

WANGECHI MUTU EXHIBITED AT THE SAATCHI GALLERY

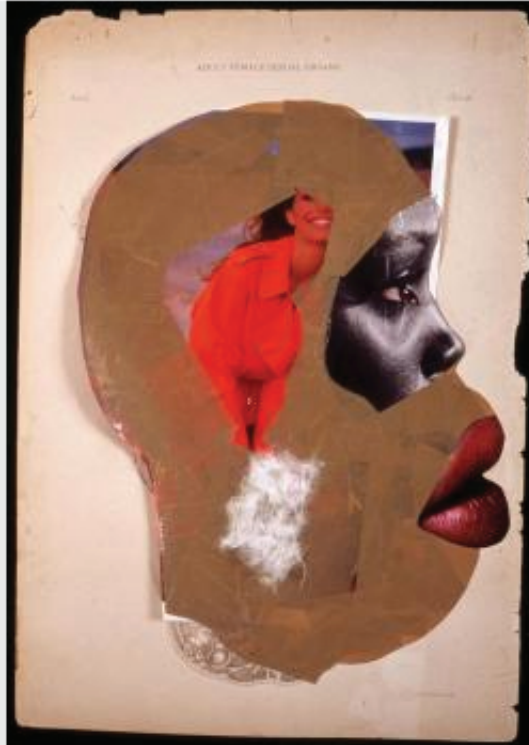
Wangechi Mutu

Adult Female Sexual Organs

2005

packing tape, fur, collage on found medical illustration paper

46 x 31cm



Wangechi Mutu observes: "Females carry the marks, language and nuances of their culture more than the male. Anything that is desired or despised is always placed on the female body." Piecing together magazine imagery with painted surfaces and found materials, Mutu's collages explore the split nature of cultural identity, referencing colonial history, fashion and contemporary African politics. In *Adult Female Sexual Organs*, Mutu uses a Victorian medical diagram as a base: an archetype of biased anthropology and sexual repression. The head is a caricatured mask – made of packing tape, its material makes reference to bandages, migration, and cheap 'quick-fix' solutions. Mutu portrays the inner and outer ideals of self with physical attributes clipped from lifestyle magazines: the woman's face being a racial distortion, her mind occupied by a prototypical white model. Drawing from the aesthetics of traditional African crafts, Mutu engages in her own form of story telling; her works document the contemporary myth-making of endangered cultural heritage.

Quote from: Merrily Kerr, *Wangechi Mutu's Extreme Makeovers*, *Art On Paper*, Vol.8, No. 6, July/August 2004. posted on:

http://www.akrylic.com/contemporary_art_article73.htm

Wangechi Mutu

Cancer of the Uterus

2005

Glitter, fur, collage on found medical illustration paper

46 x 31cm



Wangechi Mutu's collages seem both ancient and futuristic; her figures aspire as a super-race, by-products of a troubled and imposed evolution. In *Cancer of the Uterus*, her figure is an ominous goddess; pasted over a pathology diagram, her portrait is diseased at the core. Mutu uses materials which make reference to African identity and political strife: her dazzling black glitter is an abyss of western desire, which allude to the illegal diamond trade and its consequences of oppression and war. From corruption and violence, Mutu creates a glamorous beauty; her figures empowered by their survivalist adjustment to atrocity, made immune and 'improved' by horror and being victims.

Wangechi Mutu
Backlash Blues

2004

ink, acrylic, photocollage, contact paper,
on mylar

198 x 119.4 cm



Painted on mylar, Wangechi Mutu's *Backlash Blues* conveys an otherworldly quality: the paint and ink suspends on the plasticity vellum-like surface with an unnatural luminosity. Using a variety of techniques from airbrush to stencilling, controlled spills, and detailed brushwork, Mutu's image poses as a composite of gesture; collaged photographic elements merge seamlessly into the painterly aesthetic. Incorporating both the organic patterns of dyed fabric and the exaggerated flourish of fashion illustration, Mutu's wild figure exudes an apocalyptic glamour, fusing tribal 'primitivism' with the exotica of radical chic.

Wangechi Mutu
Mask

2006

mixed media collage

collage



Wangechi Mutu's *Mask* draws provocative comparison between archaeology and sexual fetishism. Pasted over the photo of a museum relic, her saucy model becomes a temptress of caricatured exotica. Encasing the woman's body and face in a cut out of a voodoo sculpture, Mutu envelops her cover girl as a product of typecast desire and roleplay: warrior-princess, s&m freak, chastity-belted virgin. Overlapping the controversial facets of cultural association, Mutu's figure beacons as a subversive dominatrix, shrewdly co-opting the rules of hierarchy, power, and manipulation.

Wangechi Mutu
Ectopic Pregnancy

2004

Glitter, ink, collage on found medical illustration paper

46 x 31cm



Wangechi Mutu's collage process mimics amputation, transplant operations and torturous prosthetics. Her figures become parody mutilations, their forms grotesquely marred through perverse modification, echoing the atrocities of war or self-inflicted improvements of plastic surgery. In *Ectopic Pregnancy*, Mutu converts an image of reproductive malfunction into a stillborn expression; the mouth/vagina bloodied and empty, her scarred figure struggling to voice her identity. Mutu designs this portrait with sex-organs as face, dressed up with glistening hair and lip-gloss: a freakish pastiche of feminine ideals.

Wangechi Mutu
Complete Prolapsus of the Uterus

2004

Glitter, ink, collage on found medical illustration paper

46 x 31cm



Wangechi Mutu trained as both a sculptor and anthropologist. *Complete Prolapsus of the Uterus* illustrates the marriage of these interests. Through collage, Mutu capitalised on the two-sided nature of her materials, conveying both the content and physicality of their sources. In using old medical diagrams, her collages carry the authenticity of artefact, as well as an appointed cultural value. In *Complete Prolapsus of the Uterus* Mutu contrives a racial hybrid: a puckered, prudish white face masks an ancient tribal wisdom. Mutu examines how ideology is implicitly tied to corporeal form. She cites a European preference of physique, inflicted on and adapted by Africans, resulting in hierarchical difference and genocide.

Wangechi Mutu

Ghouls On My Back Celebrate Murder

2003

mixed media on mylar

90 x 61 cm



Wangechi Mutu uses collage as a means of both physically and conceptually bringing layered depth to her work. Using images cut from fashion magazines, National Geographic, and books about African art, Mutu pieces together figures which are both elegant and perverse. Individual body parts comprised of found 'objects' are made to seem like odd prosthetics glued over torsos and limbs drawn in ink.

In Untitled, Mutu's surface uses these conflicting textures to draw a wide range of connotations: from glamour models, to dyed fabrics, diseased skin, and science fiction special effects. Her goddess-like figure becomes an embodiment of the disjointed facets of modern Africa, caught in the flux of Western preconception, internal turmoil, ancient tradition, and blossoming future.

Wangechi Mutu

Untitled

2004

Mixed media collage and painting on vellum

44.5 x 47cm



In Untitled, Wangechi Mutu creates a glamorous, yet barbaric centrefold. Working in painting and collage on paper, Mutu exploits the physical qualities of her media to create a self-referential sensuality: the translucent crispness of the vellum relates easily to film, spilled paint stains diffuse as the subtle bruised texture of skin, and cut out blond hair and gams lend an appropriated lusty ideal. In picturing female sexuality, Mutu offers a futuristic totality of womanhood that's both fiery and liberated. Comprised of motorcycle parts, she's a machine built for speed: corpulent, sexy, with the dazzling power creation.



Botanical Arrangement Limber,
2011
Mixed media collage and paint on
mylar
51 x 30 1/2 inches (129.5 x 77.5
cm)



blackthrone XIII, 2012
Wooden chair, plastic, hair and
tinsel
106 x 53 x 52 inches (269.24 x
134.62 x 132.08 cm)



blackthrone VI, 2012
Wooden chair, plastic, hair and
tinsel
97 1/4 x 33 1/8 x 44 3/8 inches
(247 x 84 x 112.5 cm)



blackthrone XIV, 2012
Wooden chair, plastic, hair and
tinsel
94 x 57 x 55 inches (238.76 x
144.78 x 139.7 cm)



Girl Specimen X, 2013
Ink, latex paint, glitter, pearls,
collage and contact paper on
linoleum
18 1/4 x 12 1/2 inches (46.4 x
31.8 cm)



Girl Specimen III, 2013
Ink, latex paint, glitter, pearls,
collage and contact paper on
linoleum
16 x 18 1/4 inches (40.6 x 46.4
cm)