







Eastern African Museum of Art – Nairobi  
[EAMAN] is to be built as the first world class museum of art in Eastern Africa. The untold history of Eastern African art is a prominent omission in the way humanity sees itself, and in the way the Eastern African identity and that of the diaspora are construed.

We are dedicated to the creation of an institution worthy of the genius and the artistic achievement of the peoples of Eastern Africa. EAMAN will be telling the story of human creativity in the region from its dawn to our times.

## Listening to the Rift Valley

EAMAN will be built at the cusp of the Rift Valley. The Rift Valley meanders from Djibouti to Mozambique, uniting and dividing the countries and peoples of Eastern Africa. The beauty, the vastness as well as the dangers of living at the cusp of the Rift will be EAMAN's breathtaking reality.

We find it appropriate, therefore that our inaugural project is dedicated to the connections of the peoples of the Rift with its dynamically changing environment. Trees are important intermediaries in this communication. Adapting to the climate of the region over the millennia, they have been providing humans with shelter, livelihood, inspiration. We in turn owe to these eternal stalwarts and companions a better effort at understanding and communicating. We are using scientific and artistic means and perspectives to listen to what they have to say. We use sophisticated scientific equipment, the expertise of Kenyan botanists and paleontologists, the cultural vernacular of the Swahili coast, and the polluted realities of urban downtowns to strive to listen better.

## The Scale of the Project:

- More than 1000 images are being uploaded on the Google Arts and Culture platform
- 15 to 20 videos capturing the artwork creation, the Swahili coast (the Lamu Archipelago), the Turkana basin, performances and the installation.
- 6-7 interviews with scientists, and other scientific and cultural informants
- About 20 curatorial texts

## The Team

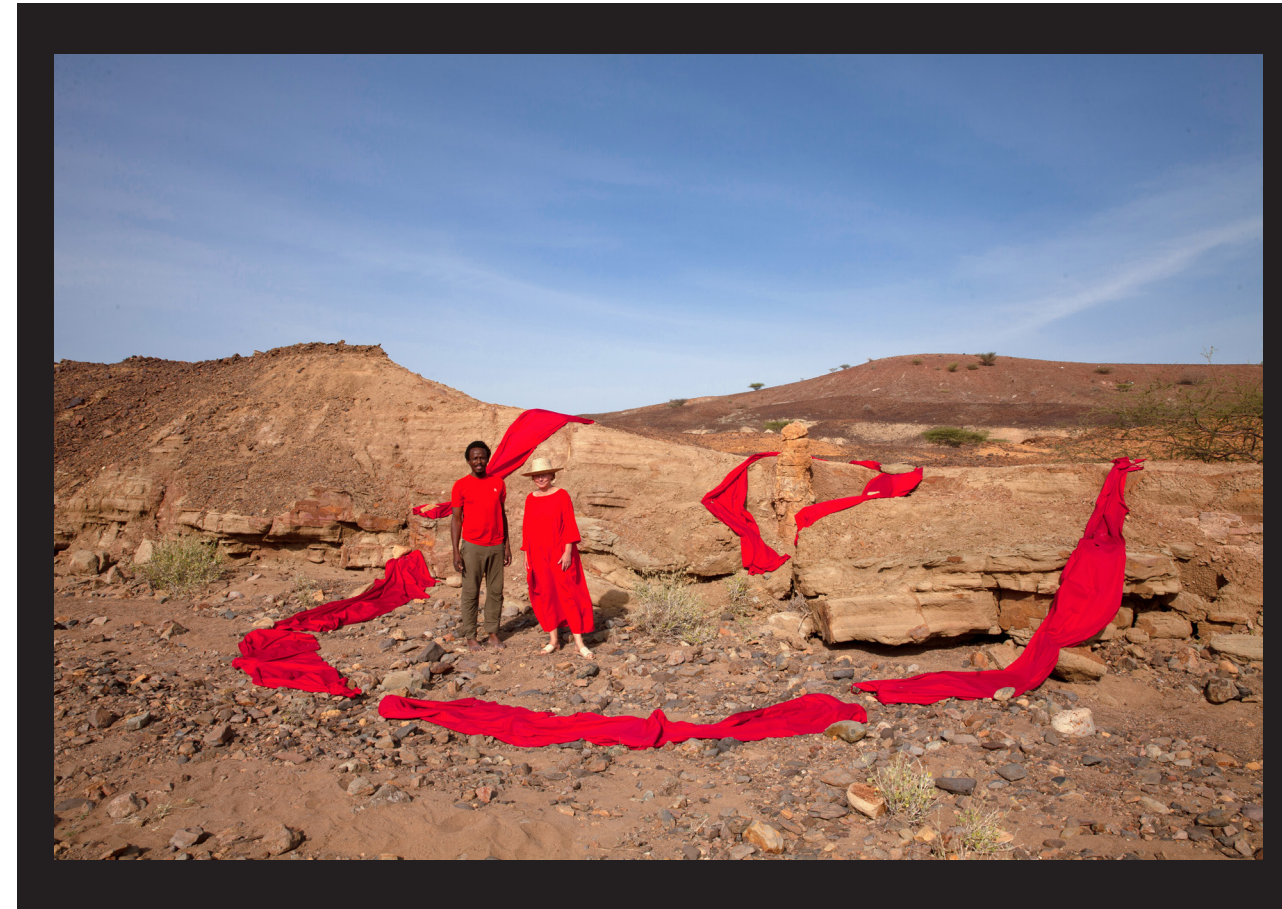
Curator – James Muriuki,  
Artist – Olga Kisseleva,  
Choreographer – James Mweu  
Photographers – Margaret Ngigi, Team of drone pilots from SwifLab

# BEING TIME

The performance BEING TIME took place on the Turkana Plateau in the Rift Valley, a cradle of humanity. The fossil-bearing sediments, unique to the geology of this part of the rift, preserves many paleontological treasures including the Turkana petrified forest, telling a majestic story of the origins of life on Earth. Kenyan paleo botanists at the Turkana Basin Institute walked the artists through time unveiling 12 million year old petrified trees. The experience of being in the presence of a fossilized syzygium (an ancestor to the eucalyptus) millions of years older than any of our human ancestors inspired the performative communication presented by the artists.

BEING TIME is based on the information derived from the non-invasive dendrochronology, with the performance exploring and expressing the annual rings of a tree. The ancient tree is presented as a time coding tool and a memory keeper, a kind of “time machine”.

Time contracted, new channels of communication between man and nature for a brief second expanded. The performance BEING TIME is a result of collaboration between EDEN (Ethics – Durability –Ecology – Nature) project spearheaded by Olga Kisseleva and the EAMAN digital project. EDEN explores a range of issues, including the protection of endangered plant species and interspecific communication between living subjects that are placed in the “inhuman” category. EAMAN/EDEN collaboration creates a new value, and exploration of interactions of art, nature, and culture in Eastnern Africa.









# SINA SIRI NINA JIBU

The performance SINA SIRI NINA JIBU took place on the coastline rooftops of Shela village. Its title was inspired by the Swahili inscriptions found on the broad rim of the khangas used in the performance: SINA SIRI NINA JIBU means “I have no secrets but I have an answer”.

For the performance Olga Kisseleva chose a young baobab from Lamu Archipelago, the emblematic tree which has a big practical, nutritional, cultural, and spiritual value for the Swahili coast inhabitants. The artist consulted with Kenyan botanists and collected from a selected Baobab dynamic biological data providing insights into the Baobab's state and wellbeing. The scientific team developed sensors to monitor noise measurements, circulation of fluids within the tree trunk, electric signals, impulses and pressure, electromagnetic waves, shrinkages, hydration, gas emissions, the amount of chlorophyll in the leaves, wind resistance, and many other parameters.

In nature all these vital signs allow the tree to communicate with other trees, birds and plants, i.e. with the environment as a whole. Transcoded by scientists, these data allow them to judge the health of the tree and the strategies it adopts for survival. Interpretation by the artist, allows the spectators to learn about the languages of nature.

Data collected from the chosen Baobab show the changes happening within the tree during several days of observation. These data, translated into colors, were matched with khangas. About 500 khangas were used to express through dance and color the “message” from the baobab as captured by the sensors.

Khanga is a colorful fabric common in Swahili culture. It has many uses including by women as a garment, a baby wrap, a towel and a ceremonial gift to name a few. Essentially, khangas are more than a piece of fabric. Sayings printed along their wide rim have been a means for women to send messages to those around them for ages.

The performance was carried out by the students from the Anidan centre. The students took part in the development of the choreography and used khangas for color coding. Interpretation of the baobab message by the creative young people of Anidan was a homage to the baobab, its wisdom, its resilience, and effort to take the dialogue with nature to a new level of understanding, protection, and exploration.

The art and science performance SINA SIRI NINA JIBU is a part of the collaboration between EDEN (Ethics – Durability – Ecology – Nature) developed by artist Olga Kisseleva and EAMAN. It explores a range of issues, including the protection of endangered plant species and interspecific communication between living subjects that are placed in the “inhuman” category and building a new kind of organic network based on vegetal medium. It transforms this encrypted communication into a comprehensive and open network. The trees included into the project can talk across continents, and humans follow their communication through interactive artworks.









# RE-LIVE

The river runs through the Turkana desert of the Rift Valley, Northern Kenya. The RE-LIVE performance took place on the Turkana Plateau of the Rift Valley, the cradle of humankind and a natural depository of many paleontological treasures, including the famous Turkana Petrified Forest. During physiological measurements of the 12 million year old syzygium tree (ancestor of eucalyptus) a signal has been recorded, possibly indicating presence of life.

The performance resulting from this experience includes modern dwellers of the Turkana Basin and celebrates the encounter with the petrified trees and the continuity of life around them. Listening requires openness and patience. And through the dance, protective gestures pave the way for the communication that takes place between humanity and nature.

The dance in the river is a moving tree. The performers' movements are inspired by the inner state of the tree, evoked by transmitted data. Dancing in the water of the Turkwel river, the bodies of the performers are doubled with their reflections. Included in the cycles of nature, the performance takes place at the moment of sunset, when the backlight makes the silhouettes and their reflections similar to dancing trees.

The sun setting and fading gives space and time for the rebirth of life.









# UKITAKA NIFURAHISHA, NIPE YA SIKUKUU

The art and science performance UKITAKA NIFURAHISHA, NIPE YA SIKUKUU is a part of the collaboration between EDEN (Ethics – Durability – Ecology – Nature) developed by artist Olga Kisseleva and EAMAN. It explores a range of issues, including the protection of endangered plant species and interspecific communication between living subjects that are placed in the “inhuman” category and building a new kind of organic network based on vegetal medium. It transforms this encrypted communication into a comprehensive and open network. The trees included into the project can talk across continents, and humans follow their communication through interactive artworks.

The performance UKITAKA NIFURAHISHA, NIPE YA SIKUKUU took place on the Shela beach, in front of the ocean and Manda Island, covered by tropical lowland shrubbery and forests of acacias, mangoes and baobabs. The title was inspired by the Swahili inscriptions found on the broad rim of the khangas used in the performance: UKITAKA NIFURAHISHA, NIPE YA SIKUKUU meaning “if you want me happy, give me a holiday gift”.

For the performance Olga Kisseleva chose a young baobab from Lamu Archipelago, the emblematic tree which has a big practical, nutritional, cultural, and spiritual value for the Swahili coast inhabitants. The artist consulted with Kenyan botanists (names of the botanists and interviews) and collected from a selected Baobab dynamic biological data providing insights into the Baobab’s state and wellbeing. The scientific team developed sensors to monitor noise measurements, circulation of fluids within the tree trunk, electric signals, impulses and pressure, electromagnetic waves, shrinkages, hydration, gas emissions, the amount of chlorophyll in the leaves, wind resistance, and many other parameters.

In nature all these vital signs allow the tree to communicate with other trees, birds and plants, i.e. with the environment as a whole. Transcoded by scientists, these data allow them to judge the health of the tree and the strategies it adopts for survival. Interpretation by the artist, allows the spectators to learn about the languages of nature.





