



Berlin, December 8, 2022

**PRESS RELEASE**

**Hamburger Bahnhof – Nationalgalerie der Gegenwart**

Invalidenstraße 50/51, 10557 Berlin

Tues., Wed., Fri. 10–6; Thurs. 10–8; Sat.–Sun. 11–6

**Sandra Mujinga. IBMSWR: I Build My Skin With Rocks**

September 9, 2022 – May 1, 2023

A special exhibition by the Nationalgalerie – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

**Opening:** Thursday, December 8, 2022, 8 pm

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Stauffenbergstraße 41  
10785 Berlin

**MECHTILD KRONENBERG**  
HEAD OF DIVISION

**FIONA GEUSS**  
PRESS OFFICER NATIONALGALERIE

Tel: +49 30 3978 34-17  
Mobile: +49 151 527 51 565

presse@smb.spk-berlin.de  
www.smb.museum/presse

For the exhibition IBMSWR: I Build My Skin with Rocks, her first institutional solo exhibition in Germany, Norwegian artist and musician Sandra Mujinga has fabricated a new skin to question what it means to be human and to imagine different ways of moving through the world.

Skin organizes life. It envelops everything that makes us into the human beings we are in flesh, blood, and spirit, and is arguably the primary site of exchange between our inner lives and the outside world. As a supple barrier, it protects the body, yet it is susceptible to attack: not only from physical, chemical, and biological forces, but also through the dangers that arise from its social coding and weaponization within a persistently racist world order.

In the sculptural video and sound installation, I Build My Skin with Rocks, Sandra Mujinga looks to bodily adaptations of animals that emerge during evolution, and specifically to the thick hide of the elephant. She imagines what it could mean to have a tougher skin, allowing for more affirmative ways of moving through the world that extend beyond sheer survival. The work unfolds around a fantastic creature—half-human, half-elephant—which, according to Mujinga’s story, has the power to grow so large that it can no longer be captured by the human eye. Instead, it becomes a shifting and shimmering landscape, which reveals fragments of its stony body to the viewer.

The work exemplifies the dexterity of Mujinga’s practice, which moves fluidly between different media and settings in order to blur the edges of classically-prescribed artistic categories. For the video and sound installation I Build My Skin with Rocks, Mujinga created one of her well-known bodysuits, synthetic skins which the artist props up into ghostly figures as part of sculptural installations – as in the case of the ensembles Reworlding Remains and Sentinels of Change, for which she was awarded the Preis der Nationalgalerie 2021; or which are animated by bodies for live performances or in video works. On this occasion Mujinga has sewn together patches of leather and artificial leather, real and synthetic skin, in order to produce a new elephantine shell for the hybrid creature at the centre of her work.

This second skin was worn by a model and filmed in front of a green screen. The resultant material was digitally reworked by Mujinga and edited into a monumental moving image that plays out across an LED video display measuring 9 x 4 m. The video work is housed within a large ab-

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stract sculptural construction painted in deep black, and is accompanied by a soundtrack composed by the artist.

Flickering between human and elephant, between biological life and geological immortality, and between the figurative and the abstract, the hybrid beast in *I Build My Skin with Rocks* raises questions about what it means to be human in times of increasingly hostile and uninhabitable planetary conditions. Which beings are recognized as humans, and who makes this decision? Is “the human” a category to which we should still aspire to belong? And how might humans look in the future if the species survives?

To mark the exhibition, an extensive catalogue documenting Sandra Mujinga’s work to date will be published by Distanz and designed by HIT!. The book contains contributions by Daniel Milnes, Thangam Ravindrathan, Wong Binghao, and Kathryn Yusoff, as well as a text by Sandra Mujinga (312 pages; 28 Euro museum edition).

The exhibition is curated by Daniel Milnes.

This exhibition is made possible by the Freunde der Nationalgalerie, with the support of BMW.

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