

# UNICEF

## KENYAN CHILDREN'S DRAWINGS CELEBRATE DAY OF THE AFRICAN CHILD

### Press release

June 3, 1998

In commemoration of the Day of the African Child (16 June), UNICEF is pleased to present a vibrant collection of children's art from two rural districts in Kenya at the *U.N. General Assembly Public Lobby 15 June - 8 July 1998*. Fanciful images of wild and domestic animals, local architecture and geography, lifestyles and fashion, traditional rituals and mythological scenes reflect cultural elements characteristic of Kenya and touch upon universal themes that transcend both location and traditions. Photographs in the exhibit document some of the participating children and teachers and show aspects of daily life, as interpreted in many of the artworks.

The project, organized by artist/photographer Mark Scheflen (Founder and Director of the Visual Arts Program at St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery in New York City) was part of a collaboration between children from New York City and Kenya. Upon the invitation of the Archbishop of Kenya, Dr. David Gitari, and Bishop Joseph Kanuku of the Makueni and Machakos Districts, Scheflen conducted a series of art workshops at 15 primary and secondary schools. The plan was simple - after viewing drawings and paintings produced by children in New York City, the Kenyan students ranging in age from nine to eighteen were given art supplies and asked to create, in five weeks, whatever they wanted, but without adult assistance. Their work was then taken back to New York to be viewed and shared by their U.S. counterparts.

From a purely artistic point of view, this collection is singular for the unusually high quality of the works. While not totally isolated from modern life, these children do not have ready access to the quantity and variety of resources available to many urban children. Yet there is no lack of wit, inspiration and subtlety in their paintings.

Selections from this collection were recently shown at the Port Authority Bus Terminal and the Staten Island Children's Museum. After the show in the U.N. General Assembly Public Lobby, they will be on view at the Hudson Valley Children's Museum (Nyack, N.Y.)

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