

PRESS RELEASE



Otobong Nkanga in her studio, working on Castello di Rivoli exhibition, July 14, 2021
Courtesy Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Rivoli-Torino
Photo Marcella Beccaria

Otobong Nkanga. Of Cords Curling around Mountains Drafted by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev and Marcella Beccaria September 25, 2021 - January 30, 2022

Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea presents the solo exhibition devoted to **Otobong Nkanga** (Kano, Nigeria, 1974), one of the most innovative international contemporary artists. Her artworks address urgent issues related to the ecological crisis and the exploitation of natural resources. She investigates the history with fine lyricism and celebrates the importance of physical materials and their care, even in a digitized world.

In 2017 the artist participated in the exhibition *The Emotion of COLORS in Art* held at Castello di Rivoli and at GAM in Turin when in the Manica Lunga she exhibited the work *Kolanut Tales: Slow Stain*, 2012-2017, which subsequently became part of the Museum Collections thanks to the gift of the Supporting and Benefactor Friends of Castello di Rivoli.

Specially conceived for the galleries on the third floor of the Castello, the exhibition consists in a large site-specific project. Drafting a new landscape, the installation includes carpets whose irregular form is inspired by the shape of minerals, such as quartz and malachite, whose healing properties have been known since ancient times. The carpets extend into the space through long hand-woven ropes which in turn connect multiple concave sculptural objects that suggest manipulation. Made of wood, glass and terracotta, they host organic materials or convey sounds, endowing the art with a performative and sensually relational component. The artist develops her exhibition at floor level through five large galleries of the third floor of the Castello to embrace the horizontality associated with the notion of geography. Travel is transit and connection between distant points; it brings into dialog the different cultural traditions that are interwoven in our contemporary world. During her studies in Paris, Nkanga was a student of Giuseppe Penone (Garessio, 1947). In her work, attentive to materials and their transformation, in fact, the heritage of Arte Povera is present as an indirect echo.

The objects, including minerals and organic materials, refer to the amulets that in some African traditions are given on the occasion of the birth of a child, as well as to the herbs used for their healing properties since ancient times, while the carpet is also linked to the historical tradition of European Flemish weaving.

The exhibition is part of a collaboration project with Villa Arson, Nice, where the first retrospective dedicated to Otobong Nkanga in France was presented. Curated by Eric Mangion, the Nice exhibition focused on the artist's main works to date.

On the occasion of this double exhibition, Castello di Rivoli and Villa Arson co-edit a new scholarly catalog which includes new texts and interviews by the curators, documentary images relating to the exhibitions in the two institutions, entries relating to the works and an end matter section dedicated to the artist's exhibition history, from the beginning to the present.

The exhibition is made possible thanks to the contribution of the Regione Piemonte



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The exhibition is made in collaboration with

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Biographical notes

Otobong Nkanga (Kano, Nigeria, 1974; lives and works in Antwerp, Belgium) is considered one of the most outstanding artists working today. She is an alumnus of the Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife, Nigeria, École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris, Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten in Amsterdam, DasArts Amsterdam and she was awarded with a residence at DAAD in Berlin.

Her work is part of the collections of numerous international institutions including Centre Pompidou, Paris; Tate Modern, London; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Rivoli-Turin and many others. She has participated in exhibitions and biennials around the world, as well as solo exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA), Chicago; Tate Modern and Tate St. Ives, UK.

In 2015 she was awarded the 8th Yanghyun Art Prize and in 2017 the Belgian Art Prize. Nkanga's project, *Carved to Flow*, was presented that same year at documenta 14, Kassel - Athens. Her most recent solo exhibitions took place at Zeitz Mocaa, Cape Town, and Tate St. Ives (2019-2020), and Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (MIMA) in UK (2020-2021).

Nkanga was the 2019 artist-in-residence at Gropius Bau in Berlin, Germany, where she further developed the project *Carved to Flow*, culminating in her solo exhibition *There's No Such Thing as Solid Ground* in 2020.

In 2019, Nkanga received a Special Mention Award at the 58th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia; she was awarded the Prize for Best Permanent Installation at the 14th Sharjah Biennial (with Emeka Ogboh); she won the prestigious Peter-Weiss-Preis, and she was also the recipient of the Flemish Cultural Award for Visual Arts - Ultima.

In 2019 she was the initial recipient of the Lise Wilhelmsen Art Award Programme and in the fall of 2020 she presented the solo show *Uncertain Where the Next Wind Blows* at the Henie Onstad Kunstsenter in Høvikodden, Norway.

In June 2021 the artist presented the retrospective *When Looking Across the Sea, Do You Dream?* at Centre d'art contemporain of Villa Arson in Nice, organized in collaboration with Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea.

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