KENYA** Culture is traditionally associated with values such as democracy and freedom of expression. But artistic creativity also helps boost countries' economic development. To enhance growth, the business sector and the creative sector need to connect.

How can these two worlds to be brought together? This was the theme of a workshop held in Nairobi as part of the project 'The Economy of Creativity.'

All around the world, the question of how the cultural sector can generate new jobs and growth is being discussed. In Sweden, for instance, the Government recently invested SEK 73 million in measures to develop the creative industry. And the EU conference 'Culture and Creativity: vectors for development' concluded this year that the creative industry is an important force in development cooperation.

In Nairobi, therefore, Kenyan and Swedish cultural workers and business representatives gathered to exchange ideas about how they could best cooperate. For two days, filmmakers, authors, dancers and musicians had

the opportunity to swap perspectives – and cast themselves in the roles of investors and venture capitalists so as to learn more about how people in this professional category think. The workshop was initiated by consultant Pratik Vithlani of Mangowalla Ventures, in cooperation with the Swedish cultural organization Nätverkstan Kultur i Väst and the Kenyan GoDown Arts Centre.

**MR PRATIK VITHLANI** chose to launch the 'Economy of Creativity' project in Kenya because the country is often regarded as the engine of cultural and media development in East



Kenyan talk show.



The organizers from Kenya and Sweden.

► Africa. The copyright-based industry accounts for about 5 percent of the country's GDP.

"Yet despite the fact that this field could generate money, Kenya has only a handful of investors targeting it," Vithlani says. But how do you learn the art of living on your art? In Sweden, cultural life is largely driven by government funding. In Kenya, the sponsors tend to be large international foundations, such as the Ford Foundation. The country still lacks a national council for cultural affairs, and the new culture policy adopted in 2008 has yet to be put into practice. This is a problem, noted one of the participants, project leader Samuel Muvela of the Zimele Asset Management Company:

"We have too few cultural institutions and our cultural workers are too divided. So how are investors going to find a way into this field, and how are we going to find talent?"

The potential conflict between artistic values and the profit motive was one of the questions

that arose during the discussion. How can you help finance artists without them feeling obliged to maximize profits? And how can artists in receipt of private capital preserve their artistic freedom?

**MS LOTTA LEKVALL** from Nätverkstan Kultur i Väst, one of the project partners, argued that cultural workers and business representatives have much to learn from one another, and that it was important to show that the cultural sector can create jobs. A further alternative, she said, was to work with skills enhancement. Most of the participants were entrepreneurs

more from necessity than from choice and probably needed more expertise in such things as project management. "There is also a need for a trade organization to activate public opinion and raise awareness about the cultural scene," she said, "and act

as an intermediary between artists on the one hand and the government and business sectors on the other."

The GoDown Arts Centre, Lekvall felt, was the embryo of such a body – an organization that could show culture to be an industry in its own right, capable of boosting the country's economy. Nätverkstan Kultur i Väst and the GoDown Arts Centre intend to continue cooperating on skills enhancement courses and other initiatives.

"The workshop gave rise to a lot of ideas and also opened up a dialogue between the various parties, who hopefully have begun thinking along new lines," Vithlani concluded.

## Focus on East African literature

**EAST AFRICA** With the Göteborg Book Fair 2010 focusing on Africa, Karavan magazine is investigating the literary situation in East Africa.

This autumn, university lecturer Erik Falk and Karavan's editor, Birgitta Wallin, will be visiting East Africa to forge contacts, invite authors to Sweden and study the conditions for book publishing in the region.

"The situation in general is pretty grim at present," says Falk, a senior lecturer at the universities of Stockholm and Södertörn. "There's

a lack of material capacity for publishing and distributing books, which means conditions for authors are tough."

In time for the 2010 Book Fair, Karavan will be presenting a bumper issue on African literature. Also, the Tranan publishing company will be publishing a novel by Abdulrazak Gurnah from Zanzibar and an anthology of short stories written by women, *African Love Stories*.

Karavan is also planning to join the magazine *00TAL*, the International Library and others in inviting numerous authors to the Book Fair and also to a major event in Stockholm.

*The magazine 00TAL is also focusing on Africa, and is cooperating among others with the Kenyan literary magazine Kwani. On November 3, 00TAL presents contemporary Kenyan writers Wambui Mwangi, Shailja Patel and Nguvatilo at the Stockholm Poetry Festival. [www.00tal.com](http://www.00tal.com)*



Stockholm Poetry Festival 2009



Participants in the workshop.

## Taking children seriously

**ETHIOPIA** "I'm extremely keen to start a network for women cultural workers in Addis Ababa to help them challenge patriarchal structures," says Swedish theater director Suzanne Osten.

This summer, she led an inspirational workshop in children's drama for actors and dramatists in Ethiopia.

The participants, who work in the theater, cinema and TV, began the week-long event by dramatizing their own childhood memories. As a test audience, they invited children from orphanages in Addis Ababa. The children, too, were given the chance to tell their own stories, and these were then played out. Their stories tended to feature deprivation, violence and how they lost their parents to AIDS.

**"Drama for children tends to be the last thing you invest in, but the gifted actors and directors I met in Addis Ababa can hopefully begin to perform more serious works."**

"These were very powerful encounters, but the children were definitely not victims," Osten says. "All the adults were fascinated to see how much they understood and were able to manage – it gave the participants a totally new view of children."

**MS SUZANNE OSTEN**, long-time artistic director of the Unga Klara theater company in Stockholm, led the workshop together with dramaturgist Ann-Sofie Barany. They drew freely on their own experiences and described their struggle to have children's theater taken seriously.

"Drama for children tends to be the last thing you invest in," Osten says, "but the gifted actors and directors I met in Addis Ababa

can hopefully begin to perform more serious works."

The workshop was the brainchild of Carin Asplund, a director and producer with many years' experience of theater in Ethiopia. She says there is considerable interest among young cultural workers in writing lifelike new drama for children. Another goal of the workshop was to actively support women actors and directors. Only a few works by women dramatists have been performed in Ethiopia over the past 20 years, and few women direct. Women working in the theater described how male actors stood demonstratively with their arms crossed when they tried to direct them.

"That's why it was important to have a strong personality like Suzanne involved, and I think the women in particular felt affirmed and strengthened," Asplund says.

**MR SURAFEL WONDIMU**, a dramatist and journalist in Addis Ababa, co-organized the workshop together with Asplund. He is hoping the participants will get together again to continue developing the methods they worked with.

"The workshop meant a lot to us, because we're greatly in need of new impulses and knowledge from children's theatre abroad," he says. "But I look at it more as an artistic partnership where we swap experiences. We ourselves have a tremendously rich culture and storytelling tradition that we're happy to share with others."



Suzanne Osten

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### FILM TRIP TO BURKINA FASO BEARS FRUIT

**BURKINA FASO** "Now it's Africa's turn – interest in African films is steadily growing, and next year several Swedish festivals will be focusing on them," says Sandra Olivegren, chair of CinemAfrica, a cultural organization that promotes African cinema in Sweden.

Sandra led the Swedish delegation funded by Creative Force that visited the Burkina Faso film festival this spring to establish new ties. Africa is now attracting growing attention, she says, due to such factors as increasing economic power in certain states, the migration issue, climate change, and not least next year's football World Cup.

"People have woken up, and this is reflected in the general interest in film," Olivegren says. "Today, though, most films about Africa are made by outsiders. It's time to bring Africans' own stories to the fore and strive for a more modern, updated picture of the continent."

The first occasion will be the Göteborg International Film Festival from January 29-February 8, where an unusually large number of African films will be shown.

Then follows the CinemAfrica film festival in Stockholm on February 24–28, featuring some 30 films. Two themes are planned. One is 'Love, gender and power,' while the other focuses on the distribution and production conditions under which African cinema operates.

The Tempo documentary festival will take place from March 10–14 and one of the scheduled sub-themes is Africa Update, co-organized by CinemAfrica.

Those interested in seeing African film sooner can take the opportunity during the European Development Days event in Stockholm, during which CinemAfrica will be organizing the Ubuntu film festival from October 21–25.

#### SELAM CELEBRATES ITS 10TH ANNIVERSARY

**SWEDEN** The Selam African Festival will be held for the tenth time in Stockholm this autumn, and anniversary concerts and events are scheduled for November 6–9. One of the highlights of the celebrations will be the Addis Acoustic Project, a popular acoustic group from Ethiopia, who are due to perform in the Stockholm Concert Hall on November 6.

On November 7, artists Timbuktu, Adam Tensta and Jaqee, who have toured East and West Africa, will describe what their musical encounters meant to them and will also perform live.

Festival program: [www.selam.se](http://www.selam.se)

# African Cinderella opens on Ghana's national day

**GHANA** African Cinderella will open next year on Ghana's national day, March 6. After the show, the audience will be invited to discuss the sensitive issues that it raises.

"Hopefully, it will make everyone more aware that children, too, have rights," says Daphnies Selasi from the National Theatre of Ghana.

Daphnies will be in Stockholm this autumn at the invitation of Riksteatern – Sweden's nationwide theater – to learn more about being a producer. Back in Ghana, she will visit the ten districts that the show will be staged in. All have different local languages and cultural customs that the play will be adapted to.

"This is to make sure that audiences will be able to feel a part of the proceedings," Daphnies says.

"We have a lot to learn at Riksteatern in that respect," producer Mansour Hosseini says, noting that theaters in Sweden do not always manage to focus on their audiences to the same extent.

**THE SCRIPT** OF the play, he says, has a distinct African perspective. Children who come to a foster home or an extended family often risk being placed in a vulnerable position.

The post-performance discussions on children's rights will be led by the aid organizations Action Aid and Plan International. The play has already been contracted for Sweden



Producer Daphnies Selasi.

and the UK and may also tour other West African countries.

"I'm hoping our exchange will lead to further productions for children," Daphnies says. "For my own part, I've benefited tremendously from studying the role of the producer in Sweden. Here, you have much greater responsibility for the production as a whole, not just for the budget as is the case in Ghana."



Production team.

## NEWS IN BRIEF



Student film makers in Rwanda.

### WOMEN FILM-MAKERS IN RWANDA STEP UP

**RWANDA** Virtually all films produced in East Africa are the work of film-makers from the West. To help bring more indigenous film-makers into the industry, the Swedish Institute has been supporting the independent Rwanda Cinema Centre since 2005. This summer, a workshop was held targeting women film-makers.

"In Rwanda, gender roles have not yet been cemented in the film industry, since this art form is relatively new there," project leader Sara Waldestam says. "So it's important to get women into film-making now."

The workshop led to four short films that will be shown at what are known as Hilliwoods – popular film shows in Rwanda's villages – but also at film festivals in Africa and other parts of the world.

The project has four collaborators: the School of Film Directing at Göteborg University, Widerberg Film, Alphaville AB and Kapetanovic Film Production AB.



Village screening.

### WHAT'S GOING ON?

**DECEMBER 2009** Transit Studios, Konstfack's pre-incubator for the fine arts, crafts, design and fashion, will be organizing a series of seminars at Le festival mondial des Arts nègres in Senegal. The festival will focus on design, fashion and handicraft, and Transit will be lecturing on the theme of starting incubator activities for creative enterprises.



#### Projects presented in this issue:

1. Selam • Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Senegal
2. Transit Studios • Senegal
3. CinemAfrica • Burkina Faso, Tanzania
4. Karavan/OOTAL • Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda
5. African Cinderella • Ghana
6. Abako International Partners • Ethiopia
7. Rwanda Cinema Centre • Rwanda
8. Mangowalla Ventures • Kenya

#### Creative Force/Force Créative

is a joint project involving the Swedish Institute, Swedish diplomatic missions abroad, and cultural actors in Sweden and Africa, with funding from both Sida's cultural support program and the Swedish Institute development cooperation program.

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#### Further information about Sweden:

[www.sweden.se](http://www.sweden.se), the Swedish embassy or consulate in your country, or the Swedish Institute, Box 7434, SE-103 91 Stockholm, Sweden

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