

**INTRODUCTION**

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# Overview

- THE WORKS OF RXAXLXF
- GOOD ART OR BAD ART?
- ART IN AFRICA
- CONTEMPORARY ART IN KENYA
- INVESTMENT IN (KENYAN) ART

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# Ralf Graf - artist name: RxAxLxF

Ralf's career in the arts is versatile and spans more than 30 years. Originally starting as a teenage street artist, he was 'discovered' by professional mentors and invited to study art at university level. He graduated in 1993 as Bachelor of Media Arts at the AKI Art Academy Enschede / The Netherlands, and was awarded in 1998 a Postgraduate degree in Design from the Art Academy Utrecht / The Netherlands.

After his Bachelor, he started to work as autonomous artist, mainly in the fields of multimedia art & photography. After his Postgraduate degree, he also worked as media designer and art director for various companies & organizations around the world. For the last 10 years, he also added the field of journalism to his job experience, with as specialization investigative journalism. While gaining job experience, he started to manage cultural & art events around the globe as well.

He won several stipends and awards for his work, like the Pepinieres Award for young artists of the European Union and the State Stipend of The Netherlands. His work is being sold by several galleries, like Saatchi Gallery (Los Angeles/London).

Originally from The Netherlands, he is based in Kenya since 2001, where he has set up (amongst others) the multimedia design school NairoBits and the media production company SasaHivi Media. Living & working in Kenya for more than 15 years, has given him the valuable opportunity to learn in-depth about Kenyan arts & culture. Since then, much of his work has been deeply influenced by the Kenyan and African narrative.

He conducted lectures as guest lecturer at several art academies and universities, in Kenya amongst others, the Architecture & Design Department (ADD) of UoN.



# SOME WORKS OF

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# Areas of Operation: Media

## Mixed Multi Media:

- Photography
- Paintography
- Print
- Performance
- Video
- Music
- Theatre

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# Areas of Operation: Concepts

One of the main theme's in my artistic work: Perception. As a part of the perception theme I am experimenting since 2010 with **Paintographies**.

As I have spent more than a decade living and working in Africa, a lot of my current work is about the perception of Africa. Since long, Africa is a place where many ideas and emotions have been projected on. The perceptions about Africa have led to several series of artworks.

# Paintography vs Photography

Post-Reality Realism – A statement about Media Manipulation

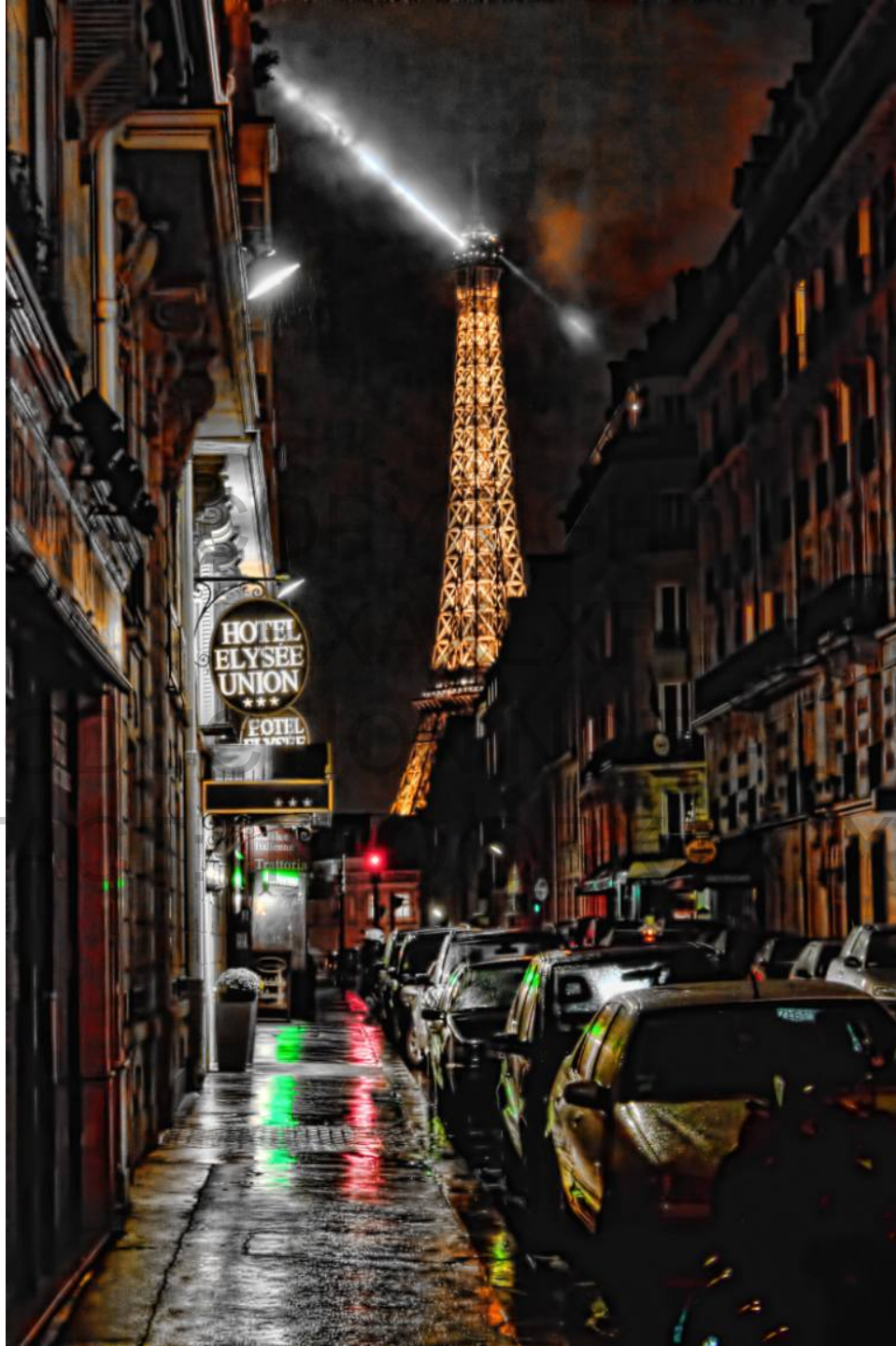
Photography was never 'real' or 'natural'. It is always the person behind the camera who decides how to depict reality. It is the photographer who decides what to catch within the frame, what to cut out of reality and present it for later use.



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# Some links

- RxAxLxF – [www.rxaxlxf.net](http://www.rxaxlxf.net)
- RxAxLxF FB – [www.facebook.com/rxaxlxf](http://www.facebook.com/rxaxlxf)
- Ralf Rafee FB – [www.facebook.com/ralfrafeef](http://www.facebook.com/ralfrafeef)
- RxAxLxF @ Saatchi Art - [www.saatchiart.com/rxaxlxf](http://www.saatchiart.com/rxaxlxf)
- SasaHivi Media – [www.sasahivi.com](http://www.sasahivi.com)
- NairoBits – [www.nairobits.com](http://www.nairobits.com)

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**BAD ART?**

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# Aesthetics

## Definition:

- The philosophical theory or set of principles governing the idea of beauty at a given time and place (adopted by a particular person, group, or culture).
- A particular taste for, or approach to, what is pleasing to the senses--especially sight

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# Aesthetic Philosophies of Art

- Before you can judge an artwork, you will need to determine what the goal of the artwork is.
- This is how an art critic determines if an artwork is “good” or “bad.”
- There are three aesthetic theories that most artwork fits into, and they all have different goals:
  - ***Imitationalism***
  - ***Formalism***
  - ***Emotionalism***



# Aesthetic Philosophies of Art

## Art as Imitationalism

- The work looks realistic; it imitates an object or material thing
- The essence of art is to picture or portray reality. Good art mirrors the world, imitating nature or some ideal form.



Martin Johnson Heade,  
*Thunderstorm at the  
Shore*, c. 1870-1871, oil  
on paper mounted on  
canvas attached to panel  
15 3/4 x 23 3/4 in.  
Carnegie Museum of Art,  
Howard N. Eavenson  
Memorial Fund

# Aesthetic Philosophies of Art

## Art as Formalism

- The essence of art is “significant form” - lines, shapes, colors, and other formal properties of the work (elements and principles)
- Representation, expression, and other subject matter are irrelevant. Good art uses formal elements to trigger an “aesthetic emotion” in sensitive observers.



Donald Judd, *Untitled*,  
1974,  
Stainless steel and  
Plexiglas  
8 x 194 1/2 x 14 in.  
Carnegie Museum of Art,  
Purchase: gift of Mr. and  
Mrs. Charles Denby, by  
exchange

# Aesthetic Philosophies of Art

## Art as Emotionalism (Expressionism)

- The essence of art is expression of the inner emotions, feelings, moods, and mental states of the artist.
- Good art effectively and sincerely brings these inner states to an external objectification.
- Many artworks depict characters showing emotions. However, an artwork would not usually be classified as emotionalist unless the emotion being expressed was the primary purpose of the artwork.



Willem de Kooning,  
*Woman VI*, 1953  
Oil on canvas

# Art Criticism

## Definition:

- It is the discussion or evaluation of visual art.
- One of art criticism's goals is the pursuit of a rational basis for art appreciation.

## Four Steps of a Formal Critique:

1. Description
2. Analysis
3. Interpretation
4. Judgment/Evaluation



# Art Criticism - Description

- Pure description of the artwork without value judgments, analysis, or interpretation.
- Answer the question, “**What do you see?**”

Points to remind:

- Name of the artist, the date of the artwork
- Size of the artwork (found in the credit line)
- Medium and process used (found in the credit line)
- The subject, object and details
- The elements of the art used in the work.

# Art Criticism - Analysis

- Determine what the features suggest and decide why the artist used such features to convey specific ideas.
- Answer the question, “**How did the artist create it?**”

Points to remind:

- Subject matter- what is it?
- Elements of art mostly used
- Principles of design and compositional techniques: Balance, emphasis, movement, contrast, rhythm/repetition, unity
- Analysis of use of light and role of color
- Treatment of space and landscape, both real and illusionary (including use of perspective): Compact, deep, shallow, naturalistic, random
- Effect of particular medium or media used



# Art Criticism - Interpretation

- Establishing the broader context for the artwork, or what the artist is trying to communicate, based on the visual clues you collected in prior steps; Play detective!
- Answer the question, “**Why did the artist create it, and what does it mean?**”

Points to remind:

- What do you think is the main idea or overall meaning of the artwork?
  - Interpretive statement: Attempt to express what you think the artwork is about in one sentence
- Supporting evidence: What evidence inside or outside the artwork supports your interpretation? Be descriptive.

# Art Criticism - Judgement

- Determine the degree of artistic merit.
- Answer the question, “**Is the artwork successful?**”

Points to remind:

- Make an objective judgment: Based on the goal of the artwork (its aesthetic theory). Determine whether the artwork is:
  - Imitationalism: Criteria = Realistic appearance of subject matter
  - Formalism: Criteria = Use of elements and principles of design
  - Emotionalism: Criteria = Emotional response elicited by the artwork
- Make a subjective/personal judgment: Do you like the artwork? Why or why not?



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# History of (Visual) Art in Africa

Art in ancient Africa was most often functional

- Fulfilled requirements of everyday life
  - Clothing, housing, rituals, economic and political, war and entertainment
  - Secondary for aesthetics
- Artworks have symbolic values
- In rural African society, the function of artist, healer, priest, blacksmith were often combined.
- Due to colonial propaganda, African Art was denounced as 'non-existing' or 'inferior'.



# Traditional African Art

- Rock drawings
- Carved human heads
- Sculpture
  - Wood, terra cotta
- Basketry
- Masks
- Musical instruments
- Printed textiles



Bronze head from Benin - 1550

# Sculptures

- Sculpture
  - Can be carved engraved or molded and is three dimensional
  - Generally symmetrical but can be naturalistic or conventional





# Masks

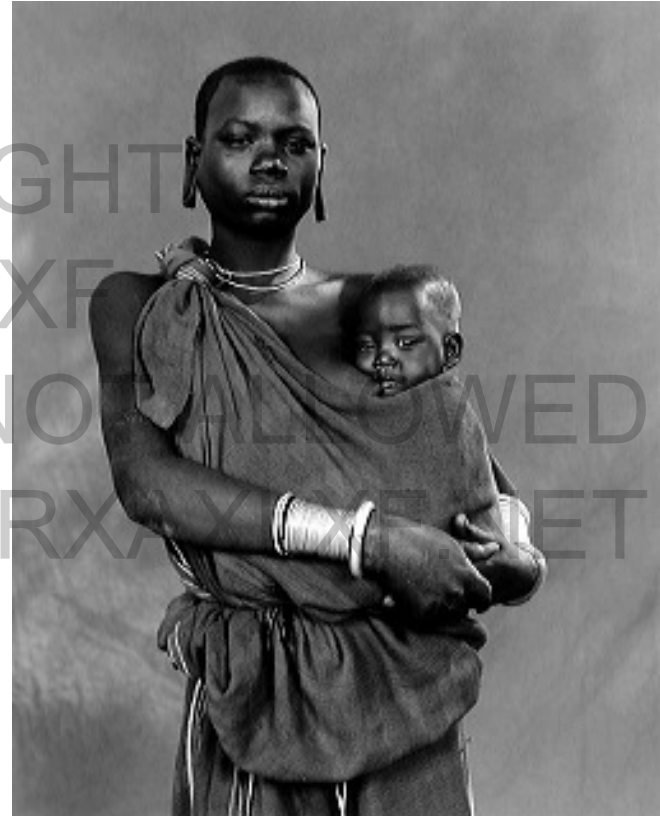
- Masks
  - Very important part of African culture
  - Closely related to life events
    - Secret societies, funerals, royal celebrations
    - Can take the form of spirits, humans or animals



# Jewelry

- Jewelry

- Metal jewelry worn on the arms and legs is thought to be good for the bones
- Amulets worn in the hair or on the body is thought to bring good luck





# Body Art

- African body art uses the human body as a way to express an individual's status, spiritual beliefs, or ethnic affiliation. It can be created on the body itself in the form of tattoos, scarification, body painting,



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**KENYA**

# Current Situation

- Kenyan Contemporary Art is existing!
- And not just since yesterday...
- Art scene developing analogue to economic development
- Economic development of other sectors are given priority
- Cultural Infrastructure challenges
- Challenges in perception of Kenyan public
- Diversification of Art growing & necessary



# Investment in Kenyan Art

## **Start with some experience or interest in art.**

The best art investors do their research on the pieces of art that they buy, so someone with some education or interest in the art world is more likely to understand this niche market. As well as personal research, you will need to have contacts with people in the art world, such as artists, art critics & gallery directors, who can give you good investment advice.

Value is found not only in the artist, but in the quality of a given work. Always buy the best you can afford – and to do so, of course, requires, again, understanding and a certain amount of expertise in the artist's oeuvre.

# Investment in Kenyan Art

## Some points to think about:

- Avoid getting caught up in hypes
- Think of art investing as venture-capital investing
- Shun the belief that art sales translate to resale value
- Value a collection as more than the sum of its parts
- Compare the ongoings in Kenya with the developments in contemporary Kenyan Art

# Investment in Kenyan Art

**Some points to think about:**

- Or just buy what you like!!!

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