

Ibrahim Mahama calls to expand the sensibilities of both art and the world at large

By  Juanita Pienaar

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Ibrahim Mahama, a Ghanaian author and artist, has been announced as one of the speakers at next year's Design Indaba Conference.



Image source: From Ibrahim Mahama's [Facebook](#).

Mahama holds a Master of Fine Arts in Painting and Sculpture and a Bachelors in Fine Arts in Painting from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana.

His work was featured in numerous exhibitions at key galleries and museums, including the Moderna Museet, Stockholm and the Norval Museum and in 2015 he was a participant of the 2015 Venice Biennale.

Known for creating installations using jute sacks, Mahama uses the transformation of materials to explore themes of commodity, migration, globalisation and economic exchange.

Often made in collaboration with others, his large-scale installations employ materials gathered from urban environments, such as the sacks mentioned but also remnants of wood, which are stitched together and draped over architectural structures.

Exploring materials that have a significant history

An article on [Cube](#) explains that these jute sacks are fabricated in South East Asia, the sacks are imported by the Ghana Cocoa Boards to transport cocoa beans and eventually end up as multifunctional objects, used for the transportation of food, charcoal and other commodities. "You find different points of aesthetics within the surface of the sacks' fabric", Mahama said. "I am interested in how crisis and failure are absorbed into this material with a strong reference to global transaction and how capitalist structures work."

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[View this post on Instagram](#)

A post shared by Ibrahim Mahama (@ibrahimmahama) on Mar 30, 2014 at 5:50pm PDT

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Ibrahim Mahama discussed the context surrounding artworks and the influence that art history has had on his work in the *Journal of Contemporary African Art* in an interview with Sharon Obuobi, where he said: "Studying in art school, we learned about the complex history of painting, exploring how images are constructed and how spaces can be perceived differently. If you can apply paint on a canvas, why can't you work with an already existing object that has paint applied on it? I use my training as a painter in exploring materials that have a significant history and memory – sometimes at the stage of neglect – which is very relevant to production systems, especially within modern-day history."

Intensive dialogue

His specific engagement with the conditions of Ghanaian trade has led his intensive dialogue into some of the most prestigious art conversations of this generation. And in doing so he has defied the traditional teaching and art's intrinsic value as he uses the coal sacks as a device to explore process, material, value and meaning within the artistic system.



Ibrahim Mahama
about 5 years ago



A Friend. Ibrahim Mahama. Curated by Massimiliano Gioni. Commissioned by Fondazione Trussardi. 2nd april till 14th April. [#apalazzogallery](#) [#fondazionetrussardi](#) [#ibrahimmahama](#) [#massimilianogioni](#) [#architecture](#) [#decay](#) [#labour](#) [#milan](#) [#miart](#) [#contemporaryart](#) @ Porta Venezia (metropolitana di Milano)

The expectation of the art world is rapidly changing and Mahama's intention is to break away from traditional art practice that he had been taught to do within an art school. In his own words, "We need to propose new forms and also constantly expand the sensibilities of both art and the world at large."

Mahama will be speaking at the 25th Design Indaba Conference, which will run from 26 to 28 February 2020 at the Artscape Theatre Centre in Cape Town.

Ticket sales for the Design Indaba 2020 are officially open. Tickets can be bought on [Webtickets](#), and for the latest updates and news, you can follow our [Design Indaba special section](#).

For more:

www.designindaba.com

ABOUT JUANITA PIENAAR

Juanita is the editor of the marketing & media portal on the Bizcommunity website. She is also a contributing writer.

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