

## Artist Profile – Otobong Nkanga

b. 1974 Kano, Nigeria; lives and works in Antwerp, Belgium

Nkanga attended Obafemi Awolowo University in Nigeria, Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux in Paris, Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten in the Netherlands, and DasArts in the Netherlands. She taught fine arts in the Netherlands after graduating from DasArts, but only stayed for two years and in 2015, Nkanga won the Yanghyun Prize.

Nkanga explores social and topographical changes of her environment and observes the complexities of resources and how they are subject to cultural analysis. Common themes in Nkanga's work include identity, culture, re-appropriation, earth, perception, and memory. Her work includes performance, sculpture, drawing, painting, textiles, photography, and installation. Although her medium changes frequently, her works always speak to her ideas of memory, environment, and the postcolonial histories embedded in her home country.

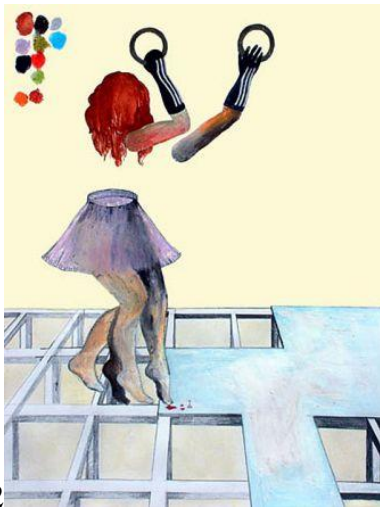
In her drawings and paintings, Nkanga creates landscapes and forms with clean, hard-edged lines that speak to the impacts of Nigeria's oil industry, they also reference West African cultural artifacts and raise questions about the value of these items. In Nkanga's installations it is common to find her drawings and paintings displayed, for example, in her installation and performance piece titled *Perfect Measures* Nkanga created a living space with sections designated for certain activities; work, rest, pleasure, cleansing. Each space had a character, her drawings, that went along with the activity. From there, Nkanga would go through the space performing these activities while viewers would watch or sometimes participate as well.

Most of Nkanga's photography is of abandoned looking architecture; overgrown houses, crumbling buildings, etc. The subjects are from around Nigeria and one series of Nkanga's photography is of pre-fabricated housing units that were meant to be the modern dream for the middle class, but as time passes the housing breaks down and more structures need to be added. This ultimately leads to the state of disrepair the residents currently have to deal with; flooding, electricity, need for water, and this relates to everyday influences of the environment and the constant state of change in nature.

Examples of Nkanga's works include *Alterscape Uprooting (1)*; a photograph of a sculpture that speaks to the fact that in some places water needs to be imported even though the place is surrounded by water. It discusses the issue of clean drinking water that many places have, Nkanga is specifically talking about the Canary Islands. *As I Hang (2)* is a piece from her *Perfect Measures* installation, and *Dolphin Estate 4 (3)* is an image from her series on the disrepair of the housing units in Nigeria.



1



2



3

