

DETRITUS & ART / A personal point of view on Environment and Art by Rainer Stegmann

Today I will present a very different example of Waste to Art: THE SHELA HAT contest.

A friend made me aware of the Shela Hat contest. It started in 2010 as a biannual event which takes place on the beach of Lamu Island in Kenya, Africa in front of the legendary Peponi Hotel. The idea is to collect waste material from their surrounding living area as plastics, fabrics, paper, corals, bones etc., and use it for the design of a hat. No strangers are allowed to participate. In this competition the best creations are awarded.

I think this very unique contest which started already 12 years ago has different effects: First of all, it is a celebration of the locals where they socialize and have a lot of fun. But this celebration has also an informal education effect to make the participants, locals, visitors and may be also outside living people aware of the local and global waste littering problem. Perhaps this helps that people become more environmental conscious, especially through the collection and identification of the waste objects. It also shows us that waste pollution from the oceans reached also remote beaches in East Africa. This documents once again that oceans become waste "sea fills" with catastrophic consequences for humans, flora and fauna.

Since all people on the globe are already or will be affected by the global pollution including climate change it is essential to make them aware of the situation and the consequences. But it is not always easy to attract people's attention and the hat contest gives an excellent example how this can be done successfully: a combination of community action, fun, creativity, and message. In addition, a kind of competition with awards for the best results may increase enthusiasm. I think we all can learn from this event.



THE SHELA HAT CONTEST / www.shela-hat-contest.com (Photos courtesy of Herbert Menzer)

Sayaka Ganz: Sea Horse
The next artist will be Sayaka Ganz, an American Japanese artist using hart plastic residues to create phantastic animal sculptures. In the next edition I will present this exceptional artist.

