

AtWork 2015

“Ziliwa ziliwa? Zibuze, ziliwa?” (Where are they? Where are they? I can’t find them, where are they?) renown Ugandan Artist, fashion designer and poet Xenson (Samson Ssenkaaba) shouted, as he looked through the sack of old shoes that he’d just torn open. Donned in a dirty, old overall coat and a hat, one could tell that this skit that he was acting out was out of the ordinary. After looking through this lot of old shoes and ranting on (in luganda) in what could be seen as clear frustration he stormed into the Art Gallery. The people present for the opening of At Work 2015, didn’t know what to make of it? Was this it? Is there more? After about 10 or so minutes, the acting Gallery curator, Ms. Hasifa Mukyala decided to call it and welcome guests to the exhibition. That was the opening skit to the At Work exhibition 2015. What followed was a series of Musical performances, Poems recited and more musical pieces performed by participants of the Workshop. All this was besides the different Art pieces being exhibited.

What is At Work? According to Artist, writer and curator, Margaret Nagawa “AtWork workshop is unique in that it alters the materials at hand, with a strong focus on the critical thought processes leading up to making an object, planning an exhibition, or writing a text.” Director of the Institute of Heritage at the Makerere art Gallery, Prof. George Kyeyune in his remarks described the workshop as an interesting workshop because it brought together Artists from different areas of specialization. “We had people from literature, we had people from performing arts, and fine art. We have seen from the different performances that it is embracing everything that is creative.”

The 5-day intensive AtWork workshop, held in partnership with Makerere University’s art school and art gallery and Maisha Foundation. It included 5 days of questioning, sharing, exchanging, elaborating, metaphorically and literally taking their shoes off and exploring the notions, spaces and territories, where they have not set their foot before. The exhibition held on Thursday 9th March 2015 was a chance to show the world the works of Art that had been created as a result of this workshop.

Prof. Kyeyune said that he always wondered why the literature he had come across on African Art exclude Uganda and East Africa in General. “I think I have the answer to that, it is because we’ve been focussing on conventions in Art and not innovations.” He added. The professor continued to thank everyone who participated in this workshop, and invited everyone present to begin thinking outside the box. “This is an opportunity for us to shine.”

The main theme of the workshop was “Should I take off my shoes” A challenge, posed by the Gallery curator to each person present at the exhibition. This challenge was introduced in order to get people out of their comfort zones and think outside the box, do something completely out of the norm. The AtWork exhibition at the Makerere Art Gallery run up to 11th April 2015.