



Craft Contemporary

5814 Wilshire Boulevard

CONTACT:

Emma Jacobson-Sive
emma@ejs-media.com
PR@craftcontemporary.org
323 937 4230 x 27

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
SEPTEMBER 13, 2021

MOFFAT TAKADIWA WITCH CRAFT: RETHINKING POWER

OCTOBER 3, 2021 – JANUARY 9, 2022



Moffat Takadiwa, *Three Little Witches/Karoi*, 2021. Found toothbrushes, computer keys, 98.4 x 177.2 x 2 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Nicodim Gallery Los Angeles. Photo: Taylor Tschider.

LOS ANGELES — Craft Contemporary presents *Witch Craft: Rethinking Power*, artist Moffat Takadiwa's first solo museum exhibition which features a new body of work accompanied by the artist's first exhibition catalog.

Moffat Takadiwa transforms post-consumer waste – such as used toothpaste tubes, spray cans, computer keyboards – into lush, densely layered sculptures and tapestry-like wall works that embody the complexities of contemporary Zimbabwean politics, culture, and reference his Korekore heritage. For his exhibition, Takadiwa created new works that defy gravity by floating in mid-air and cascading off walls. These pieces are Takadiwa's investigations of power from a distinctly African perspective – one that embraces spirituality as a powerful resource for the continent's future growth.

Takadiwa begins his work by collecting materials from dumping grounds in Harare. These materials are the remnants of everyday consumer goods produced by Western corporations that make their way into Zimbabwean households through the country's extensive secondary markets. His work highlights how global corporations are the continuation of Western cultural and economic influence in Zimbabwe, stating that "trade is not only exchange, but a weapon of dominance, persuasion, to make people totally think like the Other, because using these same materials makes them think like a Westerner because of [these commercial products'] presence in life." Once collected, Takadiwa and his team of craftspeople and art students go through an intensive process of cleaning, sorting, and drilling numerous holes into each object before the items can be assembled into his densely textured works.

For *Witch Craft: Rethinking Power*, Takadiwa has produced works that look like traditional Korekore material culture like baskets or mats that would be used in the home. There is a myth possibly brought by colonization that the traditional mats serve as flying devices for witches. Although he is referencing specific beliefs and myths about witchcraft, Takadiwa is using this and the charged



associations it carries as a touchstone to think about power more broadly, questioning why the spiritual power that exists in Africa is never considered as a source for its future development.

In his series, *Object of Influence*, Takadiwa's tubular forms, created from materials such as bottle tops, toothpaste tubes, and golf tees, levitate throughout the gallery. The famous brands that compose each work have infiltrated daily life in Zimbabwe, replacing traditional cultural beliefs with Western notions of consumerism. Takadiwa shapeshifts these products into vessels of contemplation that transport one out of the Western mindset and into a distinctly "African" consciousness that Takadiwa has fought to create.

In his largest piece for the exhibition, *Three Little Witches/Karoi*, 2021, Takadiwa again subverts the power of these Western products. Karoi, which loosely translates to "little witches," is the region where Takadiwa grew up. It is also an area that has long been associated with witchcraft, mostly due to the punishment of suspected witches under the British Witchcraft Suppression Act which was meant to discourage natives from performing African medical practices or any use of "mysterious powers" and African inventions. In this piece, three blue circles, constructed from toothbrush heads, emerge from a sea of black and white computer keys. Western technology and language have not been able to overtake the spiritual practices of the region. By rendering this history in the objects of Western colonialism, Takadiwa asserts his own power to impart new meaning and narratives onto these materials.

A resident of Harare, Zimbabwe, Takadiwa graduated with a Fine Art diploma from Harare Polytechnic College, Zimbabwe in 2008. Part of the post-independence generation of artists in Zimbabwe, Takadiwa has exhibited extensively across major institutions in Zimbabwe as well as internationally. Recent exhibitions and projects include *Material Insanity*, Museum of African Contemporary Art Al Maaden, Marrakech, Morocco (2019); *The Eye Sees Not Itself*, Nicodim Gallery, Los Angeles (2018); and *De Nature en Sculpture*, Villa Datri Foundation, L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue, France (2017). Takadiwa was also a founding member of First Floor Gallery in Harare where he played a part in mentoring the growing artist community. Takadiwa has been a recipient of many awards since 2008, including the Award of Attendance from The Zimbabwe Olympic Committee, Harare, Zimbabwe in 2012.

CREDITS:

Witch Craft: Rethinking Power has been organized by Craft Contemporary Exhibitions Curator Holly Jerger. This exhibition is supported in part by the Pasadena Art Alliance, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture, and a grant from the City of Los Angeles, Department of Cultural Affairs.

The artist will be present for the museum hosted exhibition preview day on Saturday, October 2, 2021, from 1:00 to 5pm.



Top: Moffat Takadiwa, *True Story (3A)*, 2021. Found computer and calculator keys, 43.3 x 24 x 7.9 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Nicodim Gallery Los Angeles. Photo: Taylor Tschider.



Bottom: Moffat Takadiwa, *Object of Influence (5A)*, 2021. Toothbrush, Sunlight bottle tops, 59.1 x 19.7 x 19.7 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Nicodim Gallery Los Angeles. Photo: Taylor Tschider.



PROGRAMS:

Moffat Takadiwa Artist Talk

Saturday, Oct. 2, 2021, 4pm | Free with admission

RSVP: <https://www.craftcontemporary.org/programs/>

The Craft of Poetry Series:

“Witch Craft -- Contemporary poets respond to the art of Moffat Takadiwa”

Saturday, October 23rd, 6pm | Free

A virtual event at Craft Contemporary (Los Angeles).

Brendan Constantine, moderator, with poets: Natalie J. Graham, Sara Borjas, and Douglas Brown.

RSVP: <https://www.craftcontemporary.org/programs/>



Moffat Takadiwa, *Object of Influence (5F)*, 2021. Golf tees, cable ties, 38.2 x 19.7 x 19.7 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Nicodim Gallery Los Angeles. Photo: Taylor Tschider.

Located on Los Angeles' historic Miracle Mile since 1965, Craft Contemporary reveals the potential of craft to educate, captivate, provoke, and empower. With a focus on contemporary art made from craft media and processes, Craft Contemporary presents dynamic exhibitions by established and emerging artists and designers who are often underrepresented in larger art institutions. Through a robust roster of regular programs and events, Craft Contemporary offers creative opportunities for the public to participate in hands-on workshops led by professional artists. Craft Contemporary cultivates an environment for people in Los Angeles to deepen their relationship to art, creativity, and one another. For more information, visit www.craftcontemporary.org.

LOCATION: 5814 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90036

ADMISSION: FREE every Sunday

REGULARLY: \$9 for adults; \$7 for students, teachers, seniors; free for Craft Contemporary members

HOURS: Tuesday - Sunday, 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

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