

Recess presents:

Nontsikelelo Mutiti

Ruka (To braid/ to knit/ to weave)

June 3 – August 2, 2014

June 14, 2pm: Community Braiding Workshop*

June 28, 12-6pm: Film Screenings

July 19, 12-6pm: Rent a Booth, invited artist projects

On June 3, 2014, Nontsikelelo Mutiti will begin work on *Ruka (To braid/ to knit/ to weave)* as part of Recess's signature program, Session. Session invites artists to use Recess's public space as studio, exhibition venue and grounds for experimentation.

Over the course of her Session, Mutiti will play the role of the artist, designer, and researcher to a space for the study and practice of hair braiding. While documenting the practice and resulting visual forms, the artist will excavate the language and motifs associated with this method of adornment across traditional and contemporary contexts. From the space, the artist will chart new territory in her artistic research through teaching and learning hair braiding techniques. In partnership with hair braiding professionals as well as members of her own community (of family, friends and colleagues) she will generate and consolidate an archive of materials related to hair braiding salons including archival images, field photography, texts, transcripts of conversations, braiding instructions, combs, and Harlem hair braider business cards. In response to this gathered material, Mutiti will create a new installation of custom floor tiles, video, posters and ephemera using the hair braiding's formal qualities of repetition and diagramming as a starting point.

The African hair braiding salon, which can be found in cities all over the world, is a marker of diaspora and often an important site for African women living abroad to use their braiding skills to generate income. Spaces in New York City and Bedfordshire in the United Kingdom are a type of facsimile of the salons of Harare, Zimbabwe. When building her own installation, the artist will reference these important social spaces with walls painted in acid green or bright orange, magazine cut outs of celebrities, hair product models, flyers and posters from evangelical churches, not forgetting the ubiquitous small black television set on top of a cabinet playing Nollywood movies. The artist's redrawing of an African hair braiding Salon will support her study of the technical skill involved, as well as provide a space to document and interpret these processes and forms through video, photography and printmaking.

About the Artist:

Nontsikelelo Mutiti is a Zimbabwean-born artist and educator working across disciplines to produce work that occupies the forms of fine art, design, and social practice. Mutiti received a diploma in multimedia from the Zimbabwe Institute of Digital Arts in 2007 and an MFA with a concentration in graphic design from the Yale School of



Art in 2012. Also in 2012, she was a recipient of the Alice Kimball English Traveling Fellowship and a fellow of the Create Change Program with the Laundromat Project in New York City. Her recent exhibitions include *T(H)READ*, a solo installation at the Edwin Gallery in Hamtramck, Mich., curated by Chido Johnson; "Aural Map Making (125th Street)" in *Remitting Default: Sonic Diagrams* for Recess Activities in New York City, curated by Kenya (Robinson); a performative lecture, "A New Work/A Now Work/A Non Work," at Yale's Davenport College Art Gallery; and *Give and Take: A Currency of Culture*, at the Community Folk Art Centre at Syracuse University. She is co-founder of the Zimbabwe Cultural Centre in Detroit which facilitated collaborative projects between artist living and working in Detroit, Michigan and the cities of Harare and Mutema in Zimbabwe. ZCCD mounted an exhibition of these works in sister exhibitions under the title Kumusha (Home). Mutiti is currently Visiting Assistant Professor in the New Media Department at State University of New York, Purchase College.



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*RSVP required. Contact info@recessactivities.org to secure a spot.