

# New Rituals: Ryoichi Kurokawa + Nkisi

**Doors:** 7.30pm

**Ryoichi Kurokawa:** 8pm

**Interval:** 8.45pm

**Nkisi:** 9.05pm

**Ends:** 10pm

**Approximate running time:** 120 minutes, including interval

All timings are approximate and subject to change.

Please note that extensive strobing effects will be used throughout the performances.

## April Welsh previews two transformative audiovisual performances exploring identity and spirituality in the post-digital age, as they receive their UK premieres

The pandemic may have altered our perception of time and memory, but art can help us to make sense of this shifting world. For the second volume of her event series *New Rituals*, artist and curator Estela Oliva shines a light on two innovative creators working with razor-sharp audiovisual performance to expound the nature of memory and existence.

The award-winning, Osaka-born artist Ryoichi Kurokawa – whose multimedia practice spans installations, digital works, audio, and concert pieces and has been shown everywhere from London's TATE Modern to Montreal's Mutek festival – evokes the principles of ecology to explore the relationship between humans and their environment. Making its UK premiere at the Barbican tonight, Kurokawa's *subassemblies* project presents digitally generated structures from 3D data collected by laser scanning human-made architecture, ruins and nature. Giving ghostly abandoned buildings a new lease of life, Kurokawa describes the result as 'an in-motion hybrid reality that, through its layers of order and disorder, renews history's accepted timeline and exposes the forces of nature and art for their combined possibilities'.

Guided by environmental concerns and taking inspiration from the rural plentitude of his countryside upbringing, Kurokawa's art shows nature at its most abundant. 'Nature is mystic, beautiful and frightening at the same time,' he told Maxence Grugier for *Rotondes*. For his bold *subassemblies* series, which also comprises installations and a VR experience, Kurokawa blends organic field recordings with blistering, synthetic soundscapes and uncompromising digital visuals that flood the senses.

'The way I see it, this is a visual-audio show not an audio-visual show – so the visual leads and the sound immerses into this experience, and it is worked in a way so that all of the soundscapes compliment the feelings he has had about these spaces he's creating', offers Oliva of the project's audiovisual character.

Kurokawa and Nkisi arguably view the world through radically different eyes, proposing alternative realities that allow us to reflect on who we are, and why we exist. Through her unyielding experiments in electronic music, the London-based, Congolese-Belgian DJ, producer and activist Melika Ngombe Kolongo aka Nkisi considers the impact of sound on the human psyche and behaviour, what she calls 'the mechano-sensitive reactions to sound in our bodies and surroundings'.

Nkisi is a former member and co-founder of NON Worldwide, a self-described 'collective of African artists and of the diaspora, using sound as their primary medium, to articulate the visible and invisible structures that create binaries in society, and in turn distribute power', as well as a live mainstay at Endless – the itinerant London club night that made use of unoccupied buildings around the city.

The concept of rejuvenating unused spaces and of forging underground connections chimes with the essence of *New Rituals*, and tonight Nkisi brings her visceral new live show, *Invisible Gestures*, to the Barbican. She backs her performance with a cache of exclusive new films, which link back to her research platform, The Secret Institute. 'In ancient Kongo traditions all gestures are coded, complex codes of cultural knowledge,' says Nkisi, who employs rhythm, trance and ritual to ask questions about collective identity. 'The film is more about my experience of the invisible gestures of Vodun, and Afro-diasporic traditions that use sound as vibrational forms of remembrance and world building', she offers.

barbican

Sonically, Nkisi draws from multiple influences to create a brain-scrambling bridge between the hard, fast dance music of her Belgium home and the polyrhythms of her Congolese heritage. Although her music has often tended to channel a club-minded ethos, it also defies strict genre classification and her productions have found home on an array of labels to date, including Warp's Arcola imprint and Rush Hour's MW. Released in 2019 on Lee Gamble's UIQ label, Nkisi's acclaimed debut album, *7 Directions*, sees her interpret Congolese percussion music across seven thrilling tracks, while championing the African cosmology of the Bantu-Kongo, in particular the writings of Kongo scholar Dr. Kimbwandende Kia Bunseki Fu-Kiau.

*Resident Advisor* called *7 Directions* 'a stark exercise in rhythm and atmosphere', and 'an authentic reflection of the artist herself, shaped by her experiences and unique personal history.' With its uncompromising kick drums, white-hot flashes of trance-inducing euphoria and future-facing electronic experimentations, this visionary artist's music is best absorbed in a live setting, where the body – and mind – can be truly set free.

For *Invisible Gestures*, Nkisi is set to bring in a toolkit of voice processing hardware, which she approaches like an arsenal of musical instruments primed to make her voice an integral part of the performance. 'I think Nkisi is going to be like the master of ceremonies in this case, opening up a gate on stage in which everyone else contributes and through these kinds of rhythmic vibes and sounds to kind of enter some sort of trance', offers Oliva.

## **Performers**

**Ryoichi Kurokawa**  
**Nkisi**

Produced by the Barbican in association with New Rituals  
Curated by Estela Oliva



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