

BILLIE ZANGEWA
Flesh and Blood

November 18, 2021 – January 15, 2022
Seoul

BILLIE ZANGEWA
Running Water

November 10, 2021 – January 8, 2022
London



Billie Zangewa, *Body and Soul*, 2021. Hand stitched silk collage, 28 x 28 inches (71 x 71 cm)

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Lehmann Maupin is pleased to announce *Flesh and Blood* and *Running Water*, two concurrent exhibitions featuring new work by Johannesburg-based artist Billie Zangewa, which will be presented across the gallery's Seoul and London locations. Best known for her intricate collages composed of hand-stitched fragments of raw silk, Zangewa creates figurative compositions that explore identity and challenge the historical stereotype, objectification, and exploitation of the black female form. For her second presentation with the gallery, Zangewa has created two bodies of work inspired by a new-found appreciation for family, labor, and ritual that resulted from living and working in isolation during the Covid-19 pandemic. *Flesh and Blood* features work focused on the artist's close community of family and friends, while *Running Water* examines the day-to-day acts of work, parenting, and self-care. The exhibition titles are inspired by lyrics from the Neville Brothers' song *Sons and Daughters* (1990), which the artist heard on Radio Nova, a French radio station based in Paris.

Beginning her career in the fashion and advertising industries, Zangewa employs her understanding of textiles to portray personal and universal experiences through domestic interiors, urban landscapes, and portraiture. Her earliest works were embroideries on found fabrics depicting remembered botanical scenes and animals from Botswana, but she soon transitioned to creating cityscapes, focusing on her personal relationships and experience as a woman in the city of Johannesburg. After the birth of her son, Zangewa began creating her well-known domestic interiors to explore her shift in focus from self-examination and femininity to motherhood and the home. Often referencing scenes or experiences from everyday life, Zangewa has stated that she is interested in depicting the work done by women that keeps society running smoothly but which is often overlooked, undervalued, or ignored.

For her Seoul presentation, *Flesh and Blood*, Zangewa explores the significance of the relationships with friends and family who have provided critical support and encouragement that has grounded her over the past two years. With the onset of Covid-19 and the social limitations that followed, the importance of family was magnified as people chose to stay close (for safety and regulatory reasons) to their familial networks. Her son, a recurring subject in her work, takes center stage in

these collages. In a series of portraits, Zangewa depicts the people who make up both his genetic and chosen family in scenes that range from a fragmented tree of immediate family members, to a gathering of a close-knit group of extended family and friends for the celebration of his 8th birthday.

In London, Zangewa will present *Running Water*, a collection of pieces that visualize the shifts in parenting, work, and daily rituals that have occurred as a result of the pandemic. These collages build on the themes from *Flesh and Blood* by investigating the seemingly mundane aspects of the artist's daily life—including meditation in the garden, working on the patio, sitting in bed to comfort her son, and even the simple act of putting on and removing her shoes each day. In *Whatever it Takes*, the artist illustrates this ritual in a still life of her sneakers placed at the kitchen/back door, the toes of the shoes partially obscured by a kitchen cupboard that is cut off by the rough edge of the work. "I have been wearing these Adidas since I bought them at Lillywhites in Piccadilly Circus about 10 years ago, when I lived in London," Zangewa explains, "Every day that I am working, I begin by putting on these shoes, which give me support as I stand quite a bit. It is very quickly becoming time to get new shoes as they don't quite offer the same support they once did, but I have an emotional attachment to them and all that we've been through together, [and] it's hard for me to let go." This work functions as a representation of the labor, support, routine, and comfort that work shoes are often symbolically imbued with, as well as connoting the artist's rigorous commitment to continuing to make work amidst the challenges that arise as part of day-to-day life.

Together, *Flesh and Blood* and *Running Water* act as dual markers of this unique time and the radical changes resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic. These exhibitions offer two perspectives on domestic life—the communal and the intimate. The works featured illustrate the importance of family, friends, and routine, particularly during this difficult and deeply emotional period. In these two new bodies of work, Zangewa reflects on the past two years, placing special emphasis on relationships that have become stronger and her candid view of domestic life in its altered state. These works offer an opportunity for the viewer to reflect

on their own life, particularly changes in our habits, relationships, and day-to-day life. Zangewa's message is one of hope, and an offering of love for oneself, one's family and friends, and the wider human community.

These two gallery presentations will coincide with Zangewa's first major solo museum exhibition in the United States, *Billie Zangewa: Thread for a Web Begun*, guest curated by Dexter Wimberly at the Museum of African Diaspora (October 20, 2021-February 28, 2022). The exhibition will feature work from the past 15 years, in addition to new work produced specifically for the show. Although many of the scenes depicted in Zangewa's layered silk collages are autobiographical, her work contains a relatability that goes beyond her personal journey as an artist. Zangewa's labor-intensive processes recall the historic implications of "women's work" but remain a steadfastly contemporary interpretation of lived experiences. "I use fabric and sewing, which traditionally is a female pastime, to empower myself," Zangewa states, "I tell my personal story, how it's happening on the home front, and show the intimate life of a woman, which usually we're not encouraged to do." Zangewa views telling her own story in her own voice as a kind of personal empowerment, especially as this has historically been very difficult for women in general, and for women of color in particular, with many obstacles to overcome.



Billie Zangewa, *The Pleasure of a Child* (detail), 2021. Hand-stitched silk collage, 43.7 x 59.8 inches (111 x 152 cm)

Billie Zangewa received her BFA from Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa in 1995. Solo exhibitions of her work have been organized by Galerie Templon, Paris, France (2020); Afronova Gallery, Grand Palais, Paris, France (2017); Johann Levy Gallery, Paris, France (2008); and Gerard Sekoto Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa (2005). Recent group exhibitions featuring her work include Alpha Crucis, Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo, Norway (2020); *I Am ... Contemporary Women Artists of Africa*, Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Washington, D.C. (2019); *Second Life*, Museum of African Contemporary Art Al Maaden (MACAAL), Marrakech, Morocco (2018); *Pulling at Threads*, Norval Foundation, Cape Town, South Africa (2018); *Making Africa*, Albuquerque Museum, Albuquerque, NM (2018) and the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA (2017); *The Half-Life of Love*, Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, North Adams, MA (2017); *A Constellation*, Studio Museum Harlem, New York, NY (2016); *Making Africa*, Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona, Barcelona Spain, and Kunsthal Rotterdam, Netherlands (2016); *Women's Work*, Iziko National Gallery of South Africa, Cape Town, South Africa (2016); *BodyTalk*, Wiels, Brussels, Belgium; Lunds Konsthall, Lund, Sweden and Frac Lorraine, Metz, France (2015); *Making Africa*, Guggenheim Bilbao, Spain and Vitra Design Museum, Weil am Rhein, Germany (2015); *How Far How Near*, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands (2014); and *The Progress of Love*, Menil Collection, Houston, TX (2012).

Zangewa's work is in several public and private collections including the Centre Pompidou, Paris, France; Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH; Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Washington, D.C.; Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, Atlanta, GA; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands; and Tate Modern, London, United Kingdom. In 2018, Zangewa was selected as the Featured Artist for the FNB Art Joburg Fair.



Photo by Jurie Potgieter

ABOUT THE GALLERY

Rachel Lehmann and David Maupin co-founded Lehmann Maupin in 1996 in New York. Since Inception, Lehmann Maupin has served as a leading contemporary art gallery with locations in the U.S., Europe, and Asia. For over 25 years, Lehmann Maupin has been instrumental in introducing international artists in new geographies and building long-lasting curatorial relationships. Known for championing diverse voices, the gallery's program proudly features artists whose work challenges notions of identity, and shapes international culture. Today, the gallery has locations in New York, Hong Kong, Seoul and London, as well as a team in mainland China. In the past year with growing opportunities in new markets, the gallery has opened seasonal spaces in Aspen, Palm Beach, Taipei, and Beijing.



Lehmann Maupin London at Cromwell Place. Photo by Alex Delfanne