

Kudzanai-Violet Hwami: *Incantations*

Exhibition: 26 September–1 November 2025

16 Wharf Road, London N1 7RW



Kudzanai-Violet Hwami
Atom Painting #7, 2025
Oil and acrylic on canvas and linen
200 x 200 cm
78 3/4 x 78 3/4 in
© Kudzanai-Violet Hwami
Courtesy the artist and Victoria Miro

Victoria Miro is delighted to present *Incantations*, an exhibition of new paintings conceived in dialogue with a series of photographic wall vinyls by Kudzanai-Violet Hwami. Also on view will be new bronze sculptures, the artist's first venture into three-dimensional work.

'I've tried to keep the idea of fragmentation at the forefront. It is all rooted in rapture, not distraction. A breakdown of inherited systems: religion, identity, gender and the body.' – Kudzanai-Violet Hwami

Kudzanai-Violet Hwami's paintings combine visual fragments from multiple sources, such as online and archival images, and personal photographs. Autobiographical in nature, her works address how in a digitised world of infinite images we construct a sense of self or comprehend one another in a complex social reality.

Incantations, the artist's third solo exhibition with the gallery, features paintings installed with large-scale photographic images presented as wall vinyls. Together, these might be considered as incantations or spells that activate individual elements and their corresponding energies – 'forces of hunger, chaos, seduction and destruction,' the artist explains. Imagery, drawn from family photographs and religious and mythological narratives, touches upon aspects of psyche, oscillating between individual and communal life, and territories of the unconscious, instinctual id and the learned behaviour of the self-critical superego.

The exhibition features a number of the artist's acclaimed *Atom* paintings. These works draw inspiration from Walt Whitman's poem *Song of Myself* and its line 'For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you,' which for Hwami speaks to an idea of liberation as well as interconnectedness. The *Atom* paintings comprise individual canvases that come together to form one large work. A particularly wide variety of images, ideas and themes converge within them – 'the whole chaos and cosmos in my head,' Hwami says – in contrast to the formal rationale of the underlying grid-like structure of canvases.

Here we discover references to a number of symbolic motifs: Persephone, queen of the underworld and goddess of harvest and fertility; Mamoyo, in Zimbabwe a Shona term for ‘my heart’ that is also used to identify lineage; devils or fallen angels, sometimes appearing dejected or depleted of force. At times, the fractures of the picture plane correspond with the psychic or structural fissures of Hwami’s figures, variously modelled or modified. Consequently, we are alerted to painterly and bodily gestures in tandem: the ways in which the figures in the paintings mirror or guard, hold or carry, both literally or metaphorically, alongside the analogue and digital processes Hwami employs – splice, repetition, superimposition, changes of scale and medium, areas of X-ray like solarisation, or reversed tonalities, alongside richly applied oil paint, seductive with gesture.

Through her process, the artist questions things that appear fixed, or possess apparent finality, opening up spaces of imagination and transformation shaped in part by her years growing up in Zimbabwe and South Africa, her interest in metaphysics and spirituality, and expressions of contemporary Black and Queer identities. In Hwami’s work, images and their accompanying narratives are endlessly reconstructed and reframed. Yet in *Incantations*, the artist’s restless dialogue with form and content, and the inherent tensions and frictions of her subject matter, reach a liberating, rapturous crescendo, poised between legacy – personal, cultural, art historical – and self-discovery.

About the artist

Born in Gutu, Zimbabwe in 1993, Kudzanai-Violet Hwami currently lives and works in the UK. In 2016, the same year she graduated from Wimbledon College of Arts with a Bachelor of Fine Arts, she was awarded the Clyde & Co Art Award and the Young Achiever of the Year Award at the Zimbabwean International Women’s Awards, as well as being shortlisted for Bloomberg New Contemporaries. In 2019, Hwami presented work at the 58th Venice Biennale as part of the Zimbabwe Pavilion, the youngest artist to participate in the Biennale. In 2022 she returned to the 59th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia as part of *The Milk of Dreams*, curated by Cecilia Alemani.

Her work has been exhibited at leading institutional venues including Kunsthau Pasquart, Biel (2022); Bourse de Commerce – Pinault Collection, Paris, (2025); Philadelphia Museum of Art (2024); Gropius Bau, Berlin (2023); Zeitz MOCAA, Cape Town (2022), Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2021–22); Hayward Gallery, London (2021), and Musée d’Art Moderne de Paris (2021), among others.

In November 2025, the solo exhibition Kudzanai-Violet Hwami: *They have always been here* opens at Kunsthall Rotterdam (8 November–12 April 2026). The group exhibition *When We See Us: A Century of Black Figuration in Painting*, curated by Koyo Kouoh, travels to Liljevalchs Konsthall, Stockholm, Sweden (10 October 2025–30 August 2026).

Hwami’s work is held in public collections including Fondation Blachère, Apt, France; Government Art Collection, London, UK; High Museum of Art, Atlanta, USA; Pérez Art Museum Miami, USA; KADIST Foundation, Paris, France; Norval Foundation, Cape Town, South Africa; Pinault Collection, Paris, France; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands; Tate, UK; Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, USA; Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, USA; and Zeitz MOCAA, Cape Town, South Africa.

For further press information please contact:

Victoria Miro Gabrielle Leung | Content and Communications Manager | gabrielle@victoria-miro.com | +44 (0)7375 789535

Rees & Co Fiona Russell | fiona.russell@reesandco.com | +44 (0)7917 130 801