

# Gaa

**NI HIVI HIVI DUNIANI**

**MALAIKA TEMBA**

MARCH 11 - MAY 24, 2025

GAA COLOGNE

Gaa is pleased to present *Ni Hivi Hivi Duniani*, a solo exhibition of new works by Tanzanian-American artist Malaika Temba. In this narrative-based body of jacquard woven textiles, Temba incorporates paint, stencils, and embroidery to accentuate specific cultural and historical traditions, as well as the emotional responses these practices elicit across geographies and generations. *Ni Hivi Hivi Duniani* represents Temba's first solo exhibition with Gaa, and her inaugural solo presentation in Germany.

Raised from youth through adolescence across Saudi Arabia, Uganda, South Africa, Morocco, and the United States, Temba utilizes a global, contemporary lens to address long-established archetypes and tropes. Temba presents these images in textile – a medium once reliant upon the human hand, now intertwined with technology, industry, and innovation – juxtaposing analog and digital methods of making.

Photographs from her travels to Tanzania serve as her source material and place distinct emphasis on the individuals – mostly women – directly involved in the production, harvest, dissemination, and consumption of quotidian goods. Bags of coal appear piled in stacks, ready to be loaded and distributed to their destination, generating power for industrial and domestic purposes. Matriarchs sit atop overturned buckets hand-preparing farm-fresh meat to add to the stew already simmering above the fire. Through direct and indirect references to the human body – fingers, hands, arms, and legs – Temba intentionally prioritizes the physical labor involved in these processes.

Placing particular emphasis on the undeniable contributions of women within this structured existence, Temba depicts women not only in moments of work, but also taking moments of rest. Temba's sensitivity to women's labor is aptly reflected in the medium of textile – the softness of the fibers evocative of the tenderness exhibited by women in the traditional roles of comforter, nurturer, and protector. Simultaneously, Temba utilizes materiality to predicate her subtle critique of gendered and feminized concepts of softness and sweetness as they relate to textiles, domesticity, and physical labor. Through their scale, position, and prominence, these works function as monuments to those obligations of emotional labor, and also as a record of vulnerability, an outlet for humor, and the evidence of bliss.

The inclusion of words and phrases – both in English and in Swahili – alludes to the language of advertising, infusing wit, puns, and colloquial phrases into these compositions. Repeating motifs, such as cowry shells, shop window vignettes, and market scenes directly reference the vibrant designs of traditional African Kanga fabric. A visual narrative utilizing repetition of text and pattern to convey particular meanings and messages reinforces the theoretical concepts so integral to Temba's practice. Phrases such as "tastes like salt" may overtly refer to ubiquitous condiments found in a corner store, but more subtly allude to the salty sarcasm so often associated with outspoken women. The pervasive "please" as a form of polite request shifts, forming instead the emotional "pleas" of those who experience the demand most deeply. Through this use of visual and verbal language, Temba reaffirms the ways in which craft and textiles can be galvanized as a means of expression by those so intimately connected to its origins and its legacy. Recognition of this rich artistic history is served.

**Malaika Temba** (b. 1996, Washington, D.C., USA) is a Tanzanian-American artist who works with analog and digital weaving techniques to create works that insist on the presence of the human hand. Using layered and collaged imagery and symbols from contemporary media and found images from Tanzania, Temba examines the cultural, historical, and geopolitical contexts she experienced growing up across Saudi Arabia, Uganda, South Africa, Morocco, and the United States. For Temba, making art is a process for understanding the world and distilling history, culture, emotion, and experience into a singular view.

Temba's work has been featured in solo exhibitions at Gaa, Cologne, Germany; Lilia Ben Sallah, Paris, France; Naomi Fassil Gallery, New York, NY; and Mindy Solomon Gallery, Miami, FL, among others. Recent group exhibitions have been held at Fridman Gallery, New York, NY; Mindy Solomon Gallery, Los Angeles, CA; Albertz Benda, Los Angeles, CA; Gaa, New York, NY; SITUATIONS, New York, NY; Lilia Ben Salah, Paris, France; and The Yard, New York, NY, among others. In 2018, Temba received a BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design and has since been awarded residencies at Textile Arts Center, Brooklyn, NY; Silver Art Projects, World Trade Center, New York, NY; the Studios at Mass MoCA, North Adams, MA; the Bandung Residency at MoCADA; A4 Arts Alliance, New York, NY; and the Fountainhead Residency, Miami, FL, among others.