

JUPITER

Jack Kabangu: *being in love with my work is a gift, but at the same time also a curse*

Jupiter

February 18 – March 23, 2024

Opening reception: February 18, 6-8 PM

1217 71st Street, Miami Beach, FL 33141



Miami – January 25, 2024 – Jupiter is pleased to present a solo exhibition by Denmark-based Congolese artist **Jack Kabangu**, his first gallery exhibition in the United States. Featuring eleven new, never-before-seen paintings in the artist's signature style marked by bold shapes, vibrant colors, and energetic lines that hum a tense pull between figuration and abstraction, the exhibition, titled *being in love with my work is a gift, but at the same time also a curse*, meditates on the conflicted feelings—the ups and downs, challenges and rewards—that not only define the artist's practice but also his complicated relationship to home and nation.

Born in Zambia of Congolese origins to a family that had to flee their native country due to a series of civil wars that ravaged the Democratic Republic of the Congo between 1996, when he was born, and 2003, Kabangu's personal history mirrors that of gallery founder Gabriel Kilongo. The story they share of alienation, diaspora, and a search for home speaks to the core of Jupiter's founding ethos as a space that celebrates emerging international voices and cultivates community for diverse artistic practices and varied sociocultural perspectives.

In exploring his fraught relationship to the Congo in the exhibition, Kabangu reflects simultaneously on the good and bad, the ugly and beautiful, and the manifold feelings of both alienation and acceptance that they engender. Among these, the residual effects of Kabangu's family experiences of war are reflected in such works as *flyende boldene (flying balls)* (2023), *Cry* (2023), *black girl fly/fly black girl* (2023), *fokus (focus)* (2023), *melting face* (2023), and *shaking in the heat* (2023), which prominently feature seemingly terrified, wide-eyed faces that have come to take center stage in the artist's visual lexicon. Framed by richly colored backgrounds of neon pink, maroon, ocher, teal, and kelley green, the faces each exude a palpable liveliness that transports their frenetic energy off the canvas and into the space of the viewer.

The distinct expressiveness of the figures, despite their near total abstraction, is a product of Kabangu's swift, bold strokes made directly with his fingers—as well as spatulas, scrapers, and paint brushes—in acrylic and oil stick on textured canvases rather unconventionally amended with paper and sand. Leaving behind layers, drips, cracks, and coagulations of paint, his compositions that result resonate as both novel and ancient. This dichotomy comes as no surprise given his highly stylized practice that unites the modalities of gestural abstraction with certain hallmarks of his African heritage. He draws upon diverse sources of inspiration: from hip hop, high fashion, and colorful toys of the late 1990s to modernism, graffiti, New York's East Village of the 1980s, and artists such as Willem de Kooning and Asger Jorn. But instead of superficially appropriating the aesthetics of African and Oceanic Art like the very modernists whose work he references, Kabangu

JUPITER

employs the movement's expressiveness to instead manifest a vision of the world as seen from an African perspective.

being in love with my work is a gift, but at the same time also a curse is thus defined by seemingly unreconcilable feelings—for his homeland and artistic practice—that he nevertheless manages to hold in tandem with complexity and grace.

About the Artist

Jack Kabangu (b. 1996, Lusaka, Zambia) is a self-taught artist from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He has had solo exhibition at Galleri Christoffer Egelund, Copenhagen; *Over the Influence*, Hong Kong; *beers* London, London; *The Cabin* LA, Los Angeles; THE ANZAI GALLERY, Tokyo; *Aston Martin* Copenhagen, Copenhagen; and has been featured in group exhibitions at NBB GALLERY, Berlin; Galerie Moderne Silkeborg, Silkeborg, Denmark; and Maddox Gallery, London; amongst others. Kabangu currently lives and works in Copenhagen, where he has resided since 2005.

Caption: Jack Kabangu, *black girl fly/fly black girl*, 2023, Mixed media on canvas, 99.21 by 79.53 in. 252 by 202 cm. (JK016) © Jack Kabangu. Courtesy of the artist and Jupiter, Miami Beach, FL

Press Inquiries: info@jupitercontemporary.com