

HUFFPOST ARTS & CULTURE



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CEO, *The Creative Class Group* & Author, *Upgrade*

Art in the Jungle

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[The Institute for Human Activities](#) is a research project that is located on a former palm oil plantation on a tributary of the Congo River, in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Co-sponsored by [Yale University](#), [University College Ghent](#), and the [Akademie der Künste der Welt](#) in Cologne, its five-year program has two purposes: first, to create an international arts center, where visiting scholars and artists can work in residence, providing economic opportunities for the community. Second, it seeks to call attention to and study the gap that exists between the benefits that art production confers on the places where it is created and on the big global cities like London, Berlin, and New York where it is displayed, discussed and sold--much like the divisions and discrepancies between labor and profit in other globalized industries. Creative Director and 2013 World Fellow at Yale University, [Renzo Martens](#) -- "We have an ambitious program to make artistic reflection profitable for one of the poorest populations in the world."

My team at the [Creative Class Group](#) contributed to this unique program. This video documents the forum my husband [Richard Florida](#) participated in with members of the institute and the local

community -- he from Toronto, them from a fenced in compound in the rain forest. He talked about the importance of creativity to economic development -- and how technology, talent, and tolerance, enable it. As incongruous as the setting might have been, his words could not have been more relevant.



Economist and urban studies theorist Richard Florida describes the relevance of the arts to economic development.

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