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Beyond Posthumanist

TEXT BY HECTOR OCHOA

In the article “Kenyan Contemporary Art & the Time of the Posthuman”, Joshua Williams, digs into the works of three prominent Kenyan artists, exploring how they engage with Afrofuturism and posthumanism. One of the main points he tackles is the traditional way posthumanism is often seen as a clean break from humanity. Williams flips this idea, suggesting that the “post-” in posthumanism isn’t about moving beyond humanity but rather about a rupture in time, or what he calls “untimeliness.” This disruption messes with our usual understanding of history and pushes us to think about posthumanism as a process, not some far-off future.

What I find really interesting in the article is how Williams critiques the idea that posthumanism is a future where humanity transcends its biology. While many people see posthumanism as an ultimate state where humanity evolves past its physical limits, Williams argues that this doesn’t really reflect the lived experiences of African art. For African artists, posthumanism isn’t about reaching a far-off future; it’s about transformation, something that unfolds over time. It’s about understanding the intersection of different times and identities, rather than some abstract future. In this context, Afrofuturism makes way more sense as a framework. It gives artists the chance to rethink what it means to be human, especially when you consider colonial histories and the role of technology in shaping the future.

Afrofuturism, as Williams explains, is more about “not-yet” humanity. Instead of imagining a future where humanity is

beyond itself, Afrofuturism invites artists to explore what humanity could look like by weaving together Africa’s past, present, and speculative futures. For me, this approach really opens up a space where African artists can critique colonial histories while also dreaming up new futures that break free from limiting stereotypes.

Afrofuturism becomes a way to rethink African identity in relation to things like technology, ecology, and global politics, making it a powerful tool for transformation.

Williams uses the works of three Kenyan artists Kabiru, Wangechi Mutu, and Wanuri Kahiu to show how posthumanism can

be understood as an ongoing process. First, there’s Kabiru, who challenges the boundaries between modern technology and traditional African culture. He repurposes found materials like circuit

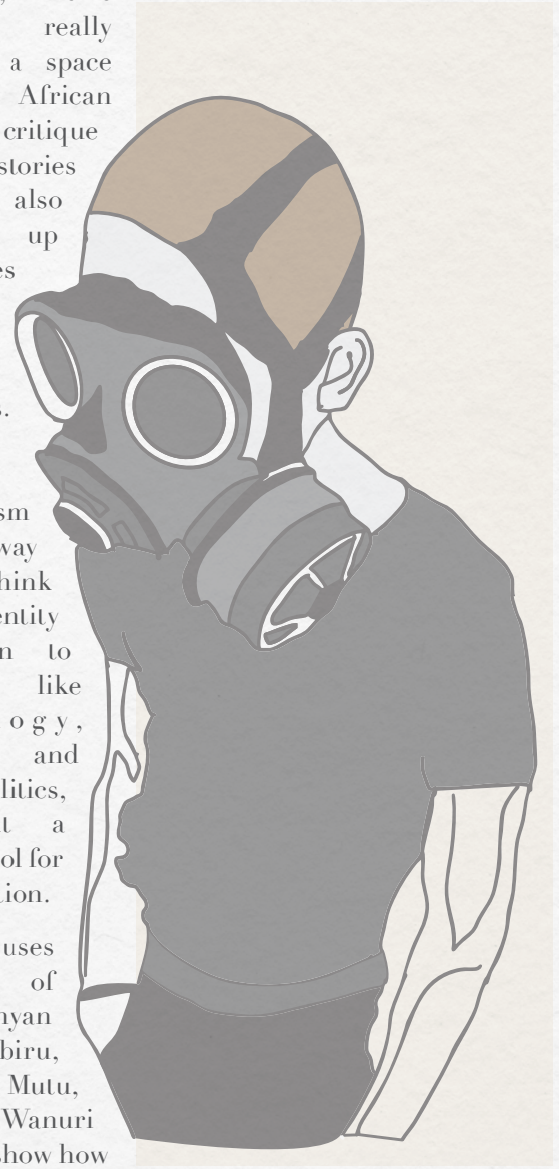


Illustration by Hector Ochoa

boards and wires to create sculptures that speak to both environmental issues and colonial histories. His art resists easy definitions, existing in a space where past, present, and future meet in unexpected ways. Kabiru's work shows that posthumanism isn't some distant event but something already happening in the way we interact with technology and the environment.

Then there's Wangechi Mutu, whose hybrid figures blending human, animal, and machine forms also push against traditional boundaries. Her works seem to say that identity is fluid, constantly transforming. Mutu's art embodies the idea of becoming, not being. For her, the posthuman isn't a destination but a process of continuous change. Her work challenges humanist ideas of fixed identity, especially when it comes to race, gender, and species. It aligns with Afrofuturism's speculative

view of humanity, where identity is always in flux.

Finally, there's Wanuri Kahiu and her film *Pumzi*, which offers a posthuman vision that transcends the usual boundaries between humans, technology, and the environment. Set in a post-apocalyptic world dealing with

“ The 'post-' in posthumanism does not mark a break from humanity, but rather a disruption in time a rupture that forces us to rethink the relationship between past, present, and future in the ongoing process of transformation. ”

Joshua Williams, "Kenyan Contemporary Art & the Time of the Posthuman"

environmental collapse, the film imagines a future where human and non-human elements like nature and technology interact in complex ways. The protagonist's journey to plant a seed in a barren desert



Illustration by Hector Ochoa

symbolizes regeneration and rebirth. For Kahi, the posthuman isn't a fixed endpoint but an emerging condition shaped by interactions between humans, technology, and the environment.

What Williams does so well is show how Kabiru, Mutu, and Kahi engage with posthumanism in ways that are complex and non-linear. Their art doesn't follow a clear timeline from past to future but instead

means to be human — not as a fixed thing, but as a process that's always evolving.

In the end, Williams suggests that the posthuman in African art isn't about reaching a final state beyond humanity but about engaging with an ongoing transformation. His critique of traditional posthumanism offers a new way to think about how time, identity, and history intersect in African art. The

It [Afrofuturism as a framework] gives artists the chance to rethink what it means to be human, especially when you consider colonial histories and the role of technology in shaping the future.

embraces a more fluid understanding of time and identity. These artists aren't reducing African art to static traditions or stories of suffering. Instead, they offer fresh perspectives on African identity that challenge colonial legacies, embrace technological change, and engage with ecological transformation. Through Afrofuturism, they help us imagine what it

works of Kabiru, Mutu, and Kahi show us that posthumanism can be a dynamic, untimely process that reflects the complexities of colonial histories, identity formation, and the interconnectedness of all life. Through their art, these artists challenge traditional narratives of progress and instead highlight the fluid, emergent nature of human existence in a world shaped by technology, ecology, and global inequalities.

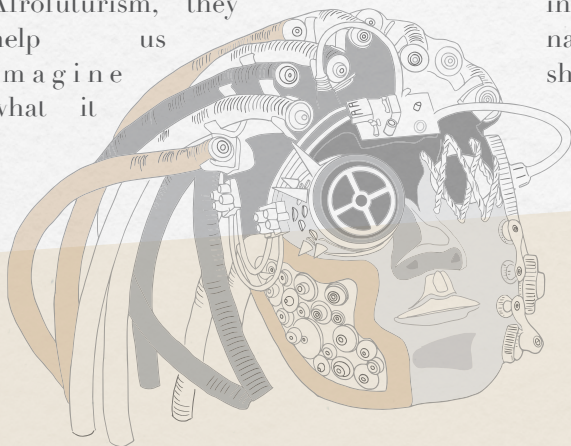


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