

# Contemporary art in the AfricaMuseum



Information about the artists who  
contributed to the museum's renovation

# In Belgium

## Aimé Mpane

(Kinshasa, 1968, lives and works in Nivelles)

***Nouveau souffle ou le Congo bourgeonnant,***  
Tervuren, 2016. Wood and gilded bronze.

*Sculpture installed in the Great Rotunda,  
commissioned by the museum. Coll. RMCA,  
Tervuren. Inv. 2017.7.1*



Aimé Mpane (1968 - )

Aimé Mpane created this sculpture, that will be installed in the Great Rotunda, in 2016-2017. This monumental work, in chiselled wood, stands on a bronze pedestal and represents the head, in profile, of an African man.

The bronze, which drips and spreads across the floor, references the gilded bronze of the sculptures that surround the work. It is the artist's way of putting them in perspective, while taking a critical look at the history of colonial propaganda. The artist's aim is not to influence the museum's approach, which discusses the colonial project and the misdeeds of colonisation, as this was a key theme of his previous works. Today, his work is fully oriented towards the future and infused with humanity: putting the African back into the centre of the Great Rotunda, probably one of the most symbolic spaces in the museum, which is filled with meaning. A fantastic subversion of Leopold II's imperialist propaganda.

He states that he wishes to leave the misdeeds of the colonial past behind him, without therefore glossing over them. Instead he wants to introduce a breath of fresh air, to create a new museum in which Africa and Africans play a central role.

Aimé Mpane is the son of a Congolese sculptor and cabinet maker. He trained as a painter at the Kinshasa Academy of Fine Arts from 1984 to 1990. In 1994, he travelled to Belgium, where he was shocked at how many clichés on Africa still persisted. He graduated from La Cambre in 2000 (painting and three-dimensional research). His breakthrough in Belgium came with the Yambi exhibition in 2007 and his sculpture "L'ombre de l'ombre" ('The shadow of the shadow'). He exhibited his work for the first time at the RMCA in Persona, in 2009, which combined traditional masks with contemporary art. The exhibition focused on the quest for identity. He has received several awards including the Prize of the Blachère Foundation at the Dakar Biennial, the Dorothy and Herbert Robert Vogel Prize (Philips Collection) of the National Gallery, in Washington the United States.

He experiments with serial painting and installation art.



## Aimé Ntakyica

(Burundi, 1960, lives and works in Beersel)

***Histoire de famille. Arbre généalogique n°1,***  
(Family history, Family tree No. 1), Tervuren,  
Belgium. 2016. Glass, labels and wool.

Permanent installation in the AFROPEA gallery.  
Coll. RMCA, Tervuren - inv. 2017.6.1



Aimé Ntakyica's work is difficult to categorise, because of its universal appeal. He creates installations that combine video, photography, and objects, which literally invite the spectator to participate in them, to become part of them. He asks himself, and the public, questions, about identity, Africanity, violence, family, the arts. His works are often infused with humour, poetry and sometimes derision.

With his work "Histoire de famille. Arbre généalogique n°1", Aimé Ntakyica has created a serial work for the museum. A work to be shared with the public, including the diaspora, which has also determined his family's history. The work was first presented at the Dakar Biennial in 2016, but has evolved since then. Other family trees can be installed, elsewhere, in the future. By displaying the names of 120 of his family members on labels that are pasted to glass pots, he shares very little but also very much of his family history. Every pot contains colourful strands of wool - without any other detail, without a date. Anyone who has experienced exile at first-hand will recognise himself in this story of a family marked by the diaspora, which is both unique and universal. This installation does not come with instructions. The museum is free to arrange the pots as it sees fit.

Born in Burundi, he left for Belgium in 1974. In Belgium, he studied drawing and painting and went to work as a lecturer at the Academy of Fine Arts in Kinshasa. He participated in AfricaRemix in 2005 at the Centre Pompidou.

## Sammy Baloji

(Lubumbashi, 1978, , lives and works in Lubumbashi and Brussels)

Organiser of the Lubumbashi biennial.

Currently, there are no works by Sammy Baloji in the museum, but in 2009-2011, he was one of the first two artists in residence in the museum, along with Patrick Mudekereza.

Having trained as a comic strip designer, and subsequently a photographer in Lubumbashi, Sammy Baloji took a keen interest in the history of Katanga, a mining region, using it as inspiration for his art practice. He draws on archives, including those of the museum, for the most part. In his assemblages, he combines images of the past with landscapes of the present. He asks frank questions about the iconography of colonisation. He also wants to increase the visibility of the Congolese in colonial history: the porters, the chefs, the women, the labourers. The history of the UMHK, which was subsequently renamed Gécamine, and the current work of clandestine diggers, is of great concern to him.

Co-curator, with Bambi Ceuppens, of two exhibitions on folk painting in collaboration with the RMCA.

### First artist in residence at the RMCA in 2009-2011

In 2008, the photographer Sammy Baloji and the writer Patrick Mudekereza were invited by the University of Ghent and the Royal Museum of Central Africa for a four-week residency in the museum. They sifted through the museum's archives, selecting the items they wished to focus on during their residency. The project was called "Congo Far West". Sammy Baloji decided to combine the photos of François Michel and the watercolours of Léon Dardenne, which he painted during an expedition of Charles Lemaire to Katanga, at the end of the 19th Century (1898-1900). Sammy Baloji wanted to paint a picture of contemporary Katanga, from a historical perspective, following in the footsteps of this expedition, rediscovering villages, grandchildren, the places and legacies of this era. As an artist in residence of the AfricaMuseum, Sammy Baloji also took the initiative for various projects in the museum, curating several exhibitions, including with Bambi Ceuppens - "Congo Art Works" at Bozar, and at Garage, a contemporary art museum in Moscow; "Congo Stars" in Graz (Austria) and Tübingen (Germany). Sammy Baloji's work can be found in various public and private collections.

## Patrick Mudekereza

(Lubumbashi, 1983, lives and works in Lubumbashi)

Writer

Cultural entrepreneur, director of the WAZA Arts Centre (Lubumbashi).

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Patrick Mudekereza is a writer and cultural entrepreneur born in Lubumbashi in 1983. He is the director of the Waza Arts Centre. He holds a master's degree in the history of art from Witwatersrand University in Johannesburg, South Africa and a graduate degree in Industrial Chemistry (Faculté Polytechnique, Université de Lubumbashi). He initiated or collaborated on several art projects, which gave rise to several publications and exhibitions, both in Congo and internationally. He worked as an administrator and visual arts curator at the French Cultural Centre in Lubumbashi, and also served as the editor of the cultural magazine Nzenze. He coordinated the first three editions of *Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi*. He was a member of the steering committee of the Arterial Network from 2009 to 2014 and the International Biennial Association from 2014 to 2017. He is currently the director of *Liboke, Réseau des centres culturels indépendants congolais*, a federation of 15 independent arts centres in the DRC. In 2015, he received the Congolese National Award for Art, Literature and Science.

Barly Baruti is a famous comic strip designer. Born in Kisangani, he initially worked for African newspapers and magazines. Soon his work began to appear regularly in Europe. Barly Baruti has instigated several initiatives to develop and promote comic strip design in Africa.

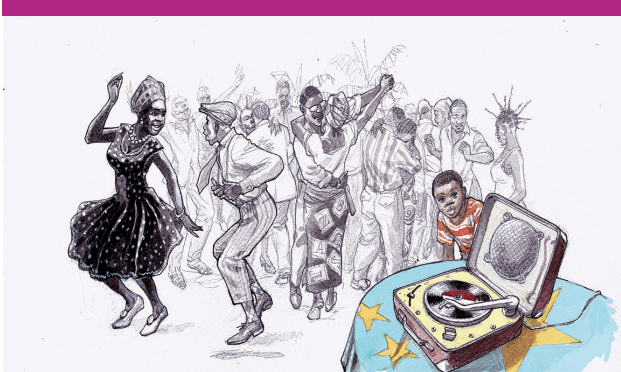
In addition to designing comic strips, he is also a musician, and a connoisseur of the Congolese rumba. At the request of the RMCA, Barly Baruti created a set of drawings, more specifically portraits of iconic musicians, which trace the history of this musical genre.

## Barly Baruti

(Congo, 1959, lives and works in Belgium)

**Rumba**, 2017. Drawing

*Installation of drawings, which retrace the history of Congolese music and focus on some of the biggest names in this genre in the gallery. ©Barly Baruti 2017.33.*



©Barly Baruti

**In Koli Jean Bofane**  
(Congo, 1954, lives and works in  
Brussels)

Writer

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A Congolese author, who became internationally famous with his two novels, "Mathématiques Congolaises", 2008, and "Congo INC. Le testament de Bismark", 2014, which were published by Actes Sud and translated into several languages. His most recent novel, "La belle de Casa", was launched in the autumn of 2018.

Jean Bofane was born in the DRC, to Congolese parents. Before 1960, his mother, Véronique Bofane, married Georges Casse, a Belgian plantation owner in the Province of Equateur. Jean Bofane's stepfather was not an official of the colonial administration. He travelled to Congo of his own volition. As he married a Congolese woman, the history of this blended family is atypical in the colonial context of that era. Jean Bofane had an older white brother and two mixed-race half-sisters. His stepfather was also a keen amateur cinematographer. He filmed his family and the workers on his plantations. These images paint a picture of the life of a family in Equateur Province, very different from that of the official imagery of the colonial propaganda. Jean Bofane has donated his family archives to the museum (they have been digitised, and are now preserved at the Cinematek). Jean Bofane comments on these archives in the Representation gallery.

# In France

## Michèle Magma

(Congo, 1977, lives and works in Nevers (France))

***Mémoires Hévée, entre Histoire et histoires individuelles (Hévée Memories, from History to herstories), 2015.***

*Installation of 3 portraits printed on baryta paper and 34 drawings. Installation in the gallery that surrounds the main courtyard (former cafeteria). Coll. RMCA. Inv. 2016.44.1*



Born in 1977 in Kinshasa (DR Congo), Michèle Magma left for Paris (France) in 1984. A graduate of the Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Arts de Cergy, she participated in the Africa Remix exhibition and the Dakar Biennial, which was curated by Simon Njami. Her work focuses on the exchanges between individual stories, collective memory and history. She combines photos, videos and drawings in her installations, using the body as an instrument.

At the centre of this installation, the portrait of three women retraces the history of three generations of Congolese women. The artist's grandmother, Anne Kilonga, who was born in 1921 is flanked by the portraits of the artist's mother Marie-José Mbongo Ngudi Mpassi, born in 1952, to the right and the artist herself, who was born in Kinshasa in 1977, to the left. All three women were born in the DRC but Michèle emigrated. The story of these three women merges with the country's history. Around the portraits, she has installed drawings of difficult episodes in the political and economic history of a country that was initially colonised and then became independent. A country that was renamed several times.



## Freddy Tsimba

(Kinshasa, 1967, lives and works in Kinshasa, DR Congo)

*"Ombres" (Shadows), Tervuren, 2016.*  
Coll. RMCA, Tervuren, Inv. 2016.45



Freddy Tsimba is an artist and sculptor who holds a degree from the Kinshasa Academy of Fine Arts (monumental sculpture, 1989). He prefers to work in bronze and metal, creating assemblages with recovered materials like scrap metal, including bullet casings and cartridge cases, as well as spoons. He is a famous in Kinshasa and on the international arts scene for his bullet casing sculptures and machete houses. Tsimba is a unique and independent artist, who defends human rights in his work. He denounces the tragedies caused by war, and highlights human violence throughout history. He participated in the "Africa Remix" exhibition, the Dakar Biennial (2005) and two exhibitions, 'The Divine Comedy' (2014) and "Afriques en Capitales" (2017), which were curated by Simon Njami. He has won several international prizes.

During his residency in 2016, he created two installations. These residences receive funding from the Belgian Development Cooperation and the European SWITCH project (2016) :

"Ombres" is a permanent installation, which was originally created for the museum's Memorial gallery in 2016. This gallery lists the names of the 1,508 Belgian soldiers who died in Congo during the struggle for independence, which explains its name. At the time, the Congolese victims were not deemed worthy of being listed.

The artist has made two interventions in the gallery. He asked the museum to remove the busts and displays that refer to Belgium's past as a victorious coloniser. Only two sets of wheels and a drawbar that were used during the independence process of Congo, remained in place. This cart, among others, was used to transport materials during the construction of the Matadi-Kinshasa railway line (1890-1898).

In addition to this tribute to the victims of forced labour in Congo, the artist has used daylight to inscribe the names of the first Congolese victims to die in Belgium in the wake of the colonisation of Congo: at the World Expo in Antwerp in 1894, in the park of Tervuren during the World Expo in 1897 and the names of the children of Gijzegem, who died between 1890 and 1906.

The daylight projects the name of these Congolese citizens on the gallery's wall.

***Centres fermés, rêves ouverts (Closed centres, open dreams)***, Tervuren, 2018. Reinforcing bars from the construction site at Tervuren and spoons from Kinshasa.

*Temporary installation by Freddy Tsimba against the wall's exterior façade. DR Congo, artist's collection.*



This installation, which is the outcome of a residency in the spring and summer of 2016, is a participatory project, which is still ongoing. With his installation, the artist invites people to inscribe the name of victims of the colonisation, both in Belgium and the DRC, and to name the people who disappeared. Freddy Tsimba trained as a smelter and is famous for his bullet sculptures. This is the first time he uses light as a material. He adds “shadows” to the colonial picture with the help of the sun.

### **Centres fermés, rêves ouverts**

This installation was created during Freddy Tsimba's residency at the museum in 2016. He used materials that were recovered from the construction site during the museum's renovation to form these characters. This installation is part of a larger ensemble, which ultimately will consist of 99 figures. Freddy Tsimba has been working on these figures for several years. They are lined up against a wall, during an interrogation. He was inspired to create this series by his own personal experience in a closed centre in Belgium. The figures have no head, they are anonymous and universal. It is his tribute to the millions of men and women who are interrogated, to the suppressed refugees. They come to life, take their place in different spaces, at different times. They reply to each other, like a long chain. Tsimba's work extends beyond the borders of the DRC. In this series of eight figures, which he created for Tervuren, larger than life women and children raise questions about the violence perpetrated throughout human history.

**Géraldine MUTUBANDE TOBE**  
(Congo, 1992, lives and works in  
Kinshasa)

Painter

***Série Masques (Mask series)***, Kinshasa, 2012.  
*Smoke on canvas. Inv. 2018.17.1.1 - 3*

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Graduating from the Kinshasa Academy of Fine Arts in 2012, she made her debut as a painter with the BO-KUTANI collective. Her colleagues reproached her that her work was repetitive, which prompted her to burn everything that she created. Her take on a reset. Now the artist uses smoke as a pigment. She produces this smoke with an oil lamp, like the ones you often see in Kinshasa. Her approach is autobiographical. Her sources of inspiration include the situation in her country, the fate of child sorcerers, mysticism, death and religion. Her work rapidly changes and progresses, as she undertakes new journeys, meeting new people. An artist in residence in Belgium and Madagascar. She was also the only woman artist to represent Congo at the Dakar Biennial in 2018.

# In the DR Congo

**Madame Thérèse Izay Kirongozi**  
(Congo, 1975, lives and works in Kinshasa)

Engineer

***Robot-roulage-intelligent. intelligent***  
***(Smart traffic controller/robot).*** Kinshasa, RDC,  
2017, polystyrene, aluminium, led lamps and  
solar collector. Inv. 2018.1.1



Road accidents are a frequent hazard and kill many people in the DRC. To combat this problem, Mrs Thérèse Izay Kirongozi and the "Women's Technology" association (Wotech) devised and fine-tuned this project of an imposing incorruptible robot. The prototype was developed into a real project, a robot traffic warden. An android robot regulates traffic on the streets of major Congolese cities. The project won the 2017-2018 WorldSafeAwards Innovation Prize in Atlanta in the United States and is currently being exported to several African countries. The robot, which the museum acquired in 2018, is one of the new generation, a MOSEKA robot. Moseka means young girl in Lingala. She is 2.90m tall, stands on a 1.10m base and weighs 160 kilos. A windshield wiper motor provides the rotational movement - 12v for the 540 led lamps. Solar panels are used to power the robot in the city. Moseka sings a popular song about road safety, which all Congolese children learn in school.

Thérèse Izay Kirongozi is an engineer, specialising in industrial electronics, and a graduate of the ISTA (Institut supérieur des techniques appliquées in Kinshasa). She is also the president of a Congolese association of women engineers, called "Women's Technology".



**Nelson Makengo**  
(Congo, 1990, lives and works in  
Kinshasa)

Photographer and filmmaker

***De Victoire-rotonde (Victoire roundabout),***  
*Matonge neighbourhood, Kalamu district,*  
*Kinshasa, DRC, 2018. Colour photos.*



Nelson Makengo, an urban dweller and an image poet, walks the streets of Kinshasa, Paris and more recently Lubumbashi, at night and during the day. He installs superheroes in the city, taking their photo, changing the perspective and the gaze. His first film highlighted the career of the artist Géraldine Tobe, who was accused of sorcery by her own family. Makengo's documentaries, such as *Tabu* (2016), *Souvenir d'un été* (2017), *Théâtre urbain* (2017) et *E'ville* (2018), were included in the official selection of several film festivals. Artist in residence at Wiels in 2018.

The photos that are displayed on the wall displays of this gallery were taken during the installation of the robot. They offer a panoramic view of the Victoire roundabout, one of Kinshasa's busiest roundabouts, both in daytime and at night.

His photos of the Victoire roundabout in Kinshasa provide a panoramic view of the smart traffic robot.

## Iviart Izamba Zi Kianda

(Kinshasa, 1974, lives and works in Kinshasa)

### Artist and designer

***Fauteuil Lumumba (Lumumba Chair).*** Brussels, 2015. Recovered materials: printed canvas and drum. With the kind permission of the artist.

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The chair belongs to the artist and will be exhibited in the Postcol gallery (post-colonial history).

Iviart Lamba is an artist and designer in Kinshasa. He lectures at the Kinshasa Academy of Fine Arts. He was the museum's artist in residence in the spring of 2014 and from April to June 2015. During his residency, he created a set of chairs. Here is what he had to say on this project:

"I developed a set of political chairs, as a reflection on the DRC's political history. Everyone has a chair, everyone knows what a chair is. It's a good communication instrument. These chairs were made of recovered materials, a basic material in Kinshasa, which became such in Brussels. As a designer, I'm used to working with recovered materials, which I combine with new materials to create a new object.

Here I was inspired by the shape and the content. I used the various post-colonial political archives of the Royal Museum for Central Africa. The content is a "re-creation", starting from press clippings, election posters, pamphlets, photos, which I combined in a layout and then printed on faux leather.

Regarding politics, I'm deeply moved by the interest that the majority of the Congolese public take in politics, especially young people. But I'm also surprised at the lack of information about our political history in the DRC. Conflicting narratives abound. I thought that I could play a role in this because such archives do not exist in the DRC or are difficult to access. By installing them on these chairs, these archives become 'legible'. People pay attention to them now. I would be really happy if this installation was exhibited in the DRC.

These chairs are installations, not seating, but thrones.

They are empty. Politics are absent."

## Mega Mingiedi

(Kinshasa, 1976, lives and works in Kinshasa)

Illustrator and painter

***Taxi Episcopo***, drawing, ballpoint on paper,  
Kinshasa, DRC. 2017., Kinshasa, DRC. 2017.

*Installation in the Resources gallery.*  
*Inv. 2017.14.1*



Mega Mingiedi holds a degree from the Kinshasa Academy of Arts (2001) and the Haute Ecole des Arts du Rhin, in Strasbourg (2008). He is interested in urban space and the place of people in the city. His large drawings and collages trace the symbolic routes that the people of Kinshasa take, rendering their impressions or mental images of the city visible. His works resemble cartographical or topographical maps. An activist artist, he was a founding member of Eza Possibles (which means: It's possible in Lingala) in 2003. This collective tries to bring contemporary art closer to the people of Kinshasa, inserting it in their daily life. He has had residencies in several international institutions.

# Folk artists :

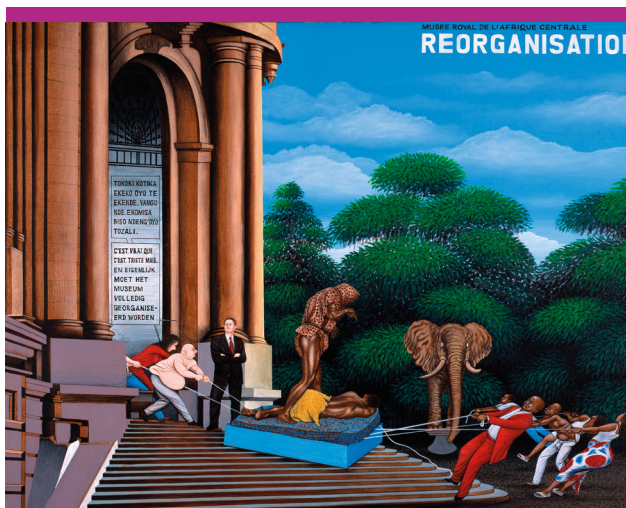
## Chéri Samba

(Congo, b. Kinto M'Vuila, 1956,  
lives and works in Kinshasa)

Painter

***Réorganisation (Reorganisation)***, Tervuren, 2002.  
Oil on canvas. Coll. RMCA, Tervuren. Inv.  
HO.0.1.3865

***Porte de Namur, Porte de l'Amour (Gate of Love)***,  
Brussels, 2002. Oil on canvas. Coll. CEC. With the  
support of Belgian Development Cooperation  
Coll. CEC (the canvas that inspired the large  
tarpaulin in Matonge)



*Réorganisation* will be presented in the Depot gallery  
(Museum zone) / Porte de Namur ! Porte de l'amour?  
will be installed in the AFROPEA gallery.

Chéri Samba is one of the most famous contemporary folk artists. He arrived in Kinshasa in 1972, earning a living as a self-taught painter of advertising signs and a comic strip designer for *Bilenge Info*. He established his own studio in 1975. Like many of the folk artists of his generation, he paints scenes of daily life, and raises political, economic, and social questions in his work, painting a picture of the harsh reality of life in Kinshasa. He paints himself, adding text to the canvases in the form of commentaries. That is his hallmark. He inspired the expression: “a painting inspired by the people, about the people, which engages with the people”. The museum has two important works by Chéri Samba. They both date from 2002. He produced them during his residency in Brussels at the CEC (Coopération pour l'éducation et la culture). *Porte de Namur ! Porte de l'Amour ?* is famous in Matonge, a neighbourhood in Ixelles, where this painting was reproduced on a large tarp. In 2002, there were political and cultural tensions in Matonge, between the Congolese and the local population. This canvas aimed to reconcile them, gathering the communities around a common idea, the concept of diversity.

Also in 2002, Chéri Samba produced a work about the museum's *Reorganisation* at the request of Guido Gryseels, the newly-appointed director of the RMCA. The painting is centred around a sculpted group, called the *Aniota*. This group was produced in the early twentieth century by the sculptor Paul Wissaert (1885-1951) for the Belgian Congo Museum. Early on, this sculpture caused controversy, as it features a scene that is degrading for Africans. The African communities feared that this sculpture would only compound the old stereotypes, and felt that such a representation sent the wrong message to an audience that would not be properly informed about the context in which this group was produced. Chéri Samba installs the group on a mattress. A group of Africans pull the mattress and the sculpture out of the museum while the stuffed elephant of Tervuren and the museum's director look on. A group of Europeans, representing the museum



staff, say, in Flemish: “We cannot accept that this statue leaves the museum. It has made us into what we are today”. To which the museum’s director replies: “It’s true, it’s unfortunate, but we must completely rethink the museum.”

## Chéri Chérin

(Kinshasa, 1955, lives and works in Kinshasa)

Painter

***Le chemin de l’exil ((The Path to Exile),***  
*Kinshasa, 2002.*

*Oil on canvas. Coll. RMCA, Tervuren. Inv.*  
*HO.2013.57.1747*



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Chéri Chérin, real name Joseph Kinkonda, studied at the Academy of Fine Arts before transferring to the studio of folk artists. He created advertising posters and frescoes on the walls of Kinshasa before switching to oils and canvas in the Seventies. His activist, political and critical work was noticed outside the DRC, contributing to his international fame.

“Le chemin de l’exil” is a profoundly typical image of Kinshasa, which depicts the incessant comings and goings of the population between Kinshasa and Brazzaville, and the opposing river banks.

There are various works by Chéri Chérin in the museum, including “Le chemin de l’exil”, which was exhibited at Bozar in 2016 and in the Egmont Palace this summer.

## Shula Monsengo

(Kioki, 1959, lives and works in Kinshasa)

Painter

Shula arrived in Kinshasa in 1975 and trained as a painter in the studio of his cousin Moke. Like so many other folk artists, he is inspired by daily life and denounces the injustice that is perpetrated by the ruling classes. His paintings are critical and political but this style of painting adds a surreal layer to his work.

