

Toxic Lands, Living Narratives

With: Nilla Banguna, Sixte Kakinda, Godelive Kasangati Kabena
Lafleur & Bogaert, Mickaël-Sltan Mbanza, Pendezâ Mulamba
Co-curated with Sammy Baloji

8 November 2025 — 21 February 2026

Opening: 8 November, 3 pm - 8 pm



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The exhibition *Toxic Lands, Living Narratives* builds on the research initiated during recent editions of the Lubumbashi Biennale, organized by the Picha Association [1] in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Conceived in collaboration with artist Sammy Baloji, it brings together artists whose works question colonial legacies and their lasting impacts on bodies, territories, and imaginaries.

The exhibition takes as its starting point the library and archives of Congolese philosopher Valentin-Yves Mudimbe, recently returned to the University of Lubumbashi. In his writings, Mudimbe analyzes how Africa was “invented” through the lenses of domination. However, he calls for a process of reclamation: rereading, shifting, rewriting, and subverting imposed forms to invent alternative ways of thinking. To reclaim is to reactivate the archive, open up new possibilities, and oppose dominant history with a plurality of living and insurgent narratives. In this spirit, the artists gathered here draw on colonial archives, mining memory, and performative gestures to compose new narratives.

The notion of toxicity runs through the exhibition, understood both as material pollution and as a social poison inherited from colonialism. Displaced and circulating, toxicity becomes a lens through which to read the destructive yet potentially transformative effects of extractive logics on cities in the Global South, particularly in Katanga, the heart of Congo’s colonial history. The exhibition examines multiple forms of contamination, as well as the possibilities for reconfiguration they open in a postcolonial context.

Moving between memory and creation, the exhibition becomes a space for confrontation as much as projection. It invites a rethinking of history, a reopening of archives, and a reconnection with narratives to imagine new possible trajectories.

[1] Picha, founded in 2008 in Lubumbashi by a collective of artists and cultural workers, takes its name from the Swahili word for “image.” The organization uses art and image-making as tools for storytelling and dialogue. Its vision: to build a sustainable ecosystem for art and culture in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by supporting local talent and fostering international exchange.

Nilla Banguna



Nilla Banguna, *Wankito (umwanakaji). La femme forte*, 2023. Printed fabrics designed and produced by Nilla Banguna, in collaboration with Patricia Banguna Kazadi, Josephine Kyungu Muloba et Fernande Musha Sebelwa, installation view: Kunsthalle Mainz. Courtesy of the artist. Image: Norbert Miguletz. (left)



Production of the printed fabrics designed and produced by Nilla Banguna, in collaboration with Patricia Banguna Kazadi, Josephine Kyungu Muloba et Fernande Musha Sebelwa. Courtesy of the artist. Image: Gaelle Van Lede. (right)

Nilla Banguna has been an artist in residence at the Picha art center since 2018, where she conducts research and textile production in collaboration with a group of women from the village of Makwacha, located 45 km from Lubumbashi. This village, where Picha is currently developing a screen printing workshop, maintains a pictorial tradition: every year, the women paint the walls of their houses with clay motifs that are erased during the rainy season. The works presented in the gallery result from a collaboration with the artist's sister Patricia Banguna Kazadi and two artists from Makwacha, Fernande Musha Sebelwa and Josephine Kyungu Muloba. Together, they transpose the local mural painting practice onto portable materials, such as cotton, thereby enhancing these motifs and the associated know-how.

Nilla Banguna

Born in 1990, Democratic Republic of Congo.

Lives and works in Lubumbashi (DRC).

Sixte Kakinda



Sixte Kakinda, *From Hiroshima to Shinkolobwe*, 2023. Animated film, 1 min. 59 sec. Courtesy of the artist. (left)



Sixte Kakinda, *Monologue*, 2019-2025. Drawing. Courtesy of the artist. (right)

Through two complementary works, Sixte Kakinda explores the invisible links between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Japan, connected by a shared history that is yet often forgotten: the uranium extracted from the Congolese Shinkolobwe mine, used to manufacture the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. The animated film *From Hiroshima to Shinkolobwe* retraces, in reverse, the trajectory of this uranium from Japan back to the Congolese mine. The film questions the time required to create a destructive work, as well as the inscription of memory into a narrative.

The work *Monologue* serves as the starting point for a comic book about the invisibility of Congo in the collective memory linked to the atomic bomb. Symbolically infiltrating visitors' libraries, this work engages in dialogue with Mudimbe's reflection on the library as a place of rearrangement and rewriting of knowledge, showing how archives can be reclaimed and transformed to address toxicity and its legacies.

Sixte Kakinda

Born in 1984, Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Lives and works in Kampala (Uganda).

Godelive Kasangati Kabena



Godelive Kasangati Kabena, *Mbwa: Now Mine*, 2025. Blown glass, velvet pillow, duvet. Courtesy of the artist. Image: Rita Silva (left).

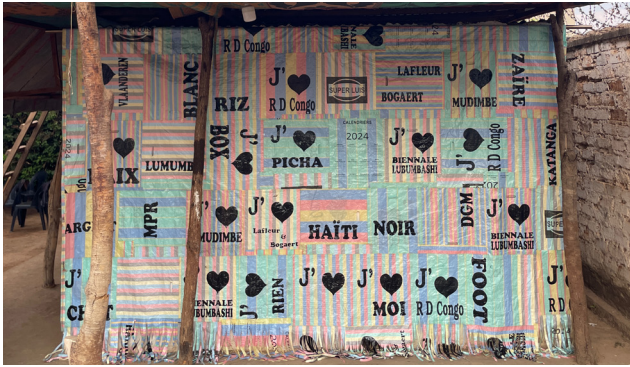


Godelive Kasangati Kabena, *Mbwa: Now Mine*, 2025. Blown glass, 1 kg rice bag and cardboard. Courtesy of the artist. Image: Rita Silva (right).

In her series *Mbwa: Now Mine*, created during her residency at Studio Voltaire in London, Godelive Kasangati Kabena explores the circulation and transformation of images of the Basenji dog, which is native to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. She examines processes that transform these images from simple representations into singularities, opening a reflection on archives and their content. Through glassblowing, a technique that combines repetition and uniqueness, the artist transposes these visual dynamics into tangible forms. Drawing on archives from institutions such as the Tervuren Museum and the British Museum, she explores the relationship between fragments and the whole. The Basenji dog is a starting point for exploring the exhaustion of archival materials, without seeking to fully define them.

Godelive Kasangati Kabena
Born in 1996, Democratic Republic of the Congo.
Lives and works between Kinshasa (DRC) and
Kumasi (Ghana).

Lafleur & Bogaert



Lafleur & Bogaert, *J'aime RD Congo*, 2024. Collage, hand-set letters on shopping bags sewn together with copper thread. Courtesy of the artists. Image: Lafleur & Bogaert. (left)



Lafleur & Bogaert, *J'aime RD Congo*, 2024. Polypropylene woven shopping bag 'taux du jour'. Courtesy of the artists. Image: Lafleur & Bogaert. (right)

J'aime RD Congo is a traveling project by the Lafleur & Bogaert artistic duo. Inspired by the polypropylene bags named *taux du jour*, which are widespread in everyday Congolese life, the artists transform this ordinary object into a hybrid form, both functional and a work of art. In collaboration with Ateliers Picha, they repurpose these bags to serve as the official bags of the Lubumbashi Biennale. Hand-painted, they circulate in public spaces, carrying messages that blend slogans from the streets, popular references, and tributes to Valentin-Yves Mudimbe. Since 2024, *J'aime RD Congo* has been traveling across the country, (from Kolwezi to Muanda, via Mbuji-Mayi, Lusanga, and Kinshasa), as a series of in situ artistic interventions, like a living textile collage nourished by the contexts in which it unfolds.

Lafleur & Bogaert
Founded in 2013 by Michel Lafleur (Haiti) and Tom Bogaert (Belgium).
Live and work in Port-au-Prince (Haiti) and Budapest (Hungary).

Mickaël–Sltan Mbanza



Mickaël-Sltan Mbanza, *Nsala*, 2025. Black and white video, 10 min. Courtesy of the artist.

Between colonial archives and contemporary images, *Nsala* weaves a silent dialogue between past and present. Mickaël-Sltan Mbanza addresses the history of mining exploitation in Katanga through a poetic film that explores memory, silence, and transmission. Created during a residency at the Yole!Africa center, *Nsala* blends images from the Tervuren Museum with scenes filmed in an active mine. Through parallel editing, gestures from the past and present respond to one another, revealing the persistence of an exploitative logic that marks both bodies and landscapes. Yet by replaying these imposed figures, the film shifts their meaning: once objectified, the filmed bodies regain subjecthood. Through cinematic means, Mickaël-Sltan Mbanza short-circuits the colonial system of representation. Taking back control of one's image thus becomes an act of reappropriation: disrupting time, delving into silence, and restoring to the filmed bodies their dignity, their history, their presence.

Mickaël-Sltan Mbanza

Born in 1996, Democratic Republic of the Congo.
Lives and works in Goma (DRC).

Pendezâ Mulamba



Pendezâ Mulamba, *Mon chant*, 2024. HD Video, coulour, sound, 6 min. 5 sec. Courtesy of the artist.

Mon chant is an experimental film that conveys artist Pendezâ Mulamba's growing anxiety in the face of fast environmental degradation, set against the backdrop of daily births in a world in crisis. The work takes root in a scene witnessed in Kinshasa, where kilometers of roads were covered in a thick layer of plastic waste, a striking reflection of the scale of pollution in a city that is both overpopulated and predominantly young. Through an imagined dialogue between a mother and her unborn child, the film questions our role in rebuilding a livable environment for future generations. By juxtaposing the calm of the intrauterine world with the violence of a threatened outside, the artist offers a sensitive reflection on motherhood, transmission, and forms of resistance facing ecological collapse.

Pendezâ Mulamba

Born in 1998, Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Lives and work in Kisangani (DRC).



Photos : © Julien De Bock

Founded in Lubumbashi in 2008 in the dynamic context of the first Lubumbashi Biennale—then called *Rencontres Picha*—Picha is a cultural association dedicated to building a sustainable ecosystem for art and culture in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Its mission is to foster local talent while promoting international dialogue.

The association's activities are structured around three main pillars: the Picha Art and Research Center, the Lubumbashi Biennale, and the Picha Workshops, a training program designed to support the emergence and professionalization of the young Congolese art scene.

Since its creation, Picha has become a key actor in the dissemination of contemporary art in Lubumbashi through exhibitions, residencies, training programs, and artistic production projects. Its activities now take place across two sites: the Picha Art Center in Makomeno and a silkscreen printing studio in Makwacha, about sixty kilometers from the city. Supported by a network of local and international partners, the Lubumbashi Biennale has established itself as a landmark event for the visual arts in Central Africa, bringing together artists and professionals from around the world. The next edition will take place in October 2026.

Last editions of the Lubumbashi Biennale:

Lubumbashi Biennale VIII – *Toxicity* – 2024

For its eighth edition, the Lubumbashi Biennale focused on the residual toxicity left by more than a century of colonialism and mass extraction in the Katanga–Copperbelt region. This edition drew upon the thought and legacy of Valentin-Yves Mudimbe, the philosopher born in Likasi, and engaged with key decolonial concepts such as *reprendre* (“to take back”), the colonial library, and (African) *gnosis*.

Mudimbe's reassessing philosophy, placed in resonance with the artistic practices supported by Atelier Picha, offers a complementary curatorial framework that both renews and extends the reflections initiated with *Toxicity*.

Lubumbashi Biennale VII – *ToxiCity* – 2022

For its seventh edition, the Biennale explored toxicity as a condition of existence that inextricably affects social worlds, under the title *ToxiCité / ToxiCity*. The theme, conceived as a starting point, invited the collective development of a critical and transformative perspective on social and cultural environments—both in Lubumbashi and across the globe.

PRESS RELEASE

Imane Farès represents Sinzo Aanza, Basma al-Sharif, Sammy Baloji, Minia Biabiany, Ali Cherri, Emeka Ogbob, Younès Rahmoun, James Webb.

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