

Press Release:

Kresiah Mukwazhi: *Kirawa* at Nottingham Contemporary

Sat 27 May – Sun 3 Sep 2023



Kresiah Mukwazhi, *mukadzi muka uti dzi! II (woman, rise up and stand firm! II)*, 2022, acrylic on textile.
Courtesy the artist and Jan Kaps, Cologne. Photo: Simon Vogel

Nottingham Contemporary presents Kresiah Mukwazhi's first institutional solo exhibition, *Kirawa*, a striking visual exploration of female empowerment and resistance

Nottingham Contemporary is excited to announce the first institutional solo exhibition by the Zimbabwean artist, Kresiah Mukwazhi (b.1992, Harare). Mukwazhi's bold and powerful work explores gender-based violence, exploitation and abuse, drawing on her long-term engagement with female sex workers in the suburbs of Harare.

Mukwazhi's mixed media collages, sculptural installations, performances and videos are concerned with the different conditions of the female body: as a site of trauma, healing and resistance, and also as a spiritual body. Using her work as a form of visual activism, Mukwazhi draws vitality from women's resilience and the possibility of empowerment and self-organisation. As curator Fadzai Muchemwa has described, Mukwazhi presents 'a theatre of women who are more than physical barometers of the toxicity of a system... These are women who stand for and take care of each other.'

The exhibition at Nottingham Contemporary features an entirely new body of commissioned work in which visual activism and spirituality come together. Mukwazhi describes *Kirawa* as 'a place of sacred resistance, where I expose and push back against this colonisation and socio-political issues forcing women into precarious labour, aiming at reclaiming the sacred power that women are destined to have. The female body, therefore, becomes a site of resistance and a site to question power relations.'

A series of new large-scale textile works, bold in both subject and form, show a tendency towards a more painterly approach. *the unrest of Ali* (2023) abounds with expressive gestures in bringing to light the gruesome and mysterious death of a political activist whose body was decapitated and thrown in a well. In *in search of stolen glory* (2023), a story unfolds of a woman who has been dethroned and 'goes to seek healing and reclaim her power from the sacred waters'. These works will be punctuated by sculptural interventions and a new video work.

Mukwazhi works fluidly across a variety of media, using materials that recall the seedier bars and nightclubs of Harare, where she previously worked as a cook. Her striking visual vocabulary includes slinky synthetic fabrics, animal print, cheap lingerie, sequins and neon wigs, which are often acquired at flea markets and second-hand stores. Tears and stains, burns and frays, can be glimpsed in her intricate textile collages, in which different fabrics are glued and sewn together, and painted with acrylic and fabric dyes.

Kresiah Mukwazhi: *Kirawa* is a collaboration between Nottingham Contemporary and Secession, Vienna, where it was presented from 17 February to 16 April 2023. The exhibition will be accompanied by a range of events, which will engage local communities and audiences, and provide opportunities for deeper engagement with Mukwazhi's powerful work.

For more information about *Kirawa* and other exhibitions at Nottingham Contemporary, please [visit our website](#).

Notes to Editors:

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Exhibition Credits:

Curators

This exhibition is curated by Nicole Yip.

This exhibition is generously sponsored by [Oliver Charles Associates](#). A boutique legal practice that was established in Leicester in 1997. They offer a unique legal and mediation service both nationally and internationally.

About Nottingham Contemporary

[Nottingham Contemporary](#) is one of the leading centres of contemporary art in Europe. Since opening in 2009, we have welcomed over 2 million visitors – with free admission for all – to our highly ambitious programme that has featured hundreds of artists and cultural practitioners from across the globe.

Our programme champions international art and artists who invite us to imagine the world in new ways, and empower different perspectives into the most pressing cultural, social, and political questions of today. We support artists at different stages of their careers – from first-time solo shows in the UK to surveys of renowned or overlooked figures – and regularly present significant thematic exhibitions and major artist-curated projects. Nottingham Contemporary was shortlisted for Art Fund Museum of the Year 2019. Nottingham Contemporary is supported using public funding by Arts Council England and regularly funded by Nottingham City Council and through our partnerships with the University of Nottingham and Nottingham Trent University.

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