



TAKUNDA REGIS BILLIAT

VACUUM OF EXCESS

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Takunda Regis Billiat

The Vacuum of Excess

Excess is a key defining feature of contemporary globalized life. We are saturated with ideas, information, images, temptations, compulsions. Even a generation ago, life was more structured, fathomable, capable of completion and comprehension. There were guides – religion, tradition, education, reliable across generations. Where are they now? In contemporary Zimbabwe, none of these former pillars of certainty are able to provide the answers and solutions desperately craved. And yet in the absence of alternatives, people keep clamouring to them for help and guidance in a catch-22, which leaves them with less, while hoping for more. These are the pain points for Takunda Regis Billiat in *The Vacuum of Excess*, his first solo exhibition. Distress at the situation in which the country finds itself permeates the works in the show. The question of how did we get here and where do we find the answers towards a better future hovers like a ghost yielding images of wrong paths taken, chasing wrong dreams.

Moving from sculpture to installation to painting, Billiat draws insightful and sometimes surprising links between traditional media and tradition of working with different media. Fibreglass becomes a base for applying soil and pigment in a very traditional way in *From Dust to Dust*, while book simulacra are composed into necklaces worn by traditional healers in *Chained but Broken*; found objects meet history of conceptual art with a toilet bowl expelling books in *The Vacuum of Excess*, the title work.

Placing value in tradition and history is part of what makes us human. We need to see the before and hope for an after, in order to give our lives meaning. But in today's world the tools we have relied on for guidance have been failing us. It takes courage to admit this and to look for new answers, to fill the vacuum amid the excesses of contemporary lives.

Valerie Kabov
Curator
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Takunda Regis Billiat

Born 1990, Harare, Zimbabwe
Lives and works in Harare, Zimbabwe

Having graduated in 2014 from National Gallery of Zimbabwe Visual Art Studio, specialising in painting, Billiat has begun working in three dimensions as a result of his artistic research into the role of religious and spiritual traditions in contemporary Zimbabwe. While retaining the formal elements of painting such as compositions and colour Billiat breaks out of the frame to grapple viscerally and tangibly with Christianity and the Bible as a social construct, ringing the alarm bell on the rise of charismatic churches in Zimbabwe, with their prophets exploiting the ignorance of the people of their own religion's true content.



The Future of Our Ancestors, 2016,
Fiberglass, beads, cardboard, leather-bond
320cm x 95cm



From dust to dust Part 2, 2016,
Beads, soil, cardboard, leather-bond
58cm x 43cm



From dust to dust Part 1, 2016,
Fiberglass, soil, cardboard, leather-bond
149cm x 40cm



Chained but broken Part 1, 2016,
Beads, soil, cardboard, leather-bond
120cm x 60cm



Chained but broken Part 2, 2016,
Beads, soil, cardboard, leather-bond
126cm x 68cm



Chained but broken Part 3, 2016,
Beads, soil, cardboard, leather-bond
130cm x 68cm



Fragment of Unimagination Part 1 & 2, 2016
Beads, soil, cardboard
38cm x 20cm each



Apocalypse Now, 2016
Paint, ink and collage on cardboard
112cm x 255cm



The Vacuum of Excess, 2016,
Toilet bowl, charcoal, fiberglass, soil, cardboard, leather-bond
Size varies

Artist Statement:**Takunda Regis Billiat**

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The Vacuum of Excess

When I look at Zimbabwe today I see us a people, who are divided – divided in our quest for material wealth, a quest to have more, a quest to stand out – a quest which lives us more alone and poorer in every way.

In my work I look at the conflict between the things we look to for solutions and which we value but which in turn create divisions between people, who were in the past united by love and shared understanding of the world.

The proverb Wonde kutsvuka kunze mukati rizere masvosve, is important to me. It teaches us that not all that glitters is gold. Shiny leatherbound books may look appealing and may make us look down on our traditions, which are bound with the soil and dirt, but if we look inside and reflect deeply on what we need as culture and as a people, our future depends on us being in touch with our past and respecting who we really are, rather than chasing all that looks modern, progressive and modern.

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