



Benon Lutaaya



'Luck equals opportunity meeting a prepared mind.'

**Benon Lutaaya
(1989 –)**



Born in Uganda, Benon Lutaaya is a Johannesburg-based visual artist. He holds a BFA with Education from Kyambogo University, Kampala. Although known for his contemporary paper collage portraiture work, he's equally adept dealing with other subjects and mediums.

Benon's success and the impact of his hauntingly beautiful images of children came at a high price. He grew up in rural Uganda, was orphaned at 18 months and raised by his grandmother. She convinced him that his only way out of poverty was a good education. He got no hand-outs and his stubborn desire to succeed drove him at every point in his life.

Benon is an entrepreneur with great convictions. He refuses to follow the easy way out or accept a closed door. He works 7 days a week, 16 hours a day, everyday, ensuring that that he is always improving on his skills as an Artist. He believes there is no such thing as a 'suffering Artist,' just a lazy one. Drawing on his autobiographical life experiences as inspiration, his work reflects his day to day experiences and culture as he pursues and deepens his fascination with technique.

Between 2011 - 2015 the retail price value of his work grew from a mere US\$200.00 for his biggest artwork (130cm x 150cm) in 2011 to a record US\$15,000.00 in 2015.

The waste paper material in his work communicates the vulnerability of human life. And through his collage techniques, he aims to comment on and raise many fundamental questions about the complexity of human conditions today. Many of his pieces convey life growing up in Uganda and his experience as an immigrant in SA. 'These experiences are not only about suffering, they are also about the triumph of the human spirit.'

Unable to afford proper art supplies when he started out professionally in 2010, Benon improvised with recycled, found paper material gathered from streets to pursue his purpose as an artist.

<http://www.benonlutaaya.com/about>

<http://art-movie-book.com/benon-lutaaya-a-window-to-the-soul/>

Interview with Benon Lutaaya

Why did you decide to become an artist?

I made the decision in my final year of high school and it's been the best decision I've ever made. For me art is a noble thing: it gives me more pleasure and emotional and intellectual engagement than anything else. Art makes me feel hopeful and inspired. It represents the best way through which I understand the world, and through which I inform and inspire others. It gives me a sense of individuality and independence.



Your medium?

I work mainly with recycled, discarded stuff: newspapers, magazines, plastics, telephone cards. I create collage and mixed media artwork. In 2011, while on an international artist residency project with the Bag Factory artists' studios, I experimented with acrylic painting. This year I started experimenting with oil painting.

Your style?

Expressionistic. I try to explore how the painting is created in terms of structure, composition, colour and mark making, rather than focusing solely on the final product and what it represents.

What kinds of questions do you hope your work raises?

My work is a social commentary. I aim to raise fundamental questions about the complexity of human conditions and issues pertaining to influences in our society today. Although almost all my work is referenced from the collage of my autobiographical life experiences and the challenges of living as an immigrant, it is important to note that these experiences are not only about suffering but also about the triumph of the human spirit.



Through this technique, Lutaaya says he is able to share his views on the various fundamental questions about the complexity of human conditions today such as immigration, political instability and poverty.



Benon's artwork has a powerful emotional pull.

The imagery is immediately striking, with bright colours, broad strokes, and a wonderful presence of texture.

He seeks to capture the core essence of his subject matter, typically addressing the issues of those living on the fringes of mainstream society.

He draws from his own experiences and knowledge of Uganda as inspiration for his work, focusing on the concept of survival, and the importance and fragility of life.

