
Cover Artwork

Title: Metaphors of Maternity

Digital Design, printed on Canvas, 2m x 1.5m

Artist: Muthoni Kimani

Among the Bamana the life cycle is passed on from grandmother to grandchild. As life is said to ebb away from the aging mother, so it is said to move into the daughter's children as a form of the aging mother's reincarnation in her daughter's children. When the aging mother designs and decorates the *bogolanfini*, she imbues it with her own fertility through embedding fertility symbols, so that when the daughter wraps herself in the *bogolanfini*, she is wrapped in the "nyama" of her mother, ensuring her own fertility.

This design is one in a series entitled "Crossing Boundaries" (of ethnicity and colonial borders), which sought to capture the "nyama" of all the mothers of Africa, so that when all the daughters of Africa and beyond wrap themselves in the African cloth, they become imbued with the fertility of their ancestors, ensuring the continuity of society. Consequently, the design comes in a multiplicity of ethnic and regional colours that enable identification with the (otherwise West African) Bamana people's cloth.

Muthoni Kimani is a Kenyan graphic designer, digital textile artist, painter and gender activist in the cultural field. Kimani currently works as a project manager and lecturer for AMAC, a community arts college that works to promote gender equity through art in schools and colleges. She has studied at the AGI and the Michaelis Fine Art School at UCT, written various articles (the *Africancolours* series) on contemporary African art practice. She has worked in Cape Town for the District Six Museum and the Multi-purpose Learning Centre of the Robben Island Museum, where she has also worked as a digital textile designer. She is currently writing her PhD in gender and policy development in community art practice. Her current interests lie in the feminine imagery of African women's arts, specifically textiles, body art and pottery and their contemporaneity in the new digital age. Email: muthoni53@yahoo.co.uk.