

# Sinzo Aanza

## Portfolio

Imane Farès

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Works courtesy of the artist and Imane Farès, Paris

Sinzo Aanza is a Congolese artist whose work focuses on the radicality of fiction. In 2007, Luhindi K. Sinzomene created Sinzo Aanza, a radical fiction to whom he assigns the responsibility for the interactions between his creations, first literary and then visual, and the equally frictional social frameworks in which the encounter, discussion and projections around all the other inventions developed by men to frame life, its understanding, organisation and projections become possible.

His writing, both poetic and irreverent, investigates the political situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo, as well as the constructed image of this country which "has always belonged to investors, preferably foreigners". The exploitation of natural resources, the representation of national identities and their excesses, and the construction of the image of the Congo since the colonial era are themes that nourish both his visual and literary works. In 2015, he published *Généalogie d'une banalité*, a novel in which two discourses, one official, the other popular and intimate, confront each other around the way people are drawn into a certain idea of the Congo and its scandalous wealth. In 2017, he was in residence at WIELS in Brussels where he conceives the first part of *Projet d'attentat contre l'image ?* in which he addresses the question of Congolese religious syncretism. During his residency in 2019 at the Museum Rietberg, he carried out the second part of this trilogy of installations for which he will take a critical look at the legacy of ethnologist Hans Himmelheber and the collections he bequeathed to the museum: 'It is as if a European peasant of the Middle Ages had been led to take in a church a Catholic monstrance with an Eucharist in it to sell to an Arab or Chinese traveler.'

Sinzo Aanza (b. 1990 in Goma, DR Congo) lives and works in Kinshasa, DR Congo. His work has been exhibited at WIELS, Brussels, Rencontres de la Photographie, Arles - where he was nominated in 2018 for the Nouveau Prix Découverte - Rietberg museum, Zurich, Lubumbashi Biennial and Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine, Paris. In 2020-21, he is the artistic director of the second edition of the Yango Biennale in Kinshasa. In 2023, he has participated in the exhibition "Zeit" at the Kunsthhaus, Zurich. In 2024, he is nominated for the Future Generation Art Prize.

His first exhibition at galerie Imane Farès, *Pertinences citoyennes*, was held in 2018.



with Isaac Sahani  
*La Cohue des petites utopies*  
2021  
Nine-channel video  
Duration: ca. 20 min each





## Le Mémorial improbable

2021

Exhibition view of *Le Mémorial improbable*, second solo exhibition of the artist at Imane Farès, Paris, 2021.

The objects and ideas that compose the fragments of the Improbable memorial, of which a second chapter will be unveiled at the Kinshasa Yango Biennale in 2022, create a possible space for the exis-tence of victims of the mineral exploitation systems and outline the beginning of a reparation of the precarious world of the living and the ignored world of the dead. This initiative comes from a personal, intimate quest that unfolds in the space left void by the lack of official recognition of the victims by the State.

However, as the title suggests, this memorial remains improbable given the current state of society, because the denial of History and memory covers and drowns everything. Sinzo Aanza observes such denial in the “victim” status, which he sees today as becoming blurry. Indeed, it is impossible not to perceive the Congolese people as the direct and indirect victims of the worldwide spread of mobile phones, which are made with many materials mined in Congo and whose ubiquitous and indispensable charac-ter extends the colonial exploitation of resources and people into the present time.

(...) Having witnessed in his childhood the extreme fragility of existence in the face of disasters, whether natural or man-made, Sinzo Aanza is aware of the role played by the colonial power in this violent history and by the contemporary forms of the inhuman exploitation of natural resources. Educated in a Catholic school, he was asked one day to write a eulogy for a priest he had known. —Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez, excerpts from the exhibition's journal





## *La Maquette*

2021

Wood, wire mesh, pigments

ca. 200 x 170 cm

Unique

The exhibition opens with the memorial's *Maquette (Model)*. Large covered halls and smaller annex structures radiate around a big ribbed dome topped by a tower. The memorial is intended to be open and accessible to all, and its modular architecture allows for endless reproductions that could occupy the whole former 'neutral' zone of Kinshasa, between the 'White Town' and the 'Black Town' of the colonial era.

## *La Carte des choses possibles*

2021

Battered raffia, probably 19th century,

textiles, pigments, iroko wood

ca. 720 x 120 cm

Unique

*La Carte des choses possibles (The map of possible things)* is a large tapestry in raffia and other fabrics representing an imaginary map of the Congo's mines. It uses elements of the real map of the country's mines, which are enriched with all the fantasies of the collective narratives about the localization of natural resources. Texts written in Mandombe' tell us (for those of us who can read them) about the nature of these resources, the meaning of shapes and colors, and the wisdom that is necessary to understand all that is buried.



## *La Fin du deuil*

2021

Wood, resin, fibreglass, cobalt calcite,  
heterogenite, coltan, manganese,  
cassiterite  
ca. 260 x 90 cm  
Unique

The undulating motif represented by the six decorative panels embossed with rare minerals of *La Fin du deuil* (*The end of mourning*) is linked to the ritual of throwing hair in water at the end of the mourning period, which is still quite widespread in the Congo and other African countries. These panels are the basic decorative units that punctuate the walls inside the memorial. They symbolize all the people who died while mining the materials that shape them.





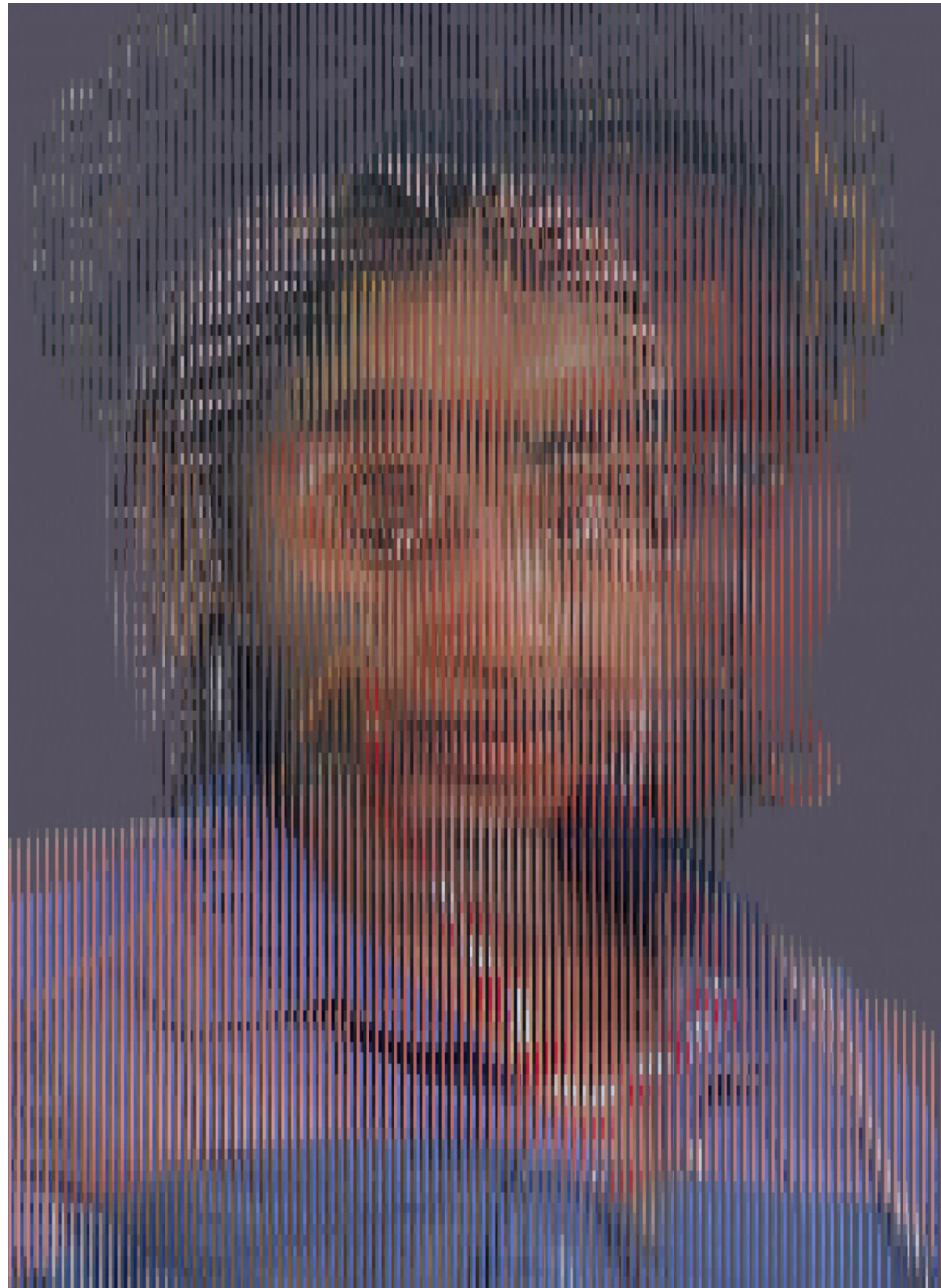
## Le Portrait

2021

Digital work, infinite duration

<https://www.sinzoanza.nuelschoch.ch/>

*Le Portrait (The portrait)* is a digital artwork that combines three different types of images: Fayum funerary portraits from Roman Egypt, made in the early centuries of our era; photographs handed by the families of the victims of massacres in the North-Kivu region, and selfies published on social media by anonymous people from all over the world. It is a confrontation between the gaze of these 'ordinary' people and the prospect of death for these men and women who do not leave behind any particular narrative or other type of achievement apart from the traces of their life or of their death.





## *La Toile*

2021

Textiles

Variable dimensions

*La Toile* (*The net*) is inspired by the ropes that adults tie around their children's wrists to avoid losing them when large groups of population are displaced while fleeing armed conflicts. It also refers to the multiple ways in which loincloths are used to wrap, hold and hold onto precious or useful belongings during such migrations.



*Une esquisse de la ville pour  
Manzambi (I)*

Inkjet print on Hahnemüle Photo rag  
baryta  
39 x 160 cm  
Edition of 5 + 1 AP

*A Sketch of the City for Manzambi [Une Esquisse de la ville pour Manzambi]* brings together on four major crossroads in Kinshasa the cursed poet, obstinate and obsessed by an idea of a country where any idea can be expressed and realised, Matala Mukadi Tshiakatumba, the artist with wonderful urban utopias, Bodys Isek Kingelez and a young anonymous student from Kinshasa, whose unmistakable pavement radio tells us that he had proposed a robotics plan to ease the hardship of certain jobs in the city, starting with road traffic regulation. The outline of this meeting is itself a noisy assertion that what is not is fundamental and indispensable.

[Link to the virtual exhibition \*Une question de perspective\*, Laboratoire Kontempo, Kinshasa](#)



*Une esquisse de la ville pour  
Manzambi (II)*  
Inkjet print on Hahnemüle Photo rag  
baryta  
39 x 160 cm  
Edition of 5 + 1 AP





*Une esquisse de la ville pour  
Manzambi (III)*  
Inkjet print on Hahnemüle Photo rag  
baryta  
39 x 160 cm  
Edition of 5 + 1 AP



*Une esquisse de la ville pour  
Manzambi (IV)*  
Inkjet print on Hahnemüle Photo rag  
baryta  
39 x 160 cm  
Edition of 5 + 1 AP



## *The Lord Is Dead, Long Life To The Lord*

2019

Mixed media installation comprises:

- marine ropes, wood, two mannequins made of chasuble, stole, jacket and trousers, shirt, tie, synthetic cotton, variable dimensions
  - recording, stereo sound, 76 minutes
  - Photomontage, 150 x 600 cm
- Coll. Museum Rietberg, Zürich

Commissioned by the Museum Rietberg Zürich for the exhibition Congo as Fiction  
Exhibition view © Museum Rietberg Zurich, photo: Rainer Wolfsberger

In his books and in his art, Sinzo Aanza regularly returns to the theme of the manifestation of injustice and injustice in the Congo. This ranges from the time of slavery and colonisation to the Mobutu dictatorship and the armed conflicts of recent years. At the same time, it explores the room for manoeuvre that exists beyond power, when, for example, the *sappers* celebrate the sanctity of the oppressed body.

In his installation *The Lord Is Dead, Long Life To The Lord*, Sinzo Aanza mixes his own texts with sound recordings he has made in the villages visited by Hans Himmelheber. Although he questions the practice of European collections, at the same time he gives voice to the objects and actors. The result is a kind of theatre in which the relationship between the powerful and the weak, oneself and the stranger, is renegotiated.





*The lord is dead, long life to the  
lord*  
2019  
Inkjet print on satin matte paper  
Edition of 3 + 1 AP



## Babola

2018

Inkjet print on satin matte paper

Variable dimensions

Edition of 3 + 1 AP

This photo is the choice to present a unique testimony of the 2018 Congolese elections. After two and a half years of civil and political protests to secure the organisation of the vote allowing the first democratic handover in the country's history, the event is a historical turning point that Sinzo Aanza preferred to examine from the perspective of those who most needed this handover, those whose life and hopes had been weakened, wilted by the political regime about to leave or to renew its mandate through the figure of the dolphin — in the royal meaning of this word. These elections are thereby presented here as the epitome of the relations between the wealthy and the powerful in Congo, and the figure of the poor as that who endlessly provides.

### Exhibitions:

- *Œuvres augmentées*, MC93, Bobigny, on the occasion of the "Performing Arts" Headquarter co-constructed by Les Récréatrices (Ouagadougou) and D-CAF (Cairo), June 15 - July 11, 2021
- *FUTURE GENEALOGIES*, *Tales from the Equatorial Line*, 9e Biennale de Lubumbashi, 24 octobre - 24 nov. 2019



## *Pertinences citoyennes*

2018

Exhibition view: *Pertinences citoyennes*,  
Galerie Imane Farès, Paris, France, 2018.

*Pertinences Citoyennes* is an ensemble of photographs, objects' installation produced by Sinzo Aanza. The artist examines how notions of citizenship, nation-state and sovereignty are rendered void by the hard capitalism operating in the Congo. Ever since the colonial "scramble for Africa", the Congo has been constructed as an international financial playground, out of the hands of its population.

Wealthy with boundless natural resources but economically dispossessed, the Congo is referred to by Aanza as an "institutional national fiction", of which the exercise of power is but a role play represented by certain attributes. The artist juxtaposes traditional objects of power - headdress, statue, mask, throne, gun, leopard skin - with those of "mutakalisation" - stone and stick.

Developed by exiled Congolese, the practice of mutakalisation is aimed at condemning the country's political figures by stripping them down, humiliating and beating them up. The series of studio photographs stage this theatricality of power and its violence.

Mannequins and models don wax-print suits and pagnes, the costume of power and social rituals. Integral to «mutakalisation» is the filmic capture of these humiliating beatings and their web broadcasting in order to ensure their worldwide visibility through the «feudality of capita», Aanza argues that the Congolese have been made citizens of the world against their best interest, and often forced into exile. Mutakalisation is born from this ambivalent cosmopolitanism, one that violently binds the Congolese diasporas to their native land's contestes leaders.





## *Pertinences citoyennes*

2018

Exhibition view: *Pertinences citoyennes*,  
galerie Imane Farès, Paris, France, 2018.

### Exhibitions:

- *Pertinences citoyennes*, Sinzo Aanza, Théâtre Jean Vilar, Vitry-sur-Seine, 15 Dec. 2020 - 30 Jan. 2021
- *Multiple Transmissions: Art in the Afropolitan Age*, curated by Sandrine Colard, WIELS, Brussels, Belgium, 25 May - 18 August, 2019
- *Pertinences citoyennes*, galerie Imane Farès, 17 May - 28 July, 2018



*Untitled #1*

2018

Digital photograph on baryta Photo Rag

315g

80 x 137

Edition of 5 + 1AP





*Untitled #2*

2018

Digital photograph on baryta Photo Rag

315g

80 x 137

Edition of 5 + 1AP



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## *Untitled*

2018

The installation comprises:

*Untitled #1* [see pages above]

*Untitled #2* [see pages above]

Sculpture made of a Kuba mask and a rifle

Variable dimensions

Unique



*Untitled #3*

2018

Digital photograph on baryta Photo Rag

315g

80 x 137

Edition of 5 + 1AP





*Untitled #4*

2018

Digital photograph on baryta Photo Rag

315g

80 x 137

Edition of 5 + 1AP



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## *Untitled*

2018

The installation comprises:

*Untitled #3* [see pages above]

*Untitled #4* [see pages above]

Sculpture made of a Tokwe throne, leopard  
skin and a bat

Variable dimensions

Unique



*Untitled #5*

2018

Digital photograph on baryta Photo Rag

315g

80 x 137

Edition of 5 + 1AP



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*Untitled #6*

2018

Digital photograph on baryta Photo Rag

315g

80 x 137

Edition of 5 + 1AP



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# *Untitled*

2018

The installation comprises:

*Untitled #5* [see pages above]

*Untitled #6* [see pages above]

Sculpture made of a Songe fetiche and a  
tire

Variable dimensions

Unique



*Untitled #7*

2018

Digital photograph on baryta Photo Rag

315g

80 x 137

Edition of 5 + 1AP



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*Untitled #8*

2018

Digital photograph on baryta Photo Rag

315g

80 x 137

Edition of 5 + 1AP



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## Untitled

2018

The installation comprises:

*Untitled #7* [see pages above]

*Untitled #8* [see pages above]

Sculptures made of a Kuba headwear,  
stone, four mannequins wearing Wax suits

Variable dimensions

Unique





## Épreuve d'allégorie

2017

269 photographs and a sculpture made of stones

240 x 700 cm; variable dimensions

Unique

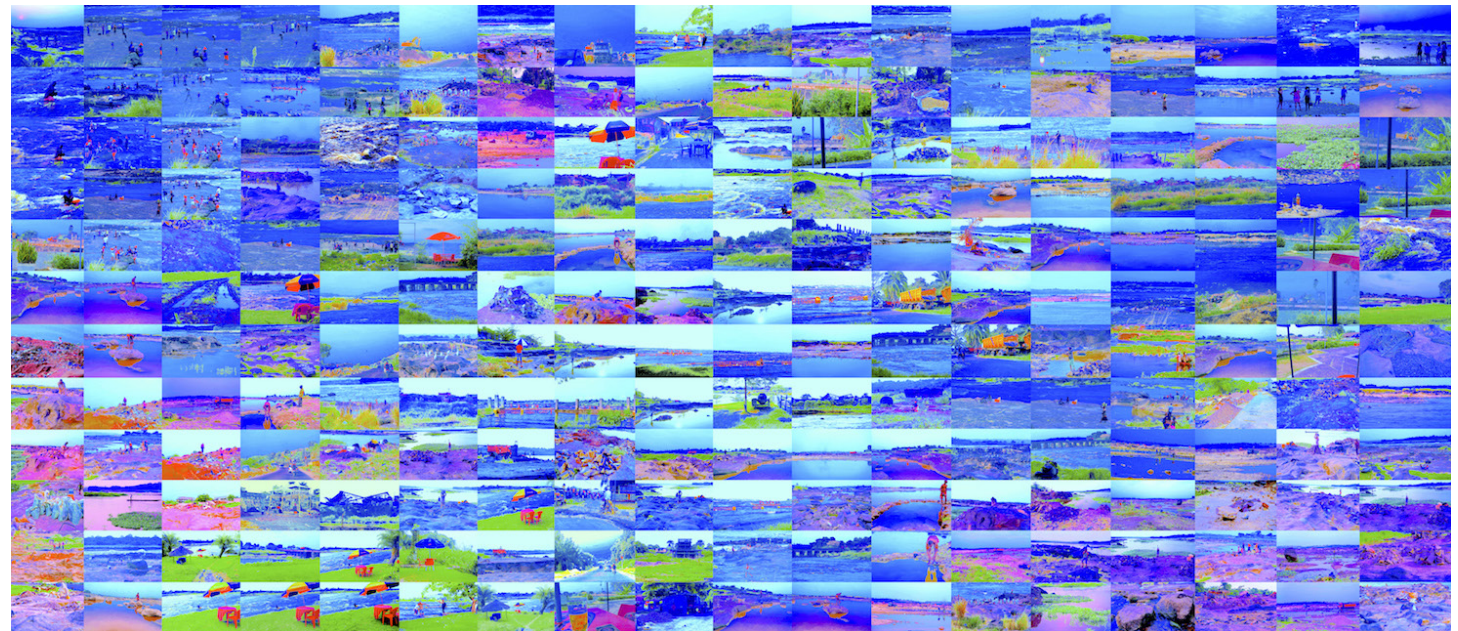
*Épreuve d'allégorie* [Allegory Trial] is a postcard featuring images of Kinshasa's Kinsuka quarter, located in the tourist area of the Congo River rapids.

Above all, it is a journey questioning the concept of value in a place where situations, objects and individuals mingle and merge.

*Épreuve d'allégorie* was set in the Kinsuka quarter with the aim of creating an ephemeral setting in which to reflect on value and its different forms. It tries to define how, in tourists' eyes, the value of the Congo River rapids or the relaxing places along its banks, the value of the big gravel plant, the value of the stone breakers' time and the value of the stone breakers themselves, whose are just becoming part of the scenery, are changing, saying something about society, describing the country and determining an index of powers and illusions.

### Exhibitions:

- *Kinshasa Chroniques Urbaines*, Cité de l'architecture & du patrimoine, October 13 - January 12, 2021
- Nouveau Prix Découverte, Les Rencontres d'Arles, 49th Edition, July 2 - September 23, 2018
- *Kinshasa chronique*, Musée International des Arts Modestes, Sète, October 23 - March 10, 2019









### *Projet d'attentat contre l'image ? (Acte 3)*

2017

The installation comprises: wooden masks, wooden fetishes, bibles, missives, breviary, chains, audio cassette tapes, audio  
320 x 1250 cm; variable duration  
Unique

Exhibition view: Rendez-Vous I Biennale de Lyon 2017, IAC, Villeurbanne, France, 2017. Photo © Blaise Adilon.

*Projet d'attentat contre l'image?* [*Project for an assault on the image?*] combines literature, photographs and objects. The artist questions the culture and national identity of the Congo with regard to religion and images of colonial propaganda. In Act 3 of this project, Sinzo Aanza is interested in the syncretism that emerged after the independence of the Congo in 1960. The work depicts disparate cultural objects which he has placed on the wall in a sinusoidal curve, interspersing Congolese masks and copies of the Bible. These items, linked by a chain, seem to oscillate between traditions and colonization. In a typical literary reference, he describes the work as «a poetry of doubt and inconstancy» that brings out an ambivalence that characterises the Congo: the gap between the exigencies of life in the here and now and the possibility of the Kingdom of Heaven—a utopian image promised by Catholic and Protestant colonial missions, on the one hand; on the other: the conflict between constructing a national identity and the identity of the individual.

#### Exhibitions:

- *Africa 2020. Mémoire Restitution Transmission*, Atelier de Nantes, 15 May - 27 June, 2021

- *Rendez-vous I Biennale de Lyon 2017, Jeune création internationale*, IAC, Villeurbanne, 20 Sept., 2017 - 7 Jan. 2018



*Projet d'attentat contre l'image ?*  
(Acte 3)  
2017

