



SMASHINGTIMES

INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR
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State of the Art: Transformative Memories in Political Violence Exhibition

Reflections on Political Violence and the Role of the Arts in Conflict

Dublin Arts and Human Rights Festival 2022

Smashing Times International Centre for the Arts and Equality

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The Bead Project - Artist Statement

The Women's Advocacy Network (WAN) is an association of women working for a better future after a long war in northern Uganda. We were abducted as schoolgirls by the Lord's Resistance Army, (LRA) who fought the Government of Uganda between 1987-2008 and forced us into so-called marriages with rebel commanders with whom we bore children. On return, we organized ourselves to support each other, share our stories, and encourage each other. We tell our stories so that our children will know what we went through, and so that they will tell their children

Sewing this bead piece was difficult work. It took a lot of dedication, hard work, technique and concentration and brought out strong feelings and emotions. To make the paper beads, we cut a long strip of paper, roll it tightly into different bead shapes, sizes and colours. We wash, varnish and dry them. Then we worked collectively using thread and needle to sew each bead by hand onto the black fabric. These are people who represent us as survivors and our children as we carried children on our backs as we moved to avoid harm.

The bead project is part of the Social Sciences and Research Council of Canada Partnership Development Grant to the Transformative Memory International Network (TMIN). WAN has collaborated to tell our stories for more than a decade with TMIN members Erin Baines (University of British Columbia) and Juliane Okot Bitek (Queen's University) through life history books, publications, poetry and art.

The Bead Project - Artists Biography

The Women's Advocacy Network (WAN) is an association of women working for a better future after a long war in northern Uganda. Each of us were abducted as schoolgirls by the rebel group, the Lord's Resistance Army, (LRA) who fought the Government of Uganda between 1987-2008. The rebels forced us into what they called marriages with rebel commanders with whom we bore children. When we escaped, we found ourselves struggling to raise our children alone, so we started to meet under the shade of a mango tree each week, to make necklaces and bracelets out of paper beads in order to generate an income. We shared our stories as we made the beads and grew in confidence. We started meeting with other women across the rest of the country to tell our stories and learn from theirs. We have travelled to Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, and Nigeria to exchange with other women's groups and build solidarity. We petitioned the Ugandan Parliament for reparations and have travelled to the United Nations and International Criminal Court seeking justice. We tell our stories as survivors of conflict related sexual violence so that others with know exactly what happened to us and to all of northern Uganda during the war. We tell our stories so that our children will know what we went through, and so that they will tell their children. Our experiences are similar to one another even if each person is also unique.