

Curator Selection / 2022 / /

From Kibera with Love



Photographer	Sönke Christian Weiss
Studio	Freelance
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Maasai Mbilli is a group of artist-activists who live and work in Kibera, Africa's largest urban slum on the outskirts of Nairobi, Kenya. Aside from overcrowding and unsanitary living conditions, the lack of a clean and safe water supply makes the slum an ideal breeding ground for the coronavirus. Self-explanatory wall paintings all over the narrow streets of Kibera remind the residents that Covid-19 has long since reached them and is now another challenge for the residents of Kibera, especially the children.

Sönke C. Weiss is an internationally awarded photographer, writer, journalist and filmmaker who has been working on the African continent for more than 25 years. His ongoing project, All that I can't leave behind, a visual essay of documentary and artistic narratives, reflects the tradition of engaged reportage. Weiss' work has been widely shown and published since the 1990s (www.soenkeweiss.com).

Awards In 2001, I won the Frans Vinkh Prize for international journalism, awarded by the foundation Journalists in Europe created by the European Commission. I was a fellow and postgraduate student in cooperation with the Institut d'études politiques de Paris, in 2019 I was among the winners of the L. Fritz Gruber Prize for photography. From 2002 - 2008, I worked worldwide as a photographer and videographer for an international charity (Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, Indonesia, etc.) as well as on the African continent (40 different countries) based in Johannesburg, South Africa. This is where I photographed my first two photo exhibitions and humanitarian campaigns. The subject: HIV and Aids. Another subject close to my heart is the issue of children in armed conflicts around the world. I have published several books concerning this problem. My Pulitzer Prize-nominated stage play 'Butterflies of Uganda' also addresses this human rights violation and premiered in 2007 in Los Angeles. I then produced and directed it at the National Theatre in Kampala, Uganda, in 2008. It won several prestigious theatre awards (NAACP- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People). I have directed and produced more than a dozen professional stage productions in the US, Russia and Africa. My artistic roots go back to my college years. I studied under Edward Albee (Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf?), Robert Wilson (Einstein on the Beach) and José Quintero (Co-founder of the Circle in the Square Theatre) at the University of Houston and the Alley Theatre. I am holding a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in directing and playwrighting next to a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Mass Communications and a second BA in German Literature from Indiana University. There are two principles that guide my choices as an artist: The first principle embraces the collaborative quality of the art. The second principle embraces the magical nature of art.

