



Educator Resource

Recommended Age: Grade 6 and up

Kapwani Kiwanga

Remediation

February 24, 2023—July 23, 2023

Kapwani Kiwanga, *Elliptical Field*, 2023. Installation view, *Remediation*, at MOCA Toronto. Courtesy the artist; Galerie Poggi, Paris; Galerie Tanja Wagner, Berlin; and Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, Johannesburg, and London. © ADAGP, Paris / SOCAN, Montreal (2022). Photo: Laura Findlay.

Museum
Of
**Contemporary
Art**

Toronto Canada



Kapwani Kiwanga, *Glaze*, 2023. Installation view, *Remediation*, at MOCA Toronto. Courtesy the artist; Galerie Poggi, Paris; Galerie Tanja Wagner, Berlin; and Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, Johannesburg, and London. © ADAGP, Paris / SOCAN, Montreal (2022). Photo: Laura Findlay.

Remediation

In *Remediation* Kiwanga expands on her research into how botany has long held a relationship to exploitation and acts of resistance and how plant life has and may intervene in the rejuvenation of contaminated environments. Through new commissions and existing artworks the exhibition navigates the tension of both toxic and regenerative relationships between humans and the natural environment

The works in this exhibition touch on a number of connected and parallel geographies, histories and cultural practices. They are also tied together visually through their playful and alluring use of colour, form and texture. This guide provides discussion questions for entering Kiwanga's installation generally, in addition to focusing in detail on two sculptures in the exhibition.

Ontario Curriculum Connections

Visual Art

Grade 6 – 8

- D1. Creating and Presenting
- D2. Reflecting, Responding and Analysing
- D3. Exploring Forms and Cultural Contexts

Grade 9 – 12

- A. Creating and Presenting
- B. Reflecting, Responding and Analysing
- C. Foundations

Science and Technology *Grade 3-8*

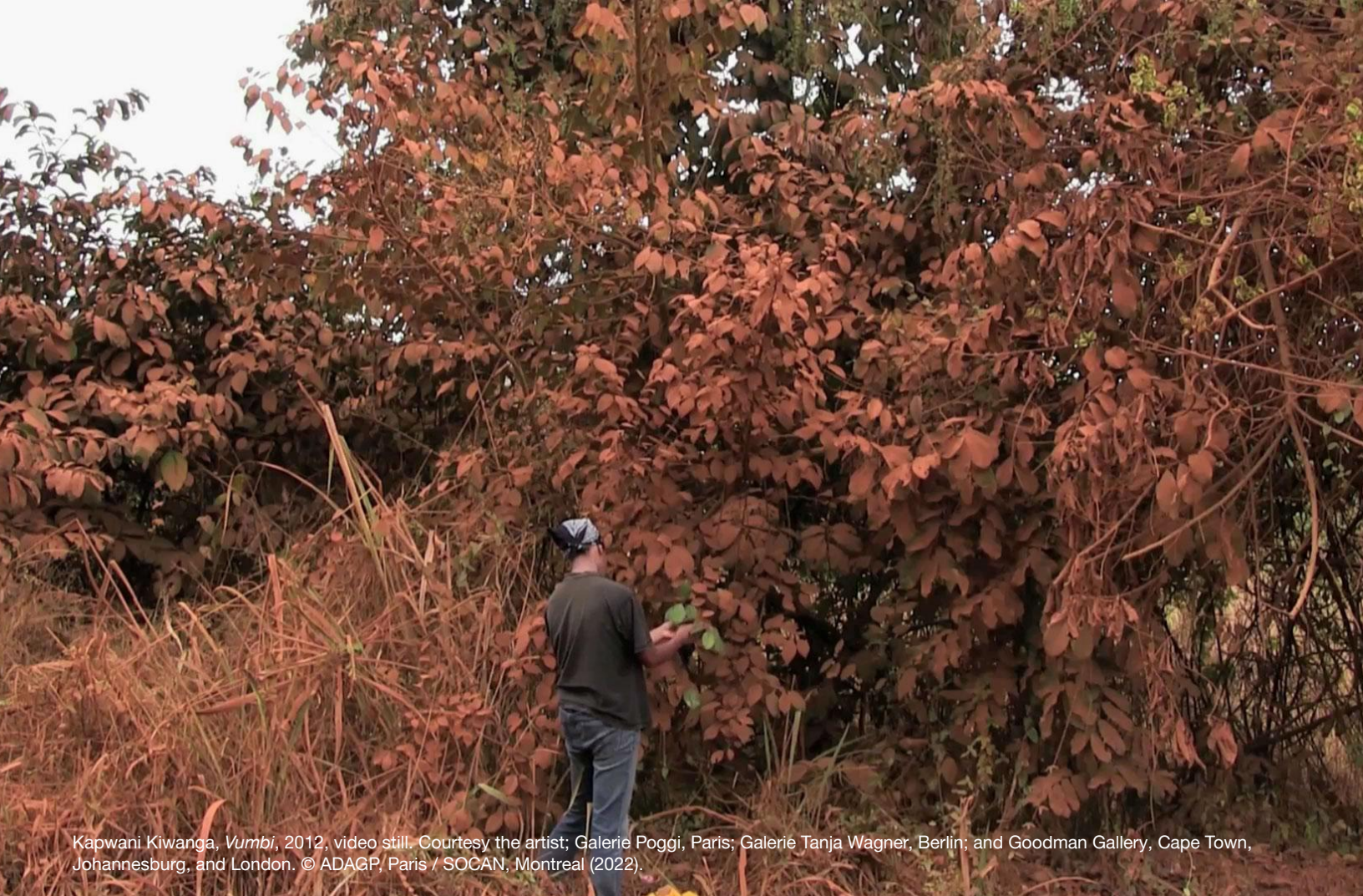
- A. Relating Science and Technology to Our Changing World
- B1. Growth and Change in Plants

Geography *Grade 9*

- B1. The Physical Environment and Human Activities
- B2. Interrelationships between Physical Systems, Processes and Events

Environmental Science *Grade 11*

- B. Scientific Solutions to Contemporary Environmental Challenges
- C. Human Health and the Environment



Kapwani Kiwanga, *Vumbi*, 2012, video still. Courtesy the artist; Galerie Poggi, Paris; Galerie Tanja Wagner, Berlin; and Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, Johannesburg, and London. © ADAGP, Paris / SOCAN, Montreal (2022).

GUIDING QUESTIONS

Kiwanga uses a wide range of materials in her works along with actual living plants. **Can you identify any of these plants or materials without looking at the wall text? Where would you normally see some of the materials she is using?**

The works in *Remediation* play with shapes, structures and colours in a variety of ways. **How do the colours make you feel and what do they make you think of? How would you describe the various shapes and forms in the exhibition?**

How are the forms and structures in the exhibition tied to themes of remediation and toxicity? Do you feel the exhibition leans more towards presenting toxic or remediative relations to the natural? Or is it somewhere in between?

Key Ideas

Remediation, Botany, Agriculture, Exploitation, Toxicity, History, Futurity, Nature-Culture

Glossary

Remediation: Generally remediation refers to a process by which humans try to reverse or undo damage done to the environment. In the context of Kiwanga's exhibition it also refers to the way plants have built in remediative properties that filter toxins out of the ecosystems they are part of.

Botany: Botany is the study of plants, and examines their biological properties. Kiwanga's exhibition is also interested in the cultural and human implications of this field of research throughout its history.

Agriculture: Agriculture often refers to forms of land management by humans for producing goods. In Kiwanga's exhibition she looks both at industrial agricultural and growing practices that allow marginalised and impoverished communities to gain autonomy.



Kapwani Kiwanga, *Keyhole*, 2023. Installation view, *Remediation*, at MOCA Toronto. Courtesy the artist; Galerie Poggi, Paris; Galerie Tanja Wagner, Berlin; and Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, Johannesburg, and London. © ADAGP, Paris / SOCAN, Montreal (2022). Photo: Laura Findlay.

Keyhole (2023)

Keyhole takes its name and shape from the keyhole garden, a type of permaculture (a self sustainable ecosystem) planting configuration that is based on a cycle of regeneration. These gardens are centred around a compost bin that feeds the plants that encircle it, which then, eventually, feed back into the compost bin. Kiwanga's main inspiration are recent keyhole gardens developed in Lesotho for populations struggling with various forms of disabilities or lack of resources.

Similarly, the plants Kiwanga has selected to fill the sculpture also play a regenerative role in their environment: they either filter air, earth or water by pulling out toxins and purifying the environments they live in. The plants include: *Typha latifolia* (Broadleaf Cattail), *Lobelia cardinalis* (Cardinal Flower 'Queen Victoria'), *Iris versicolor* (Iris), *Saururus cernuus* (Lizard's Tail), *Spathiphyllum* (peace lily), *Veronica beccabunga* (European Brooklime), *Canna* and *Colocasia* (Elephant Ear or Taro).

GUIDING QUESTIONS

Have you seen plants in a museum before? **Is this unexpected? Do they feel out of place? Do the plants change your experience of the museum?**

Keyhole asks us to think about cycles of remediation in plants themselves as well as small scale gardening. **How is this different from some large scale agricultural practices? If you have any experience gardening or growing plants are these cycles active considerations or are they things you might think about in the future?**

Take some time to look and think about the other works in *Remediation*, paying special attention to the materials Kiwanga uses in her work. **How does *Keyhole* differ from or resemble other works in the exhibition? What do you think about the use of natural vs industrial materials in *Keyhole* and Kiwanga's work more generally?**



Kapwani Kiwanga, *Vivarium: Apomixis*, 2023. Installation view, *Remediation*, at MOCA Toronto. Courtesy the artist; Galerie Poggi, Paris; Galerie Tanja Wagner, Berlin; and Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, Johannesburg, and London. © ADAGP, Paris / SOCAN, Montreal (2022). Photo: Laura Findlay.

Vivarium (2023)

A vivarium, much like terrariums, are glass enclosures that are used to keep animals and plants for observation or as pets. Both of these objects have their origins in the Wardian case which was developed in the 19th century as a tool for transporting goods from colonised areas over long periods of time.

While Kiwanga borrows the name from this object, her sculptures are not environments made to encase, control or capture. Rather they are forward or future looking projections of what a vivarium could become; one where the plant is surrounded by a protective environment that it has the possibility to use as a structure for growth and support.

The forms of these sculptures are also plant like and organic and this is echoed in the subtitles for the three works: *Cytomixis*, *Adventitious* and *Apomixis* are terms from Biology that refer to various forms of plant development, mutation and reproduction.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

Do you know what a vivarium or terrarium is? **What are they normally used for and how are Kiwanga's *Vivariums* different?**

What do the forms of sculptures remind you of? **How do the reflections of light from *Glaze* (the colourful wall cut outs) enhance the sculpture? What kind of environment is Kiwanga creating in the exhibition as a whole?**

In these sculptures Kiwanga is referencing the history of the vivarium but suggesting a radically different way this object could be designed and used. **What are some technologies that exist that are used to manage land or impact the natural environment? If you were to imagine a new version of this technology that is more sustainable and caring towards the land and planet what would it look like?**