



Abbey Muza

Portfolio
2024



L: *The collarbones, the jaw*; R: *The freckles, the knuckles*, 2024
exhibition image, Murmur
Fondation des Etats-Unis, Paris

Réciter le corps de l'autre, 2023
wool and cotton handwoven jacquard, linen, acrylic
51.5 x 37 inches

I am a spider's web of nerves exactly resembling the drawings of the anatomy texts. You say m/y beloved that you can see right through m/e ... I am touched in m/y brachial nerves m/y circumflexes m/y ulnars m/y radials m/y terminal branches. –Monique Wittig, Le Corps Lesbien

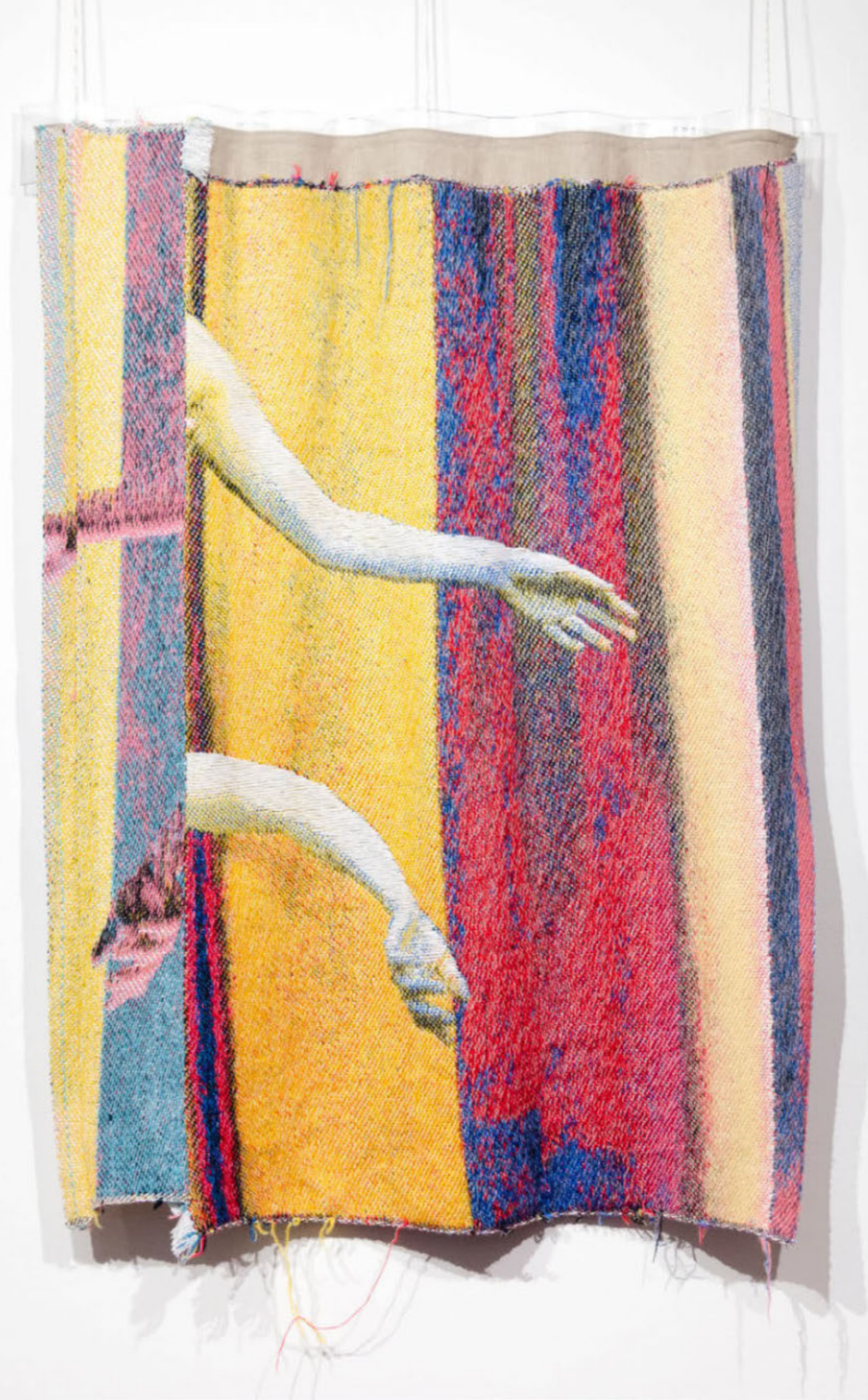
Abbey Muza's weavings and intimately scaled text drawings are both rigorously researched inquiries into queer archives and language, as well as deft and intricate compositions where material, image, and concept shift and collapse together. In Muza's woven textiles, which hang like curtains drawn across unseen thresholds, fragmented images of the artist's body insert themselves and interrupt the structure of the weave. Pointillist in essence, relying on density of color to give shape to image and pattern, these weavings exist in a state of permanent tension, examining what it means to order and assemble parts (i.e., thread into thread into thread) which are subsumed, instantly, into the larger whole (the woven surface). As Muza builds with thread, they also dismantle a sense of order and a hierarchy of looking, disrupting expectations of legibility in favor of an expansive visual language, unfolding through abstraction.

As a touchstone and companion to Muza's work, the experimental novel "Le Corps Lesbien" (1973) by French feminist theorist Monique Wittig, demonstrates a fragmented and nonlinear approach to language which Muza cites both directly and in essence, through their own work. Wittig's text hovers between form: a lyrical address to a lover; a manifesto of body and pleasure; an undoing of masculine language, fracturing and reimaging written subjecthood. There is a deliberate incoherence throughout the text that explores language's ability to break apart and transform ideological structures, embracing fluidity and a sense of productive disorder.

The pink flowers of the heather are visible in the spaces between your bones and all around you. I see the sun shining between your ribs. The sky of an intense blue is also visible in certain intervals of their arrangement.

The narrator of Wittig's text paints scenes of queer bodies and their desires, in terms both tender and violent. Their lover's body is dismantled, strewn apart, reassembled. The text speaks to the body's insides, its bones and arteries, tendons and cavities, laid bare, unspooling like thread. It hovers between form, embracing the pleasures of queerness, ungovernable bodies, treating language as with a similar freedom—and forceful insistence on reimaging how it might operate on and for us; and it is here in which we might, similarly, locate Muza's practice. Their attention to language, archive, and history of craft, merges with an abiding belief in haptic, sensual exploration of both material and content. Words are explored like soft and tangible matter. This materiality of language—letters woven together like threads—in conversation with Muza's woven textiles, builds a complex view of bodies and words, aligned with each other as forever coming into being; mutable and expansive, and intensely real.

text by Elizabeth Lalley, curator and director, Slow Dance, Chicago

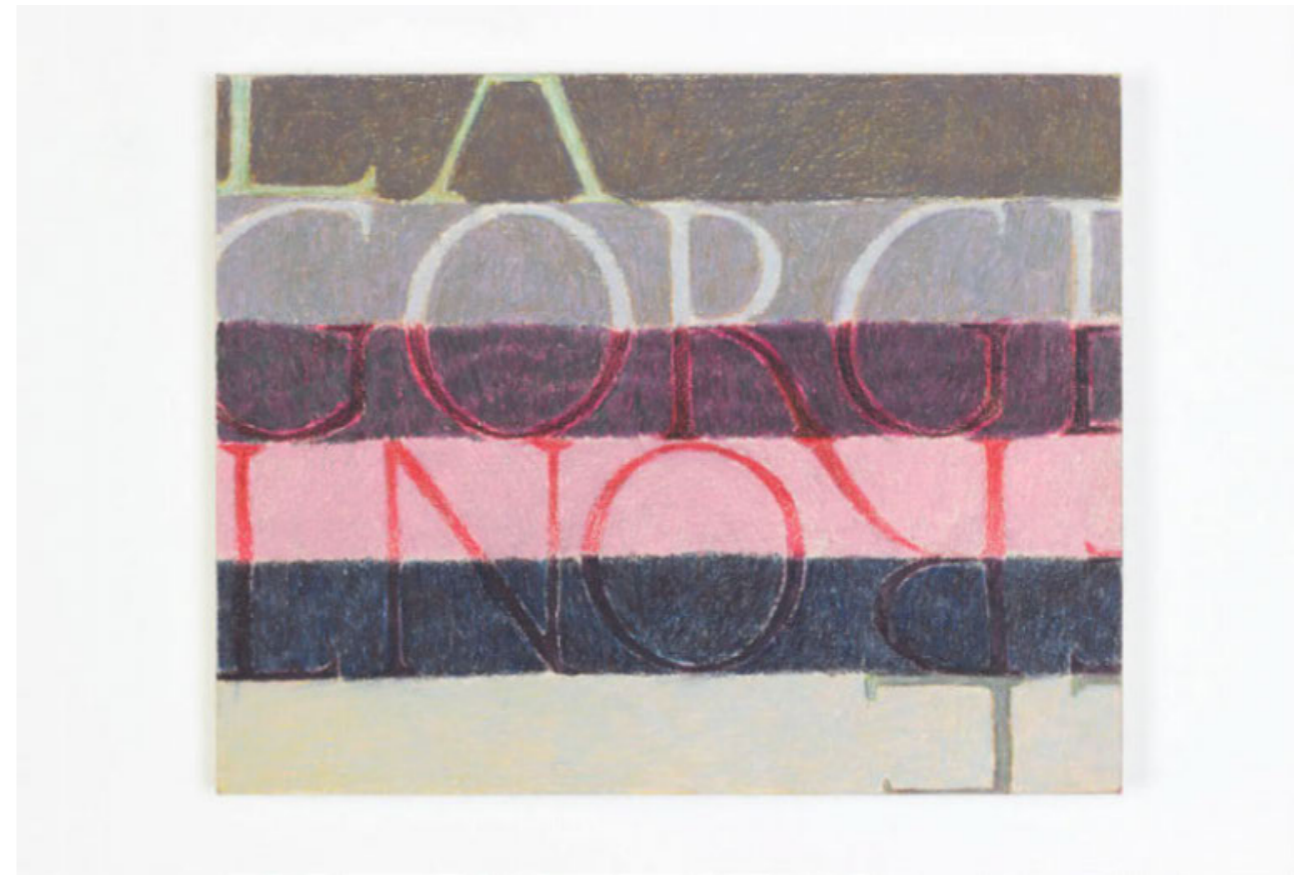




Réciter son corps, 2023
exhibition image
Slow Dance, Chicago



Two minds [doublecherry], 2023
wool and cotton handwoven jacquard, organza, gesso on panel
20 x 15.75 inches



La gorge le front, 2023
colored pencil on paper on panel
8 x 10 inches



Le sang les globules, 2023
colored pencil on paper on panel
8 x 10 inches



The fluid the fluxes the foam, 2023
colored pencil on paper on panel
11 x 14 inches



Silver aftertime, 2023
silk, dye, organza, ink
25 x 18 inches

Passive Potential is a two person exhibition of textile-based work by Abbey Muza and Maria Szakats at Tusk in Chicago, Illinois. In this show, the artists bring together two series of woven, knotted, and embroidered textiles. In *Passive Potential*, the two question what it means for a textile to act as an "object," considering its relationship to production, function, image, space and form. Influenced by Kathrin Busch's essay "P - Passivität," Muza and Szakats gave in to this approach : a collaborative work born out of what seems like inaction, passivity, or pure receptivity, which enabled inspiration. The method does not condemn inactivity, but, as a passion or inspiration, animates all activity and is also the expression of a radical sensibility that makes it impossible for the subject to remain untouched. Inspiration means that something alien enters one's own self: "otherness-in-the-self."

Reflecting Heidegger's term of Thrownness ("Geworfenheit"), Muza and Szakats accept the arbitrariness of "being thrown into the process." Woven works by Muza are hung from armatures, mimicking the forms textiles take in space - a cloth draped from a hook, a towel bunched over a drying rack, a curtain, the way clothes fall over limbs and on the body. Images of light flares cover the textile's surfaces, brief flickers of time recorded by the camera and reprinted and distorted into the assembled textiles. Knotted and embroidered pieces by Szakats function between painting and textile - their brushed mohair surfaces depicting seemingly random and ghost-like images of space satellite images, fauna, and flora, blurred and superficially in motion from the movement of the fibers across their threaded surfaces.

Passive Potential, 2023
exhibition image
Tusk, Chicago, Illinois



Downrushing, 2023
dye, silk, organza, cotton
36 x 33 inches



Cloth, dripping, 2023
silk, dye, organza, ink
36 x 33 inches



Flare/egg/eye, 2023
silk, dye, organza, ink
16.5 x 25 inches



Passive Potential, 2023
exhibition image
Tusk, Chicago, Illinois



Fragments presents an ongoing search marked by simultaneous encounter and isolation, as Muza charts a sequence of nodes between 1920s queer Paris and now. Compelled by inclination and desire, they map their own experience onto the historical through the recuperation and representation of archival material. If the archive qua history intends to locate, place, and position, then Muza acknowledges this fragmented perspective as an inherent abstraction. Weaving offers a structural framework for cohering what seem to be apparent dislocations—in fact, time and space compound as a subtle yet consistent mechanism in the unfolding of their work. Muza pulls freely from their own archive in the same gesture as they draw from the historical milieu, particularly from the artist and writer Claude Cahun. In so doing, they reify and relay that lineage in their own work and to the present moment. In collating these fragments, the limits and extensions of identification are rendered as images held in tension to parts of a whole.

“Nothing is sacrosanct,”
the Vitrine descends,
time unspools (a spool of golden
thread)
threads the eye (an inverting lens)
a needlepoint aperture
hand into matter
concatenations
wound into capture

text and poem by Ren Mahon, artist

Réciter son corps, 2023
viscose, wool, and cotton handwoven jacquard, linen, acrylic
55.5 x 31.5 inches



Fragments, 2023
exhibition image
Fondation des Etats-Unis, Paris



Rupture, 2023
wool, silk and cotton handwoven jacquard, linen, acrylic
51.5 x 30.5 inches

The lover of the androgyne, 2023
wool, silk cotton, linen, acrylic
51.5 x 30.5 inches

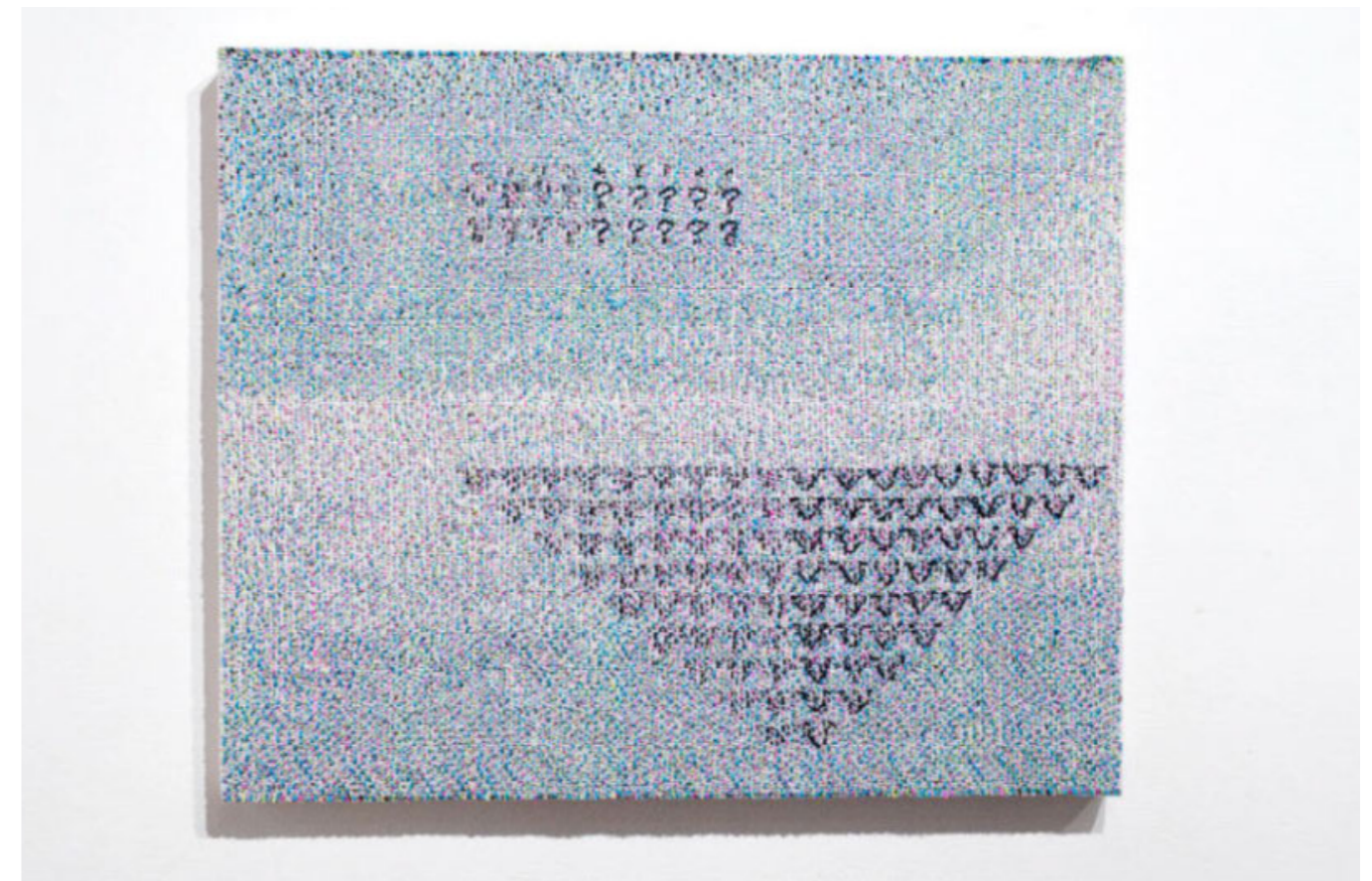
In transparent dress, 2023
dye, silk, organza, cotton
17.75 x 14.5 inches



Ô *Fragments*, 2023
silk, cotton,, organza, gesso on panel
20 x 23.5 inches



Fragments, 2023
details
Fondation des Etats-Unis, Paris



Forme triangulaire, 2023
silk, cotton, organza, gesso on panel
20 x 23.5 inches



A blush, a flush, a fever, a command, 2022
exhibition image
Temple Contemporary, Philadelphia

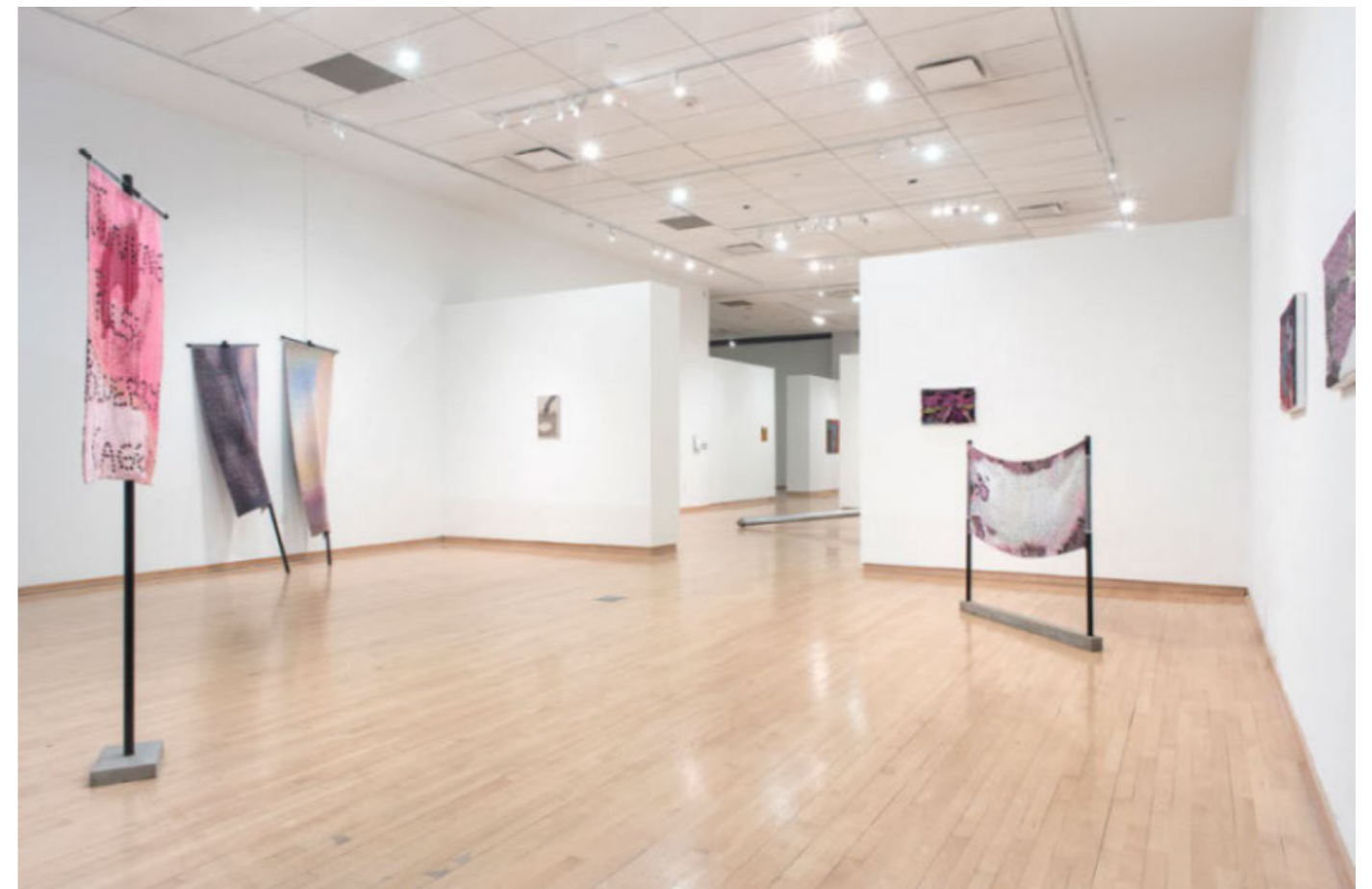


Continuously, 2022
silk, cotton, dye, organza, gesso on panel
14.75 x 26.75 inches

Muza's textiles field a dance of image and word, articulating a sensual, multilayered relationship between the poetic, the visual, and the tactile. Inspired by the lives of early 20th century queer artists and the writing of French authors and philosophers, such as Georges Bataille and his *Visions of Excess*, Muza is interested in finding beauty among the uncomfortable, the grotesque, and the unexpected. In their textiles, images that are barely discernible at first glance seem to come into sharper focus the longer the viewer sits with the work. With sensuous and dreamlike wefts of pink, burgundy, purple, celeste, and hazy off-white, the works give rare moments of clarity to visceral, almost indescribable vignettes: fleeting images of play violence among animals, a glass of wine carefully and dutifully refilled, the feeling of falling in love. Muza's approach to weaving highlights and heightens the dimensionality of the textile. It is a medium that in other circumstances, the artist recognizes, could easily lend itself to "safer" modes of viewing and interpretation – hung on a wall like a painting, a flat surface where the topography of overlapping brush strokes strain all too often against the limitations of canvases and frames. But that is not the case here. Though Muza begins the creation of each new object with a rough idea in mind, the initial step in their process is the digital encoding of an abstract pattern of black and white pixels, which oftentimes bears scant resemblance to the final work born from the Jacquard loom. The artist allows for the machine to select certain threads to be elevated during the course of the weaving process, altering the image. Abstract digital information turns into something analog, tangible, legible – but never quite in the same way twice.

Muza embraces these small moments of uncertainty and then frees the object from the wall itself, using the textiles from their loom almost as a scaffolding for more nuanced theorizations – borne out in their practice – on the capability of image, text, and weave to mutually support each other. To this end, one textile encoded with the image of a small, yappy dog also includes an excerpt from an interview with the Belgian fashion designer Martin Margiela in the magazine *View on Colour*, in which he muses on the evocative byproducts of the creative process: "What is red? A blush, a flush, a fever, a command... What is texture? A result of time."

text by Li Machado, art historian



A blush, a flush, a fever, a command, 2022
exhibition images
Temple Contemporary, Philadelphia



L: *Divine and Darling*; R: *Inversions devient Urania*, 2022
silk, wool, cotton, organza, enamel, wood
L: 67 x 26 inches; R: 82 x 26 inches

