

## Denzel Muhumuza

Uganda

### Biography

Uganda-based digital artist Denzel Muhumuza honors the collective African heritage in his Afrofuturistic digital collages. Drawing inspiration from the creativity and wisdom of his ancestors, Denzel Muhumuza's work emphasizes the power of culture, its creation and preservation. Denzel Muhumuza's work focuses on the relationship between man and nature that has existed for thousands of years.

### The artwork: aesthetic positions

Denzel Muhumuza: "As an Afrofuturist artist, I consider Afrofuturism as an ideology, a means of decolonization. Afrofuturism looks to the future, but also pays homage to the wisdom of the past. Afrofuturism allows us to finally tell our own stories, preserve our culture, and control our own narratives. Afrofuturism represents the strength of African culture, connecting the diaspora to the origin, the modern to the indigenous. Afrofuturism celebrates advances in technology and science but recognizes indigenous life as the blueprint for all progress. The ideology of Afrofuturism is a call to greatness, a belief that anything is possible, and a will to create an inclusive and just future."

### Art Works and Aesthetic Positions

#### *Blood Moon Cycles*

2021

Digital print on canvas

Size: 101,6 x 101,6 cm

Limited edition: 20 pieces

Denzel Muhumuza: "The blood moon opens the way to explore the subconscious. When the blood moon cycles, we honor the intelligence that lies in the shadows, the brilliance of the psyche."

#### *Blue Moon Cycles*

2021

Digital print on canvas  
Size: 101,6 x 101,6 cm  
Limited edition: 10 pieces

Denzel Muhumuza: "The blue moon illuminates our hopes and dreams for the future. When the blue moon cycles, the waves rise, be one with your feelings, realize you are not a drop in the ocean, you are the ocean in a drop."

### *Protected Moon*

2021

Digital print on canvas  
Size: 101,6 x 101,6 cm  
Limited edition: 20 pieces

Denzel Muhumuza: "The protected moon reflects the warmth of the sun, the protection of the womb and the wisdom of the moon."

### *About the Idi Amin series*

Denzel Muhumuza: "The Idi Amin series is very controversial, even for me. Amin was a dictator who was responsible for the oppression and murder of so many people in my country, including my grandfather. Amin was known as the "Butcher of Uganda" and was infamous for atrocities such as eating rubber slippers and disappearing thousands of people he considered political threats. Amin put unchecked power in the hands of military leaders, who in turn abused that power by torturing and extorting citizens.

With this series, I am taking a lighter, more humorous perspective to portray Amin. For although he was a dictator responsible for widespread oppression and murder, he simultaneously held strong Pan-African views and was determined to liberate Uganda from the stronghold of the British Empire. This series celebrates his Pan-African dreams, aspirations, and deeds to free Uganda from British imperialism and economic control."

### *Last King of Scotland*

2021

Digital print on canvas  
Size: 122 x 82 cm  
Limited edition: 5 pieces

Denzel Muhumuza: "Ugandan President Idi Amin was fascinated by the history of Scotland, which had rebelled against the British Empire centuries earlier. Idi Amin famously offered himself as king to the Scottish people to free them from British oppression."

## *Conqueror of the British Empire*

2021

Digital print on canvas

Size: 122 x 82 cm

Limited edition: 5 pieces

Denzel Muhumuza: "When Idi Amin addressed the African Union in 1978, he declared himself the Conqueror of the British Empire, declaring his country Uganda economically liberated from Britain and claiming that he had driven "British imperialism" out of Uganda."

## Work comment by kukutana

The Moon Series: moon and mask - two mysterious, almost mystical entities. Illustrations that could adorn science fiction publications, reminders of the future as seen in the blockbuster feature film "Black Panther", which depicts a black utopia: striking, direct, vivid, multidimensional.

But also the series on the former Ugandan president and mass murderer Idi Amin: the fruits of colonialism; ironic exaggerations and ironic commentary on European-British imperial pretensions. Atrocities produce atrocities, good can hardly grow out of bad, and violence perpetuates itself through generations. Do people learn? Sometimes one would like to think: no - the varnish of morality, closeness, or whatever one might call this, that tames aggression, is very very thin and violence ubiquitous, everywhere. Memories of the future.

## **On Afrofuturism:**

Past futures | future pasts: Afrofuturism

The "future", painted in dazzling colors and dealt with in exciting scenarios always found its place in the heart of pop culture. With "Afrofuturism," a type of pop culture emerged that originated specifically on the African continent.

Today, the Hollywood blockbuster and superhero film *Black Panther* (2018) presents its version of Afrofuturism that many can connect with: a fictional African nation, technologically advanced, hiding from the (inferior) rest of the planet. There is a desire to live in peace, not to conquer or oppress anyone either. Works such as "In the United States of Africa" by Abdourahman A. Waberi (Djibouti), a satirical novel that criticizes current everyday life from a fictional future in the manner of Jonathan Swift (*Gulliver's Travels*), show further manifestations of Afrofuturism. But fantasy novels have also conquered the terrain: Nnedi Okorafor (Nigeria, USA) wrote "Akata Warrior," a series that deals with students of magic in a special "Nigeria."

Today's political Afrofuturism has its say in Felwine Sarr's "Afrotopia." The essay concludes:

"Africa must also rethink the role of its culture. Culture as a search for purposes, for goals and reasons to live at all, as a procedure to give meaning to the human adventure. To realize culture in this sense requires a radical critique of all that, in contemporary African cultures, contains, impedes, limits, or diminishes humanity and humanity. At the same time, however, certain African values must be rehabilitated: *jom* (dignity), *communality*, *téraanga* (hospitality), *kersa* (modesty), *thoroughness*, *ngor* (sense of honor). It is necessary to bring to light and renew the profound humanism of African cultures. The revolution to be launched is a spiritual one. And it seems that the future of humanity depends on it. / On the day of the revolution, Africa will once again be the spiritual center of the world, as it was at the time of the first morning ruptures." (Felwine Sarr, *Afrotopia*, Berlin, 2019, p. 156).

Achille Mbembe also looks to the future:

"If Africans want to get up and go, sooner or later they will have to look elsewhere than to Europe. Europe is not a declining world, to be sure. But it is tired and now represents declining vitality and purple sunsets. Its spirit has lost content, extreme forms of pessimism, nihilism and frivolity have worn it down. / Africa should direct its gaze to something new. It should enter the stage and do for the first time what was not possible before. And it will have to do this in the knowledge that new times are thereby dawning for itself and for humanity." (Achille Mbembe, *Exit from the Long Night*, Berlin, 2016, p. 302).

Wikipedia defines Afrofuturism as follows (further references there):

"Afrofuturism is a literary and cultural aesthetic that combines elements of science fiction, historical novels, fantasy, Afrocentricity, and magical realism with non-Western cosmologies to not only critique contemporary dilemmas of People of Color, but also to rework, interrogate, and re-examine historical events from the

past. The term was first coined by Mark Dery in 1993 and further explored in the late 1990s through conversations led by Alondra Nelson. Afrofuturism addresses issues and concerns of the African Diaspora through a technocultural and science fiction-influenced lens and encompasses a range of media and artists who share an interest in envisioning dark futures derived from Afro-diasporic experiences. Influential Afrofuturist works include the novels of Samuel R. Delany and Octavia Butler; the paintings of Jean-Michel Basquiat and the photographs of Renée Cox; and the distinctly extraterrestrial myths of Parliament-Funkadelic, the Jonzun Crew, Warp 9, and Sun Ra." (<https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afrofuturismus>).