

GEORGINA MAXIM

BUTTON

Georgina Maxim (b. 1980, Zimbabwe) is an artist and curator based in Harare, Zimbabwe. Co-founder of Village Unhu, an artist-run space fostering emerging and professional artists, Maxim combines over a decade of curatorial and arts management experience with a distinctive artistic practice. Her work focuses on textiles, utilizing embroidery, sewing, and weaving to deconstruct and recompose second-hand clothing, creating unique pieces that act as vessels of memory and storytelling. Maxim's art transcends simple categorization, reflecting lived experiences embedded in recycled garments.

She has exhibited widely, including at the National Gallery of Zimbabwe, Delta Gallery (Harare), 31 PROJECT (Paris), Mojo Gallery (Dubai), and the Goethe Institute (Brazil). Notably, she represented Zimbabwe at the 58th Venice Biennale in 2019. Maxim holds a master's degree from the University of Bayreuth, enhancing her curatorial practice. Her recent exhibitions include the Bargoin Museum (France, 2020), FRAC Nouvelle-Aquitaine (France, 2021), MuCAT (Ivory Coast, 2022), Somerset House (UK, 2022), HKW Berlin (Germany, 2023), and the 2024 group show *Unravel: The Power and Politics of Textiles in Art* at Barbican Centre (London) and Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam).

I have enjoyed exchanging buttons from one garment to another, being mindful of the varying button holes: one button may not necessarily fit on the next. Sometimes it appears as a performance to search carefully with intention for buttons whilst other times it is a pure occurrence of buttons. My memory of buttons takes me to a haberdashery shop that was always open even on a Sunday. I had lost a button on my uniform and thought replacing the button with anything from a safety pin, to permanently sewing the button hole shut, would satisfy wearing the uniform without anyone noticing the anomaly.

However, the owner of the shop, was kind enough to cut a small piece of my uniform and using his button coating machine, he gave me a brand new button. But was it? The uniform was old and the button coated inside was one of those reject buttons that cannot be sold in pairs or fours. It was at those precise years that I gave up on matching buttons or matching thread and wool to the colour of the garment being repaired. Was the point of repairing not enough, did it need to always match the cloth and the thread? The clothing never really lost its form or function, it's a mere repair job and not a cosmetic inquest. These are the very statements that continue to shape my work.

A button in this context reflects a number of common notions including memory, time, history, archives, transmission and identity. There are hidden sensitivities of buttons, because I believe that it is not only about putting two sides of a garment together but there is more to refer to from the act and the aesthetics of the buttons themselves: of course without forgetting the issues of memory and the search of that one person in every garment that I collect, cut and sew again.

Button is a combination of personal clothes collected form over the years and including those borrowed and never to be returned. The works are created out of the textiles and thread; using a combination of crotchet and sewing stitch titled *dhunge mutunge* - a quick and haphazard sewing stitch that is strong and holds two sides together, just like how a button is supposed to. This type of stitch can only be done by hand.

Text by Georgina Maxim
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