

Ronald Muchatuta

- KaLife aka

March 17 — April 29, 2023

Almine Rech is pleased to present new collage works by South Africa-based Zimbabwean artist Ronald Muchatuta. The latest works comprise large collages with many figures suspended in motion. Using the primary medium of illustration, his signature, Muchatuta creates beings suspended in action as an existential crisis and, simultaneously, a constitutive practice.

Muchatuta's context and inspiration, always the contemporary issues facing the people of Southern Africa (migration, identity, marginalisation and the post-colony) are not apparent this time in this reflection on exile, faith, and the precarity of life. There seems to be a disconnect in the narratives this body of work presents, but it is a true reflection of what art critic Valeria Geselev called 'multiple Ronalds'[1] - created when he had just finished a big project (59th Venice Biennale, Zimbabwean Pavilion 2022) , this presentation is a tribute to his roots and marks a new path depicting his ever-expanding exploration of the ungraspable narratives that make up the world; and the different worlds many migrants have to live in and negotiate. Working across various mediums, focusing on illustration, and using figurative power to explore erasure, memory, identity, leaving and displacement, Muchatuta presents intoxicatingly hypnotic work that is reflexive and palpably exuberant in a wholly unique way. The polysemic nature of the artworks offers a grammar of experience to negotiate from the margins through the process of making and being brave enough to transform narratives. With figures suspended in animation (like the childlike feet in Mary Jane and stockings taken mid-swing), this work reflects the limbo and the violence that uncertainty and dissatisfaction bring when there appears to be no resolution. Ink and charcoal work has been a recurrent style in Muchatuta's work, reflecting on life, memory, and history and how the colour or absence of it has been an agent in his making and unmaking to consider where he fits in the spectrum between having a particular identity and belonging. It is here, though, that one notices that the subject of his work is perhaps no longer a subject for rumination, for Muchatuta coalesces the history of Southern Africa with the realisation that our history follows us everywhere, and we always find that which we know is familiar in even the strangest places. Just as his inspiration is his particular context and whilst still tinged with the sense of alienation, frustration, and nostalgia, these new works derive from his encounters with various cultures and reference his Shona heritage. They aim to present his worldview through which the viewers can determine where they stand with him, and he has now been imbued with new energy and realisation that our choices change how we see the world. The work presents a significant fragmentation in its rejection of a homogenised world psychologically fraught with hesitancy. Created when he had just finished a big project, this presentation is a tribute to his roots and marks a new path depicting his ever-expanding exploration of the ungraspable narratives that make up the world.

— Fadzai Muchemwa, Curator for Contemporary Art, National Gallery of Zimbabwe

[1] From Barnabas Muvhuti's *Ronald Muchatuta: Tackling African Migration – A Contentious Social Issue* in Ronald Muchatuta at the Stellenbosch Triennale.