

KATE MACGARRY

Samson Kambalu *Flag Factory*

10 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's second exhibition at Kate MacGarry presents recent flag and photography series exploring national and sovereign identities. Kambalu's often irreverent fusion of social, national and artistic tropes and identities is 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.

Kambalu grounds his multi-media practice in Nyau culture – a secret society of the Chewa tribe, Malawi, which is especially known for its ritual mask performances. Kambalu's 'Nyau Cinema' is characterised by spontaneity, playfulness and a non-linear approach to time.

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 resonated 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. Conversely he references Malawian respect for the leftover or the thing that falls away.

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 currently shortlisted for the Fourth Plinth Commission. The maquette of his proposed work will be exhibited at The National Gallery, London, June 2021. Forthcoming projects include Kambalu's largest solo exhibition, *New Liberia*, is at Modern Art Oxford, May – September 2021. An exhibition of Kambalu's work, *Permanent Strike*, will be presented at Culturgest, Portugal in 2021. He 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.