Kresiah Mukwazhi: *Kirawa*

27 May – 3 September 2023

Kresiah Mukwazhi (b.1992, Harare) 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**

**Wed 31 May, 12pm**

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

**Wed 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 6 June**Join one of our friendly Gallery Assistants for a short exploration of one of our exhibitions. For more details visit our website.

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30 May–1 June, 10am–12pm & 1pm–3pm**

**Summer Holidays  
1–24 Aug, 10am–12pm & 1pm–3pm  
(Tue, Wed & Thurs)**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.**

**The exhibition is curated by Nicole Yip.**

**Exhibition graphics by Åbäke.**

**For more information about the exhibition, related events and learning programmes, visit nottinghamcontemporary.org or scan here:**

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