

SULGER-BUEL GALLERY

PRESS RELEASE

'CAMOUFLAGES' Steve Bandoma
17 September – 17 October 2020



Steve Bandoma 'Jeu Kizengi' 2018 Acrylic and ink on Canson paper 145x125x5 cm

Sulger-Buel Gallery cordially invites you to attend the opening reception of 'Camouflages' the latest solo exhibition by Steve Bandoma. The exhibition will open on Thursday 17 September 2020 at 18:30 and conclude on Saturday the 17 October 2020.

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About the Exhibition

Intrepid activism remains at the core of this vibrant series by Steve Bandoma. True to form, the contorted and disrupted human figures emblazoned with consumerist and hedonistic motifs prevail at the centre of his visual compositions.

The use of recognizable yet monstrous human form serves to imbue empathy on the striking socio-political issues addressed within his work Referring to the Democratic Republic of Congo as a “vaguely disguised war zone”, Bandoma seeks to depict the gust of underbelly terrorism further consolidated during electoral periods a timely subject given that 2020 will reveal itself to be a very trepidatious election year for many Sub Saharan African nations in the midst of a pandemic.

With distinctive brushstrokes, serendipitous splatters of paint mixed with ink dribbles, Bandoma’s poignant painterly gestures succinctly capture the anarchy and the instability he discusses regarding his home city of Kinshasa. All these elements combined with a mixed media approach on paper entirely underscore the artist’s omen of an existing self-destructive age. These efforts to project a largely significant narrative are complemented with Steve Bandoma’s intuitive use of colour texture and symbolism bright magentas, iconoclast logos and flesh-toned beastly caricatures with human limbs all form a monolith of beauty and chaos.

Steve Bandoma continues to meaningfully challenge the viewer through his ability to create emphasis on a dystopian future while capturing some historical perspective juxtaposing the past and the present.

About the Artist

Born 1981 in Kinshasa, D R C
Lives and works in Kinshasa, D R C

A graduate from the Academy of Fine Arts in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) Steve Bandoma is an artist and political activist who speaks truth to power through his hard-hitting works While his CV includes numerous exhibitions, prestigious awards, and residencies, he remains dedicated to furthering contemporary art in his home country. As an art student, he co-founded Librisme Synergie an avant-garde collective that challenged the conservatism of the Academy and Congolese art world After graduating in 2004 he moved to South Africa to continue his studies and build his artistic career. Through determination and hard work, his works drew attention and were featured in group and solo exhibitions in South Africa and internationally Returning to Kinshasa in 2011 he founded Quoi de Neuf a platform for promoting contemporary art in the DRC.

Bandoma’s art is at once a powerful mode of socio-political critique and a platform of conceptual exploration and formal innovation. Thematically his work addresses the intersections of global capitalism, consumer culture, identity politics and the scourge of neo-colonialism as it manifests in Africa by citing imperial and religious history, classicism and myth, he uses intertextuality to reveal the complex relationships between the past and present. The artist predominantly works in mixed media on paper. Working as a subversive bricoleur, his sculptural and installation works are similarly assemblages of found and recycled objects. The human form is central to Bandoma’s work. The body is, however, never intact and might be read as a symbol of society, consumerism, power

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or of the contemporary psyche. He conjures distorted figures or monstrous hybrids from confluences of limbs, organs and facial features that threaten to explode, or self-implode.

Some works read like puzzles, with archetypal images and religious or consumer icons acting as visual cues. In his satirical paintings, the powerful themselves fall victim to the plagues of violence they've unleashed. The visible brush strokes, ink dribbles, and paint splatters contribute to a sense of instability and underscore the artist's portent of our self-destructive world order. Other paintings overwhelm in their simplicity and striking combinations of the seemingly disparate spiritual and materialistic, contemporary, and traditional, beauty and horror. Even when they repel us, the tragic figures elicit pathos. While working from an African context, his work addresses universal themes and speaks to the human condition.

The significance of his contemporary artistic expression is recognised through his inclusion in such group exhibitions as 'Beauty Congo' at the Cartier Foundation in Paris, the 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fairs in London and New York and the travelling exhibition 'Kongo Across the Water'. His work was featured in 'Evora Africa' in Portugal and was most recently included in 'Kinshasa Megapolis' in Leipzig and the Lubumbashi Biennale, Kinshasa. Bandoma has had several solo exhibitions in the DRC and South Africa, in Europe, the USA and the United Kingdom. He's received scholarships from Pro Helvetica, Greatmore Studios and Design Indaba and held residencies at the Nirox Foundation in Johannesburg, the French Institute in Kinshasa and the International City of the Arts, Paris.

About Sulger-Buel Gallery

Sulger-Buel Gallery is an art gallery specializing in the contemporary art of Africa and its Diaspora. Founded in 2014 by Christian Sulger-Buel, the gallery provides a focus for those wanting to explore one of the fastest developing, ground-breaking and important areas in contemporary practices — Modern & Contemporary African Art. We do this while addressing a variety of artistic mediums including drawing, painting, sculpture and photography. Led by a diverse and international team of specialists, Sulger-Buel presents a dynamic exhibition program, produces innovative publications and offers consultancy services; visitors, curators and collectors alike can experience its cutting-edge shows at the London space a stone's throw away from the Tate Modern as well as at international art fairs across the globe.

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