



karen
village

KIJIJI FEST 2015

LOCATED:

KAREN, NAIROBI

+254 722 805663

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Introduction

Oct 31st 2015, Kijiji Fest marks the grand opening of what many consider the birth of a modern village – Karen Village. The attempt is to raise awareness on the value of art, culture and heritage for which will improve the region's economy, more so meet Kenya's Vision 2030 objectives.

Kijiji means village in Swahili. This event focuses on by identifying, conserving and nurturing local talent in the region with the desire to broadcast to the rest of the world. Kenya which is known for its rich culture, using art as a tool for expression and education the world can learn new things and correct misconceptions about Africa, specifically Kenya.

Kijiji Fest 2015 carries the theme “Art yangu, Mali yetu” brings artists from across the region to showcase their various skills equally inspiring the coming generation. Focused on three key elements – art, culture, and heritage – the festival aims to help to connect the world using the language of art at the same time bring peaceful coexistence between people from all walks of life.

Who Are We?

Karen Village is a center for arts, culture and heritage. Exists to identify talent to nurture and inspire creativity with a view to benefiting the local communities who might be interested in finding a niche within the establishment. One of the goals of Karen village is to use culture (which is recognised in the Kenyan constitution as the foundation of the nation and as the cumulative civilisation of the Kenyan people and nation that promotes respect for ethnic diversity and equality - Chapter 4 bill of rights, particularly article 27 of the constitution of Kenya 2010) as a tool for the benefit of the local communities as well as to educate the outside world. Our key objectives are as follows

Karen village will seek to encourage the youth into appreciating their cultures, to nurture creativity and to support innovation while creating employment. For example, creativity in music which depicts real life situations and current affairs, thematic paintings which seek to illustrate science and real life from an artist point of view.

Moreover, Karen village would serve as a place where business people will seek information and understanding of the communities they intend to work with before venturing into introduction of new technologies. This will create ownership and partnerships with the local community which has to be in line with their thinking.

Background

Art is innately wired into our being; it is an expression of us. We cannot deny its existence hence the need to value it. For us to value it, we first need to understand it by enjoying different forms of expression e.g. dance, painting, carvings etc.

Culture and Heritage

The existence and practices of African traditional cultures should be viewed as an important way of creating order and impacting traditional knowledge to the youth and the society in general. Issues of morals, food and health, traditional knowledge were continuously taught and practised through everyday lives and hence helped to maintain a sense of identity and pride among the cultural owners. Some of the other aspects that the world should understand about the African cultures are that, each and every cultural aspect had its own value (is that African culture is highly symbolic). For example, the naming system among the Meru people is never random. A child is given a name after the character of his/her name sake because it is desired that the name will influence the child as it grows up to become what the name suggests.

Justification

In line with the theme, this event dubbed Kijiji Fest 2015 “Art yangu, Mali yetu” continues to focus on two of the three key elements; Art and Culture. The core cultural expression domains are literature, music, performing arts, visual arts and creative areas like film, galleries and photography.

In Kenya, the Creative Economy Working Group has helped develop a National Arts and Culture Bill, currently in its final stages. Constitutional and legislative frameworks are also being put in place for the promotion of creativity and innovation. At the regional level, the East African Community Creative and Cultural Industries Bill 2015 is being discussed in Arusha. It is likely to open up the region for the arts and culture.

Many people whether local or international are not aware of where the world has come from in terms of technology. To inspire further creativity and innovation, it is paramount that local artisans are introduced to the traditional technologies in their near ‘original form’ which will provoke them into thinking on how they can make new forms of technology or how they can build on the existing technologies borrowing from the traditional knowledge. This will not only realize the potential of using the available local and cheap materials to earn a living.

It is important for foreigners to understand African cultures before venturing into business. The education aspect of Karen Village will therefore not only be geared towards educating the local populace and tourist but also the business community. Kenya has been ranked as one of the first developing countries in the world, and culture being one of its vision 2030 key pillars, must be promoted so that it can be understood by the investors who seek to conduct business here. Understanding of the Kenyan cultures will not only promote preservation of culture but it will also be beneficial to the investors.

How the “Art yangu Mali Yetu’ Initiative will Work

There are very few institutions that support this cause. Research into how to replicate the various cultures in one spot is a concept that is not taking place anywhere else except for Bomas of Kenya, where they have live performances of music and dance, and traditional architecture. In the case of Karen Village such performances will be accompanied with poetry and which could be performed in a traditional setting dramatizing or recreating the real situations for example, music and dance that is used during circumcisions or during weddings can be performed in a traditional setting which will help the view to understand the circumstances and real situations as opposed to having these performances in an enclosed hall/theatre. Karen village will create a one stop cultural atmosphere which will showcase and could be tailored to the needs of the viewers through prior bookings.

Event description

Kijiji Fest shall be held in Karen Village along Ngong road, Karen area, 50 meters after shade hotel on the 31st Oct 2015. This event will be the grand opening of Karen village, commissioned by the Lord Chief Justice of Kenya Dr. Willy Mutunga and graced by the prolific artist Prof. Elizabeth Orchardson, who will be holding an exhibition on that day. This event is designed for those that are looking for an artsy experience, one that heightens all the senses including taste and touch. The activities will be engaging, interactive coupled with fun, which will help sensitizing the public on the objectives of Karen village.

Kijiji fest will host a pool of artists with various skills; performances from live bands, live graffiti, exhibitions, fashion show, a photo booth, kid’s competitions among many. In addition the food served around will be strictly African cuisine.

Objectives

The main objective for this event this year is:

- Provide a conducive environment for artists to create themselves together with an ecosystem that supports their trade.
- Conserve, exhibit and sell art works (paintings, clothes, pottery among many) to the domestic and global market.
- Identify nature and promote young talent by establishing a curriculum for them to enroll.

Participants

- Artists Networks
- National Museum of Kenya
- University Students/ Lecturers
- Government Officials
- Embassies

- Musicians/ Dancers/ Actors
- Designers/ Writers/ Photographers/ Creatives
- Private Sector
- Local Communities e.g. Ngong, Bul Bul, Karen

Sustainability

Through partnering with the above stakeholders, policies and models will be promoted to achieve sustainable growth of art, culture and heritage in the region. We will ensure a lasting relationship while working together to identify individual and combined, synergistic strategies to reach the combined targets of the initiative. The importance of stakeholder engagement and public participation in the planning process cannot be emphasized enough. Strategies on achievement cannot be effective without involving important sectors of society and without raising awareness and cooperation from the grassroots (Kijiji).

As a long term strategy to ensure the growth of the festival, **Kijiji Fest** will be dedicated to connecting with local roots in every community where it passes. Karen village will be committed to implementing wide ranging curriculums geared to developing and bringing together up and coming artists, by nurturing talents who have been handpicked because they possess great skill and show great potential. We are working with Kenyatta University, who has a strong focus on junior development; the participants will span infants (above 3 years) to the more experienced career artists.

We also ensure the sustainability of this concept through organizing and promoting regular events and workshops with our partners to ensure a gradual lifestyle change among the artist community and inculcate the best practices when building themselves as a brand.

Conclusion

Kijiji Fest 2015 will be the beginning of an art revolution. With the advent of social media we seek to increase awareness and participation of the artists' community to make it more vibrant and sustainable. Our aim is to encourage the youth into appreciating their cultures, to nurture creativity and to support innovation while creating employment.

Africa has produced some of the bestselling storylines which have been taken up and produced as movies. The storylines are borrowed from the African grandmother stories which were told around fire places in the evenings before the children went to bed. The purposes of these stories were to keep the children awake so that they could wait for dinner, but they also served as vehicles by which morals could be impacted into the children.

Now that Africa is awake, we invite you to be a part of this great African story – KIJJI FEST- that will preserve our culture for generations to come.

