

The Museum of Modern Art

MoMA PRESENTS *OTOBONG NKANGA: CADENCE*, A SITE-SPECIFIC COMMISSION OPENING IN THE MARRON ATRIUM IN OCTOBER 2024

The Monumental Installation Is the Artist's First Solo Presentation in New York

Otobong Nkanga: Cadence

October 10, 2024-July 27, 2025

The Donald and Catherine Marron Family Atrium

NEW YORK, July 10, 2024 [Updated March 6, 2025]—The Museum of Modern Art presents *Otobong Nkanga: Cadence*, a new, site-specific commission by the Nigerian-Belgian artist Otobong Nkanga (b. 1974) opening in the Donald and Catherine Marron Family Atrium on October 10, 2024. The large-scale installation, which is on view through July 27, 2025, features an all-encompassing environment of sculpture, sound, and text that addresses the rhythms of both ecological life cycles and social upheaval. Central to the commission is a monumental tapestry that is suspended along the highest wall of the Atrium. Hanging sculptures composed of dyed ropes, interwoven with hand-blown glass and ceramic forms, are suspended floor-to-ceiling within the space and featured alongside ceramic tablets imprinted with poems written by the artist, and an immersive sound work created by the artist. *Otobong Nkanga: Cadence* is organized by Michelle Kuo, Chief Curator at Large and Publisher, with Elizabeth Wickham, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Painting and Sculpture.

“Otobong Nkanga has changed the way we understand the Earth and our place in it. Her art confronts both the beauty and the degradation of the natural world—and its upheaval in the wake of industrial revolutions, resource extraction, and war,” said Michelle Kuo. “Weaving together intricate materials, images, and sounds, her monumental installation creates new ways of perceiving—and feeling—the massive shifts taking place in our world with heart, poetry, and wonder. We are thrilled to feature the work of an artist who uniquely connects global communities and landscapes.”

“I am thrilled to create this new commission for one of the world's most iconic museums, MoMA. It has been incredible to collaborate, bringing together different aspects of my practice that I am excited to present here,” said Otobong Nkanga. “My works connect us to our shared histories, not just through land and geography, but through emotions shaped by events and encounters. These are the cadences of life, formed by turbulence and hope.”

The unique, large-scale tapestry features a kaleidoscopic range of natural and synthetic fibers created by the artist with innovative digital weaving techniques at the TextielLab in

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Tilburg, the Netherlands. The multipaneled tapestry fuses abstract forms with figures that suggest oceanic depths, sprawling ecosystems, and galaxies. A series of veiled images invoking water, shooting stars, bombs in the sky, and plant forms are interwoven throughout the many layers of the tapestry, exploring states of censorship and visibility, and social and ecological turmoil. Raku fired-clay and blown-glass vessels that suggest the rhythmic fall of a drop of water—almost as if captured using time-lapse photography—are suspended on hand-dyed lines of rope and connected to anthracite coal platforms, bringing together elements of water, fire, and industry. The space is filled with an ethereal sound work based on the voice and breathwork of the artist, in which cascading sounds drop from high to low pitch and multiply, producing a polyphony of tones and words and creating a kind of sonic sculpture. These cadences are accompanied by the artist's poetic texts inscribed in clay sculptures, as well as a live performance taking place in spring 2025. Nkanga works with both improvisation and virtuosic composition, and she has constructed the site-specific installation over several weeks in the Marron Atrium, hand-sculpting and arranging many of the elements in situ.

ARTIST BIO:

Otobong Nkanga (b. 1974, Kano, Nigeria) is a visual and performance artist based in Antwerp, Belgium. Nkanga studied at the Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife, Nigeria; the École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts, Paris; and DasArts, Amsterdam. She has been artist-in-residence at the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam and DAAD in Berlin.

Nkanga is the recipient of the Nasher Prize (2025); the Flemish Cultural Award for Visual Arts, the Peter Weiss Prize, the Sharjah Biennial Award, the Special Mention Award of the 58th Venice Biennale, and the inaugural Lise Wilhelmsen Art Award (all 2019); the Belgian Art Prize (2017); and the Yanghyun Prize (2015).

She has held solo exhibitions at IVAM Centro Julio González, Valencia (2024), Sint-Janshospitaal Bruges (2023), Kunsthaus Bregenz (2022), Henie Onstad Museum, Oslo (2020), Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin (2020), Tate St. Ives (2019/2020), Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2018), Tate Modern (2017), and M HKA, Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp (2015).

Nkanga has exhibited in international venues including the Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Centre Pompidou, Moderna Museet, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, and Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa; and at the 58th Venice Biennale (2019), documenta 14 (2017), 31st Bienal de São Paulo, 8th Berlin Biennale (2014), and the Sharjah Biennial (2019, 2013, 2005). In 2017, the artist initiated the Carved to Flow project as part of documenta 14, establishing the Carved to Flow Foundation, an organic farm in Akwa-Ibom, Nigeria, and supporting the Akwa Ibom nonprofit art space in Athens, Greece.

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