

Press Release

Victoria Miro

Wangechi Mutu

Yo.n.I

24 November 2007 – 19 January 2008

Victoria Miro announces the first solo exhibition in the UK by Kenyan born, New York based artist Wangechi Mutu.

One of a new generation of prominent female artists, Wangechi Mutu first came to attention in 2000 with her pin-up drawings and elaborate figurative collages. Mutu's aesthetic employs an economy of surface and depth to engage in her own unique form of myth making. The artist manipulates ink and acrylic paint into pools of colour then carefully applies imagery sampled from disparate sources - medical diagrams, fashion magazines, anthropology and botany texts, pornography, and traditional African arts. A series of large-scale collage works on Mylar polyester film will be exhibited in the lower galleries alongside an exciting new body of work on x-ray paper, a substrate the artist is using for the first time.

In a departure from the artist's earlier collages and installations with their highly critical, dark and confrontational themes, there is a renewed optimism and positive energy inherent in this new body of work. The exhibition's title *Yo· n· I* is derived from *yoni*, the Sanskrit word for "divine passage" or sacred space rooted in the worship of female creativity and sexual organ. The artist has placed careful emphasis on the spelling of the title to invite a reading of *Yo· n· I* as "you and I", denoting a sense of unity and belonging rather than division and conflict. In researching the imagery and systems of belief around *yoni*, Mutu has drawn on a diverse range of sources from tropical flowers and desert plants, to female deities and fertility symbols of ancient Egypt to Ireland, references which all resonate within the new work.

Commenting recently on her work the artist has said: "look at a woman in any culture, at her body, her clothes, her shape and you'll see how that culture might be read from within and without". In *Yo· n· I* she further explores this idea in a site-specific water installation that draws water from the canal outside the gallery and poignantly explores the movement and relationship between what is found outside and what is within. The artist explains "Whether this notion applies to geographical boundaries, the separation of mind and body, the cultivated and the natural - this is indeed the fundamental tension between that which is considered real and that which is considered abstract and magical".

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Born in Nairobi, Kenya Wangechi Mutu moved to New York in the mid-1990s. She received an MFA in sculpture from Yale University in 2000. Mutu has had solo exhibitions at major institutions including the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; The Miami Art Museum; and ArtPace, San Antonio. Mutu is one of seven artists selected for the inaugural exhibition for the new MCA Denver – *Star Power: Museum as Body Electric*, 2007. Mutu's work has been included in exhibitions such as *Pin-Up: Contemporary Collage and Drawing* at Tate Modern, (2004); *SITE Santa Fe Biennial*, (2006) and *USA Today* (2006). Mutu's work is in public collections including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Whitney Museum of American Art; The Studio Museum in Harlem; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

Catalogue

Wangechi Mutu: *Yo· n· I* will be accompanied by a publication with essay by Artistic Director of the ICA, Ekow Eshun.

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open Tuesday to Saturday
10am to 6pm, admission free
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