



Kampala Contemporary
13th April – 14th May 2016



Circle Art Gallery

Circle Art Gallery aims to be the foremost exhibition space in East Africa. We exhibit carefully curated, challenging and thought-provoking contemporary art, and provide a venue for presentations from local and international artists, curators, art critics, collectors and academics.

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Opening times:

Weekdays 10am – 5pm, Saturdays 11am – 4pm
By appointment after hours, Sundays or public holidays

front cover: **Paul Ndema**, *Be Like the Raven*, 2016, oil on canvas, 100cm x 100cm

inside front cover: **Papa Shabani**, *Kampala: City of Dreams*, 2016, print on photographic paper, edition 1/10, 42cm x 59.4cm



Denis Mubiru
Xenson
Mukiza
Immy Mali
Henry Mzili
Eria 'Sane' Nsubuga
Papa Shabani
Paul Ndema
Stacey Gillian
Timothy Erau

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Curated by Nicola Elphinstone and Robinah Nansubuga

Kampala is a cross section of co-habiting realities reflected in the styles, subjects, and symbolism of the artists in this exhibition. The artists cast their characters across class, gender, and social roles. The work looks inward at the self, looks around as if to find its bearings, and looks out beyond the city, country, and continent.

These ten Kampala based artists present a vibrant and honest reflection of their city. They work in diverse media that celebrates a recent wave in Kampala's contemporary art including installation, video, and fine art photography as well as discovering new avenues in technique and subject on canvas.

Xenson and Paul Ndema, in particular, favour patterns as playful backdrops to themes of identity and religion. Henry Mzili contemplates the timeless subject of happiness, while Mukiza's palette quietly repositions our perceptions of history on the continent. Stacey Gillian Abe takes the discussion on gender out of the gallery, away from the table, and into the public realm through her installations.

Denis Mubiru relates, in detail, unseen daily life in the familiar, if not iconic, setting of the Kampala taxi. Photographers Shabani and Timothy Erau seek deeply in their subject, but where Shabani seeks intimacy with his characters, Erau seeks intimacy with light. A video installation by Immy Mali speaks of self, society, and a brittle, yet persistent attempt to break free. Eria 'Sane' Nsubuga carries us out of Kampala where his disembodied and patchwork characters are the allegorical cast of a global social satire.

Kampala Contemporary is a prism of identities, reflected onto canvas, paper, pixels and glass. It portrays Kampala as a city that embraces the intricacy of co-existence.

Denis Mubiru



Denis Mubiru, *The Conductor is Present*, 2015, acrylic on canvas, 100cm x 100cm

Denis Mubiru's work explores the complex yet practical Kampala mini bus taxis, better known locally as 'kamunye'. He uses playful, abstract, naïve paintings and imagery to retell the interesting and exciting dramas that unfold within the taxi; petty arguments, flirting and wolokoso (local gossip) that reflect on the society of Kampala and Uganda at large.

Seeking to draw the viewers' attention to what social media and press often ignore, he documents and interprets the more intricate aspects of life in the mini buses; the signage, religious symbolism and characters.

Denis Mubiru graduated in 2012 with an art degree from Nkumba University, Entebbe. In 2015 he completed his postgraduate diploma in Education with Art and was artist in residence at 32° East | Ugandan Arts Trust.

Mubiru's recent exhibitions include: *Eroticism and Intimacy: Paths, Faces and Places*, Underground art space, Kampala, 2016; *Music is a Feature of Man*, German Ambassadors Residence, Kampala 2015; *Kampala Yange*, 32° East Open Studios, Kampala, 2015; *4th NALA Group Art Exhibition*, Kenya, 2015.

Xenson



Xenson, *Mbasakidde (Are you questioning my hard work?)*, 2015, mixed media, 126 cm x 101 cm

Employing a multi disciplinary approach including fashion, performance, installation and painting, Xenson's work interrogates contemporary issues of identity, consumerism and human excess.

Xenson's latest body of work titled *Barakoa* (the Swahili word for mask) explores humanity's obsessive tendency to hide behind facades, visible or invisible. It highlights but also demystifies pre-conceived and stereotyped identities. The artist intentionally creates a perceived aesthetic of flowers, patterning and bright colours around his otherwise unsettling subject matter. This superficial adaptation mutes the fear and disguises the impending tension that waits silently beneath surface.

Samson Ssenkaaba aka Xenson graduated from Margaret Trowell School of Industrial and Fine Arts, Makerere University with a first class honours degree. He has participated in numerous workshops, residencies and exhibitions including: *Johannesburg Art Fair*, South Africa, 2015; *KLA ART 014*, Kampala, Uganda, 2014; *The Lubare and the Boat*, Deveron Arts, Scotland, 2014; *Future of Africa Summit*, Paris, France; *Africa Now: Fashioning Personhood*, Minneapolis Institute of Art, USA, 2014; *Artist in residence*, 32° East | Ugandan Arts Trust, Kampala 2013; *KLA ART 012*, Kampala, Uganda, 2012; *World Cultural Forum*, Rio De Janeiro, Brazil, 2006.

Mukiza



Mukiza, *Untitled*, 2015, oil and pencil on canvas, 100cm x 80cm

Mukiza's recent work in oil on a plain white background, bold dark figures and pencil drawings is focused on questioning a narrative that has been passed off as 'history' for centuries. It mostly depicts recognizable figures, symbols and other historical paraphernalia recomposed to incorporate the modern.

The viewer's engagement with what they see on the canvas is the beginning of a deeper reflection of what they know of as 'history'. The artist invites the viewer to interact with the work and colour in the blanks thereby applying their knowledge of the current to a new narrative of history.

Mukiza has a formal training in fine art but prefers not to be defined by his education as he is a multi disciplinary artist. He has been labeled: cartoonist, caricaturist, portraitist, illustrator, painter, sculptor, singer, poet, storyteller and arts education facilitator.

Recent exhibitions include *Obvious Things*, Makerere University Gallery, December, 2015 and *Untitled II*, The Hub, Kampala, July 2015. His work is also part of private collections in Uganda, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Canada, Spain, US, India and UK.

Immy Mali

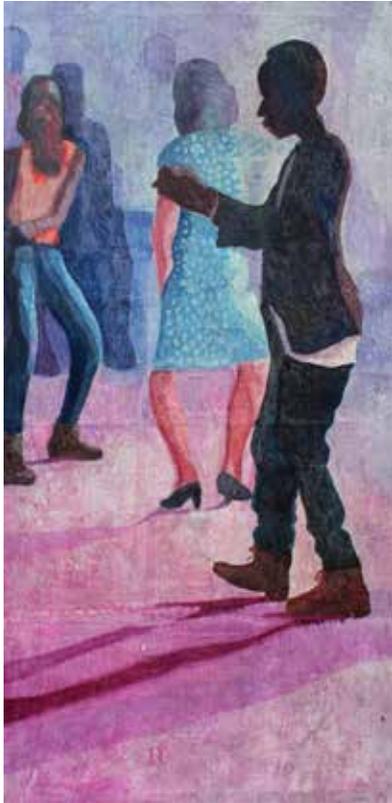


Immy Mali, *Dancing with Myself*, 2015, video installation, 22 minutes

Immy produced *Dancing with myself* in 2015 during her residency at Khoj in Pune, Maharashtra, India. Inspired by the space in which she resided she drew parallels between the rules of the hotel which once occupied the art space and that of the oppressive attitudes towards women in society. As a result she produced 18 Musts, a multi visual project including video, installation and performance work. *Dancing with Myself* is a 22-minute video where the artist connects the movement of the subject with a personal desire to break out, to break the rules and dance.

Immy Mali graduated with a bachelor's degree in Industrial and Fine Arts from Makerere University and has recently participated in the following exhibitions: *Transform*, Kampala, 2015; *KLA ART 014*, Kampala, 2014; *Laba Street Art Festival*, Kampala, 2014; *Bayimba International Festival of the Arts*, Kampala, 2014. She has also participated in the following workshops and residencies: *East African Regional Visual Arts Exchange Project*, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 2016; *5th ASIKO CCA Lagos International Art Programme*, Maputo, Mozambique, 2015; *'Images Youth Programme'*, CKU, Denmark, 2014; *Artist in residence*, 32° East | Ugandan Arts Trust, Kampala, 2013

Henry Mzili



Henry Mzili, *Transform IV*, 2016, mixed media, 180cm x 90cm

Mzili's paintings capture and preserve scenes from real life on canvas with a mixture of experimental media and techniques. Using an application he refers to as 'dabbing', the artist sets out to reinterpret the duality of a moment; where some people see melancholy, he sees tranquility.

The Transform series continues the theme of duality by focusing on the question of what constitutes happiness. For some it is praying in church, for others it is drinking in a bar. Through his large-scale paintings, Mzili presents his observations on canvas whilst simultaneously asking the viewer to question what it is that makes them happy.



Henry Mzili, *Transform III*, 2016, mixed media, 180cm x 90cm

Henry Mzili graduated with honours from Margaret Trowell School of Industrial Fine Art (MTSIFA), Makerere University. He is also a holder of a Postgraduate Diploma in Education.

Mzili is a member of the *Pan African Circle of Artists (PACA)* and is currently the Vice President of the *Uganda Artists Association (UAA)*. In 2003, Mzili won the *Royal Overseas League (ROSL)* art scholarship. He has exhibited his work in galleries in East Africa, West Africa as well as UK, Germany, Italy, France and The Netherlands.

Eria 'Sane' Nsubuga



Eria 'Sane' Nsubuga, *Zeitgeist*, 2016, mixed media, 40cm x 40cm

Eria Solomon Nsubuga, also known as Sane, is a painter, sculptor and illustrator whose work engages with politics, morality and spirituality. Sane's recent collage work tackles capitalist modernism that commodifies sexuality and uses the female body as a political tool. Sane challenges the accepted standards of Western aesthetics espoused by photographers such as Annie Leibovitz, which he believes have left us trapped as ghosts of time. He uses icons from glossy magazines to challenge the idea of an absent creative African indigene, but also seeks a cross-pollination of different histories and presents to look at today's social global complexities.

Sane graduated from Makerere University in 2008 with an MA in sculpture from the Margaret Trowell School of Industrial and Fine Arts. A practising artist since 1999, he has participated in numerous auctions, fairs, workshops and exhibitions, including: *That Art Fair*, Cape Town 2016; *Johannesburg Workshop for Theory and Criticism*, University of Witwatersrand; *Cape Town Art Fair* 2015; *Kampala Contemporary Art Biennale* 2014; *Abanene*, Afriart Gallery, Kampala, 2013; *Artist in Residence*, 32° East | Ugandan Arts Trust and *KLA ART 012* (Kampala Contemporary Art Festival) 2012.

Papa Shabani



Papa Shabani, *Create*, 2016, print on photographic paper, edition 1/10, 42cm x 59.4cm

Papa's photography explores the boundary between art and documentary. His art practice aims to peel off the layers of the viewers' preconceptions that often camouflage his subjects, so that he can document them in their unabridged form.

Through committed research, he uncovers what lies underneath a layman's perception of the issues surrounding his subjects. He then converses with the subjects to assimilate their character, their very essence. Finally by building an intimate relationship with his subjects, he is able to capture his subjects' integrity through the lens, that inner beauty which is a fusion of their dignity and vulnerability.

Papa graduated from Margaret Trowell School of Industrial and Fine Arts at Makerere University in 2014. He is an award winning photographer (Uganda Press Photo Awards 2013, 2014) and recently exhibited 'Queens in Essence' at the Underground Art Space, Kampala, Nov 2015; *Neusicht Art Festival*, Switzerland, Oct 2015; *Just Another Photo Festival*, India, Sept 2015; *Open Studio*, Kuona Trust, Nairobi, May 2015; *Millerntor Gallery*, Germany, April 2015.

Other exhibitions: *Making Oneself*, Noorderlicht Photo Festival, Netherlands, Aug, 2015 and *Simunda Nyuma*, Framer Framed, Netherlands, Aug 2015. Residencies include: *Millerntor Gallery*, St Pauli, Germany, 2015; *Kuona Trust*, Nairobi, 2015; *Afrika Arts Kollektive*, Kampala, 2014 and *32° East with History In Progress Uganda*, Kampala, 2014.

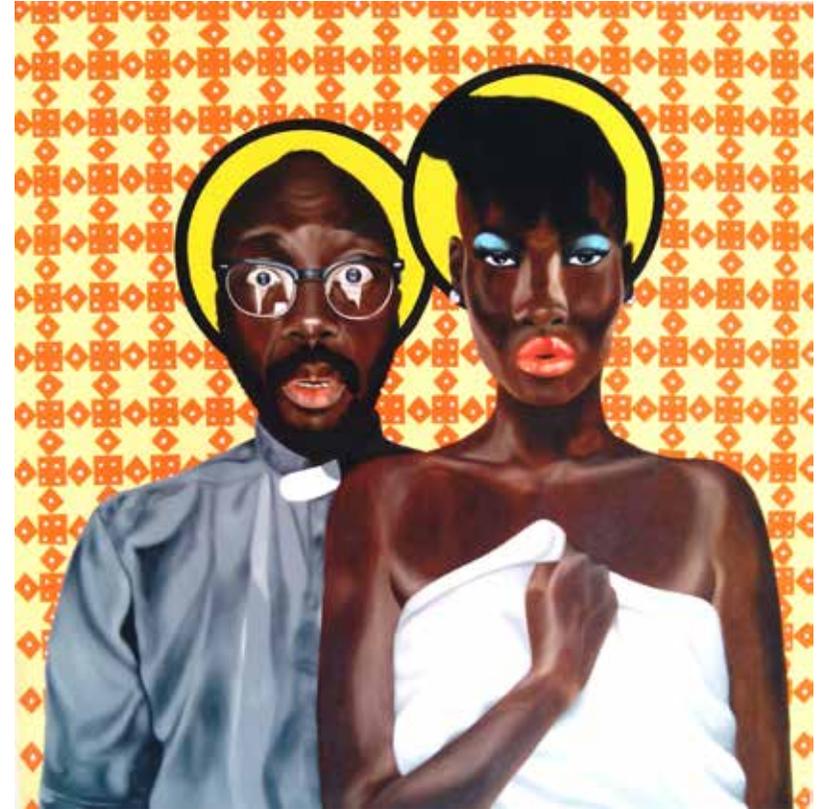
Paul Ndema



Paul Ndema, *The Seal of Confession*, 2016, oil on canvas, 100cm x 100cm

In this latest series of work, Paul Ndema's technical proficiency together with his satirical interpretations of religious moral order gives his paintings a unique and playful insight into the meeting of tradition and modernity.

His final pieces are the result of his experiences growing up in a Catholic family together with his questioning of the ethics of those in positions of power and influence. His subjects, often self-portraits, are elevated to an iconic status yet compromised by the artist's use of irony. Ndema places his subjects on colourful, patterned and symbolic backgrounds and his use of light suggests that his subjects are both literally and figuratively in the spotlight



Paul Ndema, *Private Blessings*, 2016, oil on canvas, 100cm x 100cm

Ndema Paul was born in Uganda in 1979. He studied at the Margaret Trowell School of Industrial and Fine Arts, Makerere University from 1999-2002 where he obtained a Bachelors degree in Fine Arts.

Most recently he has participated in *Circle Modern and Contemporary Art Auction* in Nairobi (2015, 2014); *Cape Town Art Fair* (2015); *Kampala Art Biennale* (2014) and *East African Encounters Exhibition*, Circle Art Gallery (2014). His work is also housed in many international private collections.

Stacey Gillian



Stacey Gillian, *Strange Fruit: Flesh Bulbs*, 2016, Mixed media, 200cm x 76cm x 30cm

Stacey Gillian Abe's sculptural work focuses on misconceptions of gender equality in Uganda. She works with glass as her principle medium through site-specific installations as it illustrates both the fragility and defiance of her personal experience as a sculptor.

In many rural areas of Uganda, people live by traditional and conservative values, which can restrict, deprive or oppress women from freedom of expression. Because of this Gillian creates her sculptures in public spaces and communities in order to create a dialogue around social issues like gender equality, sexuality and identity, and urban cultural self-expression.

Stacey Gillian graduated with a BA Hons in Art and Industrial Design from Kyambogo University in 2014. She has exhibited her work at a variety of group exhibitions including: *Women Without Borders*, Institut Francais, Kinshasha, 2014 and *International Stone talk*, Nairobi Museum, 2014. She has also participated in: *KLA ART 014*, Kampala, 2014 and *AtWork* workshop with Simon Njami and Lettera 27, Kampala, 2015. Recent residencies include: *Culture Vultures Fez*, Morocco, 2015; *Nafasi Art Space*, Dar es Salaam, 2015 and *32° East | Ugandan Arts Trust*, Kampala, 2014.

Timothy Erau



Timothy Erau, *Reverie II*, 2016, photographic print on paper; edition 2/3, 42cm x 59.4cm

Timothy Erau describes the making of his work as an intricate process using a dark background with torch light and colour gels in order to achieve the desired intensity. In this series he amplifies the emotions of his subjects by adopting a stark contrast between light and shadow resulting in unique and dramatic imagery.

As the light playfully catches the subjects, the captured movement is fleeting as if threatening to disappear. It delicately provokes a dreamlike state that absorbs the viewer into this moment of music and dancing.

Timothy Erau was born in Kampala in 1991 and graduated from the Margaret Trowell School of Industrial and Fine Arts, Makerere University in 2012. He recently participated in *Music is a Feature of Man*, German Ambassador's Residence, Kampala, 2015 and was artist in residence at *32° East | Ugandan Arts Trust* from January – March 2016.

Circle Art Gallery

Circle is an art agency set-up to provide a highly professional consultancy service for art institutions and the contemporary art market. We are passionate about contemporary East African art.

Through our gallery, advisory service and annual auction we aim to give the region's most talented artists greater visibility and opportunities, ultimately increasing access to the region's lively and fast-developing art scene.

Collecting Art

Circle offers individuals and corporations advice on creating, presenting and managing an art collection. We source appropriate works of art and give curatorial advice on the installation, presentation, and storage and cataloguing of a collection. We are able to advise clients on art philanthropy and sponsorship of the arts.

We spend time with clients gaining an understanding of their particular taste and requirements, introducing them to artists, exhibitions and events that they might not otherwise encounter. We act on a client's behalf in negotiations to ensure prices are at market value and act in the strictest confidence on the dispersal of whole collections or individual works.

Commissioning Art

Circle is the first company in Kenya to provide an advisory and management service for commissioning art. We believe that urban and domestic environments should be enhanced by well-considered artworks that relate to the social and cultural experiences of the viewer. Circle supports artists creating landmark pieces for our clients that provide interest and entertainment to locals, visitors and workers.

Artists

Circle works with both emerging and established artists across East Africa. We have a large artist database, wide networks across the region and have shown over 150 artists in the last 2 years.

We are always looking for new and exciting research-based art, visiting artists' studios regularly, attending regional and international events that relate to contemporary African art exhibitions.



inside back cover: Eria 'Sane' Nsubuga, *Questlove*, 2016, mixed media, 40cm x 40cm

back cover: Denis Mubiru, *Can't Wait To Be*, 2015, acrylic on canvas, 50cm x 70cm



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