**Staircase First Floor**

***H(a)unted in the Doldrums***, 2021

A snare drum is suspended upside-down, floating in midair, concealing a set of built-in speakers, whose frequencies set its membrane and drumsticks in motion. The ensuing rat-atat of the drumsticks suppresses the very source that prompts their response: a voice reading a list of names. The voice triggers the drumsticks’ reaction, inadvertently impeding itself and consequently preventing the names from being heard.

These names[[1]](#footnote-1) are the ones of twenty-seven people with albinism who were victims of mutilation between 2016 and 2019 in Tanzania, the country with probably the highest rate of albinism in the world. These twenty-seven victims each survived attacks during which some of their body parts were violently removed and sold as supposedly magical ingredients for witchcraft-related rituals. Far from being ancestral, this practice is juxtaposed with the ancient belief that people with albinism are “zeru zeru” or “ghost people”. Both hunted for their auspicious powers and ostracized for their skin pigmentation, these "black people in the skin of a white bodies" often find themselves persecuted and hounded within their own communities, leaving them without shelter or sense of belonging.

The burnt surface of the drum with its light wood entrails left intact evokes a dichotomy between perception and insight, what is to be seen or believed and what constitutes the essence of something or someone, its right to exist. *H(a)unted in the Doldrums* is at once a revelation and an instantaneous removal. It compels, or rather coerces, the names of the mutilated victims to acoustically suppress themselves and commit an act of self-censorship. In doing this, it discloses an explosive condition in a permanent stagnation.

1. The names in alphabetic order: Adam Robert, Aisha Yusuph, Baraka Cosmas Rusambo, Bibana Mbushi, Emmanuel Festo, Ester Togolai Maganga, Fatma Mohammed, Jonas Maduka, Kabula Nkalango, Kulwa, Leti Amonius Dionizi, Limi Luchoma, Lucia Rusambo, Maria Chambanenje, Mariamu Staford, Maryciana Sikitu, Mawazo Simon, Meriki, Mohammed Said, Mtoba Malosa, Munghu Masaga, Mwigulu Matonange, Nassoro Mohammed Msingili, Pendo Sengerema, Rukia Khalfan, Said Abdallah, Thomas From Mara. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)