

## Press Release

*Kimvuka (Together)*  
Nú Barreto &  
Yvanovitch Mbaya

JAN 27. – MAR 4.

The new Berlin contemporary art gallery Ronewa Art Projects welcomes its first visitors on the evening of January 26, 2023. For the inaugural exhibition at the Potsdamer Straße gallery space, we are pleased to announce the duo show *Kimvuka (Together)*, featuring **Nú Barreto** and **Yvanovitch Mbaya**. The exhibition runs from January 27 until March 4, 2023, with a grand-opening event open to the public on Thursday, January 26, from 6pm until 9pm.

Collective human experience is the center of the exhibition, taking the shape of anonymous figures. Barreto's dark silhouettes manifest a reality of violence and inequality, while Mbaya's line-drawn figures are vessels that appeal to the universality of human nature. Both artists surround their figures with a distinct symbolic system developed over their careers and grounded in the context of contemporary Africa. Similarities in their work parallel the friendship and generational influence between the two artists.

Barreto, born in Guinea-Bissau, moved to Paris in 1989, from where he continues to create multidisciplinary, politically charged work that confronts the socio-economic conditions of the African continent. In the canvas paintings presented in *Kimvuka*, his twisted, anguished figures free fall into disorienting spatial abstractions. From this space, rise ladders with broken rungs – a recurring motif in Barreto's practice – pitting the individual against a rigged economic system. Though critical, even outraged, Barreto's work is not fatalistic; he charges viewers with a responsibility towards those suffering under global structures of inequality.

Mbaya presents a humanity full of hope, inspired by his travels as a young man, journeying from his home in Brazzaville, Congo, through West Africa, and settling in Casablanca, Morocco. As a narrator, Mbaya is the traveler, the observer, the anthropologist, and the immigrant. Tableaus from his memory and imagination plot scenes along his personal journey. The natural materials he incorporates, coffee and indigo pigment, are sourced from several different African nations and pay homage to local practices and traditions, including his own Bantu culture. Ronewa borrows the exhibition title from Mbaya's work '*Kimvuka*', a Bantu word meaning together. While drawn from specific local contexts, such as ceremonies and the passing of ancestral knowledge, Mbaya's figures also capture basic human gestures and emotions. He urges his viewers to seek commonality, reaching beyond the boundary of them and us. Created for the occasion of Mbaya's first German exhibition, Ronewa Art Projects will debut his performance video work '*Ngunza (Spiritual Initiation)*', which will screen for the duration of the show.

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**Nú Barreto** (born in 1966 in São Domingos, Guinea-Bissau) studied at the École Nationale des Métiers de l'Image des Gobelins in Paris. Since representing his home country at the Lisbon World Fair in 1998, Barreto has received much international exposure and acclaim. His work has been celebrated in many solo and group shows across Africa, Europe, the Middle

East, South America, and China, including numerous surveys of prominent contemporary African artists. Barreto's works are housed in major public collections such as the Musée Capixaba do Negro Museum (MUCANE) in Vitória (Brazil), the Pro-Justitiae Foundation in Porto and the Arpád Szenes and Viera da Silva Foundation in Lisbon (Portugal), the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) in Ouagadougou (Burkina-Faso), as well as the Taipa House Museum of Macao (China).

**Yvanvovitch Mbaya** (born in 1994 in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo) graduated from the National School of Fine Arts in Brazzaville, where he was a student of the acclaimed Congolese artist, writer, and set designer Bill Kouélany. Along his journey towards settling in Casablanca, Morocco, Mbaya traveled to and lived in numerous countries across the African continent that impacted his work, notably Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Mali, Benin, and Togo. Mbaya's works have been exhibited widely in Africa, including his recent solo show at CDA Gallery in Casablanca, as well as in France, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates.

**Ronewa Art Projects** promotes emerging and established artists from Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and with a particular focus on Africa and artists from the global African diaspora. Ronewa Art Gallery was originally founded in Berlin in 2015 by director Roger Washington, from which it evolved into Ronewa Art Projects – an adaptable, project-based model of curating international exhibitions. Now returning to the European art capital and located in the thriving Tiergarten art district, Ronewa Art Projects opens with the mission to expand the diversity of its artist collaborations and to combine its international position with a local public program.