

FONDAZIONE MEMMO

Like Flowers We Fade

Portia Zvavahera

curated by Alessio Antonioli

Fondazione Memmo

via della Fontanella di Borghese 56/B, Rome

Press preview: Wednesday 29 April | 11.00 a.m–1.00 pm

Opening: Wednesday 29 April | 6.00–8.00 pm

29 April – 1 November 2026

Fondazione Memmo inaugurates *Like Flowers We Fade* Portia Zvavahera's first institutional exhibition in Italy, **curated by Alessio Antonioli**, running from **Wednesday, April 29, to Sunday, November 1, 2026**.

For this occasion, Zvavahera presents a site-specific installation conceived especially for the Foundation's spaces, together with a new body of paintings developed following a period of residency in Rome. The project marks a significant phase in the artist's recent research, in which autobiographical experience intertwines with a broader reflection on memory, loss, and transcendence.

Zvavahera's work gives form to emotions emerging from realms and dimensions beyond the domains of everyday life and thought. Her vibrant, visionary imagery is rooted in the fundamental conditions of earthly existence - life and death, love and loss - translating intimate experiences into layered pictorial environments. These visions take shape through surfaces built by accumulation, combining expressive brushwork, intense layers of colour, and complex printmaking techniques to generate dense and pulsating visual fields.

For her first solo exhibition in Rome, the artist focuses on an intimate and meditative theme: the passing of her grandmother, an experience that continues to resurface in her dreams, alongside reflections on heaven and the way its imagined presence guides life on earth, interweaving with the joys and anxieties of everyday experience. Within this framework, dreams, with their symbolic and emotional stratifications, remain a fundamental generative matrix. Technically, this vision translates into a free and experimental practice that integrates drawing, gestural painting, and printing. Through vibrant chromatic layering, Zvavahera overlays complex patterns and figures in a calibrated interplay of transparency and opacity, using hand-cut stencils and repeated motifs to generate a rhythmic tension that lends depth, density, and movement to the pictorial surface.

Deeply rooted in Shona culture and language - a Bantu language spoken primarily in Zimbabwe by approximately 80% of the population, and the sphere in which the artist thinks, dreams, and defines her identity - her practice merges religious iconography with psychological inquiry, transforming the artwork into a space of revelation. Here the dream assumes the role of a privileged channel of

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communication with the divine and an almost prophetic guide: visions, omens, and memories are internalised and reworked until they become painterly matter. The creative process is therefore intrinsically processual and cathartic, aimed at transferring the intensity of inner experience onto the surface. The resulting works are populated by spectral figures caught in states of ecstasy, metamorphosis, or emotional tension, in a language that dissolves the boundaries between the tangible and the spiritual.

PRESS CONTACTS

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PUBLIC INFORMATION

Exhibition: *Like Flowers We Fade*, Portia Zvavahera

Curator: Alessio Antonioli

Location: Fondazione Memmo, Via Fontanella Borghese 56/b, 00186 Rome

Open to the public: April 29 - November 1, 2026

Hours: Monday to Sunday, 11:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. (Closed Tuesdays)

Free admission

Info: Benedetta Rivelli: +39 06 68136598

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ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Portia Zvavahera is born 1985 in Harare, Zimbabwe, where she lives and works. She graduated from Harare Polytechnic, Zimbabwe in 2006. Her painting practice is characterised by layered surfaces and ornamental patterning, explores the emotional and spiritual dimensions of the human condition.

Recent solo exhibitions include: *Portia Zvavahera: Hidden Battles/Hondo dzakavanzika*, Institute of Contemporary Arts, Boston; *Portia Zvavahera: Zvibereko zvemweya wangu*, David Zwirner, Los Angeles; and *Portia Zvavahera*, at Fridericianum, Kassel, all in 2025. *Open Space # 15. Portia Zvavahera: Imba yerumbidzo (house of praise)*, Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris; *Portia Zvavahera: Zvakazarurwa*, Kettle's Yard, University of Cambridge, touring to Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh, all in 2024. *Portia Zvavahera: Pane rima rakakomba*, at Stevenson, Cape Town, 2021; *Portia Zvavahera: Ndakaoneswa murima*, David Zwirner, New York, 2020; *Portia Zvavahera: Ndakavata pasi ndikamutswa nekuti anonditsigira*, David Zwirner, London 2020; *Portia Zvavahera: Ndichasvika rinhi ndionekwe*, Stevenson, Cape Town, 2020; *Portia Zvavahera: Walk of Life*, Institute of Contemporary Art Indian Ocean (ICAIO), Port Louis, Mauritius, 2020. In 2013 she was invited to present her work in the Zimbabwe Pavilion at the 55th Venice Biennale with *Dudziro: Interrogating the Visions of Religious Beliefs*; her work has been also included in the 59th International Art Exhibition of Venice Biennale (2022).

Zvavahera's work is held in major international collections including Johannesburg Art Gallery; Minneapolis Institute of Art; National Gallery of Zimbabwe, Harare; Pérez Art Museum Miami; Tate, United Kingdom; University of Chicago Booth School of Business; Weisman Art Museum, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis; and Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa, Cape Town.

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Fondazione Memmo was founded in 1990, with the aim of realizing Roberto Memmo's desire to establish cultural activities that could bring the wider public closer to the art world, by giving them a direct knowledge of some of the greatest masterpieces created through the ages by the most varied cultures and civilizations.

Since 2012, Fondazione Memmo has broadened its views with a new exhibition programme entirely dedicated to the contemporary art scene. The objectives of Fondazione Memmo include contributing towards developing

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cultural initiatives in Rome and the surrounding area, establishing dialogues, connections and collaborations with international and local institutions, and encouraging interactions between artists and the city of Rome. This new phase began with a solo exhibition by Sara VanDerBeek (2012), followed by shows featuring Sterling Ruby (2013), Shannon Ebner (2014), and Camille Henrot (2016), all curated by Cloé Perrone. In 2017, the foundation presented a solo exhibition by Giuseppe Gabellone, curated by Francesco Stocchi, who later also curated exhibitions for German artist Kerstin Brätsch and the duo KAYA, as well as solo exhibitions by Latifa Echakhch (2019), Oscar Murillo (2021), and Amalia Pica (2022). In 2023, Sin Wai Kin's solo exhibition was held, followed in 2024 by Wynnie Mynerva's first solo exhibition in an Italian institution, and in 2025 by Anthea Hamilton's solo exhibition, all curated by Alessio Antonioli. In 2015, Fondazione Memmo presented the group exhibition *Conversation Piece*, curated by Marcello Smarrelli. Over the years, eleven additional editions have followed, organized annually with the aim of mapping the artistic presence in Rome, particularly by engaging artists hosted by the city's academies and foreign cultural institutions. In 2019, Fondazione Memmo launched a residency program in London, in collaboration with Gasworks, dedicated to Italian artists, thus continuing the process of discussion, exchange, and connection between artists and institutions from diverse backgrounds. The artists involved so far are Diego Marcon (2020), Adelaide Cioni (2022), Francis Offman (2023), Alice Visentin (2024), Alessandro Di Pietro (2025), and Raffaella Naldi Rossano (2026).