

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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Meet the African writers and visual artists chosen to help celebrate 20 years of the African Union

Ten (10) African writers and visual artists who will contribute their creative ideas to the African Union's 20-year celebrations have been selected as part of the AU20 Artists & Writers Residency Programme.

Following an Africa-wide call, 10 successful applicants were selected for the AU20 Artists & Writers Residency Programme which received close to 1000 submissions in response to the open call for applications under the AU20 theme "**Our Africa, Our Future**"; 392 applications were received for the Writers' Residency and 602 submissions for the Artists' Residency.

The five winning writers will be hosted by the Library of Africa and the African Diaspora (LOATAD) in Accra, Ghana, while the five visual artists will be based at the Loman Art House in Dakar, Senegal for the residency programme.

The residencies will allow the artists the time and space to develop and complete their projects while being supported by mentors, workshops, resources and curated activities. The visual artists will take part in a three-week residency at the Loman Art House in Dakar, with a public showcase of their completed artwork on 19 November. The writers will take part in a digital residency followed by a two-week physical residency in Accra. They will showcase their poems and short stories at LOATAD in Accra on 26 November.

The five writers are:

- **Nour Kamel** an Egyptian poet and editor passionate about exploring her country's relationship with the continent. Her poetry will explore the different and differing facets of identity and how Africans intertwine across nation states.
- **Sukoluhle Nyathi** a Zimbabwean creative writer, editor and data analyst whose short story will engage with Africa's economic liberation as a unifying goal for the continent.
- **Tony Mochama** a Kenyan fiction writer and journalist who wants to tell a compelling futuristic African short story that cuts across generational and national boundaries on the continent.
- **TJ Benson** a Nigerian award-winning novelist whose short story will interrogate alternative structures that sprung up across the continent in response to COVID-19 and how they can provide relief in anticipation of future global events.
- **Musih Tedji Xaviere** a Cameroonian award-winning writer whose short story is a futuristic piece that features Africa as a global superpower.

The five visual artists are:

- **Eza Komla** a Togolese multidisciplinary artist whose work explores climate change and upcycling waste into artistic masterpieces.
- **Ronald Odur** an award-winning Ugandan artist who will use aluminium printing plates, copper wires and acrylics to create a sculpture that expresses the complexities of social and political interactions in Africa.
- **Natnael Ashebir** an Ethiopian visual artist who uses painting, digital art, drawing and photography to explore urbanisation and social structures.
- **Lerato Motaung** a South African fine artist who makes use of the intangible to weave together the familiar and the imagined to create a personal and intuitive evocation of the continent's history.
- **Senami Donoumassou**, from Benin, who will use photograms, drawings, and protean installations to explore identity, memory, heritage and history.

The AU20 Residency Programme is supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) who have partnered with the African Union to support various initiatives aimed at celebrating the implementation of the mandates and programmes of the African Union during the 20 years of the organisation's operations.

Ms. Leslie Richer, Director of Information and Communication at the African Union, said: "The AU20 Artists & Writers Residency Programme is an exciting component of the celebration of our organisation's history as it brings to the fore the voices of those that society has charged with preserving, celebrating and amplifying the diversity of our African culture and heritage through their creative talent and skills and likewise ensures their inclusion in promoting Aspiration 5 of Africa's development framework Agenda 2063, which envisions "an Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics."

Mr. Jide Okeke, Regional Programme Coordinator at UNDP Africa, said: "Storytellers and creatives contribute to socio-economic development. They remind us of our collective history, mirror current realities and inspire the future. We therefore welcome creative voices as part of the AU20 celebrations. By developing creativity, we are also creating sustainable development for Africa."

The AU20 Artists & Writers Residency Programme will culminate in a published anthology and an exhibition at the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia creating a platform for their work to be seen by African Heads of States and Government as well as other African and international dignitaries, citizens and visitors who frequent the AU headquarters.

For more information

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