

JACK KABANGU

Smiler Gennem Smerten

(Smiling Through The Pain)

PREVIEW: THURSDAY 18 APRIL (6-8PM)

EXHIBITION: 19 APRIL - 1 JUNE 2024

BEERS London is very pleased to announce the debut solo exhibition of Zambian-born, Copenhagen-based Jack Kabangu opening 18 April 2024. Kabangu has had a meteoric rise in the past couple years, and we are really excited to present his first UK-based exhibition - *Smiling Through The Pain* - (*Smiler gennem smerten*), the first of two major solo exhibitions we will present to London audiences in the 2024 calendar year.

At its core, the exhibition deals with primal, instinctual emotive concepts much in the same way Kabangu's work deals with paint in primal, instinctual methods. The young artist is interested in the balance of life; core philosophical ideas about how one is only capable of experiencing goodness in contrast with badness. There is of course the immediate connection to the artist-as-tortured-genius, where the process in the studio is one of struggles and rewards.

"Some of the hardest things in life are also the most rewarding," he states. "My mission is to find a balance between the ugly and the beautiful, the light and the dark. To create an energy that speaks to me. When I have captured this energy, the work is finished."

The sentiment seems to echo many great thinkers, including Nietzsche, who's existentialist views on life and creativity address such paradoxes. "How can those who live in the light of the day possibly comprehend the depths of the night?" Nietzsche famously wrote in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, about the prophet whose message was about mankind's goal to create something superior to one's human being.

And there is a similar kind of prophetic immediacy and message found in Kabangu's work. He has, indeed, created a sort of codex or series of repeated images and motifs: hovering, disembodied, face-like forms - demarcated with broad and frenetic mark-making and bright colours - which seem based as much in the African tribal masks of his youth (Kabangu moved to Copenhagen at the age of nine), as they appear to subvert the derogatory 'Jim Crow' caricature of the 19th century, or the latter era Golliwog stereotypes. But there's a spirituality lurking behind these bold colours, wild brushstrokes, and chemical reactions occurring on Kabangu's surface.



All this seems to suggest a bright and enlivened exterior that belies - or, perhaps directly suggests - a darkness underneath. Kabangu approaches these cryptograms and figures with an urgency that is at times lyrical, musical, fluid, or even aggressive - that is disarming and compelling for viewers.

But there is something enigmatic - despite their immediacy - in what Kabangu chooses to reveal or conceal. And from this technique is a brazenly confident repositioning of Kabangu's (now trademark) reductive form - these nondescript orange eyes, these purple lips - as he owns the responsibility to remove these referents from a prejudicial and pejorative historicity into a newly empowered arena, where a young black man can create a new, metaphoric, exciting, colourful mode of relaying the burdens of the past and the promise of a new future with a wry and empathetic sensibility, as well as the deft skill and confidence of a new young master.

We can't wait to bring this powerful new body of work to our collectors and followers.

“I work without rules. I physicalize memories, dreams, music, etc... My mission is to find a balance between the ugly and the beautiful, the light and the dark. To create an energy that speaks to me. When I have captured this energy, I feel that the work is finished. But a work is never until it has found its final surroundings.”

JACK KABANGU (b. 1996, Zambia, Africa) lives and works in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Solo exhibitions include: *Being In Love With My Work Is A Gift, But At The Same Time Also A Curse*, Jupiter Arms, Miami, USA (2024), *Tilgiv Mig Mine Synder*, Galleri Christoffer Egelund, Copenhagen, Denmark (2023); *The Cabin LA*, Los Angeles, USA (2023); *The Anzai Gallery*, Tokyo, Japan (2023); *My Beautiful Ugly Home*, Galleri Christoffer Egelund, Copenhagen, Denmark (2022); *borgerkrigen (The Civil War)*, OTI, Hong Kong (2022) and *Aston Martin Copenhagen*, Copenhagen, Denmark (2021).

Group exhibitions: *Family & Friends*, BEERS London, London (2023); Galleri Christoffer Egelund, Copenhagen, Denmark (2022) and Maddox Gallery, London, UK (2022).

Fairs include: *Herning Art Fair* with Galerie Moderne Silkeborg, Herning, Denmark (2024); *Untitled Miami Beach* with Makasiini Contemporary (2023); *CAN Art Fair* with Anna Zorina Gallery, Ibiza, Spain (2023); *Herning Art Fair* with Galerie Moderne Silkeborg, Herning, Denmark (2023) and *Art Fair Tokyo* with The Anzai Gallery, Tokyo, Japan (2023).