Ingrid Mwangi was born and raised in Nairobi, Kenya. Robert Hutter was born in Ludwigshafen/Rhein, Germany. They both received New Artistic Media degrees from the University of Fine Arts Saar, Saarbrücken, and have received scholarships from the Studienstiftung des Deutschen Volkes, and residency scholarships of the Rhineland-Palatinate studio at the Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris. Their work has been shown across Africa, Asia, Europe, United States and South America, at the Bienal de Sao Paulo, Venice Biennale, the Brooklyn Museum, DAK’ART, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Smithsonian Institution - National Museum of African Art, Mori Museum among others. In 2005, after working together for several years and marrying, Mwangi and Hutter merged their names and biographies and became a single artist, Mwangi Hutter. Working with video, photography, installation, sculpture, painting and performance, they use themselves as the sounding board to reflect on changing societal realities, creating an aesthetics of self-knowledge and interrelationship. Mwangi Hutter live and work in Berlin, Germany and Nairobi, Kenya.
The Other Side Of Intuition
From the series of paintings titled Union
2015
aquacryl, chinese ink on canvas, 200 cm x 200 cm

These paintings depict merging, melting or dripping into one another. They actualise oneness, which is potentially always present within the appearance of separate identities.
Reflecting on the differences or contrasts between people, but trying to think about how these differences are ultimately superficial, interaction is central to the work *Burning Desire to Be Touched*. One component of the piece features two human figures (Mwangi and Hutter) in full-body costumes. They reach out to each other and leave traces, using black paint to display how this intermingling leaves an imprint and a mark that is lasting. The body-concealing attire is a way to keep human figures from looking specific. A glimpse of a particular skin color or hair type might distance a viewer who doesn’t share that trait, whereas an entirely cloth-swaddled figure will spark a similar recognition in everyone. The work also incorporates video and a soundscape.
Due to the dualistic perception of self and others, community as well as exclusion are similarly possible. These notions are expressed in *Proximity of Imperfect Figures*, a sculptural installation, with the artists’ own bodies used to cast the elements of the piece. Numerous wax arms reach up from the floor around an impaired robed figure made out of aluminium, perched on a transparent pedestal. The work reflects experiences of living as outsiders in contrasting spaces. It seeks to capture the atmosphere of settling within the unsettled, withstanding the pressure of preconceptions. In that, there is dignity and poise as well as the demand to create oneself anew.
Field of Joy
2015
wax, lightbox
For Transference Mwangi Hutter photographed their twin daughters, each time standing behind, wrapped in their manes of hair.
In three video projections of a bed, a woman and a man are lying, as if waiting, while the third bed in the centre projection remains empty. The body of the woman on the left slowly fades. She reappears on the right within luminous light and bends to lift the heavy frame of her partner, carrying him off. Her cradling, protective bearing becomes a demonstration of strength, while he manifests the suppleness of complete reliance.

Finally, they find themselves in the centre projection, lying nestled in each other by virtue of superimposition, merging into one entity that dissolves into an opulent arrangement of luscious fruits and vibrantly colorful flowers. The sound accompanying the images is a haunting, wistful music piece.
In a Pure Land
2014
3-channel video, 22:50 min loop, sound,
hand-made objects, text

Three figures are video projected in a dark space. Clad in full-body outfits, each unicolor and of a different design, they act out a mysterious dance, rage and gesticulate. On the ground in front is a circular arrangement of objects fashioned out of three basic materials human beings need; flour, salt and water, shaped by the hollow of the artist’s clenched hand. They form a text encircled by a ring that speaks of “an accumulation of wealth pouring out before every soul” and describes a “heavenly space, a pure land”.

Single Entities
2013
3-channel video, 18:44 min, 24:04 min and 19:65 min loops (no sound)

For Single Entities outfits were designed based on places constructed and wrought functional for business in Ouakam, Dakar. Worn by a person, the full body clothing represents the merging of a person with the surroundings. It becomes a commentary on the use and textures of the specific locations. Dancers Fatou Cissé, Mohamed Abdoulaye Kane and Codou Gueye interpreted the moment, beautifully feeling their way into the theme of human elasticity in adhering to environment and context.
Be Present
2014
c-print, size 1: 108 x 162 cm, size 2: 80 x 120 cm

With Be Present, Mwangi Hutter have created an image that is concerned with European and African cross-projections; the ideas we have about each other concerning wealth and prosperity, the basis of exchange and personal safety, or danger. The artist is presented as a gold-hooded accomplice/captive of a darkly grinning gang. Two on each side, similarly reduced to a masquerade, in their case by the exaggerated blackness imposed onto their bodies in the image. As in other works, Mwangi Hutter chooses a paradisiacal beach as the setting. In this potentially perfect place, players of 'both sides' are staged in ways that expose human folly to ridicule, so that one might see the fault as well as the chance therein.
Dandora’s Box
2012
c-print, 194 cm x 80 cm

Within a vast dumping ground, the artist with bare upper body is captured while running in a vain attempt to chase scavenger birds away from the refuse. This absurd act is a wry comment on the paradoxic human relationship to the world. There are disparities between what appears/is presented to us as valuable and what lies hidden away from our understanding. To make sense of the turmoil, it might be useful to go and experience the dirt that has piled up.
**The View**

2012

single-channel video, 29:00 min loop, sound

A seascape is displayed. The artist literally enters into the view. She continuously prostrates herself towards the sea, moving step by step towards it, leaving a mysterious-looking track. Finally, she reaches the edge of the water and the first wave washes over her. Her body seemingly dissipates into the water as if absorbed by the very image that she herself arranged. Only the track in the sand remains, which curiously does not look as if it was made by a human, but rather by an engine powered vehicle or perhaps an animal, such as a large turtle.
Aesthetic of Uprising II
2011
photo print on roll  400 cm x 200 cm, black paint, cleaning rags with text

A large photo print depicts a muddy, almost naked female figure running on all fours over dry, cracked ground. The shape can be identified as the lower part of the African continent set on black. The print is suspended from a roll and extends onto the floor. It merges with a river-like puddle of black liquid paint, the outward flow of which has been constrained by several cleaning rags. Fragments of text, written and overwritten on the rags, speak of the need to set out on a journey as turmoil and chaos have broken loose in a place that remains unnamed. In the course of time the paint dries and begins to crack.
Assemble
2012
3-channel video installation, 6:24 min, 5:03 min and 3:30 min loops, sound

I reveal my bosom and lap: in the guise of luscious fruit with tough golden-orange outer skin, sweet red gelatinous flesh and many seeds. It seems as if I would open my innards and let out a scream, triumphant, but not over others—finally over my self—yet all remains quite still with the mere delicious sound of fruit eating. I thus show my mind, vibrant, full of wild dreams and distilled images, well-wrought with natural jewels. I am not asking for small-minded discussions about sexual desires and games. You who are witness to the beauty as well as to the violence must come to know me.
The Cage
2009
single-channel video, 12:01 min, sound

A fenced-off enclosure is utilized as a particular setting, in which the artist sightlessly shaves his hair and cuts pieces of his clothes, drawing a large audience of passersby, street vendors and shopkeepers. Inviting people to an exchange, he hangs packets filled with his hair and the snips of his clothing on the fence, and offers his bare upper body to be written on through the fence in return. After a period of astonished silence, one person steps forward and then many people follow to leave their message on his skin.
In Eastleigh in Nairobi, I came upon a crossing filled with stagnant water from broken sewage pipes, and I decided to 'step into' the situation. It is about confronting the location, intervening, creating a halt in the busyness of daily life and transforming the place for a moment into a creative space. This flings open the entranceway to a different dimension of being. For a while, the daily stories, struggles and worries of the astonished viewers are cleared away. A new context opens up, in which each person can become differently aware of their surroundings, their movements, themselves and others around them. This ‘technique’ functions especially well in such an environment, in which contemporary art up to now does not play a great role. It can create an unexpected and possibly transforming experience for those who witness the action. I pick up impulses from the people and the specific surroundings and allow that to be communicated with my voice and movements.
Conscious of the Wall
2007
Mwangi Hutter in collaboration with Jimmy Ogonga
video projection 15:00 min loop, sound, corroded steel sheet wall (5m x 4m)

Conscious of the Wall is designed to be a freestanding obstruction in a space. Its corroded steel sheets reveal imprints of bodies, created by the artist through pressing his/her sweating body onto the metal. The video projected onto this textured surface shows a man’s bared back (Mwangi Hutter), on which another man (Ogonga) is using an electric tattoo machine without ink. He is puncturing the skin to create bloody marks consisting of four vertical lines crossed diagonally by a fifth; typically used to tally a number of acts, objects or events. The body begins to perspire and glisten with sweat, while the increasing wounds swell and redden fiercely. The man quietly undergoes the act. He is faced towards the wall, but his demeanor suggests acceptance. He becomes almost complicit with the other marking his back, who does so with quiet, concentrated energy and no sign of hesitation.
In *Cryptic, A Traveler’s Diary* writing is interpreted as drawing, an act of creating lines, marks and signs that remain as a trace. Spontaneous performance actions were video-recorded at various sites during a year’s travels. The imagery shot in Nairobi, Tokyo, Heights of Aripo in Trinidad, Western Desert of Egypt and Dakar merge within the video to dreamlike sequences where action and outcome remain a mystery.

The video is projected onto a central wall. On black walls to the left and right, invented patterns describable as script-like drawings are marked with white liquid chalk. Though based on different existing scripts these writings are undecipherable, open in meaning, like drawings.

“Mwangi Hutter created in *Cryptic, A Traveler’s Diary* transgressive landscapes with her body, refusing to accept the “naturalness” of geography, history and its rules of exclusion.” Alanna Lockward
The title *In My House* alludes to a home, but also a country or even the state of the world. A video displays burnt-out remains of a building: room upon room full of ash, destroyed corridors and collapsed enclosures. A fragmented, ghost-like figure appears in corners and blended into interiors gutted by fire.

Laid out on the floor before the projection is a text consisting of cutout, mirroring characters. The reflection from the projection plays over the words, highlighting and animating them. The text reads like dream sequences that conjure up the idea of an imminent and necessary upheaval. Its points to an inner knowledge that things are not right, seeming to express existential longing to awaken to a better world.
Man of War
2006
concrete casts of military boots (146), metal pole (265 cm), video projection 8:00 min loop on black projection fabric (180 x 240 cm)

Concrete casts of military boots are heaped on the floor. A mast rises from the middle of the pile with a black flag onto which an image of a small boy is projected. Dashing in from the side, he runs in slow motion that displays his flailing arms and swaying hair, then disappears into darkness. Another sequence shows him in the arms of a faceless woman, who tries to hold him back as he fights to leave her lap, finally escaping her grasp while the image blends out. He appears again, standing with one hand over his eyes. With a smile he peeks through his fingers.

Man of War deals with war beyond questions of politics, historical context and blame. The work offers a universal questioning about the tragic circumstances of human beings wasted within the fatal machinery of war. Before soldiers were made to become soldiers they were once innocently playing children.
Headskin
2005
2 video projections 5:55 min loop, sound

Two synchronized videos showing the back of the artists' heads are projected in juxtaposition. In the space of six minutes shaved lines cleave their way through both heads of hair, dividing the body of hair first into halves, quarters, then eighths. Finally, the remaining segments of hair also disappear bit by bit, leaving both heads bald. The sound accompanying the process of elimination consists of hacked, mechanical noises of an electric shaver, supplemented by fragments of speech taken from a dialog between Mwangi Hutter. Words such as 'I - Identity - not African, let's talk about European - guilt - think/forget - what? - decide, act, relate' indicate that the work is about the intercultural dialog that the artists are engaging in.
In the installation *Splayed*, three flat-screen monitors present the artist - arms outstretched - formally echoing Jesus on the cross. As the words 'monogamous polygamy' are incised into the artist's forearms, *Splayed* questions the role of women in complex social systems using the lens to investigate connections between individuals and society. 

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1. [Insert note reference here]
Dressed Like Queens
2003
3 video projections on hand-dyed fabrics, 21:35 min loops, sound

In *Dressed Like Queens*, Mwangi Hutter projected videos on to three large, hand-dyed fabrics commissioned in Kenya. The red, brown and green textiles drape down and pool together on the floor, while the video portrays a pregnant woman, flanked on each side by Mwangi. The artist narrates a text about the strength and power of African women as the woman moves majestically through space. *Dressed Like Queens* represents a reclamation and commemoration of African women that resonates with feminist ideologies of recovery and empowerment.
In a propaganda image Hitler was depicted surrounded by a cluster of women regarded to be ideal Aryans, leaning towards him, magnetized by his supposed charismatic presence. Mwangi Hutter replaced all the women with the artist's own face and body, as well as placing a superimposition on Hitler's face. The presentation of a rejuvenated and modernized Hitler breaks with the taboo of binding the infamous personage to a best forgotten past. It opens up the context to an awesome and frightening thought: how would we have related to each other only seven decades ago?
Your Own Soul
2002
13 sound objects - hand-dyed jute yarn, metal, wood, loudspeakers, 10 mono audio channels, 9:54 min loop

“Mwangi Hutter places faith in the concretization and conveyance of feelings filtered from the difference between the body as object and the body as subject. Her work is related to inherent human knowledge. Not only animist natural religions but also European conceptions of human nature – as expressed in theosophy and anthroposophy, for example - view the soul in the manner the artist endeavors to express in her ‘hair piece’ and sound installation Your Own Soul, namely as a source of power-producing fields of energy. Once again, the sensorial dreadlocks are involved. Here they appear as oversized jute yarn, worked in the manner of hair (braided, knotted, dyed, etc.). Thus transformed and interwoven with fragments of text and sound, they represent the adaptation and alienation process experienced by the artist. Mwangi Hutter: “The ownership of one’s own hair becomes a symbol for the ownership of one’s self.” And: “You can’t pretend to be passive! This has just as much to do with your soul as with mine.”

Horst Gerhard Haberl
To be in the World
2002
video projection, 6 monitors on steles (metal, wood), 15:00 min loops, digital dolby surround sound

Presenting faces on monitors placed at eye-level on mechanically-moved steles, To Be in the World documents a range of emotional states. Shot with a digital camera in a dark setting, the footage presents intimate encounters with the viewer’s faces lit by disturbing footage of violence on the source monitor: the use of close-up angles, coupled with audio-bleed from the original material, allows viewers to tap into their own imagination. All the while, their gaze seem to be focused on shifting questions projected onto the floor.
MWANGI HUTTER

Down by the River
2001
video projection 22 sec loop (no sound), light object (metal cylinder and spot), red soil with text

A suspended projection screen displays the artists head with dreadlocks floating steadily face down in red-tainted water. On the ground in front is a fine layer of red soil, into which a text has been written by hand about ‘blood that has been poured down the river’.

The installation depicts an ambivalent state in which pain and death is countered by hope and continuity. The red soil is fertile, but must ‘absorb’ the blood of violence. The water is red, but nonetheless water is a symbol of life.
“In the photographic work *Static Drift*, Mwangi Hutter experiments with her own body, likening it to an open book upon which her own national and racial lineage is both written and read. Here the artist transposes the borderlines of Germany and Africa onto her stomach. National titles and geographic borders are displaced from their habitual contexts, causing one to contemplate what nationalism, skin color, and ethnic identity mean when physically inscribed on a body—particularly a female body.”
Global Feminisms, Brooklyn Museum
Neger Don’t Call Me,
2000
video projection 11:34 min loop, 4 chairs with loudspeakers, 5 channel sound

Neger Don’t Call Me presents a grid of images of the artist creating abstract masks out of her own dread-locked hair. Her masks refashion traditional African forms as well as masks worn by bank robbers and a range of zoomorphic forms. The installation also included four chairs with built-in speakers emitting the artist’s commentary on how living in Germany heightened her awareness of being African. Neger Don’t Call Me expresses the fury and refusal surrounding racial classifications.¹
Full CV:
http://www.mwangihutter.com/art/biography.html

Video links:


http://www.mwangihutter.com/art/the_view_2012.html


http://www.mwangihutter.com/art/see_in_the_light_2002.html


Text source:
1 Laurie Anne Farrell, Contemporary Art Magazine, issue no. 71, London 2005