

KATE MACGARRY

Samson Kambalu

Beni

11 June – 17 July 2021

I'm a cosmopolitan. I believe in people, I'm not too sure about countries. I think there should be a thousand countries every day. I like the idea that every moment is a country of its own.

Samson Kambalu, *Art Monthly*, 2020

Samson Kambalu's second exhibition at Kate MacGarry presents recent flag and photography series, accompanied by three new films exploring national and sovereign identities. The title of the exhibition *Beni*, is based on a Southern African syncretic dance of the same name developed by African soldiers fighting for the British around the turn of the twentieth century. *Beni* means 'band'. The dance is part parody of colonial style military discipline and industry.

The *Flag Factory* (2019-2020) is an installation of prints and sewn flags drawn from Kambalu's childhood memory of collecting bubblegum cards of the flags of the world. The *Beni Flag* series (2020) consists of individual cotton and silk flags hung from bamboo and accompanied by black and white photographs mounted on board. The flags' graphic appearance is manipulated and dissected using smart phone technology to create images that adopt the 'look' of geometric Western abstract painting. Their vibrant colours and bold patterning resonate with African Kuba cloth.

The cardboard cut-out figures are photographs of African soldiers sourced from the Weston Library in Oxford. Kambalu uses cardboard to reference their expendable status by colonial powers in combat.

Kambalu's often irreverent fusion of social, national and artistic tropes are intentionally mischievous and provocative. His aim is to skew our reading of cultural behaviour and customs and to seek out the areas where humanity meets.

Samson Kambalu was born in 1975 in Malawi. He lives and works in Oxford where he is a lifelong fellow at Oxford University. Kambalu is shortlisted for the next two Fourth Plinth Commissions in 2022 and 2024. The maquette of his proposed work is on display at The National Gallery, London, May - July 2021. Kambalu's largest solo exhibition, *New Liberia*, is at Modern Art Oxford, May – September 2021. *Samson Kambalu: Black Jack* is an outdoor presentation of remixed flags on Mandela Walk, Southbank Centre, London until September 2021. An exhibition of Kambalu's work, *Permanent Strike*, will be presented at Culturgest, Portugal, 2021. Kambalu is participating in *The Athens Biennale 2021*.

Kambalu's work was included in *All the World's Futures* curated by Okwui Enwezor, 56th Venice Biennale, Venice, 2015. More recent solo exhibitions include *Postcards from the Last Century*, PEER, London, 2020; *Nyau Western: American Psychogeographicals, Statements*, Art Basel, 2017; *Nyau Cinema*, NSU Art Museum, Fort Lauderdale, USA, 2016-17; *Introduction to Nyau Cinema*, Whitechapel Gallery, London, 2016, *Capsules, Mountains and Forts*, Kate MacGarry, London, 2016. Group exhibitions include *History without a Past: Samson Kambalu & Vincent Meessen*, Mu.ZEE, Oostende, Belgium, 2020. His first book, an autobiographical narrative entitled, *The Jive Talker or How to Get a British Passport*, was published in 2008.