



ANNUAL REPORT

DECEMBER 2023 - DECEMBER 2024

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Introduction

In December 2023, Inkundla Spaces was born from a vision as bold as the art we celebrate—a vision to create open, inclusive spaces where creativity could breathe freely, where stories could find their voice, and where communities could come together to share in the magic of expression. From our first Pop Up Spaces event to the transformative Inkundla Arts Festival, we have been more than an organization; we are a movement rooted in passion, resilience, and the belief that creativity has the power to change lives.

At our core, Inkundla Spaces is about more than performances or events. It's about fostering a culture of safety, collaboration, and boundless exploration. Our dedication to nurturing talent extends beyond applause—we strive to create lasting networks, paid opportunities, and platforms where creatives can thrive both within and beyond their natural environments.

But like all ambitious visions, ours has not been without its challenges. Finances, unsurprisingly, have been a persistent hurdle. Despite this, we take immense pride in having compensated every artist who participated in events where compensation was promised, such as Wi Kreative Playgron (WKP) and our Rise & Riot Poetry Slam winners. This commitment has often required stretching our resources and finding innovative solutions, but we believe in valuing the time, effort, and artistry of those who share their talents with us.

Beyond finances, smooth cooperation between artists and organizers hasn't always come easily. Late starts, unexpected cancellations, and no-shows have occasionally disrupted plans, but these experiences have taught us to stay flexible and prepared. Some of our initiatives, like the open mic in Lunsar, were experimental, giving us valuable insight into where our activities are most needed and can create the greatest impact.

These hurdles have not deterred us but have instead fueled our determination to learn, adapt, and grow. Every setback has been an opportunity to refine our approach, to better understand the needs of the communities we serve, and to strengthen the bonds between artists, audiences, and our team.

This report is not just a reflection of the projects we've undertaken; it's a testament to the power of resilience, creativity, and collaboration. It is a story of navigating challenges, celebrating victories, and building a future where art not only survives but thrives. It is a shared commitment to creating magic, even when the odds seem stacked against us.

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Wi Kreative Playgron (December 2023 – Present)

Overview:

Pop Up Spaces laid the groundwork for Inkundla Spaces, bringing poetry, music, and art to unconventional venues. Starting with our debut on December 28, 2023, at Badenya Art Gallery, it featured artists like Zeefa, Simiji, and ApriiL. By May 2024, this initiative evolved into **Wi Kreative Playgron**, our flagship monthly event that celebrates creativity in all its forms.

Wi Kreative Playgron follows a curated format, featuring three poets, two musicians, and one visual artist each month, offering a balanced showcase of artistic expressions. The event thrives on its commitment to inclusion and collaboration, transforming venues into dynamic hubs of creativity where audiences and artists engage meaningfully. It has become a vibrant space for emerging talents to shine and for seasoned artists to connect with the community, fostering artistic growth and building a thriving creative ecosystem.

Impact:

- Engaged **66** featured artists and up to **50** open mic performers.
- Fostered connections between creatives and their audiences, establishing a foundation for sustainable community arts initiatives.
- created tangible opportunities for artists—some sold their artwork at the events, while others secured commissions and gigs outside the event through the connections they made.



Collage from Wi Kreative Playgron - February 2024

On the Balcony (April 10, 2024)

Overview:

The **On the Balcony** event was a unique cultural experience that brought together an intimate audience for an evening of music, poetry, and storytelling. Headlining the event was **Sorie Kondi**, a celebrated Sierra Leonean musician whose mastery of the “kondi” (thumb piano) filled the evening with soulful melodies and infectious rhythms. His performance beautifully blended traditional sounds with modern influences, showcasing the richness of Sierra Leone’s cultural heritage.

Adding to the evening’s magic, **Meme**, an emerging Sierra Leonean songbird, delivered a heartfelt set that deeply resonated with the audience, her emotive delivery leaving a lasting impression. Completing the lineup, **S’phongo**, a Zimbabwean spoken word artist, captivated the crowd with poems from his book *TRIALS*, blending introspective musings with powerful social commentary that encouraged reflection and dialogue.

The event’s impact extended beyond the performances. It bridged traditional and contemporary art forms, demonstrating the power of small-scale, intimate gatherings to foster meaningful connections between artists and their audiences. For some attendees, it was a rare opportunity to engage deeply with cultural expressions, while for the artists, it offered a platform to share their work and connect with a supportive and enthusiastic audience. The event underscored the importance of creating such spaces to nurture both the arts and community engagement.



Collage from On The Balcony - April 2024

Rise & Riot Poetry Slam (February 2024 – Present)

Overview:

Rise & Riot has redefined spoken word in Sierra Leone, establishing itself as a groundbreaking platform for poetic expression. This dynamic competition held at **Mango Peak** features five electrifying heats, each bringing together a diverse range of poets from across the country. These events not only showcase the immense talent within Sierra Leone but also provide a safe space for artists to address personal, social, and political issues through their powerful performances.

The journey culminates in a grand finale at the **Inkundla Arts Festival**, where the top poets from each heat compete for the title of **Rise & Riot Champion**. More than just a competition, **Rise & Riot** has become a movement—celebrating creativity, amplifying underrepresented voices, and inspiring audiences to engage with poetry as a tool for dialogue and change. It is a testament to the transformative power of spoken word to connect, challenge, and empower communities across Sierra Leone.

Impact:

- Engaged 75 poets from across Sierra Leone, highlighting the country's rich and diverse talent.
- Empowered youth by providing a transformative platform for creative self-expression and addressing critical social issues.
- Strengthened and redefined the spoken word movement in Sierra Leone, fostering a vibrant and inspiring community of poets.



Collage from the inaugural Rise & Riot Poetry Slam - February 2024

Open Mic Series (March 2024 – Present)

Overview:

Expanding to cities like **Bo**, **Waterloo**, **Kenema**, **Foredugu**, **Lunsar**, and **Freetown**, our **Open Mic Series** provides grassroots platforms for poetry, music, and storytelling, fostering creativity and connection across Sierra Leone. Since its inception in March in **Freetown** and **Kenema**, the series has steadily grown, branching into **Lunsar** in May, where we successfully organized two events. Additional milestones include two events in **Western Kenema**, one in **Bo**, two in **Foredugu**, and one in **Waterloo**. These open mics have become hubs of artistic expression, amplifying voices and creating vibrant spaces for cultural exchange in both urban and rural communities.

Impact:

- Attracted over 1,000 attendees across 10+ events, building a dedicated and engaged audience.
- Engaged up to 100 artists, providing them with a platform to showcase their talents and connect with wider audiences.
- Collaborated with small businesses, boosting local economies and fostering community partnerships.
- Amplified diverse voices and stories, fostering cultural pride and strengthening cultural awareness across Sierra Leone.



I Anthology (June – November 2024)

Overview:

A collaboration with LitFest Harare, the I Anthology brings together 20 poets—10 from Sierra Leone and 10 from Zimbabwe—in a powerful exploration of identity, culture, and individuality. This cross-cultural project bridges two nations through the universal language of poetry, showcasing the diverse voices, experiences, and perspectives of African creatives.

The anthology features contributions edited by a collaborative team of two editors, one from each country, ensuring that the collection authentically represents the unique contexts and cultural nuances of Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe. This project not only highlights the richness of African poetry but also fosters cultural exchange, understanding, and dialogue between the two nations.

The I Anthology is more than just a literary work; it is a celebration of shared humanity and the transformative power of storytelling, marking an important milestone in the journey of African literature.

Impact:

- Showcased 20 poets, fostering cultural exchange and artistic dialogue.
- Published our first literary work, setting the stage for more anthologies.



The Living Room: A Celebration of Art and Cultural Exchange

On October 17th, 2024, Inkundla Spaces, in collaboration with the German Embassy, hosted The Living Room—a special “Art in Residence” event at the Residence of the German Ambassador. This unique gathering brought together an intimate audience for an unforgettable evening of poetry, music, and cultural dialogue.

Overview

The Living Room served as a platform for artistic exchange, blending traditional and contemporary art forms in a cozy and welcoming setting. From 5-9pm, attendees were treated to powerful performances, rich storytelling, and moments of genuine connection.

Highlights

- Sorie Kondi, the renowned Sierra Leonean musician, captivated the audience with his mastery of the “kondi” (thumb piano), delivering soulful melodies that beautifully bridged heritage and modernity.
- **WISE**, a German artist, brought an international perspective, sharing insights into Berlin’s creative scene through storytelling and live performances.
- Local spoken word artists from Sierra Leone shared pieces that explored identity, resilience, and hope, creating a dynamic and reflective atmosphere.
- **Happy Money Contributions:** Instead of a traditional entry fee, attendees contributed voluntarily to support the participating artists, embracing the concept of “Happy Money” to foster community generosity and sustain creative endeavors.

Impact

- **Cultural Exchange:** The event bridged Sierra Leonean and German cultures, fostering mutual appreciation and understanding through the universal language of art.
- **Artist Support:** Happy Money contributions provided direct financial support to the performers, ensuring their talents were valued and celebrated.
- **Audience Engagement:** The intimate setting allowed for meaningful interactions between artists and attendees, creating a shared space of inspiration and dialogue.

Inkundla Arts Festival (October 31 – November 2, 2024)

Overview:

A three-day celebration of creativity, the Inkundla Arts Festival showcased the vibrant diversity of Sierra Leone's artistic landscape, featuring poetry, music, visual arts, discussions, and much more. This landmark event was a platform for cultural exchange, innovation, and storytelling, bringing together artists, audiences, and thought leaders in a unique and engaging format.

Highlights:

- **Rise & Riot Grand Finale:** The festival's centerpiece, where the top poets from the poetry slam's five heats competed for the championship title, delivering electrifying performances that captivated the audience.
- **I Anthology Launch:** A cross-cultural collaboration with LitFest Harare, this anthology was unveiled during the festival, celebrating voices from Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe in a collection exploring themes of identity and individuality.
- **Theatre Performance:** A thought-provoking play addressing social issues, performed by a talented ensemble of local actors, showcasing the transformative power of storytelling on stage.
- **Hybrid Poetry Open Mic:** A blend of in-person and virtual performances, this open mic session provided a platform for poets from diverse backgrounds to share their work, bridging geographical and cultural divides.
- **Visual Arts Exhibition:** A curated display of artwork by local and international artists, highlighting the creativity and talent within the visual arts community.
- **Panel Discussions and Workshops:** Engaging conversations and interactive sessions exploring topics such as funding, inclusion, and sustainability in the arts, aimed at empowering creatives and fostering dialogue on the future of Sierra Leone's cultural landscape.

The festival not only provided a vibrant space for artistic expression but also strengthened connections within the creative community, amplified diverse voices, and sparked critical conversations. It was a testament to the transformative power of the arts to unite, inspire, and drive positive change.

Impact:

- Platformed over 50 artists across disciplines.
- Strengthened Sierra Leone's cultural and creative community.
- Sparked critical discussions on funding, diversity, and inclusion in the arts.



Sponsorship and Partnership Section

In 2024, Inkundla Spaces thrived through the invaluable support of our sponsors and partners. These collaborations have been instrumental in helping us create transformative artistic experiences, empower creatives, and bring our vision to life. Here's a summary of how these partnerships contributed to our activities throughout the year:

Mango Peak

Mango Peak has been a steadfast supporter of Inkundla Spaces, sponsoring key events such as the Rise & Riot Poetry Slam and the Inkundla Arts Festival. They provided their venue for these events, creating a professional and inspiring space for artists to showcase their talents. Their partnership has been instrumental in enhancing the quality of our programming and fostering a thriving creative community.

Aurora Foundation

Aurora Foundation played a key role in supporting the Inkundla Arts Festival and Wi Kreative Playgron (WKP). Their contributions allowed us to compensate artists, enhance event logistics, and sustain the quality and inclusivity of these flagship initiatives. Aurora's unwavering support has been pivotal in fostering creative growth and ensuring the continuity of our programs.

Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary

Tacugama partnered with us for the November WKP, tying the event to National Animal & Wildlife Month. Through this collaboration, we combined creative expression with environmental advocacy, inspiring audiences to engage with conservation issues while enjoying poetry, music, and art.

Friends of Sierra Leone

Friends of Sierra Leone enabled us to expand the Open Mic Series to underserved communities, including Foredugu and Lunsar. Their support facilitated grassroots platforms for creative expression, amplifying local voices and fostering cultural pride in these regions.

OneVillage Partners

OneVillage Partners collaborated with us on initiatives in rural areas, particularly in Kenema and Bo, where their contributions helped us integrate artistic platforms into community-building activities. Together, we empowered creatives to tell their stories and connect meaningfully with their audiences.

Hotel Barmoi

Hotel Barmoi provided a vibrant venue for the Freetown leg of the Open Mic Series and hosted several events during the Inkunda Arts Festival. Their support created a professional and inspiring setting for artists and audiences to connect, fostering meaningful artistic exchanges and memorable experiences.

German Embassy

The German Embassy partnered with us for The Living Room, a special “Art in Residence” event that celebrated cultural exchange. Held at the German Ambassador’s residence, the event highlighted the synergy between local and international artists, including performances from Sorie Kondi, WISE, and Sierra Leonean spoken word artists.

Lumley Atlantic Hotel

Lumley Atlantic Hotel provided refreshments and food during the Inkundla Arts Festival, helping us host a memorable and impactful event. Their partnership ensured attendees and artists were well-catered to, creating a comfortable and welcoming atmosphere that allowed everyone to fully immerse themselves in the celebration of creativity.

Lunsar Artists’ Union

The Lunsar Artists’ Union played a crucial role in establishing our open mic events in Lunsar and Foreduku. Their local expertise and community connections ensured strong participation and seamless coordination. By helping to identify and engage talented local artists, they significantly contributed to amplifying diverse voices and fostering cultural pride in these underserved areas.

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Key Achievements Through Partnerships

- **Artist Empowerment:** Contributions from sponsors enabled us to consistently compensate artists, fostering a culture that values and supports creative talent.
- **Expanded Reach:** Partnerships allowed us to bring creative platforms to underserved areas, ensuring access to artistic spaces across Sierra Leone.
- **Cultural Exchange:** Events like The Living Room showcased the power of art to connect diverse cultures and spark meaningful dialogue.
- **Sustainability:** The support of our sponsors and partners has laid the groundwork for the long-term growth and impact of Inkundla Spaces.

Overall Key Outcomes and Achievements

- **Empowerment:** Inkundla Spaces has established itself as a hub for creative expression, providing platforms for artists to share their talents, amplify their voices, and build meaningful connections within a thriving community of creatives.
- **Visibility:** We have elevated Sierra Leonean creatives to national and international prominence through initiatives such as the I Anthology, the Rise & Riot Poetry Slam, and our Open Mic Series, showcasing their artistry on global stages and in collaborative cross-cultural projects.
- **Collaboration:** Inkundla Spaces has forged impactful partnerships with organizations such as AVSI, Tacugama, Aurora Foundation, OneVillage Partners, Friends of Salone, Lumley Atlantic Hotel, and Hotel Barmoi, enabling long-term growth, resource sharing, and the expansion of our programs.
- **Cultural Impact:** By bridging urban and rural communities through shared artistic experiences, Inkundla Spaces has amplified diverse voices and fostered cultural pride. Our events have created spaces for dialogue, exploration, and unity, ensuring art reaches all corners of Sierra Leone.
- **Economic Contributions:** Collaborations with small businesses, local venues, and community organizations have boosted local economies and provided paid opportunities for artists, further enhancing the sustainability and reach of our initiatives.

These outcomes reflect our commitment to empowering artists, connecting communities, and driving cultural and social transformation through the arts.

Conclusion

In its inaugural year, Inkundla Spaces has redefined the creative landscape of Sierra Leone, bridging urban and rural divides to create spaces where creativity flourishes and untold stories find their voice. From grassroots platforms like Wi Kreative Playgron and open mic series in underserved villages to transformative initiatives like the Rise & Riot Poetry Slam and the Inkundla Arts Festival, we have fostered connection, collaboration, and cultural pride.

This year has taught us resilience, innovation, and the power of community. Every event, every partnership, and every creative expression has reinforced our belief in the transformative potential of the arts—not just to entertain, but to inspire, empower, and create lasting change. As we move into the new year, we are committed to expanding our reach into underserved areas, amplifying voices that have long been silenced, and creating sustainable opportunities for creatives to thrive.

Together, we turn challenges into opportunities, dreams into realities, and creativity into magic.

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