



Press Release

Lakwena Maciver: A green and pleasant land (HA-HA)

12 November 2022 – 19 March 2023

The Weston Gallery

Yorkshire Sculpture Park (YSP) announces an immersive solo exhibition of new painting and textile works by Lakwena Maciver.

Vibrant colour and bold text combine in Lakwena's joyful and gently subversive work. Her paintings, murals and installations often reference everyday shared experiences and popular culture, such as songs, fashion and basketball. Bringing messages of hopeful possibility, Lakwena speaks to points of connection and commonality between people, with a utopian vision that dreams of redemption and liberation. In the Acholi language of northern Uganda her name aptly means 'messenger of the chief'.

Lakwena's new paintings and textile works will transform The Weston Gallery at YSP into an immersive and colourful environment through the grey winter months, using dazzling hues and concise phrases to communicate powerful concepts. The artist has taken inspiration from YSP's landscape and particularly the 18th-century ha-has – concealed walled ditches that were built to stop livestock straying into the gardens without the need for visible fences. Simultaneous with the ha-has' construction, the 18th/19th century Enclosure Acts dramatically changed the configuration of land in this country, removing 'commoners' access, placing it in private ownership and demarcating it with partitions. Lakwena uses these historic ideas to comment on how in today's society, despite the illusion of openness, public speech and public space are increasingly tightly controlled by a privileged elite.

A bank of vivid panels incessantly proclaiming the word 'Ha-ha' overturns the feature's deliberately clandestine existence and instead writes its name large and impossible to ignore. When repeated in this way the allusion to laughter is also inescapable. Yet beneath this appearance of jollity, Lakwena asks whether we are laughing along or being laughed at by those at the helm of power, drawing our attention to structures of control.

The idea of paradise, a transcendent and idyllic space of healing, recurs in Lakwena's practice and she describes her works as "escape routes, afrofuturistic portals to utopia". In developing her ideas for this new exhibition, Lakwena considered YSP's verdant landscape as representing an Eden-like place that once belonged to wealthy landowners but is now openly accessible by a diverse audience.



Lakwena. Photo: Danika Magdalena

Within her work, she questions hierarchies of access to speech and space, and imagines what the paradise we all long for might look like without the boundaries that are created around us and the systems that polarise us. Central to this particular body of work is her insistence that whilst on our quests for Utopia, we allow space for dissent.

Lakwena's textile works resonate with the rich history of textiles in West Yorkshire and also the tradition of making banners to convey potent messages of resistance. Critically, at a time when revolutionary rhetoric and activism are rife, but only the orthodox ideology is allowed, Lakwena's work challenges assumptions of liberty and provokes us to question how free public speech really is.

"I'm really excited to be showing at YSP. For me there's something really powerful and significant about showing work in the context of the English countryside. Thinking historically and politically, themes of power, ownership, access, control, boundaries, and division all come to mind, and this is the impetus for the work. But at the same time, physically being in and experiencing the landscape, I can't help but feel a strong sense of liberation, and an invitation to let the work speak freely. And that's what I intend to do."

- Lakwena

Exhibition supported by Vigo Gallery.

ENDS



Installation view of Lakwena Maciver *Jump Paintings*, Vigo Gallery, London



Installation view of Lakwena Maciver, *Back in the Air: A Meditation on Higher Ground*, Temple Underground Station Roof Terrace, London.

Notes for Editors

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Listings information

Yorkshire Sculpture Park, West Bretton, Wakefield WF4 4LG

Near Wakefield and Barnsley – M1 Junction 38

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Open seven days a week, except Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

Booking essential, via ysp.org.uk

Social media

Instagram and Twitter: @YSPsculpture

Facebook: @YorkshireSculpturePark

LinkedIn: Yorkshire Sculpture Park

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About Lakwena Maciver (b.1986)

London-based artist Lakwena is internationally renowned for her joy-inducing palette, dynamic compositions and profound, pertinent messages. Having been born in London to an English mother and Ugandan father, Lakwena moved to Ethiopia for a number of years before returning to England. This formative experience has been a great influence on her work, with a recurrent theme being a longing for a return to what was for her 'a glimpse of Paradise'. Power, public space, public speech and decolonisation are pivotal considerations in the artist's work as well as references to Afrofuturism and Utopia.

Her public art commissions and installations include those at Tate, Somerset House, The Bowery (NYC), the Southbank Centre, Covent Garden, and other large scale architectural installations in Munich, Miami, New York, Los Angeles, Dubai, Vienna and London, as well as a juvenile detention centre in Arkansas. Most recently her acclaimed *Back in the Air: A Meditation on Higher Ground* has brought to life the half-acre roof terrace on top of Temple Underground Station. Lakwena is represented by Vigo Gallery.

About Yorkshire Sculpture Park

Yorkshire Sculpture Park (YSP) is the leading international centre for modern and contemporary sculpture. Welcoming around 500,000 visitors each year pre-pandemic, YSP is an independent charitable trust and registered museum situated in the 500-acre, 18th-century Bretton Hall estate in West Yorkshire.

Founded in 1977 by Sir Peter Murray CBE, YSP is the largest sculpture park of its kind in Europe. It is the only place in Europe to see Barbara Hepworth's recently restored *The Family of Man* in its entirety, alongside a significant collection of sculpture, including bronzes by Henry Moore, important pieces by Phyllida Barlow, Roger Hiorns and Ai Weiwei, and site-related works by Katrina Palmer, Andy Goldsworthy, Alfredo Jaar, David Nash, Sean Scully and James Turrell.

YSP mounts a year-round temporary exhibitions programme including some of the world's leading artists across six indoor galleries and the open air. Recent highlights include exhibitions by Fiona Banner, Anthony Caro, Tony Cragg, Amar Kanwar, KAWS, Joan Miró, Henry Moore, Annie Morris, Giuseppe Penone, Jaume Plensa, Ursula von Rydingsvard, Sean Scully, Yinka Shonibare CBE, Chiharu Shiota, David Smith, Joana Vasconcelos and Bill Viola.

Across its 45-year history, YSP has worked with over 1,000 artists from more than 40 countries, on varied projects from short-term residencies to major surveys. YSP supports artists at vital stages in their careers and is rare in having the accommodation, workshops and expertise to enable open-ended and risk-taking practice,

giving artists space, time and support to think and to develop new ideas.

Over this time, YSP has sought to ignite, nurture and sustain interest in and debate around contemporary art and sculpture, especially with those for whom art participation is not habitual or familiar. It enables open access to art, situations and ideas, and continues to re-evaluate and expand the approach to considering art's role and relevance in society. Supporting 40,000 people each year, pre-pandemic, through YSP's learning programme, this innovative work develops ability, confidence and life aspiration in participants.

YSP's core work is made possible by investment from Arts Council England, Wakefield Council, the Liz and Terry Bramall Foundation and Sakurako and William Fisher through the Sakana Foundation. YSP was named Art Fund Museum of the Year in 2014.

Creative Case for Diversity

Yorkshire Sculpture Park was founded in 1977 to enable fairer cultural access and opportunity and we are committed to being part of change towards a fairer world. We do not tolerate discrimination in any form and are proactive in our programme, policies and behaviours to address inequalities locally, nationally and internationally. We recognise that economic, social and cultural disadvantage is complex and intersectional and shape our activity accordingly. Diversity and equality are crucial to the arts because they release the true potential of our nation's artistic talent – from every background. At YSP, we support Arts Council England's mission – great art and culture for everyone. We share ACE's commitment to promote and embed diversity in our workforce and cultural programme. This is called the 'Creative Case for Diversity



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