

PRESS RELEASE

Sinzo Aanza

Une archéologie de la nuit

11 April—6 June, 2026

Opening: Saturday 11 April, 3 pm — 8 pm



Sinzo Aanza, *The Sky Map of Mbwila on 29 octobre 1665*, 2024.
Photo by Ela Bialkowska, OKNO Studio for PinchukArtCentre/Future Generation Art Prize.

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Lives and works between Kinshasa and Zurich



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Born in 1990 in Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo.
Lives and works between Kinshasa and Zurich.

Congolese writer and visual artist, Sinzo Aanza develops a transdisciplinary practice that explores the radicality of fiction as a poetic, critical, and visual method. At the core of his work lies the concept of Ngwaki, inspired by an ancient dance of the Nande people, in which movement, speech, and rhythm compose a collective space of narration and renewal. Aanza appropriates this principle to elaborate a practice in which texts, drawings, installations, and performances function as gestures within the same narrative architecture.

At the intersection of literature and the visual arts, his work examines the mechanisms through which societies, institutions, and individuals produce their founding narratives and regimes of truth. Drawing on writing, archives, documentary research, and poetic speculation, he constructs apparatus in which objects, images, and textual fragments become elements of a narrative field in transformation.

His installations draw as much from theatre as they do from critical thought, composing environments in which images appear as traces of real or imagined events. Between document and legend, memory and speculation, official discourse and alternative fiction, the work stages the tensions that are held within the production of collective imaginaries.

Through these structures, Aanza explores how myths, economies, histories, resource extraction, and symbolic constructions shape ideas of territory, identity, and belonging. Fiction becomes both a tool of analysis and a space for experimentation, capable of displacing established narratives and opening other forms of thought.

His recent work has been presented in numerous exhibitions, including the 36th Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts and at the Musée de l'Homme in Paris (2025), the PinchukArtCentre in Kyiv as part of the Future Generation Art Prize, and the Magasins Généraux in Paris (2024), Kunsthaus Zürich (2023), the Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine in Paris (2020), Museum Rietberg in Zurich, WIELS in Brussels, and the Lubumbashi Biennale (2019), the Rencontres de la photographie d'Arles (2018), as well as the Lyon Biennale (2017).

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For his third exhibition at the gallery, Sinzo Aanza will present three of his most recent projects, which explore obscure corners of history—moments when a world shifts, when political, symbolic, and material structures are transformed to the point of becoming almost unrecognizable. *Une archéologie de la nuit (An Archaeology of the Night)* examines these ruptures not through their official narratives, but through the traces they have left on objects, cosmologies, the psyche and gestures.

The figure of Kalisya appears through the sculptures of the series *Kalisya, the Thousand Faces*, like the paradoxical spirit of technological modernity: a goddess born in the cosmologies of Kivu, yet now scattered throughout the material circuits of a hyperconnected world.

The Sky Map of Mbwila on 29 October 1665 revisits the 1665 battle between the kingdoms of Kongo and Portugal as a moment of cosmological upheaval, where the end of a local political order ushers in a global modernity that is already corrupt and fractured.

Finally, with the series *The Pedestal is a Flowerpot*, the artist questions the history of museums and monuments, revealing how the beauty of the objects on display remains linked to the dynamics of conquest, appropriation, colonial knowledge and possession.

Hair, minerals, textiles, heads, displaced objects—the works act as fragments unearthed from a partially buried history. Together, they offer a symbolic excavation of our time, revealing the invisible layers that connect ancient cosmologies, historical catastrophes, and contemporary infrastructures. This exhibition is an attempt to read the night of the world—not as a void, but as an archive.

Kalisya, the Thousand Faces



Kalisya, The Thousand Faces series, 2024.

Photo: Ela Bialkowska, OKNO Studio for the PinchukArtCentre/Future Generation Art Prize.

The sculptures from the *Kalisya, the Thousand Faces* series embody Kalisya, the goddess of technological time and a spirit of the contemporary world governed by extraction, resource transformation, and hyperconnectivity. In the Nande tradition of Kivu, she also represents the spirit of nature, linking stones, waters, mountains, human bodies, and the spirits of the dead. Invisible and elusive, Kalisya cannot be definitively represented: the different sculptures therefore propose a series of possible manifestations—her “thousand faces”—exploring the breadth of her essence.

The series draws inspiration from a mourning ritual in Kivu in which the hair of the deceased is cast into water, symbolizing the transformation of bodies and lives that escape human control. These gestures become an invisible archive of the tragic history of the wars in Kivu. The thousand faces of Kalisya—of which these sculptures present only the first eight—find their origin in these staggering statistics. They do not represent individuals, but intensities: the density of human lives, deaths, and mourning gestures that traverse the territory.

The forms of the faces combine African codifications, natural morphologies, and statistical data. Kalisya thus becomes a paradoxical figure of modernity: the resources of her territory fuel global technology and shape the daily lives of billions of people.

The sculptures in the series were commissioned by the PinchukArtCentre as part of the Future Generation Art Prize. They are made of wood and painted with a special acrylic derived from columbite-tantalite. The hair of these sculptures, made from banana fibers and held in place by copper rings, extends the connection between the human body, nature, and history. It forms an “analog statistic,” materializing the density of lives and events that make up Kalisya’s world.

Kalisya, The Thousand Faces series 2024

Sculptures in Gmelina wood, special columbite-tantalite acrylic paint, banana floral stem fibres, copper
Variable dimensions

Commissioned by the
PinchukArtCentre as part of the
Future Generation Art Prize

The Sky Map of Mbwila on 29 October 1665



The Sky Map of Mbwila on 29 octobre 1665, 2024.

Photo: Ela Bialkowska, OKNO Studio for PinchukArtCentre/Future Generation Art Prize.

The Sky Map of Mbwila on 29 October 1665, the Battle of Mbwila pitted the Kingdom of Kongo against Portuguese forces and marked the end of a political world: a local system of power and sovereignty ceased to be recognized. From that moment on, African structures were reclassified by colonial narratives as archaic, and their insignia became ethnographic objects, preserved in European museums. The political was transformed into culture, and the complex history of these societies was reduced to traces detached from their original function.

The textile work addresses this rupture through a symbolic cartography. It imagines the sky of October 29, 1665, as a site where two cosmologies collide: the old world, dense and structured by local powers, and the new world, broader and fractured, marked by economic expansion, transoceanic trade, and the violence that made it possible. The figure of Ndyoka, a sea monster from Nande and Konjo traditions, illustrates the danger of excessive accumulation and the imbalances it generates, resonating with the historical transformations initiated by Mbwila.

The Sky Map of Mbwila on 29 October 1665, is a commission by the PinchukArtCentre and takes the form of a poem in Kinande and a textile surface composed of Kuba fabrics made from palm fibers, embroidered with raffia threads and industrial textiles. Each fragment bears the trace of human labor and constitutes an embodied memory. The embroidered astrological symbols create a recomposed cosmology: the map does not predict the future, but makes visible the passage between two worlds—a threshold from which new forms of life and thought must emerge.

*The Sky Map of Mbwila on 29 octobre 1665
2024*

Palm fibers, various fabrics, and acrylic
16,5 x 6 m

Commissioned by the
PinchukArtCentre as part of the
Future Generation Art Prize

The Pedestal is a Flowerpot



The Pedestal is a Flowerpot series, 2025. Print and acrylic painting on Canson paper. Courtesy of the artist.

The Pedestal Is a Flowerpot is a series of 70 drawings commissioned by the Ljubljana Biennale. The project revisits the pedestal as a museological and political object by shifting perspective. Usually designed to showcase an object, a figure, or a symbol, the pedestal isolates and elevates, organizing admiration and visual hierarchy. Yet behind this aesthetic function lies a mechanism of power: it determines what deserves to be seen, preserved, or celebrated. The pedestal speaks as much about the object it supports as about those who look at it.

The series of drawings interrogates the pedestal itself—its role, its history, its psychological and political function. Before being displayed, the object has been selected, conquered, extracted from its context. The beauty of the pedestal results from a social and psychological dynamic aimed at creating collective points of reference. Elevated figures—heroes, thinkers, martyrs, artists—embody values that society seeks to stabilize, revealing what it admires or wishes to preserve.

The history of museums illustrates this tension: far from being neutral, they have often collected through conquest, at times transforming the human body into a scientific archive. The drawings in this project evoke this circulation and symbolic violence, recalling that the history of objects is tied to their context and to processes of appropriation.

To shift this traditional logic, the artist replaces the pedestal with flowerpots. As domestic objects, they do not seek to elevate but to contain and invite contemplation. Where the pedestal fixes, the flowerpot transforms the monument into a dialogue and a living memory, capable of growth and fracture. The series of drawings thus reinvents the pedestal as a space for reflection, where beauty reveals what we choose to honor—and what that says about us.

The Pedestal is a Flowerpot series
2025

Prints painted with acrylic on paper
Variable dimensions

Commissioned by the Ljubljana
Graphic Arts Biennale, 2025

PRESS RELEASE

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

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