



MARCH 2021

WHAT'S IN A FLAG?

Rogue States | Stephanie Syjuco



Installation view, Stephanie Syjuco: *Vanishing Point (Overlay)*, 2021. Photography by Mitro Hood.

A collection of brightly colored flags hangs from the ceiling of this space—each one with a distinct design. On the flag at the front and center of this installation is what appears to be a human silhouette in white, flanked by two yellow crescent moons on a background of two bold black stripes with a light blue stripe between the two. To the right of this flag is a red flag with a central motif of a white circle, rimmed with black, encircling a star and two overlapping swords. As you see the flags towards the back, you may notice more colors—white, blue, green, red, yellow, orange—and glimpses of stripes, triangles, and other design motifs.

These flags were created by artist Stephanie Syjuco, who has mined film and television for flags that represent fictional countries. Attached to this resource is a key to each flag—its source and the name of the fictional country to which it belongs. For example, the red flag hanging right of center in the photograph is from the film *Iron Eagle* (USA, 1986) and is supposed to represent a Muslim country engaged in abuse of a member of the United States Air Force.

By bringing these flags together, Syjuco asks us to consider how the creation of the flag designs shapes our view of who is supposedly represented by them. In the context of the films and television programs in which they were featured, they all represented some kind of threatening “other.” Through her work, the artist asks us to re-examine the narratives that define some countries as civilized and moral, and some countries as uncivilized, unstable, and dangerous.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY:

Divide students into groups of four and have them discuss the following questions: What is the purpose of a flag? What is a flag intended to communicate to the citizens of its own country? What about to people around the world? Have students share their answers with the entire class. Ask students to look closely at the flags in *Rogue States* and describe what they see. What are the colors, shapes, and motifs they see on the flags? How would they interpret what kind of country is represented by some of the flags they can see? As the discussion progresses, share relevant information on *Rogue States*. In the next stage of the activity, form student pairs. Ask each student to decide on a “place” in their lives that could be represented by a flag—that could be anything from their family to their state. Then have each student interview their partner about the place they selected. Each student will then design and draw a flag for their partner’s “place” in collaboration with the partner to ensure that it represents this “place” in the way their partner wishes.

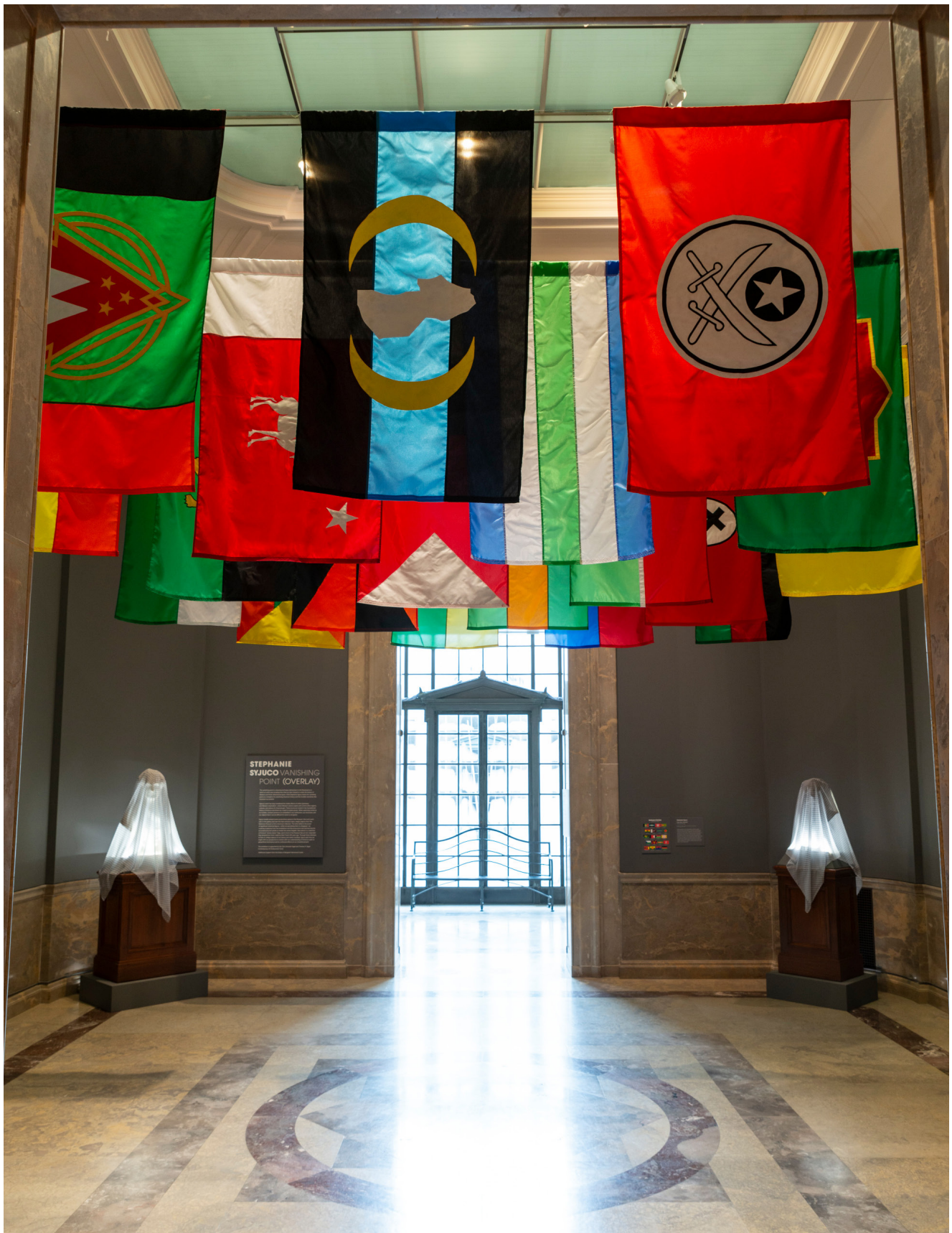


To comment or register for Art-To-Go,
email lwilson@artbma.org

For visitor information, visit artbma.org

Generous support for Art-To-Go
is provided by Art Bridges and
Wilmington Trust.





ROGUE STATES

STEPHANIE SYJUCO, 2018



VAL VERDE
Commando (USA, 1985)



MAGUADORA
Whoops! Apocalypse (UK, 1982)



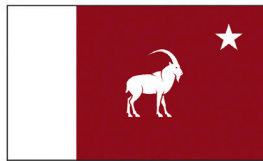
UNNAMED COUNTRY
Iron Eagle (USA, 1986)



MATOBO
The Interpreter (USA, 2005)



VAL VERDE
Die Hard 2 (USA, 1990)



TAZBEKISTAN
Ambassadors (UK, 2013)



SAN MONIQUE
Live and Let Die (USA, 1973)



HATAY
Indiana Jones and the
Last Crusade (USA, 1989)



ZAMUNDA
Coming to America (USA, 1988)



SALOUF
Where the Spies Are (France, 1966)



NAMBUTU
Casino Royale (USA, 2006)



UNNAMED COUNTRY
Help! (UK, 1965)



PETROVIA
Air Strike (USA, 2004)



ZANGARO
The Dogs of War (USA, 1980)



WADIYA
The Dictator (USA, 2012)



TOMANIA
The Great Dictator (USA, 1940)



UNNAMED ISLAMIC COUNTRY
Superjail (USA, 2007)



UNNAMED AFRICAN COUNTRY
Banzai (France, 1983)



SLOVETZIA
The Beautician and the Beast (USA, 1997)



NIBIA
Ace Ventura (USA, 1994)