

PRESS KIT

# MABELE ELEKI LOLA!

DE AARDE, STRALENDER DAN HET PARADIJS  
LA TERRE, PLUS BELLE QUE LE PARADIS  
THE EARTH, BRIGHTER THAN PARADISE



**FREDDY  
TSIMBA**

curator / commissaire

IN KOLI JEAN BOFANE

29.10.2020 - 15.08.2021

[www.africamuseum.be](http://www.africamuseum.be)



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For the first temporary exhibition since it reopened in December 2018, AfricaMuseum invites Kinshasa artist Freddy Tsimba to enter a dialogue with the museum's collections. The exhibit is curated by writer In Koli Jean Bofane, with the scientific contribution of Henry Bundjoko, director of the Musée national de la République démocratique du Congo – Kinshasa.

The title of the exhibit, '*Mabele eleki lola !* The earth, brighter than paradise', expresses the urgency of living in the here and now, and to the resilience demonstrated by Congolese people day after day.

The curator presents a face-to-face encounter between the memories contained in the ethnographic pieces and the spirit of Freddy Tsimba's work. For the artist, the museum's pieces hold memories that are waiting to come alive. African artists and intellectuals have always been interested in the museum's collections. Opening this heritage to new studies, reflections, and reappropriations is a crucial step in the process of transforming the museum and its collections.

Together with Africalia, the museum seeks to fulfil the task of promoting artists and cultural actors from Africa.

## THE EXHIBITION

In Koli Jean Bofane, novelist and author of *Mathématiques congolaises* (Actes Sud) and exhibit curator, casts a new light on the art of Freddy Tsimba by revealing the spiritual nature of his work. As the heir to a long tradition of master smithing, Freddy Tsimba transforms conflict metal into raw materials for a different narrative.

Revival churches come with a promise of heaven. But what paradise do they speak of?

For Freddy Tsimba and Jean Bofane, it is vital to do away with false promises. The Earth is above everything else. It is brighter than paradise! The title comes from a conversation with the artist, an eternal optimist and lover of life and beauty.

Tsimba's monumental works come into dialogue for the first time with the museum's collections. The artist thus pays homage to the work of traditional sculptors and smiths alike. In this exceptional encounter, twenty-two installations by Freddy Tsimba come face to face with 25 museum pieces.

## HIGHLIGHTS

Visiting '*Mabele eleki lola ! The earth, brighter than paradise*' is a singular experience. For the first time, the museum and Freddy Tsimba have taken the gamble of arranging a face-to-face encounter between traditional objects brought together in this space and the artist's works. In other words, it is a meeting of the ancestral memories housed in these objects and the spirits brought to life in the creations of the artist from Kinshasa.

## MASKS



Freddy Tsimba (1967), *Series Rescapés*, (Survivors series), no. 512. 2016. Melted casings, chains. Private collection. Photo J.-M. Vandyck © RMCA Tervuren.

Freddy Tsimba comes from the line of Master smiths that emerged during the age of copper, in Sudan, well before the Iron Age began. The smith made people's wishes come true: riches for the dowry, in the form of *konga*; sustenance, in the form of tools; and the ability to defend and protect, in the form of arms. Among the Mongo, the master smith was also the head of the clan, as exemplified by the Penge chief Inkoli Botuli. His youngest daughter was Inkoli Bofane, the mother of In Koli Jean Bofane. Freddy Tsimba is a demiurge using his gift to transform our emotions and thinking. (In Koli Jean Bofane)

The head with chains for dreadlocks is one of a series of several dozen heads in copper and brass, from the forge of artist Freddy Tsimba.

For this series, the artist-smith melted casings and scrap metal.



Dipola. Mask. Masuika, Kasai central, DR Congo. [Salampasu]. Before 1950. Wood, red copper, brass, plant fibre, pigment, turaco feathers. Gift from H. Bogaerts, 1950. EO.1950.14.6, collection RMCA Tervuren; photo J.-M. Vandyck © RMCA Tervuren.

### Face to face

From the moment one enters the exhibit, the piece is found facing a *Dipola* mask (Salampasu culture) from the museum's collection. The mask, covered in copperplate, comes from the *Ngongo Munyenge* secret society. The messenger of ancestors and spirits, it goes out at night to appeal for abundance, prosperity, healing, fertile women and lands, and good hunting and fishing. It only goes out in daytime upon the death of an initiate, so it can commune with ancestors. The mask wearer holds a double-edged knife. He can go wild and kill. To prevent this, another initiate holds a stick to block his path. (Henry Bundjoko)

## RELIGION



*Freddy Tsimba (1967), Réveil Sommeil (Revival Sleep). 2011. Scrap materials, found spoons, knives, and chair. Collection Gervanne and Matthias Leridon. Photo © Mathieu Lombard. Courtesy Collection Gervanne and Matthias Leridon.*

In Tsimba's body of work, the spectre of religion is indubitably present and criticised, as it can serve in the annihilation of personal power.

In Congo, religion has always played an essential role in subjugating minds. It erases ancestral memory and affects imaginations. For religion, paradise is the ultimate goal and earth must be set aside. Freddy Tsimba challenges this premise. (In Koli Jean Bofane)

In 2011, a Revival church (in French, *Église du Réveil*, literally Church of the Awakening) opened beside Freddy Tsimba's atelier in the Matonge quarter of Kinshasa. The air was rapidly filled with the sound of sermons, making it impossible to work in peace. Exasperated by the incessant noise, Freddy Tsimba created this work and installed it in front of his property, in full view of everyone. The church, horrified by it, decided to move elsewhere. This work is the first of a series of 9 women, all seated, with crosses piercing the body.



*Freddy Tsimba (1967), Croix (Cross). 2018. Scrap materials, mousetraps. 'Les archives suédoises' project. Kalmar, Konstmuseum, Sweden. Artist's collection, Ghent.*

This work, created in Kinshasa, is part of a larger chapel. The project '*Les archives suédoises*' was initiated by the artists Anna Ekman and Cecilia Järdeemar around an archive of glass negatives from the Swedish missions of the then Belgian Congo (between 1890 and 1930). With Freddy Tsimba, they investigated what alternative readings of history could take shape when the archives were used as a starting point. Freddy Tsimba's father was educated in a Swedish mission.



Kangi kiditu. Crucifix. Kongo central, DR Congo. [Kongo]. s.d. Wood, copper, brass. Gift from Les Amis du Musée. HO.1963.66.1, collection RMCA Tervuren; photo J. Van de Vyver © RMCA Tervuren.

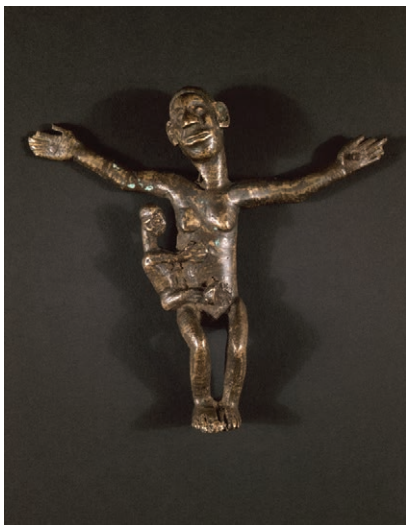
## Face to face

With religion looming, the museum's collections, photos, and objects reflect the extent of Catholic and Protestant presence in Congo since the 16th century.

The Kongo crucifix (*Kangi kiditu*), produced between the 16th and 19th century, is proof of the first evangelisation and the introduction of Christianity to the Kongo kingdom.

This Christian-inspired crucifix was used as an object of devotion in the same way as statues of the Virgin Mary and medals of saints.

The traditional Kongo religious system postulated the existence of a lone supreme God who created the universe. The ancestors, cultural heroes, and nature spirits were just as important.



Crucifix with mother and child. Kongo central, DR Congo. [Kongo]. 19th century. Brass. HO.1973.48.1, collection RMCA Tervuren; photo © RMCA Tervuren.

In 1483, during the reign of King Nzinga Kuvu, the Portuguese created commercial and cultural ties with the local populations and evangelized them. Smiths then crafted *Kangi Kiditu* brass crucifixes depicting Christ on the cross. Adorned with orants, they reflected the syncretism that took place between the traditional and the new religion. They became insignias of nobility and chiefly prestige and lineage.

This Christian-inspired crucifix represents a female Christ with a baby on her back. It is a local interpretation of maternity figures used to invoke fertility. It symbolizes birth and is proof of the syncretism between the traditional and the new religion.

## THE POWER OF THE WOMAN

In here, one senses the essence of that particular power of womanhood in which Freddy Tsimba has such faith. His tireless portrayal of how this power is stifled haunts his work. For him, it may well be the only way of redeeming the Being. (In Koli Jean Bofane)

The statuettes on display, imbued with a visible power, depict women's backs, some bearing deep scars. Despite the meticulous work of the sculptor or traditional healer, the backs remain proud. Tsimba's sculpted backs reflect the power that extends to the neck which, in turn, bears the head upon which a bundle is placed. (In Koli Jean Bofane)

Meanwhile, since the dawn of the 21st century, women's bellies have been sacrificed, in the DR Congo, for the conquest of strategic minerals, through systematic rape and mutilation, to promote the extraction of the materials of the future. (In Koli Jean Bofane)



*Freddy Tsimba (1967), Dos (Back), no. 999. 2016. Chains. Private collection.*



*Freddy Tsimba (1967), Femme-ciseaux (Scissor woman). 2017. Scissors collected from hospitals. Galerie Angalia, Paris. Photo © Galerie Angalia.*





Christiaan van Couwenbergh (Delft, 1604-Keulen, 1667). Three Young White Men and a Black Woman, known as *The Rape of the Negro Girl*. 1632. Oil on canvas, 105 x 127.5 cm. Musée des Beaux-Arts de Strasbourg. Photo © Musées de Strasbourg.



*I will not give them my diamond*, 2014. Scrap materials, found keys. Collection Gervanne and Matthias Leridon. Photo © Mathieu Lombard. Courtesy Collection Gervanne and Matthias Leridon.

'I was deeply marked by my encounter with this painting. The painting known as *The Rape of the Negro Girl* shows a defenseless black woman being raped. Her cry is left hanging. Couwenbergh's work reflects the Europe of the 17th century. It is the triumph of the impunity of this bourgeoisie whose power lies in sexual supremacy and an imagined superiority. The painting inspired the creation of the two works *The Forgotten's Tears* and *I will not give them my diamond*' (Freddy Tsimba).



Freddy Tsimba (1967), Mabele babosana - Les seins oubliés (Forgotten breasts). 2004. Terracotta, drums, scrap materials. Artist's collection, Charleroi. Photo © Dirk Vercuysse - Tse-Tse Art.

Part of a series of nine terracotta busts, first exhibited in Belgium in 2004, in Herve. Freddy Tsimba engages in wordplay. In Lingala, 'mabele' has two meanings: the earth, and the breasts (*libele* in the singular).



Mother-and-child figure. Kongo central, DR Congo. [Yombe]. Before 1955. Wood, pigments, glass. Gift from M. Valcke, 1955. EO.1955.98.40, collection RMCA Tervuren; photo J.-M. Vandyck © RMCA Tervuren.

### Face to face

Sculptures made from casings, shells, and other scrap materials confront traditional mother-and-child depictions in the museum's collections.

The *phemba* maternity figure depicts a mother-and-child pairing sculpted from wood or soapstone. It symbolises multiple births, fecundity, female fertility, continuation of the lineage, and survival of the community. Aside from the notion of procreation, the maternity figure is a powerful symbol of wealth, clan prestige, and reincarnation of an ancestor. She is used in rituals, fertility cults, divination, funerals, and political power.



Ndonga Nkento. Mother-and-child figure. Kongo central, DR Congo. [Yombe]. Before 1977. Wood, pigments. Purchase from F. Van Noten, 1977. EO.1976.77.1, collection RMCA Tervuren ; photo J. Van de Vyver © RMCA Tervuren.

A *phemba* maternity figure shows the mother in a number of positions: legs crossed, kneeling, squatting, seated, or standing, with the child on her lap, in her arms, on her hip, shoulder, or back. Each position has a specific cultural meaning.

The *Ndonga Nkento* maternity figure depicts the tutelary female ancestor, foundress of the line, and guardian of the secrets of power. She recalls the privileged social status of women in the matrilineal system. Associated with political power, she is used as a dignitary's insignia.



Mother-and-child figure. Mayumbe, Kongo central, DR Congo. [Yombe]. Before 1910. Wood, kaolin, black pigment, red pigment. Collected by Vankerkhoven, before 1909. EO.0.0.1040-1, collection RMCA Tervuren ; photo J. Van de Vyver © RMCA Tervuren.

Mother-and-child figure painted in white kaolin, an allusion to the ideal mother – one who becomes a fertile spouse, gives life, raises her child. She also represents a mother who would have given birth after undergoing a fertility ritual. The ritual white colour also implies the colour red. White symbolises purity, while red symbolises the bravery of childbirth, the transformation which confers a privileged status to the woman.

## WARLIKE SPIRIT

War cannot be dissociated from the artist's work. Traditional objects indicate the perpetuation of conflict, and each of their representations reflects an aesthetic of violence.

'Machete house' is another symbol. It calls for the necessary protections against the killings that have fashioned the fate of Congo: slavery, colonization, and now, through multinationals and authority figures, the blatant neocolonialism being carried out in East Congo.

(In Koli Jean Bofane)



Maison machettes (*Machete house*). 2012. *Machetes, wood and metal*. Artist's collection, Kinshasa. Photo © Cédric Nzolo.

This 'Machete house' was made in Kinshasa and installed one evening in the Marché de la liberté, the city's second largest market. By the next morning, the entire city was abuzz with the news. The work was created to draw attention to the massacres during the wars in Central Africa. Freddy Tsimba is no stranger to paradox: the machete is above all a household tool. Meanwhile, the house is a symbol of hope and education. During its creation, the work was carried through Kinshasa's Matonge quarter, in a walking performance involving 60 youths.

This series pays homage to the bodies of black men – slaves, eunuchs, refugees – and recalls their sufferings through time.



*Les Oubliés du temps. Corps d'hommes (Forgotten by time. Men's bodies), 2016. Scrap materials, keys, spoons, forks, scissors, bottle caps, mousetraps, casings. Artist's collection, Kinshasa. Photo © Wonda-Mansia.*



*Freddy Tsimba (1967), Mansia Malayika. Scrap materials, keys, spoons, forks, scissors, bottle caps, mousetraps, casings. Artist's collection, Kinshasa. Photo © Wonda-Mansia.*



*Freddy Tsimba (1967), Sans titre (Untitled) XV, 2007. Coffee and pigments on canvas. Collection Fondation Blachère, Apt. P FT 07 RDC 00.26E. Photo © Fondation Blachère.*

The paintings of Freddy Tsimba are not as well-known as his sculptures. The ones here are part of a series of 16 paintings that were created in residence at the Fondation Blachère (Apt, France) in 2007.



*Sword. DR Congo. [Azande, Boa, Bandja]. s.d. Iron, copper, wood. Acquired in 1938. EO.0.0.38192, collection RMCA Tervuren; photo J.-M. Vandyck © RMCA Tervuren.*

## Face to face

Knives can be distinguished by form, use, and function. They are made from iron, wood, copper or brass, with handles of wood, ivory, or metal. Some handles sport a human face. Knives can be used as work tools, throwing weapons, hand weapons, or ceremonial weapons. They also served as power insignias and currency, and were used in hunting and military strategy. Knives play political, cultural, social, economic and religious roles.

This Azande, Boa or Bandja sword is a combat weapon. The sword provides protection and security, reflects the might of its bearer, and commemorates the first ancestor and cultural hero. It is also used as trade currency between neighbouring peoples.

## KINSHASA

How does one represent Kinshasa, the teeming capital of the DR Congo, where power sits? A flawed power, as shown by this automobile pushed by the people. (In Koli Jean Bofane)



*Freddy Tsimba (1967), Encore un effort... (Give it another shot...), 2011. Scrap materials, found spoons and forks, iron. Collection Gervanne and Matthias Leridon. Photo © Mathieu Lombard. Courtesy Collection Gervanne and Matthias Leridon.*

The car has no engine, people are pushing it. For Freddy Tsimba, this vehicle is a symbol of the DR Congo: the country has lost its engine. It is also a message of hope, a homage to the women and men who are pushing the country to pull through.

## LOVE AND PARTING

On either side of the fence, a man and a woman cling to the hope of reuniting one day. While in residence at the town of Les Lilas (near Paris), Freddy Tsimba was inspired by the tragic history of Fort Romainville, used to detain women during the Second World War. Imprisoned, the women awaited deportation to the camps. One of them became pregnant – a triumph of a love that goes beyond bars despite separation.



*Freddy Tsimba (1967), Les Amants du fort de Romainville (The lovers of Fort Romainville), no. 30010, 2020. Scrap materials, found forks and spoons, fencing. Artist's collection, Kinshasa. Photo © Wonda-Mansia.*

## FREDDY TSIMBA

Freddy Bienvenu Tsimba (Kinshasa, 1967) studied monumental sculpture at the Académie des Beaux-Arts de Kinshasa, obtaining his degree in 1989. He then trained for 6 years with master founders in Kinshasa, Kongo central and Bandundu. Tsimba works with bronze and scrap metal. The independent and engaged Congolese artist is deeply attached to human rights, particularly those of the most fragile: mothers and children. He exposes the tragedy of war and the ravages of violence over time. But he is also an advocate of peace and resilience, paying magnificent homage to women and to life.



Freddy Tsimba (1967), *Centres fermés, rêves ouverts* (Closed centres, open dreams), Tervuren, 2016. Rebar from the Tervuren construction site, spoons from Kinshasa. IL.2016.10, collection RMCA Tervuren; photo J. Van de Vyver © RMCA.



Freddy Tsimba (1967), *Ombres* (Shadows), Tervuren, 2016. 2016.45, collection RMCA, Tervuren; photo J. Van de Vyver © RMCA.

Today, Freddy Tsimba is known and renowned in Kinshasa and the international art scene, famous for his sculptures made from casings and cartridges and for his machete houses. He has participated in several editions of the Biennale de Dakar (2002, 2006 and 2008) as well as group exhibitions such as *The Divine Comedy* (2014), *Kongo am Rhein* (Basel, 2017) and *Afriques Capitales* (Lille, 2017) under the aegis of Simon Njami.

Freddy Tsimba was the artist-in-residence at the Royal Museum for Central Africa in 2016 ([https://www.africamuseum.be/en/get\\_involved/artists](https://www.africamuseum.be/en/get_involved/artists)). During the residency, he created two works for the museum's reopening:

*Centres fermés, rêves ouverts*, 2016. Eight figures face the museum's wall. The series pays tribute to refugees, to those turned away at the border, and to victims of violence past and present.

With 'Shadows', Freddy Tsimba uses light as a medium for the first time. Here he recalls the memory of Congolese victims of colonization. The work can be found in the museum's memorial gallery.





*Freddy Tsimba in front of his atelier. Photo © Renaud Barret.*

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## IN KOLI JEAN BOFANE

In Koli Jean Bofane (Mbandaka, 1954) is a Congolese writer and exhibit curator who has lived in Belgium since 1993. His books have won several prizes and been translated into several languages. They include *Pourquoi le lion n'est plus le roi des animaux* (Gallimard Jeunesse, 1996) and *Mathématiques congolaises* (2008), Congo Inc. *Le Testament de Bismarck* (2014 ; *Congo Inc. Bismarck's Testament*, Indiana University Press, 2018) and *La Belle de Casa* (2018), all published by Actes Sud. In his work, he tackles the themes of globalization and social and political violence in post-colonial African societies, particularly in Central Africa. He depicts the continent as a laboratory of the world, a concrete and marginal space where his characters bump into reality. One of the characters in his next book is named Freddy Tsimba.



Portrait of Jean Bofane.

## PROMETHEUS

LITERARY TEXT BY JEAN BOFANE FOR THE EXHIBITION

Novelist Bofane weaves a tale where fiction and fact intertwine. A protagonist in the author's new novel bears the name Freddy Tsimba.

For there are no limits in Tsimba's work. The artist is another Prometheus, who created humanity from clay. The Smith defies the Titan by becoming a Titan himself. He draws bodies and uses them to portray. More than a few have been filled with envy, and with the involvement of Congolese authorities, cold-hearted soldiers, all the way to the Immigration Office of Belgium, they all sought to punish him. In vain. To proclaim victory over coercion, the artist creates even more monumental and more powerful figures, and in doing so, strives to grant them immortality. (In Koli Jean Bofane)

**During this long Congo war, Freddy Tsimba, seeking an adequate supply of casings, leaves Kinshasa for the city of Kisangani. Bad idea. He rapidly finds himself in the hands of Ugandan soldiers and has a taste of the agony of jail and death. There, he makes a certain encounter.**

**First apparition of Liwa, called La Muerte, also Kifo, to Freddy Tsimba**

[...] As darkness weighed on him, Freddy Tsimba, contemplating an invisible ceiling, felt a mass beside his face, almost touching his cheek. One of such density, as though the moon or a nearby planet was drawn abruptly by the Earth's gravity and found itself hurtling faster than the speed of light to stop mere metres from its surface. Freddy felt waves penetrating his skin all the way down to his bones. He turned his head as slowly as he could and found himself facing a woman's immense derrière, covered in black leather that was stretched to the limit and sent reflections of satin. He cried out something like 'Hey!' but no sound left his throat, as though everything was happening in one of those most terrible of nightmares.

The owner of the sumptuous buttocks was in fact on all fours, her back turned to him. She raised one of her legs then deployed column-like thighs sheathed in fishnet stockings. Upright, she stood more than six feet tall in her patent leather stiletto boots, weighing at least a hundred and

sixty-five pounds. She turned to face him and Freddy, in a nameless panic, took note of her attire: a black leather miniskirt on hips of an opulence that Freddy had never seen before, topped as they were by a wasp waist – though one surmised that this particular wasp’s sting was fatal. She wore a tight-fitting, low-cut fuchsia silk top, and on top of it, a Chanel jacket of the same colour that would have been unable to contain a bosom of such magnificence had one attempted to close it. A neon pink streak in her medium-length hair crossed half of a face whose features were as perfectly drawn as a portrait in a graphic design program. She took her place on the tree trunk and sat upright on it as though it were a throne. The amount of gold adorning her earlobes, neck, and wrists only added to the effect. The red handbag on her lap was a Prada, as it should be. She opened it, rummaged around for a few seconds, drew out frames sporting a Versace logo, put them on and up like a headband, and calmly crossed the manicured hands that bore a tiny diamond on each fingernail.

- Relax, honey. It’s just because I’m here. That always happens when I show up. You can’t move or speak. It’s normal. Don’t you recognize me? *Eza ngai!*<sup>1</sup>

Freddy remained silent.

- What? Are you taken aback by my position right now? I’ve been hiding in your shadow since you left Kin’. I left it. I’m watching you from the top of this trunk now, but I slipped your shadow under it.

Freddy still didn’t know what to say. He had recovered from his previous paralysis and now tried to think, but he was still flabbergasted by the apparition.

In Koli Jean Bofane

Translated from French.

Excerpt from *Nation cannibale*, forthcoming in French, Actes Sud, 2022

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1 It’s me!

## Second apparition of Liwa

[...] For the first time, Freddy couldn't hold back a tiny smile as he lay down. The next day he would be preparing his departure and finally leaving the prison. He didn't want to think about Kinshasa too much. To contemplate it without getting dizzy, he first had to internalise the commander's promise. Yet from time to time he allowed himself flashes of Victoire on Avenue Kasa-Vubu, of *wewa*<sup>2</sup> weaving in and out of the chaotic traffic, of a *shegue*<sup>3</sup> reeling off a spiel for some cash, of Kinshasa beauties walking with a haughty stride. His mind was on one of them, crossing the street just in front of his car, when he felt that strange sensation on his right cheek again. "Fuck," thought Freddy, and turned his head.

- How's it going? she said.

- Hello! he said, a bit curtly. Freddy thought he needed to show he was far from delighted to have the visit. Liwa, true to herself, was there, sitting nonchalantly on the trunk that was her hiding place. And like the last time, Freddy was alone with her. The other prisoners were in deep, fitful sleep.

- Don't think your work is of any use to anyone. I already told you it's worthless. It won't have any effect on the way the world turns. I shall always win. My partners and I talked about you. Here's a little scoop for you: in 2020, when you're having your exhibit in Tervuren, there will be over a billion small arms in circulation, just in civilian hands. Cruise and other missiles? Their manufacturers will pocket three or four hundred billion dollars. Billions, you hear. What are you going to do? Weld them all together? Fool!

To corroborate her statements and crush all of Freddy's hopes, she reeled off the names of everyone who had been in her pocket for ages. Presidents of the Republic, obviously; tyrannical kings used as pawns, inventive defence industry CEOs, conglomerates dedicated to high technology and rare minerals, Defence and Economics ministers with boundless imaginations, pragmatic parliamentarians, influential and unscrupulous lobbyists, foundations based on fluctuating human rights,

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2 Moto-taxis.  
3 Street kid.

conflict prevention NGOs, prominent philanthropists praised to the heavens in the media, popular and indispensable social networks. All-powerful, she went on to denounce the International Criminal Court in The Hague, along with media groups and television networks, public and private, whose reporting worked to the advantage of Death and Death alone, thoroughly concealing her areas of influence and most intimate motivations. But at the same time, she admitted, she allowed her desires to be debated in the UN's hemicycle in New York, in the general assembly of the FN Herstal, during Pentagon briefings around a coffee with just four-star generals and colonels in attendance, and, dressed to the nines, she always sat in their midst. She didn't even have to force anyone to take initiatives in her favour; they were paid to do it. Using reference upon reference, she tried to hammer into Freddy's head that he was nothing compared to them and that he would be better off by giving up. Death spoke regally and expressed herself with few gestures, uncharacteristically for her. All because she was alluding to the so-called elite...

In Koli Jean Bofane

Translated from French.

Excerpt from *Nation cannibale*, forthcoming in French, Actes Sud, 2022

## ACTIVITIES

*Mabele eleki lola !* is an opportunity to provide visitors with a full programme of activities. They are invited to participate in the 'keys to paradise' joint installation, to meet artist Freddy Tsimba during an 'Artist talk', to walk in the footsteps of writer Jean Bofane to discover pieces in the permanent exhibition that are related to the exhibit's themes. Students training in metalworking can take inspiration from Freddy Tsimba's work and join the '*Une volonté de fer*' (an iron will) competition.

Whether visitors come alone or in groups, from schools or the general public, the programme hopes to reach a wide audience.

Given the exceptional circumstances resulting from the coronavirus pandemic, a range of onsite and online activities will be on offer.

## SCHOOLS

### COMPETITION '*UNE VOLONTÉ DE FER*' (AN IRON WILL)

AfricaMuseum invites secondary schools offering metalworking classes to add their own sculpture to the new *Mabele eleki lola !* exhibition. The first 10 classes to register can join the competition. A board of judges composed of professionals will select the winning class. The works, to be created from scrap metal, will be on display in AfricaMuseum between 13 and 21 February 2021.

## ARTIST TALK

On Sunday the 1st of November, Freddy Tsimba, In Koli Jean Bofane and philosopher Yala Nadia Kisukidi will discuss the art of Freddy Tsimba, the artist's methods, and the themes examined in his pieces.

Sunday 1 November 2020 at 3:00 p.m.

Moderator: Ayoko Mensah

Venue: AfricaMuseum - Auditorium and online

With reservation, free with an exhibition ticket.

## SCREENING OF THE FILM *SYSTÈME K*

In collaboration with BOZAR, the new documentary *Système K* by Renaud Barret will be screened in late February. The screening will be followed by a panel discussion. *Système K* (K for Kinshasa) places a spotlight on artists who, like Freddy Tsimba, draw inspiration from decay and transform chaos into hope.

15 February 2021 at 7:00 p.m.  
in BOZAR Brussels

## COMBO GUIDED TOUR

### *MABELE ELEKI LOLA !* + AFRICAMUSEUM GALLERIES

A guided tour allows you to discover the dialogue between the works of Freddy Tsimba and pieces from the AfricaMuseum's collections. The tour continues in the museum galleries, around themes that are dear to the artist.

For individual visitors

On Wednesday 4/11, 23/11 and 17/2/21.  
2:00 p.m. in NL and 2.30 pm in FR  
6 €/person + entrance ticket

On reservation for groups

max. 10 persons, 90 €

## STANDING GUIDE

Guides will be present in the *Mabele eleki lola !* exhibition to answer questions from visitors during the autumn, winter, and spring breaks.

In Dutch, French, and English  
Sundays 8/11 and 27/12/20, 3/1 and 21/2/21  
from 2:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.  
free



## 'A KEY TO WHICH PARADISE?'

This is the question you hear when you visit the *Mabele eleki lola !* exhibition. Visitors can write a message on a label and tie it to one of the many old keys on offer. In doing so, they take part in this installation inspired by the work of Freddy Tsimba!

## CONTINUATION OF THE TEMPORARY EXHIBITION

### IN KOLI JEAN BOFANE'S PICKS IN THE PERMANENT EXHIBITION

Pieces in the permanent exhibition that touch on the same themes as the pieces in the temporary exhibition are labelled with quotes from the novels of In Koli Jean Bofane.

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Public activities are organized as part of the AfricaMuseum CAMPUS and FORUM programmes. These programmes are funded by Belgian Development Cooperation.

The CAMPUS programme focuses on knowledge dissemination and awareness-building through educational efforts in global citizenship and solidarity. Activities for the general public, with special attention given to primary and secondary school groups, examine the main themes found in the permanent exhibition. Teaching tools and dossiers, webinars, and training courses for (future) teachers round out the offer.

FORUM is a programme that seeks to further the museum's role as a resource centre for cultural actors and persons who are African and of African descent, by promoting and facilitating access to collections, archives, and scientific research. Like CAMPUS, the FORUM programme works together with cultural operators from Africa and the African diaspora to provide new readings of images and representations of Africa, Africans, and people of African descent. FORUM offers residencies to African artists and journalists. It supports artistic, cultural, and community projects that involve the archives, the collections, and the permanent exhibition. The AfricaTube project, in partnership with Centre d'art Waza (Lubumbashi, DR Congo) provides a glimpse of the enormous range of African digital art.

BOZAR is a partner of the FORUM programme.

# THE CATALOGUE

Catalogue of the exhibition '*Mabele eleki lola !*

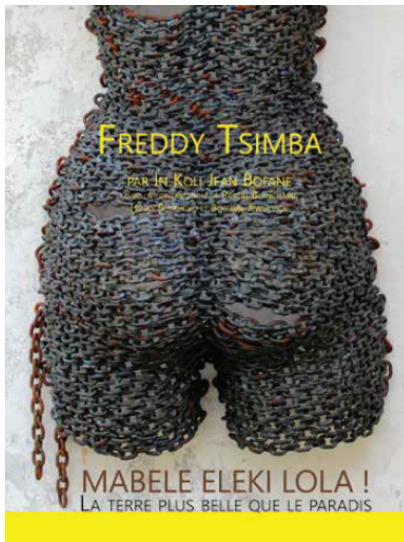
La terre, plus belle que le paradis'

Available in French and in Dutch

Under the supervision of In Koli Jean Bofane

Texts by In Koli Jean Bofane, Pascal Blanchard, Henry Bundjoko, and Bogumil Jewsiewicki

Co-published by Kate'Art Editions and Africalia asbl in collaboration with the Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA)



25.5 x 19 cm, 144 pages

140 colour illustrations

Hardbound

Publication date: November 2020

€ 35.00

ISBN (FR) : 978 2 87575 266 6

ISBN (NL): 978 2 87575 267 3

# PRACTICAL INFORMATION

## ADMISSION PRICE

<i>Mabele eleki lola !</i>	<b>8 euros</b>
<i>Mabele eleki lola !</i> + permanent exhibit	<b>16 euros</b>
Under 18 y.o.	<b>free</b>
Annual pass (including temporary exhibitions)	<b>20 euros</b>

The full list of admission prices can be viewed on [www.africamuseum.be](http://www.africamuseum.be)

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# COLOPHON

Freddy Tsimba

*MABELE ELEKI LOLA !*

The earth, brighter than paradise

29 October 2020 - 21 February 2021

## DIRECTORATE AFRICAMUSEUM

Guido Gryseels, director-general

Bruno Verbergt, operational director for public services

## CONCEPT

Freddy Tsimba, artist

In Koli Jean Bofane, curator

## EXECUTION

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Siska Genbrugge

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## SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTION

Henry Bundjoko, professor, Université de Kinshasa; director, Musée national de la République démocratique du Congo - Kinshasa

Pascal Blanchard, member of the Laboratoire Communication et Politique (CNRS) and co-director of the Groupe de recherche Achac (Paris)

Bogumil Jewsiewicki, professor emeritus, University de Laval, Canada

## TEXTS

In Koli Jean Bofane

Henry Bundjoko

Christine Bluard

## LENDERS

Jean Michel Champault, France

Collection Blachère, France

Private collection, Belgium

Collection Gervanne and Matthias Leridon, France - South-Africa

Les ballets C de la B, Belgium

Bart and Carine Ouvry - Bormans, Belgium

Anna Salviato, Italy

Bruno Scaramuzzino, France

Patrick Sohier, Belgium

Chantal Tombu, Belgium

Freddy Tsimba, DR Congo

Steve Vermeer, Belgium

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GRAPHIC DESIGN

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TRANSPORT

Mobull, Zaventem  
ConnexAfrica, Kinshasa

CATALOGUE

Catherine de Duve - Kate'Art, Brussels  
and Africalia, Brussels

THANKS TO

All staff members of the public-oriented services and of the support services  
Galerie Angalia, Paris  
Angès Beziz  
Kathryn Brahy  
Anne Dechamps  
Philippe Dewaegenaere  
ISS Services  
Frédéric Jacquemin  
Jean-François Pierlot  
Sabine Scheerlinck  
T&D Securities  
Victoire Van der Woude  
Eric Van Herreweghe

THIS EXHIBITION WAS MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH THE SUPPORT OF







