



Description of Cover Art

Cover Image Caption: Zohra Opoku. 2024. *My Head Shall Not Be Taken From Me. You Shall Raise Me Up. You Shall Make Me New. You Shall Rejuvenate Me*. Courtesy of Zohra Opoku and Mariane Ibrahim, <https://marianeibrahim.com/>.

Aigner Autry¹

Zohra Opoku's *My Head Shall Not Be Taken From Me. You Shall Raise Me Up. You Shall Make Me New. You Shall Rejuvenate Me* (2024) is a powerful multimedia work of art rendered through photographic layering, screen printing, embroidery, and X-ray imagery on vintage mixed-cotton fabrics to examine themes of preservation, identity, and renewal. This piece draws on literature from Ancient  *kmt*: Kemet (Egypt), The Papyrus of Sobekmose (fashioned by Sobek) of *The Book of Coming Forth by Day* or *The Book of Obtaining Righteousness*, specifically Chapter XLIII, which seeks to protect the deceased from metaphorical decapitation and affirm regeneration and renewal in the afterlife.

At the center of the composition is a fragmented face from Kemetic antiquity, displayed in cool, muted blue tones. This monumental and ethereal image suggests a sense of layered memory and transcendent identity, enhanced by X-ray imagery that adds a spectral quality. The overall coolness of the work creates a sacred, meditative atmosphere where color serves as a guide to spiritual resonance. In this context, the negative inversion technique is more than a visual device; it symbolizes a reversal. From an Africological perspective, this idea of reversal aligns with the intellectual project of centering African subjectivity, along with the Ghanaian principle of Sankofa—the quest of looking back to one's history to inform the present and future.

Interwoven throughout the piece are symbols, symbolism,  *mdw ntr*: Medew Neter (words of the divine, hieroglyphs), and floral motifs reminiscent of papyrus, depicted in contrasting yellow and red tones in a collage-like construction. Opoku's practice transforms photography into silkscreen compositions that incorporate sutures and hand stitching. These components symbolically piece together her personal and cultural narratives, illustrating the process of reclaiming identity through creative practice. By visually reversing the image and layering ancient Kemetic iconography with contemporary media, Opoku invites viewers to look toward ancestral sources to affirm a sense of agency. This layered approach, using historical references and artistic techniques, explores the complexities of self-determination and the intellectual and spiritual triumph of centering one's cultural identity within their historical narrative, introducing a transformative journey of self-discovery.

References

Opoku, Zohra. 2024. *My Head Shall Not Be Taken From Me. You Shall Raise Me Up. You Shall Make Me New. You Shall Rejuvenate Me*. Paris: Mariane Ibrahim Gallery.

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