

## KEMANG WA LEHULERE

not even the departed stay grounded

13 SEPTEMBER – 20 OCTOBER 2018

OPENING RECEPTION:

THURSDAY 13 SEPTEMBER 2018, 6–8pm

"Kemang Wa Lehulere is firmly established as the preeminent young South African artist on the global scene right now... His work addresses post-apartheid disquiet and other important issues, and, beyond merely instrumentalising certain symbols of politics, his work has instead facilitated politics. It creates discussion. Wa Lehulere's exhibitions and performances are spaces for working out ideas; and not allowing something to be fixed into a static representation is very much at the heart of all he does."

– Prof. Delinda Collier, School of the Art Institute of Chicago

Marian Goodman Gallery London will launch its 2018 - 19 season with Kemang Wa Lehulere's first exhibition at the gallery, featuring new sculptural works and drawings. Wa Lehulere only became an artist in his late twenties, after years of social activism, which remains vital to everything he approaches. His layered practice investigates broad socio-political references, drawing from both his familial experience and research, and has become the subject of several substantial museum solo exhibitions, and included in biennials, throughout the USA and Europe.

In 2006, Wa Lehulere co-founded Gugulethu, an artist-led collective based in the former township of Gugulethu, Cape Town, and his energies were devoted entirely to socially- and community-engaged performative actions. These included setting up interventionist pirate radio stations, creating pamphlets that challenged local histories, and becoming a founding member of the Center for Historical Reenactments in Johannesburg. It was only once this activism had developed into a practice that included sculptural objects and drawings as a residue of performance that he decided to enter into formal art education, graduating in 2011.

The London exhibition will include a new group of sculptural objects and drawings, many of which build on his work *I cut my skin to liberate the splinter*, a multi-element piece commissioned by Performa and premiered in New York in November last year. It received Performa 17's principal award in recognition of Wa Lehulere 'staging the most innovative and thought-provoking performance of the biennial'.

Elements that relate to the Performa work and which recur throughout his practice – including messages-in-bottles, porcelain dogs, bird houses (a reference to the prevalence of forced removals under apartheid) and the cast hands of his aunt, who was caught up in the student demonstrations of 1976 with harrowing consequences – will be augmented by new imagery and objects bound together or suspended by shoe-laces.



Photographer: Lerato Maduna

Wa Lehulere's interest in the Dogon people of Mali and their indigenous astrological knowledge will be reflected in many of the new works. There has been much controversy surrounding the Dogon people's knowledge of a dwarf moon invisible to the naked eye, orbiting the 'Dog Star', Sirius, which they appear to have known about despite having no access to astronomical instruments. European historians have relentlessly explained away the plausibility of this advance knowledge. Kemang will use laces to form star constellations and groups of simple white crosses, referring not only to the racist repudiations premising this controversy, but also to the repeated negation of opportunity for contemporary young black South Africans.

The London show will include an array of new sculptures including a floor-to-ceiling work comprised of white laces suspending hundreds of wooden discs taken from Wa Lehulere's bird house entrances; a wall-piece with star clusters created from welded school-desk legs – which also refers to the 1976 demonstrations – and a musical work premised on attendees at a Xhosa coming-of-age initiation ceremony singing whilst gathered around a fire.

Throughout the summer, Wa Lehulere will spend time in the London gallery spaces, responding to them by reconfiguring and building on the sculptures he has created in Cape Town, as well as carving directly into the gallery walls. All visitors to the exhibition will be invited to donate books, which will be sent to Wa Lehulere's forthcoming library project in Gugulethu at the end of the show.

# MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Kemang Wa Lehulere (b.1984, Cape Town). Lives and works in Cape Town, South Africa.

Selected recent solo exhibitions include those at the Pasquart Art Centre, Biel (2018), MAXXI, Rome (2017), the Deutsche Bank KunstHalle, Berlin (2017), and the Art Institute of Chicago (2016), and his works have been included in the following notable group exhibitions and biennials: Performa 17, New York (2017); the 15<sup>th</sup> Istanbul Biennial (2017); Art/ Afrique, le nouvel atelier at Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris (2017); the 8th Berlin Biennale (2014); Public Intimacy: Art and Other Ordinary Acts at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco (2014); *The Ungovernables*, the second triennial exhibition of the New Museum, New York (2012); *A Terrible Beauty is Born*, the 11th Lyon Biennale at the Museum of Contemporary Art (2011) and *When Your Lips Are My Ears, Our Bodies Become Radios* at the Kunsthalle Bern and Zentrum Paul Klee. (2010).

Wa Lehulere won the Malcolm McLaren Award, presented by Performa in 2017, was Deutsche Bank's 'Artist of the Year' 2017, the Standard Bank Young Artist for Visual Arts in 2015, won the first International Tiberius Art Award Dresden in 2014, was one of two young artists awarded the 15th Baloise Art Prize at Art Basel in 2013, the recipient of the Tollman Award for the Visual Arts in 2012 and the MTN New Contemporaries Award in 2010, and the winner of the inaugural Spier Contemporary Award in 2007.

## EXHIBITION DETAILS

The exhibition will be on view at Marian Goodman Gallery London from 13 September until 20 October 2018.

Please join us for the private view on Thursday 13 September, from 6 – 8pm.

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