

Kimathi Donkor: Queens of the Undead

Exhibition:
13 September - 24 November 2012

Press view: (with artist present)
Wednesday 12 September 2012, 10am - 12 noon

Kimathi Donkor's dramatic large-scale paintings express pathos, wrath, devotion and irony. From 13 September to 24 November 2012, Iniva (Institute of International Visual Arts) at Rivington Place presents a series of new commissions by the artist celebrating heroic black women from history, alongside selected earlier works.

'These paintings resurrect the undead glory of charismatic black women who each helped define the modern world, and are revered as amazing armed heroines in their homelands – a lot like Joan of Arc. Of course, I enjoy quoting imagery from their own times, but I also want to reflect the turbulent power such bold figures still exert on our contemporary imagination.'
Kimathi Donkor

Kimathi Donkor's work is constructed through extensive research both into history and the ideologically loaded genres of Western oil painting. The artist explores portraiture, narrative and art historical themes in his paintings, creating a body of work often conceived in dialogue with other artists from David and Velazquez, to Sargent and Bowling. This will be the first complete exhibition of painting to date at Rivington Place.

Queens of the Undead is a series of six works exploring the possibilities of figurative painting through the filters of history, legend and myth. Each painting is at once a contemporary portrait, an exploration of art history and an evocation of an historic female commander / royal figurehead from Africa or its Diasporas, celebrated for their place in liberation struggles.

The works are dedicated to the life of Queen Njinga Mbandi who led her armies against the Portuguese empire in Angola; Harriet Tubman, the underground-railroad leader who freed 70 people from U.S. slavery in the 1850s; Queen Nanny who led the Maroon guerillas that fought the British in 1700s Jamaica; and in what is now Ghana, the 20th-century anti-colonial commander-in-chief, Yaa Asantewaa.

Research texts written by curator/ writers David Dibosa (Chelsea College of Art & Design) and Carol Tulloch (University of the Arts) are displayed alongside the paintings, adding context and making reference to histories which might not be so apparent.

To find out more about the exhibition and accompanying series of talks and events, visit www.iniva.org.



Kombi Continua (Scenes from the life of Njinga Mbandi), 2010; *When Shall We Three? (Scenes from the life of Njinga Mbandi)*, 2010. All images by Kimathi Donkor, oil on linen, copyright the artist.

Editor's Notes

Artist biography

Born in Bournemouth, England in 1965, painter Kimathi Donkor lives and works in London. He has a BA in Fine Art from Goldsmiths College and an MA in Fine Art from Camberwell College of Arts, as well as a PGCE in Art and Design. He is completing his doctoral thesis with Chelsea College of Art and Design.

Recent exhibitions include *Invisible Forces*, London (2012) *Seven things to do in an Emergency*, Rome (2011) and the *29th São Paulo Biennial*, Brazil, (2010) as well as solo exhibitions *Hawkins & Co*, Armagh, (2008); *Fall/Uprising*, London, (2005) and *Caribbean Passion: Haiti 1804*, Nottingham (2005). In 2011, he was awarded the Derek Hill scholarship for the British School at Rome, and in 2009 he received an Arts & Humanities Research Council full masters award.

Researchers

Dr David Dibosa trained as a curator, after receiving his first degree from Girton College, University of Cambridge. He was awarded his PhD in Art History from Goldsmiths College, University of London. During the 1990s, he curated public art projects. He is currently Course Leader for MA Art Theory at Chelsea College of Art and Design in the University of the Arts, London. He is also a Researcher in the University of the Arts Research Centre for Transnational Art, Identity and Nation (TrAIN)

Carol Tulloch is a curator, writer and Reader at the CCW Graduate School, and is a member of the Transnational Arts, Identity and Nation Research Centre (TrAIN), at the University of the Arts, London. She is also the TrAIN/V&A Fellow at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Carol's most recent exhibition is the British Council's contribution to London's inaugural International Fashion Showcase featuring Botswana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone (2012).

Further information

For high resolution images please contact:
Sheena Balkwill, Communications Manager
sbalkwill@iniva.org or tel 020 7749 1246

Exhibition listings Information

Exhibition: *Kimathi Donkor: Queens of the Undead*

Dates: 13 September – 24 November 2012

Venue: Rivington Place, London, EC2A 3BA

Rivington Place public opening hours:

Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday: 11am – 6pm

Late Thursdays: 11am – 9pm

Saturday: 12noon – 6pm

Admission: free

info@rivingtonplace.org

www.rivingtonplace.org

Tubes: Old Street/Liverpool Street/Shoreditch High St

Rivington Place is fully accessible, for parking & wheelchair facilities call +44 (0)20 7749 1240

About Iniva

Iniva (Institute of International Visual Arts) engages with new ideas and emerging debates in the contemporary visual arts, reflecting in particular the diversity of contemporary society. We work with artists, curators, creative producers, writers and the public to explore the vitality of visual culture. (www.iniva.org) Iniva is supported by Arts Council England.

About Rivington Place

Opened in 2007, Rivington Place is home to Iniva and Autograph ABP. Designed by architect David Adjaye OBE, this award winning building is dedicated to the display, debate and reflection of global diversity issues in the contemporary visual arts. An ongoing programme of exhibitions and events is presented by Iniva in the 2 project spaces and Iniva's Learning Space. It is also home to the Stuart Hall Library, Iniva's unique research library with specialist resources and collections relating to contemporary international visual arts.

Rivington
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Art, debate
& diversity

Press Release