

Agenda

MARCH | APRIL



YOUR SPRING SCHEDULE SORTED with a showcase of Gerald Chukwuma's carved-wood wonders, potter Akiko Hirai's biggest exhibition yet, pop art by body-builder and weaver Archie Brennan and inspiration from Iran. Plus, Bonnie Kemske on the restorative magic of kintsugi



Chukwuma images: courtesy the artist and Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery

EXHIBITION

Carving a niche

'Wood is a very giving material – that's what drew me to it,' says Gerald Chukwuma, who is known for his vibrant carved wood panels. 'It can take on any material and let it speak – glass will work on it, metal will work on it.' Initially, he found the material frustrating to work with, he admits, 'but as I learned more we started to become one – almost like a romance. Now, even though the journey is tough, I never feel the pain.'

The Lagos-based artist chisels, burns and paints onto his beloved material and, in doing so, embeds it with layers of meaning, drawing from traditional symbols and contemporary concerns such as climate change, migration and globalisation – the intricacy of his handiwork echoing the complexity of the subjects he explores. A series of solo exhibitions in Africa and Europe over the past five years have

carved out his place in the art world, and his work now sits in collections in Ghana, the Netherlands and the US.

His exhibition at London's Kristin Hjellegjerde gallery will feature new works that comment on the effects of the information age and the written word on culture and identity. *'Eclipse of the Scroll'*, 2 April – 8 May; kristinhjellegjerde.com



BOOK

In her new book, ceramicist Bonnie Kemske explores the Japanese craft of kintsugi, which gives broken pots new life by fixing them with lacquer and gold dust. She tells us more

What makes this process of repair so remarkable?

Three reasons: first, it is beautiful. Second, it restores function, so that irreplaceable objects can be repaired. Third, it always carries a story. A kintsugi-repaired object speaks symbolically to our own experiences of breakage and repair, loss and recovery.

Have you noticed a growing interest in kintsugi?

Yes – it relates to the rising culture of 'make do and mend', and its metaphorical quality gives it inbuilt power. I think that's why it resonates so strongly, especially now. My book covers both historic and contemporary examples, including artworks such as Paul

Scott's *Aleppo*, a 19th-century plate with a decal of the bombed city. A kintsugi-repaired crack in the centre is like a lightning bolt of gold, symbolising repair.

How challenging is it to learn the craft?

Most people trying it do the easy version, using glue and gold powder or paint. The traditional Japanese technique takes 10 years to master, they say. This original craft uses urushi lacquer: it's a toxic tree sap that triggers adverse reactions in 90% of people. Master *kintsugi-shi* can be hospitalised from exposure to their materials. It's best left to the professionals. *'Kintsugi: The Poetic Mend'* is published by Bloomsbury, £30 hb



Previous page: *Afro*, 2021, mixed media, and main image, left: *After 2*, 2021, mixed media, both by Gerald Chukwuma. Left: Goro Suzuki, *Yobitsugi Large Bowl*, from the book *Kintsugi* by Bonnie Kemske, top