



Step inside

African women and children affected by HIV/AIDS let the world into their lives through photos they took for *The House is Small*

by [Edie Adelstein](#)

In 2006, a group of photographers lent women in South Africa professional cameras and, after a two-week training course, set them out to document their lives. The following year, another group traveled to a Mozambique orphanage and gave the children cameras and pointers to shoot their world.

This program, *The House is Small But the Welcome is Big* — named after a saying posted on one South African woman's door — allows women and children affected by HIV/AIDS in Africa to tell their own stories, and to gain empowerment, through the experience of creating art.

The photographs are stunning in their candor, composition and honesty: children skipping through trash-lined streets, graceful hands curving atop black-and-white family photos, a tear-strewn face.

Some of the photographs have traveled the world, and from their most recent stop at the United Nations in New York City 41 are coming to Colorado College's Coburn Gallery. I.D.E.A. Space curatorial assistant Daisy McConnell says within them are myriad, sometimes surprising, emotions.

"The photographs are really poignant, they're beautiful," she says. "They are tragic in some cases, but often there's a lot of joy."

The House is Small program is organized by the California-based Venice Arts foundation and co-created by CC alum Neal Baer, M.D., who is a writer and executive producer on the TV show *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*. Baer saw an opportunity to use art and media as a way to connect health issues (such as sicknesses encountered by those with HIV) and social issues (like orphaned children having to look after their siblings).

"[This show connects] people around with world to the realities of living with the aftereffects of AIDS," says McConnell. "They stand on their own as works of art and they also have that second, dual role of telling their stories and telling stories in a way that somebody from the outside could not."

— Edie Adelstein

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