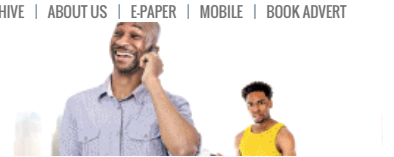


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Life Style

The helmet, the message, your safety: Artist Collin Sekajugo's story

Publish Date: Oct 12, 2015



Some of the niftily decorated helmets on display inside showroom/art space of Collin Sekajugo in Kamwokya, Kampala

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Collin Sekajugo is an artist and a social entrepreneur established both in Kigali (Rwanda) and in the Ugandan capital Kampala.

Over the last eight years, he has been a visual artist in Kenya, Rwanda and later in Uganda. Since early 2013, he has invested his artistic skills into driving home an emphatic message on road safety, particularly *boda boda* (motorcycle) safety through that one important headgear – the helmet.

So how is he doing this? Here is his story . . .

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"After traveling a bit around the world, in 2007 I returned to Rwanda with a mission of Using Art to Change Lives where I started the first arts center in Rwanda called Ivuka Arts Kigali. Later in 2011 my vision expanded into founding the first community for the arts in Uganda called Weaver Bird Arts Community that is based in Masaka. The work for realizing this dream is being done under Weaver Bird Arts Foundation located at our Kampala offices on Plot 62 Kenneth Dale Drive, Kamwokya Kampala.

Since the beginning of 2013, I have dedicated my work to using art as a catalyst for promoting *boda boda* safety by which among other things I started training a group of youth from Kamwokya and Bukoto to learn designing and decorating skills. And I chose safety as our integral aspect of our designs.

'An inconvenience'



To me when one talks about safety on Ugandan roads the first thing I think of is *boda boda* and whenever I'm asked about their operations, I never ever hold back to mention the urgent need for enforcing the wearing of helmets by commuters. However this being said, I have realized the challenges faced by the authorities in the line of their duties. Most of our people find the helmet as an inconvenience given that it would mess up their well-combed hair or gather unwanted heat on their heads.

Amidst various questions surrounding this seemingly widespread skepticism, I came up with an idea of a fusing safety with art and entertainment. The idea was to create what I termed "Safety Visuals" (SV) to act as backdrops for showcasing interactive images and messages about public safety and also starting to decorate helmets that would appeal to the general public as a way of enticing *boda boda* users to start buying them for personal use.

Given today's extreme urban migration, unemployment amongst the youth in countries like Uganda

experts say



The UN's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) warned Monday that processed meats like sausages and ham cause bowel cancer, and red meat "probably" does too....

Alpha Blondy and Mory Kante to grace Africa music festival



Rated by reggae fans as Africa's best reggae export anywhere, Alpha Blondy will be one of the headline acts, alongside Guinean Kora player Mory Kante, at the first ever Africa Music Festival event to be held in Nairobi, Kenya on December 5....

Zuckerbergs to start school mixing learning and health



Facebook billionaire Mark Zuckerberg and his doctor wife on Friday revealed plans to start a private school in a hardscrabble Silicon Valley town, mixing education with health care....

Ssengendo lives on through his art



Professor Pilkington Ssengendo died recently, leaving behind a collection of paintings, sculptures and a thriving art school that he helped to shape....

Is 'pulling' worth the effort or trouble?



Pulling is a tradition in central and southern parts of Uganda and Rwanda, which has become widely known as a Kiganda cultural coming of age for teenage girls....

K-Rafael takes on fashion at Mavuno Yetu



Mavuno Yetu is back again, and this time with a new team. It is the first Mavuno Yetu after four years without Santa Anzo of Arapapa, and we cannot help wonder how this year's Mavuno will turn out without her....

POLL

In light of the recent strikes, should public universities be privatised?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Can't Say

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has led them into venturing in what many refer to as a lucrative business – that is the *boda boda* business. While an enormous number of desperate youth have sought refuge in operating these dangerous commuter carriers, fatalities on Ugandan roads keep rising and cost the government nearly sh1.5 billion each year to treat *boda boda*-related cases at Mulago Hospital alone.



It's with this notion that I am currently developing more ideas that would make this safety campaign become more relevant to society and taking effect on our regular road usage while staying in tune with what the United Nations (UN) has recently translated into Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

I would therefore like to use Safety Visuals to educate, provide information while entertaining our target groups.

While I consider art as my primary occupation, I have always used it to raise awareness for social issues that are faced by society and also I invest my savings from art to venture into other youth employment initiatives.

As an artist-turned-social entrepreneur, I was intrigued to start a company called Se Community Communications under which I initiated a start-up called Se Connect – a community-based initiative that mainly focuses on helping the youth to realize their potentials through creative skill development, healthcare provisions and safety awareness.

Recently, we started a partnership with City Motor Imports, a locally-based Japanese company that imports motorbikes and European standard helmets.



This company sells helmets to us at a relatively low price and also displays our sample designs at their showroom on Crane plaza, Kisementi (Kampala). This partnership has helped us to meet expectations for our expatriate clientele standards given that the helmets that we worked on before were cheap substandard ones from China.





My artist statement



'Social conscience and healing'

We tend to become constrained by our heritage and cultural backgrounds. I believe that when culture dictates a lot in our day-to-day lives, we eventually lose our moral values as subjected to the world we live in today. What does culture mean to you or me? And who has the best culture?

I have learned to believe that Ethnocentrism has always been the worst problem on the soils of all humanity since the genesis of man. This has dismantled societies and built up new cultures. Some of us have lost our cultural heritage and assimilated new cultures and others are born in a mixture of cultures hence losing cultural identity. Who is to blame? It's the modern world, the Neo-global change.


Even though I am born of men and women whose blood is rooted in the reaches of the Upper Nile or areas of Ancient Ethiopia and the Cameroon Forests, my work has less to do with my ancestry or

cultural heritage. It's about my surroundings, experiences and emotions. I have focused on change in society because it is rapid and solid.

My art is about social conscience and healing. Raising awareness for issues concerning our breaking societies: from discrimination to segregation, from environmental change to isolation and from disintegration to integration. Through my work, I am developing concepts on the elements that build or destroy our societies. And the message that is portrayed in my artwork is a demonstration for social transformation whereas stitching together different identities that create a bond for our common values as a people."

Connect with the artist:

 On Twitter: [@CollinSekajugo](https://twitter.com/CollinSekajugo)

 On Facebook: [Collin Sekajugo](https://www.facebook.com/CollinSekajugo)

If it's not on, it's not safe

Sekajugo emphasizes that "protecting your life is not a luxury, it's a necessity".



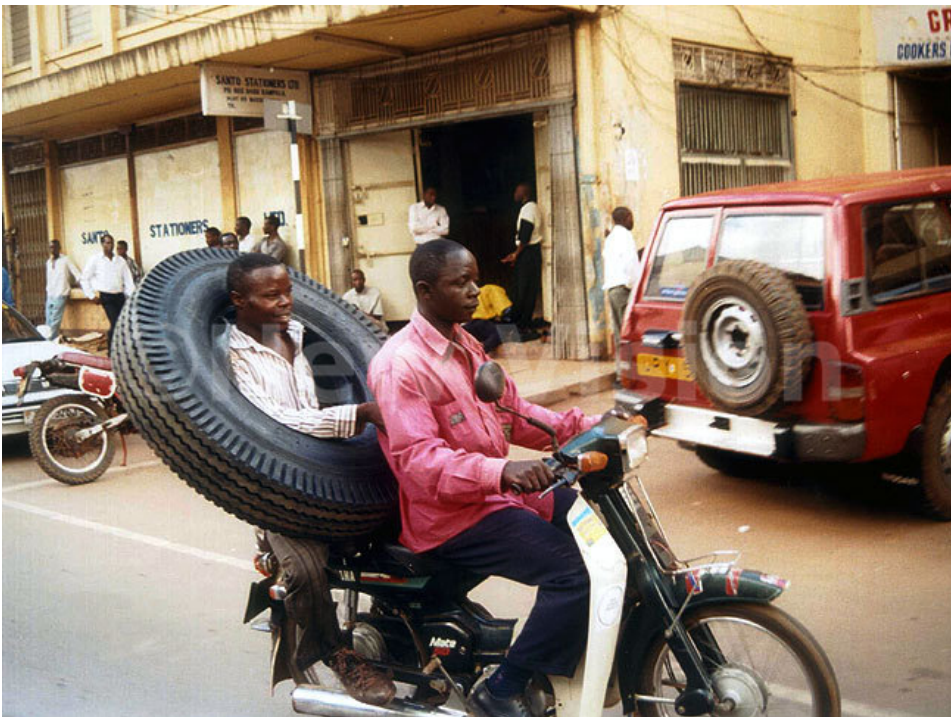
RIGHT: It's better to protect yourself than to land yourself in any looming road trouble



WRONG: There are so many wrongs in this picture. Any pessimist would sniff trouble lurking ahead



RIGHT: Personal safety is indeed a necessity, and these two men know just that



WRONG: Don't you sniff a bit of trouble looming here? Perhaps these two men don't



COLLIN SEKAJUGO

When you walk into Collin's showroom in Kamwokya, these are some of the ingeniously decorated helmets you will find there

Safety, education, jobs: Carrying the messages to the street



Every child needs to have an education to have hopes of securing a good future . . .



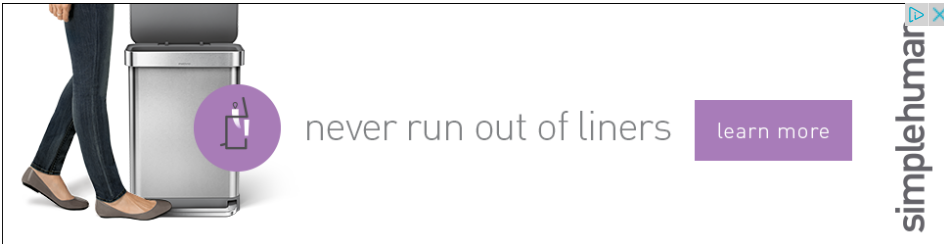
... but many, especially girls, drop out of school due to a number of factors ...



... and as a result, they become very desperate



It's a world of needs we live in, but how do desperate girls find their way out of such despair? These are some of the social issues Collin Sekajugo communicates through art



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