

# JACK KABANGU

## Smiler Gennem Smerten

### (Smiling Through The Pain)

PREVIEW: THURSDAY 18 APRIL (6-8PM)

EXHIBITION: 19 APRIL - 1 JUNE 2024

B EERS London presents a 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 look forward to presenting his first UK-based exhibition, *Smiler Gennem Smerten*, (*Smiling Through The Pain*), the first of two-major solo exhibitions we will present to London audiences in the 2024 calendar year.

Kabangu's debut London exhibition deals with primal, instinctual emotive concepts similar to how Kabangu's works are visceral, instinctual, and physical responses to his media. 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; dark with light; heaven versus hell, et cetera.

The sentiment is one considered by a legion of great thinkers, including Nietzsche, who's existentialist views on life and creativity address the greatest of philosophical 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*. The book features a prophet relaying humankind's desire to create something superior to the limits of one's physicality.

The desire to break free from constraints seems appropriate when speaking of Kabangu. It recalls the artist-as-tortured-genius, where the process of creation 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."

Kabangu's work does seem to tap into a prophetic feeling of immediacy and, perhaps, feelings of rage and joy. "Smiling Through The Pain" suggests this polarity.

Here, Kabangu has created a sort of repeated narrative through his choice of imagery 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 19<sup>th</sup> Century, or the latter era Golliwog stereotypes that were perpetuated in popular visual media into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.



And for Kabangu to appropriate such imagery and thereafter imbue it with his own identity suggests a powerful reclamation of a previously problematic and pejorative territory. But in this process the young artist creates a new sort of codex or semiological series of signs and symbols. There is, undoubtedly, a spirituality lurking behind these bold colours, wild brushstrokes, and whatever chemical reactions occur on Kabangu's surface. The introduction of sand to these surfaces further suggests a darkness underneath - or, perhaps a desire to directly challenge viewers; they appear to ask us to reach into them to question their philosophical intent. Kabangu approaches these cryptograms and figures with an urgency that is at times lyrical, musical, fluid, or even aggressive.

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 visual history into a newly empowered arena, where a young black man can create new modes of representation with a wry and empathetic sensibility, as well as the deft skill and confidence of a young master.

We are thrilled to bring this powerful new body of work to our collectors and followers.

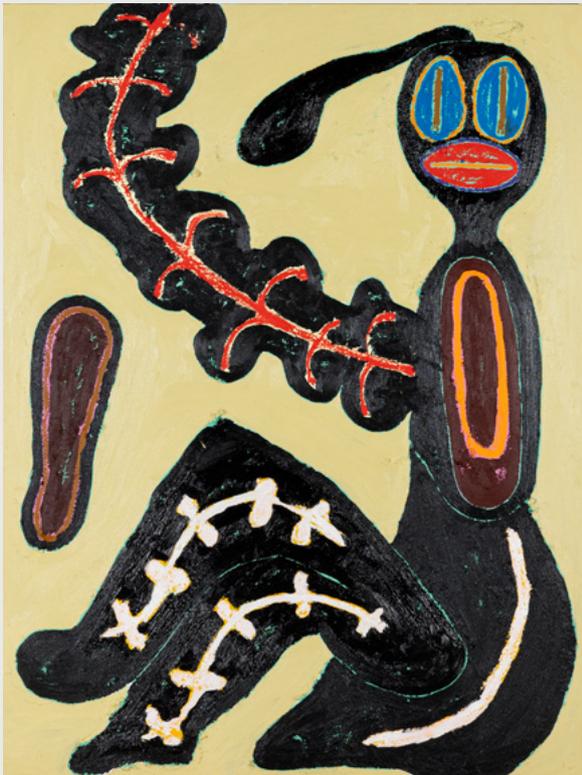
*“I work without rules. I physicalize memories, dreams, music, etc... My mission is to find a balance between the ugly and the beautiful, the light and the dark. To create an energy that speaks to me. When I have captured this energy, I feel that the work is finished. But a work is never until it has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



**Jeg Har Din Ryg (I Got Your Back) I & II (2024)**  
Oil, acrylic, oil sticks, sand, and paper on canvas  
200 x 300 cm (diptych) individually sized 200 x 150 cm