

## Covers for the World – Introduction

Covers for the World is a project on art and healthcare set up by artist and activist Pierre Mertens in collaboration with curator Edith Doove. With this, Covers for the World aims to launch itself as a global art initiative that addresses decolonisation in both art and healthcare.

An essential pillar of the project is the decolonial reinterpretation of Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* from 1907 in which African masks are appropriated by the artist. Pierre Mertens created a first version of this as part of the East African Biennale in 2008 with Ricardo Brey (Cu), Willo Gonissen and Mulugeta Tafesse (Et). To this is now added one created entirely by the Tanzanian artists Prince John Hugo, Lightness Jonas, David Valerian Lay, and Lilian Munuo. In addition to their work, Kazakh photographer Daniil Zozulya shows a selection of photos from a project on spina bifida and hydrocephalus in Uganda while also documenting the new project.

After the introduction in Moshi, the idea is to develop the projects in other countries in the Global South where Child-Help International is active.

As the founder and president of Child-Help, Pierre Mertens has been working for decades to give children with spina bifida and hydrocephalus in the Global South the same access to surgery, continence care and dignity as in the Global North. His art and activism are intertwined: as part of the Covers for the World project, he is bringing more than 4,000 of his drawings, made daily since 2014, to the art market, with his entire share going to the new knowledge centre in Moshi.

<https://pierremertens.be/en/>

Edith Doove is a curator and researcher, currently based in Rouen, France. Her practice is based on the original meaning of the word curator: curare, meaning 'to take care'. She has worked intensely with Pierre Mertens since 2005 on the shows Loving Care (Antwerp, Belgium, 2020), Bolero - an international art project on the move (Rouen, France, 2021) and Composition - Watou Arts Festival (Watou, Belgium, 2023).

<https://bureaudoove.com/>

## Covers for the World - **Maandishi ya Maonesho**

Covers for the World ni mradi kuhusu sanaa na huduma za afya ulioanzishwa na msanii na mwanaharakati Pierre Mertens kwa kushirikiana na mkurugenzi wa maonesho Edith Doove. Kupitia mradi huu, Covers for the World inalenga kujianzisha kama mpango wa kimataifa wa sanaa unaoshughulikia masuala ya *ukoloni mamboleo* katika sanaa na huduma za afya.

Nguzo muhimu ya mradi huu ni ufanuzi wa upya wa kimkoloni wa kazi ya Picasso *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* ya mwaka 1907, ambamo msanii alijumuisha barakoa za Kiafrika bila muktadha wake sahihi. Pierre Mertens alitengeneza toleo la kwanza mwaka 2008 katika Biennale ya Afrika Mashariki akiwa na Ricardo Brey (Cu), Willo Gonissen, na Mulugeta Tafesse (Et). Sasa tunaongeza toleo jipya lililotengenezwa kikamilifu na wasanii wa Kitanzania: Prince John Hugo, Lightness Jonas, David Valerian Mlay, na Lilian Munuo. Mbali na kazi hizo, mpiga picha kutoka Kazakhstan Daniil Zozulya anaonesha picha kadhaa kutoka mradi wake kuhusu *spina bifida* na *hydrocephalus* nchini Uganda, sambamba na kuandika kumbukumbu za mradi huu mpya.

Baada ya utangulizi wa Moshi, mpango ni kuendeleza miradi mingine katika nchi za *Global South* ambako Child-Help International inafanya kazi.

Mwanzilishi na rais wa Child-Help, Pierre Mertens, amefanya kazi kwa miongo kadhaa kuhakikisha watoto wenyewe *spina bifida* na *hydrocephalus* katika *Global South* wanapata upasuaji, huduma za udhibiti wa njia ya haja, na hadhi sawa na wenzao wa *Global North*. Sanaa yake na uanaharakati wake vimeungana: kama sehemu ya mradi wa Covers for the World, anapeleka zaidi ya michoro yake 4,000, aliyochora kila siku tangu 2014, kwenye soko la sanaa—sehemu yake yote ya mapato ikienda kwenye kituo kipywa cha maarifa Moshi.

Website: [pierremertens.be/en](http://pierremertens.be/en)

Edith Doove ni mkurugenzi na mtafiti wa maonesho, kwa sasa anaishi Rouen, Ufaransa. Praksisi yake inatokana na maana ya asili ya neno *curator: curare*, inayomaanisha "kutunza". Amefanya kazi kwa ukaribu na Pierre Mertens tangu 2005 katika maonesho: *Loving Care* (Antwerp, 2020), *Bolero* (Rouen, 2021), na *Composition* – Watou Arts Festival (Ubelgiji, 2023). Website: [bureauedoove.com](http://bureauedoove.com)

**Pierre MERTENS and Willo GONNISSEN – African Heroes, 2009**

First made for the Biennial of East Africa, this kanga is imprinted with a map of Dar es Salaam, hand lines and star constellations. To this are added the names of African Heroes, such as artists and politicians. You are invited to add your own, whether it is a well-known figure, a family member or a friend that you see as your personal hero.

Kanga hii ya kwanza ilitengenezwa kwa ajili ya Biennale ya Afrika Mashariki. Ina ramani ya Dar es Salaam, mistari ya viganja, na makundi ya nyota. Pia ina majina ya Mashujaa wa Kiafrika—wasanii, wanasiasa na viongozi wengine. Unakaribishwa kuongeza jina lako mwenyewe: awe mtu maarufu, wa familia, au rafiki unayemwona kama shujaa wako binafsi.

## Pablo PICASSO, Les Demoiselles d'Avignon, 1907

Cubism developed from 1907, and this large scale painting (8' x 7' 8", 243.9 x 233.7 cm) in the collection of MOMA, New York, is its most famous example. Moving from traditional forms of copying nature, African art is an essential inspiration for how bodies are depicted, and the inclusion of African masks. Picasso first saw African art in May or June of 1907, when he visited the ethnographic museum at the Palais de Trocadero in Paris. In the composition of the painting he might also have made use of photographs of African subjects that were easily available at the time and of which Picasso owned several in the form of postcards. Throughout his career Picasso tended to absorb, combine, and transform a vast range of visual sources in the development of his work. This could include sources from art history, seen in life or in reproduction, images from popular culture, and daily life. In the case of *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* the source material ranges from ancient Iberian sculpture and tribal masks to paintings by El Greco, Rubens, Titian, Ingres, Delacroix, Manet, Cézanne, and Gauguin.

*Cubism* ilianza kujitokeza kuanzia 1907, na uchoraji huu mkubwa (243.9 x 233.7 cm) unaohifadhiwa MOMA, New York, ndiyo mfano maarufu zaidi. Akitoka katika mbinu za kitamaduni za kunakili maumbile, Picasso alivutiwa sana na sanaa ya Kiafrika, hasa jinsi miili ilivyochorwa na uwepo wa barakoa za Kiafrika.

Picasso alionna sanaa ya Kiafrika kwa mara ya kwanza Mei/Juni 1907 katika Makumbusho ya Ethnografia, Palais de Trocadero, Paris. Inawezekana pia alitumia picha za watu wa Kiafrika zilizokuwa zinapatikana kirahisi wakati huo na ambazo alikuwa nazo katika mfumo wa kadi za postcard. Maisha yake yote, Picasso alichanganya, kubadili na kuunda upya vyanzo vingi vya kuona—kutoka historia ya sanaa, utamaduni wa watu, hadi maisha ya kila siku.

Source: Janie COHEN, Staring Back: Anthropomorphic-style African Colonial Photography and Picasso's *Demoiselles* in Photography & Culture, Volume 8, Issue 1, March 2015, pp. 59-80

**Taking back, 2025**

**Lightness Jonas, Lilian Munuo, Prince John Hugo, David Valerian Mlay**

For this new reinterpretation of *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, Picasso's painting is returned to four Tanzanian artists, who bring it back to its African origins.

Top left: Lilian Munuo; top right: Lightness Jonas (The Rebirth of African Light); bottom left: David Valerian Mlay; bottom right: Prince John Hugo.

Katika ufanuzi huu mpya wa *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, kazi ya Picasso "inarudishwa" kwa wasanii wanne wa Kitanzania ambao wanairudisha kwenye mizizi yake ya Kiafrika.

Juu kushoto: Lilian Munuo

Juu kulia: Lightness Jonas (The Rebirth of African Light)

Chini kushoto: David Valerian Mlay

Chini kulia: Prince John Hugo

**Ricardo BREY, Willo GONNISSEN, Pierre MERTENS, Mulugeta TAFESSE,  
Les Demoiselles d'Avignon reinterpreted, 2008**

This first reinterpretation of *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* was made for the Biennial of East Africa by Pierre Mertens and three artists based in Belgium.

Top left: Ricardo Brey (Cu); top right: Mulugeta Tafesse (Eth); bottom left: Pierre Mertens; bottom right: Willo Gonnissen.

Ufafanuzi huu wa kwanza wa *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* ulifanywa kwa ajili ya Biennale ya Afrika Mashariki na Pierre Mertens pamoja na wasanii watatu walioko Ubelgiji.

Juu kushoto: Ricardo Brey (Cu)

Juu kulia: Mulugeta Tafesse (Eth)

Chini kushoto: Pierre Mertens

Chini kulia: Willo Gonnissen

## **LIGHTNESS JONAS, 2001, Arusha,**

Lightness Jonas has been drawing since she was a young girl. When she joined The School of St Jude in Arusha, she had access to art materials, clubs, and great mentorship. No one ever formally taught her how to paint, but instead she would observe closely and teach herself. Due to her disability, through which she cannot use her hands, she paints with her feet.

Lightness is connected to Rafiki Painting, a group of artists based in Mto Wa Mbu that provides them with a form of income, answering the command from the camps, a big gallery and other shops in the neighbourhood. They also organise painting workshops for children every weekend. A percentage of sales goes to the village to help orphan children. See Rafiki Painting – [https://www.instagram.com/rafiki\\_painting/](https://www.instagram.com/rafiki_painting/)

Apart from her contribution to *Taking Back*, we show a selection of animal portraits as well as AI generated computer prints by Lightness Jonas. Of this latter *Rooted in Greatness* represents the deep roots of African identity, leadership, and legacy. The central figure, blending a human face with a plant, symbolises growth, life, and connection to the land. The roots take the form of human limbs—hands and feet—showing the power of action, work, and movement grounded in ancestral wisdom. The four stars surrounding the figure bear the names of iconic African leaders: Mandela, Nkrumah, Nyerere, and Sankara—visionaries who planted seeds of unity, liberation, and dignity. These names are not just historical—they shine as guiding stars, influencing the present and future. The mountain in the background, likely Mount Kilimanjaro, anchors the scene in East Africa, representing strength, elevation, and endurance.

*Legacy in Our Hands* tells a visual story of African empowerment through art, history, and ancestry. The five women at the centre represent strength, grace, and the resilience of African womanhood — often the silent backbone of revolution and culture. Behind them rises Mount Kilimanjaro, symbolising African pride and elevation. Above, star constellations spell out legendary names — Edward, Tafari, Mandela, and Nkrumah — freedom fighters and visionaries who lit the path for the continent. They are literally written in the stars, guiding us like ancestors. In the foreground, we see the artist's hand and feet — grounded in the soil, holding a brush — painting from the earth, a branch of green life in hand. This symbolises that creation is rooted in heritage, and the future is painted by those who remember where they come from.

Lightness Jonas amekuwa akichora tangu akiwa msichana mdogo. Aliposhiriki katika *The School of St Jude* huko Arusha, alipata fursa ya kutumia vifaa vya sanaa, kujiunga na vilabu, na kupata mwongozo bora. Hakuwahi kufundishwa rasmi jinsi ya kuchora, bali alitazama kwa makini na kujifunza mwenyewe. Kutohakana na ulemavu wake, ambao unamzuia kutumia mikono yake, anachora kwa miguu yake.

Lightness anahusiana na Rafiki Painting, kundi la wasanii walioko Mto Wa Mbu linalowapa kipato kwa kujibu ombi kutoka kwenye kambi, kwenye gallery kubwa na maduka mengine katika jirani. Pia wanapanga warsha za uchoraji kwa watoto kila wikendi. Sehemu ya mapato kutoka mauzo huelekezwa katika kijiji kusaidia watoto yatima. Angalia Rafiki Painting – [https://www.instagram.com/rafiki\\_painting/](https://www.instagram.com/rafiki_painting/)

Mbali na mchango wake katika *Taking Back*, tunaonyesha mchujo wa picha za wanyama pamoja na uchapishaji wa kompyuta uliofanywa na AI na Lightness Jonas. Kati ya haya, kazi ya *Rooted in Greatness* inawakilisha mizizi ya kina ya utambulisho wa Kiafrika, uongozi, na urithi. Mhusika mkuu, ambaye uso wa binadamu umechanganywa na mmea, unaashiria ukuaji, maisha, na uhusiano na ardhi. Mizizi yake inachukua sura ya viungo vya binadamu — mikono na miguu — ikionyesha nguvu ya hatua, kazi, na mwendo uliofungamana na hekima ya mababu. Nyota nne zinazoizunguka mhusika zinaonyesha majina ya viongozi mashuhuri wa Kiafrika: Mandela, Nkrumah, Nyerere, na Sankara — wazoefu waliopanda mbegu za umoja, uhuru, na heshima. Majina haya si ya kihistoria tu — yanang'aa kama nyota zinazoongoza, yakiaathiri sasa na siku za usoni. Mlima uliopo nyuma, uwezekano ni Mlima Kilimanjaro, unashikilia mandhari ya Afrika Mashariki, ukionyesha nguvu, uinua, na uvumilivu.

*Legacy in Our Hands* inasimulia hadithi ya kuona ya uwezeshaji wa Kiafrika kupitia sanaa, historia, na urithi wa mababu. Wanawake watano katikati wanaashiria nguvu, neema, na ustahimilivu wa uka wa mwanamke wa Kiafrika — mara nyingi msingi kimya wa mapinduzi na utamaduni. Nyuma yao kuna Mlima Kilimanjaro, unaashiria fahari na uinua wa Kiafrika. Juu, kundi la nyota linaandika majina ya hadithi — Edward, Tafari, Mandela, na Nkrumah — wapiganaji wa uhuru na wazoefu waliowasha mwanga wa njia kwa bara. Kwa kweli yameandikwa katika nyota, yakiwongoza kama mababu. Katika mstari wa mbele, tunaona mkono na miguu ya msanii — ikiwa imefungamana na udongo, wakiwa wameshika brashi — wakichora kutoka ardhini, tawi la maisha ya kijani mkononi. Hii inaashiria kwamba uumbaji umefunikwa katika urithi, na siku za usoni zinachorwa na wale wanaokumbuka walikotoka.

[https://www.instagram.com/mbwambo\\_lightness/](https://www.instagram.com/mbwambo_lightness/)

<https://bureaudioove.com/2025/10/15/covers-for-the-world-interview-with-lightness-jonas/>

## **Lilian MUNUO, Moshi, Kilimanjaro**

Lilian Munuo is an artist, curator, disability rights advocate, and founder of Beyond the Label Initiative (Tanzania). She was a member of the international curator cohort who visited Liverpool Biennial 2025 as part of the British Council's Biennials Connect programme. *Strings of Hope* was presented with support from the Goethe-Institut in partnership with Rangi Gallery and Together with Tanzania.

"Born from Munuo's personal journey of navigating disability and self-expression, the installation transforms simple threads into powerful metaphors of resilience and optimism. Through woven forms and sculpted elements, Munuo invites viewers to trace lines of struggle and triumph, reflecting on strength, creativity, and the enduring capacity for hope." (Stages 13, Beyond Limits, Liverpool Biennial, 2025)

Lilian Munuo has used the technique of working with threads also in her contribution to the Taking Back version of *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*. Apart from that we show an installation with plasters that the artist has used to shape her feet, and thus are like sculptures of them.

Lilian Munuo ni msanii, mkurugenzi wa maonesho, mtetezi wa haki za watu wenyewe ulemavu, na mwanzilishi wa Beyond the Label Initiative (Tanzania). Alikuwa mmoja wa washiriki wa kikundi cha makurugenzi wa kimataifa waliotembelea *Liverpool Biennial 2025* kama sehemu ya mpango wa Biennials Connect wa British Council. Mradi wake *Strings of Hope* ultolewa kwa msaada wa Goethe-Institut kwa kushirikiana na Rangi Gallery na Together with Tanzania.

"Ilizaliwa kutokana na safari binafsi ya Munuo ya kushughulika na ulemavu na kujieleza, usakinishaji huu unageuza nyuzi rahisi kuwa methali zenyeye nguvu za ustahimilivu na matumaini. Kupitia mitindo ya kushona na vipengele vilivyochochongwa, Munuo anawaalika watazamaji kufuatilia mistari ya mapambano na ushindi, wakitafakari juu ya nguvu, ubunifu, na uwezo endelevu wa matumaini."

Munuo pia amejumuisha mbinu ya kutumia nyuzi katika mchango wake kwa Taking Back, na pia tunaonyesha usakinishaji wa plasta ambazo msanii amezitumia kuunda miguu yake, na hivyo kuwa sanamu zake.

[https://www.instagram.com/hettie\\_lillie/](https://www.instagram.com/hettie_lillie/)

<https://bureaudioove.com/2025/10/13/covers-for-the-world-interview-with-lilian-munu/>

## **PRINCE JOHN HUGO, 1999, Mwanza,**

Prince John Hugo grew up in Tanzania, surrounded by stories, colours, and history. Since childhood, he's always been fascinated by the power of images, how a single drawing can carry emotion and truth. He started drawing seriously with a simple ballpoint pen and found his voice. Over time, people connected with his work, and that encouraged him to dedicate his life entirely to art. For him, art is a form of preservation and a way to tell real African stories that might otherwise be forgotten. Every piece he creates carries memory, emotion, and a message for future generations. For him, art means more than beauty; it's memory, identity, and truth. It's how he communicates with the past and offer something to the future.

Prince John Hugo alikulia Tanzania, akiwa amezungukwa na hadithi, rangi, na historia. Tangu utotoni, daima amevutiwa na nguvu ya picha, jinsi mchoro mmoja unaweza kuonyesha hisia na ukweli.

Alianza kuchora kwa umakini akitumia kalamu rahisi na akapata sauti yake. Kadri muda ulivyopita, watu waliunganisha kazi yake na wao, na hiyo ilimsukuma kuahidi maisha yake yote kwa sanaa.

Kwa yeye, sanaa ni njia ya kuhifadhi na kueleza hadithi halisi za Kiafrika ambazo vingelikuwa vimesahaulika. Kila kipande anachoumba kina kumbukumbu, hisia, na ujumbe kwa vizazi vijavyo. Kwa yeye, sanaa ni zaidi ya uzuri; ni kumbukumbu, utambulisho, na ukweli. Ni jinsi anavyowasiliana na zamani na kutoa kitu kwa siku za usoni.

<https://www.instagram.com/pijey.ink/>

<https://bureaudioove.com/2025/10/18/covers-for-the-world-interview-with-prince-hugo/>

## **David VALERIAN MLAY, 1992, Arusha**

David Valerian Mlay is one of the young people who have gone through a difficult life, but he did not give up. Instead he formed an arts group together with colleagues, twelve years ago. The [Pamoja Boys and Girls](#), help young people who are going through difficult times to gain skills that would help them in their daily lives and survive. The goal was to help young people and vulnerable children develop artistic skills to create products they could sell and earn an income. The group has helped to change their lives and achieve their dreams and goals. David believes there are still young people and children who need this kind of help and says he will never give up on helping those in need of help and enlightenment to achieve their goals.

The two paintings we show of him apart from his contribution to Take Back, are a strong woman and a small painting in which he recuperates painting rests.

David Valerian Mlay ni mionganini mwa vijana waliopitia maisha magumu, lakini hakukata tamaa. Badala yake, alianzisha kikundi cha wasanii pamoja na wenzake, miaka kumi na mbili iliyopita.

Pamoja Boys and Girls husaidia vijana walioko katika changamoto kupata ujuzi unaowawezesha katika maisha yao ya kila siku na kuishi. Lengo lilikuwa kusaidia vijana na watoto walio hatarini kukuza ujuzi wa kisanaa ili kuunda bidhaa ambazo wanaweza kuza na kupata kipato.

Kikundi hiki kimechangia kubadilisha maisha yao na kufanikisha ndoto zao. David anaamini bado kuna vijana na watoto wanaohitaji msaada wa aina hii na anasema hatakomaa kuwasaidia kufanikisha malengo yao.

<https://www.instagram.com/ddaxl/>

<https://bureauaudioove.com/2025/10/21/cover-for-the-world-interview-with-david-valerian/>

## **Daniil Zozulya, 1998, Karaganda, Kazakhstan**

Daniil Zozulya is a photographer based in Brussels, Belgium. In 2024, he worked on E'SSUUBI, a project about hope, an ongoing close collaboration with SHAU (Spina Bifida & Hydrocephalus Association in Uganda).

Every day Ugandan youths with Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus strive to gain their undeniable rights and values in their society. E'SSUUBI is a photographic documenting work resulting from a close collaboration with SHAU (Spina Bifida, Hydrocephalus Association). Through these images, the aim is to highlight an issue that severely affects the Ugandan population and against which SHAU has been intensely fighting since their creation in 2016. Moreover, finding photography as a medium to, I hope, push forward inclusivity. Together with the residents and members of the association, the wish was to assert their presence in an effort to break what was considered a taboo 25 years ago. E'SSUUBI demonstrates the pride and resilience of people who experience and have experienced the challenges associated with Spina bifida and Hydrocephalus. It's an attempt in which photography serves as a conduit for the most accurate and comprehensive representation of the word 'hope'.

Daniil has documented the Covers for the World project.

Daniil Zozulya ni mpiga picha anayeishi Brussels, Ubelgiji. Mwaka 2024, alifanya kazi kwenye E'SSUUBI, mradi kuhusu matumaini, unaofanya kazi kwa karibu na SHAU (Spina Bifida & Hydrocephalus Association in Uganda).

Kila siku, vijana wa Uganda wenye Spina Bifida na Hydrocephalus wanajitahidi kupata haki zao na thamani zao katika jamii. E'SSUUBI ni kazi ya kufuatilia kwa picha, inayotokana na ushirikiano wa karibu na SHAU. Kupitia picha hizi, lengo ni kuonyesha tatizo linaloathiri sana watu wa Uganda na ambalo SHAU imekuwa ikipambana nalo tangu kuanzishwa kwake mwaka 2016. Aidha, mradi huu unakusudia kuhimiza ujumuishi. Pamoja na wakazi na wanachama wa shirika, lengo ni kuthibitisha uwepo wao na kuvunja kile kilichokuwa kitabu cha siri miaka 25 iliyopita. E'SSUUBI inaonyesha fahari na uimara wa watu wanaopitia changamoto za Spina Bifida na Hydrocephalus.

Zozulya pia anaandika kumbukumbu za mradi wa Covers for the World.

<https://www.zozulyadaniil.com/work/essuubi>

<https://bureaudioove.com/2025/11/17/covers-for-the-world-interview-with-daniil-zozulya/>