

Mugwaneza Hubert, also known as Hovey Drude, is a 28-year-old visual artist with a multitude of talents. Much like an alchemist turning lead into gold, he finds beauty and potential in what others may discard as waste.

You can often find Mugwaneza scouring the outskirts of the city for leftover banana peels, not to discard them into the many trash cans adorning the beautiful pavements of Kigali city, but to transform them into exquisite ornaments and high fashion pieces for travelers and tourists to appreciate, offering them a glimpse into the rich culture and traditions of Rwanda.

Since his youth, Mugwaneza has been captivated by the indigenous culture and narratives of Rwanda. He fondly recalls a visit to his maternal aunt, during which she shared stories of how garments were crafted using unconventional materials such as cattle hides and banana peels. From that moment on, he was captivated and inspired to explore the boundless possibilities of creative expression through recycling and repurposing materials.



However, the young man wears many hats; he is not only a visual artist but also a musician who has released an Extended Playlist of six songs titled “It’s Now or Never.” Among the tracks, the most beloved song is “Ukuri.” Additionally, he writes stories about paintings created by artists in Rwanda.

To rewind a bit, Mugwaneza was born in Kimisagara, a suburb of Kigali, into a family of three. Reflecting on his childhood, he warmly reminisces about a cherished moment when he, accompanied by his siblings and father, embarked on a picnic trip to Kibuye. Constructing a sandcastle and delighting in a boat ride served as his earliest introduction to the realm of visual art.

The transition from a carefree young man to an artist took root in 2020 amidst the global pandemic-induced job scarcity. This shift birthed Drude the artist. Serendipity struck when he crossed paths with David Kwizera, the cultural steward of Leaf Junior Troupe, who happened to have a studio. However, the studio’s equipment and materials lay dormant in limbo.

So, alongside his friend David, they conceived the idea of establishing a studio located in Kacyiru, affectionately referred to as Kak-city by the locals. Mugwaneza assumed responsibility for the studio and revisited his initial song, “You and Me,”

which he had originally recorded at Red Rocks with a producer named Andy from Germany. This endeavor led to the creation of his Extended Playlist.

Reflecting on his journey, Mugwaneza explains that he transitioned to visual art after previously working as a writer. Fate intervened when he collaborated with artists for an exhibition titled “Already Sad.”



*Hovey Drude 'Mugwaneza' performing at Institut Francais*

Witnessing the fervent interest of foreigners, particularly white individuals, in Rwandan visual art served as his initiation into the world of visual expression. From that moment onward, he was steadfast in his pursuit.

Offering advice to the youth in Rwanda grappling with poverty and drug abuse, he urges them to take pride in their identity and seek any available employment opportunities.

Mugwaneza emphasizes the importance of learning from the past and embracing innovation to elevate yourself from mediocrity to prosperity, underscoring that culture is dynamic and constantly evolving.