

## Kunsthaus Bregenz

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Austria



KUB 2021.04 | Press Release

# Otobong Nkanga

23 | 10 | 2021–

06 | 02 | 2022

### **Press Conference**

Thursday, October 21, 2021 at 11 am

### **Extended Opening**

Friday, October 22, 2021 from 5 pm to 8 pm

### **Press photos for downloading**

[www.kunsthhaus-bregenz.at](http://www.kunsthhaus-bregenz.at)

“All the earth we carry with us, the dust in our lungs, the crystals on our bodies, the stones in our pockets, the minerals in our blood, our fissures and fractures, our gold, our gems, all come to rest finally in earth.”

Otobong Nkanga



How do we think about the ground we walk on, how to heal and protect it? Otobong Nkanga's exhibition tells the (hi)story of the elements earth and water.

The Earth's survival is reliant on water. Otobong Nkanga conveys such a message in four vibrant, large-scale tapestries depicting the entanglement between land and ocean. The woven works, hanging separately on each floor of Kunsthhaus Bregenz, render the depths of the sea, the seasons, and climatic zones.

On the ground floor of KUB darkness prevails; a small pond near the glass wall glistens with life, as in *Unearthed - Abyss*, the first of four tapestries. A tree trunk rises from this shallow hollow, appearing to pierce the ceiling and penetrate the subsequent floors.

On the following two floors ropes perforate the now tapering trunk, with glass spheres tied to the cords and in the presence of the tapestries *Unearthed - Midnight* and *Unearthed - Twilight*. The interconnected, movable spheres are opulent glass objects that have been fabricated in Murano. The amorphous containers are climatecontrolled display cases, colored terrariums for various lifeforms, which Nkanga has filled with soil and plant samples. On the upper floor, the ragged, scorched top of the tree protrudes from loamy soil, overseen by *Unearthed - Sunlight* the last of the four tapestries. The ascent through Kunsthhaus Bregenz becomes a journey through the exploitation of nature, a path towards desolation, yet one where islands of life may still exist and hope germinates.

Nkanga has also written poems, ingrained into earth slabs, for each of the four floors of Kunsthhaus Bregenz. The monumental tapestries are unique originals that have been specifically conceived for the series of spaces at Kunsthhaus Bregenz and its likewise massive concrete walls. Nkanga produced them on a new type of highly complex rapier weaving machine manufactured by the DORNIER company in Lindau, in collaboration with the TextielLab at the TextielMuseum in Tilburg (Netherlands). The tapestries function like windows into a vivid world full of life on the periphery of a barren landscape. Colorful fish and shells

populate coral reefs within the intense, tropical blue of a deep, pristine ocean. The fabrics are as precise as they are painterly; amongst the warp threads' streaks of color, sometimes apparently swaying like maritime streams, rounded forms, spheres, celestial bodies, and poetic medallions appear, providing an insight into both maritime life and a particular, interconnective "way of thinking," explains Nkanga.

The exhibition at Kunsthaus Bregenz is being created in close collaboration with both regional and international partners, including Martin Rauch, the Vorarlberg-based pioneer in earth structures, and experts from the renowned at the TextielMuseum in Tilburg, where a large-scale rapier weaving machine, newly developed by the Lindau-based company DORNIER GmbH, has recently come into operation.



## Biography

Otobong Nkanga



Otobong Nkanga (born in 1974 in Kano, Nigeria) is a visual and performance artist, who is based in Antwerp. Nkanga studied at the Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife, Nigeria, and later continued her studies in Paris at the École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts and she finished her Masters in the Performing Arts at DasArts, Advanced Research in Theatre and Dance studies, Amsterdam. In 2002 and 2003 she was artist in residence at the Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten in Amsterdam and in 2013 she was awarded a scholarship from the DAAD Artists-in-Berlin Program.

In 2015 Nkanga won the Yanghyun Art Prize and received in 2017 the Belgian Art Prize. In 2019 Otobong Nkanga was the recipient of the Flemish Cultural Award for Visual Arts – Ultima, the 2019 Sharjah Biennial Award, the Special Mention Award of the 58th Venice Biennale, the Lise Wilhelmsen Art Award and the Peter Weiss Prize of the City of Bochum. She had solo shows at the Villa Arson, Nice (2021), Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin (2020), Tate St. Ives (2019/2020), Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2018), and M HKA, Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp (2015).

International exhibitions she has participated in include the 58th Venice Biennale (2019), documenta 14 in Kassel (2017), Biennale of Sydney (2016), Berlin Biennale (2014), and the Sharjah Biennial (2019, 2013 and 2005)

## **KUB Billboards**

Otobong Nkanga

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The KUB billboards located on Seestraße, the main thoroughfare in Bregenz, are an integral part of Kunsthaus Bregenz's program, extending each KUB exhibition into public space. Otobong Nkanga is showing details of the tapestry works that she has produced for Kunsthaus Bregenz on the six billboards.

## **Unearthed**

Looking from a distance  
A landscape appears  
Interwoven with the sunlight  
Fleeting as the twilight  
Serene at midnight  
Only to sink deep into the abyss

Poem by Otobong Nkanga, 2021

## **KUB Publication**

Otobong Nkanga



Stones, fabrics, and plants are the materials that Otobong Nkanga employs in her installations, enabling them speak of the land and the people they originate from.

The works – small-scale drawings and sculptures, sound, as well as pieces extending throughout all the floors – are always intended metaphorically, as symbols for the global system, involving imagery of migration, transformations, appropriation, and loss.

At Kunsthaus Bregenz, the Nigerian-born artist is exhibiting numerous works that have been created in dialogue with the building's architecture as well as the region and its industrial history. In the catalogue, Thomas D. Trummer will be expounding on the concept of the exhibition and the new works that have been created for Kunsthaus Bregenz.

Edited by Thomas D. Trummer, Kunsthaus Bregenz

Graphic Design: N.N.

Essays by Thomas D. Trummer et al.

German / English,

approx. 164 pages,

23.5 x 28 cm

Hardcover

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### **Available online**

[Shop.kunsthhaus-bregenz.at](http://Shop.kunsthhaus-bregenz.at)

## **KUB Original**

Otobong Nkanga

Unearthed (Fragment), 2021



For her exhibition at Kunsthhaus Bregenz, Otobong Nkanga has conceived an extraordinary work, a tapestry series titled *Unearthed*. It consists of four 6 by 3.5 meter tapestries, forming a single motif and thus connecting all four of KUB's floors. 30 fragments from *Unearthed*, each one uni-que, are being made available as a limited edition exclusively for Kunsthhaus Bregenz. Each original segment will be accompanied by a print depicting the complete motif of *Unearthed*.

### ***Unearthed (Fragment), 2021***

Tapestry, various yarns, with

an additional inkjet print on Hahnemühle German Etching

Approx. 60 x 85 cm

30 originals + 6 H.S., numbered

€ 5,800 incl. 10 % vat, excluding shipping and packaging costs, and custom duties, 40 percent of the proceeds will be donated to the *Carved to Flow Foundation*.

### **Available online**

[shop.kunsthhaus-bregenz.at](http://shop.kunsthhaus-bregenz.at)

Produced in collaboration with TextielLab / TextielMuseum Tilburg (NL), using a special p2 rapier weaving machine manufactured by Lindauer DORNIER GmbH

### **Carved to Flow Foundation**

Otobong Nkanga's *Carved to Flow Foundation* regards itself to be a platform for research, collaboration, and communal production through the transfer of knowledge by means of conversations and horizontal learning. As part of the *Carved to Flow* project, which was initiated in 2017, the process for making *O8 Black Stone* soap was created. The formula developed by Otobong Nkanga herself consists of water, charcoal, and lye, together with four different oils, and three different types of butter, sourced from the Mediterranean, the Middle East, as well as North and West Africa. The proceeds from the sale of the cold soaps provided the financial basis for the establishment of the foundation, which is based in Akwa Ibom, Nigeria.

## Partners and Sponsors

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