

Kresiah Mukwazhi

Nyika irikure nezuva

kaufmann repetto is pleased to present Kresiah Mukwazhi's first solo exhibition in New York, opening concurrently with her show in our Milan gallery. The exhibition *Nyika irikure nezuva* - a Shona expression meaning "a land far from the sun" - introduces a new body of work that imagines a space of freedom and protection, drawing on celestial symbolism to explore the tension between expression and repression, visibility and concealment.

If the Milan presentation, titled *Ndakangavara*, reflects the artist's engagement with transformation and survival in the face of societal expectations, *Nyika irikure nezuva* turns its gaze upward. Inspired by the feminine associations of the Moon and the masculine energy of the Sun, the series envisions a distant terrain - the nocturnal sky as a sanctuary. The Earth's satellite, long connected to women's menstrual cycles and emotional rhythms, here becomes an emblem of selfhood, mystery, and cyclical rebirth.

Mukwazhi uses this metaphorical landscape to consider the limits placed on women's voices and bodies in a conservative society, where censorship often dictates the terms of public expression. Against this backdrop, her work quietly insists on freedom - freedom to feel, to speak, to be seen. The artist describes this space as an imagined utopia where the self can unfold without fear, where softness is protected rather than punished.

Within this cosmology, Mukwazhi continues her practice of working with secondhand materials sourced from Harare's markets, particularly undergarments once worn by women whose lives remain invisible, yet palpably present in her work. Fostered by patriarchal cultures and belief systems, social control over women's bodies in Zimbabwe often extends to expectations around dress and behavior. The public display of lingerie, especially bras, is still considered controversial, invoking judgments tied to purity, desirability, and moral worth. Mukwazhi engages these charged objects head-on, deconstructing hundreds of used bras - many of which arrive in Zimbabwe through illegal secondhand markets - which she recomposes into powerfully textile canvases. The resulting works bear the weight of what they've held: both physically and energetically, they echo the presence of their past owners, while also standing in tribute to the countless women subjected to violence and erasure. These forms, delicate yet resolute, become sculptural gestures of both mourning and resistance.

Her large-scale textile collages - *Kali the Goddess*, *Kuzvarwa patsva zvekare (A Rebirth, Again)*, and *Sarura wako (The Choice is Yours)* - summon a powerful feminine force that transcends the earthly. Pieced together from vibrantly colored found fabrics, synthetic lace, sequins, and tinsel, these works evoke celestial visions while remaining grounded in the textures of everyday life. Each composition serves as a portal: *Kali the Goddess* channels the energy of divine feminine rage

and protection, *Kuzvarwa patsva zvekare* speaks to the cyclical nature of healing and transformation, and *Sarura wako* confronts the idea of agency within a system that constantly seeks to deny it. These figures are neither victims nor saints – they are mythic, erotic, and fiercely alive.

In *Nyika irikure nezuva*, the feminine body is no longer merely a site of judgment or trauma, but one of knowledge and mystic power. Mukwazhi's textile collages summon celestial beings – guardians, queens, protectors. Through them, she continues the lineage of earlier works like *Nyenyedzi nomwe*, where she invoked a queen living among the stars to watch over women across the world. In the artist's work, that call expands outward: the cosmos becomes both mirror and refuge, a place where femininity can stretch, shimmer, and exist on its own terms. Through this body of work, Mukwazhi moves between the earthly and the otherworldly, grounding the sacred in the everyday materials of women's lives. Her vision of resistance is one that transcends violence through softness, through slowness, through a faith in the body as a vessel not only of survival, but of transformation.

Kresiah Mukwazhi was born in 1992 in Harare, Zimbabwe, where she currently lives and works. She has been the subject of several international exhibitions, including: Nottingham Contemporary (2023); Secession, Vienna (2023); Zimbabwean Pavilion, 59th Venice Biennial (2022); Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg (2022); South African National Gallery, Cape Town (2020); Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (MOCAA), Cape Town (2019); SAVVY Contemporary, Berlin (2017); The National Gallery of Zimbabwe, Bulawayo (2016), among others. Her monumental bra strap mural is currently shown at Museum Ludwig, Cologne, as part of the fourth iteration of the *Schultze Projects* curated by Yilmaz Dziewior.