



# Rebecca Mzenzi Corey

Executive & Artistic  
Director

## contact

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## summary

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Rebecca Mzenzi Corey is an experienced arts practitioner whose interdisciplinary work includes arts management, curation, filmmaking, and installation art. She has held top leadership roles at Nafasi Art Space, Sauti za Busara music festival, and the Tanzania Heritage Project, making significant contributions to the cultural landscape of East Africa where she lived and worked for more than a decade (2010-22). Her work is “love made visible” – specifically, an abiding love for creativity, community, and cultural equity. More than a job or a title, her efforts reveal a dedication to building inclusive, critical, and joyful spaces and ecosystems where art and creativity thrive.

## experience

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**NAFASI ART SPACE / Artistic & Executive Director** (2016 - Present)

[www.nafasiartspace.org](http://www.nafasiartspace.org)

### | Vision

Furthering and enriching human potential through the arts by creating a centre of excellence that promotes the creativity and professionalism of Tanzanian artists through training, exposure, cross cultural dialogue, and collaborative artistic endeavors.

### | Key Outcomes

- Led the establishment of the Nafasi Academy for Contemporary Art, Tanzania’s premiere professional development program for emerging visual artists and curators
- Established FEEL FREE, a grant and incubator program for artist-led cultural initiatives, providing \$50,000+ each year in funding
- Secured multi-year core funding from the Norwegian and Swiss Embassies in Tanzania for the organization from 2017-2026, as well as raising more than 2 million USD in project-based funding and increasing self-generated revenue by 135% over 6 financial years.
- Oversaw major infrastructural development projects, including the construction of two new galleries, a networking and co-working hub, a digital art lab, a film hub, a children’s art space, and new artist studios and workshops
- Led the artistic direction of the public program, which included 22 major group exhibitions, 50 solo exhibitions, 53 major performing arts or multidisciplinary events (30 of which were festivals), 47 participatory public art workshops 48 film screenings, and 79 artist talks, which attracted over 40,000 audience members, increasing the visibility and accessibility of arts for the public.

### | Curation

- Curated major solo and group exhibitions in Tanzania and across East and Central Africa, including “About Time” for the Zanzibar International Film Festival, “Living Art, Living History: Elias Jengo & George Lilanga” for the East Africa Art Biennale (2021), and “Remix” for the Congo Biennale (2022), among others

### | Selected Writing

- 2016-20 and 2021-26 [Strategic Plans](#) for Nafasi Art Space
- 2016-2022 [Annual Narrative Reports](#) for Nafasi Art Space
- Exhibition catalogs: [New Shapes](#), [D.A.R.](#), [Imagined Encounters](#)
- [“Art as Education”](#) Case Study on the Nafasi Academy

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### | Selected Presentations and Talks (Nafasi Art Space cont'd)

- "Cultural Funding and Freedom of Expression in Tanzania" - Culture Matters Virtual Open Space organized by the Swiss Development Cooperation (2021)
- "Gaze and Place: The Act of Travel and the Invention of Destinations" - End of the Grand Tour Symposium organized by Arquetopia Foundation (2020)
- "On the Value of Independent Art Spaces in Africa" - Desmond and Leah Tutu Foundation, Cape Town, SA (2019)
- "Making 'Space' in Tanzania's Art Centers" - Academie des Beaux-Arts, Kinshasa, DRC (2018)
- "Of Dinosaurs and Revolutionaries" - Terms of Engagement conference organized by Pro Helvetia Swiss Arts Council in Johannesburg, SA (2018)
- "Urban Heritage From Below: The Critical Now" - Urban Narratives Heritage Activism conference, TU Berlin and ZK/U (2017)
- "Silimuka: Negotiating a New Modernity" - Waza Art Centre in Lubumbashi, DRC (2016)

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### TANZANIA HERITAGE PROJECT / Co-Founder & Director (2014 -16)

[www.tanzaniaheritageproject.org](http://www.tanzaniaheritageproject.org)

#### | Vision

An independent initiative to preserve and digitalize Tanzanian music from the early independence period and contribute to the ongoing revival and revitalization of indigenous sounds.

#### | Key Outcomes

- Digitized over 100 hours of endangered reel-to-reel tapes
- Gathered and presented field recordings of traditional instruments
- Organized "Urithi wa Leo" Festival showcasing collaborations between traditional and contemporary musicians, attended by over 500 audiences
- Co-directed and produced Wahenga (The Ancestors), an award-winning feature documentary film that was selected to screen at festivals including FESPACO, Film Africa (London), WOMEX, the Zanzibar International Film Festival, among others

#### | Selected Presentations and Talks

- "Reviving the Radio Tanzania Archives" - Ethnomusicology Symposium of the University of Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania(2012)
- "The Role of Preservation and Digitisation of Heritage Music" - DoaDoa Performing Arts Market, Uganda ( 2016)

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### SAUTI ZA BUSARA MUSIC FESTIVAL / Executive Director (2012 -14)

[www.busaramusic.org](http://www.busaramusic.org)

#### | Vision

Celebrating and showcasing live music from Tanzania, the Dhow Countries, and the African Diaspora at East Africa's most beloved live music festival, held annually in Stone Town, Zanzibar

#### | Key Outcomes

- Led the implementation of the 2014 edition of the festival, which hosted more than 20 groups, 200 musicians, and 6,000 audience members
- Secured core funding for the organization for 2014-16
- Oversaw the Strategic Planning process for the 2013-18 period

#### | Selected Presentations and Talks

- "The State of Music in Tanzania" - DoaDoaPerforming Arts Market, Uganda (2014 & 2016)
- "Music as a Global Language" - Oslo World Music Festival, Norway (2012)
- "Cities and the Arts: The Impact of Festivals" - City of Stars, Malawi (2012)

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## filmography

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Feature documentary and short narrative films exploring themes of cultural resilience, self expression, and the power of memory

**Katope (TBA)** / 13 min - Executive Producer, Co-Writer, Production Designer

- Winner of Netflix and UNESCO's [African Folktales, Reimagined Competition](#)
- First international production of a film in ciGogo, the language of the waGogo people of central Tanzania

[Ndio Ukubwa \(2021\)](#) / 38 min - Executive Producer, Director, Co-Writer

- A short film anthology selected for the mobile cinema screenings of the Zanzibar International Film Festival and Sauti Mpya Festival in Dar es Salaam

[Wahenga - The Ancestors \(2018\)](#) / 92 min - Co-Director, Producer

- Official festival selections at FESPACO, Film Africa (London), Zanzibar International Film Festival, Zimbabwe International Film Festival, Rwanda International Movie Awards, and more
- Winner of the Docubox East Africa Film Fund (2015)

## exhibitions

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Photography, video, and installation art expressing curiosities, calamities, and compassion for the unseen and dreamed of.

- New Shapes (Dar es Salaam, 2022)
- Imagined Encounters (Dar es Salaam, 2021)
- Otherworldly (Dar es Salaam, 2019)
- How Did We Get Here? (Dar es Salaam, 2019)
- Taboo/Mwiko (Dar es Salaam, 2018)
- Silence (Dar es Salaam, 2018)

## skills

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### SOFT SKILLS

Strategic Leadership and Planning, Fundraising and Development, Team Management, Partnerships, Event and Exhibition Organisation, Festival Production, Writing and Curation

### HARD SKILLS

Google Suite, MailChimp, InDesign, Premiere Pro

### LANGUAGE

English (Fluent), kiSwahili (Conversational)

## education

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### UNIVERSITY OF DAR ES SALAAM, TANZANIA

Institute of Development Studies (2009-10)

### UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA, USA

B.A. Anthropology, English Literature (2005-09)

Summa Cum Laude, Foundation Fellow Scholarship Recipient,  
Outstanding Honors Student in the Humanities

## references

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AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST