



Djofray Makumbu, *Snap!*

25 Oct 2024 – 19 Mar 2025
SPACE Ilford
10 Oakfield Rd, IG1 1ZJ

“Painting is about connecting with your memory, it’s about getting joy.”

DJOFRAY MAKUMBU

When artist Djofray Makumbu discovered his family’s old photo albums he was instantly transported back to a time when his parents, their friends and family would gather in each other’s homes in East London to chat and dance, to engage in fierce debates, share food and enjoy life.

This was the 1980s and 90s, a time before smartphones and social media and instant messaging, when moments were freeze-framed by the click of a camera’s shutter. Back then, photographs were treasured; film and processing were expensive. When you took a photo, you had to think a bit more carefully about its composition, and you never really knew how it was going to turn out. The best ones were carefully mounted in albums to be poured over again and again. It was this process that sparked something in Djofray. “I suddenly realised that these photographs looked like paintings,” he says.

Djofray has captured the essence of this era in a series of portraits of family and friends taken from these photo albums. His paintings convey the energy and joy of a community coming together through a shared language and culture.

“The photos were mostly taken by my father, and they sparked all these memories,” he explains. “It was like I jumped back to a time when my parents were so young and in the moment; you forget that your parents had a life! It was magical. It was clear from the photographs that the community bond was so strong – and it still is. My parents are still in touch with these people. You can’t recreate that bond – it’s just beautiful.”

Book your school visit on Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Thursdays. No more than 30 students per visit, 2 visits per day, for up to 90 minutes. Visits can start from 10am – please book with Daniel Picone, daniel@spacestudios.org.uk.

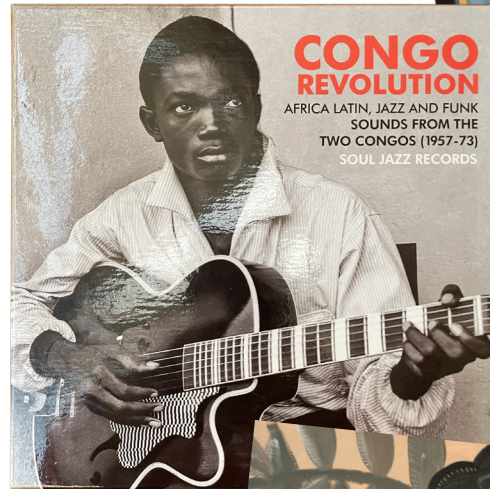
FOR TEACHERS

MATERIALS AND PROCESSES

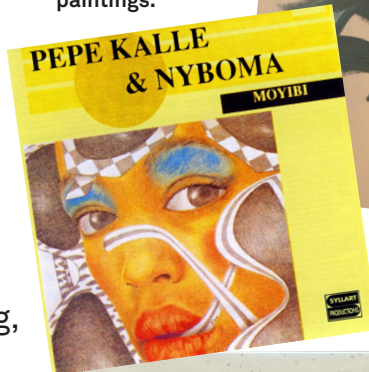
Djofray uses multiple ways of working to tell stories, to reminisce about family and to describe situations that have happened to him. In *Snap!* as well as paintings and stop-frame animation, there's also music, dancing and moments of joy contained in the work. There is an acknowledgement of how important these themes are to discussions around mental health, the challenges faced by young people, and the role of music and dance in cultural expression.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

If your parents and grandparents provide the link to your community, what happens when that older generation is gone? The artist admits that this scares him. In recreating his family's photographs as paintings, Djofray is conscious of wanting to create a living archive, trying to catch hold of a narrative that is fast disappearing, and preserve a moment in time for future generations. "You try your best to keep that bond together."



A selection of album covers, books and images reflecting Congolese cultural and political life. (Right) is Makumbu's portrait 'Mario' and (below left) Djofray and some of his paintings.



FILMS AND ANIMATIONS

Showing alongside the paintings in this exhibition is Djofray's stop-motion animation film *Hello Mr Officer*, which navigates the everyday experiences of young black men across London who are frequently stopped, searched, and harassed by the police. And *Cover*, a film that shares the experiences of Djofray, his friends and a group of young people with disabilities from Eastbury Community School in Barking.



Scan the QR code to learn how to create your own animated ball bounce.

Makumbu's films are painstakingly created frame by frame over several months. There is a lot of planning involved. Below are some suggested activities for students:

MAKE A PICTURE BOOK OR COMIC

Can you tell a story in 8, 16, 24 or 36 pictures?

This will become a picture book, a comic or a storyboard for an animation. Start by folding a piece of A4 paper in half, then again and again so that there are 8 rectangles created. In each rectangle draw a picture that will tell an element of your story to create a cartoon or comic. This can be a whole story or just the first chapter. Or take no more than 8 photos on a camera phone to make a short story.

CREATING A CHARACTER

Using plasticine or modelling clay make a portrait of a

family member or a friend. How would you like to show their features? What objects or clothes help to describe their personality? What is the most important thing you think of when you remember that person? If they were a superhero, what might their power be?

WAYS TO STRUCTURE WRITING

To think of how you would like to structure your story, think of what elements are most important. Where does it take place? What happens? Who are the characters involved? You can create a story by writing each element on a Post-it note and then move the Post-it notes around to

decide the layout. How will you order your story? If you could only use 8 pages, what would be on each page? Would you fill the page with words or just one sentence?

MAKE A PLAYLIST

Djofray found a freedom and an immediacy with his paintings. "When I started painting it made me so happy, it's like it put me in a trance. I put my music on and just paint! I can't stop painting because it makes me happy." Think of 10 songs that make you smile and lift your mood. Make a playlist and share it with a friend. Join up the playlists together to make one communal happiness compilation with your class.

USEFUL WORDS:

Storyboard

STIGMA

Archive

Mental health

SELF PORTRAIT

Memory
Narrative
Nostalgia
Photo album
Preserve

Joy
Family
Animation

UPLIFTING

Reminisce
Stop-frame
animation
Structure
Trance

Connection
Cultural expression
Freeze-frame
Generations
Happiness
Harassment

Autobiographical
Challenge
Composition
Community