

Maliyamungu Gift Muhande: Kobikisa

Muhande's first New York solo show explores the artist's identity, Blackness and diasporic history

September 2–December 2, 2022

Opening Reception:
Thursday, September 15,
6–8pm

Gallery Hours:
By appointment via
info@iscp-nyc.org
Monday–Friday
10:30am–5:30pm



Maliyamungu Gift Muhande, still from *Kobikisa*, digital video, 2022. Cinematography by Jake Maxwell Bellew. Courtesy of the artist



Maliyamungu Gift Muhande, *Body Prints*, 2022, tempera, turmeric and pen on paper, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist

The International Studio & Curatorial Program presents *Kobikisa*, an exhibition of new work by Maliyamungu Gift Muhande, recipient of The New York Community Trust's Edward and Sally Van Lier Fund residency at ISCP. Born in the Democratic Republic of Congo, raised there and in South Africa, and now based in New York City, Muhande investigates her identity, Blackness, and diasporic history through diverse media including film, painting, drawing, sculpture, performance, and social practice. Translated as “to heal” in Lingala, *Kobikisa* features an immersive video installation and a series of large-scale works on paper that create a space of healing and self-empowerment in ISCP's first floor project space. The presentation is curated by Lauren Wolchik.

The centerpiece, or altar, of the exhibition is an intimate video projection of Muhande receiving acupuncture and massage treatments at the Life Wellness Center in Bed Stuy, Brooklyn. She considers the treatments to be collaborative acts of artmaking, charged by shared ancestral experiences: Black women exchanging Black tenderness in order to heal one another. Muhande's documentation of the sessions grew out of a desire to see her “Black flesh, Black body, Black physique being held tenderly by another—and not just any other, but another Black woman” on screen. Muhande aims to normalize and celebrate images of Black trust, tenderness, and healing.

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The film installation is experienced in a counterclockwise sequence, in opposition to the direction enslaved African people were forced to walk around the “Tree of Oblivion” in Benin before boarding transatlantic ships. Colonial slave traders enacted this ritual to try to make their captives forget their origins. The “Tree of Oblivion” is further alluded to in Muhande's *Body Prints*, works on paper mounted to wood panels that stand against the gallery walls, surrounding the video installation. These terracotta-colored tempera paintings are created through literal self-embraces and reference an ancestral Congolese ceremony that uses clay. Muhande further defines her own figure with meandering ink lines drawn counterclockwise, a meditative practice that recalls tree rings and records the passing of time.

Of these works the artist explains, “In the process of reconnecting to my roots, digging for what the colonists attempted to erase, this healing practice—body painting with clay—came to me intuitively.

I was delighted that my mother, upon seeing the works for the first time, recognized in my process a traditional coming-of-age ritual for young women in the Congo. So now I see that just as the body holds trauma, it also holds ancestral truths, memories, and rituals. By listening to my body's wisdom, I discovered an artistic modality that brings me joy by connecting me with my lineage.”

Maliyamungu Gift Muhande is a quadrilingual (Swahili, Lingala, French, English) Congolese artist, filmmaker, and educator based in New York. Her work explores the global history of the African diaspora at the intersection of anti-colonialism and artistic creativity. Muhande's documentary film about NYC street photographer Louis Mendes, *Nine Days a Week*, was screened at the 2022 Sundance Film Festival and 2020 Doc NYC festival, and selected by the 2020 National Board of Review. By documenting stories from communities of African descent, she creates an historical archive for use by future generations. She has exhibited her artwork in New York City and beyond, and is currently a Sundance Producer Summit Fellow and artist-in-residence at Jacob Burns Film Center. Additionally, Muhande is a part-time faculty member at Parsons School of Design. Muhande was an artist-in-residence at ISCP and Sundance Ignite x Adobe Fellow in 2022.

Lauren Wolchik is an independent curator, producer, and the founder of GLORIA'S, a project space in lower Manhattan that showcases work by underrepresented artists in New York City and beyond. Wolchik is currently the Exhibitions Manager at PACE, New York, and was previously the Exhibitions & Production Manager at David Zwirner, Studio Manager for David Byrne and Lawrence Weiner, and Production Office Manager across New York City venues including Central Park Summerstage, Madison Square Garden, Radio City Music Hall, and Carnegie Hall. She has produced events at institutions including MoMA PS1 and Pioneer Works, was a Guest Curator at the Elizabeth Murray Artist Residency in 2019, and an artist-in-residence at Silent Barn in 2015. Additionally, she was an artist for the Biden for President Campaign and performed in the Performa 19 Biennial. Wolchik lives and works in New York City.

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About ISCP:

Founded in 1994, ISCP is the fourth-largest visual arts residency program in the world and a global leader in the field of visual arts residency programs. ISCP supports the creative development of artists and curators, and promotes exchange through residencies and public programs. Housed in a former factory in Brooklyn, with 35 light-filled work studios and two galleries, ISCP organizes exhibitions, events and offsite projects, which are free and open to all, sustaining a vibrant community of contemporary art practitioners and diverse audiences. Over 1,800 artists and curators from more than 90 countries, including the United States have undertaken residencies at ISCP.

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