

Wrathall, Claire, *Artists in Focus: Moffat Takadiwa*,
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Moffat Takadiwa with a work from his *Head Spin* series



Moffat
Takadiwa, *New
used off road*,
2015

Moffat Takadiwa

The work of Moffat Takadiwa may address issues of rampant consumerism and the fragility of the environment, but his decision to make what he calls 'object paintings' – large-scale constructions or wall-hung assemblages of what most people would regard as rubbish – was initially born of the 'lack of conventional art materials during the recent difficult times in Harare'. As he says: 'Most young artists saw the bin as a rich source of alternative materials.'

Born in Karoi in 1983 and now based in Harare, Takadiwa is a self-styled 'spiritual garbage man'. His two series *Head Spin* and *Smell of Harare* feature glittering metallic circles, some almost a metre in diameter, made from the packed-together tops of spent aerosol cans. If the works in those series have a certain ordered compactness, single-edition pieces such as *New used off road* seem strikingly unconstrained. This is an immense work woven from tyre rubber, pipes, bottles, electronic circuit boards and the tops of perfume bottles. From a distance, however, it has the appearance of a delicately woven hanging, embellished with beadwork. His series

Superhighway of Coloniality continues this theme. At first glance it is easy to mistake the works for beaded hangings. Viewed more closely, however, they are clearly composed of computer keys threaded on fishing wire.

As that title suggests, post-colonialism is another theme in Takadiwa's work, often as it relates to what he calls the 'cultural dominance of foreign products'. Zimbabwe may have freed itself from its colonial rulers, but the rubbish that has transformed Harare from the 'sunshine city' of his youth into 'a very dirty place' is almost all manufactured abroad. Given Zimbabwe's ostensible resistance to foreign influence or cooperation, this strikes the artist as paradoxical.

One of the aims of Takadiwa's work is to 'interrogate the unfair distribution of cultural and political power through the dumping of products'. In an era of globalisation and ever more contentious international trade deals, this assumes a relevance that extends far beyond southern Africa. ♦

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