



Dickens Otieno
TRAILS

29 November 2023 - 6 January 2024



*Dickens Otieno,
Panya Routes, 2023
detail shot*

Since March of this year, Dickens Otieno has been in transit between Nairobi and Migori in Western Kenya, a recurring journey that is the genesis of the works in the current exhibition, Trails.

The seven-hour drive in either direction formed a meditative environment for Dickens to rewire his relationship with his childhood home in Migori, a process that has opened up new channels of inspiration, and explorations in psychogeography. Whether it is winding through fields of maize and sugarcane, alongside smaller kitchen gardens that serve everyday vegetable needs, or watching cattle grazing with younger calves tethered to small trees, observing and translating the specificity of this farming landscape has materialised in meticulous sculptural tapestries for his second solo exhibition at Circle.

In one of his largest works to date, Panya Routes, monumental at 3.11 x 5.93 m, Dickens observes paths made in wild grass by cane rats and other small field animals, while also alluding to road networks and the web of feeder roads that open into highways. It is here that the exhibition title emerges, Trails. With this as a departure point, Dickens creates different permutations of details in the landscape through a series of emergent patterns that speak to various ecosystems in both urban and rural contexts. During this time, not only making environmental observations but also taking notes on technique by revisiting the crafting methods associated with weaving baskets and making ropes, Dickens continues to play and experiment with the galvanised steel looms he forms to create new visual effects be it through raised surfaces, or leaving gaps in the weaving, he rewards the viewer for close-looking.

In the diptych Darkening Clouds, Dickens not only expands his ideas for how the tapestries appear in space, in this case, installed to hang from above but also explores weaving techniques that trick the eye with an illusion of appearing darker or more silvery depending on the angle at which the viewer looks at the work. Dickens here thinks back to indigenous farming wisdom of observing clouds and based on their shape and colour, being able to predict whether it would rain, and maybe even extrapolate for how long, while in these modern times, there are several instruments deployed by the meteorological centres towards this.

**Front cover:
Dickens Otieno, Darkening Clouds, 2023**

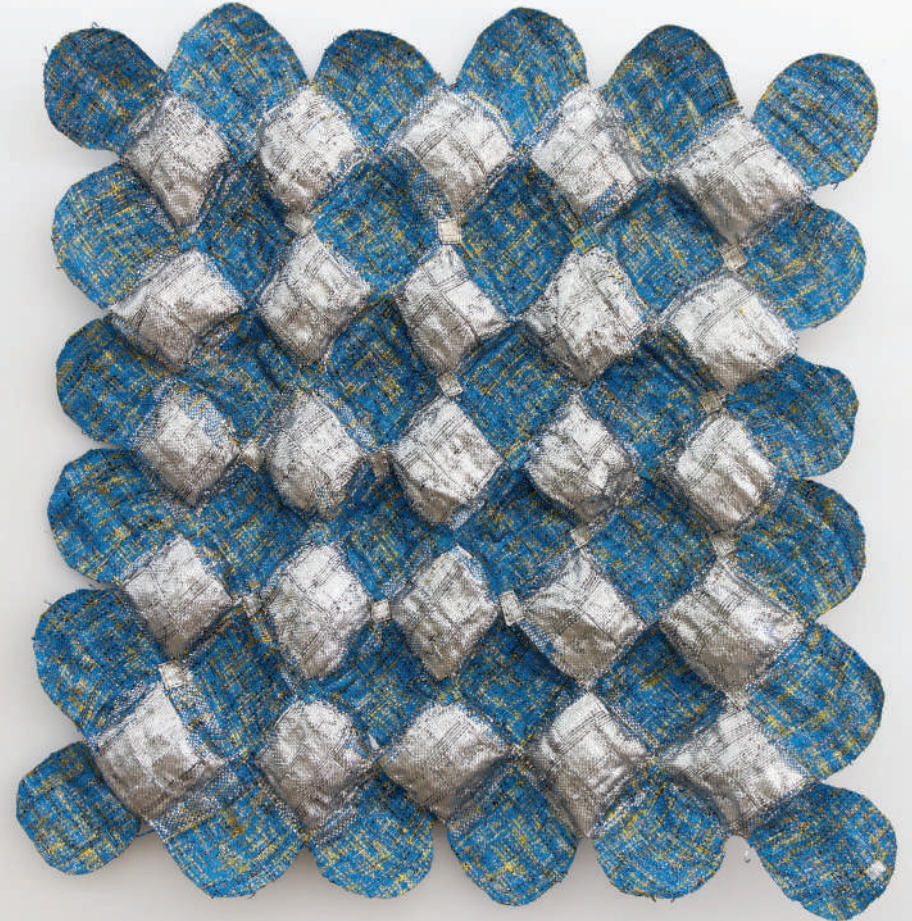
In *Waves (Oscillations)*, Dickens weaves blue, silver and gold shredded aluminium cans to create an undulating surface that mimics and magnifies the reflection of light on water, highlighting the silvery crests and blueish troughs. Much like the nature of the interference between the light and water causes a uniform shimmer, the tightly woven and colour-blocked warps and wefts form a steady pattern that is balanced to the eye, prompting a calming effect much like standing before a large body of water, in this case summoning the feeling that Dickens gets while standing on the shore of Lake Victoria.

Much like his interest in water which is a recurring theme in his tapestries, Dickens finds himself returning to his series of free-standing garment sculptures; and for this exhibition, features two shirt and short pairings, and one shirt and skirt pairing, as well as a woven tapestry titled *Sketchbook page, Uniform Series*. The first in this expansion of the *Uniform series*, the charming tapestry mimics a ruled page of an exercise book with sewing measurements outlined in loose font, much like looking at a tailor's handwritten notes for a custom fit. Growing up, Dickens watched his mother, a tailor with close regard for fabric and pattern, and while for him the medium has changed, working with recycled shredded aluminium cans on galvanised steel frames, the elements of fashion design continue to hold his attention to colour, construction, shape and texture.

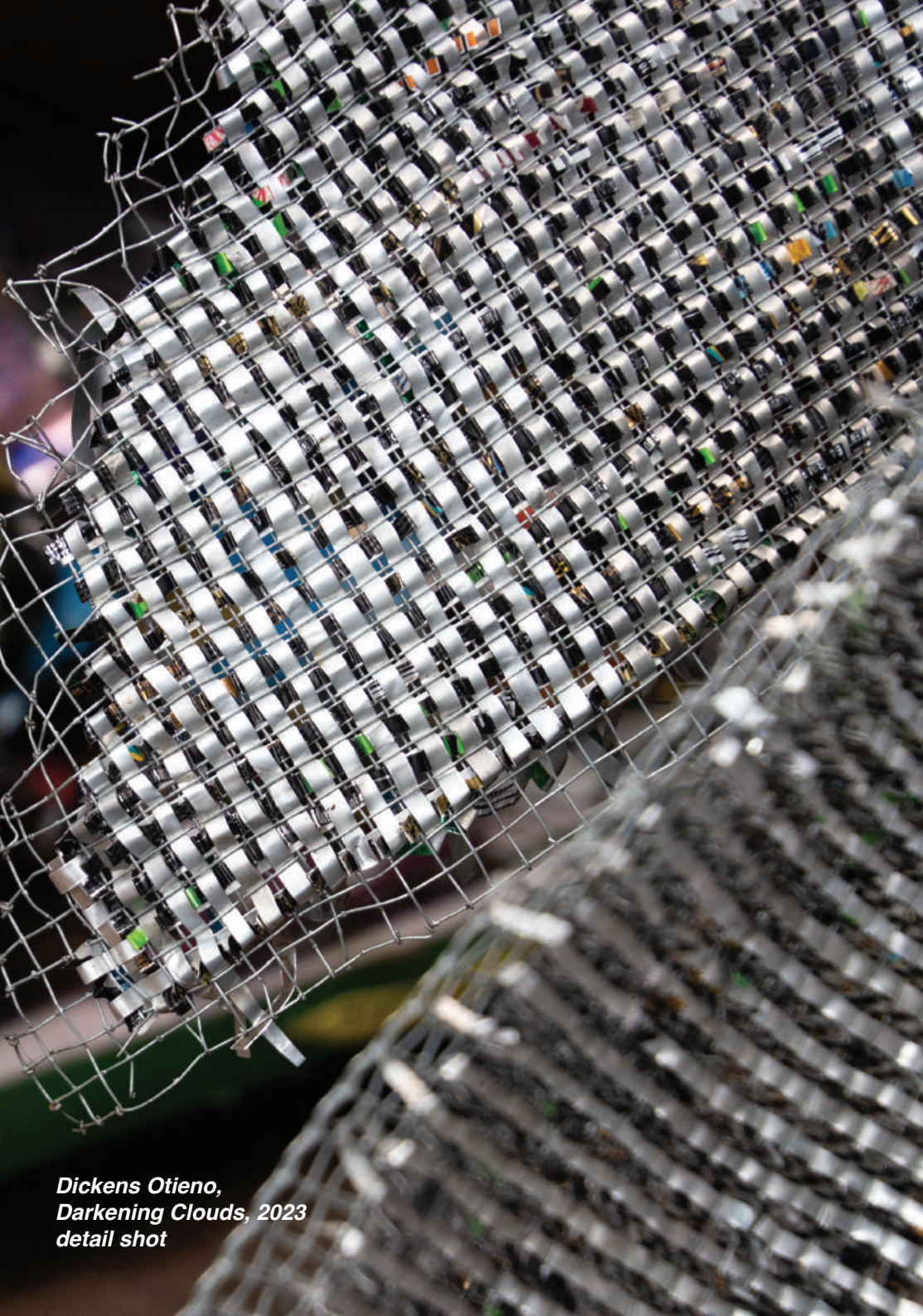
Adopting the position of a learner and expanding his studio practice

Since his first solo exhibition at Circle in 2020, Mabati Tailor, Dickens speaks of his ongoing process of learning through doing, and the place of studying other artists' practices as a muse to scale up his studio practice. As one of the four artists who represented the Kenyan Pavillion at the 59th Venice Biennale 2022, alongside Syowia Kyambi, Kaloki Nyamai and Wanja Kimani, Dickens was both incredibly honoured and inspired to expand his studio practice, now working with several assistants which he says has allowed him to 'catch up with the ideas in my mind freeing up time for the thinking as well as the doing'.

Rising to the challenge of a solo exhibition in the new gallery space, five times the size of Circle's first gallery, Dickens has woven together an immersive experience for viewers to enjoy featuring eight large tapestries and three free-standing garments demonstrating what is possible with new dreaming, drive and devotion.



*Dickens Otieno,
Waves (Oscillations), 2023*



Dickens Otieno,
Darkening Clouds, 2023
detail shot

In the Studio

Dickens Otieno in conversation with Don Handa

Don Handa: Let's start by talking about the studio. The last time I saw you, it was at another studio. Currently, you have this, your home studio, you have a studio at the Godown [Arts Centre], and you've just told me that you're thinking of setting up another studio upcountry. Could you talk a little bit about your movement between the three spaces?

Dickens Otieno: It really has a lot to do with time. I find that working from home is easier for me; I have more time in my house, and I don't lose time in traffic. The Godown space is like a meeting place; I meet people there who don't want to come all the way here. The studio itself is relatively small, so it's also not suitable for my kind of work - you see how bulky it is. You've come just after I've folded up all these works; this place was full.

I think I may need a much bigger space, which is why I am thinking of setting up another space at home, in the village, in Migori County.

So, in terms of work, it's quiet here. I have a family, but once the kids have left for school, and my wife, too, is out dealing with her own stuff, then I'm almost always all alone here. Comparing working here and working in a communal space, such as the Godown, I can meet other artists and chat about various issues that come up, and there's also a kind of influence in a space where there are very many artists working. You look at how people work, you look at their work, and that also kind of drives you to do something.

At the Godown, I'm in between [Michael] Soi and Peterson [Kamwathi]. Soi does one painting a day, whereas Peterson's work is so detailed. And I'm kind of in between those two - somebody who's producing a painting every day and somebody who's very detailed. And that's also influenced how I go about my work and think about a balance between producing a certain amount of work and the depth of that work. So here is quiet, and once everything is set, and I'm ready to settle and work, I prefer to do it here.

DH: And you've only recently started thinking about working from Migori.

DO: Yeah, it's something that I've just started testing out for - it's just a month old. Within this month, I've been back there twice - I go on the weekend and spend 3-4 days there. I've set up a studio there, and sometimes I go there and work. My work is also very labour intensive, so I'm also trying to get assistants.

DO: As an artist, I started first with drawing, then moved to painting. I'm a self-taught artist, and I stumbled upon mosaics; the first mosaic I saw was a Kenyatta Hospital or something, a mosaic on the wall. This showed me that I could use different materials, and actually, what I was trying to do was to paint using materials other than paint. So, I started cutting up bottle tops and stapling them onto sisal sacks to make a picture, or to make a painting; during that period, I experimented a lot with bottle tops on sisal sacks. The results would come out very heavy. And working with bottle tops was also not very friendly - I used to get cut a lot because it's rigid. After working awhile with that material, I was walking home to Kawangware from my studio one day - I was at Godown already, in the industrial area - and I just saw a can lying on the roadside, I picked it up. It felt very light, and I carried it home and I went and sliced it.

I started to think about how it could go into the sisal sack that I was using because it was still metal. It had the colours from the branding on it, so I could still use it the same way I was using the bottle tops. This was about trying to reduce the weight of the final work and also avoiding cuts as I worked. It didn't work the first time I tried it because the sisal sacks have thick threads and small holes, and the can is quite light, so getting it through and folding it on the other side wasn't easy. Later, again as I was walking - I used to walk a lot from studio to my residence and back, back and forth - going past a hardware shop, I saw this type of mesh, and I thought, this can work like the sisal I've been using. I bought a little piece, and now I started seeing cans. I started seeing cans and collecting them along the way as I walked back and forth to work. And when I shredded them and fixed them in the holes, it worked much better. This was a kind of experiment that I did, and I also did research on how to come up with the best work at work.

DH: It's interesting that you say you're looking for ways to paint rather than using paints.

DO: Initially, I was just trying to paint, and still, I think I'm painting because I'm very conscious of colour.



*Dickens Otieno,
Waves (Oscillations), 2023
detail shot*



Dickens Otieno,
Climbers, 2023

DH: You used to walk back and forth between your studio and your house. At the time, was that experience influencing the things you were trying to do? Did that walking form, in some way, part of how you thought about the work you were doing?

DO: I think that walking was, and still is part of how I compose my work. I use my eyes a lot; I'm very, very interested in everything I see around me. When I'm walking around

Nairobi, I see buildings, there are lots of patterns that I see, there are textures, and I think these are some of the things that I put in my work.

DH: Are there particular kinds of patterns that stick out, or that you're more drawn to? Are there things that you find often your eye is pulled towards? Alternatively, with all this input, with all this material, how do you narrow down your focus?

DO: When I'm creating, what I'm looking at a lot is not just the patterns but the way of thinking around them. How do people think? What do they focus on? How do they behave? I am trying to bring out people's behaviour through the materials. For example, the trends that come along, and then everybody's into that trend, then all of a sudden they stop and move to a new trend. So I'm kind of also looking at the behaviour. Take the example of (garbage) disposal, we are very poor at disposing garbage. It becomes an eyesore, but then it also creates a different landscape. Like the Dandora dump site - if you look at it, it forms like a mountain, a mountain that has all the colours because it's everything dumped there. And sometimes I want to create that mountain, rather than the naturally occurring mountain that's green, or rocky. There's this new mountain that's just created by garbage. So I look at such kinds of things when I am composing my work.

DH: So the landscape and how it's transforming is a thing that you're interested in.

DO: Yeah. The city, the buildings that are cropping up... What else do I look at? My work is based on the landscape. I'd say it has to do with landscapes, whether a crop field or a cityscape

DH: The landscape is the framework that you're using to engage with the space and the patterns

DO: Yeah

DH: Sometimes they (the works) are very close, zoomed in on a particular object, and then there are other times when they seem like a vast landscape. And some of the works seem to focus on a particular object within the landscape. And it's as though you're moving back and forth between these points. What is informing those decisions?

DO: Some, I would say, are impulsive - you just look at something, and it hits you. I'm very conscious of not just the landscape, but also of patterns that repeat themselves around us. For example, when we were growing up, we used to have these mud houses that our mothers used to make very beautiful. They would create patterns on them, waves, drawings of fish and so on. I think that's also a place where my inspiration is coming from, those patterns that repeat themselves. In the work, I am sometimes just repeating patterns. The work is abstract, so I am not necessarily defining objects on the surface of the work. I grew up around my mother, who was a tailor, and she used kintenga a lot, and they also have these patterns on them. So pattern is definitely something that I am interested in.

DH: When you talk about the work being abstract, I think this has not always been the case. You've also done these free standing sculptures that are very obviously representational. Has the work become more abstracted with time, or was it always, on some level, abstract?

DO: I'd say I'm somewhere in between the two. I've always made forms that are very figurative, and I think this is still informed by my mom being a maker of clothes. With the clothes, I'm interested in people, they're like portraits of people going about their activities. I've really really focused on uniforms, because they're more definite. You look at a uniform and it tells you that story; it's very straight to the point. Casual dress also sometimes tells you the story of the person (the wearer) - trends, fashion sense, class - these are some of the things that I'm looking at. When making the wall hangings, I'm still putting patterns in them, because I'm also thinking, "who designed this?" I'm looking at things around me, putting them into the work.

DH: There are patterns that you yourself create in the work, using colour, texture, relief and such. The materials you use, the cans and now more recently, paper, also already have information on them.



*Dickens Otieno,
Untitled (Pink Dots), 2023
detail shot*

The cans have labels and colours, the magazines have certain images, colours, different kinds of text. What is your thinking on the relationship between the patterns you create and those that are already on the material?

DO: Most of the time, I'm not conscious of that. When I want to create a work with beer cans, for example, I'm not thinking of the beer can as a beer can and I'm not interested in the fact that it previously contained alcohol. I'm interested in what it can give me in terms of colour and texture, the information on the surface of the can is not my focus; I want to see how suited it is to what I am composing.

DH: How much work do you do to change the material from the state in which you found it, to one where it's usable for your work? How much do you alter the work, and has this always been the case, or is this something that's become necessary as the work evolves.

DO: It definitely became a need; it was not always the case. I would really love to use cans with their original colours, but I found it to be restrictive because then I have the same cans every day. Sometimes I burn them; mostly I've been burning them to give me a yellowed, aged look. If you look at this can for example, I used burning to give it that kind of feel. If you burn this other side, it gives you a sort of golden effect. Yeah. So I do alter colours somewhat, but the thing I've not yet done is add a new colour - for example, spraying on a new colour. That's because it gives me a plain colour. This can, for example, is white, but it has writings on it. If I use it in its original state, it gives me white but with texture, because of the small text. If I paint it white, then it's just going to give me a flat white, a completely different result. That's one reason why I don't like painting them. But then I can kind of scratch them a little just to give me kind of a feel. I can also burn them.

I also try as much as I can to collect the right colours I need for my work so that I don't have to change them. Sometimes, I may not get enough of some colours, and sometimes there ends up being less of those colours in the work, because I want to keep that original colour. I think it's very interesting when I shred the can but you can still see the writings.

DH: So there's a kind of this restriction that's set for you by the material

DO: Yes, the material does restrict me - before I set out to make a work, I have to know, to an extent, how a particular colour will feature in the work.



*Dickens Otieno,
Cow Tracks, 2023*



*Dickens Otieno,
School Uniform, 2023*

DH: Is there a lot of planning that happens before you begin a work?

DO: Yeah. But it also changes sometimes, because I weave very blindly. I usually know that I'm going to this in this portion, or sometimes I'll map them out on the mesh with a permanent marker, so that I know which colour goes where. But when I see the final result, if I'm not satisfied, I'll undo some parts and start working on them again. So it's weaving and removing, weaving and undoing...

DH: Negotiating

DO: Yeah. I also think of it like a painter, because you can paint, and then paint over it again, and keep creating layers. In my case, I can't create layers, but I will undo a portion and weave it again.

DH: Do you do anything else in the studio while you work?

DO: Music - I listen to music. I have no particular music that I listen to in the studio, it depends on my mood. Sometimes in the morning when I wake up, I walk or I jog, and then some music repeats itself in my head. When I get into the studio, that's the music I'll listen to.

DH: On the subject of uniforms. There's a particular kind of uniform that you've worked on - school uniforms. What is it about school uniforms that keeps you returning to them?

DO: I'm thinking about school kids when I'm making school uniforms; I'm making portraits of the school children. I make the uniform, but I am also trying to define the person who is wearing the uniform. You can look at the uniform, and from how it's set up you can tell - this is the kid who's heading to school in the morning, this kid is coming home from school. Another thing that interests me with uniforms is how uniforms change a landscape. If you go to a school and look at those kids during parade and how it relates to the landscape, how it relates to the trees, the buildings. That uniform, the kind of uniforms we have in Kenya - it's a sudden change in colour. For example, it's a yellow and blue uniform, and they're all gathered for assembly. If you look at it from a little distance, it's a patchwork of yellow and blue, and everything around it changes. When I'm walking, I'll sometimes see kids going to school or going back home, these uniforms will always catch my eye. I don't even see the people in them, I see the colours.



*Dickens Otieno,
Panya Routes, 2023*

It's not just school uniforms; there's religious attire - Jorocho, Lego Maria - work uniforms, military uniforms. The uniform helps anyone who sees you define who you are, without talking to you - you're in the military; you're in school; you're a christian, you're a muslim.

DH: You also spoke earlier about being interested in people's behaviour, how that can be transformed as well by uniforms. There's a relationship that's created as soon as someone is instantly recognized as a police officer, a student.

DO: That's what I'm thinking about when I say clothes define you. They give you a certain social status, which in turn determines how you're going to relate [with people, with spaces]. There is information that they give which, once you have in your head, you can use for or against the person concerned.

DH: Do you see yourself continuing this interest in children and their uniforms?

DO: The thing is, I see kids a lot. And, usually what I create is [informed by] what I see outside. Unless I decide to delve into, and research a particular situation, I create from what I see.

DH: You made the Legio Maria works in 2020 - 2021?

DO: Yeah. Here's how started. Back home I have this friend who used to be a guard at the high school I went to. So we met when he was coming from church and he had a bicycle and the yellow apparel. That was the first time I realised it was a legio. There was a time in Nyanza when Legio Maria was considered a kind of cult. And even when one visited Lego Maria church, it was because you were kind of seeking some spiritual solution. Maybe somebody bewitched you... So in my head, I've grown up knowing that this church is not good. That it's associated with witchcraft or something

DH: More like a cult than just another Christian denomination.

DO: Yeah. So, on this day when I met this guy, we talked, I went to his house and he even prayed for me. You know, I'm a Catholic. I was following his prayer, and thinking to myself that I'd heard so many negative stories about Legio Maria, how come this prayer was, step by step, just like the catholic prayers.



*Dickens Otieno,
School Uniform, 2023*



*Dickens Otieno,
School Uniform, 2023
detail shot*

That's the point at which I started thinking differently about Legio Maria, and it's from that meeting with that guy, his story, to this little prayer when we arrived at the house which was so catholic. So there was all this information; it was not planned for, just something that I met on my way in doing something. And that's how I ended up making the Legio Maria uniforms.

I think I make uniforms because they're more definite. You can see them and they tell you the whole story about the [wearer]. So I'm still going to make more uniforms in future - it's still a very interesting topic, and not one that I can exhaust it. I think this is something that's still going to come up in my future work.

DH: You are obviously working from a specific place, a specific context, and someone from outside might not necessarily get the significance of some of the references you use. How important? Do you think it's necessary for someone looking at your work to be able to connect it to this particular experience? Or can the work go out in the world and function on its own, and be interpreted in various ways?

DO: I think whatever is very particular, it's also still universal. For example, the uniforms - if you go to another country you will find completely different uniforms, but there's still something that will resonate. And the way that I try to create this form is such that, you look at it, and you know that it's a kid; and there's always a relationship that. With the Legio Maria, when I first heard about it, it was associated with witchcraft and stuff like that, but when I got deeper into it, it was very much catholic, which is something that's quite [common]. Something that's very particular can still be interpreted in different ways. Something that's very local can still... If you look at it is to find something universal.

DH: You said you started out as a painter. Could you talk about specific reasons that prompted your shift away from traditional canvas painting? Was there a point where you felt it was ineffective for your expression? Furthermore, what considerations influenced your current interest in creating textures and surfaces in your work?

DO: When I started out as an artist, I started at Maasai Mbili in Kibera. I was initially very interested in painting. I practised a lot on growing on my own before I even became an artist one day. In my desire to become an artist, I thought it was limited to painting because I already knew how to draw when I joined Maasai Mbili. They

started to show me how to paint and how to work with colours and oil paint. But then again, they were doing more than painting. And that also shifted my interest from drawing and painting. They were collecting just stuff and making artworks from them, which informed me that you can make art from things other than paint. So that's how I also started to do my own experiment; how do I create using alternative materials?

So it was, it was informed by a lot of things. One: what I saw - Maasai Mbili who were already using found objects to make work. Two: the struggle as an artist just starting out - paints were really expensive, and when you don't have income, when you're not selling and you don't have a job, sustaining that kind of art in that line of creativity wasn't easy. So I also started using alternatives because they couldn't be found locally, everywhere.



*Dickens Otieno,
Hikers Trail, 2023
detail shot*

They were just something you needed to collect material not buy. Right now I buy because scrap metal has become a business. It's a big business, so I go to the paths and I can no longer find [the cans] - I find somebody has already taken them, and these are the same people who come back to sell to me. Three: once I started making - take weaving, for example - I still did weaving and painting at the same time. But you know, like where your heart calls you to go? I always say that I will come back and paint one day, but it's been two, three years, five years.

So I'm also responding to my heart, what it wants. I'm not, I'm not forcing myself to do something because I have to do it. I want to enjoy what I do, I want to do it with a lot of ease. It doesn't mean I'm just going to stick to doing that. I'm always thinking. Within what I do, I'm always thinking of [bringing] new ideas into it. Rather than trying to follow very many ideas at the same time using different materials, I think that I can use the same material, but think of as many ideas that can come into it as possible. And that's also something I don't think I can exhaust.

DH: So you're also trying to push the possibility of what you can do within your chosen medium

DO: Yeah. Scale, texture, colour, form. If you look at my work over the you can see that kind of that push

DH: There's an interesting shift in your practice over time, particularly in collecting materials. Initially, you could collect cans casually while walking or from specific places. Now, with scrap metal becoming a thriving business, there seems to be a growing economy that's affecting your ability to obtain materials. Are there specific places or people you know and have developed relationships with where you source materials, or is it more spontaneous?

DO: I have actually just one particular person. There's a lady with a very big scrap yard. She sells scrap metal, plastics, paper, everything. So this is the lady that always relied on to get cans from. I've gone to her over the years, for over ten years. And I do that because I know I can always find as many cans as I want from her, so I don't have to look around. I just go and choose what I want. And it's not just me who wants to buy cans from her, there are other people. Mostly people who want to melt them and create some other aluminium products.

DH: Where is this scrap yard?

DO: In Industrial Area

DH: Does she know what you do with the cans? Has she seen the work? What does she, as far as you know, think of the work?

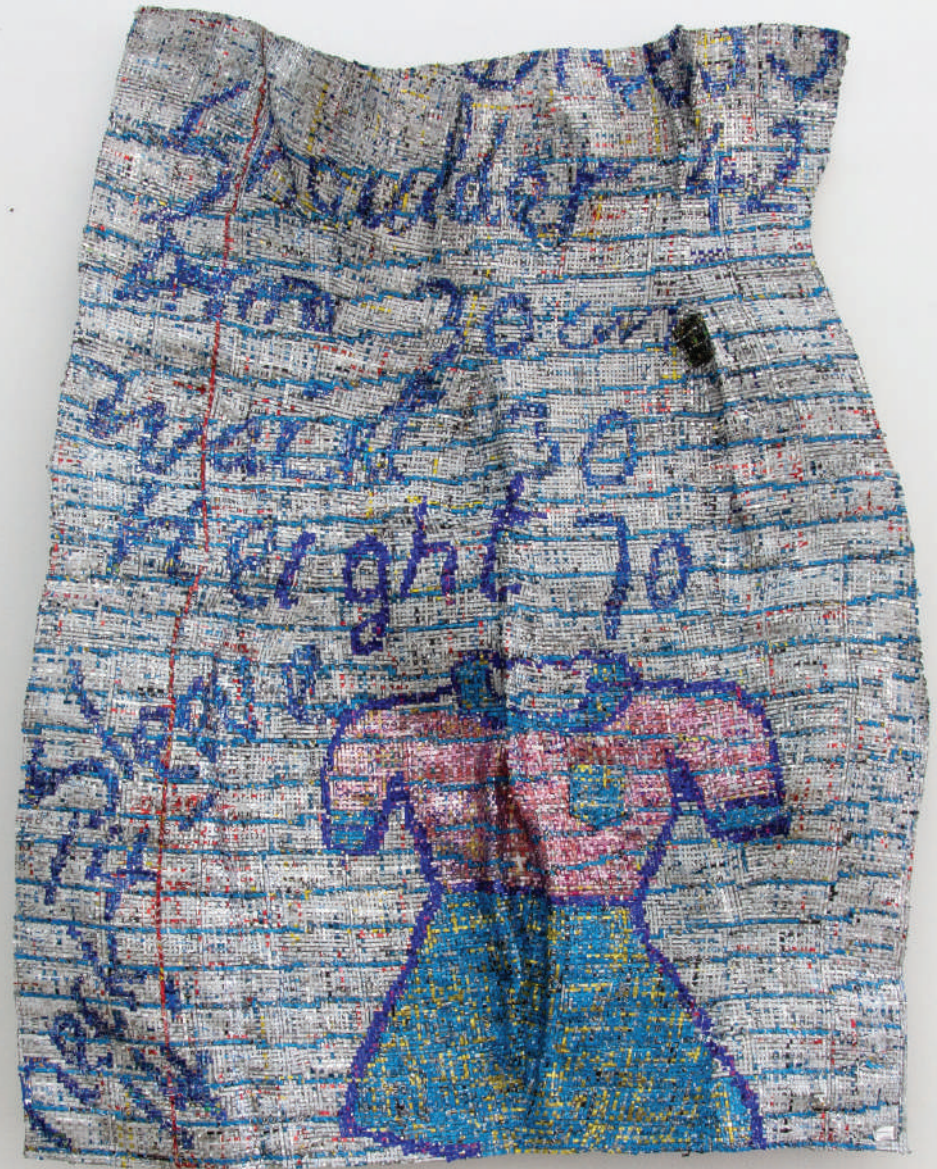
DO: Yeah, she knows. Not the actual work, she's never come to my studio. But I've always shown her pictures of what I am making. I'm not sure if her interest is in art. But I know she's really... You know how I transform from the can to something that looks like a cloth, like a hanging I think that's something that amuses her. And she's not there alone. She has a group of people who sort [the material]. These garbage trucks take her stuff to the yard, and there are these people who have to sort them - yeah. They've seen, just through my phone, what I do with the cans. And they say, "you mean these cans can transform something like this? I think I should invite them to my next exhibition"

DH: Has your mom had a chance to see your uniforms, the clothes that you make?

DO: Yeah. That's because sometimes I carry them back home. My mom doesn't like coming to Nairobi much. I already had one solo. They didn't come for my solo, but then hopefully, the next one. But I always talk to them about it. Because also, when I was starting initially, they didn't understand it completely. It wasn't very easy for me to convince them that I want to become an artist. I'm sure they may not understand it much, but they know. The only thing that they don't quite get is... [They ask], "what do people use them for?" Yeah, that's a question. "Why would you have something like this?" But then I've done their portraits, and those were the very first portraits I did - my mom and my dad. So they really accept portraits. And I think these are very common - this is the kind of, that I think a lot of people will accept.

DH: It's more familiar, when one talks about art, more available.

DO: So always when I say to somebody that I'm an artist, they say, "so you can draw." But then when I go into depth and show them this, they start wondering, "what is it used for? Is it a carpet? It's not a carpet, because it's very sharp, you can't step on it." But I always try to explain to them that art is not just decoration, its history. It carries the story of place. I always say, for example, I'm weaving using cans today. In a hundred years,



*Dickens Otieno,
Sketchbook Page, 2023*



Dickens Otieno,
Tethers, 2023

we may no longer have cans. And then you can refer to my art to say, you know, this used to exist. So this kind of information is what art carries a lot of, other than just decoration.

DH: As we're speaking now, you're preparing for another exhibition. This will be your second solo exhibition in Nairobi. How are you feeling about that?

DO: A little bit of pressure. And I think there's always pressure in what you do, especially when there's some expectation; people probably have expectations already. They already saw my first solo.

DH: And now there have been other shows, some abroad. And there was also Venice. A lot has happened.

DO: Yeah. This is the kind of pressure that I have with me now. Because now I can't express the same thing. Of course, I'm going to weave, I'm always going to weave, I love weaving. But then I have to present some new ideas, new concepts. But I'm excited. I think I also like the pressure; this is what makes you grow as a person as an artist. I'm having my show at Circle. They have a new space - that's also another new kind of pressure. How do I present my work in this space? And what's, what's the right amount of work, that fits and balances that space?

DH: I guess new space offers new possibilities in terms of what you can do. In contrast to a familiar space where you might have a preconceived approach, this new space challenges you to adapt. The space is new, the work is also new.

DO: Yeah, it creates that situation possibilities. You can go beyond your normal.

DICKENS OTIENO KENYAN, B. 1979

Dickens Otieno's tapestries use and draw attention to the potential beauty in objects that would otherwise be dismissed as useless, and discarded. Aluminium cans are shredded and woven into sculptural fabrics in a process informed by the weaving of natural materials such as papyrus, raffia or palm that he observed growing up. Otieno's mother was a tailor and he spent many hours in her workshop amongst lesos and kitenges, whose colours and patterns have since influenced his aesthetic. This engagement with textile grows from an interest in the way pattern, colour and

iconography are used to imbue functional objects with meaning and identity. Otieno draws on his immediate physical surroundings, particularly the urban environment in his native Nairobi, to create his compositions. Objects piled high in markets, the constantly shifting skyline, and the pockets of nature within the concrete and steel haze of the city, have become sources of inspiration for his richly hued, increasingly sculptural forms.

Otieno has had solo exhibitions in Kenya and the USA: Mtaani, Steve Turner, Los Angeles, 2021 and Mabati Tailor, Circle Art Gallery, 2020. He has participated in numerous group exhibitions locally and internationally including: East African Encounters, Cromwell Place, London, 2021; See Here, Old Neals Auction House, Nottingham, 2018; Africa/Africa, Total Arts Courtyard Gallery, Al Quoz, Dubai, 2018; Young Guns, Circle Art Gallery, Nairobi, 2017; The Third Dimension, Circle Art Gallery, 2016; UNI-FORM MULTI-FORM, Roots Contemporary, Nairobi, 2016; Paint and Metal, National Museum of Nairobi, 2016.

Otieno has exhibited at international art fairs including Art Dubai, Eye of the Collector, London, Circle Art Gallery, 2023 and Untitled Art Fair, Miami, Steve Turner Gallery, 2022. Residencies include the Tilleard Artist Residency in Lamu and a fellowship in Italy at the Civitella Ranieri Foundation.





Circle Art Gallery exhibits and promotes visual artists from Eastern Africa. In the last ten years, Circle Art Gallery has worked locally and internationally to create a strong and sustainable art market for some of the most exciting artists in East Africa. Through our exhibitions, participation in international art fairs, and a modern and contemporary art auction, we have significantly increased awareness, visibility and opportunities for many artists in our region.

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Gallery hours :
Monday to Friday 10am - 5pm
Saturday 12 - 5pm

