



ELI AND EDYTHE **BROAD ART MUSEUM** MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

October 19, 2015

**The Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at MSU Presents *Material Effects*,  
Featuring Leading Contemporary Visual and Performance Artists from West Africa and the  
Diaspora in Exploration of the Social and Political Role of Objects and Materials in Contemporary  
Society**

**Marking U.S. museum debut for three leading artists, exhibition includes commissioned and  
existing works of video art, sculpture, performance, and installation art**

**East Lansing, MI** – A major new exhibition examining the work of contemporary artists from West Africa and the diaspora will premiere at the Broad MSU this November. The exhibition features work by Bernard Akoi-Jackson, Jelili Atiku, Ibrahim Mahama, Otobong Nkanga, and Zohra Opoku, as well as a video work by German artist Antje Majewski presenting a portrait of pioneering Senegalese sculptor and performance artist Issa Samb. Featuring a range of media—including video art, sculpture, performance, and installation—*Material Effects* will explore each artist’s use of and reflections upon the symbolic, commercial, and practical value of man-made and natural materials.

On view November 6, 2015 – April 8, 2016, the exhibition will debut newly commissioned works by Ibrahim Mahama, Jelili Atiku, and Bernard Akoi-Jackson, marking their first major presentations in a U.S. museum.

“It is our vision to provide a platform for international artists to spark dialogue about some of contemporary society’s most pressing challenges,” said Min Jung Kim, deputy director of external relations at Broad MSU. “We are thrilled to be working with these dynamic artists and to invite examination and conversation, through their probing gaze, on a variety of cultural, political, and social situations across the globe.”

“The objects and materials that surround us—whether they be the cloth we wear or the sacks that carry our food—hold strong meaning” said exhibition curator Yesomi Umolu, “In *Material Effects* the artists we present use this very basic notion as a platform to explore the relationship between people and things as it relates to global commodity markets, individual and collective identities, and contemporary socio-political realities. It has been truly wonderful to get to know these artists and we look forward to bringing their captivating work to East Lansing and the United States.”

Presented across two galleries within the Zaha Hadid-designed building, the works in *Material Effects* confront the shifting value of materials and objects in different ways: some transform everyday materials into sculptural and performative works, exposing and subverting their perceived meaning and economic value; others leverage an object’s symbolic meaning to spark discussions about broader issues relating to institutional power and global crises.

The exhibition is anchored in the reflections of pioneering Senegalese artist and philosopher Issa Samb (b. 1945) on the intrinsic qualities of objects. A video work by German artist Antje Majewski, *La Coquille*.

*Conversation entre Issa Samb et Antje Majewski. Dakar 2010*, features a conversation with Samb in his courtyard studio—a site that itself contains hundreds of found objects.

Additional highlighted works within the exhibition include:

- Three new commissions:
  - A work by Ghanaian artist Ibrahim Mahama (b. 1987) transforming reclaimed jute sacks into a large-scale, site-specific installation that investigates the material remnants of Ghana's commodity markets.
  - A new participatory installation and performance by Ghanaian artist Bernard Akoi-Jackson (b. 1979) *Untitled (Vestige:Systems.BLOCKS.Standards)* that looks at the objects and rituals of contemporary African life as they are informed by traditional culture and the colonial heritage. On November 6, Akoi-Jackson will present his performance during the exhibition's opening reception. Embodying the persona of a fictive "African" royal, he and a team of collaborators will solicit audience participants to engage in actions that unravel the tensions inherent in our daily submission to institutional, ideological, and aesthetic authorities.
  - The 17th iteration of Nigerian artist Jelili Atiku's (b. 1968) *In the Red* series—an installation and associated performance exploring themes of war and violence. On November 7, Atiku will orchestrate a live performance of his work—wrapping himself in a richly hued fabric and leading a troop of performers from exterior spaces into the galleries as they perform choreographed and spontaneous gestures that elicit collective reflection on global disputes and crises. The performance will culminate in the creation of a new site-specific installation that bears the physical and psychological residue of the performers' actions.
- Nigerian artist Otobong Nkanga's (b. 1974) *Contained Measures of a Kolanut* (2012), a work combining woven tapestry and installation that traces the trajectory of the Kolanut—from its ritual use in village life in West African communities, to its movement via the clay trade to Latin America and its use as a key ingredient in popular Western products such as Coca-Cola and Red Bull.
- German-Ghanaian artist Zohra Opoku (b. 1976)'s *Post No Bill* (2013), a video work delving into the rich history of textile cultures in West Africa to comment on the formation of individual and societal identities.

*Material Effects* is organized by the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University and guest curated by Yesomi Umolu. Support for this exhibition is provided by the Eli and Edythe Broad Endowed Exhibition Fund and the Broad MSU's general exhibitions fund.

**Yesomi Umolu** is Exhibitions Curator at Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts, University of Chicago. Specializing in global contemporary art and spatial practices, Umolu has presented exhibitions, commissions, and public programs with John Akomfrah, Ursula Biemann and Paulo Tavares, Mithu Sen, Karen Mirza and Brad Butler, Abraham Cruzvillegas, Minouk Lim, Sharon Hayes and Eyal Weizman, among others. Prior to joining the University of Chicago, Umolu was Assistant Curator at the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University. Umolu was previously Curatorial Fellow for Visual Arts at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis and held curatorial positions at the European biennial of contemporary art Manifesta 8, region of Murcia, Spain and the Serpentine Gallery, London. Her writing has appeared in numerous catalogues and journals, including *Art in America*, *Afterimage: The Journal of Media Arts and Cultural Criticism* and the Studio Museum in Harlem's *Studio* magazine. Umolu received an MA with honors in Architectural Design from the University of Edinburgh and an MA with distinction in Curating Contemporary Art from the Royal College of Art, London.

### **Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University**

Opened on November 10, 2012, the dynamic 46,000-square-foot museum serves as both a teaching institution and a cultural hub for East Lansing and the region. In keeping with MSU's commitment to applying knowledge to benefit society and further the global common good, the Broad MSU's program of original and traveling exhibitions; initiatives with living artists; performances; and educational offerings for students, faculty, and the community make the museum a center for questioning and understanding the modern world. With a collection containing 7,500 objects from the Greek and Roman periods through the Renaissance and on to the Modern, the Broad MSU is uniquely able to contextualize the wide range of contemporary art practices within a firm historical context. The museum is named in honor of Eli and Edythe Broad, longtime supporters of the university who provided the lead gift of \$28 million. For more information, visit [www.broadmuseum.msu.edu](http://www.broadmuseum.msu.edu).

### **Michigan State University**

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