

# secession

Vereinigung bildender KünstlerInnen Wiener Secession  
Friedrichstraße 12, A-1010 Wien  
T. +43-1-587 53 07, F. +43-1-587 53 07-34  
office@secession.at, www.secession.at

## Press release

### Kresiah Mukwazhi

#### *Kirawa*

February 17 – April 16, 2023

Galerie

**Preview for the press:** Thursday, February 16, 2023, 10 a.m.

**Opening:** Thursday, February 16, 2023, 7 p.m.

In *Kirawa*, her first solo exhibition at an Austrian institution, Kresiah Mukwazhi presents a new body of work consisting of textile paintings and video works. Her mixed-media collages, sculptures, videos, and performances are informed by her personal experiences and observations of gender-based violence, exploitation and abuse in her native Zimbabwe. In vibrant textile works, female figures perform seemingly vulgar and obscene gestures, hinting at the artist's inquiries into the arduous working and living conditions of female sex workers in Zimbabwe's patriarchal society. Against this backdrop of precarization and marginalization, Mukwazhi uses her powerful work as a form of visual activism, scrupulously carving out forms of resistance and self-empowerment. Mutual support and encouragement, together with humour as a weapon and means of resistance, are recurring themes in her work.

The artist describes *Kirawa* as a place of sacred resistance: "In this body of work, I am interested in creating moments of an imaginary safe place where we go to seek healing, fight battles, and find answers. I present a society that is at disharmony and disease because the life-bearers of this world are raped and abused every day. I ask who is responsible. When will it end? I use my body to personify the grotesque nature of perpetrators of abuse as I imagine. This is a somewhat difficult role for me as someone who wishes to resist these oppressive systems. I attempt to wear the face of patriarchy while fighting it at the same time. It becomes a face-to-face with the oppressor if you may. The intention here is to mock the system while at the same time triggering the feeling of trauma and discomfort caused by that system. Dressed as a robber to signify the theft and corruption causing poverty in the nation; I am seen with a whisk which I toss around to sprinkle the medicine on matters oppressing women in the society and to chastise the perpetrators. I also show moments of pride and empowerment in the painting/textile titled *Zvamanjemanje ndirikupisa (As for now, I am hot)* through a social scene of sex workers casually showing off their lingerie; even though their dignity is often questioned they find moments of empowerment. One might ask what are the repercussions of speaking up against systems of abuse? To this, I respond with the painting titled *the unrest of Ali*, where I bring to light the story of the gruesome and mysterious death of

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a political activist who was missing for 18 days whose decapitated body was then found in a well. In the work titled *in search of stolen glory*, I see the bald-headed woman as a woman who has been dethroned and has lost her crown and goes to seek healing and reclaim her power from the sacred waters. Before the fall of matriarchy, we find that African societies had a sense of harmony in how they lived, and this was because women and men coexisted and worked together. However, the indoctrination of Christianity brought about the worship of a white God who Africans were forced to believe was a man, thus beginning the perpetuation of patriarchy. Kirawa is a place of sacred resistance, where I expose and push back against this colonization and socio-political issues forcing women into precarious labour aiming at reclaiming the sacred power that women are destined to have. The female body, therefore, becomes a site for resistance and a site to question power relations. At my Kirawa you will find the white cloth of purity and sanctification and you will find life. You will find real stories affecting real people and you will find a voice that stands for the injustices in the world.” (Kresiah Mukwazhi)

Kresiah Mukwazhi was born in Harare, Zimbabwe, 1992, and lives and works in Harare, Zimbabwe, and Cologne, Germany.

Programmed by the board of the Secession  
Curated by Jeanette Pacher

The exhibition by Kresiah Mukwazhi is a collaboration between the Secession and Nottingham Contemporary, where it will be presented from 27 May to 3 September 2023.

**Nottingham**  
**Contemporary**

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## Publication

### *Kresiah Mukwazhi*

Format: 14,8 x 21 cm

Details: Softcover, Schutzumschlag, 80 Seiten

Series design concept: Sabo Day

Graphic design: Sabo Day

Texts: Noemi Smolik (essay), Pauline Chirata Mukondiwa (poem), Fadzai Veronica Muchemwa and Kresiah Mukwazhi (conversation)

24 images

Secession 2023

Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther und Franz König, Köln

ISBN 978-3-7533-0422-9

EUR 18,00

Intervention by the artist:

*kuda*, 2015

Black-and-white photograph, 10 × 15 cm, stamped on the back, loosely inserted into the book

On occasion of her exhibition at the Secession, the Kresiah Mukwazhi releases her first monograph. She speaks to the curator Fadzai Muchemwa about key themes of her work: the everyday lives and oppression of women, the consequences thereof for social progress in Zimbabwe, and her ideas about healing; the art historian Noemi Smolik, meanwhile, gives an introduction to Mukwazhi's oeuvre. Reproductions of numerous works and a series of photographs by the artist framing a poem by Pauline Chirata Mukondiwa illustrate the publication, which includes an artistic intervention in the form of a limited-edition black-and-white photoprint.

The art historian and critic **Noemi Smolik** has written numerous texts on contemporary art as well as on Russian art history, curated exhibitions, and taught at art colleges. She writes regularly for the FAZ, Artforum/New York and Kunstforum/Cologne. She lives in Berlin and Prague.

**Pauline Chirata Mukondiwa** has described the Shona language as a fundamental cultural tool that defines her identity as Zimbabwean and has published two poetry collections in English and Shona to demonstrate that both can equally occupy the language canon. The author's poetry explores the power of words to traverse a wide range of emotions.

Researcher, writer and curator **Fadzai Veronica Muchemwa** is a Curator for Contemporary Art at The National Gallery of Zimbabwe and curated the Zimbabwe Pavilion at the Venice Biennale 2022. She lives and works in Harare, Zimbabwe.

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### Current exhibitions

Hauptraum

**Christine Sun Kim** *Cues on Point*

February 17 – April 16, 2023

Galerie

**Kresiah Mukwazhi** *Kirawa*

February 17 – April 16, 2023

Grafisches Kabinett

**Jordan Strafer** *LOOPHOLE*

February 17 – April 16, 2023

### Publications

*Christine Sun Kim. DRAW A BLANK – BLANK ZIEHEN*

Softcover, dustjacket, 144 pages, EUR 24,00

*Kresiah Mukwazhi*

Softcover, dustjacket, 80 pages, EUR 18,00

*Jordan Strafer. LOOPHOLE*

Softcover, dustjacket, 80 pages, EUR 18,00

### Permanent presentation

Gustav Klimt, *Beethoven Frieze*

*Beethoven – Painting and Music* in cooperation with  
Wiener Symphoniker

### Opening hours

Tuesday – Sunday 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

### Admission

Regular € 12,00 | Students under 26 € 7,50

Seniors 65+ € 10,00 | Free admission for children under 12

### Press contact Secession

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### Press images

download at <https://secession.at/presse>

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## Kresiah Mukwazhi

### Biografie | Biography

Kresiah Mukwazhi wurde 1992 in Harare, Simbabwe, geboren und lebt und arbeitet in Harare, Simbabwe, und Köln, Deutschland.

Kresiah Mukwazhi was born in Harare, Zimbabwe, 1992, and lives and works in Harare, Zimbabwe, and Cologne, Germany.

### Einzelausstellungen (Auswahl) | Solo exhibitions (selection)

- 2023 Nottingham Contemporary, Nottingham, UK
- 2023 Kirawa, Secession, Vienna, Austria
- 2022 Ndakamira pamukaha (Standing my ground till it cracks), Jan Kaps, Cologne
- 2021 Zviratidzo. blank projects, Cape Town
- 2020 Mukando, Jan Kaps, Cologne
- 2018 Bedroom Interview, SMAC Gallery, Cape Town

### Gruppenausstellungen (Auswahl) | Group exhibitions (selection)

- 2022 Zimbabwean Pavilion, 59th International Art Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia Empowerment, Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Wolfsburg
- 2021 OFF ROAD II, Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp  
Mixed Company, Norval Foundation, Cape Town
- 2020 Love your symptoms but not too much, blank projects, Cape Town Materiality, Iziko South African National Gallery, Cape Town
- 2019 African Textures. Jeanne Gaigher, Kresiah Mukwazhi, Marlene Steyn, Osart Gallery, Milan, Italy  
The Female Line, SMAC Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa  
Conversations in Texture, Berman Contemporary, Johannesburg, South Africa  
Legitimate Expectations, Market Photo Workshop, Johannesburg, South Africa  
Not the Usual Suspects, Iziko Museums, Cape Town, South Africa  
Five Bhoobh – Painting at the End of an Era, Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (MOCAA), Cape Town, South Africa  
Prism of Freedom, Netherlands Institute of Sound and Vision
- 2018 Legitimate Expectations, The Market Photo Workshop, Johannesburg  
PARA\_OTHER, with Performance, Take me back to Osibisa (with blood on my hands), Chale Wote Street Art Festival, Accra
- 2017 That, Around Which the Universe Revolves, Kapitel 3 - Harare, SAVVY Contemporary, Berlin at Njelele Art Station, Harare, Zimbabwe
- 2016 My Private Moments, The National Gallery of Zimbabwe, Bulawayo

### Fellowships und Stipendien | Fellowships and Grants

- 2020 Institute for Creative Arts (ICA) fellowship with Performance, Zvisarira, Cape Town
- 2018 Research Residency ANT Mobility Grant, Pro Helvetia

### Residencies und Performances | Residencies and Performances

- 2019 Arts of Africa and Global Souths, Rhodes University with Performance, Summoned from Luzari, Makhanda  
Nafasi Art Space with Performance, Pamuchakata, Dar es Salaam
- 2018 Katutura Art Centre, Windhoek, Namibia supported by ANT Mobility Grant, Pro Helvetia

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## Kresiah Mukwazhi

### List of works

#### Room 1

*Rakazvirova rikazhamba (it (the cock) hit itself and it cried)*, 2023  
HD video, 8:19 min, colour, sound

#### Room 2 and corridor

*"Zvamanjamanje ndirikupisa" ("As for now I am hot")*, 2023  
Acrylic on canvas, 212 x 203 cm

#### Corridor left

*Yaivepo nguva yandaitya asi yakapfura (there was a time I was afraid, not anymore)*, 2023  
Acrylic on canvas, 215 x 144 cm

#### Corridor right

*Tsvukukuviri (the two headed snake with double standards)*, 2023  
Acrylic on canvas, 215 x 132 cm

#### Room 3 (clockwise)

*In search of stolen glory*, 2023  
Acrylic on canvas, 210 x 224 cm

*Simuka tienzane (stand up to my height)*, 2023  
HD Video, 3:12 min, colour, sound

*The unrest of Ali*, 2023  
Acrylic on canvas, 230 x 180 cm

*Ura mutsime (the guts in the well)*, 2023  
Mixed media on canvas, 142 x 95 cm

*The unrest of Ali 2*, 2023  
Acrylic on canvas, 140 x 95 cm

*Kupukunyuka muhuranda (I get out of all your boxes)*, 2023  
Acrylic on canvas, 220 x 150 cm

*Kirawa renguwo tsvuku (the redcloth of sacred resistance)*, 2023  
Video installation, HD video, 7:38 min, colour, sound,  
Trees, stones, wooden bowl, river water, cotton fabric

All works: Courtesy of the artist and Jan Kaps, Cologne