

Building Beyond

Cycle 3



Impact Report



C

F o n d s

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Introduction: Building Beyond

Developed in collaboration with Creative Industries Fund NL, Building Beyond is where artists from across the African continent come together to collectively respond to the built environment by engaging with relational worlds of communities and public space in this setting. Fellows receive €10,000 to invest in the further growth of their practice, engaging their communities, critically assessing how we live, and what the future could hold.

Building Beyond Fellows hail from a variety of countries on the African continent, and their practices span a wide range of design fields including architecture, urbanism, digital design, visual arts, photography, research, and performance.

Supported by four mentors, Building Beyond fosters conversation, collaboration, and support to spatial practices. Fellows contribute to an ongoing conversation on how resilience, humanity, and creativity in our urban environments can create opportunities for communally imagined realities in the city.

The third cycle of the Building Beyond programme took place throughout 2024, with fellows selected through an open call in late 2023. Fellows were selected from a

total of 119 eligible applications, of which 24 shortlisted candidates were evaluated through a research process. During this research process, a total of 75 second opinions were gathered from experts in the relevant subject area.

The final selection includes 6 women and 6 men, living in 8 countries across the African continent.



Location of cycle 3 Building Beyond Fellows: size of circle reflects number of fellows in a given country

The fellows work in a wide range of spatial and design fields including architecture, urbanism, archiving, digital design, visual arts, photography, research and performance. All recipients of the Mentorship Award Building Beyond contribute through their work to Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11).

Fellows came together in person in two lab weeks; intensive week-long sessions of site visits, workshops and discussions. The first lab week took place in Benin in April 2024, and was followed by a second which took place in the Netherlands in October of the same year. During this second lab weeks, fellows participated in a public symposium entitled *Intersecting Geographies and Technologies: on African Spatial Practices*, curated by the mentors and hosted at Kunstinstituut Melly in Rotterdam.

Throughout the programme, the cohort was guided by four mentors, who are experts in architecture, art and design: art advisor and curator, Fatima Bintou Rassoul Sy; artist, architect, critical space practitioner, Ola Hassanain; architectural researcher, designer, and performer, Khensani Jurczok-de Klerk; curator and cultural practitioner, Hicham Bouzid.

For more information on the individual practices of fellows, please see the Prince Claus Fund [website](#).



Above Photo by Victor Adéwálé

Report Summary

- The building of community with informed peers from across the African continent was experienced as one of the most meaningful aspects of the programme, as was also observed in previous cycles of Building Beyond. Beyond the professional and emotional importance of particular connections, some fellows reported that the programme had brought a deeper appreciation for collaborative practice, and many have plans to continue these connections following the end of the programme.
- The programme created extensive opportunities for the fellows to learn, both from their peers and from the mentors. Fellows reported learning new vocabularies with which to articulate their artistic concerns and began to integrate new disciplines into their practices. Practical learning around how best to sustain an artistic practice on the continent was also extremely helpful to some fellows.
- During the reflection sessions fellows praised the curation of the programme content by mentors, and at least one fellow shared that they would have appreciated even more one on one contact with the mentors. They also felt that the interest had been mutual, and a few of the fellows have followed up with further contact and plans for possible collaboration.
- Receiving unearmarked financial support through the programme made it possible for fellows to devote uninterrupted time to their practice during the year, which led to meaningful steps in the deepening of their approaches.
- Fellows reported positive responses to their work, either from public audiences or from smaller encounters with peers and communities. Several fellows have been inspired by the programme to work more closely with communities as part of their practices, and to respond more flexibly to local community needs, while others have made significant steps towards building up locally rooted institutions.
- Fellows were positive about the two lab weeks in Benin and the Netherlands, highlighting the research and selection of local encounters during the week. Having the chance to meet and engage within the African continent was deeply appreciated, and fellows valued the connections made in the Netherlands, some of which have led to ongoing conversations. One visit to a site in Benin raised questions about the role of European capital in African cultural institutions. Fellows also shared feedback regarding the symposium which took place as part of the lab week in the Netherlands, suggesting that it be made longer and involve more interaction with local practitioners.

- Fellows praised the administration of the programme, which they felt had been conducted with high levels of care and responsiveness by programme staff from both the Prince Claus Fund and the Creative Industries Fund.



Above Photo by Alex G

Outcomes

Building community

As in earlier cycles, the connections made within the cohort over the course of the year were described by fellows as one of the most meaningful aspects of Building Beyond. In reflection sessions and reporting, fellows called out the programme's selection process for praise. In the first reflection sessions at the mid-point of the programme, Doha Ibrahim shared that the sense of community within the group had exceeded her expectations, saying

“I did not expect that we would be that close, that we would find this much in common together, and that we would be this much in line with each other's thinking”.

Eloilo Bosoka echoed this praise for the selection process in the final reflections

“It's almost as if they carefully brought together all these different people who are doing different things, but similar in terms of how we are putting out information or the form that it is taken.”

In both sets of reflection sessions as well as in the reporting, fellows described how the cohort had become a community, from the intimacy of small conversations

on the bus or over food to profoundly emotional bonding moments. In her final reporting Isabella Asimwe wrote that

“Nothing could have prepared me for how the fellows were going to become a huge part of my day to day during this year of the program. Which is a testament to the PCF selection team's diligence and intention.”

The importance of these connections went beyond an intangible sense of community. A number of fellows shared how difficult it had been for them to consistently receive feedback and affirmation on their practice from informed peers prior to the programme. The programme offered fellows a chance to discuss their practices with peers who had similar life experiences, artistic backgrounds, and social and political concerns. The fact that all the fellows came from the African continent, where trans-local travels and connections can be difficult, was particularly valued by several fellows. Victor Adéwálé wrote in his report

“Their practices affirmed mine in ways I had never experienced before. As I listened to each fellow discuss their work, it often felt as though they were describing my own, despite the differences in our mediums and approaches.”

The extent and content of this peer-to-peer learning is discussed in more detail in the [section on learning from each other](#).

Looking forward: longer term connections

The experience of being part of this community has prompted fellows to think about their own practices in new ways going forwards. A number of fellows described how their interest in collaborative work had deepened, and Chantell Hassan shared how her experience of connecting with the group “is something that I have deeply taken into my practice”.

There is a high level of interest within the group in future collaboration, and a number of collaborative projects have already begun to blossom. Khotso Lamola, Elolo Bosoka and Doha Ibrahim have formed the Kin Collective,

“whose aim is to begin the preparatory work for a structure from which a Pan-African collective of artists, creatives, cultural workers, designers and spatial practitioners can engage and grow.”

Oratile Mothoagae has also initiated a collaboration with Isabella Asimwe based on their shared interest in building physical spaces for exploration and collaboration, while Afrane Makof, moved by exchanges on photography with Victor Adéwálé and Elolo Bosoka, writes that he is “planning an exciting collaboration with them on a project that will leverage photography to capture and document meaningful narratives”.



Above Photo by Victor Adéwálé

Outside of specific planned collaborations, fellows shared how the conversations, connections and shared experiences built through the programme had laid the foundation for all kinds of ongoing relationships. Doha Ibrahim writes

“with the amount and depth of conversations we’ve had over the year, we’ve built an ethos for how to work together and how to collaborate together that we truly lack within our individual contexts.”

During the final reflections, fellows described the feeling that they had a “family” across the continent to whom they could reach out when they needed to, and the long-term, intangible support provided by such a community.

Learning and artistic growth

The Building Beyond programme is designed as an environment for learning, where practitioners from across the continent can develop new perspectives and deepen their practice in conversation with their peers, mentors, and the spaces and sites encountered as part of the programme.

Across the board, participation in the Building Beyond programme has prompted major steps in fellows’ practice towards ways of working that are collaborative, interdisciplinary and long-term. This shift can be characterised by Afrane Makof’s description of the programmes influence on him. He writes in his report

“I now envision a future for my practice that extends beyond immediate interactions, seeking to forge meaningful connections across Africa and the broader Global South.”

Learning from each other

Peer to peer learning played a major role in the cycle,

with fellows describing how conversations around each other’s practices had led to major developments in how they saw their own work. For several of the fellows, the interdisciplinary nature of the cohort was particularly revelatory – such as Afrane Makof, who described the perspectives of fellows working with photography as having “fundamentally reshaped my understanding of the medium”, or Doha Ibrahim, who writes that the group had inspired her

“to experiment with media and to expand my practice to realms I had always aspired to explore... for example, the use of sound as a media to express certain observations of the city.”



Above Photo by Eloilo Bosoka

Beyond specific disciplines, fellows developed new insights into the discourses their work engages with, through conversation with peers from other contexts and disciplines. Understanding his perspective within these discourses was a major learning of the programme for Victor Adewale, who was deeply moved by the interdisciplinary vocabularies he encountered in discussions within the cohort, particularly architectural ones. He writes

“This exposure allowed me to reframe my photographic practice as a spatial one, approaching it with the same intentionality that an architect might.”

During a reflection session, Nneoma Angela Okorie also described her learning from the cohort in terms of vocabularies, saying

“there are ways of viewing the built environment that I’ve learned from people who view space in a different way, and also [from] being able to learn new vocabularies, to create vocabularies together, and to discard westernized or redundant descriptions of spaces.”

Nneoma added in her report

“It was an exercise in peeling off things that are already there for us to see things clearly and to add to that as well. It was that vantage point I needed for my work and practice.”

Learning from the mentors

Practical learning around sustaining practice was also present in the support fellows received from mentors, including as part of broader discourses on institution building. Afrane Makof echoed the importance of this learning in his report, writing

“The mentors played an instrumental role by providing tailored guidance, sharing their vast expertise, and offering constructive feedback that challenged and inspired me.”

The programme content developed by the mentors was also a major driver of learning. Several fellows spoke about the importance of the mentors in curating and introducing them to new ways of seeing their work through concepts of lexicons and vocabularies, such as Victor Adewale, who reflected that “the organizers have done a great work in curating discourse”.

The programme content also included practical lessons for fellows around sustaining their work within the continent, which were introduced in response to requests from the cohort. For Elolo Bosoka, this aspect of the programme offered a wealth of knowledge around ways of seeking and sustaining funding, “knowing that a lot of our colleagues have experienced many different fundings for projects that they have done”. Khotso Lamola also described how conversations with the mentors as well as her peers

led to a stronger sense of how she should position and communicate about her work.

However, the most commonly described learning from the mentors came in the form of advice during one-on-one discussions. Fellows described their strong sense of the experience and expertise of the mentors, and the value of the feedback they received on their work. As Oratile Mothoagae shared,

“we’ve been fortunate enough to have mentors who are really ready to listen to the unfinished ideas and help us get a step [further].”

In their reports, both Victor Adéwálé and Doha Ibrahim highlighted the specific contributions of individual mentors to major steps they had made in their practice, with Khensani Jurczok-de Klerk’s initiative deepening Victor’s “understanding of how spatial practice can be used as a tool for reimagining agency and collective knowledge”

and Hicham Bouzid supporting Doha in “breaking the shell of the academic research and practice and embracing a more artistic and creative side of my practice.”

Connections with the Netherlands

Fellows felt that the organisations and collectives they encountered during the lab week in Amsterdam and Rotterdam had been extremely well selected to align with their social and artistic interests, and appreciated being able to learn about the Netherlands through these encounters.

Meeting and connecting with organisations and collectives in the Netherlands during the second Lab Week was described by the fellows as deeply meaningful. The level of interest in these encounters was high – in his report, Victor Adéwálé shared as feedback that he would have liked to see these encounters take an even more prominent place within the week, to

“allow fellows to process their learnings, refine their work, and engage with institutions and practitioners in a way that supports long-term collaborations.”

Fellows praised the curation of organisations visited during the Lab Week in the Netherlands, which they felt was well aligned in terms of their artistic and sociopolitical interests as well as and the level of experience of the cohort, and that they had been able to learn and connect well. Khotso Lamola described the visits as “very specific to what we are doing”, while Jesse Gerard Mpango shared how the selection “made every sort of session useful in one way or another”.

Doha Ibrahim also praised the level of interest shown in the cohort by the practitioners they encountered in the Netherlands, describing how the practitioners she met had read up on her practice before the visit, and seemed genuinely excited to be connecting with a cohort of peers from the African continent.

Some visits were particularly useful and productive to specific fellows, such as Afrane Makof's experience of the visual archiving of the Black Archives, Khotso Lamola's encounter with the institution-building practices of DAR Cultural Agency, and Chantell Hassan's learning from the Cape Verdean Music Tour of Rotterdam led by Spatial Codes.

For a few fellows, the encounters with peer organisations in the Netherlands inspired planning for future possible contacts and collaborations – particularly Elo Bosoka, who is hoping to initiate an exchange between V2 in Rotterdam and his own community of artists in Kumasi around exploring the use of technology in art. Other fellows, while not having specific plans for follow-up, would feel able to reach out and continue the conversation with the practitioners they had met in the Netherlands if an opportunity presented itself.



Above Photo by Danii Walton

Societal Outcomes

Connecting with audiences

Over the course of the Building Beyond programme, fellows created work that reached out to new audiences, connecting and building community with different publics within the urban environment.

Several fellows described the response of audiences to work that they exhibited during this programme. In particular, Afrane Makof highlighted the levels of public engagement with his work on electronic consumption and waste, sharing that

“audiences now examine and unravel the intricate connections of these gadgets to global economic systems and environmental impacts. This perspective allows for a deeper understanding of how our consumption patterns reflect societal values and contribute to ecological degradation.”

Eloilo Bosoka and Jesse Gerard Mpango also reflected on positive audience responses to their exhibitions during the period of the programme. Eloilo showed two exhibitions, describes the diverse audiences they attracted. He is particularly satisfied with the response from young audiences and schoolchildren, which he describes as

“seeds with the potential to grow and positively change our world.”

Meanwhile Jesse writes about the response to his collective’s video exhibition

“There was a willingness to remain in the space and atmosphere of the exhibition - and to revisit the works which was very encouraging/affirming.”

Other fellows have reached audiences on a smaller and more private level. Isabella Asimwe has begun hosting what she called “family dinners” at her space in Kampala, which she describes as “so much fun and a great way to have meaningful conversations and engagement.” Meanwhile, Khotso Lamola has slowly begun to share “snippets” of her new work, given its political sensitivity, but describes how

“the public who has seen the work have reflected with me on the complicated conversation that the publication (which is about restitution and silent femme figures in the archive) could elude to.”

Oratile Mothoagae has also reached a more specialised audience, and he writes that

“my work that centres black South African histories and theories at its core has been welcomed by fellow architects and academics.”



Above Photo by Khotso Lamola

Collaborating with communities

The Building Beyond programme has been transformative for some fellows' approach to working with communities and contexts. Oratile Mothoagae described this shift, saying that

“as artists and designers, there is a fine line between extraction and inspiration.”

For Khotso Lamola, this has meant a new focus on “care and solidarity”, in order to produce work that is “polyvocal”. Victor Adéwálé also describes a major shift in his practice, from documenting communities to actively collaborating with them. He writes

“the ultimate goal is to create a counter-archive that does not just document their experiences but actively centres their voices, positioning them as knowledge producers rather than passive subjects.”



Above Photo by Jesse Gerard Mpango

A focus on community collaboration can lead to meaningful shifts in practice. Already during the mid-point reflections Chantell Hassan shared that support from the programme had helped her understand that

“the project that I had projected for a specific community ended up being something that they don’t need...And for me, that has been really enlightening on with regards to the methodology of how to approach a project”

and to pivot her project towards a different direction in response to this learning.

Making institutions

One concrete way in which this collaboration has manifested has been through the building of institutions. Relationships with institutions have been a major thread within this cycle of Building Beyond, both in the discussions during the programme and in the work done through the programme. During the mid-point reflection session Isabella Asiimwe shared how a presentation from mentor Ola Hassanain had prompted a major realisation about “how things can go horribly wrong in practice...when you don’t read situations in terms of institutions properly, and how that can affect communities.”

Fellows who have created formal or informal institutions during this period include Doha Ibrahim, Elogo Bosoka, (who has launched the artist-led initiative baseprojects to platform “young and emerging Ghanaian artists living in Ghana and the diaspora”) and Victor Adéwálé. Victor, in keeping with his general turn towards collaboration, has also begun to act as a mentor for young artists in his community, hosting a grant-writing workshop using the Funding Demystified materials developed by the Prince Claus Fund. He writes that

“the material provided a critical framework for demystifying funding structures, helping me to translate these insights into a practical session where artists could exchange knowledge on funding opportunities.”

Oratile Mothoagae, Afrane Makof and Khotso Lamola also reflected in their reports on institution building, with Khotso writing

“one thing I take away from this is collective structure/ institutional building is hard work, and takes a lot of commitment, care and invisible work - and I am now willing and able to do it with the support of the BB community.”



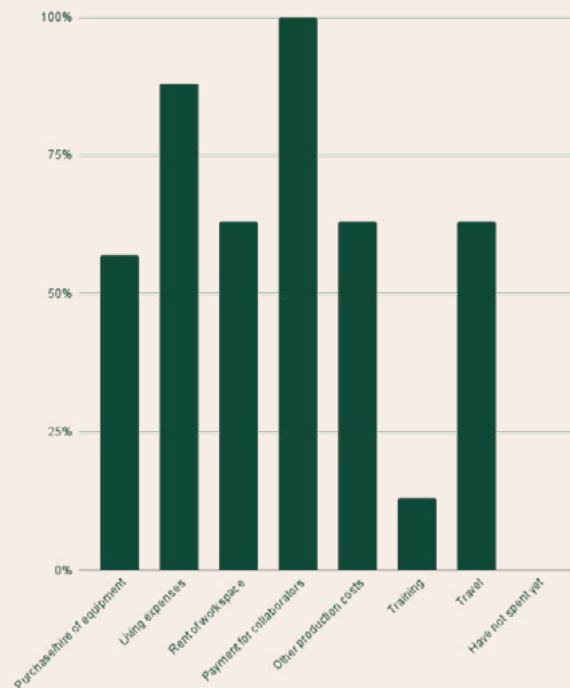
Above Photo by Alex G

Photo by Victor Adéwalé



Impact of financial support

Each of the fellows received an un-earmarked grant of €10,000 to invest in the further growth of their practice. The ways in which fellows made use of this grant are in line with the reported spending among earlier Building Beyond cohorts – particularly the significant proportion of fellows who reported having used (part of) the funds to cover payment for collaborators and their own living expenses.



Fellows were given the option while reporting to describe in more detail what the financial aspect of the programme had meant for them. Several of them described the sense of peace and creativity provided by a period of financial security. The unearmarked, trust-based funds received through the programme allowed for what Jesse Gerard Mpango described as “a year of more study and quiet work”. Khotso Lamola also described the privilege of being able to “to explore [their] work without the financial stress of making it immediately profitable.”

This freedom to create in peace and security is a profoundly meaningful outcome, and it has already led to major steps in creative practice for some fellows. Victor Adéwálé, for instance, described how the financial support of the programme

“allowed me to dedicate time and resources to deepening my engagement with the Okada riders... [and] to explore new methods of collaboration.”



Photo by Afrane Makof

Programme feedback: Lab Weeks

Benin

The first Lab Week took place in Cotonou, Benin, in April 2024. As in previous cycles of the Building Beyond programme, fellows were profoundly appreciative of being able to meet on this way on the African continent, as visa restrictions and financial burdens are often challenges to mobility on the continent difficult. Having the opportunity to encounter Beninois practitioners and spaces and to connect with each other in an African context created a deep sense of connection that was described as unusual in programmes aimed at African artists; which fellows felt often prioritised connections with Europe. One of the fellows who expressed this appreciation for meeting within Africa was Oratile Mothoage, who reflected that

“one of the beauties of this programme is that it really brings us together as a continent. Because on our own it becomes very difficult...from a program point of view, I hope that these connections become much easier, so that we are able to connect amongst ourselves much easier, to exchange ideas and work”

For Victor Adéwálé, the experience in Benin prompted profound reflection on his positionality as a practitioner, and ideas of belonging and exploitation, which have shaped his practice since then. In his report, Victor shared how

“recognizing this has made me more intentional about my approach, ensuring that my work does not merely document but actively engages with and is shaped by those at its centre.”

During the mid-point reflection sessions there were extensive discussions concerning a specific visit which took place during the Lab Week in Benin. This visit, to an art space with a complex relationship with European financial and cultural capital, raised extensive discussion on the position of such institutions and capital across the continent. Fellows were appreciative of how the difficulty had been handled by the programme team in the moment, with an impromptu reflection session being added to the day's plan to unpack the issues encountered. However, a certain amount of critique was given as to how the visit had been planned and prepared.

Fellows were also appreciative of the quality of research and planning done by the programmes team in preparation for the Benin Lab Week. The effective management of the week allowed the fellows to be present and focus on what they were encountering. Afrane Makof reflected that

“visiting these interesting places, getting to know more about the cultures and having the kind of unpacking that also impacted my practice was very magical for me.” The balance in the Lab Week programme between intensity and moments of reflection was also appreciated.



Above Photo by Victor Adéwálé

The Netherlands

The second lab week took place in Amsterdam and Rotterdam, the Netherlands in October 2024. The curation of this lab week was also praised, with fellows finding feeling closely aligned with the practitioners and organisations they connected to in the Netherlands (this aspect of the second lab week is discussed in more detail in the section on connections with the Netherlands.) During the reflection sessions, fellows shared their appreciation for the week’s programming, which Victor Adéwálé described as

“excellently curated in a way that the intensity was felt, but it was not overwhelming”.

Fellows enjoyed the interactive encounters with the cultural landscape of the Netherlands, with Chantell Hassen singling out the music tour of Rotterdam and suggesting that

“adding one or two [more] of those kind of learning atmospheres could be really nice”.

One tangible feedback around the Lab Week in the Netherlands concerned the split between Amsterdam and Rotterdam. While fellows found visiting both cities valuable, in general they felt that the attempt to cover both cities had been too ambitious and had precluded a deeper engagement with either city. (On a lighter note, the food in Rotterdam was praised in comparison

to the food in Amsterdam.) It was also suggested that future cycles could visit other cities or regions within the Netherlands, instead of focussing solely on major cities.

Symposium

A highlight of the Lab Week in the Netherlands was the public symposium *Intersecting Geographies and Technologies: on African Spatial Practices*, which took place at Kunstinstituut Melly on the final day of the Lab Week. While the fellows were excited by the chance to present and connect with a Dutch public around this topic, the time constraints on this event were a recurring piece of feedback during the final reflection sessions. The relatively short amount of time allocated to each fellow meant that they felt there had not been a chance to engage in extended conversation and exchange. Khotso Lamola summed up the discussion in her report

“I do think the Symposium in the Netherlands needs more weight in the programme. It is really an opportunity to come together and reflect on what we have achieved with each other in the year and potential funders, community and collaborators in Netherlands.”

Fellows recommended that the symposium be split over two days, and a larger and more specialised Netherlands-based audience be invited to attend. One fellow even suggested that the practitioners they

had connected with throughout the week be invited to participate in the symposium programme, while mentors stressed the importance of sending invitations to interesting Netherlands-based individuals and organisations earlier in the process.



Above Photo by Danii Walton

Programme feedback: Administration

Finally, fellows reflected on the way in which the programme had been administered. As in previous cycles, the level of care and attention given by the programme staff was experienced as an exceptional highlight. Michael Tesfaye, for example, reflected on the way that both the Prince Claus Fund and the Creative Industries Fund teams had responded to his individual needs, sharing

“I felt very special, as if they’re very focused on me. But I think this is also how everybody was feeling.”

In his report, Oratile Mothoagae also commented on the colleagues who had worked on the programme:

“What an exceptional team. Their kindness, patience, and care are amazing.”

Credits

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Culture is

Photo by Victor Adéwalé

building beyond.



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