

The Kgotla Method



Fairness as Collective Practice

I do not write about "*fairness*" as a trend. I write about it because the arts have a talent for romanticising exploitation when it is dressed up as opportunity.

If you are a Black African arts worker building platforms with and for communities that have historically been treated as disposable, you learn quickly that the global cultural economy does not reward care. It rewards legibility. It rewards proximity. It rewards institutions that know how to perform competence in the language of funders, biennales, and policy.

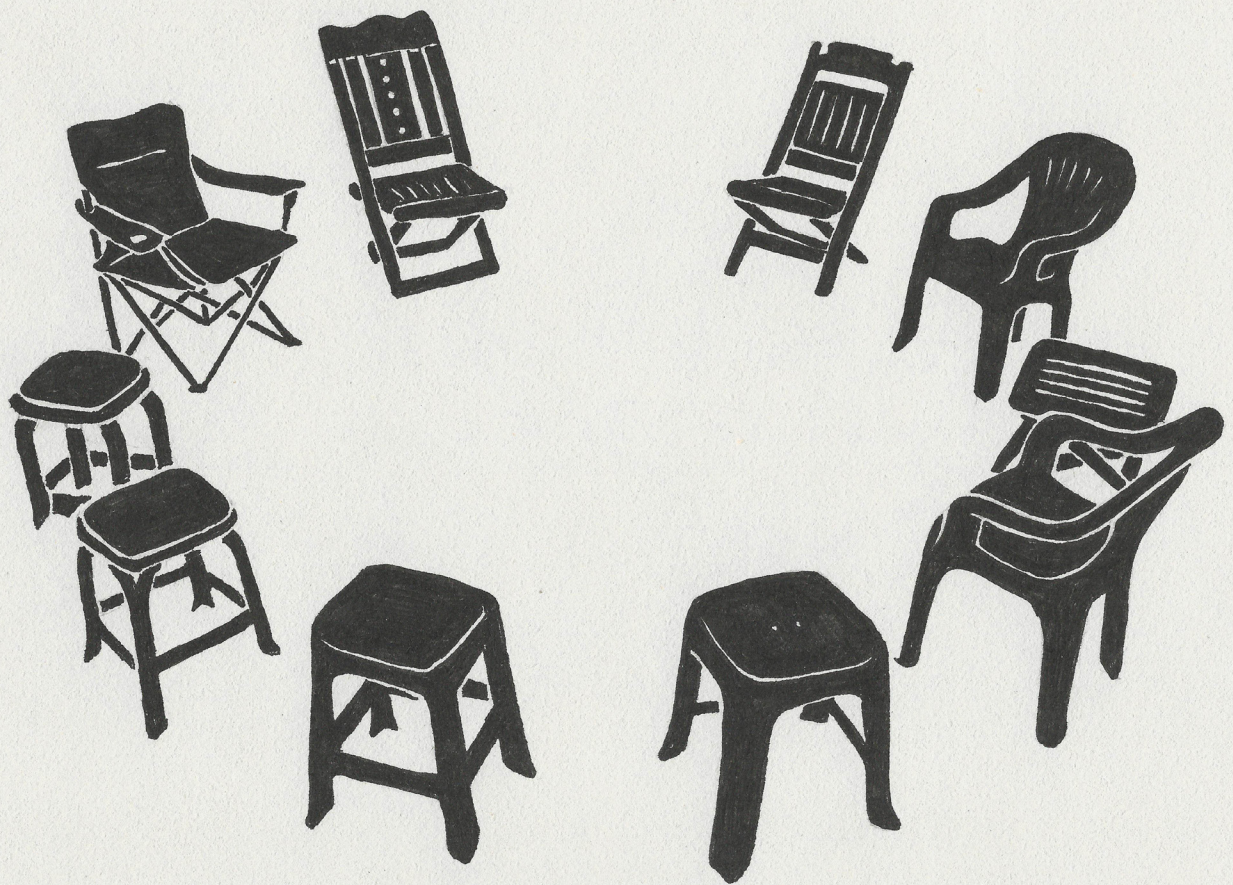
Meanwhile, many of us are building infrastructure without being paid like we are building infrastructure.

Fairness, for me, starts as an economic question before it becomes a moral one. Who gets paid, how consistently, and for what kind of labour? Who gets a budget line, and who gets told to be "passionate"? Who is invited into the room early enough to shape the agenda, not just late enough to decorate it?

I am tired of conversations that treat African cultural organisations as if they are always "emerging", as if they must remain grateful, as if the baseline expectation is scarcity. I am also tired of the polite versions of inequality. The ones that call themselves partnership while keeping decision-making elsewhere. The ones that ask for our stories but not our terms.

So this zine is written from the ground. From lived practice. From arguments, compromises, awkward meetings, WhatsApp voice notes, and the unglamorous admin that holds communities together. And it is written with a simple proposition: fairness is not a policy statement. It is a practice. It is something you do repeatedly, publicly, and with consequences.

Tanlume Enyatseng, Journalist and Cultural Strategist



The Kgotla System

A local structure for collective listening, and a proposal for cultural work

The kgotla, in Botswana, is commonly understood as a public gathering space and civic process: a place where community matters are discussed, where listening is visible, and where legitimacy is shaped through participation. It is not perfect, and it is not automatically fair. But it is a local reference point for what collective process can look like when it is taken seriously.

In this zine, I am framing the kgotla as a curatorial and methodological approach: a way of gathering, listening, and learning together that resists extractive research models and instead centres collective sense-making as cultural work.

What changes when you treat “gathering” as a method, not an afterthought?

- You stop treating people as sources, and start treating them as co-thinkers.
- You slow down the tempo so nuance can survive.
- You make disagreement part of the record, not a threat to the outcome.
- You accept that care is not soft. Care is structure.

What is my role in fairness?

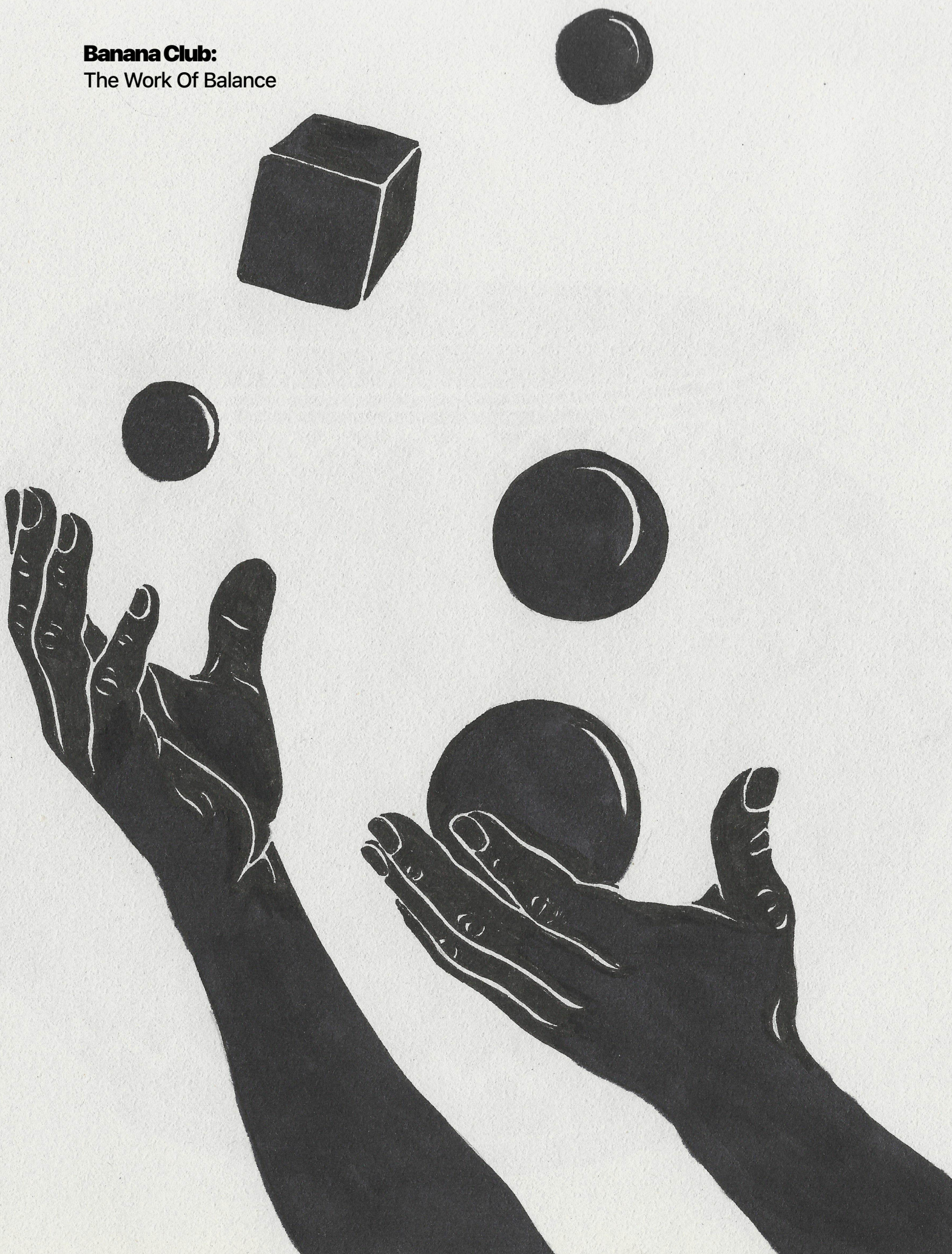
My role is not to claim neutrality. It is to design conditions where people can speak without being mined, and where the work produced can return value to the communities it came from.

That means I have to hold two things at once:

- The desire to make work that travels internationally
- The obligation to not flatten Botswana, or Southern Africa, into a “case study” that is only legible when it matches external frameworks

The kgotla, here, is not a metaphor for tradition. It is a strategy for contemporary governance of cultural work.

Banana Club:
The Work Of Balance



Banana Club

Building a Platform While Being Told to Stay Small

Banana Club is a non-profit organisation based in Botswana, working across contemporary art, design, film, and human rights. Its focus is not only on visibility, but on building accessible platforms for critical dialogue and socially engaged storytelling.

Banana Club operates in a space where cultural work is repeatedly told to soften itself. In Botswana, and across much of the region, there is a quiet but persistent line drawn between what is considered culture and what is deemed “*too political*.” That line is rarely explicit. It is enforced through tone-policing, funding conditions, and the suggestion that certain conversations are premature, inappropriate, or better held privately. The result is an arts ecosystem that often values appearance over substance and visibility over accountability.

The work Banana Club undertakes consistently crosses that line, not out of provocation, but out of necessity. When artistic practice treats queer life as ordinary life, or makes space for conversations about legal rights, safety, dignity, and economic exclusion, it is often received as an escalation. Work that names how power circulates, how bodies are regulated, and how silence is maintained is quickly reclassified as activism rather than culture. This distinction is convenient for institutions, as it allows them to support “diversity” while distancing themselves from the material consequences of inclusion.

Moral policing in this context rarely arrives as overt censorship. More often, it takes the form of gradual narrowing. Partners express support but request gentler language. Funders emphasise “positive narratives” when the work is concerned with harm. Audiences respond with discomfort, reading critique as confrontation. Gatekeepers frame seriousness as neutrality, and neutrality as professionalism. Over time, this teaches artists and organisers which truths are expensive to tell.

Within Banana Club itself, the tension takes a different form. It is not about suppressing politics, but about negotiating risk. How visible can queer work be in a context where backlash is not hypothetical? How does one hold public space without exposing participants to harm? How is momentum sustained without burning out the very people the work is meant to support? These questions are not resolved through ideology. They are negotiated through care, trust, and constant recalibration.

Fairness, for me, becomes unavoidable as an economic question. Cultural labour in Botswana is routinely treated as voluntary, particularly when it centres communities already positioned at the margins. Artists are praised for impact while infrastructure remains unfunded. Organisers are expected to absorb the costs of safety planning, mediation, and emotional labour, while being told to remain grateful for exposure. When the work speaks to queer lives, women-identifying artists, or other underrepresented communities, the burden intensifies. Fairness is not only about who is invited into the room, but about who is expected to carry the room once they arrive.

Banana Club's programmes span public dialogue, residencies, exhibitions, performances, and community-led engagements. Yet representation alone has never been the goal. The deeper question is governance: who sets the terms of engagement, who decides what is legible, and who is trusted to define culture in the first place. Fairness, in this sense, is not an outcome. It is a practice of refusal. A refusal to work for free. A refusal to dilute language. A refusal to treat safety as an afterthought. A refusal to separate care from professionalism.

This is where the logic of the kgotla becomes essential, not as metaphor, but as method. The kgotla positions conversation as central to decision-making rather than supplementary to it. It insists that power must be spoken in public in order to be accountable. In shaping Banana Club's approach to fairness, the kgotla offers a way of gathering that privileges listening over speed and relationship over performance. It demands that disagreement be held rather than hidden, and that cultural work remain accountable to the people it claims to serve. In this context, fairness is not a moral position. It is a structure. And like all structures, it must be built, tested, and repaired in public.



▲
This Noble Land
Short film, (2022)



▲ Its Really Complicated. 2018
Giancarlo Diablo Santana

TBP Collective:
The Collective Pot



TBP Collective

When a “National Pavilion” Becomes a Question, Not a Destination

Lead voice: Co-Founder and Artist, *Kim Karabo Makin*

TBP Collective began in **2019** at the Michaelis School of Fine Art in Cape Town as an informal space where Botswana artists could discuss their work with shared cultural understanding, outside the formal classroom. That origin story matters because it begins with something institutions rarely fund: peer critique, mutual recognition, and the slow work of building language together.

TBP’s early move was both playful and precise. The Botswana Pavilion: No Return was staged as a pointed gesture, questioning national representation and visibility within the global art world. Timed alongside the Venice Biennale, the exhibition operated less as an aspiration than as a provocation. Its return to Gaborone through a second chapter at the Botswana National Art Gallery shifted the question back home, creating a dialogue between external visibility and local accountability.

From the outset, TBP has been clear about the gap it was responding to: the limited representation of Botswana artists internationally, alongside weak local infrastructure for art education, exhibitions, collaboration, and professional development. In response, the collective built its own platform, guided by a sense of social responsibility and an ethic of mentorship, rather than waiting for institutional permission.

Fairness as Internal Governance

What makes TBP particularly relevant to this zine is not only its critique of external systems, but how fairness is embedded internally as an operational design. The collective works through horizontal leadership, with roles rotating according to project needs and members’ capacities at any given time. Curatorial direction, administration, communications, and production are shared responsibilities, ensuring that decision-making remains transparent and adaptable rather than fixed or hierarchical. Authorship follows the same logic: some projects are led by individual members, others emerge through collective discussion or in collaboration with external partners.

Their financial model is similarly direct. Income generated through commissions, sales, or institutional partnerships is pooled into a shared fund, referred to as the “Collective Pot.” This system is loosely modelled on motshelo, a widely practised group savings system in Botswana in which members contribute regularly and take turns accessing a lump sum. Traditionally, motshelo functions as both an economic and social mechanism, built on trust, collective accountability, and shared risk rather than formal financial institutions.



▲
Thero Makepe
The Aunt I Almost Had, 2021.

Within TBP, this logic is adapted to the realities of artistic labour. Contributions and withdrawals are discussed openly, and decisions are made collectively, acknowledging that artists' financial circumstances fluctuate across projects and time. This is not a symbolic gesture. It is a practical response to an ecosystem defined by inconsistency, where income is irregular and institutional support is uneven. Fairness here is not about equal distribution, but about negotiated equity, flexibility, and mutual responsibility.

TBP also actively resists the scarcity mindset that structures much of the art world. Rather than encouraging competition for limited opportunities, the collective treats visibility as something that circulates. Their position is simple and deliberate: a win for one is genuinely a win for all.

Structural Blockage: Power Without Practice

At the same time, TBP names a structural problem that many practitioners experience but rarely articulate publicly. Decision-making power in the arts often sits with non-artists, and creative leadership is frequently required to justify itself through the language of business, economics, or market value. This becomes a fairness issue because it determines whose knowledge is trusted, which practices are legitimised, and what kinds of cultural labour are considered “real.”

A Fairer Ecosystem, In Their Own Words

TBP's vision of a fairer arts ecosystem is grounded rather than aspirational. It centres meaningful investment in artists rather than symbolic exposure, including scholarships, support for contemporary art spaces, and the development of platforms that allow artists to practise professionally within a sustainable market. Fairness, in this sense, is not about recognition alone, but about building conditions that allow artistic work to endure.



▲
Kim Karabo Makin, Ceramic Basket series, 2023, Photograph of ceramics, Dimensions variable. Developed through a Royal Over-Seas League and Art House Visual Arts Scholarship (3)



▲
Thebe Phetogo, Lowe
(Day Painting 6)



▲
LegakwanaLeo
Makgenene,
Dithuthuntshwane, 2023

LAPA:
Shared Meals



LAPA (Goethe-Institut Johannesburg)

Fairness as responsiveness, not sameness

Lead voice: *Tammy Langtry*, Programmes Manager.

LAPA began as a physical project space in Brixton, Johannesburg, but quickly understood its deeper value as a discursive and continental network. The premise was uneven access: artists across Africa working in isolation, uneven institutional infrastructure between cities, and dominant narratives about African art that remain externally framed.

LAPA's early vision is important because it is explicitly anti-extractive: a space where African artists set the terms of engagement, and residency models are re-imagined around equity, curiosity, and local relevance rather than extractive mobility.

Their approach to fairness is also precise: “fairness does not mean sameness, it means responsiveness.” That line matters because so many institutional models treat fairness as uniform treatment, ignoring unequal starting points and unequal barriers.

What “fair practice” looks like as operations

LAPA describes fair practice through structure:

- Selection grounded in artistic intent, site relevance, and long-term impact, with rotating regional juries and care around language to avoid extractive framings
- Transparent budgets and negotiated needs, with attention to visa and mobility barriers, and resource redistribution through local partners
- Intentional slowness: check-ins, grounding sessions, shared meals, reflection circles as integral, not incidental
- Co-authored documentation, and a refusal to over-frame residents’ work through curatorial authority

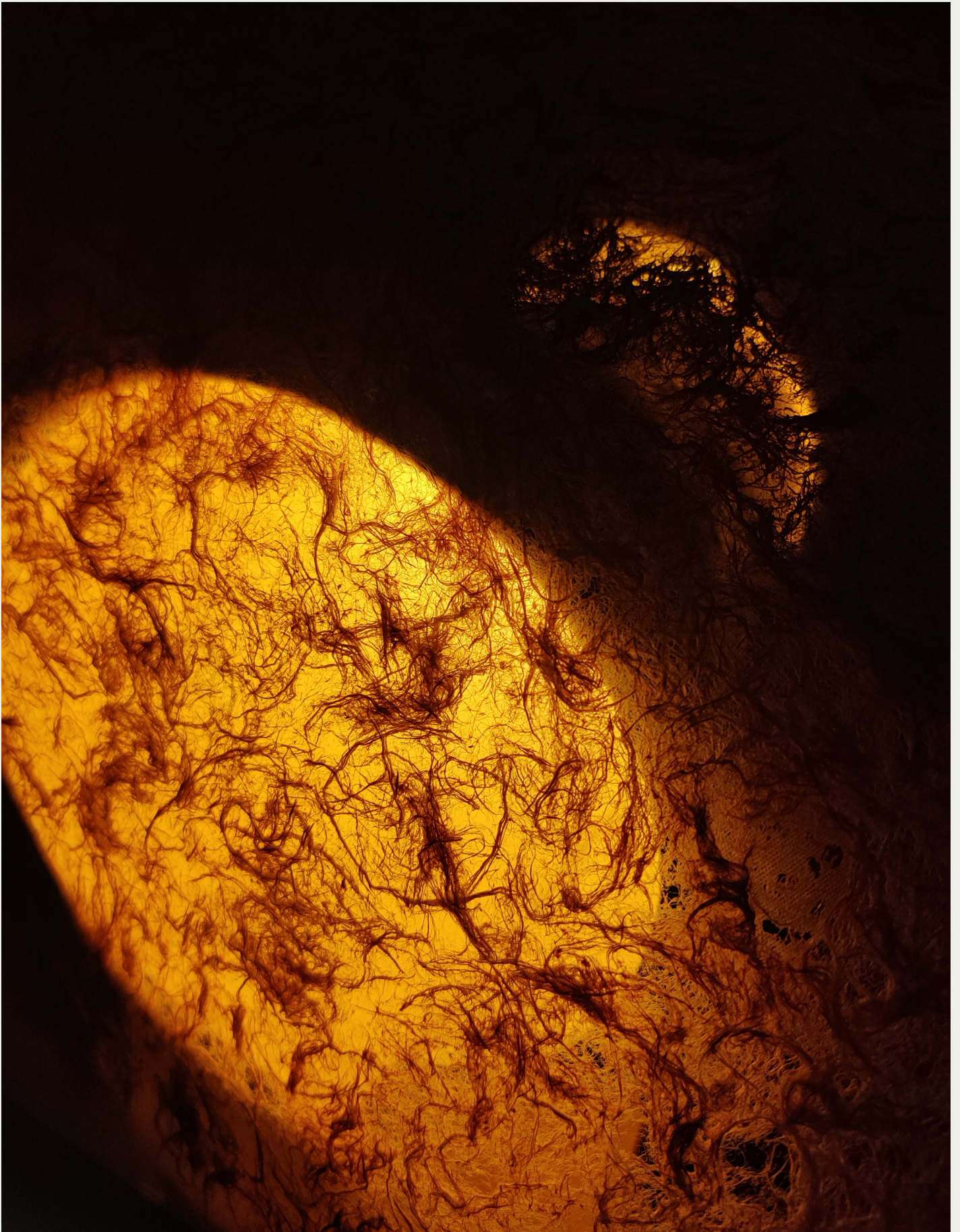
They also name the conflict honestly: funder timelines versus slower research needs; burnout inside the team. Their response is not “*we handled it perfectly*”, but “we paused, called the issue what it was, and repositioned timelines collaboratively.”

Care labour as infrastructure

One of the strongest contributions from the LAPA interview is how they treat care work as structural planning: cycles of residency months, followed by months designed for rest and reflection, because without it the team's capacity collapses. They also speak to translation and mediation as intellectual labour, often hard to budget for, but essential to “homing” artists and building community in practice.

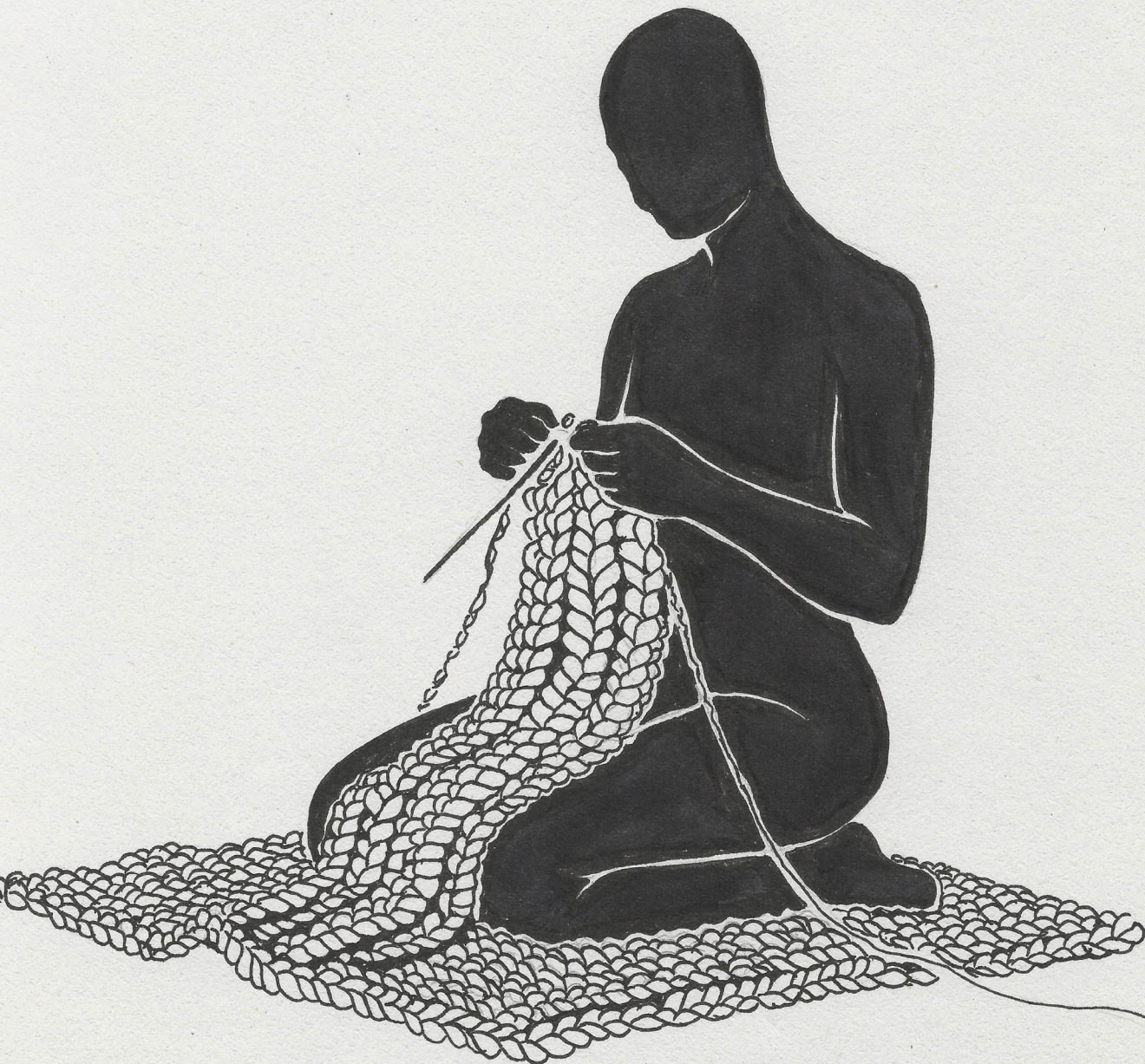
This is where fairness becomes real: not in a manifesto, but in a calendar, a budget, a workflow, and the permission to slow down.







Ulayo:
Still Learning



ULAYO (Maputo, Mozambique)

A festival built for visibility, still learning how to be structurally fair

ULAYO started as a day-long event, imagined as a “fair” type of picnic setting that ended in music. It emerged from recognising that queer artists had potential, but not access to production teams or bigger opportunities. After COVID, funding support enabled it to scale into a week-long festival. From the start, ULAYO was responding to a familiar trap: queer work being visible only in Pride contexts, treated as marginal by default. The festival’s ambition was to move queer artists into a professional frame, where they could be seen by broader publics, and also learn to see themselves as professionals.

ULAYO also carries a regional complexity: Mozambique’s Portuguese language context creates both isolation and uniqueness. And the economics of proximity shape programming decisions. South Africa is cheaper to book because the industry is bigger and travel is easier, and ULAYO has to keep reminding itself: this is a Mozambican festival, made by Mozambican people, with a Pan-African intention.

Fairness in Practice

ULAYO’s strongest contribution is its honesty. They state clearly that fairness is still a work in progress, and they name where the system is not yet fair: no open call, because the team lacks capacity to review applications, which narrows the curatorial pool toward artists whose work they have seen, mostly in Maputo.

At the same time, they outline practical fairness decisions:

- Artists set their own rate, then ULAYO negotiates to ensure everyone gets something
- Artists from other provinces receive the same per diem and accommodation as international artists
- Names are featured equally in communications
- No VIP spaces, no backstage hierarchy, because community-building requires social mixing
- Most events are free, with careful thinking around the risk of pricing people out

They also highlight safety as fairness infrastructure: gendered bathrooms, discrimination risks, and the institutional violence that shows up in small places like banking, where paying trans and non-binary artists in cash becomes an act of care and protection.







Ecosystem & Challenges

Q: What barriers affect fairness in Mozambique's queer arts context?

A: Financial barriers operate locally and internationally. ULAYO also sits in a difficult category position, caught between “Arts & Culture” and “Activism”, and therefore struggles to land in conventional funding buckets. Safety concerns (including bathrooms and discrimination) shape venue negotiations as part of the work.

Q: How does ULAYO navigate fairness with external partners?

A: They take a long-term view, making strategic concessions to build future benefit, and they broaden the definition of resources beyond money (accommodation, free space, connections).

Q: How does ULAYO sustain itself organisationally?

A: It does not yet sustain itself financially. Both co-founders rely on other income, and most support is project-based due to limited funds for staffing.

6.4 Looking Forward (Q&A)

Q: How do you envision ULAYO evolving?

A: They want ULAYO to become an established organisation with multiple generations building a vibrant community of queer artists, connected to other queer spaces and festivals on the continent.

Q: What would a fairer queer arts ecosystem look like?

A: Queer artists on mainstream stages, protected from violence, and stronger support for under-represented countries like Mozambique within regional ecosystems.

Q: One tool or framework to strengthen fairness?

A: Regional circulation and exchange funds (because conservative networks are larger than national borders), and funding that supports institutional structure: salaries, rent, the boring essentials.

Reflections & Questions for a Fairer Future

Reflections

If there is one thing these three cases agree on, it is this: fairness is expensive. Not always in money first, but in time, negotiation, documentation, emotional stamina, and the courage to be misunderstood.

Fair practice means you will sometimes look “slow” to people who only respect output. You will sometimes look “difficult” to people who benefit from your compliance. But I am not interested in fairness that only exists when everyone is comfortable.

Questions (to carry forward)

- What if funders were required to fund administration as a fairness baseline, not as an exception?
- What if visibility had to be matched by durability: salaries, stipends, and long-term organisational health?
- What if “partnership” required shared authorship, not just shared branding?
- What if we stopped treating African cultural organisations as temporary experiments, and started treating them as institutions in formation?
- What does fairness demand when the state is absent, the market is unstable, and community expectations are high?

Burning questions surfaced by participants

- How do we build infrastructure that outlives individual burnout?
- How do we protect community knowledge while still producing public outputs?
- How do we ensure “fairness” is not just rhetoric when capacity is limited?

This zine does not offer a blueprint for fairness. It offers evidence that fairness is already being practised, imperfectly and at cost, by artists and cultural workers who refuse to confuse survival with success. What connects these cases is not agreement, but a shared insistence that fairness must be built where resources are thin, politics are present, and care cannot be outsourced. If this publication travels, it should do so as an invitation: to slow down, to listen longer, and to treat cultural work not as content, but as infrastructure in the making.

BANANA CLUB

The Kgotla Method: Fairness as Collective Practice

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Illustrations by Tebogo Cranwell