

# Troy Makaza

## Portfolio

Born in 1994, in Harare, Zimbabwe, where he lives and works.



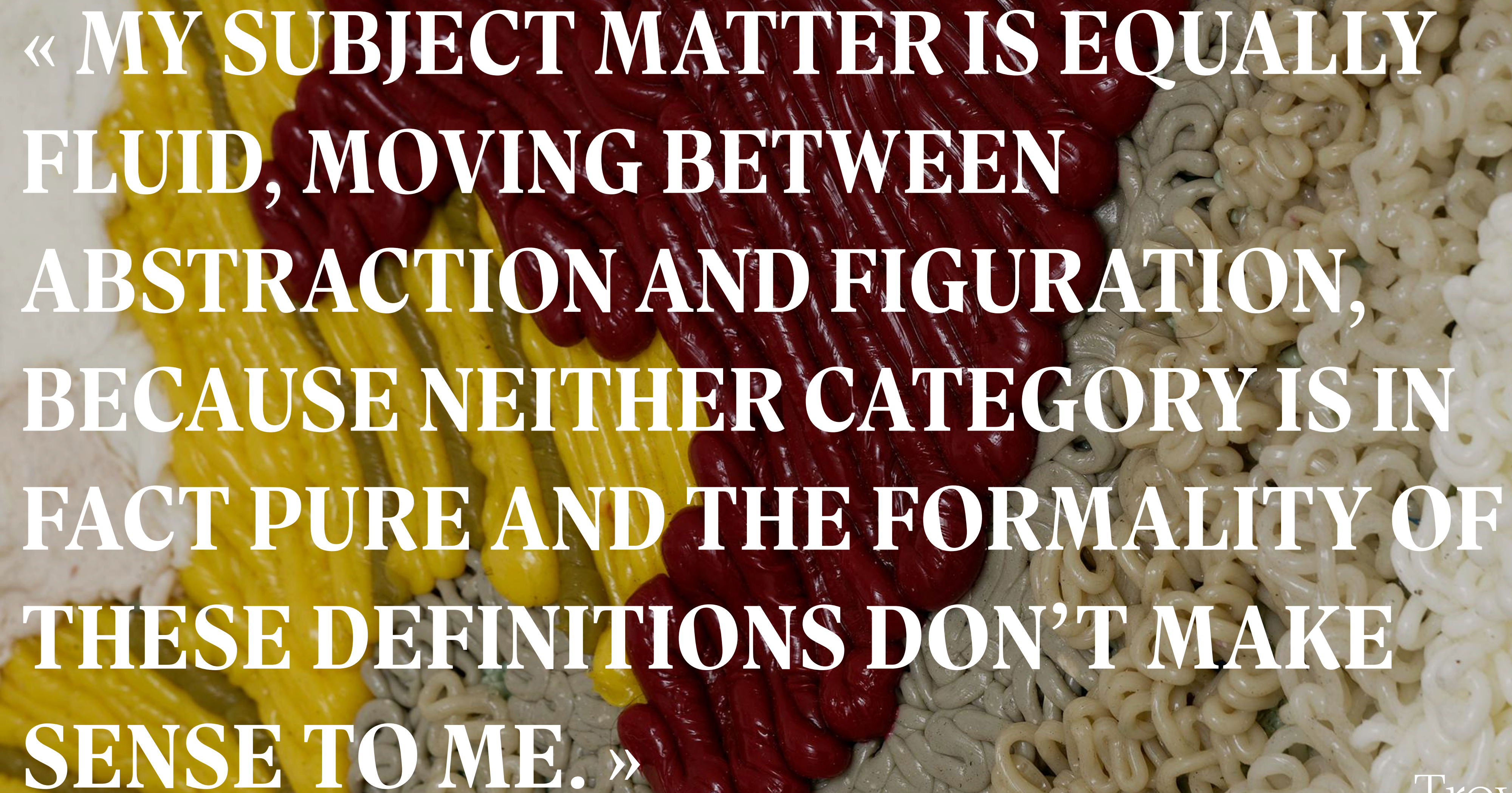
Born and living in Harare, Troy Makaza is one of the most unique Zimbabwean voices of the past decade. He graduated from the National Gallery School of Visual Art and Design (NGSVAD), where he studied painting and sculpture and was supported by renowned artists such as Wycliffe Mundopa, Moffat Takadiwa and Gresham Tapiwa Nyaude.

To merge his love of painting and sculpture, he invented his own medium, creating seductive, glossy, tactile and surrealist wall works made of silicone infused with pigment, a material that can be cast, painted, but also woven and tied. Resonating with traditional modes such as weaving and tapestry, Makaza's works explore what the African and specifically Zimbabwean contemporary can be today : a paradigm both internationally appealing and locally compelling.

Over the past eight years, Troy Makaza's work has gradually become a way for him to express himself, both viscerally and philosophically, on the challenges he faces as a young Zimbabwean concerned with the political life of his country and its impact on the daily lives of its citizens, but also as a millennial engaged in a globalized society.

Troy Makaza's work defies any formal categorization and thus conceptualizes and "maps" a reconciliation of divergent cultural, historical, and political ideologies in Zimbabwe and around the world. Makaza's work remains playful and light-hearted, subtly referring to popular visual culture, traditional Zimbabwean symbolism, local food and art history to create synthetic agglomerations where colors, shapes and textures play an aesthetic and symbolic role.

Now one of the leading figures on the emerging scene in South Africa and Zimbabwe, Makaza will be a part of the group that will represent Zimbabwe at the **International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia in April 2024**. He won the **2019 Investec Cape Town Art Fair Tomorrows/Today Award** and his work has been exhibited in **London, Milan, Al Maaden Museum of Contemporary African Art in Marrakech, Vestfossen Kunstlaboratorium in Norway, Evergold Projects in San Francisco**, and in fair presentations at **Art Basel Miami Beach, Paris+ by Art Basel, Frieze no.9 Cork Street, Art Joburg** and **ARCOMadrid**.



« MY SUBJECT MATTER IS EQUALLY  
FLUID, MOVING BETWEEN  
ABSTRACTION AND FIGURATION,  
BECAUSE NEITHER CATEGORY IS IN  
FACT PURE AND THE FORMALITY OF  
THESE DEFINITIONS DON'T MAKE  
SENSE TO ME. »

Troy Makaza

# Exhibitions Selection

2018 — 2023

# Galerie Poggi, Paris (FR), 2023

*Untwisting the Fantasy*, Exhibition View (Solo Show), © Kit Production



# Galerie Poggi, Paris (FR), 2023

*Untwisting the Fantasy*, Exhibition View (Solo Show), © Kit Production



**TROY MAKAZA**  
*Untwisting the Fantasy*



# Art Dubai (AE), 2023

First Floor Gallery (ZWE), Booth View (Group Show)



# Manifesta, Lyon (FR), 2022

*Le Fil du Temps, Exhibition View (Group Show), Troy Makaza, A 'sacred song' in violence Part 1 & Part 2, 2022 © G. Grasset*





**Manifesta, Lyon (FR), 2022**

*Le Fil du Temps, Exhibition View (Group Show), © Troy Makaza, A 'sacred song' in violence Part 1, 2022, © G. Grasset*





**First Floor Gallery, Harare (ZWE), 2022**

*Kufa IzuvaRimwe, Exhibition View (Solo Show)*

# First Floor Gallery, Harare (ZWE), 2022

*Kufa IzuvaRimwe*, Exhibition View (Solo Show)



# First Floor Gallery, Harare (ZWE), 2022

*Kufa IzuvaRimwe*, Text by Valerie Kabov, 2022

« *Kufa IzuvaRimwe* », means « death is but a day ». It is perhaps the most poetic and life affirming proverb openings in ChiShona. While the proverb continues with a caution that problems take a long time to build us and no outcome happens on its own, it is valuable to just reflect on the idea that death is just a moment and rest there. Because when we do consider that death is just a moment, we immediately realise that life is far more than that. That in fact *Kufa IzuvaRimwe* is the flipside to the concept of hupenyu which means infuses the idea of life with the blessing of being alive, in and of itself.

So there is no necessary conflict or contrast between the joy of a good meal, the pain of war and poverty, celebration of a new birth or the Moon landing. There is no superior civilization, there is no better culture, there is nothing more human than being human. I remember taking my husband to Le Louvre for the first time many years ago, expecting a euphoric reaction to the pathos and spectacle of the grandest museum, the palace and home of Mona Lisa and treasures of Ancient Greece, Rome, Egypt and Mesopotamia.

His response stunningly concise was ‘To think they built all this and they did not know how to treat other human beings’. It was not a rejection of beauty but seeing it in totality and a totality which included himself, explicitly and undeniably. It is at this crossroads of self-awareness and self-acceptance and recentering the world for all that we find Troy Makaza’s *Kufa IzuvaRimwe*.

*Kufa IzuvaRimwe* is a body of work, which looks at life as it is lived rather than imagined. Life, with inequality and class, with history of oppression, with the present of poverty and drugs and corruption, with politics diving people and land, with maps of a continent carving out scars of dispossession and inherited trauma, where answers are neither clear nor close at hand. These new works, assert and vanquish any doubt that there is a need for compromise between painfully serious and deliciously seductive, that do be significant and important art needs to become devoid of joy and beauty, that concept, context and the sublime cannot sing in unison.

In *Kufa IzuvaRimwe*, Makaza brings us a heartfelt invocation to himself and others, to hear and see themselves in history as part of history, to see everything we are and what we live with honesty, with passionate love for being alive. A life infinitely imperfect, infinitely and imperfectly beautiful and infinitely hopeful and optimistic.

Text by Valerie Kabov, 2022

# Hôtel Puyricard d'Agar, Cavailon (FR), 2022

*Ecce Homo*, Exhibition View (Group Show), © Troy Makaza, *Big Man Syndrome*, 2021



# Primo Marella Gallery, Milan (IT), 2022

*Instinct of great survivors*, Exhibition View (Solo Show)



# Primo Marella Gallery, Milan (IT), 2022

*Instinct of great survivors*, Text from Primo Marella Gallery, 2022

In the exhibition “*Instinct of great survivors*”, **Meaning, responsibility and contentment** is the work with a more figurative appeal, divided into three layers, three floors, three levels. It is a series that examines a relationship and through a narrative element reveals the levels of society in which people can move. Each level can describe a different situation : one is meaning, one is responsibility and the other is contentment. On the first floor we find the atmosphere of abandoned table, four empty seats and a glass, a ghostly banquet with a dancer who moves almost in the void, casting her shadow on the floor. On the second level, columns of a temple seem to appear against the backdrop of a bush. Above, contentment, colors painted like military medals and flag of Zimbabwe. Everything remains tangled: knotted emotions, threads and strings that stack on top of each other to form a representation that oscillates between figurative and abstract.

*“Dreams of a soft landing is inspired by the fairytale story of the princess and the pea...there are layered mattresses and blankets for comfort and each pattern is taken from the orders, decorations and medals given to most army troops who participated in the Rhodesian bush wars and other wars fought after 1980 which the ZNA (Zimbabwe National Army) participated in... these wars were portrayed as ventures which would benefit every Zimbabwean citizen but only a few profited from it”. - Troy Makaza*

These works influenced by Hans Christian Andersen's tale of the Princess and the Pea give us the possibility of a double reading through their endless layers of false medals and hopes.

False awards, decorations and honors to magnify an act that will not bring any real benefit to ordinary people. Where no one can fully understand the hardness of that pea hidden under the blankets. Only the princess, who in this case can be seen as the artist, is trying to reveal the truth with this work. Or, on the contrary, in a more obvious reading, only a few could obtain the right to gain anything from wars. Few have been recognized as "princesses" and have gained the true power and benefits under these endless layers of colored medals that engulf a more raw and difficult truth.

The work called **Bhuru rinoonekwa nemavanga** recall a shona proverb which can be translated to “a real bull can be seen from its scars”, as explains Troy Makaza. Looking at the work it appears almost like a map, a cartography. On the right side there are numbers 14 117 and two letters, ZW, country code of Zimbabwe, engraved on white silicone, almost a milestone that marks the way and the kilometer reached by the young people of Zimbabwe. Here Makaza, inspired by this proverb, denounces a very difficult situation in today’s Zimbabwe, where many young people are engaged in drug use due to the high un-employment rate and “just to kill time”. These numbers demonstrate the heartbreaking truth of a consumption or rather of an abuse of drugs. The center of this mapping is in fact full of capsules, the new scars of his land, which in the outermost part still remains a blood red color and reflects, in its entirety, a fear of uneasiness or death that one tries to overcome taking pills.

Text from Primo Marella Gallery, 2022

# Primo Marella Gallery, Milan (IT), 2022

*Instinct of great survivors*, Text from Primo Marella Gallery, 2022



***Delusions of decisions*** is a series of two works. In one of the two, the abstract figure seems to be an elephant head. That same shadow that we find in the flag of the Infantry Brigade, there on a red background, a symbol of power and strength, and of the giant animal that reflects old age and wisdom. However, the title of the work is *Delusions of decisions*: that is, the choice, the difficulty that exists even in the appearance of wisdom.

Here is the delirium and the difficulty of losing rational control, the intensification of passion or the exaltation of the imagination. This figure, already difficult to recognize, appears even more distorted in the second of the two works, where the weave is lengthened, the weft threads are no longer able to fully support an understandable form. External intertwining and interlocking give a feeling of tension and stretching, like something about to fray, to break. As flowing and wavering between sculpture and paintings, in troy Makaza works there's always an attempt to reconnect and patch up what is stretching or breaking. It's a continuous flux back and forth. An attitude of breakup and reconnecting, two opposite poles as starting points of his production.

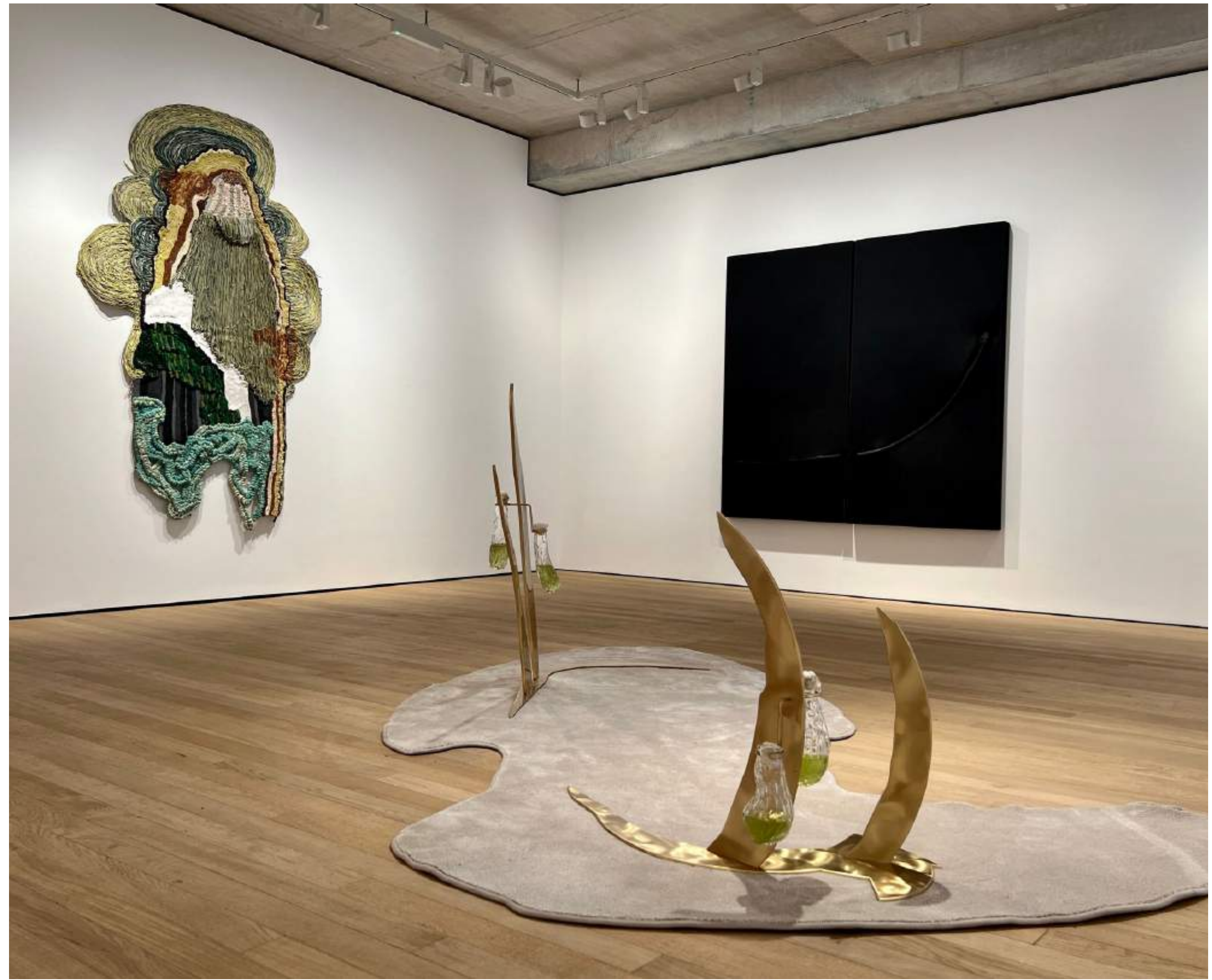
Lastly, for the creation of ***Instinct of great survivors***, Makaza recalls the equations taken from his math book from the first years of elementary school. From them he extracts only the equations with wrong results, remembering how they made sense then and how, in his stubbornness as a child, when he was given a challenge, it was welcomed with open arms always looking for a solution, right or wrong.

This way of acting connects him to the saying "a Zimbabwean always finds a way to survive in Zimbabwe. »



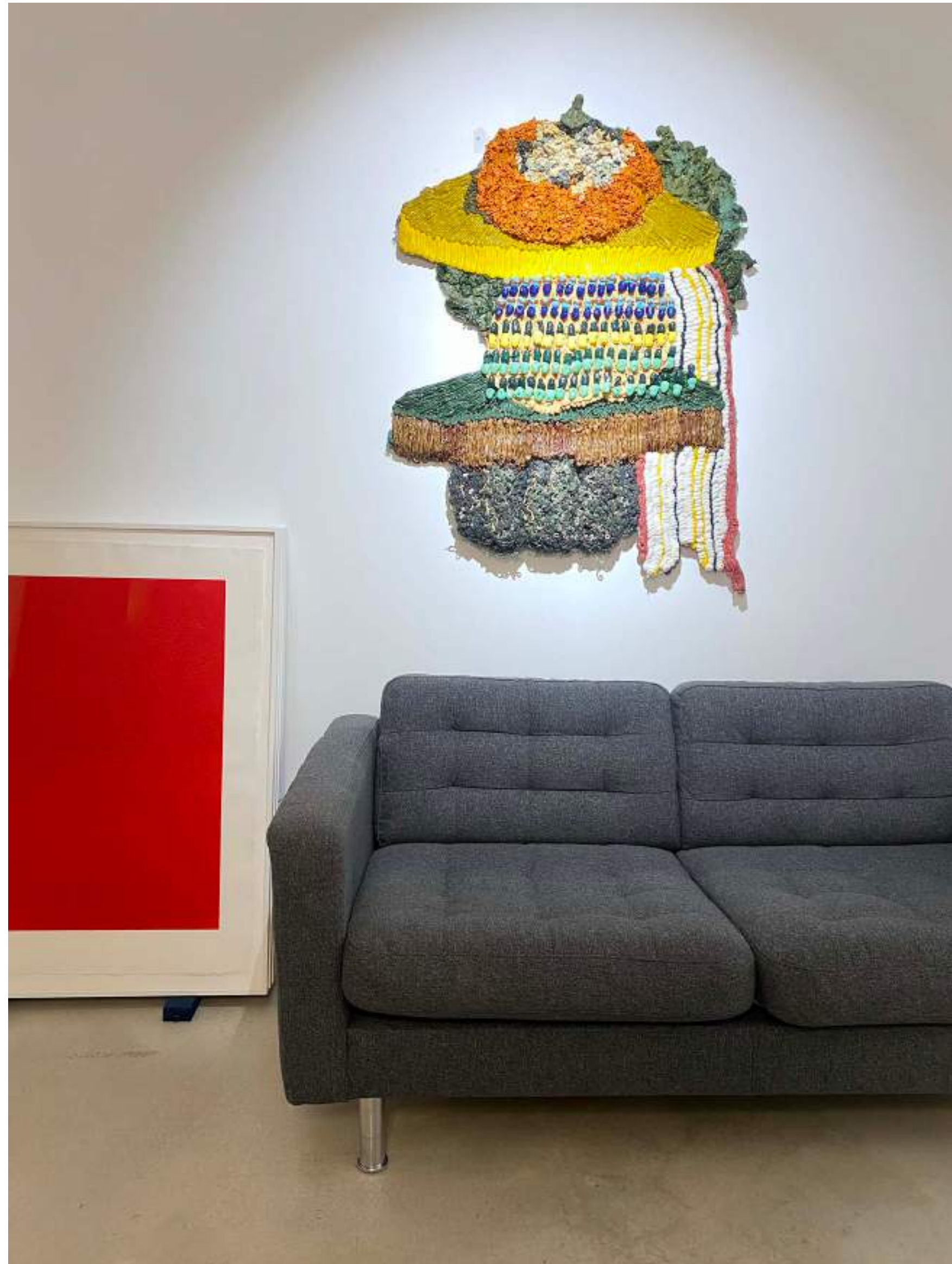
# Frieze no.9 Cork Street, London (UK), 2022

*The Territories of Abstraction*, Galerie Poggi, Exhibition View (Group Show)



# Galerie Poggi, Paris (FR), 2022

*Monochromes ?*, Exhibition View (Group Show with Kees Visser), © Troy Makaza, *Nhimbe*, 2022



# Galerie Poggi, Paris (FR), 2022

Text by Valerie Kabov, 2022



While presenting as abstractions, Makaza's works are invariably rooted in reality, using symbolic references from the colours of the Zimbabwean flag, to geographic forms, food representations and military rank colours to address the issues he finds most urgent and poignant. Over the past several years he has tackled ideas such as hyper-individualism and toxic masculinity in bodies of works such as the *'Big Man Syndrome'* to the fraught connection between military, political power and land wealth in Zimbabwe, as well as cognitive dissonance between the self-perceptions of Zimbabweans of themselves and their country's past and potential and the reality in the country in fact.

In his most recent works, like *'Nhimbe'* Makaza is focusing both on interdependence and complicity between different social strata on creating the present state of Zimbabwe. While most people prefer to blame the government for all the ills they experience, few are willing to open their eyes on the collective and personal responsibility in the status quo. The reference *'Nhimbe'* is to a traditional concept of collaboration between farmers to help each other with planting and harvesting to make sure that all succeeded together. Makaza uses this term both as a criticism but also as a reminder that collective responsibility for the disaster, can be turned around with return to traditional values.

Text by Valerie Kabov, 2022

# Art Basel Miami Beach (USA), 2021

*Dispatches from Zambesia, Nova Sector, First Floor Gallery (ZWE), Booth View (Solo Show)*



# Art Basel Miami Beach (USA), 2021

*Dispatches from Zambesia*, Text by Valerie Kabov, 2021

***Dispatches from Zambesia***, is a suite of brand new silicone-based wall works by Troy Makaza. These works form Chapter 5, the closing chapter, in *Neverland*, Makaza's evolving narrative articulating history and politics of Zimbabwe through colour-based coding reflecting the contemporary and traditional idioms of Zimbabweans. In his work, Makaza straddles the concept of critic and advocate, as a young locally based but globally engaged citizen, who is aware of the difference in the way local and international audiences engage with his work and staking a claim for an authentic and critical voice in contemporary art.

This project began in November 2017 with ***Chapter 1 - Camo : Division of Labour***, parts of which were exhibited at Zeitz MoCAA as part of 'Five Bhob' exhibition in 2018. In *Camo* the terse combination of the colours of the military and the civil normally separated by politics, responding poetically and optimistically to the events of November 2017, when in a dramatic turn of events, the army and the people came together as a united force to achieve the removal of Robert Mugabe from power after 37 years.

***Chapter 2 : Forever Neverland***, Makaza's 2018 solo exhibition with First Floor Gallery Harare looking at chance, illusion and aspirations creating a powerful and emotionally charged mix in the life of young Zimbabweans today.

***Chapter 3 : Visceral Politics***, was presented as a solo exhibition at Primo Marella Gallery in Milan and dealt with food production and

consumption in Zimbabwe as a metaphor for the interplay between power, land and class in a country where land is both a source of political power and legitimacy as well the core means of survival. The trip to Italy for *Visceral politics*, became a catalyst for a nuanced reflection on history and legacy of colonialism. Visiting Venice, just as the historic aqua alta was coming in, impressions of drowning beauty and opulence, turned to how history will remember us and our civilisation and led to development of ***Chapter 4 : Remembering Byzantium*** series as a rumination on the past but also the current precipice we are facing on a global scale. They also introduce St Tura the fictional Zimbabwean saint 'you' as a Westerner do not know about even though you are used to knowing everything.

These are the ideas forming the matrix from which ***Chapter 5 : Dispatches from Zambesia*** emerges. Zambesia was one of the early proposed names of Zimbabwe post Rhodesia. A name which was never to be used with ideas for a place, which equally does not exist and also could not exist. These works articulate the danger of mythologizing history or future, no matter how delightful it might be. Playing with ideas of mapping, geography, land use but transposing them into a mythical world which is not too far from 'tangerine trees and marmalade skies' of *Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds* – a dreaming which while local is also enmeshed with our shared humanity, which pushes us towards hope because and not in spite of cynicism all around.

Text by Valerie Kabov, 2021

# Art Basel Miami Beach (USA), 2021

*Dispatches from Zambesia*, Text by Valerie Kabov, 2021

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The playful and fluid approach to delivering an ideologically passionate and focused narratives in his work, is a deliberate device, Makaza uses to give audiences their own space to engage with the work in ways which are not prescribed or proscribed. He borrows widely yet subtly both from popular visual culture, traditional symbolism and art history as a source of his synthesised agglomerations, where colours and forms become the prime actors in the works.

***Dispatches from Zambesia*** is tour de force of energy which speaks to a consciousness of the need towards a holistic and compassionate reconciliation of human kind with its history and the environment but also passionate optimism for this possibility.

Text by Valerie Kabov, 2021



# Art Basel Miami Beach (USA), 2021

*Big Man Syndrome*, Text by Valerie Kabov, 2021

In the 'Big Man Complex' being developed specifically in response to the Art Basel OVR curatorial premise, Makaza takes a small detour, to reflect on some issues emerging in the context of the pandemic lockdowns in Zimbabwe. Side-stepping pandemic pandemonium clichés, Makaza looks at aberrant phenomena which became amplified by social media during the lockdown and in the absence of white noise of daily lives. In particular, the veneration of extravagant and deeply immoral Zimbabwean men, showcasing their decadent lives in the middle of a global as well as country-wide crisis and in a country with extreme income inequality.

A touchstone for this rumination, was the death of notorious nightclub owner and self-proclaimed millionaire, Genius (Ginimbi) Kadungure, in November 2021 in a drunk-driving and speeding accident, in which Ginimbi's Rolls Royce exploded into flames killing him and several others. Despite the criminal recklessness Ginimbi's death became a citywide mourning event in Harare, with incredible public processions and partying to celebrate his life. November 2021 was also the month when Makaza became the father to a baby girl. Makaza picks up this event as a symptom of conflicted values of contemporary Zimbabweans, sold on the dream of wealth with no work, a celebrity with no achievement while facing the dearth of prospects and opportunities for the large proportion of the population and neglecting traditional values of collaboration and togetherness in favour of rampant and callous hyper-individualism.

While Ginimbi emerged as an urban cultural phenomenon. it is also a story of male exploitative privilege and complicity between wealth, capitalism, patriarchy. As a young man and new father of a daughter Makaza reflects and critiques the destructive culture his contemporaries are seduced by and position it in a broader historical context as an allegory of rampant greed and acquisitiveness of the political classes in Zimbabwe, which in many ways only replaced colonial rulers despite the revolutionary ideals. Ginimbi is also an easily recognisable analogy to the global income inequality, which has reached the levels of desperation driving social protest and social progress movements around the world.

However stark the message, Makaza's deliberately infuses playfulness and fluidity. He borrows widely yet subtly both from popular visual culture, traditional symbolism and art history as a source of his synthesised agglomerations, where colours and forms become the prime actors in the works, giving audiences their own space to engage with the work in ways which are not prescribed or proscribed.

Makaza's 'Big Man Syndrome' is an intellectually robust and aesthetically poignant reflection on this moment in contemporary history from unique perspective.

Text by Valerie Kabov, 2021



**First Floor Gallery Harare (ZWE), 2021**

*Mirror Mirror !, Exhibition View (Group Show)*



# MACAAL, Museum of African Contemporary Art Al Maaden, Marrakech (MAR), 2019

*Welcome Home*, Exhibition View (Group Show)



# Depart Foundation, Los Angeles (USA), 2018

*Right at the Equator*, Exhibition View (Group Show)



# Zeitz MoCAA, Cape Town (ZAF), 2018

*Five Bhob*, Exhibition View (Group Show)



# First Floor Gallery Harare (ZWE), 2018

*Forever Neverland*, Exhibition View (Solo Show)



Troy Makaza

'Forever

Neverland'

# First Floor Gallery Harare (ZWE), 2018

*Forever Neverland*, Exhibition View (Solo Show)



# First Floor Gallery Harare (ZWE), 2018

*Forever Neverland*, Text by Valerie Kabov, 2018

“In war, truth is the first casualty.” - Aeschylus

In times, when basic survival becomes an overwhelming pre-occupation, it can be argued that imagination and hope are the first casualties. How much creativity can you have left at the end of a day of queueing for petrol and food to feed your children ? How much inventiveness and inspiration to make the world a better place can you aspire to, when you wake up to a day worrying about rates, whether or not you will get electricity or have enough drinking water. While times of economic duress ebb and flow, the spiritual and emotional scars they leave are profound.

***Forever Neverland*** is a broad act of defiance and optimism of an artist in the face of yet another cycle of impossibilities and improbabilities in Zimbabwe today. The decadently opulent works in the exhibition speak to both the genuine and imagined wealth the country holds in natural resourced, minerals, agriculture, making it almost a definitional land of milk and honey. Looking at them it is impossible to imagine a place where poverty or privation can exist and yet they are outside the door. Also outside the door is a masquerade of opportunism and the black market, which neatly replicates and makes visible the disparities of the haves and have nots, normally well-hidden by city planning unchanged since colonial times.

The exuberance of the works in the exhibition is also a celebration of life and youth which continues unabated and demands to have its day in the sun, regardless of circumstance that meet it on that day. Man does not live on bread or sadza alone. The greatest gift that artists can give their audience is knowledge that they are free; the power to make up their mind without fear. ***Forever Neverland*** reminds us that we are not the sum of our circumstances but the sum of our dreams and aspirations.

Text by Valerie Kabov, 2021

# Works

## Selection

2019 — 2023



**Troy Makaza**  
*Doilies 1, 2023*

Silicone infused with pigments  
152 x 118 cm





**Troy Makaza**  
*Ice Cream 1, 2023*

Silicone infused with pigments  
120 x 172 cm



**Troy Makaza**  
*Bull 1, 2023*

Silicone infused with pigments  
176 x 220 cm



**Troy Makaza**

*It began with an ice cream, 2023*

Silicone infused with pigments  
198 x 110 cm



**Troy Makaza**

*Country Player Played (Revisited In Colors), 2023*

Silicone infused with pigments  
150 x 110 cm



**Troy Makaza**  
*What a Crazy Little Country, 2023*

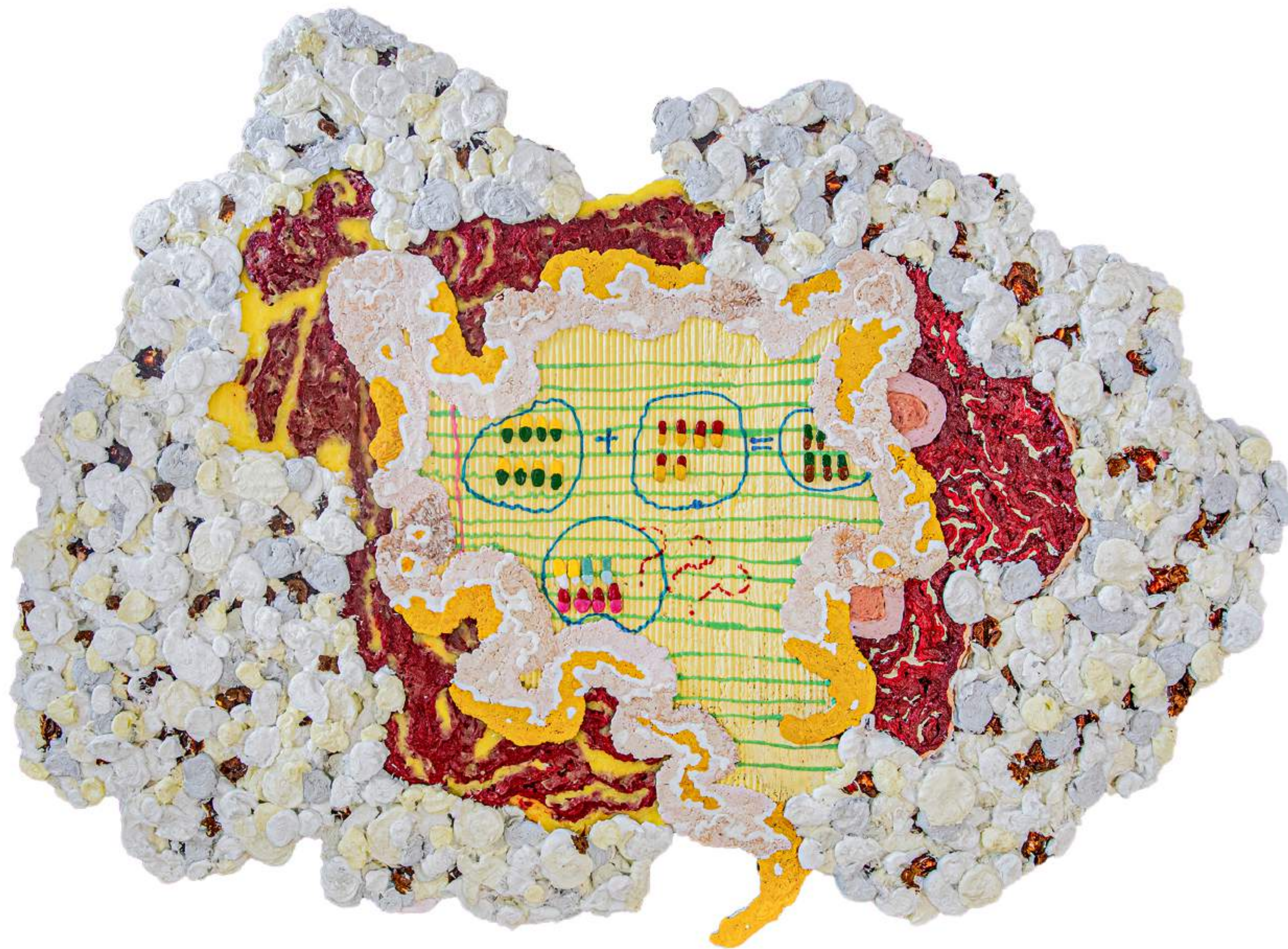
Silicone infused with pigments  
240 x 130 cm



**Troy Makaza**

*Dreams of a Soft Landing part 5, 2023*

Silicone infused with pigments  
160 x 116 x 4 cm



**Troy Makaza**  
*Please see me !!!, 2023*

Silicone infused with pigments  
180 x 125 x 3 cm



**Troy Makaza**  
*Incomplete Metamorphosis of a Pill, 2023*

Silicone infused with pigments  
170 x 95 x 8 cm





**Troy Makaza**

*Used by the user, 2023*

Silicone infused with pigments  
144 x 112 cm



**Troy Makaza**  
*The Pleasure of the Precipice part 6, 2023*

Silicone infused with pigments  
130 x 75 x 5 cm



**Troy Makaza**  
*The Pleasure of the Precipice part 5, 2023*

Silicone infused with pigments  
120 x 80 cm



**Troy Makaza**  
*A 'Sacred Song' in Violence Part 1, 2022*

Silicone infused with pigment  
146 x 75 cm

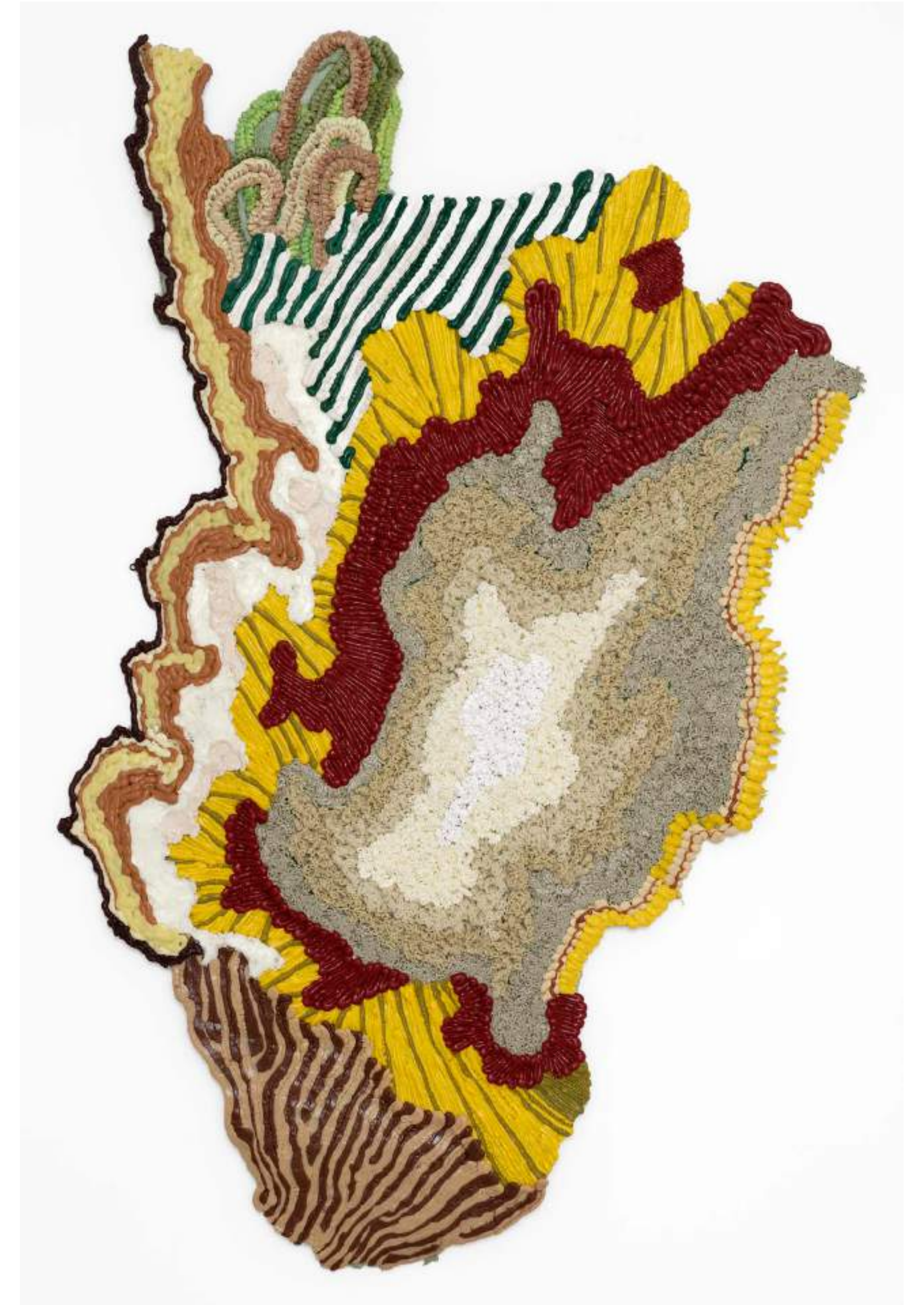
**Troy Makaza**  
*A 'Sacred Song' in Violence Part 2, 2022*

Silicone infused with pigment  
118 x 64 cm



**Troy Makaza**  
*Scales of Magnificence, 2022*

Silicone infused with pigment  
176 x 115 x 3 cm





**Troy Makaza**  
*Nhimbe, 2022*

Silicone infused with pigments  
115 x 100 x 3 cm



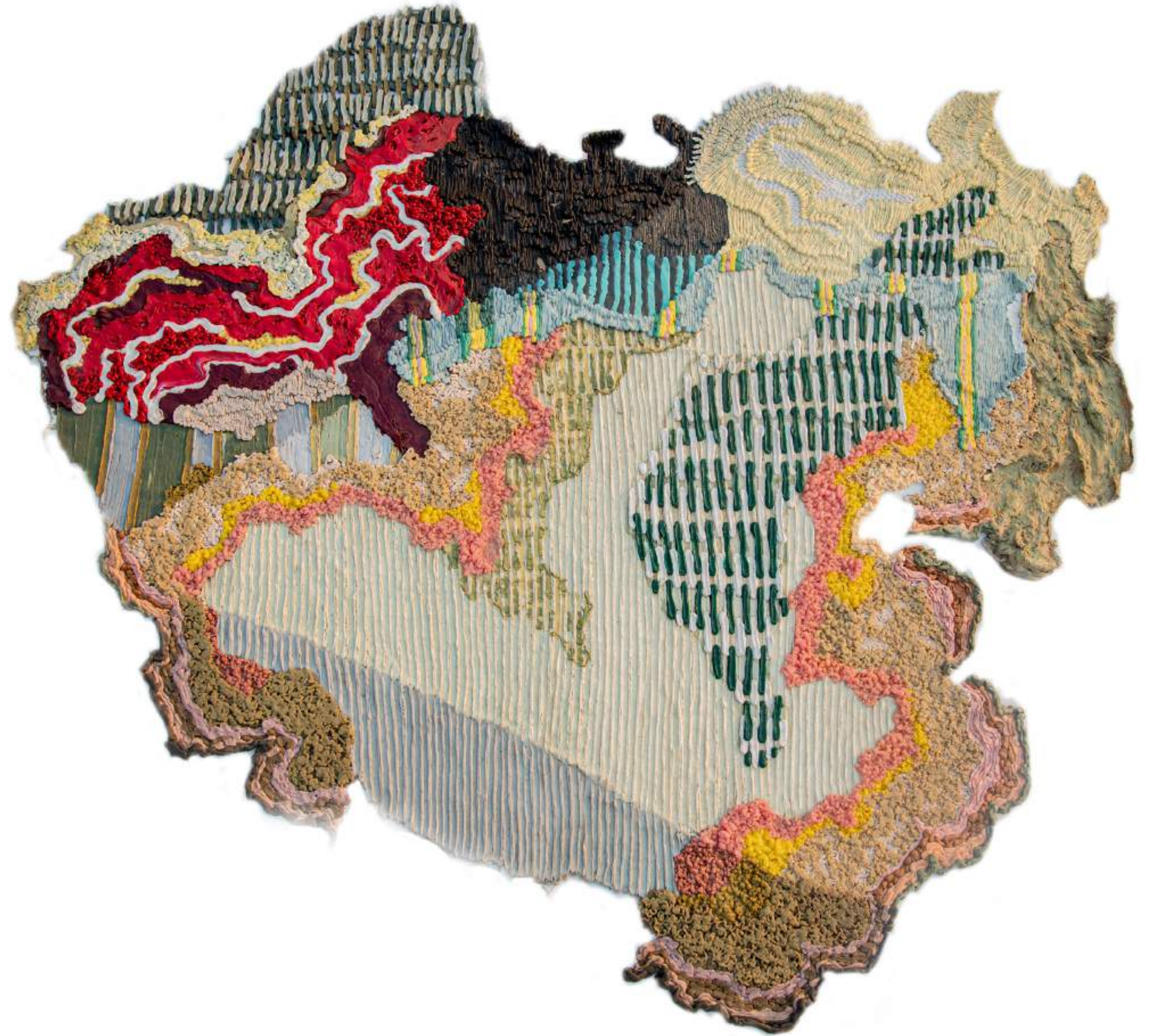
**Troy Makaza**  
*Big Man Syndrome Part 1, 2021*

Silicone infused with pigments  
230 x 150 x 4 cm



**Troy Makaza**  
*Big Man Syndrome Part 2, 2021*

Silicone infused with pigments  
140 x 164 cm



**Troy Makaza**

*Myths of Zambesia, 2021*

Silicone infused with pigments

248 × 230 × 4 cm





**Troy Makaza**  
*Land of Milk and Honey, 2021*

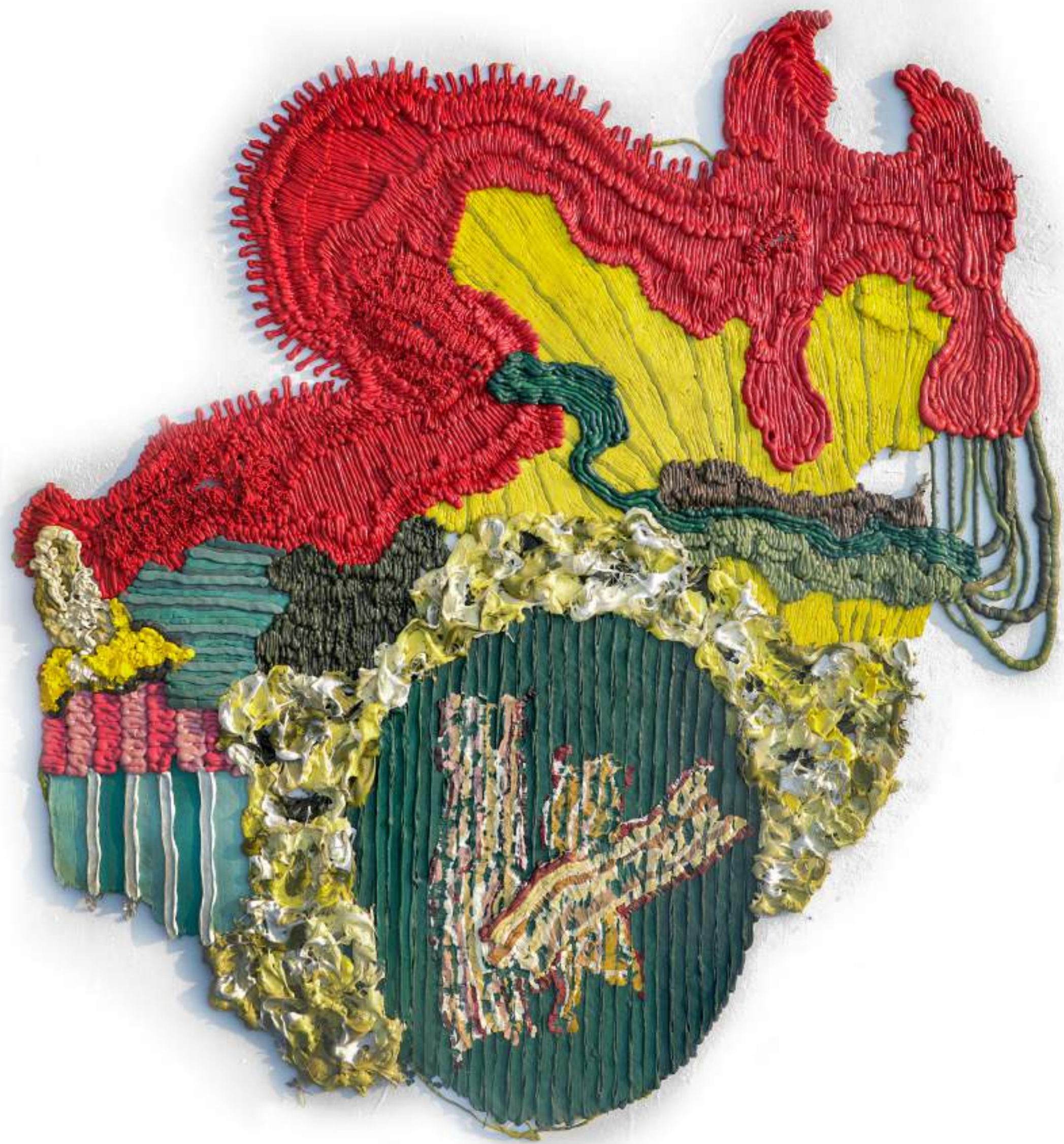
Silicone infused with pigments  
165 × 102 × 3 cm



**Troy Makaza**

*Legacy and Poetry, 2021*

Silicone infused with pigments  
160 x 110 x 3 cm



**Troy Makaza**

*Opaque Mirror for an Aspiring Emperor, 2021*

Silicone infused with pigments  
132 x 120 x 3 cm



**Troy Makaza**

*Permutations of what is obvious, 2021*

Silicone infused with pigments  
185 x 92 x 3 cm



**Troy Makaza**

*Player Country Played, 2021*

Silicone infused with pigments  
200 x 115 x 4 cm



**Troy Makaza**

*Steak for Dessert Part 1, 2021*

Silicone infused with pigments  
168 x 145 x 4 cm

## **CONTACT**

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