

Sammy Baloji

The King's Order to dance

Solo exhibition at Imane Farès gallery

September 9 - December 16, 2023
opening: Saturday, September, 9
from 3 pm to 8 pm



Aquare. The Future That Never Was, 2023, HD video, colour, sound, 21'

Sammy Baloji

Lives and works in Brussels and Lubumbashi



Photo: Nick Harvey

Since 2005, Sammy Baloji has been exploring the memory and history of the Democratic Republic of Congo. His work is an ongoing research on the cultural, architectural and industrial heritage of the Katanga region, as well as a questioning of the impact of Belgian colonization. His use of photographic archives allows him to manipulate time and space, comparing ancient colonial narratives with contemporary economic imperialism. His video works, installations and photographic series highlight how identities are shaped, transformed, perverted and reinvented. His critical view of contemporary societies is a warning about how cultural clichés continue to shape collective memories and thus allow social and political power games to continue to dictate human behaviour. As he stated in a recent interview: "I'm not interested in colonialism as nostalgia, or in it as a thing of the past, but in the continuation of that system."

He started in September 2019 a PhD in Artistic Research titled "Contemporary Kasala and Lukasa: towards a Reconfiguration of Identity and Geopolitics" at Sint Lucas Antwerpen. A Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres, he has received numerous awards, distinctions and fellowships including the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative. In 2019-2020, he was a resident at the Académie de France à Rome - Villa Médicis. Sammy Baloji co-founded in 2008 the Rencontres Picha/Biennale de Lubumbashi.

His recent personal exhibitions include *K(C)ongo, Fragments of Interlaced Dialogues. Subversive Classifications*, Palazzo Pitti, Florence (2022); *K(C)ongo, Fragments of Interlaced Dialogues*, Beaux Arts de Paris (2021); *Sammy Baloji, Other Tales*, Lund Konsthall and Aarhus Kunsthall (2020); *Congo, Fragments d'une histoire*, Le Point du Jour, Cherbourg (2019); *A Blueprint for Toads and Snakes*, Framer Framed, Amsterdam (2018); *Sven Augustijnen & Sammy Baloji*, Museumcultuur Strombeek (2018); *Urban Now: City Life in Congo*, with Filip de Boeck, The Power Plant, Toronto and WIELS, Brussels (2016-2017), and *Hunting and Collecting*, Mu. ZEE Kunstmuseum aan zee, Ostend (2014). He has recently participated in the Architecture Biennale of Venice (2023), the 15th Sharjah Biennial (2023), the Sydney Biennial (2020), documenta 14 (Kassel/Athens, 2017), the Lyon Biennial (2015), the Venice Biennial (2015), the Photoquai Festival at the Musée du Quai Branly (Paris, 2015).

The King's Order to Dance

September 9 - December 16, 2023

We are pleased to announce Sammy Baloji's solo exhibition, *The King's Order to Dance*, at the Imane Farès gallery (September 9 - December 16, 2023).

In connection with extractivism, always present in the artist's work, the exhibition will present the installation *...and to those North Sea Waves Whispering Sunken Stories (II)* (2021), composed by a terrarium made by Sammy Baloji in resonance with the Wardian case, used in the nineteenth century to move endogenous plant species in imperial powers or colonizing countries. The form of the work also takes up the contours of the minerals extracted in certain mining areas in the Congo to highlight the various plunders that have been put in place to dispossess local lands of their natural resources.

This work is complemented by a new series of photographs also taken during Baloji's residency in Ypres, a Belgian town on the front line between Germany and the Allies, whose surrounding landscapes still bear the scars of the First World War. By revealing the holes left by the shells, the artist evokes both the Congolese volunteer soldiers who fought alongside the Belgian army as well as the exploitation of the local population in the minerals also put at the service of the war, thus denouncing the indispensable nature of Congolese resources - both human and material - for Belgium in the context of this international conflict. This installation is accompanied by a sound archive drawn from a vast collection of recordings made with prisoners of war during the First World War by a group of German linguists, anthropologists and musicologists as part of an ambitious project to "collect the languages of the world". Here we hear Albert Kudjabo, a Congolese prisoner, whistling, singing and drumming.

The film *Aequare. The Future that Never Was* (2023), that received a special mention at the 18th International Architecture, will also be presented at the gallery. By highlighting the second largest rainforest in the world around Yangambi, in the video the artist questions the legacy of colonialism and the ecological destruction that has resulted. Giving a view of this particular territory

around the equatorial forest and the Yangambi Science Center (INEAC), Sammy Baloji also reveals a form of dissonance with this environment that results from "the acclimatization, scientific control and territorial appropriation of Africa by Western colonists" and suggests the essential character of this region that plays a primary role in reducing carbon emissions on a global scale.

¹ Sandrine Colard, "From the Equator, I have seen the Future"



Aequare. The Future That Never Was, 2023, HD video, colour, sound, 21'



Aequare. The Future That Never Was, 2023, HD video, colour, sound, 21'



...and to Those North Sea Waves Whispering Sunken Stories (I), 2021,
Metal and glass terrarium containing various tropical plants, potting soil, clay pebbles
Exhibition view: Sammy Baloji at Beaufort 21, Zeebrugge, Belgium



Bellewarde Park, 2021
Realized in the frame of the residency program
at Flanders Fields Museum, Ypres, Belgium