

The Kenya Arts Diary Launch and Arts Exhibition 2015

It's now the second time that the Nairobi office of the Heinrich Boell Stiftung has hosted the launch of the **Kenya Arts Diary**. This year's **Launch and Arts Exhibition** on October 21 attracted a large crowd of artists and art lovers. The German ambassador, **Andreas Peschke** who was the guest of honor, officially launched the 5th Edition of the Kenya Arts Diary an invaluable documentation and rare collection of art from Kenya and the region. The Diaries flew off the shelves in unexpected numbers, indicating the all around success of the evening.



L-R: Mr. Andreas Peschke, German Ambassador; Ms. Katrin Seidel, Heinrich Böll Stiftung Regional Director; and Mr. Martin Falk, German Embassy

The **Heinrich Boell Stiftung**, an ardent promoter of the Arts and the critical reflections that Art brings along, opened its doors to an exhibition of many of the artists featured in the diary. “Honoring the legacy of Heinrich Boell commits us to support and seek out the links between artistic expression, political awareness and social activism”, explained the office’s regional director **Katrin Seidel**. “The Foundation is proud to carry the name of the famous German writer and novelist Heinrich Boell, as he embodied a rare combination of political awareness, artistic creativity, and moral integrity that remains as inspiration for our work.

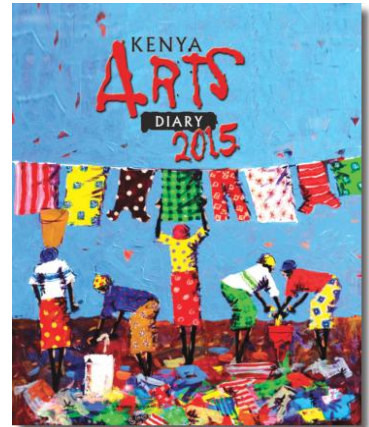
The Kenya Arts Diary (KAD) is the brain-child of the German-born, Kenya-based glass artist **Nani Croze** (below), whose idea was and still is to highlight the artistic gifts of local artists.

The idea to create the diary finally came to fruition in 2010 when Nani enlisted several local art lovers, including the graphic designer of the Kenya Museum Society's magazine, Kenya Past and



Nani Croze, Kenya Arts Diary Founder

Present, Peta Meyers. Peta's graphic skills combined with Nani's and several other art lovers' eye for our local artistry enabled the first Kenya Arts Diary to appear in late 2010, covering the New Year 2011.



Every year since then, the Diary highlights the beauty of local visual artists on a yearly basis where both sculptors and painters are included. Young, upcoming Kenyan artists are the priority in selecting who gets featured every year. A few resident expatriate artists also appear in the Diary, but the goal has always been to confirm and amplify the reality and dynamism of Kenya's visual arts.

That commitment is most visible in the recently launched Kenya Arts Diary Residency Award (KADRA), which recognizes four Kenyan artists who are over 18 and meet a certain criteria for entry. KADRA first awarded two promising young Kenyan artists in 2013 and their stories appeared in the 4th Edition of the Kenya Arts Diary 2014. This year, one contestant was selected and Kezia Nduta spent a month in residency at Kitengela Glass working closely with Nani Croze in her glass workshops.

The structure of the diary is such that, different artists feature on each weekly spread and their work appears in living color on one page while on the opposite page, their short biography and their contact information are given, so the public can connect directly with them. The same page is one where you can make diary entries, although I must admit to always find the diary too cute to scribble stuff on.

Direct contact with the artists is one of Nani's key concerns since she wanted to liberate them from middle men and give them more control over their art. A number of local artists can testify to having benefited immensely from appearing in the Diary. This is especially true because the Diary is bought both by locals and expatriates, many of whom share it overseas. So, everyone behind the realization of the activities surrounding the arts diary, including the buyers, contribute to an elevation of the profile of the contemporary Kenyan arts.

This elevation and recognition is long overdue in the global art world and we are delighted to seeing Kenyan artists claiming their place on an international platform where the art-loving public can see that the Kenyan art scene is vibrant and growing by the day.