

An abstract painting featuring a complex texture of blue, white, and orange. The background is a vibrant blue with vertical streaks and patches of white and brown, suggesting a layered or distressed surface. On the right side, there are prominent orange and yellow shapes, including a horizontal bar and a vertical column of circular and rectangular forms, resembling a stylized graphic or text.

circle art gallery

Young Guns

7 June - July 2017 2017

Young Guns

plural noun (informal)

Definition: People, especially young men, who have lots of energy and talent, and are becoming successful.

This exhibition features new drawing, painting, photography and video from 26 emerging artists in Nairobi. The artists' work mostly in collectives and communal art spaces across the city. They are the new guard; politicized and pushing boundaries. Exploring their identities; local and global concerns; war and peace; law and disorder; issues of masculinity and the artists' role in society.

Following a series of exhibitions at Circle featuring artists from Tanzania and Sudan, it was important to re-focus on Kenya and what is happening in Nairobi right now. In the last five years, the dominance of Kuona Trust as the artists' studio space, has been challenged by alternative spaces and collectives established by emerging artists or their mentors to offer new working space and workshops.

This exhibition was conceived during a series of studio visits to Wajukuu Art Centre, Brush Tu, Kuona Trust, the GoDown Art Centre, Dust Depo, Maasai Mbili and other private spaces in Nairobi. Though there are still young artists working in more conventional ways, the landscape is changing. Bold fresh voices have begun to make their presence felt by pushing boundaries, organizing alternative spaces to reach audiences, experimenting and influencing each other.

Painting and drawing are still the dominant media, largely for economic reasons but these artists are exploring their medium of choice, researching and learning and whilst much of the work is experimental, confident and surprising discoveries are being made.

More controversially, and for the first time at the gallery, this exhibition features all male artists. This did not begin as a conscious intent, it was simply an exploration of new works by young artists, but during the studio visits, all the artists I met were men, the collectives were established by men and the art that I saw in each space was created by men and this became relevant. It raises the question as to why there has been this vigorous surge in young male artists, and equally for future investigation to find the hidden female voices.

Who are they these 'Young Guns'? Where have they come from? Who are their mentors? What are their concerns, their dreams, and their inspirations?

Alex Njoroge | Boniface Maina | Churchill Ongere | David Thuku | Denis Mubiru | Dennis Muraguri | Dickens Otieno | Elias Mun'gora | Emmaus Kimani
Ian Mwesiga | Isaiah Mwangi Maina | Joakim Kwaru | Julian Manjahi | Joseph Waweru | Kaloki Nyamai | Leevans Linyera | Lemek Tompoika | Lincoln Mwangi
Michael Musyoka | Mosoti Kepha | Mwini Mutuku | Ngugi Waweru | Paul Njihia | Peteros Ndunde | Sydney Mang'ong'o | Waweru Gichuhi

Danda Jaroljmek

Front Cover: Elias Mun'gora, Footprints 5, 2017, Mixed media on canvas, 116 x 300 cm

Back cover: David Thuku, Freedom Of My Utopia, 2017 (Panel I - III), mixed media on canvas paper, 80 x 55 cm (each)

I. Alex Njoroge

Alex Njoroge was born in 1988 and is an artist based in Nairobi. After completing high school education in 2006, Njoroge was mentored by the painter Peter Elungat, but did not have a professional practice of his own until 2012.

He experiments with a wide range of materials and has developed a distinctive mixed media approach to painting.

Njoroge has completed an artist residency at Nafasi Art Space in Dar es Salaam and has exhibited in various group exhibitions in Nairobi.

"Making War to Keep Peace addresses current states of unrest in the world and considers the ironic potential scenario in which the only way left to maintain peace is by making war.

Muziki na Historia is an illustration of the intimate connection between nature and music. Since inception, nature has provided us with inspiration and creativity. This is a beautiful relationship that I want to celebrate."



Alex Njoroge, Kenya
Make War to Make Peace, 2017
Mixed media on canvas
137 x 193 cm

2. Boniface Maina

Born in 1987 in Nanyuki town, Boniface Maina now lives and works in Nairobi. He earned a diploma in Art and Design from YMCA National Training Institute in 2008.

Maina has experimented with different mediums and materials and is currently exploring inks. His work has evolved over the years, touching on various themes, striving to capture conflicts in human behavior. He engages with issues that tend to be avoided, and interacts with them through questioning.

In recent years, Maina's work has featured in magazines, art books and news articles locally and internationally. He is a founding partner of Brush Tu Art Studio. He has exhibited nationally and internationally and his work is included in private and public art collections.

"Atrocities and Left Overs constitute an exploration of aspects of war, peace and what lies in between. We are told that peace is what follows from war, yet this is an illusion – the following state is of psychological and physical wounds and destruction which can take generations to overcome."

*Boniface Maina, Kenya
Atrocities and Left Overs, 2017
Mixed media on paper
100 x 76 cm*



3. Churchill Ongere

Churchill Ongere's practice is perched at the intersection of art and advocacy for the neo-liberation of space for freedom of expression. He has been a visual artist for the past three years as well as navigating through other artforms; poetry, music, and graffiti. Often made after much critical observation, his works are both an illustration of, and an inquisition into, conspicuous and indistinct topics in the contemporary space such as sociability, history, population, and the geographies of hegemony in world politics. Ongere has participated in various group exhibitions in Nairobi and abroad, including, as a recipient of the MASK Prize, his work being shown at the Saatchi Gallery in London.

"In *Tableau X* and *Tableau Big*, I am considering the placement and positionality of the individual in the expanded context of humanity. They are pieces from a larger body of work which is intended as an entry point into discussions about all that is sizzling under this 'settled buzz' of humanity, as visually represented from an imagined aerial view."

Churchill Ongere, Kenya
Tableau X, 2016
Mixed media on paper
98 x 67.5 cm



4. David Thuku

Born in 1985 in Nakuru, David Thuku is a visual artist currently living and working in Nairobi. A recipient of the Langalanga Scholarship Fund, Thuku graduated from the BuruBuru Institute of Fine Arts in Nairobi in 2009. In 2013, he co-founded Brush Tu Art Studio, a creative arts collective providing artists with studio space and collaborative exchange, and in 2016 he joined Kuona Trust Arts Centre.

Thuku works in a variety of media; from oil paint on canvas, design sets for drama festivals, public commissions, to paper, which is cut and peeled away to reveal carefully constructed images.

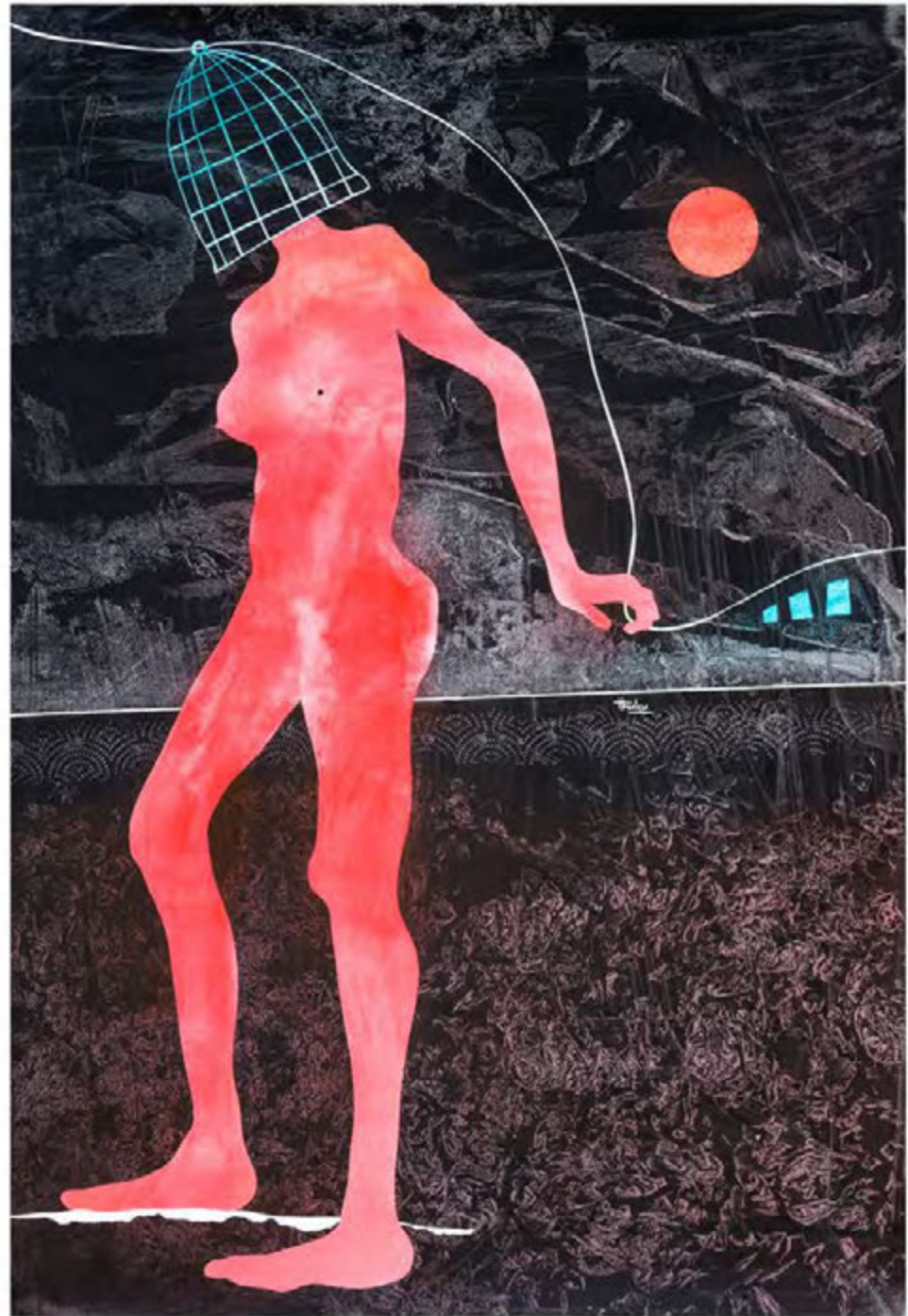
These works on paper explore the nature of social structure, identity and urban migration through semi-abstract portraits. They analyze the everyday space we occupy, peeling layers away to uncover hidden dimensions.

"Freedom of My Utopia is drawn from a body of work which interrogate how different societal boxes (here represented by the cages), bring out the individuality of a person. Against a surreal, dreamy background, the characters can only stand, unable to act on anything except focussing within the cages of freedom.

The work began with the notion that water and oils don't mix. The entire paper was coated with an oil-based medium; the characters are then peeled to reveal a layer that is non-oily. A coat of water-based glaze is then applied on top of the entire surface, when it is wiped, only the peeled-out areas retain the colored glaze, while the oily part repels the water.

The work is displayed as a triptych, but each panel can still stand alone, as each represents individuality."

*David Thuku, Kenya
Freedom Of My Utopia (Panel III), 2017
Mixed media on canvas paper
80 x 55 cm*



5. Denis Mubiru

Denis Mubiru graduated in 2012 with a degree in Art from Nkumba University, Entebbe. In 2015, he completed his postgraduate diploma in Education with Art. He was also artist in residence at 32° East, Ugandan Arts Trust for three months in 2015.

Mubiru's recent exhibitions include Kampala Contemporary at Circle Art Gallery, Nairobi, 2016, Unseen Art at AfriArt Gallery, Kampala, 2016, and Eroticism and Intimacy: Paths, Faces and Places, Underground, Oasis Mall, Kampala, 2016. He has also participated in numerous arts festivals in Kampala.

"My work explores the complex minibus taxis in Kampala better known as 'kamunye'. I use a playful, naive approach to painting and imagery to retell the dramas that unfold within these taxis; petty arguments, flirting and 'wokokoso' (local gossip), that reflect on the society of Kampala. Seeking to draw the viewer's attention to what social media and the press often ignore, I document and interpret intricate aspects of life in the taxis."



*Denis Mubiru, Uganda
Our Dreams Don't Fit On Your Ballots, 2016
Acrylic on canvas
50 x 70.4 cm*

6. Dennis Muraguri

Dennis Muraguri, born in 1980 in Naivasha is a multimedia artist, now based in Nairobi, working in painting, printmaking and sculpture. Muraguri graduated from Buru Buru Institute of Fine Arts with a diploma in Painting and Art History. He has been a resident artist at Kuona Trust Art Centre since 2005.

Muraguri is mostly recognized for his body of work inspired by 'matatus' (Kenyan minibuses and vans that are the main mode of public transport). In these works, he employs a range of approaches to look at the urban culture of contemporary Nairobi.

"The print's title is *Kudandia* - which is a Swahili word that translates as 'jumping onto'. The word is commonly used in matatu culture to mean to get on board ('kudandia mat'). It can also refer to the stunts performed by the 'makangas' (people who call for passengers and sometimes double up as the conductor). These stunts are just for thrills and for show, but they add to the energy of a particular matatu, and work, to some extent, in attracting more passengers amongst the confusion, which is all part of what I like to call 'matatu games'."



Dennis Muraguri, Kenya
Kudandia, 2017
Edition 2/2 variable
Woodcut print on paper
121.5 x 243.5 cm

7. Dickens Otieno

Dickens Otieno is a Nairobi based artist born in 1979. Otieno's art practice is driven by the search to find meaning and worth in things that seem otherwise useless. He weaves large sculptural fabrics from discarded drink cans which he collects from local kiosks near his home and studio. He compares the shredded cans to palm leaves which have been used traditionally for weaving through many generations and civilizations.

“Clothing is important because apart from covering the body, the different designs, material, patterns and colours make a statement about the wearers' identity as well as being a reflection of their time and context.

School uniform is a part of the development of children in Kenya; they have to wear this uniform daily from around three to eighteen years of age. This limitation and permission to use the same colors, pattern and even material every day is likely to have some impact on them in terms of choice and decision making later in life.

In my uniform series, I wonder whether we are creating a nation of people who can think freely and bravely, or a nation of people trained to think in a certain predetermined way.”



*Dickens Otieno, Kenya
Primary Education (Dede) 2016
Aluminium cans on coffee mesh
65 x 45 x 15 cm (approx.)*

8. Elias Mun'gora

Elias Mung'ora is an artist working and living in Nairobi. He was born and raised in Nyeri. Although his exposure to art was very little, his love of drawing was evident from an early age. He joined college briefly to pursue Real Estate and Property Management before leaving school to make art. Mung'ora is a member of Brush Tu Art Studio, where he works mainly in painting, drawing and photography.

"Currently, my practice is focused on the urban environment and living conditions in Nairobi. For the series *Footprints*, I have explored how everyday human activity alters the appearance of physical spaces. The interaction of people and their surroundings leaves behind marks. The resultant aesthetic is often a testament of time and histories; leaving us with hints of activities or the nature of the people who have used these spaces. I interpret these marks/footprints as a collage of everyday human activity that takes place in the city."



Elias Mun'gora, Kenya
Footprints 5, 2017
Mixed media on canvas
116 x 300 cm

9. Emmaus Kimani

Emmaus Kimani was born in 1991. His earliest memories are of a little Kodak box camera, bought by his family, which he quickly mastered and experimented with for years. As Kimani grew older and developed more interest in photography, he felt limited when his camera couldn't do as much as he intended it to.

Kimani now is a multidisciplinary artist, working mostly in photography and curation. He also writes, plays and teaches music, regarding himself as broadly creative, "because anything else would be limiting". He is a member of Brush Tu Art Studio.

"*City Craves - Power* is from a photographic project exploring the human-architectural relationship in the urban environment of Nairobi. It considers the influences of urban spaces on human behavior, of human beings on architecture, and the effects of the evolution of urban spaces on architecture...all back and forth. City craves power in all forms."



Emmaus Kimani, Kenya
City Craves - Power, 2017
Photographic print
42.37 x 60 cm

10. Ian Mwesiga

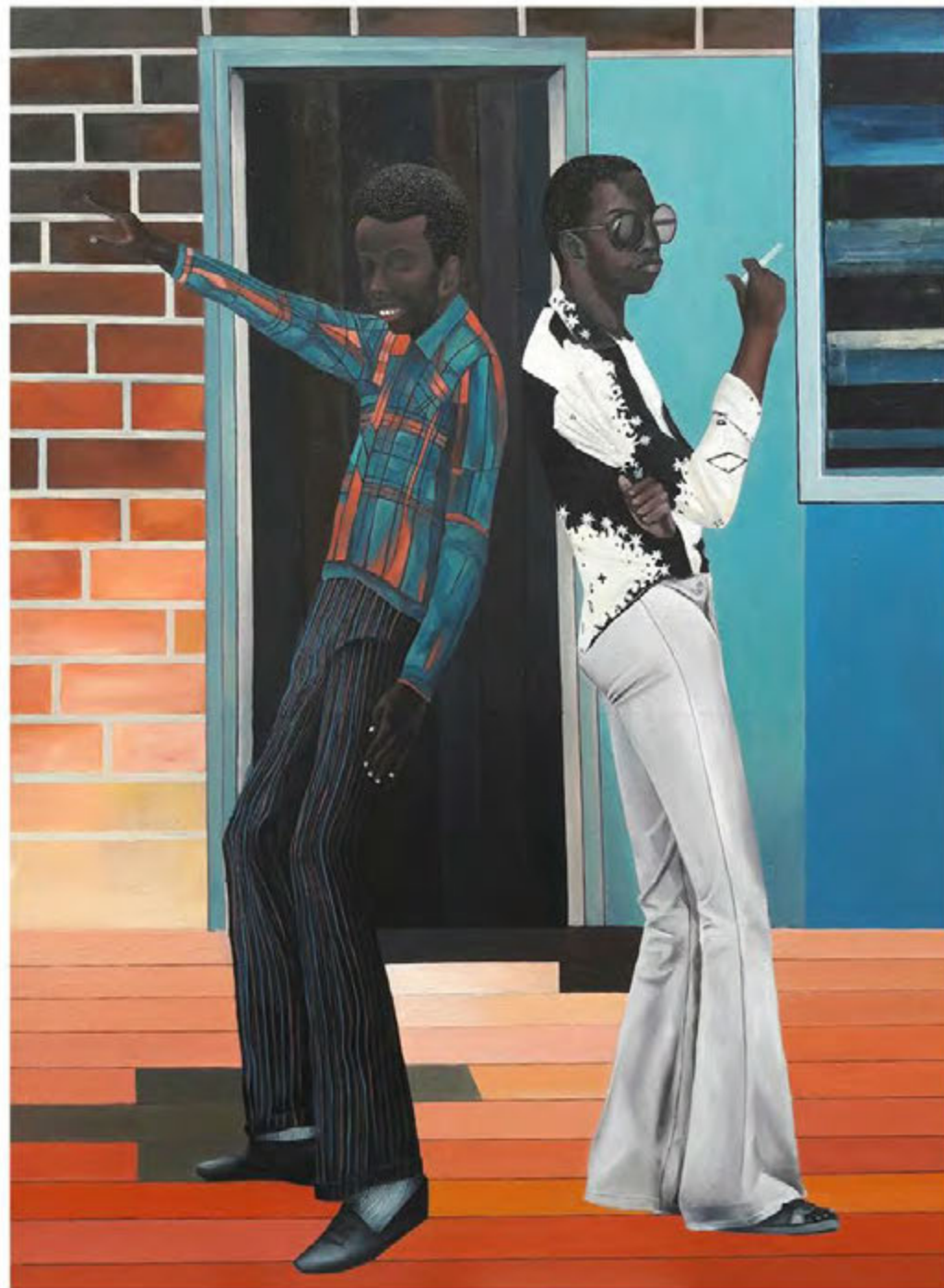
Ian Mwesiga graduated with a BA in Fine Art from the Margaret Trowell School of Industrial and Fine Arts in 2014. He has undertaken residencies at 32° East, Ugandan Arts Trust, Kampala and Kuona Trust Centre for Visual Arts, Nairobi, both in 2014.

Mwesiga's works have been exhibited in a solo exhibition at AKA Gallery Kampala, in 2014 as well as numerous selected group exhibitions including Forward Ever Backward Never, Framed, Amsterdam, 2015, East African Encounters, Circle Art Gallery, Nairobi, 2014, KLA ART 014, Kampala Contemporary Art Festival, 2014 and Moving Africa, Dak'Art Biennale, 2014.

Mwesiga participated in the At Work workshop facilitated by Simon Njami and the Asiko Art School in Maputo facilitated by Bisi Silva and CCA Lagos, both in 2015.

"My new work is a flashback of black portraiture, focusing on material culture such as fashion and hair-style trends. It makes reference to a lifestyle that emerged in the 1970s, and aims to refresh our memory of these past times. The paintings are an amalgamation of imagery from personal collections of photographs - of people, friends and family - connoting what I term as 'progressive Africa'. This work is a part of my continuing investigation of black identity in post-colonial Africa."

Ian Mwesiga, Uganda
When it was Bell Bottom, 2017
Acrylic on canvas
100 x 150 cm



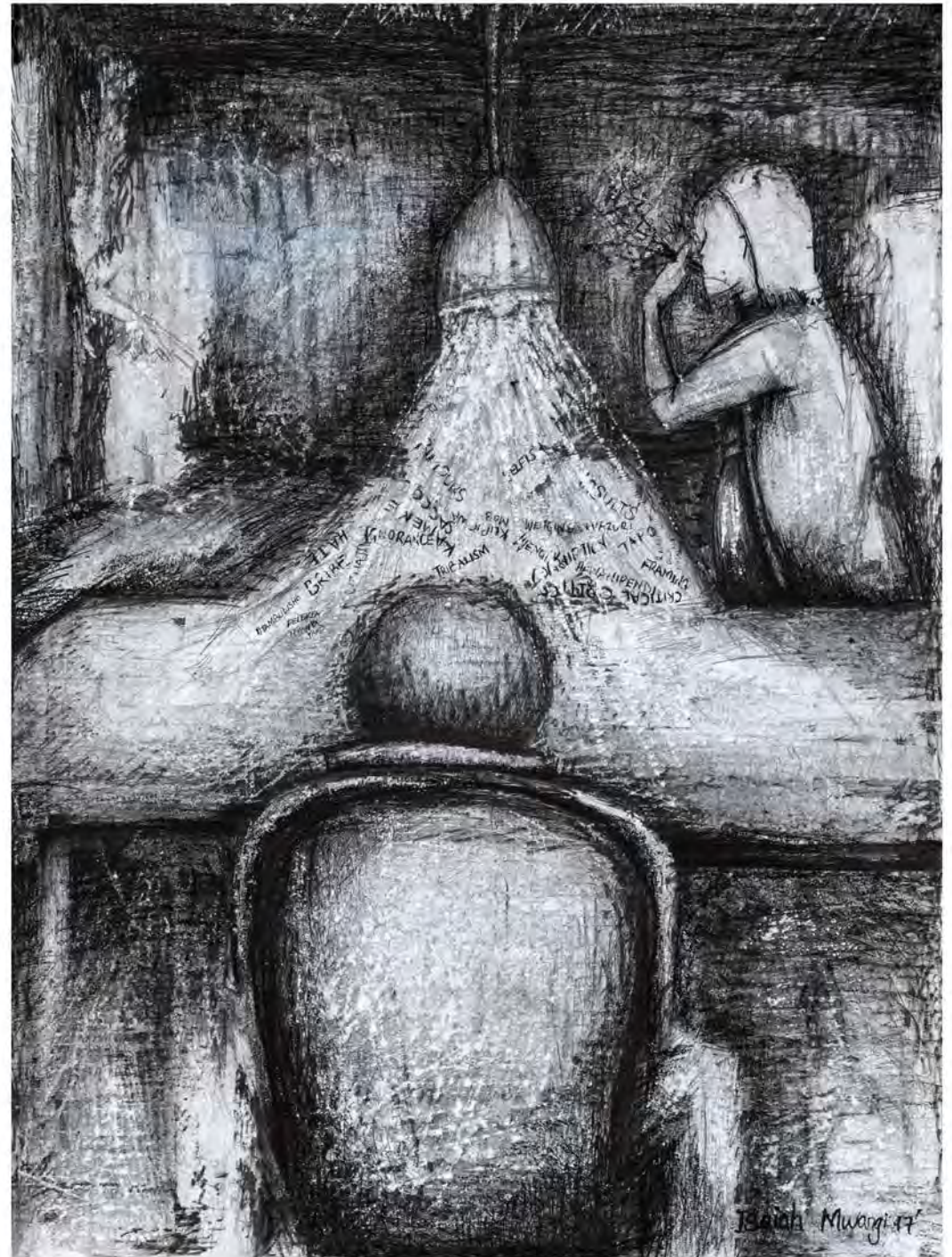
11. Isaiah Mwangi

Isaiah Mwangi is an artist who was born in Juja and is now based in Nairobi. After studying Computer Technology at the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology he developed a serious studio practice, rooted in his long-standing interest in drawing.

Mwangi uses a range of media to create intense drawings and paintings which consider societal issues hidden beneath the surface, and the emotional, psychological and physical marks that they leave on us and our environment.

"*Society's Canvas* depicts an interrogation room. The light at the center of the room reveals hidden societal issues, be it tribalism, ignorance, bribery, killing of innocent youths, or illegal arrests.

In the background of *Unfinished Business* is a building half completed, with the beams popping out of the first floor. Yet below, the light reveals that someone is living on the ground floor."



Isaiah Mwangi, Kenya
Society's Canvas, 2017
Mixed media on paper
69 x 51 cm

12. Joakim Kwaru

Joakim Kwaura was born in 1992 in the Kianda village of Kibera. He developed his knowledge of art and technique as a student of the artist Kota Otieno and later as a studio assistant to Kevo Stero. In 2016 Kwaura joined Maasai Mbili artist collective.

Kwaura's intricate and energetic paintings mix elements of the architecture, roads, flora and fauna from his Kibera neighborhood with fragments of found basketry, sackcloth and street signs.

As well as leading numerous children's workshops and partaking in public art initiatives, Kwaru has been included in exhibitions at Circle Art Gallery, Maasai Mbili Artists Collective, Nagenda International Art Academy, Uganda and the GoDown Art Centre.



*Joakim Kwaru, Kenya
Into The Ghetto, 2017
Acrylic on canvas
165.5 x 202 cm*

13. Julian Manjahi

Julian Manjahi is a photographer born and raised in Kiambu, Thika. He studied Mass Communication at Daystar University and currently works in Nairobi as a freelance photographer.

Manjahi's works traverse two different spaces; of nature and wildlife, and urban environments. His interest in street and urban photography was sparked when he relocated from the rural surroundings of Thika to the concrete jungle, full of car noises and human traffic, that makes up Kenya's capital. The contrast between these two spaces has fueled his passion for photography, which he uses as a visual extension of how the environment makes him feel. For Manjahi, art making is about connection and aesthetics; attaining a mixture of these two.

Manjahi's works have been exhibited as part of group exhibitions such as Frontiers of the Present, Circle Art Gallery, 2016, Mwangilio Tofauti II, National Museums of Kenya, 2013, and have been published by National Geographic, 2015 and Inside Africa, a publication by CNN, 2014.

"Whirlpools"

I experimented with a photographic technique of panning from a moving vehicle. This created a swirling effect which I used to emphasize the stories that arose from the scenarios and people in the pictures. The images to ask: What is it that dominates these people's lives? Or what is it that their lives revolve around?

Just Add Water

One of my favorite times to photograph is during the rainy season, where a seemingly normal day or evening can be transformed by just adding water. I find that the rain combined with architecture, people etc. creates very formally interesting scenes."



*Julian Manjahi, Kenya
Just Add Water 2, 2012
Photographic print
33 x 43 cm*

14. Joseph Waweru (Weche)

Joseph Waweru is an artist currently working in the communal studio of Wajukuu Art Project. He was born in Nakuru town in 1987 and later attended Mukuru Art and Craft Skills Training Centre, where he met the artist Shabu Mwangi in 2004. In response to the challenges of surviving in the art industry, Shabu established a collective art centre. A group of about twenty people came together to create Wajukuu Art Project, to encourage and support each other morally and emotionally as artists.

"My artwork considers the social and economic issues of urban and slum living in Kenya. The congestion of people within an area is something I am very interested in. Nairobi hosts so many groups of people and I'm curious about their interests and uniqueness as individuals, as well as their group behavior. As insects move in masses to achieve their goals and keep future generations in existence, so does mankind. The movement of groupings of people, of race, culture and tribe, is what moves me to create paintings."



*Joseph Waweru (Weche), Kenya
The Comrade, 2017
Mixed media on canvas
76.5 x 64.5 cm*

15. Kaloki Nyamai

Kaloki Nyamai was born in Kitui and now lives and works in Nairobi. He creates works using canvas, board, metal, video and installation which explore parallels between the past and the present. Kaloki studied at the BiFa Institute of Fine Arts. He has exhibited in Kenya and abroad, including Spain in 2011 and the UK in 2016 and 2015.

Kaloki has also worked in various roles for many film productions including as art director for Nsisi, prop maker for Nairobi Half Life and assistant art director for Malika.

"My work stems from a fascination with comparing our present time to that of our ancient ancestors and the space in-between. I intend my work to question human behavior, patterns and repetition, and how people exist in certain spaces. In this work, I am considering the spaces that are created when traditional or religious beliefs, narrations or fashions are consumed unquestioningly within a particular culture or time. I am investigating these frameworks from my own historical lineage in comparison to what is happening in my environment today. I observe that even in the face of political, economic, industrial and technological advancements, we tend to find patterns that repeat themselves over the course of time and that despite time passing, much remains the same."



*Kaloki Nyamai, Kenya
Untitled II, 2017
Mixed media on canvas*

16. Leevans Linyera

Leevans Linyera is a painter currently based at Railways Studio in Nairobi. He was mentored in earlier years by Patrick Mukabi at the GoDown Art Center. He works in a range of media and is inspired by human emotion and behaviour.

“Outlive

I work a lot with children and am often touched by their kindness and enthusiasm which has a power over me that makes me respond with generosity towards them.

Wax of Wisdom

The title refers to how wisdom grows with knowledge and age, and how listening is an important component in gaining wisdom. The older one becomes the more things one has heard, and the better decisions are made.

Nairobi Series II

This painting expresses the love I have for Nairobi, the city I was born in; the sounds, chaos, crowds and beauty.”



Leevans Linyera, Kenya
Outlive, 2016
Acrylic on canvas
70 x 60 cm

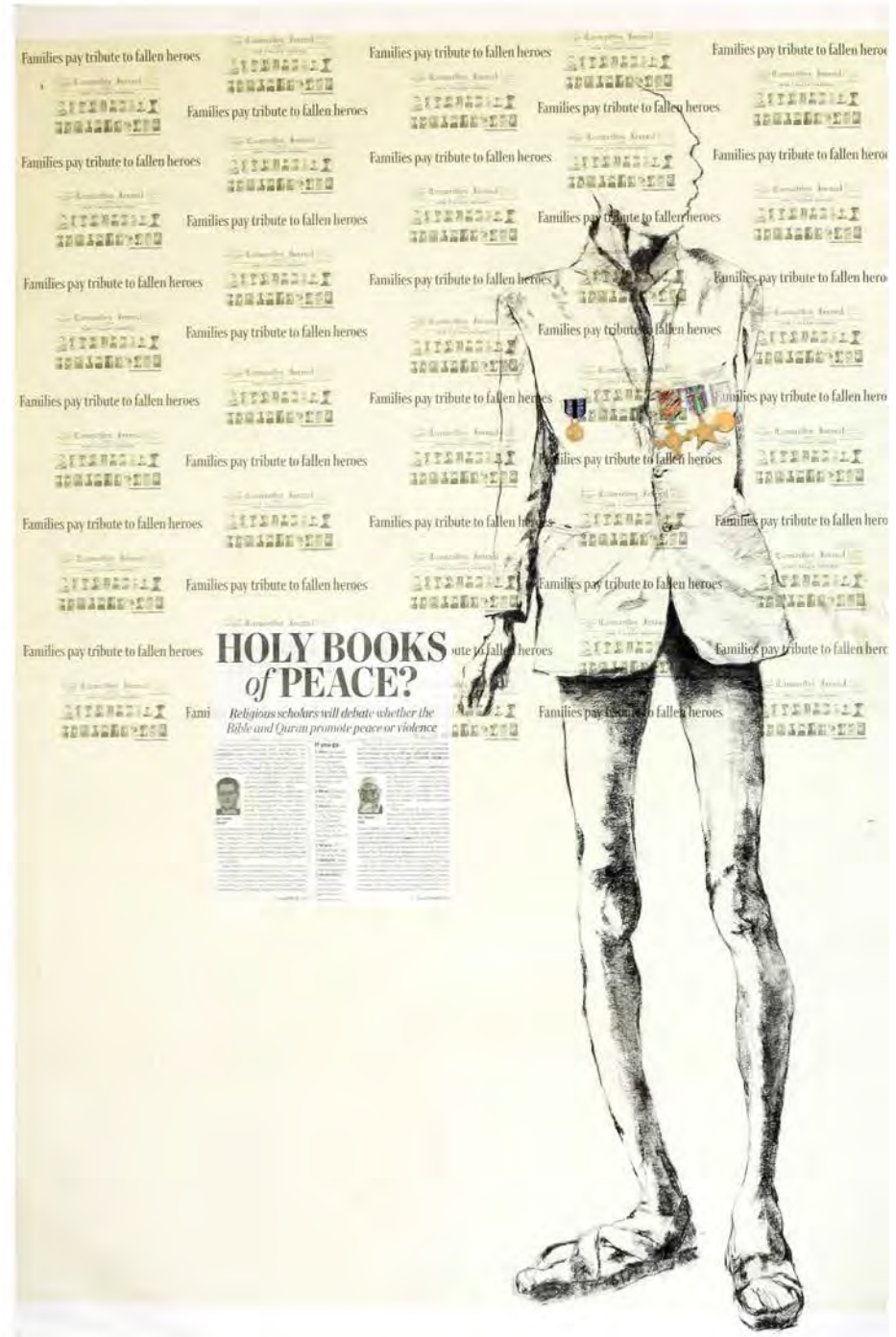
17. Lemek Tompoika

Born in 1988 in Kajiado, Lemek currently lives and practices in Nairobi. He attended an Art and Drawing course at the Creative Art College, Nairobi in 2005. In 2013, he took up a studio at Kuona Trust Art Centre to begin a full-time art practice.

Using charcoal, pastel and graphite on paper, his work reflects a curiosity about public spaces and the dynamics of human conduct. Lemek's work has been shown in several group exhibitions in Nairobi and abroad. He's also participated in international, continental and national art competitions as well as conducting workshops in Kenya.

"*Holy Books of Peace* is a series of works focusing on war as a personal debate, where ideas, information and beliefs collide within and among ourselves. By investigating the nature of wars, I am questioning the existence of peace and whether it denies us our humanity by denying us our right to fight for our beliefs and rights."

Lemek Tompoika, Kenya
Holy Books of Peace II, 2017
Mixed media on paper
151 x 100 cm



18. Lincoln Mwangi & Peteros Ndunde

Born in 1996, Peteros Ndunde is a Nairobi based artist currently taking a BA in Fine Arts at Kenyatta University.

Ndunde has participated in many group shows in Nairobi as well as in the World Art Fair, World Trade Centre, Dubai in 2017. He was a recipient of the MASK Prize in 2016 and his work was displayed at the Saatchi Gallery in London. In 2016 he completed a residency at Brush Tu Art Studio.

Lincoln Mwangi was born in Nairobi in 1996. He has completed an art course at Buruburu Institute of Fine Arts and now works as an artist in Nairobi. Mwangi has exhibited in a number of group shows in Nairobi.

“Bedrock and Bedrock

The video installation explores multiple perspectives of inter and intra generational interactions. It comprises a pair of televisions, a video and sound. The two televisions, an older one and a more modern one, are placed side by side. The video is split between the two screens, beginning on the left, in the old television, with a potassium permanganate and water reaction. The potassium permanganate diffuses through the water from left to right. Once it reaches the right side, another reaction starts on the second television. This time molten salt is added to water; it explodes then slowly subsides.

During the first reaction, traditional funeral music of the Akan people plays, panning from the left to the center of the sound system. Once centered the sound changes to a mellow, modern trance-like sound. It then shifts again as it moves to the right of the sound system, to a high-tempo African voodoo-ritual drumming.

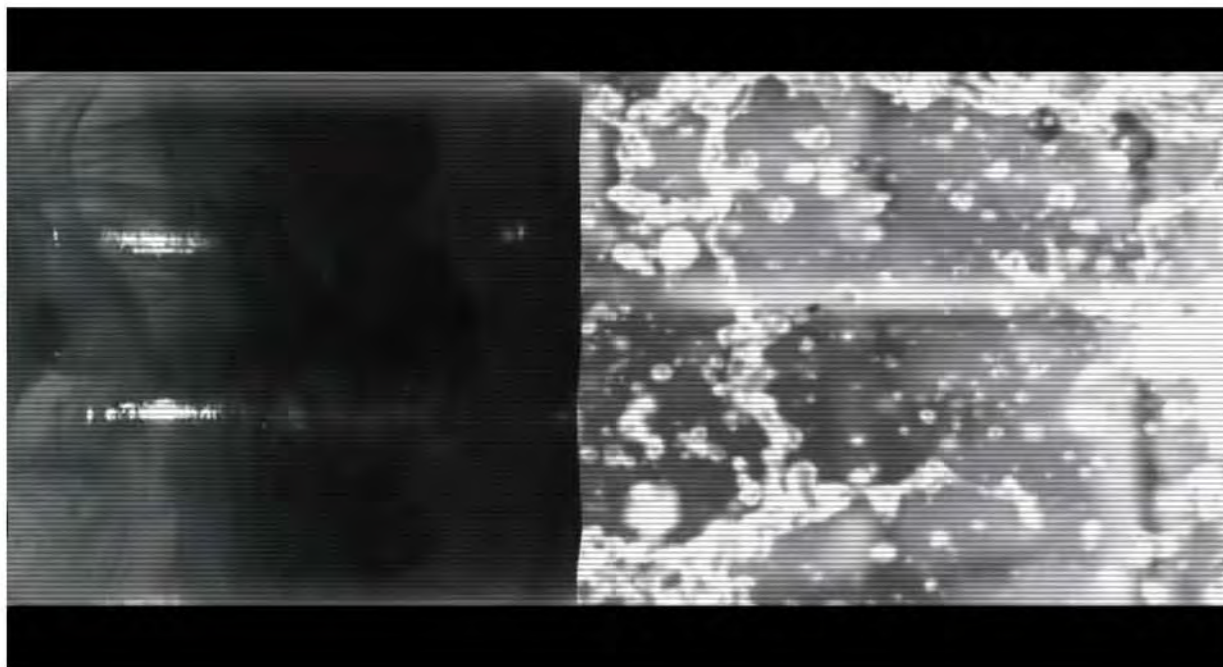
The choice of television sets expresses aspects of time and space. Time and space are transformative forces and affect the individuals of different generations both separately and together. The presence and set up of the two televisions as one systematic entity symbolizes the existence of multiple generations together in shared spaces.

The chemical reactions depict the inter and intra generational interactions. The change may be subtle, as when the potassium permanganate gently diffuses in the water, or it can be aggressive like the way molten salt explodes once dipped in water.

Potassium permanganate and molten salt represent youth. More often than not, the young are the bringers and subjects of change. Youth is the point when the search for identity and independence occurs. Older generations already have their independence and identities, due to this, they will at some point impose their identities on those younger. Some have also pushed younger generations to develop identities that they wished they could have had for themselves, disregarding changes in perspectives, culture, time and spaces. As such, the water represents the older generations, who remain steady throughout time, with consolidated identities.

The sound shows a transition from traditional African cultures to contemporary hybridized ones, greatly influenced by changes in technology and cultural exchange. For this reason, the sound is sourced from a traditional African recording, but is tuned and presented in a modern method. The sound pans between the two to show a change in space and time, as well as the transference and development of culture, and ideas from older generations to younger ones.

The video bears some glitches to put emphasis on drifts from the norm that come with the journey of looking for an identity and independence.”



*Lincoln Mwangi & Peteros Ndunde, Kenya
Edited by: Raphael Masinde
Bedrock to Bedrock, 2017
Video, Edition 1/1
3 mins 7 sec*

19. Michael Musyoka

Michael Musyoka was born in 1986 and raised in Nairobi's Kariobangi South estate. He grew to appreciate the aesthetics of matatu art, street graffiti and local business signboards in his neighborhood. His passion for comics and the characters which he would copy and improvise laid the ground work for his approach to figurative compositions. This skill secured work for Musyoka as an illustrator for publishing companies and advertising agencies.

Musyoka's journey into painting began with sign writing in 2006. He is now a practicing artist, drawing upon what he sees and hears; music, movies, literature and day-to-day experiences, to create work.

"*Hunting Grounds* is a body of work that emanates from ordeals inflicted on me and/or people close to me, by the police and officers of the city inspectorate. The latter ironically bends the law to extort from and exploit the very public that they are meant to protect. Their actions consequently place them in the position of a predator laying down traps to catch their prey. These works are imaginations of where, when and how these traps are laid."



Michael Musyoka, Kenya
Hunting Grounds #4, 2017
Acrylics on canvas
100 x 100 cm

20. Mosoti Kepha

Mosoti Kepha is a sculptor based at Kuona Trust Art Centre. He has a diploma in Painting from the Buruburu Institute of Fine Art.

Mosoti has been a practicing artist for more than nine years now, and has become well known in Kenya for his figurative wooden sculptures.

He has participated in several joint exhibitions in Kenya, and collaborated with many renowned artists.

"Buffalo Charger comes from a Buffalo skull owned by one of the artists at Kuona Trust. I saw a great beauty in the features within and without the skull, so I decided to try and communicate that beauty in wood."



*Mosoti Kepha, Kenya
Buffalo Charger, 2017
Pine wood sculpture
60 x 90 x 27 cm*

21. Mwini Mutuku

Mwini Mutuku is a Kenyan born artist. He holds a degree in Professional Design from Limkokwing University of Creative Technology in Cyberjaya, Malaysia. Mwini's practice revolves around concepts of human existence and environment. He uses a growing diversity of materials including industrial machines to make work. Mwini won the Prestigious Absolut Art Award in 2014, the Kenya Art Fair prize for Digital Art in 2015 and third prize in the 2017 Manjano Art Competition.

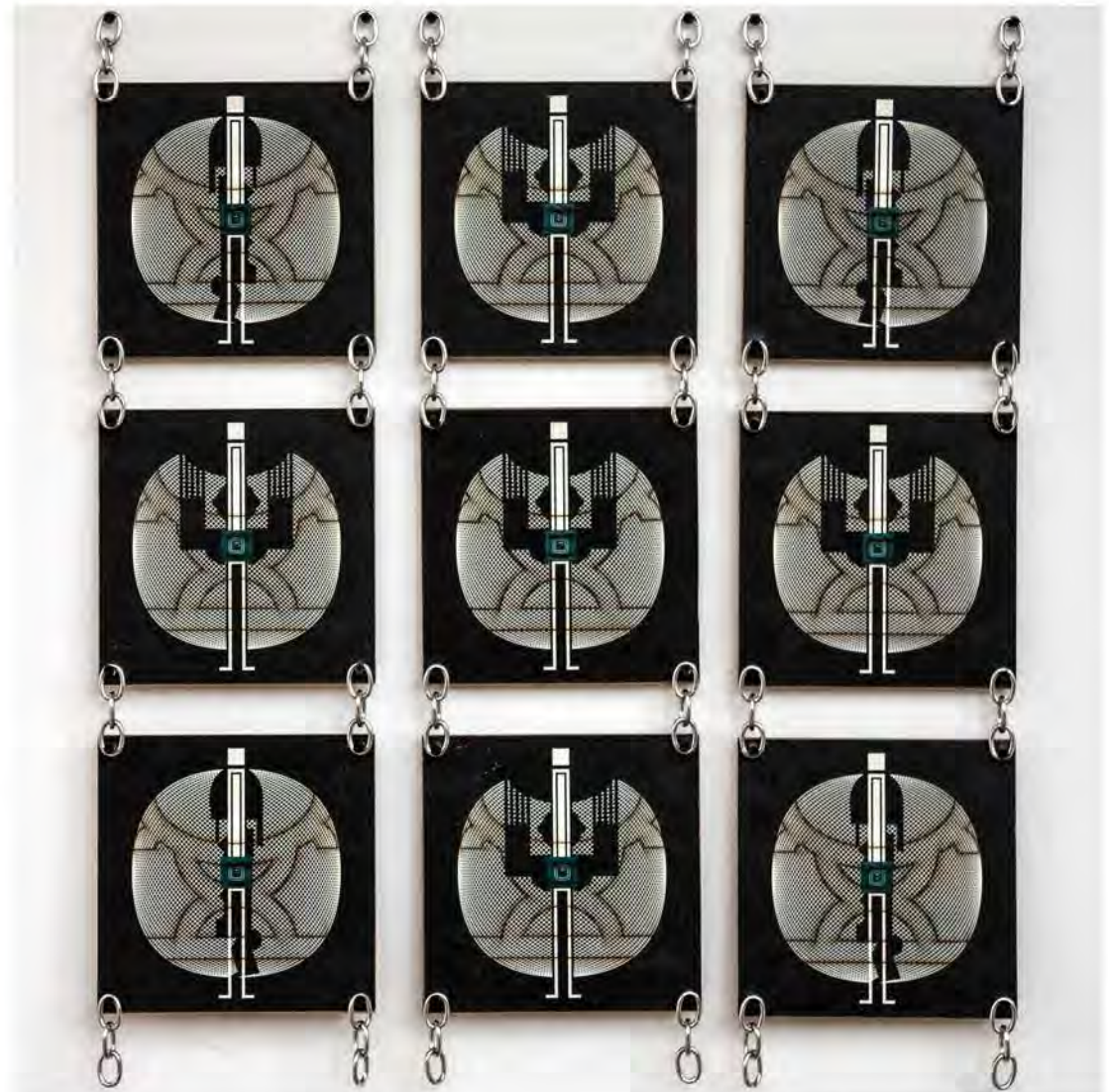
"Through constant experimentation I explore subjective emotional responses to various aspects of life in general. Self-reflection, experimentation and emotions are central to my work - it is about connecting with others' minds and creating a dialogue

Blue Chip

Over time, technology has won its place between paint and marble. Art is taught through technology and technology is a tool to make art. In my practice, I utilize various technologies and regularly go to a certain printer in Nairobi's CBD. I am fascinated by the magical machine there, which processes a colossal volume of information and needs to replace its microchip frequently. Blue Chip is a new series, using pieces of micro-technology. Is it really art? What is the role of the artist in this process?

Viscosity

There are encountered frictions between being an artist and responding commercially to the art market. I see parallels between two different commercial markets: of art and water. The first deals in dreams and the second connects with the reality of life. Can these two items be treated as 'products'? How does packaging change their initial purpose? Can we be reasonable when we speak about art and water?"



*Mwini Mutuku, Kenya
Blue Chip, 2017
Polyptych of 9 panels
20 x 20 cm (each panel)*

22. Ngugi Waweru

Ngugi Waweru is an artist living in Mukuru, Nairobi, where he works from the collective Wajukuu Art Project as a painter and printmaker. Waweru is one of the founders of Wajukuu Art Project which was formed after a small group of artists living within the community came together to support and train each other, to search for a market as a collective and to build an art culture within the community.

"I tend to begin my works by applying thick paint to canvas to form a rough texture. When I work on this rough surface, it reminds me of the struggles we all go through; our inner strengths, and the knowledge that we use to overcome challenges. I feel a sense of relief and calmness when I complete a piece.

When people look at my work I want them to be curious, and see how stitches (connections) in our lives play a big role in hiding and healing the individual rough paths that we may have travelled. Most of my artworks have these two elements, of roughness and stitching, which I use to create a sense of struggle."

Ngugi Waweru, Kenya
Holes and scars of war (I), 2017
Acrylic on canvas
89 x 75 cm



23. Paul Njihia

Paul Njihia began his career in 2010 by painting commissioned portraits as a way of financing his studies. After completing school, he became a full time artist, and in 2014, he joined Kuona Trust Art Centre.

Njihia has taken part in several artist residencies including Kenya-Deutschland, Konstanz, Germany, 2015 and at Nafasi Art Space, Dar es Salaam. He has participated in many group exhibitions in Nairobi and also in Dar es Salaam.

"Backbenchers View & Untitled

These paintings are part of an ongoing series that interrogates the school system in Kenya. They examine the obsession with numbers in the education system and their significance, where exam marks are used to categorize students; creating a non-physical gap between the best performers and the non-performers in their shared classrooms.

Tower of Babel

Nairobi's infrastructure is growing at an astonishing rate. Builders and contractors are competing over who is going to build the next tallest/biggest/coolest building around.

I am fascinated by the transformation these buildings undergo before they reach completion. They look dangerous and unstable while in progress, eventually becoming polished and shiny on completion."



*Paul Njihia, Kenya
Back Benchers View, 2017
Mixed media on wood
100 x 100.5 cm*

24. Sidney Mang'ong'o

Sidney Mang'ong'o, born in Kenya in 1983, began his art career at Maasai Mbili Art Center in Kibera. After five years working from Kuona Trust Art Centre, he now has a studio on the outskirts of Ngong town.

Mang'ongo's ongoing experimentation with collage using both abstract qualities and the popular imagery of magazines and newspapers is unique and exciting.

"These studies are part of a body of work that I have been developing in the last few months. They are a set of abstractions arrived at through experimentation with both material, technique and idea. They have been reached through a labour intensive process of layering interesting found imagery, political jargon and textures on board to create a narrative about the degradation of government."



*Sidney Mang'ong'o, Kenya
Untitled (triptych), 2016
Mixed media
74 x 53 cm (each)*

25. Waweru Gichuhi

Waweru Gichuhi is a painter based at Brush Tu Art Studios in Nairobi. He studied Art and Graphic Design at the Technical University of Kenya and then worked as a graphic designer for some years before joining Brush Tu in order to focus on his art practice. Primarily using acrylic paint to create colorful figurative works, Waweru also actively experiments with different media and styles in his exploration of diverse topics affecting people in their day-to-day lives.

“In this series, I am investigating the impact of new means of communication and expression, particularly of social media, and considering how it has affected and continues to change human behavior and interaction.

With the advancement of technology and the proliferation of new apps every other day, people are constantly finding new ways to express themselves. We increasingly communicate what we want to say without necessarily using words or full language, and are now accustomed to using emojis, emoticons, and hashtags to send out messages and discuss issues. The use of these alternative forms of expression has caused some disconnect between people with both positive and negative effects. *Alternative Lines of Communication 1* is about this disconnect.”

Waweru Gichuhi, Kenya
Alternative Lines of Communication 1, 2017
Mixed media on canvas
138 x 99 cm





Directors: Danda Jaroljmek and Arvind Vohora

Circle was founded in 2012 to provide a highly professional consultancy service to individual and corporate collectors and art institutions, and build audiences through curating ambitious pop-up exhibitions.

In 2015, we opened our permanent gallery space in Nairobi, aiming to be the foremost exhibition space in East Africa. Our intention is to create a strong and sustainable art market for East African artists by supporting and promoting the most innovative and exciting artists currently practicing in the region. We exhibit carefully curated, challenging and thought-provoking contemporary art and invite guest curators to work with us.

We also participate in international art fairs and engage with the art community by providing a venue for presentations from local and international artists, curators, art critics, collectors and academics.

Gallery hours:

Weekdays 10am - 5pm, Saturdays 12pm - 5pm
or by appointment outside these hours, closed in Sundays and public holidays

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