



ELIAS MUNGORA: GATHERING OF SMALL FIRES

AUGUST 5 - SEPTEMBER 11, 2021



MONTAGUE CONTEMPORARY

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GATHERING OF SMALL FIRES

Montague Contemporary is pleased to present *Gathering of Small Fires*, the first solo show for Kenyan based artist Elias Mung'ora.

The exhibition features an entirely new body of work from the artist, reflecting on the upheaval over the past year and how our collective behavior highlighted both promising coalescence as well as disheartening social fracturing.

At first glance, the works seem to capture peaceful streetscapes, moments of impromptu gatherings, and snippets of daily urban life in Nairobi. However, upon closer inspection, we start to recognize the symbolic nature of these moments and Mung'ora's contemplation of social space. Inclusive access to common spaces and collective areas has been hindered historically in Nairobi, due to the historically unjust ruling elite; more recently, social spaces have undergone a dramatic transformation due to private land development. These new developments breach into the existential landscape of the cityscape, taking up every inch of available land and in some cases overstepping into the public domain, designed to maximize profit and leaving the underserved populace wandering the streets looking for respite.

The parallels of the collective experience during the recent COVID-19 pandemic and Mung'ora's investigation into our fractured cityscapes is not lost. We have been, in many cases, stranded alone in our homes - physically removed from social gathering spots where we can assert our collective will. Mung'ora wants to remind us of the persistence and power of collective action, even in the face of obstacles beyond our control.

Mung'ora's works also capture the fleeting lived moments of social spaces - with main characters often kept out of focus or partially completed, as if lost in the flow of time, calling out the embedded histories of each place. His use of transfers from the Kenyan Historical Society, line drawings, collage, and glazing all manifest into a living time capsule, create a hybridity in each work by infusing present day spaces with lived memories and cultural and historical experiences.

"Elias Mung'ora: *Gathering of Small Fires*" opens on August 5 and runs through September 11. The gallery is open to the public Thursday - Saturday, 11am - 6pm.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Elias Mung'ora is a member of Brush Tu, a Nairobi-based artists' collective, and has participated in several exhibitions including *The Ghost in The Machine*, Montague Contemporary, USA (2020), *Kikulacho*, British Institute in East Africa, 2018; *Remains*, Waste & Metonymy II: *Sensing Nairobi*, British Institute in East Africa, 2017; *Stranger Times*, Circle Art Gallery, 2017; *Young Guns*, Circle Art Gallery, 2017. Solo shows include *Journal Entries*, Little Art Gallery, 2016. He was the winner of the 2016 Manjano Art Prize in Nairobi, and a top ten finalist in the 2018 edition of the Barclays L'Atelier competition.

ELIAS MUNG'ORA

Born: 1992, Nyeri, Kenya

Lives: Nairobi, Kenya

AWARDS AND RESIDENCIES

2020	Emerging Painting Invitational, Finalist, Harare, Zimbabwe
2018	Saba Artist Residency, Lamu, Kenya
2017	Barclays L'Atelier Competition, Finalist, Pretoria, South Africa
2016	Manjano Art Competition, Winner, Nairobi, Kenya

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2021	Gathering of Small Fires, Montague Contemporary, New York, USA
2020	Elias Mung'ora, One Off, Nairobi, Kenya
2017	Elias Mung'ora, Polka Dot Gallery, Nairobi, Kenya

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2020	The Ghost in the Machine, Montague Contemporary, New York, USA
2019	I will see what I want to see, Circle Art Agency, Nairobi, Kenya
2019	Cape Town Art Fair, Cape Town, South Africa
2019	Celebrating Collectors, One Off, Nairobi, Kenya
2019	Behind this Face, Gravitart, Nairobi, Kenya
2018	CO.FEE, Priest Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
2017	Sensing Nairobi, British Institute East Africa and National Museum, Nairobi, Kenya
2017	Young Guns, Circle Art Gallery, Nairobi, Kenya
2016	Kenya Art Fair, Nairobi, Kenya
2015	The Art Space, Nairobi, Kenya
2015	Kenya Art Fair, Nairobi, Kenya

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Art Africa | Business Daily | CNN | East African | The Guardian | New York Times | Quartz



STAND UP AND BE COUNTED, 2021

Acrylic and Phototransfer on Canvas

120 × 200 cm



IN TRANSITION, 2021

Acrylic and Phototransfer on Canvas

100 × 240 cm



A GRASP FOR LITTLE THINGS, 2021

Acrylic and Phototransfer on Canvas

180 × 130 cm



INTROSPECTION, 2021

Acrylic and Phototransfer on Canvas

100 × 150 cm



WITNESSES 4, 2021

Acrylic and Phototransfer on Canvas

100 × 120 cm



WE SHOULD MEMORIZE, 2021

Acrylic and Phototransfer on Canvas

100 × 120 cm



BRIEF ENCOUNTERS, 2021

Acrylic and Phototransfer on Canvas

100 × 120 cm



OUT OF SIGHT, 2021

Acrylic and Phototransfer on Canvas

120 × 100 cm



INTROSPECTION 2, 2021

Acrylic and Phototransfer on Canvas

120 × 100 cm



A COMPELLING POWER, 2021

Acrylic and Phototransfer on Canvas

100 × 120 cm



PUBLIC DISCLOSURE, 2021

Acrylic and Phototransfer on Canvas

60 × 60 cm



INTROSPECTION 3, 2021

Acrylic and Phototransfer on Canvas

60 × 60 cm



WITH NOWHERE ELSE TO GO, 2021

Acrylic and Phototransfer on Canvas

60 × 120 cm



UNTITLED, 2021

Acrylic and Phototransfer on Canvas
30 × 30 cm