

Stephen Friedman Gallery

Mpls. St. Paul
A fusion of art and music comes together at Mia
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Mia has collaborated with the musician Chaka Mkali to create Rituals of Resilience, a story of visual art told through music.



Image: Courtesy of Mia

Co-curated by the musician Chaka Mkali (a.k.a. I Self Divine) and the Minneapolis Institute of Art curator and the head of its department of contemporary art Gabriel Ritter, the audio-visual experience Rituals of Resilience opens today. The new installation pairs 28 works by Black visual artists from the United States, Africa, and the greater African Diaspora with accompanying music created by Mkali and collaborators exploring themes of culture, identity, spirituality, and power through the Black lived experience. Mkali's album is being released on digital platforms in tandem with the exhibition opening.

A recipient of a Bush Foundation fellowship, Mkali is a Minneapolis-based musician, artist, and community organizer. His 16 track album, also titled Rituals of Resilience, creates an “atmospheric sonic landscape” born out of deep research into each featured visual artist. Produced with Orko Eloheim and Medium Zach with features from The Lioness, SoloStar, Tish Jones, Izell Pyramid, Muja Messiah, Greg Grease, I-BE, and others, the 51-minute flow of meditative beats invites listeners to explore the ancestral message of a “collective Black consciousness transcending time and space.”

“I was drawn to this project with Mia because it offered the possibility of shifting power and presenting the institutional space of a museum as a place for engagement, inclusion, imagination, and potential—not gentrification, removal, containment, and restrictions,” Mkali says. “Rituals of Resilience is about the act of survival under intense pressure and heat. It's a place to hide when being in your body isn't safe, a reimagining of new worlds and possibilities.”

Featured visual artists include Kevin Beasley, Bisa Butler, Jordan Casteel, Deborah Roberts, Cinga Samson, and Billie Zangewa. Many of their works will be shown to the public for the first time, including Amoako Bofo's 2020 painting 2pc Floral Suit. The audio-visual combination of this nature is a first for the museum. “It is an honor to work with Chaka Mkali and his collaborators,” Ritter said about the collaborative experience. “Rituals of Resilience is an immersive audio-visual experience that emphasizes art as something to be felt throughout your entire being.”

Due to COVID-19 protocols, visitors are asked to bring their own devices and headsets to access the album. The exhibition remains open through February 27, 2022.