

"Fables"

with

AMADOU SANOGO

PRIVATE VIEW: 23rd June, 6:30 - 9:00 PM

24th June – 23rd July 2016

Vivid colours, stark outlines and intriguing figures converge, greeting us with stories and fables from West Africa. These stories hover between reason and emotion, a maelstrom of internal conflict, a storybook still being written. Kristin Hjellegjerde gallery is pleased to present *Fables*, the first solo show in the UK of prominent Malian artist Amadou Sanogo. Born in 1977, in Ségou, Mali, Sanogo paints large, vivid and patterned works that sit somewhere on the frontier between colour-field and narrative styles.

As an exhibition, *Fables* takes us on a journey of self-discovery, exploring our eternal and universal struggle to come to terms with who we are. In his relentless investigation of what it really means to be human, Sanogo invites the viewer to examine the various complexities we struggle with on a daily basis, from issues of morality to our responsibilities, both within society and as individuals. What most of us are only dimly aware of, Sanogo argues, he holds in the centre of his attention, and illustrates using his own cultural terrain.

For Sanogo, art is at the service of mankind; like satire, it reflects society, and seeks to better help us understand ourselves. "Not all food should pass through the stomach, food that passes through the mind is as important," he says. "This is symbolised in my work by the importance of the head."

Each of Sanogo's 10 or so acrylic on fabric paintings is a variation on a single theme, revealing the many ways in which we slip out of touch with who we are, and how we relate to and consider the society we live in. His human-like forms, sometimes like robes without a body, sometimes skeletal, stretch out of human dimensions into incongruous postures; heads dislocate, and legs merge into arms in a fascinating riddle.

There is an element of tragicomedy in Sanogo's figures. His vivid colours are often joyful, while his contorted shapes are sometimes troubling – reflecting the juxtaposition of elements and contradictions we face on a daily basis. Within Sanogo's paintings, heads are nearly always disembodied, sometimes held in the hands. In one painting a torso holds its own head in one hand, flowers in the other, suggesting a choice between reason and emotion. In another, feet stomp on a head

disturbingly. His paintings reflect humanity in danger; they present the selfish, opportunistic search for power. Yet, if there is criticism in his painting, then it is of himself as much as anyone else.

Sanogo uses flat expanses of colour that bring to mind the colour-field paintings of the American post war period. They contrast strongly with his more serious themes, in some cases creating the effect of a surprisingly joyful backdrop. In others, soft and earthy pastels meet bright red, blue and black rectangles. In each, the choice of palette and subject express the artist's exploration of disharmony.

Sanogo works on fabric stretched out on the floor of his studio, only mounted on frames later on. He has always worked in this way, first out of necessity (due to a lack of space and money), then out of habit.

It is often said that the identifier of great art is that it resonates with all who witness it, regardless of their nation or background. Similarly, it is often the case that African art expresses and dwells on African culture, which can leave the door closed to those who do not know it. But Amadou Sanogo manages to detach from his own context. Though born of Mali, his artistic language reaches us all.

***Fables* runs from 24th June - 23rd July 2016 at Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, London.**

Information for journalists:

Amadou Sanogo:

Amadou Sanogo, born in Ségou, Mali in 1977, graduated from Bamako's esteemed Institut National des Arts in 2003. His academic study of fine arts paved the way for future analysis of the ethnic mores of his homeland in an aesthetically abstract and deconstructed manner. Sanogo paints on unstretched, repurposed cloth found at his local market, paying homage to his cultural roots and transposing them into both medium and subject matter. Sanogo is a mainstay at the 1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair in London and Paris' FIAC Officiel with Galerie Magnin-A, having shown there for three consecutive years (2013, 2014 and 2015). Recent exhibitions include *Chapelle des Dames Blanches*, La Rochelle, France (2015), *L'homme du présent* at the Institut français de Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso (2014) and *Le Reflet*, at the Institut français de Bamako (2013), while group shows include *Bi-Mali: le Mali Contemporain* at the Rotonde des arts contemporains, Galeri Nour Al Hayat, Abidjan (2015) and *We Face Forward: Art from West Africa Today* at the Manchester Art Gallery (2012). Drawing on his Malian upbringing, Sanogo delves into the tender and nuanced matters of global politics, journalism and the justice system. Sanogo currently lives and works in Bamako, Mali.

Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery

Kristin Hjellegjerde opened her gallery in south west London in June 2012 following her move from New York. Quickly gaining recognition for showing a roster of innovative emerging and established artists, the gallery has been named one of Blouin's 500 Best

Galleries Worldwide (2015 and 2016) and The Londonist's Independent Gallery of the Year (2014). Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery showcases cutting-edge contemporary art with the central concern being the creation of an intimate space in which artists can present a coherent, focused body of work. Drawing on her own international background, Kristin Hjellegjerde seeks to discover and develop new talents by creating a platform through which they can be introduced to local and international audiences and by allowing for artistic exchange. Kristin Hjellegjerde also acts as an art advisor for both emerging private and corporate collectors as well as working closely with developers and architects. For more information, visit www.kristinhjellegjerde.com.

For further information and high-resolution images, please contact Kristin Hjellegjerde on khjellegjerde@mac.com.