

The Moody Center for the Arts Presents the Immersive Art of Kapwani Kiwanga in Fall 2021 Exhibition

Paris-based artist Kapwani Kiwanga, 2020 recipient of the Prix Marcel Duchamp, explores the cross-cultural history imbued in natural materials, September 17 - December 18, 2021



Kapwani Kiwanga, *White: Gold Morogoro*, 2016. Exhibition view, *Ujamma*, La Ferme du Buisson, Noisiel, France. Artwork ©2021 the artist and ARS, New York / ADAGP, Paris. Photo © Emile Ouroumov, courtesy of the artist and Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris.

(HOUSTON, TX – August 2, 2021) -- From Texan sand to Tanzanian sisal, the raw material of Kapwani Kiwanga's enveloping and powerful exhibition will activate the galleries of the Moody Center for the Arts, September 17 through December 18, 2021. Articulated through new, site-specific installations created for the Moody, together with a video work, *Kapwani Kiwanga: The Sand Recalls the Moon's Shadow* employs the artist's research-based approach to offer an investigation into how natural materials can be interpreted as archives of shared human and natural history. In turn, this body of work inspires alternative understandings of social, economic, and environmental realities.

"This fall we are delighted to share Kapwani Kiwanga's work with Moody audiences and to explore the interdisciplinary implications of her practice through a season of public conversations and performances around the complex ramifications of natural resource extraction," Alison Weaver, Suzanne Deal Booth Executive Director of the Moody Center for the Arts, said. "Through a minimalist formal vocabulary, Kiwanga addresses some of the most relevant issues of our time."

In her first solo exhibition in Houston, Kiwanga (b. 1978, Hamilton, Canada) will create two site-specific installations for the Moody, *Maya-Bantu* and *Dune*. Both works will address linkages between trade and labor, as well as society and the environment. The exhibition will also include Kiwanga's 2012 video, *Vumbi*, which draws attention to the nuanced relationship between humans and the planet. Collectively, these works meditate on raw material as a primary resource, simultaneously in the context of cultural exploration and economic development.

"Drawing parallels between Tanzania's national independence and natural gas extraction practices in Texas, Kiwanga's multi-layered exhibition presents natural and raw materials as conduits for understanding history," Ylinka Barotto, Associate Curator, said. "Kiwanga's site-specific installations, composed of more than 50 tons of sand and 275 pounds of sisal fiber, will create an immersive experience that offers viewers an opportunity to consider the historical and present-day role of nature within global economic systems."

The Exhibition

Maya-Bantu explores the potential of sisal fiber to serve as a reflection on colonization and development in East Africa. By layering the plant's pearly-white, raw fiber to create a minimalist yet monumental sculpture, Kiwanga speaks to the crop's historic significance in global trade--originating in Central America and later cultivated in Tanzania. First imported to the east African country at the end of the nineteenth century by German settlers, sisal required labor for plant cultivation and the production of sisal line fibers. In the decades following the country's independence from Britain in 1961, the material played a vital role in the expansion of the nation's agricultural economy. This large-scale work, which will be on view in the Moody's Central Gallery, testifies to the cultural and commercial value of the natural material itself and expresses the importance of self-sufficiency and self-determination in the nascent stages of national independence.

With *Dune*, Kiwanga will transform the Brown Foundation Gallery into an immersive desert-like environment made of sand from central Texas, an essential product for fracking. Both controversial and revolutionary, the practice of fracking--or hydraulic fracturing--has driven economic growth in Texas and impacted energy production worldwide. While mechanically ingenious for its capacity to draw natural gas and oil from the previously impenetrable rock, fracking produces byproducts--solid and liquid waste containing pollutants and carcinogens--that can negatively affect humans, animals, and the environment. *Dune* underscores the long-lasting implications of such extraction methods on Texas's economy, as well as the hazards fracking presents to both the landscape and the population.

In the media gallery, Kiwanga will present the 2012 video *Vumbi*. The title, meaning "dust" in the East African language of Kiswahili, refers to the red powder that blankets parts of the rural Tanzanian landscape during the dry season. In the video, Kiwanga cleans this vermilion layer of dirt from vegetation, exposing brilliant green leafage, which will invariably become covered again. The Sisyphean task performed by the artist is both an act of domesticity as well as a means of subtractive painting. While suggesting a delicate and caring human relationship with nature, the work also highlights an inexorable force of nature.

As a whole, Kiwanga's exhibition explores the ways in which humanity's interactions with and appreciation for nature morph over time, constantly acquiring new meanings when viewed through the historical lenses of production, culture, and the economy.

This exhibition curated by Ylinka Barotto, Associate Curator, Moody Center for the Arts. Substantial support is provided by the Moody Center for the Arts Founder's Circle and the Elizabeth Lee Moody Excellence Fund for the Arts.

The Artist

Based in Paris, Kapwani Kiwanga studied anthropology and comparative religion at McGill

University, Montreal, and art at École des Beaux-Arts, Paris. Kiwanga was awarded the Prix Marcel Duchamp in 2020, following her receipt of the Frieze Artist Award and the Sobey Art Award in 2018. Last year, Kiwanga had solo exhibitions at Haus der Kunst, Munich; Kunstinstituut Melly, Rotterdam; and Kunsthaus Pasquart, Biel/Bienne. These shows were preceded by exhibitions at MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge; the Esker Foundation, Calgary; the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin; and Power Plant, Toronto. The Logan Center for the Arts, Chicago; South London Gallery, London; and Jeu de Paume, Paris, among other institutions, have also hosted solo exhibitions of Kiwanga's work.

Programming and Special Events

Free and Open to the Public

***Kapwani Kiwanga: The Sand Recalls the Moon's Shadow* Opening**

Friday, September 17, 6 - 8 p.m.

Artists-in-Dialogue: Hanan Sabea and Kapwani Kiwanga,

Thursday, October 14, 12 - 1 p.m., virtual, register online at moody.rice.edu.

As a part of the Moody's signature interdisciplinary series, special guest, Hanan Sabea, professor of anthropology, American University in Cairo, will offer insights into the past and current impact of the sisal trade, in dialogue with the artist. Sabea's research examines the dynamics of land and labor on plantations in colonial and postcolonial Africa, state-subject relations, and the production of histories and memories.

Dimensions Variable: Lisa E. Harris

Wednesday, October 27, 6:30 p.m.

Initiating the Moody Center for the Arts fall exhibition programming is the award-winning singer/songwriter, researcher, and educator Lisa E. Harris with *Import*, a commissioned performance that will respond to Kiwanga's exhibition. A Monroe Research Fellow at Tulane University's Center for the Gulf South, Lisa "Li" Harris is also the 2021 recipient of the Dorothea Tanning Award for Music/ Sound, awarded by the Foundation for Contemporary Arts. Recognized by *Huffington Post* as one of "14 Artist Who Are Transforming the Future of Opera," Li's work resists genre classification as she focuses on the energetic relationships between body, land, spirit and place. She is also the founder and creative director of Studio Enertia, an arts collective and production company in Houston, Texas.

Dimensions Variable: Jasmine Hearn

Friday, November 5, 5:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Organized in conjunction with the fall exhibition, Jasmine Hearn, Houston native and a 2019 Jerome Foundation Jerome Hill Fellow, will perform an original commission at the Moody Center for the Arts. An interdisciplinary artist and choreographer they have crafted and shared collaborative dance theater performances rooted in the facilitation of creative space for remembering and imagining. Hearn has been a part of solo and collective choreography and performances at the Guggenheim Museum, Getty Center, Venice Biennale, Ford Foundation, New York Live Arts, Danspace Project, and Dance Source Houston.

About the Moody Center for the Arts

Inaugurated in February 2017, the Moody Center for the Arts at Rice University is a state-of-the-art, non-collecting institution dedicated to transdisciplinary collaboration among the arts, sciences, and humanities. The 50,000-square foot facility, designed by acclaimed Los Angeles-based architect Michael Maltzan, serves as an experimental platform for creating and presenting works in all disciplines, a flexible teaching space to encourage new modes of making and a forum for creative partnerships with visiting national and international artists. The Moody is free and open to the public year-round.

Website: moody.rice.edu

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6100 Main Street, MS-480, Houston, TX 77005

(University Entrance 8, at University Boulevard and Stockton Street)

Hours & Admission:

The Moody is currently closed due to COVID-19 restrictions. Normal business hours will resume on September 18. Exhibition spaces are open to the public and free of charge Tuesday through Saturday from 10am to 5pm, and closed Sundays, Mondays, and holidays. Events and programs are open to the public. For schedule, tickets and prices as applicable, visit moody.rice.edu.

Directions & Parking:

The Moody Center for the Arts is located on the campus of Rice University, and is best reached by using Campus Entrance 8 at the intersection of University Boulevard and Stockton Street. As you enter campus, the building is on the right, just past the Media Center. There is a dedicated parking lot adjacent to the building. Payment for the Moody Lot is by credit card only.

For campus maps, visit www.rice.edu/maps.

About Rice University

Located on a 300-acre forested campus in Houston, Rice University is consistently ranked among the nation's top 20 universities by U.S. News & World Report. Rice has highly respected schools of Architecture, Business, Continuing Studies, Engineering, Humanities, Music, Natural Sciences and Social Sciences and is home to the Baker Institute for Public Policy. With 3,879 undergraduates and 2,861 graduate students, Rice's undergraduate student-to-faculty ratio is 6-to-1. Its residential college system builds close-knit communities and lifelong friendships, just one reason why Rice is ranked No. 1 for quality of life and for lots of race/class interaction and No. 2 for happiest students by the Princeton Review. Rice is also rated as a best value among private universities by Kiplinger's Personal Finance.

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