



View of "War Inna Babylon: The Community's Struggle for Truths and Rights," 2021. Photo: Tim Whitby/Getty.

*Law and Black Youth*, 1978—the ensemble testified that the condition of racialism imposed on the Black British subject has been omnitemporal. It will always be too soon to celebrate; rather, we should commemorate and honor.

In order to access the institute's upper gallery, one first had to bypass two large, figurative, almost allegorical works by Kimathi Donkor—*Under Fire: The Shooting of Cherry Groce* and *Madonna Metropolitan: The Death of Cynthia Jarrett* both 2005—which depict separate incidents commonly remembered as the catalysts for the 1985 Brixton and Broadwater Farm riots, respectively. One then passed by Garnet Dore's "Broken Lives," 2016, a series of charcoal portraits on paper depicting people killed in police custody. At the top of the stairs was a curtained-off, darkened room in which five original video tributes by relatives of Tottenham locals killed at police hands—including Duggan's mother—played in immediate succession. A small sign asked visitors to respect those in mourning. One struggled to fathom the cumulative weight of so much grief.

Across the corridor, the walls of which were clad with even more archival material, was the room presenting Forensic Architecture's work. Though the report falters slightly in that it critiques the failings of the judicial system on that system's own terms—as if proof of Duggan's innocence is reason alone for why he should not have been killed—it identifies in detail the sinisterism and corruption of Britain as Babylon.

—Olamiju Fajemisin

## OXFORD, UK

### Samson Kambalu

MODERN ART OXFORD

The colonial government of the early-twentieth-century British protectorate of Nyasaland (today's Republic of Malawi) exerted control over the bodies of Black citizens in ways that were both brutal and mundane—Africans who did not remove their hats or shoes in the presence of a European, for example, were subject to punishment. The Reverend John Chilembwe took particular issue with such policing of clothing and gestures, and in 1915 he led an uprising against plantation owners. Samson Kambalu's exhibition "New Liberia" smartly laid bare the absurdity—and the utter seriousness—of such rules and their enforcement. Recalling Chilembwe's plea for a "second Liberia," an African nation created according to ideals of self-governance, the exhibition mixed Conceptual art, liberation politics, and Southeastern African masquerade to explore the concept of "social freedom."

At the center of one gallery, viewers could stand at either of two podiums. There, they were implicitly invited to reenact the legal proceeding wherein the etiquette of hat wearing in Malawi was formally

addressed, following Chilembwe's uprising. Titled *Nyasaland Rising Commission of Inquiry*, the "live multi-media installation" was dated 1915 and presented an open book containing a real courtroom transcript, which could be used as a script. As if participating in a work of absurdist theater, the viewer as court witness testified to the introduction of hats by Europeans to Africa, the conditions of their sale to everyday Malawians, and their necessity as a function of one's skin color or severity of hair loss.

Surrounding this installation were ten short projected films from the series "Nyau Cinema," 2012–, named after the secret society of the Chewa people of present-day Malawi, which show Kambalu performing simple "liberatory" actions in public spaces. Each under a minute in duration, the films raise questions surrounding individual autonomy, the hypervisibility of the artist's body, the social rules that dictate our movements through space, and the ease with which others can be misperceived. In *Don*, 2014, for instance, the artist exits an arched facade and slowly approaches the camera. Other pedestrians appear in the frame but seem to be walking backward; they occasionally collide with Kambalu, who politely waves or smiles. The footage is, in fact, reversed. The world *around* the artist is rendered strange, even though it is *his* movement against the current that is, in reality, the cause of momentary social discord.

At the exhibition's entrance, Kambalu installed two large-scale sculptures—*Drawing Elephant I* and *II*, both 2021—portraying the titular animals on a monumental scale. Fabricated from Oxford University regalia, they evoked in both their materials and their construction the costumes worn by Nyau masqueraders (of the secret society of the Chewa people) as well as the "initiation rites" of academia. In contrast to the liberated movements of Nyau dancers and to the ritualized pomp of academic ceremony, the installation alludes further to the patrolling of individual movement on a more global scale: This gallery contained an array of colorful flags and banners whose shapes refer to geographic borders and national insignia, thus attesting to restrictions imposed by citizenship and international law.

"New Liberia" also featured Kambalu's *Sanguinetti Theses*, 2015, first shown at the Fifty-Sixth Venice Biennale, wherein the artist attempted to detourn the archive of the Situationist International by rephotographing its contents. He was sued by Situationist writer Gianfranco Sanguinetti for the unauthorized reproduction of SI ephemera and protest art and found himself on trial for copyright infringement. In the filmed court proceeding, Kambalu testifies on the spirit of collective authorship associated with Situationism, and that footage



Samson Kambalu, *Don*, 2014, digital video, black-and-white, silent, 52 seconds.

mirrors the allusions to judicial process found elsewhere in the exhibition. This multifaceted set of works addressed nuanced varieties of “freedom”—and the ways in which it is too often withheld—by way of law and politics, but also by the comportment and activities of everyday life.

—Allison Young

## NICE, FRANCE

### “She-Bam Pow Pop Wizz! The Amazons of Pop”

MUSÉE D'ART MODERNE ET D'ART CONTEMPORAIN

In 1961, the contraceptive pill went into free circulation in the UK. Shortly thereafter, in the mid-1960s, the miniskirt appeared. As the story goes, the sexual revolution of the '60s was instrumental in liberating women from the shackles of a society that for too long had kept them confined to a purely domestic sphere of family life. Women's newfound powers were translated onto the pages of comic strips through the appearance of heroines such as Barbarella or Jodelle. Though these svelte bombshells were dreamed up by male authors, their sensuality and sexuality went in tandem with superhuman powers and a commitment to justice and peace. This vision of woman, brought to life by Brigitte Bardot in the music video for “Comic Strip,” her 1967 duet/collaboration with Serge Gainsbourg, that opened and set the tone for “She-Bam Pow Pop Wizz! The Amazons of Pop.” The exhibition, marking the thirtieth anniversary of Nice's Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain (MAMAC), set out to undertake an urgent reappraisal of American and European Pop art from around 1961 to 1974 through the still-to-be-acknowledged contributions made to it by women artists. In so doing, it proposed an expanded notion of the genre, not tethered by style or aesthetics but rather comprising a polyphony of voices, as an antidote to the still-dominant machismo of culture and society at large.



Dorothy Iannone, *The Next Great Moment in History Is Ours*, 1970, silk screen on paper, 28 3/4 × 40 1/8".

But if woman as sex object still dominated the male psyche, the more than forty artists included in the exhibition strove to reclaim autonomy over the representation of their bodies without denying themselves the pleasure of their own sexuality. By filming herself making love with her partner James Tenney for *Fuses*, 1964–67, Carolee Schneemann sought to render a female experience of sexual pleasure nonconformant with male-oriented fantasies, while Natalia LL's *Consumer Art*, 1972, a sequence of photographs showing her

provocatively eating a banana, tackled a tired sexual euphemism through gleeful parody.

Evelyne Axell's pseudo-self-portrait *Axell-ération*, 1965, depicted a pair of stockinged feet in patent red stilettos pressing down the pedals of an automobile: As the painting's title coyly suggests, the feet in question belong to an active subject, master of her own self-representation. A year earlier, her husband, Belgian filmmaker Jean Antoine, made the documentary *Dieu est-il Pop?* (Is God Pop?), in which he asked James Rosenquist, Allen Jones, and others what role they accord a woman in their paintings. To Jones, a woman's body was just a form; and the fragmentation that Axell enacts is nothing if not a riposte to such an attitude, defined by a male gaze that relies on tactics of framing and dehumanization. In a similar vein, Kiki Kogelnik's *Miss Universe*, 1963, painted the year that Soviet cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova became the first woman to travel into space, was a female silhouette floating in a Technicolor cosmos, her outline literally bypassing the limits of the canvas.

While the effervescence of Pop might speak of a postwar optimism dominated by speed, consumerism, and reconstruction, the exhibition's curators, Hélène Guenin and Géraldine Gourbe, equally foregrounded the clear-sightedness with which artists addressed the less palatable political realities of this new world: Take the atomic bomb explosion cutting through a bourgeois couple's dining room in Lucia Marcucci's collage *Crea un'atmosfera* (Creates an Atmosphere), 1965; the intrusion of a public sphere dominated by war, colonialism, and conquest into the domestic arena in Martha Rosler's *Cosmic Kitchen II* from the series “House Beautiful: The Colonies,” 1966–72; or Ulrike Ottinger's nine-part 1967 screen-print sequence *Journée d'un GI*, which recounts with black humor a day in the life of an American soldier. Yet for all their tenacity, argues Gourbe in her catalogue essay, many would be ignored by mainstream feminist critique because their “sexy” feminism was at odds with the analytically driven Marxist aesthetic that would become prevalent from the mid-1970s onward. In this light, Dorothy Iannone's exuberant Kama Sutra-esque screen print of a lone figure with her fist raised, *The Next Great Moment in History Is Ours*, 1970, struck an unequivocally bittersweet note.

—Anya Harrison

## MILAN

### Nairy Baghramian

GALLERIA D'ARTE MODERNA | FONDAZIONE FURLA

The luxurious Neoclassical Villa Reale in Milan, which is home to the Galleria d'Arte Moderna (GAM), boasts the oldest English garden in the city. It is open to adults only if they're accompanying children under twelve, which makes the GAM, whose art collection focuses on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, something of a tease: On the ground floor, its nearly floor-to-ceiling windows open onto a terrace that beckons you to a lush and secluded garden with a pond, wooden bridges, and a small playground, essentially inaccessible to most visitors. The duality of playfulness and frustration engendered by this setting informed Iranian-born German artist Nairy Baghramian's first institutional show in Italy. Titled “Misfits,” the exhibition took over five ground-floor rooms and worked its way outside onto the terrace, pairing each large-scale indoor sculpture with a seemingly even larger-scale outdoor counterpart. At the entrance to the exhibition, a large photograph, *Jumbled Alphabet* (all works 2021), presented the defiant face of a blonde child, whose frown, together with her messy hair, oversized sweater, and fuchsia face paint, pointed to her rebellious and determined nature—contrary to the traditional image of docile and orderly children.