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Studios Kabako Wins 2014 Curry Stone Design Prize

Congolese Dance Company Recognized for Using Culture as a Tool for Development in Post-Conflict Regions

Brussels, Belgium (October 18th, 2014)—The Curry Stone Foundation has named **Studios Kabako** (Kisangani, Democratic Republic of the Congo) as the 2014 Curry Stone Design Prize Winner. The Congolese performance and theater studio, founded by Faustin Linyekula in 2001, was created to address social memory, fear, and hope in the aftermath of civil war. Through its cultural programs and urban interventions, the studio aims to create a network for dance and artistic expression in a city that is geographically and culturally isolated, and that has been the theater for a series of major battles over the last decades.

Studios Kabako presents art not as a form of entertainment but as a form of political empowerment. The studio uses different tools—among these, dance, theater, and music—to help local communities imagine an alternative to the hardships of daily life, and understand that they can have a hand in creating a better future.

“With so many world regions facing fratricidal wars, we are asking ourselves, how can we rebuild?” said Emiliano Gandolfi, Prize Director. “Studios Kabako realized that in order to rebuild we must be able to envisage an alternative to the culture of destruction. Faustin Linyekula’s is manifesting how art should be the first design component in building a better society. With their performances they are exposing internationally the devastating effects of local conflicts, while in Kisangani they are assembling daily the building blocks for envisaging a sustainable future.”

At the time the studio was founded, Linyekula was just twenty-seven years old and already a renowned African choreographer and director, traveling throughout Africa and Europe. When he returned to the DRC, decades of dictatorship and conflict had devastated the country, which is still contending with the displacement of large numbers of refugees, government corruption, economic instability, and significant human rights abuses. Studios Kabako was founded in recognition that under these circumstances, the Congolese people, especially young people, were living without hope, completely immersed in their daily survival and unable to imagine an alternative. Linyekula had been drawn to dance because he felt no other form could adequately express the violence he wanted to expose—he knew by his own experience the transformative power of art. Studios Kabako strives to provide the citizens of Kisangani with the skills that will allow them to use creativity not just as a professional means, but also as a way to build a new approach to life.

2014 Curry Stone Design Prize

Award Ceremony

October 18, 2014, 7:00PM

Royal Flemish Theater of
Brussels, Belgium – KVS

Jury: Suad Amiry, Clifford Curry, Gary Feuerstein, Louisa Silva, Delight Stone, John Thackara, Antonio Scarponi.

Prize Founders: Clifford Curry and Delight Stone, Bend, OR.

Prize Director: Emiliano Gandolfi, architect and curator, co-founder of Cohabitation Strategies, Rotterdam.

Prize Advisors: Donna Cooper Read, Phoebe Curry Campbell, Rahul Mehrotra, and Kimberley Saunders

View the video on the work of Studios Kabako

Past Curry Stone Design Prize Winners

According to renowned theater, film, and opera director, Peter Sellars, who teaches “Art as Social Action” at the University of Southern California (Los Angeles), “Faustin is training a generation of kids to challenge everything about their surroundings. He has created this energy among youth in Kisangani that insists on moving forward. His work is never self-pitying, there’s always this alertness, this awakens, that has the spirit of challenge in it. It refuses to say ‘Oh, poor Africa.’ It says, ‘OK, pull your life together. Lift your own game.’”

Over the years Studios Kabako has steadily developed its presence in Kisangani by producing and performing works in the city; offering youth programs in many artistic forms including dance, choreography, video, cinema, music, theater, and literature; and providing the facilities and technical expertise to help residents produce art that exposes the city’s most critical issues while building the possibilities for alternative developments. While touring around the world, the company has reinvested more than one third of its revenue into Studios Kabako’s activities in Kisangani.

Studios Kabako practices urban acupuncture. Though the studio maintains offices and recording and rehearsal studios in the city center, it has brought its work to the rural fringes and to vacant areas of Kisangani by organizing a series of mobile performances. Studio Kabako is currently working with Viennese architect Bärbel Müller to build two more facilities within the city and through these projects is experimenting with environmentally friendly technologies, communal living systems and educational models, all of which are unprecedented in this region.

“Culture is one of the most powerful means of providing a shelter for a community. That shelter doesn’t have to be a concrete roof,” synthesized Suad Amiry, founder of RIWAQ, winner of the CSDP award in 2012, and member of this year’s jury.

Studios Kabako will be on tour in the United States including in New York from October 21 to November 1, 2014, with two performances at BRIC theater in Brooklyn.

The Curry Stone Foundation, in partnership with the Royal Flemish Theater of Brussels, Belgium, will be holding an awards ceremony followed by a public conversation between Faustin Linyekula, Virginie Dupray (Executive Director of Studios Kabako), acclaimed theater director Peter Sellars and Emiliano Gandolfi, Curry Stone Design Prize Director.

Curry Stone Design Prize, in its seventh year, is one of the most recognized social impact design awards, celebrating socially engaged practitioners and the influence and reach of design as a force for improving lives and strengthening communities. Each winner receives a no-strings-attached grant, the main award is \$100,000 USD. Winners are also the subjects of short documentary films produced by the Curry Stone Foundation. The documentary on Studios Kabako will be premiered at the Royal Flemish Theater of Brussels, Belgium, and then immediately posted online. It was produced by the Curry Stone Foundation, in collaboration with the filmmakers Donna Reed Cooper, Ben Ged Low, and the contribution of Studios Kabako. The trainees of the studio were involved as active participants in a workshop lead by filmmaker Gaël Teicher.

The Curry Stone Design Prize films, past and present, are shared on many digital channels including the Prize’s [website](#), IDEO, Public Interest Design, and YouTube.

About Studios Kabako

Studios Kabako is known in the dance world and in the European festival circuit for producing poignant and evocative theatrical experiences. Pieces such as “Drums and Digging,” a 2013 production that traced Linyekula’s personal journey up until the founding of the studio, have received international press, and toured extensively. Their work informs an international audience of the geopolitical consequences of postcolonial instability and the exploitation of the Central Africa region.

Studio Kabako has been led since 2003 by executive director Virginie Dupray and currently is growing, with seven full-time staff members and offices in Kisangani. Studios Kabako is self-sustaining. Performance pieces created and premiered in Kisangani tour abroad, with the studio using this revenue to fund its local projects and programs.

The young people in the DRC are the direct beneficiaries of Studios Kabako’s work, gaining dance, music and artistic skills as well as professional expertise in writing, development, video and event production. Some students become part of the Linyekula’s touring group or create their own touring projects, produced by Studio Kabako. Studios Kabako uses part of its funding to send young artists to residencies in major cities both in neighboring countries and abroad in the hope that they will come back and share what they’ve learned with others in Kisangani. When students join Studios Kabako both they and their families receive funding; providing their families with a basic income ensures that all financial pressure is removed from the students, allowing them to freedom to focus intently on their creative pursuits.

About Curry Stone Design Prize

Curry Stone Design Prize was founded in 2008 by **Clifford Curry** and **Delight Stone** to recognize designers who address urgent social issues. It was established with the belief that design can be a critical force to create positive social transformations and empower local communities. Its goal is to make the talents of social impact practitioners available to a broader audience and inspire the next generation of designers to harness their ingenuity and craft for social good. Each winner receives a cash prize with no strings attached and is the subject of a short documentary about their work.

Nominees for the Curry Stone Design Prize are selected by an anonymous, rotating group of social impact experts representing broad fields of design, as well as humanitarian advocates from related disciplines. Emphasis is placed on emerging projects and ideas that may not have yet been taken to scale.

2014 CURRY STONE DESIGN PRIZE AWARD CEREMONY

Conversation with Faustin Linyekula, Virginie Dupray (Executive Director Studios Kabako), acclaimed theatre director Peter Sellars and Emiliano Gandolfi, Director of the Prize.

October 18, 2014, 7:00PM

The Royal Flemish Theater of Brussels, Belgium

RSVP: events@currystonedesignprize.com

To view the short documentary film produced by Curry Stone Foundation on Studios Kabako and learn more, go to www.currystonedesignprize.com/artforculturaldevelopmentpostconflict

For more information about the Curry Stone Design Prize, Winners, All Short Documentaries, and Events go to **www.currystonedesignprize.com**, follow us on **Twitter**: [@currystoneprize](https://twitter.com/currystoneprize),

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