

TEMPLON



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OMAR BA
Anomalies
4 February 2021 – 27 March 2021



Omar Ba, 2020

For his new exhibition in Brussels, Omar Ba, rising star of the African scene, is presenting an exclusive group of paintings more critical than ever. An original and striking portrait of the continent, the show explores the fragility of democracy and individual freedoms.

Anomalies opens with a gallery of portraits of imaginary heads of state. Intertwining mythological and oneiric references, the artist subtly denounces the insidious regimes of leaders “who claim to be democratic but in reality, neglect its most important firewalls, from the constitution to the national assembly.” As a counterpoint, another group of paintings evokes the current pandemic. By juxtaposing a dazzling palette with pale, pervasive flashes, repetitive to the point of obsession, the painter exposes the cracks in our social and mental environment. This new work questions the representation of the “individual”, subtly examining the contradictions of our materialistic values of freedom and fulfilment: to what extent must we place limits on our freedom and comfort in order to save lives?

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Discarding the codes of traditional painting, Omar Ba has thrown off the shackles of the predefined format imposed by the frame. He has chosen to paint directly on rolls of bare canvas or on large cardboard boxes placed on the floor. He starts by using black paint to prepare opaquely uniform backgrounds before populating them with a profusion of fantastical beings, part human, part animal or plant. Each painting is then cut out, mounted and framed. Omar Ba develops highly personal narratives and metaphors, drawn from daily life as well as ancient African cultures. Abandoning his early abstract style, he has created an enigmatic figurative style with a blend of oil paint, gouache, Indian ink and pencil. He uses this unique, dense and unsettling visual language to communicate the complexity and cruelty of the themes he tackles: political violence, exploitation of nature and the phenomena of domination and exclusion.

Born in Senegal in 1977, Omar Ba studied fine arts in Dakar then Geneva, where he has worked for many years. With one foot on each continent, Omar Ba has developed an approach rooted in permanent hybridization. Over the last 10 years Omar Ba has shown his work in numerous international solo and group exhibitions, including, most recently, *Omar Ba : Same Dream* (Contemporary Calgary, Canada, 2020 and Power Plant Toronto, 2019), *Global(e) Resistance* (Musée National d'Art Moderne - Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 2020), *Art/Afrique, le nouvel atelier* (Louis Vuitton Foundation, Paris, 2017), *Afropolitan Festival* (Bozar, Brussels, 2017), *Afrique-Raconter le Monde* (Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea, Milan, 2017), *Le Havre – Dakar, Partager la mémoire* (Le Havre natural history museum, 2017), and the Summer Exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts (London) and Biennale of Dakar in 2014.

His work can also be found in a number of public collections, including at the Centre National des Arts Plastiques in France, Collection Nationale Suisse in Switzerland and Abu Dhabi Louvre.