

# Kirawa

Kresiah Mukwazhi



Installation view of Kresiah Mukwazhi: Kirawa, Secession, Vienna, 2023.  
Courtesy the artist and Jan Kaps, Cologne. Photo: Iris Ranzinger

27 May – 3 September 2023

Nottingham  
Contemporary



# Kirawa

## Kresiah Mukwazhi

Kresiah Mukwazhi creates vibrant textile-collages, video, performance and installations informed by her observations of gender-based violence, exploitation and abuse in her native Zimbabwe. By bringing together the worlds of visual activism and spirituality, she explores the different conditions of the female body; from being a site of trauma, to one of healing and resistance. Drawing on her long-term engagement with female sex workers in the suburbs of Harare, she takes inspiration from the resilience and forms of self-organisation present within these communities.

In Zimbabwe, a 'kirawa' is a sacred shrine and place of healing. Situated outdoors these sites are marked out by stones, plants and flags assembled from found fabric and bamboo. Here, a 'kirawa' is evoked in the installation *the red cloth of sacred resistance* (2023), comprising a video projection framed by two plum trees, a rock shrine draped with a knot of red fabric and a bowl of water from the river Trent. The red fabric is a potent symbol, a closed loop of pain, suffering or grief.

The video *it (the cock) hit itself and it cried* (2023) presents Mukwazhi partially disguised in a bright blue wig, mask and sunglasses. By using costume she removes herself from immediate view, a form of self-protection, whilst mocking how colonial conventions, such as the use of Western judges' wigs, continue to persist in Zimbabwe.

In her large-scale textile assemblages, such as *the unrest of Ali* and *in search of stolen glory* (both 2023), different fabrics are glued and sewn together, then painted with acrylic and fabric dyes. The materials she uses – slinky synthetic fabrics, animal print, cheap lingerie and sequins – combine to recall the seedier bars and nightclubs of Harare. Often acquired at flea markets and second-hand stores, their surfaces are marked with tears and stains, burns and frays: intimate inscriptions of the lives of the women who used them. These works are less an attempt to represent the individual and collective stories of the women Mukwazhi has encountered, but rather an artistic strategy to seek reconciliation and re-empowerment for these women.

Mukwazhi has described the act of bringing these works together in *Kirawa* as one of 'sacred resistance, where I expose and push back against colonisation and socio-political issues forcing women into precarious labour, aiming at reclaiming the sacred power that women are destined to have.' In the same way that spirit mediums at a 'kirawa' are able to heal through ritual, Mukwazhi seeks restitution for these women through her art.

### RELATED EVENTS

#### Hera Hera (hail hail)

Sat 27 May, 2pm

A performance lecture by Kresiah Mukwazhi on sacred resistance, resilience and magic.

#### Exhibition Walkthroughs

##### Wednesday 31 May, 12pm

Welcome walkthrough

Explore the exhibitions with our team and partners, and join us for refreshments and conversation in the café afterwards.

##### Wednesday 12 July, 2pm

Curator's walkthrough

Learn more about the exhibitions with Nicole Yip, Chief Curator and Niall Farrelly, Assistant Curator.

##### 12.30pm every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, starting Tuesday 6 June

Join one of our friendly Gallery Assistants for a short exploration of one of our exhibitions. For more details visit our website.

#### Free Family Activities

##### Spring Half-Term: 30 May – 1 June

##### Summer Holidays: 1 – 24 Aug

Explore the themes in the exhibitions through making and play. For more details visit our website.

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 is generously supported by The African Arts Trust and Oliver Charles Associates.

Exhibition graphics by Åbäke.

For more information about the exhibition, related events and learning programmes, visit [nottinghamcontemporary.org](http://nottinghamcontemporary.org) or scan here:



Nottingham Contemporary is a registered charity and dependent on the generosity of our visitors, partners and supporters. Donate today to directly support our ambitious exhibitions, and the vital work we do with artists, schools, young people, and our local community. Suggested donation: £3

If you would like a calm space to reflect during your visit, please feel free to use Gallery 0 (room adjacent to Gallery 1), where you can also find support resources and tools. Please speak to a member of staff for more information.

**Environmental:** Nottingham Contemporary is committed to advancing sustainability within the organisation and aims to explore and embed sustainable working practices and habits within our workplace and across the sector. This includes standardising environmental considerations at all stages of decision making.

The artwork in *Kirawa* was transported by consolidated road freight. This document is printed on FSC Mix paper (Forest Stewardship Council® certified products manufactured with a variety of sources including FSC-certified virgin fibre, controlled wood and/or recycled materials). Please return to a member of staff or recycle should you not want to keep after your visit.