

Africa-Asia Textile Art Exhibition

Fabric of Being

The Nairobi Summit on ICPD25

12-14 November 2019

Kenyatta International
Convention Center (KICC)



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ICPD25

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“Fabric of Being”

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Kenyatta International Convention Center

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Editor and Lead Writer:

Rosalia Sciortino Sumaryono

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Alan Feinstein and Fabio Saini
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Lay Out:

Martopo Waluyono and Atik Chawasi

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Content

Acknowledgments v
Rosalia Sciortino Sumaryono

Foreword vii
Natalia Kanem
Executive Director, UNFPA

Introduction ix
Rosalia Sciortino Sumaryono
Director, SEA Junction

1 The Flaming Womb
Pankaja Sethi, India

7 Women's Circle of Life
Yemisi Ajayi, Nigeria

13 Gender Metamorphosis
Aze Ong, Philippines

19 Sisterhood
Dilomprizulike Thejunkmanfromafrika,
Nigeria

25 Textile Truths
Mali Ya Abdulla, Kenya

31 Kangha Conversations
The Performance Collective, Kenya

37 Fertility
Nia Fliam and Agus Ismoyo, Indonesia

45 Water Goddess
Aboubakar Fofana, Mali

51 Signs of the Now
José Hendo, Uganda

57 Born from the Same Womb
Abdi Karya, Indonesia

63 Sis, You Betta Werk
Siwa Mgoboza, South Africa

71 Women's Resilience
Keeta Isran and Salwanee Hajisamea,
Thailand

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of the Summit, as well as for providing visual and written documentation to inform the production of this catalogue. Unless otherwise indicated, the description of the artworks and of the short biographies of the artists are based on writings provided by the artists, who also contributed photographs and enabled this project to access and reproduce contents from their official media.

Without the creativity, generosity and patience of dear friends this catalogue would never have materialized: Alan Feinstein and Fabio Saini carefully reviewed and improved the language; and Martopo Waluyono and Atik Chawasi worked day and night at the lay-out and ensured the timely printing of the catalogue in Indonesia and its delivery via Thailand to Kenya.

Through all these collective efforts, this exhibition has become a tangible aesthetic expression of our commitment to gender equity and sexual and reproductive health and rights. May the reader enjoy the results of this labor of passion and celebrate with us the shared goals of equality, inclusivity, and justice.

With thanks,

Rosalia Sciortino Sumaryono

Foreword

This year, we celebrate the global movement for reproductive rights and choices that began in the 1960s and gained impetus in Cairo in 1994. There, at the landmark International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), world governments declared that world population was not a balance sheet, but a rich tapestry of people's lives.

What inspired all present in Cairo, and millions more around the world, was the conviction that women and girls belong squarely at the center of development; that all human beings have the right to decide freely whether, when and with whom to have children; and that everyone must have the means to exercise this right.

It's simple—people first, with priority attention to women and girls. Over the past 25 years since the ICPD, we have made remarkable gains. Fewer women die in pregnancy and childbirth. More women are using modern contraception. More girls are in school. We are beginning to turn the tide against harmful practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation.

Yet for far too many women and girls, the world we envisioned in Cairo is still far from reality. That is why UNFPA, along with the Governments of Kenya and Denmark, came together as co-conveners of the *Nairobi Summit on ICPD25: Accelerating the Promise*. It is time to mobilize concrete global, national and local commitments to deliver fully on the promise of Cairo for everyone, everywhere.

Textiles are inextricably linked to our lives, essential to our survival and powerful signifiers of our existence. In the “Fabric of Being” textile exhibition, renowned artists from Africa and Asia reflect upon womanhood, women’s rights, gender equity, fertility, contraception, diversity, violence against women and more. While the creators come from different countries and use diverse types of textiles in their work, they explore universal and fundamental themes at the heart of the agenda in Nairobi.

On behalf of the Summit co-conveners, I thank Southeast Asia (SEA) Junction, the Trust for Indigenous Culture and Health (TICAH), the Nest Collective and the Performance Collective for making this exhibition possible, in collaboration with UNFPA. Above all, I commend these truly imaginative and inspiring artists. The work of their hands illustrates the unifying thread of art, revealing its unique ability to weave understandings and connections among cultures and peoples, linking all of us in all our beautiful diversities in the rich, vibrant fabric of humanity.

Dr. Natalia Kanem

Executive Director, UNFPA

New York, USA

Introduction

In 2012 UNFPA titled one of its publication “Women Are the Fabric” to stress that women hold societies together, as they “weave and mend” to ensure the health, security and well-being of families and entire communities. This metaphor expands into new interpretations and representations at the Africa-Asia Textile Art Exhibition “Fabric of Being” held at the Nairobi Summit on ICPD25. The pivotal role of “fabrics in life” as well as “fabric of being” is highlighted through a collection of textile artworks from Africa and Asia that resonates with the central themes of the Summit: gender and power, sexuality and reproduction. The works also resonate with current broader contextual issues that affect the agendas of equality and sustainable development, as addressed by the Summit’s signature sessions, such as climate change, urbanization, and social inclusion.

In the exhibition, the Summit’s ideas and concerns come to life in a variety of fabrics. The artworks, installations and performances feature different kinds of textiles—from handmade batik and crochet to *khanga*, sarong and used cloths—creating a vibrant atmosphere. In their culturally diverse perspectives, they invite visitors to discover multiple layers of meanings expressed in the forms, colors and technologies applied and the kinds of fabrics used. The symbolic richness of the exhibit reveals both the ceremonial and everyday use of textiles in defining people— and women in particular— as they move through their life cycles negotiating sexuality, fertility, reproduction, relationships, childbirth, health, illness, and death. Gender norms and roles, including those that shape the division of labor in the production of textiles, from spinning and weaving to tailoring,

are challenged. A fabric's social function also emerges as the individual artworks, and the exhibition as a whole, give voice to the unspoken, advocate alternative visions, and make public statements on crucial issues of diversity, equity and rights.

The exhibition was inspired by Natalia Kanem, Executive Director of UNFPA, and is organized by SEA (Southeast Asia) Junction in Bangkok in collaboration with TICAH (Trust for Indigenous Culture and Health) and its founder Mary Ann Burris in Nairobi with curatorial and creative contributions from the Nest Collective and the Performance Collective, and financial and logistic support by UNFPA. All the organizations and the artists involved have worked closely together sharing a belief in the transformative power of art and textiles.

The artworks are showed at the Delegates' Lounge, at the center of the Kenyatta International Convention Center (KICC) where the Summit is held, thus reflecting the centrality of the exhibition's vision and purpose to the themes of this global gathering. In recognition of the role of textiles as the "fabric of social life" the exhibition is placed in the midst of plenary sessions and coffee breaks. The artworks act as reflection islands among the currents of people and activities, inviting participants to pause and absorb messages in an unconventional and creative manner. In their cultural and thematic diversity, the artworks enrich the discussions taking place in the more formal sessions, and add new insights and dimensions. These collaborations and conversations among African and Asian artists and organizations also embody the Summit's spirit of innovative partnerships in harnessing creativity for social causes and transformative change. The exhibition is thus not only an aesthetic addition to the Summit, but contributes to the Summit's aspirations of fully realizing an inclusive ICPD Programme of Action and sexual and reproductive health and rights for all.

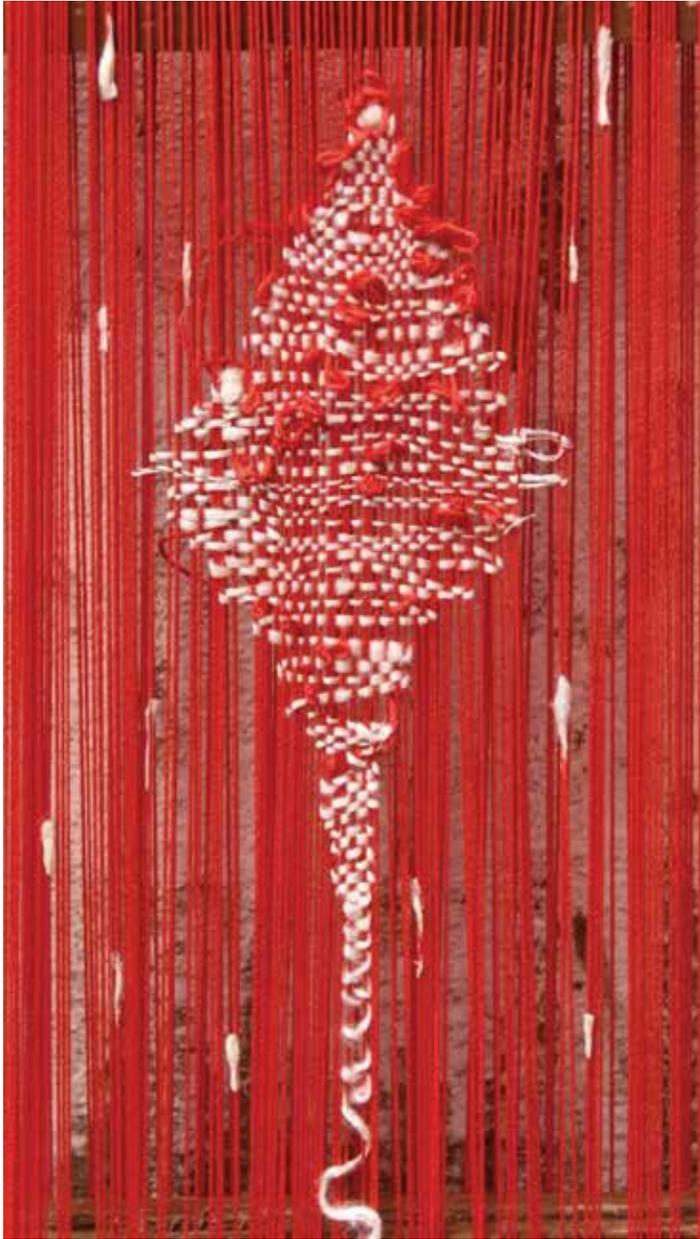
Rosalia Sciortino Sumaryono

Director SEA Junction

Bangkok, Thailand

The Flaming Womb

PANKAJA SETHI • INDIA



ARTWORK

In Indian mythology nature is celebrated as the mother, creator, and Goddess of power, and represented in various symbolic forms. The iconic embodiment of *yonis*, the feminine generative power, is the stylized form of the female womb or uterus, connected with sexuality and fertility as a form of primordial cosmic energy or shakti-power that elevates women as the supreme Goddess.

Still, patriarchal culture reduces this worshipped and feared Goddess into a socially constructed woman's role that is inferior to that of men. In daily reality, oppression and violence against women know no geographic and cultural boundaries and are rife irrespective of class, caste, or religion. Women's strength and sensuality are challenged and their

autonomy and choices contested. Their voices rise and fall against the historical injustice of the past and the present.

Pankaja's textile artwork "The Flaming Womb" examines the gap between the symbolic and power attributes of womanhood and the role and conditions of women as dictated by a patriarchal society. The artistic depiction of the uterus and womb as sources of power represents women who are unshakably negotiating for a space against forces that want to confine their power and make them invisible and unheard. The womb is flaming and burning from women's anger and resistance in the face of all the injustices they experience.

Textile art itself is a contested domain. In the artist's home state of Odisha, the significant role of women in the weaving tradition and industry is marginalized or ignored, and considered subordinate to that of men. The challenged contribution of women to textiles and society is expressed in this series of six

textile panels by using a two-part concept. The three panels in red color—whose smaller scale models are presented in the cover and in the illustrations included here—use weaving with woven and non-woven spaces to represent the binaries of the world around women. In the other three panels, the colors alter in hues of pink, peach, red and white and the panels are made using a different technique, *ikat*, or tie-dyeing, to represent the voices of women and their resilience. With this symbolic statement embedded in textile art, Pankaja regains control of her tradition and draws attention to how women resist and raise their voices while negotiating justice.

Details

Description : Series of six textile art panels
Size : 1.20m. x 2.70m.
Material : Silk and cotton with wooden frame
Techniques : Weaving and *ikat*





SHORT BIO

Pankaja Sethi is an Indian textile designer and researcher who has worked with indigenous women and weavers in India for over a decade. Her experimentation as a practicing textile artist aims to express personal and social narratives related to women and the environment. Pankaja started her textile design career in 2001 after graduating from the National Institute of Fashion Technology, New Delhi, India. She moved back to her native Bhubaneswar, the capital of the Indian state of Odisha, in 2006 to experiment with handcrafted traditions. In 2009, she enrolled in a master's program in social anthropology at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

Pankaja created a textile art installation titled "Reflection of Time and Nature" for the public art project Bhubaneswar Art Trail 2018. In the same year, she was awarded a Junior Research Fellowship by the Ministry of Culture of



India to practice textile art. Previously she had been awarded the Sahapedia-UNESCO fellowship in 2017 and the Tata fellowship in 2012 to study indigenous textiles made by women. In 2012, she was selected for the first Global Empowerment Program (GEP) at the Ewha Women's University for women working in public service and civil society in Asia and Africa. The Nehru Trust for the Indian Collections at the Victoria & Albert Museum gave her three research awards (2009, 2015, and 2017) for work on natural dyeing, quilts, and the bark cloth.

Women's Circle of Life

YEMISI AJAYI • NIGERIA



ARTWORK

For Yemisi, textile art is a powerful source of self-discovery, creation and expression and a living document of cultural history. Textile art enables her to create a forever-flowing movement of forms, each different, each new. She aims to create works that have no boundaries and project a message of herself to the world. Batik is her passion and wax her love, and she is continually enthused by the batik creative process at times combined with other techniques to explore textiles' patterns and colors.

Yemisi particularly wants the viewer to see the power and beauty of women through her work. Over the years, she has challenged herself to create works communicating in images and symbols that speak for women's and girl's rights. This majestic fabric entitled "Women's Circle

of Life” is an eloquent example of Yemisi’s work, in which she expresses her artistic and spiritual emotions, her experience as a woman and her awe for the wonder of the natural world. This mixed-medium textile art piece symbolizes Yemisi’s reflection on women’s reproductive health and the role women play in replenishing the Earth’s mystery. It tells about the strong women



of all ages all over the world and embodies female reproductive health and women’s empowerment. The design celebrates the female reproductive structure to represent strength and autonomy rather

than weakness and inferiority as often portrayed by patriarchal cultures.

The cotton fabric is hand printed with multiple layers of colors and impregnated with meanings. The repeated figures of women express their empowerment, love, and support, and their different colors represent diversity in skin colors and yet universality of womanhood. The circles around them represent the ovary ovary—a symbol of women’s fertility, with red symbolizing strength, power, and passion. The spirals in the background symbolize birth control intrauterine implants. Their color, orange, is associated with joy, warmth and sunshine representing the liberation that comes from autonomy and women’s control over their bodies and lives.

Details

Description : Mixed-medium textile art
Size : 1.45 m. x 2.75 m.
Material : Cotton fabric
Techniques : Hand print of layers of colors and batik for spiral design



SHORT BIO

Yemisi has won a reputation as an innovative textile designer working within the realm of traditional Yoruba cloth and motifs. She is also a teacher of batik, *adire* (starch resist) dye method, and Yoruba patchwork quilting.

A native of Lagos, with family roots in the Ijebu region of Nigeria, Yemisi began her career as a textile artist in 1986 in Oshogbo, where she studied with several of Nigeria's recognized textile artists. Striking out on her own in 1990, Yemisi has had broad success in the areas of quilting, fashion design, textile design, and interior decorating. Now based in Philadelphia, she maintains a small workshop and collaborates widely with Nigeria's many talented visual artists.

To Yemisi, art is life. She first trained at Oshogo Art School and then received her Diploma in Creative Arts

at the Centre for Cultural Studies at the University of Lagos. She started exhibiting her work in 1990, and in 1991 staged an exhibition at the Lagos Museum, which brought her national and international recognition. She opened her own studio and shop in 1993 and has taught textile classes since 1994. Among the countries where she has given lectures and held workshops and exhibitions are: Nigeria, Mali, USA, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brazil, the UK, and Jordan.

In late 1995, Yemisi and a group of her friends started the Rainbow Women's Arts Association (RAWA) to provide women with the opportunity to express themselves through the arts, while gaining some economic independence. The organization is committed to providing a platform for women's artistic and creative growth, and to preserving the traditional textile arts of Nigeria as well as developing them so they remain relevant to modern times.

Gender Metamorphosis

AZE ONG • PHILIPPINES



© Albert Labrador

ARTWORK¹

Aze's work interweaves the artist's personal journey across spatial and temporal contexts with a public discourse on craft and art, spiritual growth, and gender and other social expectations. The work—presented previously under the title of “Liwanag (Light)” and many other frames—is mutable and ever-evolving, with each addition of hue, pattern, and

¹This and the Short Bio are adapted from Laya Boquiren, Patrick Flores and communication with the artist.

texture corresponding to the accretion of memories and epiphanies the artist has gained through the years. It resonates with the Fabric of Being exhibition's emphasis on the communicative potential of textiles—as embodied collective knowledge, as personal memory, or as the body's open-ended script that highlights human life and women's struggle and defiance.

The installation of 58 colorful crochet pieces hung from the ceiling invites tactile interaction, sustained engagement, and cross-cultural conversations on women's experiences. In their variety and sensual shapes, they speak of gender roles and their transformation in multiple ways. They embody the complex histories of women weavers from diverse ethnolinguistic communities all over the Philippine archipelago whose textiles voice their past, present contestations, and future aspirations. These exhibits also refer to women's double roles in the domestic and public sphere and the



© Albert Labrador

tensions that they create. The installation elevates the feminized practice of crocheting to cosmopolitan art challenging both a perception of this practice as “ephemeral” and “devoid of concept” and patriarchal gender stereotypes and values that dismiss women's creativity. Through this metamorphosis, the artist rejects denying status and economic value to women's domestic labor and the labeling of



crocheting as an inferior female art form, merely relegated to the craft domain. And if there is any doubt, the numbers and the sizes of Aze's pieces demonstrate how the laboriously creative process of crocheting is no longer confined to domestic spaces and small "stuff," but it now fills public spaces and art world platforms with impressive large-scale productions.

At the same time, this installation rejects the binaries of gender and celebrates the rainbow of colors. It breaks away from reductionist views on reproduction and sexuality still persisting

in the Philippines and many other countries by hinting at penises and vaginas, the fluidity of sexual orientations and joyful pleasure. Aze's crocheted works place the mindful body center stage and evoke animate and supple forms, which enfold a body that is at once docile and unruly. They are meant to be sensual, to be touched and felt, to be worn and to be discovered from within and through it. If for feminism the personal is political, for Aze it is also art—an art that stitches and intertwines the narratives of women in everyday scenarios and across places, nationalities, and geopolitical boundaries.

Details

Description	: Textile art installation of 58 pieces
Size	: 7 m. in length (when displayed together in a line)
Material	: Assorted yarns (e.g., chenille, cotton, acrylic, bamboo, silk, fur, and wool)
Techniques	: Crocheting

SHORT BIO

Aze Ong is a Filipino contemporary visual and performance artist who explores the different possibilities of using fiber as an art form. Fiber is an underutilized element in contemporary arts in the Philippines despite its traditional presence in the country's culture. The intent of Aze's art is to re-awaken the appreciation and relevance of these cultural expressions in today society. Crochet, knitting, knotting, embroidery, macramé, and sewing—these are just some of the techniques she uses to create immersive installations, both tactile and interactive. The use of shapes, colors, texture, space and movement encourages open interpretation. Her works range from small sculptural pieces to large-scale crocheted installations that elicit a visual conversation with and within the site. The works may be floor-based, suspended from the ceiling, or wearable.

Aze learned to crochet left-handed while taking classes at the private Catholic college of Assumption Antipolo, where she attained a Bachelor of Communications in Media Production. In 1999, she decided to

volunteer for the Associate Missionaries of the Assumption and taught at the Xavier de Kibangay High School in Lantapan Bukidnon in the Philippine island of Mindanao. Most of her students were members of the Talaandig, an indigenous group found in the municipalities surrounding the mountain of Kitanglad, and much of what she learned from them continue to inspire her textiles art and performances.

Since 2010, she has exhibited her art in group and solo exhibitions in the Philippines, the United States, South Korea and the United Arab Emirates, and her work is collected in museums around the world. She also performs at her exhibitions and beyond, most recently walking through New York with Queen, her “rolling sculpture.” She was granted a residency at the Abu Dhabi Art Hub in 2015 and at the Topaz Arts Inc in 2017, and was an Asian Cultural Council (ACC) grantee in 2016. She has a long-standing collaboration with Ged Merino; their last The GedAze Project Collaboration was “Stitching Boundaries” at Yant Art Space and Bliss on Bliss Art Projects in New York with support from the Queens Council on the Arts.

Sisterhood

DILOMPRIZULIKE THEJUNKMANFROMAFRIKA

● NIGERIA

ARTWORK

Dilomprizulike's work concentrates on the city and city life as a curious concept of modernity, which in Africa, but also in other locations, both confronts and interweaves with cultural attitudes and traditional practices. The conflicts, agitations and new concepts of life and life styles which emerge from tensions in transitional realities constitute the bases of the artist's creative expressions as he attempts to mold stories and imageries of these emergent experiences by employing used, dis-used and discarded materials to create forms of aesthetic character.

He shows a different face of the city and explores the aspirations of people living in urban settings and the gaps between those who can access and use available resources and the disenfranchised who live at the margins of mainstream society. With wisdom and humor, he also "creates sculptures and performances that are deeply tied to traditional African masquerade yet informed by postmodern awareness"² and shows how from the detritus of modern life a particular kind of beauty can emerge imbued with resilience.

² Quote from Utne Reader from <https://www.utne.com/arts/dilomprizulike>



The artwork conceived for the “Fabric of Being” exhibition translates these approaches into a charming and unique representation of sisterhood. The beauty, diversity, strength, and resilience of women emerge from the discarded material used to compose a group of five women standing together for a more just and sustainable world. The new installation, created in Nairobi just a few days before the opening of the Summit, employs used wood and other material found in situ. The five figures resemble previous work as in the photos shown here, with used clothes brought from Nigeria and some other added as found locally, thus creating a new, unique ensemble.

Details

- Description : Mixed installation
composed of 5 figures
- Size : Wooden pedestal of 15
cm. x 3.6 m. x 0.9 m.
- Material : Used clothes and wood
and other junk (used and
discarded objects)
- Techniques : Junk elaboration
-





SHORT BIO

Dilomprizulike is a contemporary artist working in sculpture, performance, and painting. He has become known as the “The Junkman from Afrika” because in his work he recycles and transforms heaps of old clothing and other detritus found on city streets, creating sculptural installations and performances that reflect the socio-economic exclusion of many African people.

He holds a BA in Fine Art from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and a Master’s in Fine Arts from the University of Dundee, Scotland. From 1989 to 1995 he was a lecturer at the University of Benin, Nigeria. Thereafter he has been in studio practice and featured as guest lecturer, speaker, and performer in many events across the globe including at the universities of Bonn, Soest, Giessen and Bayreuth in Germany. He also teaches creative concepts and self-development and offers life-coaching services.



Among the major exhibitions in which he has participated are those at: Centre Pompidou, Paris; Tate Modern, London; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona; Center of Contemporary Artists, Osaka; Herzliya Museum, Tel Aviv; Johannesburg Art Gallery; as well as the Dakar and Guangzhou Biennales.

He is the initiator of the Junkmania creative concepts, and the founder and director of the Junkyard Museum of Awkward Things, Lagos, a sculptural environment built up from found objects. He has also made a version of it for the Oriel Mostyn Gallery in Llandudno, Wales. He currently lives and works in Lagos, Nigeria.

Textile Truths

MALI YA ABDULLA • KENYA



ARTWORK³

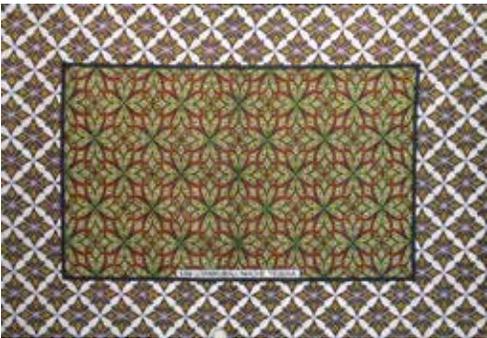
The *khang*a, also spelled *kanga* and called *leso*, is a colorful printed fabric, ideally sold and worn in a pair. With a size of about 1.5 m. by 1 m., a *khang*a often has a border along all four sides (called *pindo* in Swahili), and a central part (*mji*) which differs in design from the border. A proverb/saying or “*msemo*”, horizontally placed along the *khang*a’s lower border, is its unique mark. It is worn by women and occasionally by men, and is ubiquitous in Kenya and Tanzania. It is also found in many parts of central and southern Africa, and has also made appearances as far away as the Middle East.

When a baby is born at the Kenyan coast, it is wrapped in a *khang*a. Later, the *khang*a is used as a blanket or covering, its light fabric suitable because of the warm, breezy weather of the area. Women wear the *khang*a in many ways: one is the classic traditional way, by cutting each pair into two pieces, then fastening one around the waist, and wrapping the other around the upper body. They also fashion it into

the long, loose one-piece dress garment called the *dera*. It has also been made into scarves, bags, shirts and more.

The saying on the *khang*a provides the wearer or recipient with a way to communicate to one person or to many people. *Khang*as can express powerful messages without uttering a single word. For instance, the sentences in the illustrations of *khang*a included here read “When will you let me stop suffering” (“*lini utanikubali niache teseka*”) to register women’s pains and “Loving them (him or her) is my payment/satisfaction/consent” (“*kumpenda yeye ni ridhaa yangu*”) to express the right to be autonomous.

People have become used to reading *khang*a to discern and understand how the woman wearing it is feeling. *Khang*a sayings have both overt, or immediately comprehensible inferences, as well as covert meanings, communicated via additional elements like the contextual allusion and metaphor in the words, the power and relevance of particular cultural euphemisms,



³ This and the Short Profile are adapted from writings by Njoki Ngumi and Sunny Dolat of the Nest Collective

the design of the motif, the place the woman chose to wear the *khanga*, the identity of those in the vicinity, and much more. In light of the limitations society puts on women, *khanga* provides a uniquely strategic space for women's expression in environments that are all-too-often unwilling or unable to 'listen' to their words. This is as true today as it was in the past.

At the "Fabric of Being" exhibition, a selection of *khanga* is showcased as a single installation constructed around two main ideas. The first is that of the woman's inner voice as an avenue to subvert women's ascribed role. Here the *khanga* acts as an arbiter of women's autonomy, especially in their expressing erotic feelings and sexual desires, which are key to conversations about reproductive health, and beyond health, wellness. As affirmed in the ICPD Programme of Action, loving and being loved in the way that one wants is key to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health. Often, a woman is not in complete control of whom she partners with, how she loves, procreates, labors, or expresses dissent due to patriarchal norms as shaped by culture, religion, tradition and society.

The *khanga* offers openings, using the gender neutrality of the Swahili language, to add layers of nuance, intrigue, and depth to platonic intimacies and romantic options.

The second idea explored is that of the woman as a social pundit, purveyor of folk and holistic wisdoms, and political analyst. Here, the *khanga*s communicate the reflections and philosophies of a woman about the world around her. In some, she is hopeful, in others resigned, in others indignant. She celebrates holidays like Eid, and she warns about greed, corruption and the love of money. She takes this freedom to be an authority, even as she washes dishes, cooks food, and runs errands in her neighborhood. The traditional maxim that women should be seen and not heard is ironic when juxtaposed with the *khanga*, which is, indeed, seen and not heard: however, the woman wearing it is far from silent.

Details

Description	: Installation of 19 pairs of <i>khanga</i> s
Size	: Each <i>khanga</i> is about 1.5 m. x 1 m.
Material	: Cotton
Techniques	: Printed fabric

SHORT BIO

Kaderdina Hajee Essak Limited, popularly known as Mali Ya Abdulla (MYA, meaning Abdulla's wealth in Swahili) is a company and store focusing on textiles and especially the *khanga*. The name refers to the founder Essak Bharadia who boarded on a ship at the age of 13 at the port of Mandvi, in what is now the Kutch district of the Indian state of Gujarat, and travelled to Unguja in Tanzania and then Mombasa in Kenya. He quickly became a trustworthy trader who organized expeditions to the Ukambani Plateau and exchanged beads, blankets, copper wire, salt, sugar and calico for ivory, rhino horn, hides and skins. These precious commodities were then sent to Zanzibar and from thence to India and China. In 1887, he opened the company Kaderdina Hajee Essak Limited in Mombasa's Old Town, soon to be followed by the opening of his son Abdulkader (also called Kaderdina)'s shop. In 1907, they moved to their registered premises on Biashara Street, where the company is located to this day.



© Soud

Every *khanga* is designed in-house and trademarked. MYA carefully develops and edits the central design motif, then chooses a suitable and compatible *msemo*. Proverbs about love and marriage, for instance, are popular when combined with floral or paisley patterns. MYA releases three new designs on average every week, and each design is made available in five unique color combinations. During high demand times, like Eid holidays, up to five new designs can be released per week. Each *khanga* run consists of 2,000

to 2,500 *khanga* pairs, and the designs, once released, are never repeated. As the sayings enjoy different popularity and relevance, however, they can themselves be reused after a year or more, depending on public demand. The people from the Kenyan mainland have different designs and proverb preferences from the people at the coast, and MYA takes this, as well as their different uses of the Swahili language, into consideration during design.

To this day five generations of the

Essak family have run the store and the company. Muneeb Kaderdina is the current Director of the company, having joined in 2008 and taken up the leadership position in 2011. His son, Imran Kaderdina, who also is following in the family footsteps, and one of the designers there for 15 years, Beatrice Elizabeth Okumu, are representing MYA at the exhibition and at the pre-Summit *khanga* performance and workshop at DreamKona, a public art space at Uhuru Gardens in Nairobi.

Khanga Conversations

THE PERFORMANCE COLLECTIVE • KENYA



ART PERFORMANCE⁴

The exhibition includes an interactive community storytelling performance that combines the history of the *khanga* as a cosmopolitan African fabric with connections to different parts of the world—as far as Asia on the one hand, and the Americas on the other—with stories celebrating its rich history since its creation on the Swahili Coast. “*Khanga Conversations*” particularly highlights the primary association of the *khanga* with girls and women and its amplification as a gendered “fabric of being” that carries history, culture, life lessons and articulations of experiences, aspirations and perceptions.

⁴ This and the next Short Profile was written by Mshai Mwangola

Every element and use of *khanga* has meaning that will be explored in the performances. For instance, the photo of the *khanga* skirt on a cloth features the classical (and many say seminal) “kisutu” design, traditionally associated with particularly the rites of passage and death among the Swahili, and now adopted by the neighboring Giriama women as well as a signifier of identity. The two colors are the traditional red and blue, and there is a contemporary twist to the shade of red and the use of the fabric exemplifying the approach the Collective will be taking in bringing the various elements together.

The performance is about the “cloth that speaks” through its mix of verbal and visual art and its multi-faceted messaging whose ambiguity creates the potential for strategically subversive and subliminal communication which often enables the apparent subaltern to “speak.” Its story-telling celebrates the *khanga* for the voice it has given to women in promoting their well-being, health, and dignity, especially with regard to their life choices,

relationships, reproductive rights, and socio-political power.

Different iterations of “*Khanga Conversations*” have been staged in various spaces in Kenya. The “Fabric of Being” exhibition provides a new international setting to share and expand this initiative by showcasing the performance at the exhibition opening at the Delegates Lounge of KICC. Before that, on 10 November, a workshop is planned on the “Cloth That Speaks” and its design together with story-telling and performance at DreamKona in Uhuru Gardens. Visiting textile artists are invited to take part in this pre-Summit event



© Mshai Mwangola

SHORT PROFILE

The Performance Collective is the performance arm of The Orature Collective (TOC), a group of Nairobi-based creative intellectuals who create and facilitate safe spaces for communal explorations of issues of collective interest. TOC members, who have known each other and worked together for over three decades, founded The Performance Collective in 2008 as an inter-disciplinary, multi-genre venue of artistic exploration, expression and enjoyment. They are Mueni Lundi, Mshāi Mwangola, Kawive Wambua, Aghan Odero Agan and Abubakar Zein Abubakar.

Convinced that the arts offer a critical space for individual and communal intellectual work, the Collective is committed to discovering, exploring, creating, and working in a range of settings, in order to use the process and products of artistic performance as catalysts for individual and collective growth. Monthly, the Collective acts as the literary performance partner of Pointzero Bookcafé. At this coffee-and-books experience reflecting on the world from the heart of Nairobi, the group introduce recent African writings to receptive audiences by dramatizing the texts.

Fertility

NIA FLIAM AND AGUS ISMOYO • INDONESIA



ARTWORK

Like humans and so many other living creatures on our planet, ants every day take responsibility for their lives. They march in every direction looking for food and at any moment one of them can release secretions to alert other ants to danger or give directions so

that they can work together to bring back food to stash in their nest.

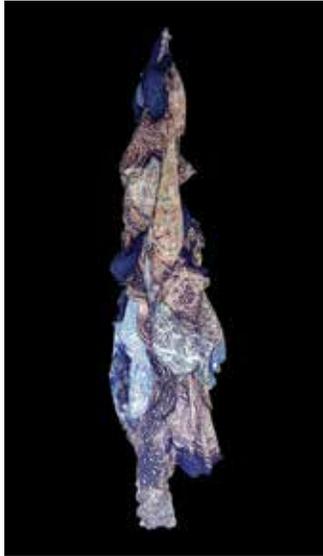
This reminds us of the ancient Javanese text, “*Agastyaparwa*”, which associates the ant with fertility and describes it as a powerful symbol of how the cycles of human reproduction are



intertwined with the environment. The Earth absorbs the secretions from the bodies of the ants, the soil thus being enriched and the plants nourished for our consumption. These nutrients are essential elements of human sexuality and reproduction, as they provide the energy for women's eggs and men's sperm and thus to fertility and the regeneration of our being. The process of reproduction is a very sacred action because the new being will directly become a part of guarding the harmony of life in this universe. Women

play a particularly important role as they ensure the passage of new life into this realm and are the custodians of future generations.

The textile art installation "Fertility" illustrates the cycles of life's reproduction on Earth with 26 artworks made in the medium of batik and tie-dye. At the core of the installation, there are pieces representing the ant house, the life of ants, and the elements of water, earth, and air. There are various abstract birds depicting the elements of air and fire in



a contemporary batik interpretation of the sacred *parang* traditional design motif. The “Tree of Life” batik is made using the technique of reverse applique and is all hand-stitched. The installation also includes four pieces of sarong (*sarung* in Indonesian), a large tube or length of plaid or checked fabric, often wrapped around the waist, which is used in some parts of Indonesia as cradle or blanket for sleeping children. They depict the seen and unseen aspect of our existence as well as the four directions of the earth.

One more sarong with soft sculptures inside shows the stages of a woman’s life first as a young girl, then a woman and finally an aged person (or grandmother). In addition, there are two videos: one of a woman walking, representing the dynamic nature of life’s transformations and one of the life of ants in their constant activity of working together. Inside the batik “ant house” there are recordings of the sounds ant make to communicate.

Details

Description : Textile art installation of 26 figurative pieces and visual and sound media
Size : 6 m. x 4 m.
Material : Cotton and silk
Techniques : Batik and tie-dye

SHORT BIO

Crossing both visible and invisible boundaries of nationality and ethnic background, traditional-contemporary, and of art-craft, Agus Ismoyo (Indonesian) and Nia Fliam (American) have been working collaboratively to produce art textiles in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, since 1985. Ismoyo's ancestors were batik makers in the neighboring court city of Solo, and he was trained in industrial management at the Industrial Academy (AKPRIND) in Yogyakarta. Nia originally explored dye resist techniques from Africa and Asia in America. She completed her fine arts degree at Pratt Institute in New York City before moving to Indonesia in

1983 to study traditional batik.

Together, Nia and Ismoyo, have presented their beautifully intricate, nuanced and time-intensive contemporary fine art textiles at many prestigious exhibitions globally. Their work is on display at renowned museums and in public and private collections. Since 1994, they have explored and worked in collaboration with Australian aborigines, American First Nation, African artists from Mali and Nigeria, and artists from all over the world.

The name of their art batik studio and brand Brahma Tirta Sari (BTS) means 'creativity is the source of all knowledge',



and is grounded in the belief that there are many traditions throughout the world that are important resources in the creation of contemporary art. BTS is a division of the Culture House Babaran Segaragunung that was founded to support the artists' exploration of traditional cultures, in order to understand basic principles derived from local wisdom that act as a guide through an integral artistic process. In this process, centered on learning and teaching batik's intangible heritage, Ismoyo and Nia have found symbols and knowledge that have provided an unending rich source of inspiration in an ever-expansive journey of artistic discovery.

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Water Goddess

ABOUBAKAR FOFANA • MALI



© Jason Wyche, New York

Aboubakar's work stems from a profound spiritual belief that nature is divine and that through respecting this divinity we can understand the immense and sacred universe. His raw materials come from the natural world, and his working practice revolves around the seasonal cycles of nature, the themes of birth, decay and change, and the impermanence of these materials. He sees the conception and realization of this work as a form of spiritual practice which is shared with his audience. He uses indigo, a dye different than any other obtained through a living fermentation process that does not require any mordant. His indigo vats are alive, the color a visible imprint of these natural cycles, and the most challenging part of his work is understanding and working with the living things to allow these colors to become visible.



These cultural and spiritual values and techniques are also expressed in the large artwork presented at the “Fabric of Being” exhibition. The indigo used for the hand-made textile is closely related to fertility in different ways. Indigo has been used for centuries in Africa as a symbol of wealth and fertility and also had medicinal use. More directly, for women who are having difficulties conceiving, the advice is to wear a skirt dyed with the fermented leaves as traditionally it is thought that indigo cures infertility. Also, traditionally indigo-dyed textiles bring well-being to pregnant women and ensure a healthy growth for the child. Babies are laid down in indigo-dyed sheet to stimulate their minds.

The blue stripes of the exposed four meters-long cloth with all their different tonalities refer to water and other liquids essential to life, starting from the amniotic fluid protecting the growing fetus and providing it with the necessary nutrients and chemical. In its symbolism, the artwork embodies Faro, the Goddess of the Waters of the Bamanan cultural group in Mali and treasures water as a scarce resource in a country partly covered by the Sahara Desert. The different shades of light to deep blue also express emotions with blue being again associated with regeneration of life. Blue is what is visible of indigo, but the unseen is the spirit of the plant that transforms, the leaves fermented with live bacteria that from green become blue when exposed to air in a process as mysterious and astounding as birth itself.

Details

Description : Hand-made textile art
Size : 1.17m. x 4.36 m.
Material : Hand-sewn linen
Techniques : Fermented vegetable
indigo dye

SHORT BIO

Aboubakar Fofana was born in Mali and moved to France at an early age. As a child in West Africa, he was told about green leaves that made blue colors. Years later, already a successful calligrapher, artist and graphic designer living in France, he remembered this story, and started on a long journey to understand indigo and his African heritage.

He is known for his work in reinvigorating and redefining West African indigo dyeing techniques, and much of his focus is devoted to the preservation and reinterpretation of traditional West African textile and natural dyeing techniques and materials. Currently, he is deeply involved in creating a farm in conjunction with the local community in the district of Siby, Mali, in which the two types of indigenous West African indigo will be the centerpiece for a permaculture model based around local food, medicine, and dye plants with the hope of contributing to the rebirth of fermented indigo dyeing in Mali and beyond.



© Riley Salyards

He has exhibited all over the world in both solo and group exhibitions, including in the recent exhibitions “Ravelled Threads” at Sean Kelly Gallery in the US and “What is Written Will Remain” at the Galleria delle Prigioni in Italy. He also gives workshops and at the time of the Summit he is committed to hold an Indigo and Mud Dye Workshop with Threads of Life, an educational and retail space dedicated to sustaining local textiles in Bali, Indonesia. His fellow artist George Petsikopoulos is, therefore, representing him at the “Fabric of Being” exhibition.

Signs of the Now

JOSÉ HENDO • UGANDA



© Sophie Eliot

ARTWORK

This artwork made to resemble the one currently exposed at the Berlin's Museum of Decorative Arts' exhibition "Connecting Afro Futures. Fashion-Hair-Design", is in direct response to what is happening in our planet at the present time. Landfill space running out, the plastic in the oceans, forests burning and glaciers and polar ice melting. If we do not act now to stop environmental degradation and climate change, when? The responsibility lies with everyone. Taking inspiration from her past concepts, research, and designs, José's installation and collection "Signs of the Now" urges all of us to stop being wasteful immediately.

The dominant material of her artwork is bark cloth, which is biodegradable, organic and manufactured without the use of chemicals. Sourced from the inner layer of the mutuba tree (*ficus natalensis*) the bark is peeled away, stretched, and pounded with mallets for up to 12 hours before it can be worn. As the tree regenerates, another bark grows

to be harvested every year for up to sixty years. This organic cloth, predating the weaving era and proclaimed a UNESCO World Heritage Material in 2005, is the best ambassador for sustainability: it truly is “The Fabric of Being”!

The artist’s philosophy of sustainability is also expressed in the five principles that guide the making of this artwork:

1. Reduce, reuse, recycle.
2. Ethical (supply chain recognition).
3. Timelessness (multi-purpose pieces).
4. Natural fibers (organic, eco-textiles, recycled).
5. Produced locally (price point).

The imagery of the artwork also conveys the same concerns. The depiction of the planet, hand carved out of bark cloth, stands for the how we are all connected and have to act together. At the centre of the planet is Africa, referring to the origin of the artist, but also to the disproportionate effect of climate change on populations in Africa and Asia, despite Western countries having contributed more to the root causes of environmental



degradation. The laser-cut bark cloth beyond the planet further signifies how fragile the environment has become through our actions. And it is through our actions therefore that we have to remedy the destruction of our habitat.

Details

Description	: Textile art installation composed of 3 pieces
Size	: 3 m. x 4 m. x 2 m.
Material	: 2 pieces in bark cloth and 1 in hand woven bark cloth and organic cotton
Techniques	: Making bark cloth and hand weaving



@Melida Hendo

SHORT BIO

José Hendo is a Ugandan-born British eco-sustainable designer who takes a fresh approach to fashion design, challenging the throwaway culture. Her label is passionately conscious of the times, is inspired by the world around us, and supports ethical trading, fair working conditions and raising awareness about the environmental issues affected by the fashion industry.

In her desire to get away from fast fashion, she has adopted “sustainable by design” as her mantra, from material choices to clever cutting and simplified production processes. She promotes awareness of the environmental impact of the fashion industry and the use of organic, eco-textiles and recycled materials to create unique, one-off pieces, often avant-garde garments and accessories for both women and men.

She chooses to work extensively with bark cloth and uses it in all her collections, alongside other organic fabrics such as organic cotton, silk, hemp, bamboo, end-of-line fabrics such as linen, wool or denim, and upcycling. Currently, there are eleven José Hendo's collections inspired by a mixture of her African heritage and British influence, and the "Resonance" collection is entirely made from bark cloth. In 2014, José launched an initiative called "Bark to the Roots" (B2TR) to share about the use of bark cloth in the modern fashion world, reminding us to preserve both our heritage and environment to build a resilient and sustainable fashion industry. B2TR is connected to the Bukomansimbi Organic Tree Farmers Association (BOTFA) in

Uganda, which sustains the practice of making bark cloth to save this tradition and enable the sourcing of organic bark cloth directly from the processors.

José's bark cloth pieces are displayed across the world, including in the Uganda Museum, the World Culture Museum in Sweden, the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising and the Charles H Wright Museum of African American History in the US, and the World Culture Museum and Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum in Germany. Among the exhibitions where her work was showcased are the Slowfashion/Fastfashion Exhibition and the Killerton House Tree of Life Exhibition, and soon at the African Gallery of the British Museum.

Born from the Same Womb

ABDI KARYA • INDONESIA



ARTWORK

This textile art installation is composed of *ayunan* (swings or cradles) made from sarongs from the artist's birthplace, the province of South Sulawesi in the eastern part of Indonesia. Taking the title from a textile art installation previously shown at the 20 Year Exhibition of Selasar Art in Bandung

in 2018 and again in 2019 in Yogyakarta, the installation also combines elements from other work on related themes that employed the same medium.

Departing from the collective memory of cradles as a baby's second living space outside of the mother's womb, the artwork reflects on the universality of

our human condition irrespective of our diverse individual characteristics and is a call for pluralism and inclusiveness in the face of growing sectarianism, intolerance, and identity politics in Indonesia and beyond. The sarong is not only a “second womb”, but also a “second body,” a fabric that accompanies people in their life cycle and marks their life stages: birth, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, social and sexual interactions and marriage, in health and sickness, and until our death. Every new-born baby has a silk sarong “friend” from the partum that is used later to cover him/her for the first time, which has been woven in the family and transmitted through generations. In the colors and ways of wearing the sarong, social roles and commentaries are expressed and messages produced and delivered.

A key implicit value is the “universality” of the sarong in South Sulawesi in that, unlike other parts of the country and the world, on this island of



eastern Indonesia the sarong is worn by anyone, any time, and anywhere across classes and genders. The local pre-Islamic Buginese culture recognizes that gender and sexuality exist on a spectrum and identify five combinations of biological and social gender and sexual identities: *makkunrai* or female women; *oroani* or male men; *calalai* or female men; *calabai* or male women; and *bissu*, androgynous or intersex persons revered as healers or religious leaders.

This installation consists of three parts: first, different sizes of swings made of sarong, with the larger ones for the public to try and feel in the cradle again. Second, a video placed in the smaller swings depicting someone folding a sarong

into human dolls to indicate the coming of life from the womb with the sound of lullabies from various parts of Indonesia to express diversity in the universality of birth. Third, dozens of dolls from sarong made from textiles characteristic of various places in Indonesia arranged on the floor as a representation of geographic, ethnic, religious, and gender diversity. The artist will also be performing, creating identical dolls out of the diverse textiles stressing the oneness of human beings. The installation thus challenges the growth of fundamentalist and sectarian movements in Indonesia and globally, and calls each one of us to action since attacks to “the other” are attacks to our shared humanity.



Details

Description : Textile art installation and performance
Size : Unknown
Material : Sarong and video player
Techniques : Performance

SHORT BIO

Born in South Sulawesi, Indonesia, Abdi has been working in the art world since 2004, first in management roles and later as performer and visual artist. From 2001 to 2010 he was a performer in plays put on by the Batara Gowa Art Foundation, a non-profit organization, in South Sulawesi's capital, Makassar, dedicated to protecting, preserving, and promoting the traditional dance, music, and games of Indonesia especially from South Sulawesi. From 2011 to 2017 he directed the *Rumata Art Space*, a cultural hub also in Makassar and led its activities ranging from cultural research to production of exhibitions, artist residencies, performances, and festivals, including the ground-breaking Makassar International Writers' Festival and Makassar-Southeast Asia Film Academy.

During the summers from 2007 to 2016, he was a resident artist at

Watermill Center for the Arts in New York contributing to the building of the center through ground works and developing performance projects initiated by renowned theater director and visual artist Robert Wilson. He is a co-founder of 5Tomidnight, a transnational artist collective based in Taiwan focusing on intercultural performance creation and experimental methodologies. In early 2019, he was involved in Indonesian film director Garin Nugroho's production as a field research manager. His performance and textile artworks have been presented in Indonesia—at the Jakarta Biennale, Selasar Sunaryo Art Space in Bandung, and Lorong Gallery in Yogyakarta, among others—and internationally, including at the 1st International Theatre Festival in Colombo, Sri Lanka, Singapore Writers Festival, and Castlemaine State Festival in Australia.

Sis, You Betta Werk

SIWA MGOBOZA • SOUTH AFRICA



ARTWORK

This colorful artwork is inspired by “Olympia,” a painting by Edouard Manet that was controversial at the time, as it portrayed a brothel setting and a naked “prostitute” facing the viewer with a servant sitting in the back. Siwa’s tapestry reproduces the same scene in the artist’s specific style to interrogate the

importance and value society has placed on the lives of people who work in the sex industry: women, men and the non-binary — many of whom are murdered and raped every day.

South Africa is sadly renowned for the extremely high number of rapes, contributing to high rates of HIV infection,



unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortions, and femicides. Perpetrators too often are not brought to justice. Official figures show that at least 137 sexual offenses are committed every day in the country, mainly against women, but also LGBTIQs and children. According to a recent article by The Guardian that cited Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, South Africa's Minister of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, in the second week of September 2019 alone, more than 30 women were killed by their spouses or partners.

This abhorrent rape culture is fueled by the hypocritical stigmatization of the victims who are accused of “calling for men’s attention” and deserving to be raped because of their perceived “inappropriate” clothing or behavior. Words like, “they deserve it” or “they were the ones who tempted men” are often used without any awareness of the power they carry in maintaining a culture of social acceptance of sexual violence to control women. The blaming-the-victim is even stronger towards sex-workers and LGBTIQs. Society is becoming increasingly desensitized to the practice of “corrective rape” and, as a result, many cases are often unreported or not taken seriously. This culture deprives of dignity and value the bodies and lives of people who experience sexual violence. They are erased from society as “immoral” or “going against nature”, and structural violence becomes a fabric of their existence.

For Siwa, the artwork displayed at the “Fabric of Being” exhibition represents a wide range of people who exist on the fringes of this culture. These are people

who usually come from disadvantaged backgrounds, are placed in a subordinate position like women, are considered outcasts like sex workers, and persons outside of the heterosexual paradigm, or people whose identities may intersect several of these social categories used for othering and excluding.

The tapestry, like in Manet's "Olympia", depicts two characters: one, lying on their back with their eyes intently confronting the viewer; and another, who is seen as the maiden. In Manet's original work, the figure lying down is given visual priority because of her dazzling white skin. However, in Siwa's tapestry there is no particular body represented (white, black, male, female, etc.). Instead, the imaginary, almost imperceptible figure aims to depict the absence of any superior race or gender. There is no single or particular body that claims center-stage. As a Xhosa (South African language) saying goes, "Wathint' umfazi, wathinth' imbokodo" ("You strike a woman [or other human

beings], you strike a rock")—it affects the entire nation when gender-based violence occurs.

The materials used have meaning too. As explained in more details below, Siwa's tapestries, including this one, employ *isiShweshwe*, a printed dyed cotton fabric common in South Africa with the specific aim to "deconstruct" ideas of nationhood and gender. The ornamental beads are used in a traditional fashion as amulets that protect the owner from bad luck and keep them in the light (eye) of the ancestors. The tapestry is thus an homage to all brave beings, who continue to exist and live their truth despite the hostile and violent society in which they live.

Details

Description	: Mixed textile artwork
Size	: 2.40 m. x 1.80 m.
Material	: <i>isiShweshwe</i> (three cats cotton), tulle, glass beads and cotton.
Techniques	: Tapestry

SHORT BIO

Siwa Mgoboza is an award-winning visual and performance artist whose work has been shown locally and internationally. He is also a part-time lecturer at the University of Cape Town. He explores notions of difference and belonging as informed by his personal experiences of prejudice and assimilation. Growing up abroad and subsequently returning to South Africa as a young man, Siwa was profoundly struck by the difference between his expectation of an egalitarian South Africa and the stark contrast of its reality.



© ArtMeetsCamera

As a response to this, Siwa has created Africadia—a means to transcend, if only momentarily—prejudice based on preconceived notions of gender, race, religion, sexuality, class, and nationality. Hybridity is at the core of the Africadian experiment that imagines a world where absolutes become fluid and open to debate. A utopian intermingling of notions of an un-spoilt Africa and Arcadia—as

referenced in Greek mythology and the painting of Renaissance artist Nicolas Poussin—Africadia represents an alternative, a space where in Siwa's words, "we stop talking about the 'other' and start talking to one another."

In creating the hybrid beings that populate the Africadian dimension, Siwa has drawn on his South African Hlubi heritage by incorporating the bright and densely patterned shweshwe cloth into his photographic, sculptural and textile work. Traditionally worn by women, *isiShweshwe* cloth motifs are immediately recognizable as "African" but on closer investigation,

they have truly global roots, having arrived in southern Africa via Dutch trade routes and were made popular in the mid-1800s by German settlers. *isiShweshwe* is a symbol embedded with the ethos of Africadia—of cultural interchanges across continents, of indigenization and cultural revitalization. Siwa offers *isiShweshwe* to the viewer as an accepted African signifier, but it is simultaneously reconstituted as a question that subvert both geographical and gender-specific assumptions, thus opening alternative readings of individual and collective identities.

Women's Resilience

KEETA ISRAN AND SALWANEE HAJISAMEA

● THAILAND



Artwork Keeta Isran © Prach Pimarnman

ARTWORK

Women's resilience is the focus of a set of tapestries created by Keeta Isran and Salwanee Hajisamea. Both artists are based in Thailand's deep south, a historically and culturally distinct area consisting of the provinces of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, and parts of Songkla. This area of Thailand shares the Malay ethnicity and Islam with the rest of the southern part of the peninsula, which belongs to Malaysia. Although the Malay Muslim population

represents the majority in this border area, it constitutes an ethnic, linguistic and religious minority nationally. In the midst of recurrent tensions, Keeta and Salwanee are united in the goal to show the resilience of local women, who go ahead with their daily lives and continue to work and support their families despite the difficulties they encounter.

The two artists have independently chosen to portray women's faces using embroidery to express their heritage and

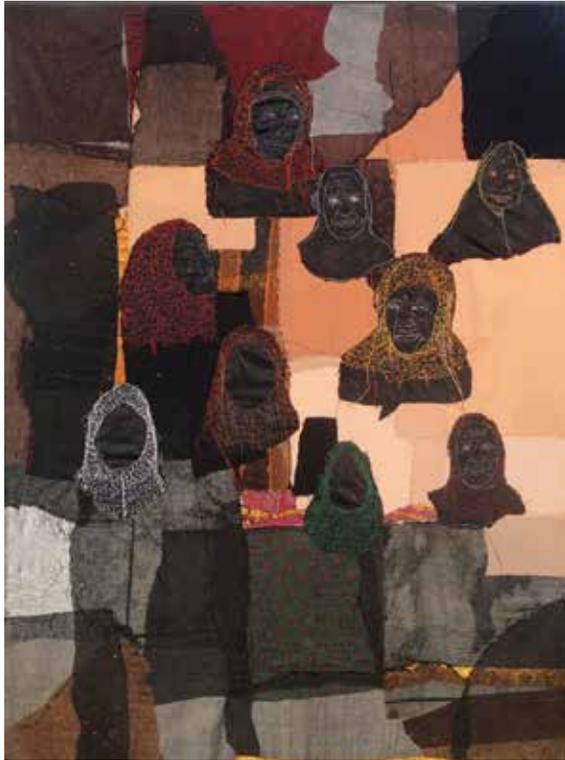


©Esuwan Chai

Muslim identity in what has become a single artwork for the “Fabric of Being”. In her series of three tapestries with the original title of “Moh” or “Mother/Woman”, Keeta has hand-sewn different layers of fabrics on torn and burned pale black fabric to sculpt textile reliefs and portray women as conflicted between hopes of peace and their current daily realities. She has employed clothes and fabric used by

people in the area in order to powerfully situate her artwork in a real local context. Sawanee also uses similar materials and hand sewing to portray widows and their children in a series of multiple pieces of large tapestry in different colors, of which two are exposed in Nairobi.

These five art pieces show how, even in a troubled area, beauty can be found in the courage and strength of women.



©Esuwan Chal

Women's voices are rarely heard, and yet they often are the breadwinners carrying out parenting responsibilities as men are drawn into social unrest and conflict. For the artists themselves, art is part of the healing process and an expression of the reality of their lives. It is also a way to convey messages of hope and contribute

to peace by showing the universality of womanhood transcending different religious and ethnic identities. It also expresses Islam as a religion of peace and sisterhood as a counter-discourse to the way it is often portrayed in the media, and art as a means to create a more stable community for all. In the words of Keeta to the Bangkok Post, art for women artists in southern Thailand is like planting flowers with the hope that "the beauty of flowers will always shine wherever they grow."

Details

- Description : 5 tapestry pieces by 2 artists on the same theme
- Size : 3 pieces 80 cm. x 1 m. each and two pieces 1.44 m. x 1.44 m. and 2 m. x 1.50 m. respectively
- Material : Sarongs and used cloths and fabrics
- Techniques : Hand-sewing and embroidery
-

SHORT BIOS

Keeta Isran and Salwanee Hajisamae, the two artists who contributed artworks on “Women’s Resilience”, are interested in identity issues grounded in their experience of belonging to religious and ethnic minority groups in their country. Born in Bangkok, but now mainly based in the southern province and town of Narathiwat, Keeta is one of the founder of Muslimah (Muslim Women) Collective, a group of five women artists formed in 2015 to promote peace through the medium of art. Muslimah first public appearance was at the Bangkok Art and Cultural Centre (BACC) as part of a People’s Gallery exhibition in September 2017 under the title “The Way of Women”. Most recently, in 2018 they participated in the first Bangkok Art Biennale (BAB) also at BACC receiving positive reviews for both the beauty and the depth of the work they exposed.

Keeta runs De’ Lapae Contemporary Art Space, a learning art center in her hometown with her artist husband Prach

Pimarnman, who also helped with the documentation and took the photos for this catalogue. She also works as an art teacher at Prince of Songkla University Pattani Campus to encourage her students to contribute with their art to peace processes and greater inter-ethnic and inter-faith understanding and respect. In the same university, she graduated in the Visual Arts Program of the Faculty of Fine Arts at Prince of Songkla University Pattani Campus.

Later, she attained a master in the same discipline at the Faculty of Painting Sculpture and Graphic Arts of Silpakorn University, the most renowned academic institute for the arts in Thailand. In the last decade, she has received various awards including the 2012 Gold Medal Award Contemporary Painting at the 2nd Bualuang Art Exhibition, and the 2012 National Award for Exhibitions “Fine Art Brings Good Things to Life”.



Keeta Isran © Prach Pimarnman

Salwanee Hajisamae also derives inspiration from local tradition. She uses different techniques, but embroidery is currently the art form that she tends to privilege. Salwanee was born and lives in Pattani, the capital of another southern province of Thailand. Like Keeta, she received a bachelor's degree in Visual Arts, Faculty of Fine Arts at Prince of Songkla University Pattani Campus in 2012 under the mentorship of assistant professor Jehabdulloh Jehsorhoh, one of the leading contemporary artists from Pattani and the founder of Patani Art Space. There, Salwanee has found a supportive environment and her artworks are exposed in this creative learning center for youth. In 2018, Salwanee has received the prestigious Platinum Award UOB Painting of the Year.

Both Keeta and Salwanee are part of a movement to introduce contemporary art inspired by the diverse Muslim Malay traditions as seen from a woman perspective to the general Thai public and the neighboring country of Malaysia. They have exhibited in the ground-breaking exhibition “Patani Semasa” (“Patani Now”)

co-organized by and held consecutively at two institutions located to the far north and south of Pattani—Chiang Mai’s MAIIAM Contemporary Art Museum and Kuala Lumpur’s Ilham Gallery to highlights



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an unfamiliar current of contemporary art in Thailand and reflect on geographical and identity boundaries. More recently they have participated in regional initiatives in Malaysia and Indonesia. “Fabric of Being” will be their first global event and they have gladly accepted the invitation to display their artworks even if they are in no position to attend due to previous commitments, trusting SEA Junction to represent them.

Exhibition Team

SEA Junction, OUR Venue on Southeast Asia, is a public venue managed by the Foundation for Southeast Asia Studies in Bangkok, Thailand that aims to foster understanding and appreciation of Southeast Asia in all its socio-cultural dimensions and facilitates exchanges among Southeast Asia lovers. For more information see www.seajunction.org and join the fb page and group @sea-junction, and Instagram and twitter @seajunction

Trust for Indigenous Culture and Health (TICAH), located on the outskirts of Nairobi, Kenya, is a feminist organization that aims to promote health, wellness, equitable relationships, healthy households, and community action. It seeks to enhance the positive links between health and cultural knowledge, practices, beliefs, and artistic expression. For more information see www.ticahealth.org of fb page @TICAHKenya

The Nest Collective is a multidisciplinary arts collective in Nairobi founded in 2012 that has created works in film, music, fashion, visual arts and literature. The Nest Collective also founded HEVA—Africa’s first creative business fund of its kind—to strengthen the livelihoods of East Africa’s creative entrepreneurs. For more information see www.thisisthenest.com or on fb @NestCollective

The Performance Collective is the performance arm of The Orature Collective (TOC), an interdisciplinary, multi-genre venue of artistic exploration, expression and enjoyment. For more information see fb page @greatcoffeesublimebooks



Fabric of Being
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the performance collective



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