

ART - BILLIE ZANGEWA

Tramway, Glasgow, Friday 29 September –
Monday 28 January

by Rachel Ashenden

(1) Billie Zangewa is a Malawian artist based in South Africa whose specialist medium is textiles. Sewing from the heart, her figurative silk collages have gained her international acclaim. Telling autobiographical stories of growth through change, her choice of material purposefully 4 this: silk is a by-product of animal transformation. She has exhibited widely across Europe and America (from Paris Art Fair to the National Museum of African Art in Washington DC) but A Quiet Fire at Tramway marks the first time her art can be seen on display in Scotland.



(2) Preoccupied with the domestic realm and the underappreciated labour which goes into its maintenance, Zangewa's collage tapestries express what she describes as daily feminism. Motherhood figures repeatedly in her practice as she depicts routines such as walking a child to school or assisting with homework at the kitchen table. Zangewa's kitchen table transforms into her 'kitchen studio' where she assembles her hand-sewn silk fragments into tapestries. In interviews, she speaks tenderly about her soul-enriching relationship with her son and how his presence helped her pursue the 'personal as political' narrative of her art.

(3) 'The ordinary Black woman needs support from society,' Zangewa once declared. She depicts herself juggling tasks, reading, gardening, washing, drinking and meditating. 6 the ancient tradition of tapestry-making, she sews a woman surfing the internet on an Apple Mac (a repeated symbol in her practice). By creating artworks which depict Black women's everyday experiences, she seeks to affirm their existence and 'elevate their place in the world.'

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