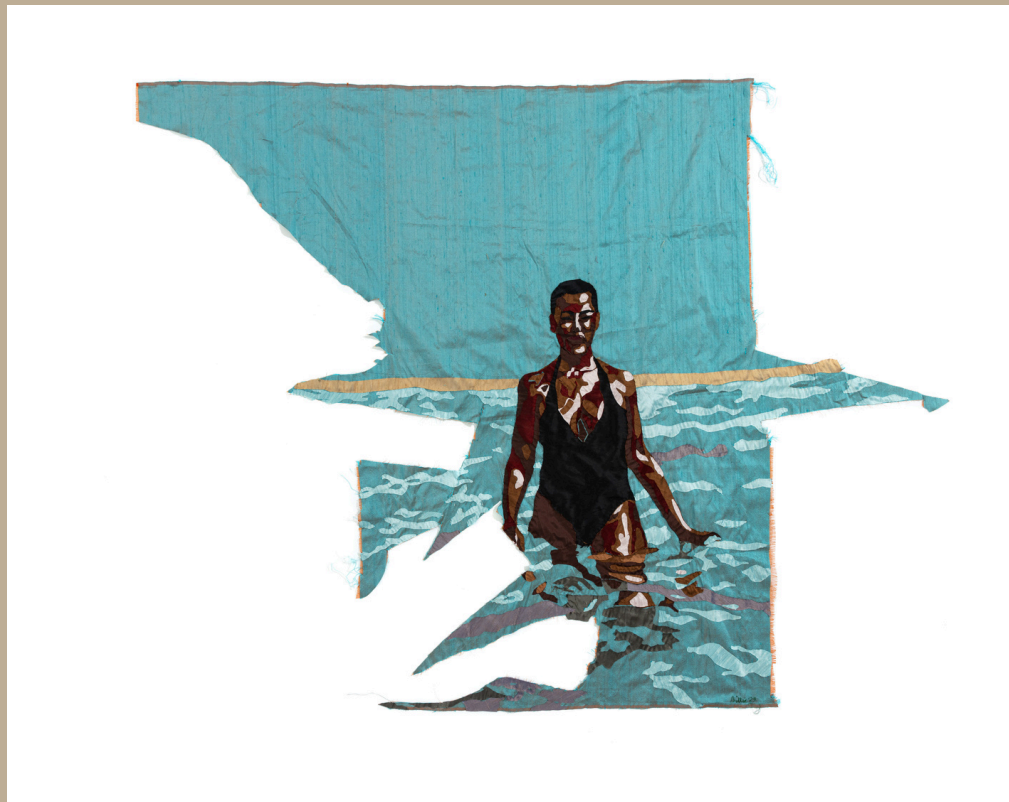


FROST ART MUSEUM



In My Element, 2023
Hand-stitched silk collage
Billie Zangewa

THE TEACHER RESOURCE PACKET

ABOUT THE ARTIST

THE ARTIST



Billie Zangewa

Billie Zangewa is an African Artist based in Johannesburg, South Africa. Born in Malawi and based in Johannesburg, Zangewa's emphasis on domesticity is contradicted by her family's frequent moves as a child. Her family homes were impersonal and transient spaces. Her art is thus an exercise in reckoning with this, creating scenes that are mundane and relatable, as well as intimate and heart-warming. From an early age Billie Zangewa learned how to sew in school, but what sparked her interest in sewing was her mother's sewing group. The group allowed women to express their feelings and relieve stress through the art of sewing, Zangewa received her B.F.A from Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa and has had work featured in group exhibitions as well as two solo shows.

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ABOUT THE ARTIST



Traveler, 2023 Hand-stitched silk collage, by Billie Zangewa

Her work consists of intricate hand-stitched silk collages, metamorphosing life's changes and emotions into art. Silk was a resourceful and versatile material, allowing her to explore and express her creativity. This process of transformation is reflected both in the nature of the material and in her artistic journey.

Despite her innovative approach, Zangewa's work has not always been recognized as fine art; she was often dismissed as a crafts woman. Zangewa's work channels raw emotions and captures intimate moments from her daily life, serving as a form of therapy. In her lush collages, Billie Zangewa positions her personal experiences at center, weaving scenes of her life as a single mother into silk fabrics.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

The recent works shown in this exhibition demonstrate her skill in hand-stitching while also offering a variation in subject matter. The A Man for all Seasons series shows fragmented portraits of male subjects on cut-up fabric squares with gaping incisions. These works are colorful and heavily detailed despite appearing scrap-like and fractured. Working primarily with weaving, stitching, and collage, Zangewa uses processes traditionally perceived as women's work to tell stories about her life and community. Her labor-intensive methodology is an introspective honoring of domestic life, black femininity, motherhood, and home-making.

Field of Dreams is a solo exhibition featuring new and recent works by artist Billie Zangewa. Across her body of work, Zangewa creates intricate collages composed of hand-stitched fragments of raw silk. Her use of this material speaks to the transformative nature of the work itself. Silk, as the “leftovers” of the chrysalis process, is a material created through transformation; it's what remains and is illustrative of Billie Zangewa's creative process of metamorphosing life's challenges and complex emotions into art. Both the artist and the material share the process of transformation.

The works in Field of Dreams are a departure from Zangewa's recent figurative compositions that center on themes of domestic life. During the pandemic, Zangewa shifted her gaze to a ponderance of the human condition and the interconnectivity of all living things. These multimedia works also call attention to the sociopolitical challenges facing societies today and the way these influences impact individuals and whole communities from one generation to the next.

EDUCATION ACTIVITY

Transformative Threads: Family Narratives in Silk Painting

Essential Questions:

1. How does Billie Zangewa use her artwork to explore personal identity and universal experiences?
2. In what ways can art serve as a medium for self-expression and storytelling?
3. How does Zangewa's focus on domestic and everyday life challenge traditional ideas of what is considered "important" in art?
4. How does the use of silk as a medium contribute to the themes and emotions conveyed in Zangewa's work?
5. How does the craftsmanship and hand-stitched techniques create intimacy in her art?
6. How does the choice of material (silk) impact the viewer's perception of the artwork?
7. How does Zangewa's work reflect issues of gender, race, and cultural identity?
8. In what ways does her art engage with themes of vulnerability, strength, and resilience?
9. How do her depictions of private, domestic moments connect with broader social and political conversations?

Discuss: Discuss how artist Billie Zangewa's creates a narrative in her artwork. Reflect on connections between everyday life and the broader connections related to cultural identity.

Connect: Visit, tour, and discuss **Field of Dreams** by Billie Zangewa at the Frost Art Museum. Use the Close Looking questions and expand on this dynamic artwork.

Studio Experience: Transformative Thereads, Silk Painting Portraits or Landscapes
Grades 6-12

Materials:

- Pencil and sketch paper
- Fabric paints and/or silk dyes
- Gutta
- Silk scarves or fabric cut into squares
- Brushes, various sizes
- Frames (Embroidery Hoops or Canvas Frames)
- Containers for paints, gutta, and water
- Gloves and aprons

EDUCATION ACTIVITY

Transformative Threads: Family Narratives in Silk Paintings

Studio Experience

Step 1: Review and display the images of Billie Zangewa's artwork. Discuss Zangewa's life and her artwork reflects personal and universal experiences. Use the Frost Art Museum Virtual Tours as a resource. Introduce silk painting and explain to the students they will be creating works using Zangewa's silk collage techniques as inspiration.

Step 2: Guide students as they develop 3 to 4 sketches for the silk paintings focusing on family narratives (self-portrait, family portrait, landscapes, etc.). Encourage them to think about symbols, patterns, and imagery that represent their ideas. Students sketch their designs on paper, emphasizing shapes, outlines, and composition. Cut and prepare pieces of silk fabric for each student for the next class session.

Step 3: Set up workstations with all materials, ensuring proper ventilation for resist and dyes. Demonstrate to students the steps in silk painting and how to stretch silk on a frame or hoop to keep it taut.

Step 4: Demonstrate how to apply resist (e.g., gutta or wax) to create boundaries and outlines. Explain how resist prevents dye or paint from spreading beyond the lines. Students transfer their sketches onto silk using resist materials.

Step 5: Demonstrate how to apply fabric paint or silk dye, blending colors to create gradients and textures. Students begin painting their designs, focusing on base colors and large sections.

Step 6: Demonstrate techniques for adding fine details, shading, and layering colors. Students finish their silk paintings, refining details and ensuring balance in their designs. Show students how to set their silk paintings using heat or other fixative methods (if needed).

Assessment: Display the silk painting and discuss Creativity and Originality, Effective use of painting techniques/application and allow students to reflect on their artistic choices and process. in the school gallery, library, or art lab. Have students participate in a group critique using TAG: T - Tell the Artists Something You Like; A - Ask the Artist a Question; G - Give the Artist a Suggestion. Have the students write a poem related to their paintings.

EDUCATION ACTIVITY

Transformative Threads: Silk Fabric Collages

Discuss: Discuss how artist Billie Zangewa's creates a narrative in her artwork. Reflect on connections between everyday life and the broader connections related to cultural identity.

Connect: Visit, tour, and discuss Field of Dreams by Billie Zangewa at the Frost Art Museum. Use the Close Looking questions and expand on this dynamic artwork.

Studio Experience: Transformative Threads, Silk Painting Portraits or Landscapes
Grades 4-12

Materials:

Pencil and sketch paper

Silk fabric scraps in various colors and patterns

Fabric scissors

Fabric glue, needle and thread

Cardstock or canvas as the base

Step 1: Review and display the images of Billie Zangewa's artwork. Discuss Zangewa's life and her artwork reflects personal and universal experiences. Use the Frost Art Museum Virtual Tours as a resource. Introduce silk painting and explain to the students they will be creating works using Zangewa's silk collage techniques as inspiration.

Step 2: Guide students as they develop 3 to 4 sketches for the silk paintings focussing on family narratives (self-portrait, family portrait, landscapes, etc.). Encourage them to think about symbols, patterns, and imagery that represent their ideas. Students sketch their designs on paper, emphasizing shapes, outlines, and composition. Cut and prepare pieces of silk fabric for each student for the next class session.

Step 3: Allow students to explore the silk fabrics, experimenting with layering and overlapping pieces to create textures and patterns. Students can finalize their designs, ensuring they understand how to transfer their sketches to the fabric collage format.

Step 4: Discuss safety tips for using fabric scissors and techniques for gluing or stitching fabric. Have students cut silk fabric to fit the shapes and patterns from their sketches. Attach the pieces to the base using fabric glue or stitching, focusing on layering and detail. Assist students as needed. Optional: Add embellishments such as beads or sequins for additional texture and interest.

EDUCATION ACTIVITY

Assessment: Display the silk painting and discuss Creativity and Originality, Effective use of painting techniques/application and allow students to reflect on their artistic choices and process. in the school gallery, library, or art lab. Have students participate in a group critique using TAG: T – Tell the Artists Something You Like; A – Ask the Artist a Question; G – Give the Artist a Suggestion. Have the students write a poem related to their paintings.

Art Vocabulary: Appliqué, Autobiographical, Collage, Cultural Heritage, Domesticity, Empowerment, Feminism, Fibert Art, Hand-Stitching, Identity, Layering, Narrative, Representation, Resist Technique, Silk, Symbolism, Textile Art, and Value

Elements and Principles of Art: Color, Composition, Contrast, Emphasis, Proportion, Repetition, Shape, and Texture

Visual Arts Benchmarks

Transformative Threads: Family Narratives in Silk Paintings

Visual Arts Benchmarks, Grades 6-12

VA.4.S.1.1: Use processes, media, techniques, and technology to create original art.

VA.5.C.2.1: Use visual evidence and prior knowledge to reflect on multiple interpretations of works of art.

VA.6.F.1.1: Create artworks that communicate personal interests and ideas.
Grades 9-12:

VA.912.O.3.1: Synthesize knowledge and skills from other content areas to create meaningful works of art.

VA.912.S.3.4: Demonstrate personal responsibility through appropriate selection and use of media, techniques, and processes.

Transformative Threads: Silk Fabric Collages

Visual Arts Benchmarks, Grades 4-12

VA.68.C.1.1: Apply critical-thinking and problem-solving skills to solve challenges in a creative process.

VA.68.F.1.3: Investigate careers in which artworks or designs are created.
Grades 9-12:

VA.912.O.2.3: Create artworks that explore the ideas of identity and narrative.

VA.912.S.3.7: Use visual-thinking skills to translate ideas into images.

STEAM CONNECTIONS

Science

Material Science - Discuss the properties of silk as a natural fiber (its strength, elasticity, and texture) are essential to understanding how Zangewa works with it. Have students explore and research the production of silk fabric (silkworm farm). The production of silk connects Zangewa's artwork to biology and chemistry.

Color Theory - Dyeing silk involves understanding chemistry, specifically how different pigments bond with fibers and how light interacts with materials to create vibrant colors. Have students experiment with dyeing silk and take notes on how the silks react to the various colors of dyes.

Environmental Science - The production of silk raises discussions about sustainability and the environmental impact of textile industries, tying her art to ecological awareness. Have students research and document how the production of silk can become more sustainable and reduce environmental impact.

Technology

Digital Design Tools - Have students research modern textile artists who use digital tools to conceptualize compositions before translating them into fabric form. If available, Have students experiment with laser cutting, use of design software to create patterns, or digital printing on fabric to extend their knowledge and experience with fabric production.

Photography and Video - Have students photograph or video record the production of their dyed fabrics. Have them take notes/sketch of their process.

Engineering

Pattern Design - Discuss pattern design and construction with students. Have them create a pattern for their silk fabric collage. The collage process involves precision cutting and problem solving which support the process of engineering.

Art

Have students create a silk painting or stitched collage inspired by personal narratives, using Zangewa's techniques. Have students experiment with dyeing silk fabric and document the chemistry created by the various colors of dyes.

Mathematics

Scale and Proportion - the precise cutting and arrangement of silk pieces require an understanding of geometric shapes and patterns. Balance and symmetry in Zangewa's compositions involve mathematical principles of proportion and alignment. Have students scale their work and calculate with precision and spatial reasoning. Ensure students document accurate measurements in their design compositions and create prototypes (sketches) to transfer to their cut silk fabric pieces.

RESOURCES

The Artist Profile Archive: Billie Zangewa

<https://www.theartistprofilearchive.com/artist-profiles/billie-zangewa>

Artist Billie Zangewa in conversation with Curator Brandee Caoba

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NIfcQmPxeDU>

Field of Dreams Virtual Exhibition

<https://frost.fiu.edu/exhibitions-events/events/2024/11/billie-zangewa-field-of-dreams.html>

FNB JoburgArtFair Conversations: Billie Zangewa, 2018 Featured Artist

<https://www.artsy.net/article/fnb-joburgartfair-fnb-joburgartfair-2018-programming>

Lehman Maupin Artists - Billie Zangewa

<https://www.lehmannmaupin.com/artists/billie-zangewa>

This exhibition has been sponsored by the generosity of



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FOUNDATION



LEHMAN MAUPIN

This is a teacher resource packet intended for elementary through high school students. For more educational resources, please visit: <https://frost.fiu.edu/learn/schools-teachers/index.html>