

apexart

2014-15 Franchise Proposal by
Rehema Chachage and Jan van Esch
Franchise location: Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania

CURATOR/ORGANIZER STATEMENT OF EFFECT:

'If they wont follow the art, let the art follow them'

As an apex art Franchise, the aim of this project, 'Beauty Salons and the Beast', will be to introduce, and 'bring to the (Tanzanian) public exposure to new and experimental art as well as to increase public interest and dialogue in the art happenings and the role of the visual arts in Tanzania.

PROPOSAL:

This project is interested in the public sphere and in questioning the role of artists in society, especially in using artistic media and creative expression to engage with communities to communicate, explore and articulate issues of local significance. It will attempt to experiments with the 'if they don't follow the art, we will bring the art to them' idea. This is in response to the fact that attending art exhibitions is not a tradition, and hence there are not enough Tanzanians (as compared to expatriate audience) attending art exhibitions and other cultural events when they happen in galleries and cultural centers in the city. The project will employ an 'infecting the city' methodology using activities like public performances, interventions and public discussion as a way of 'bringing art' to the community, and as a dialogue starter.

The plan is to experiment with one-day 'pop-up' art exhibitions (from different Tanzanian and non Tanzanian artists that work with new and experimental media) in public spaces with a big concentration of Tanzanians. This particular project will explore barbershops and beauty salons—spaces where large numbers of Tanzanian from upper, middle, and lower class spend their spare time, especially on weekends—as sites for hosting interventions, performances, installations and exhibitions of sound and video, followed by interactive discussions around the art intervention 'brought' to that particular community. The list of featured artists for this project will become clearer as the project develops, for now the few whose video, sound, and/or instillation pieces are under consideration are Vita Malulu (Tanzania), Rehema Chachage (Tanzania), EmKal Eyongakpa (Cameroon), Wanja Kimani (Ethiopia/Kenya), and Jan van Esch (Tanzania/Netherlands).

WHY BARBERSHOPS AND BEAUTY SALONS?:

The modern barbershop and beauty salon is one of the fastest-growing businesses in Tanzania especially in Dar es Salaam. Large crowds of Tanzanians spend most of their weekend hours in these spaces. If you visit barbershops or beauty salons on Saturdays/Sundays you have to prepare for a long waiting time. The interior of these modern shops give you ideas of the services provided and what they cost (and hence, what class of Tanzanians will visit)—the nicer the place, the more expensive and expansive the services offered. Regardless of the stature of the space, it is imperative that in the barbershop/beauty salon you will find a television (a flat screen or two in the more fancy ones) to entertain those waiting their turn, a sofa (or just waiting chairs in the less fancy ones), and a music system (or a small radio in the less fancy). This environment make these spaces perfect sites for 'pop-up' exhibitions.