

*Attempts to Read
the World (Differently)*

Three Exhibitions
in Five Acts

EN



**Attempts to Read the World (Differently):
Three Exhibitions in Five Acts**

27 November 2016 – 5 March 2017

In successive solo exhibitions, Max de Waard, Monira Al Qadiri and Jean Katambayi Mukendi present proposals that breathe new life into the way we think about our radically changing world. The work by these artists offers an impetus for a refreshing recap of the themes of *Attempts to Read the World (Differently)*, a long-running programme through which Stroom and various artists look at today's world in a searching and intuitive way. Doubt, hesitation and the multiplicity of realities are welcomed to the foreground as the exhibitions publicly transform and shake off their finite frame.

Act 1: Max de Waard

27 November – 18 December 2016
Opening Saturday 26 November 2016

Act 2: Public Transformation Period

Act 3: Monira Al Qadiri
8 – 29 January 2017
Opening Saturday 7 January 2017

Act 4: Public Transformation Period

Act 5: Jean Katambayi Mukendi
12 February – 5 March 2017
Opening Saturday 11 February 2017



Attempts to Read the World (Differently): Three Exhibitions in Five Acts

Are we living in the Anthropocene, the *Age of Earthquakes*¹, the *post-truth* world²? Every major news event seems to confirm that existing models, risk prognoses and navigation systems are no longer adequate for measuring our changing times. A watershed period like ours doesn't just create new opportunities; it is also marked by turbulence, chaos and uncertainty.

Monira Al Qadiri, *Spectrum* 1 (2016). Six 3D printed plastic sculptures with automotive paint, 20 x 20 cm each.

The changing world continues to be a rewarding subject for the media, philosophers and historians. But it is also relevant to us on a very personal level, both as individuals and as a society. Each new generation lives under the impression that we live in times of disorienting change. This is inspired by developments in technology, for example, or the acceleration of time felt in everyday life. Over the past century, Western society has attempted to arm itself against the fickle course of history with growth models based on economic and rationally quantified considerations.

Today, we are witnessing a far-reaching transformation of the technological and economic systems that influence our lives. These new developments have given us unprecedented access to information and social structures. But the manipulability and fluidity

of virtual worlds and digital information has also lead to the circulation of multiple versions of reality, which have an increasingly strong impact on our real-world existence.

To gain a handle on these profound and complex developments, we need stories. Fiction, speculations, metaphors and imagination are an inexhaustible source of new perspectives on our world. They offer tools for re-evaluating how we may deal with life. Enriching our view of the real world in the process.

Previous phases of *Attempts to Read the World (Differently)* were developed in collaboration with Fernando Sánchez Castillo, Céline Condorelli, Dunja Herzog and Neil Beloufa from 2014 on. They took the first steps in a new approach to reading, interpreting and imagining our current world in the quest for other forms of knowledge, information and communication. This effort does not center on the search for an overarching truth, but rather on a polyphony of options and interpretations.

Over the years, the issues touched on by *Attempts to Read the World (Differently)* have only become more urgent. *Three Exhibitions in Five Acts* forms a new chapter to this programme. This exhibition is a plea for the imagination, as a poetic instrument that can be used to see our present-day world in a different light. With stronger resilience, and more empathy.

Max de Waard, Monira Al Qadiri and Jean Katambayi Mukendi use formal systems and their experience of the world around them as raw materials that can be bent, sanded down and rearranged. Through fiction,

intuitive exploration, or by imagining a new future based on a rewritten past.

The need for polyphony is reflected in the exhibition format. While the three artists offer personal interpretations through their own works, they also take account of the other artists' production. The exhibition space will remain open to the public during the changeover from one presentation to the next. This means that during the exhibition run, visitors can enjoy the interplay of different artistic perspectives, in five acts: three solo presentations and two periods of transformation. *Three Exhibitions in Five Acts* can be seen as a 'serial of exhibitions', a place where the viewer has an opportunity to experience first-hand the preparations, transitions, uncertainty and experimentation that are inherent to any art exhibition. Or, as Anna Tilroe once put it: a place where our imagination finds the building materials for our future.

¹ As portrayed in Shuman Basar, Douglas Coupland, Hans Ulrich Obrist, *The Age of Earthquakes. A Guide to the Extreme Present*, London 2015.

² *Post-truth* was named *Word of the Year 2016* by Oxford Dictionaries. They offered the following reasons for their selection: "The concept of post-truth has been in existence for the past decade, but Oxford Dictionaries has seen a spike in frequency this year in the context of the EU referendum in the United Kingdom and the presidential election in the United States. It has also become associated with a particular noun, in the phrase post-truth politics."



Act 1

Max de Waard

"June the 1st. We are still under attack. Called the FDA today, they had no idea. I keep on calling every time I see this activity where they are spraying our world, our beautiful planet. People don't know what to do about this. Why are we polluting our beautiful planet?"

- Anon

Max de Waard,
Behind The Cur-
tain (2016), still.

Max de Waard (Lelystad, NL 1992) uses sound fragments, video clips and 3D-rendered digital images to unravel the rationales and quests for truth that circulate online. His work deals with life on the internet and how people give meaning to their world within it. One can find numerous environments that have been gradually developed into a kind of parallel reality. These worlds are supported by intricate conspiracy theories, 'scientific' studies proving the earth is flat, or communities that are preparing to survive the coming Apocalypse. But De Waard can also see a leading thread running through them: carefully-composed narratives that are the outcome of specific social processes. These stories serve as something to hold on to for people who distrust the commonly-held perceptions of our world. They feel armed with the truth – effectively prepared for the drastic changes that are already taking shape around us. Moreover, these communities largely exist thanks to the same digital media, networks, interfaces and online platforms used by the rest of society. Max de Waard graduated from the Royal Academy of Art The Hague (KABK) in 2015 and lives in The Hague.



Max de Waard,
Behind The Cur-
tain (2016), still.

INTERVIEW WITH MAX DE WAARD

Your art doesn't offer linear narratives that allow for easy interpretation by the viewer. How do your works come about?

I get my images from a wide range of sources – video channels and online forums, for example. A found or digitally-produced image or sound fragment can bounce around in my mind for a few years before it finds a place. I treat these bits and pieces – or their sources – as completely equal, and this is also how I incorporate them in my work. I want people to become completely absorbed by the situation I have created in my videos. To me, they aren't flat surfaces, but spaces within the room. You can enter these spaces the same way that every day, you are unconsciously drawn into other digital worlds too.

Which significance do you attach to this 'online condition', and which interests can you trace back to it?
I am very interested in the basic idea of the screen: the way in which we extract stories and information from our monitors. Screens are similar to windows in some ways. At one point, I was living in a flat. I was always working behind the computer with the TV on. My window had exactly the same shape as the various screens in my home. I started imagining that one could start to feel disassociated from physical reality itself – perhaps even feel less of a need for it. I come across a lot of modern-day hermits online. In Japan, they call them *hikikomori* – young people who withdraw entirely from direct contact with other human beings and lead their lives online. Work, ordering food – all your basic necessities can be arranged. I personally am a bit more social than that, and I enjoy going outdoors. But even then, you're never entirely offline. Our 'real' and online worlds have completely merged. Even when you stay 'offline' for a month, the internet doesn't actually go away, and your data are still there.

It's 20 years or so since the first generation of net.art and internet artists adopted the web as an artistic medium and subject. The academic art world seems to have discovered it far more recently, when its broader social implications became apparent. For you, the internet and digital software play such a central role that you could develop works for this exhibition even while in between studios. How would you describe your relationship with physical and digital work?

My physical experience of it is actually very intense! It really feels as if I am playing with tangible materials.



Max de Waard, *The Fountain Of Youth* (2016), still.

Of course, the whole project was realised via my computer monitor, but the process of making work is very real. If only because locating, editing, producing, loading and rendering [exporting large digital files, ed.] themselves take up physical time and space. When you're working with software, it's almost as if you're touching the material, layering or arranging it... And sound is also a very physical material. It's no different to someone who finds and collects materials out in the street. Except in this case, they're very complicated materials, since they can only be seen or heard via some channel or other: a video projector or a monitor. Personally, I sometimes find it difficult to 'read' conventional, physical art installations. While I enjoy that kind of work, this is partly an acquired taste. It takes a while before I start seeing anything besides just the materials. It only really starts to become interesting when I don't recognise the source; can't put my finger on what I see.

Max de Waard,
Behind The Curtain (2016), still.

Someone with a different perspective might actually find it difficult to move past the digital materials when viewing your work...

I get that. It's probably normal when you weren't born into 'a digital world' like I was. For other people, installations like this may remain a series of projections. While for me, they are truly like a kind of gateways to other worlds. But yes, you still need those electronics in between: the computer, the graphics card... All made very far away, by people you'll never meet. The prints are about my digital process of production. I'm interested in all the stuff I don't need anymore, in collecting sketches and 'doodles'. Things that I wasn't satisfied with; failures. They had already 'come into being', so I didn't want to simply



discard them. Like using something that isn't broken. Software has accustomed us to making things look exactly the way we intend them to. And to discard anything that doesn't turn out right. But that usually means that the end result doesn't reflect any of the clumsiness and messiness of the creative process.

Do you take the internet to be a natural home for fiction and parallel worlds?

One thing that continues to appeal to me is the fact that all kinds of different people contribute to it. It's a collection of sources and ideas that are developed, shared and viewed by all these other people, who are also taking in the same information on their screen, processing it and elaborating on it on some other forum. This content in turn serves as a starting point for something else, and so on. You get a wide range of outcomes, which are all based on distorted information or inaccurate theories to begin with. I am fascinated by how this stuff comes about, and how it is structured: ignorance; forgetting stuff; appropriation; misinterpretation. That's exactly how I work. And it can lead to some really strange twists in your thought process: odd connections you wouldn't be able to make if you only departed from a specific 'truth'. I also think this is healthy sometimes. After all, there's no way of knowing the truth about everything, check out every source of information – especially on the internet.

***Behind The Curtain*, the largest piece in this exhibition includes a lot of material on online communities that seem to lose themselves in magical thinking or alternate realities – the 'Reptilians' for instance. Could you explain what kind of world views they represent?**

Reptilian theorists believe that there's a type of alien that lives among us and that has taken human form. Politicians, Hollywood stars, newsreaders. They are waiting to overthrow humanity. Sometimes – when they briefly break character – the projection of their human face shifts away to reveal the reptile beneath. This theory actually predates the internet. But when I really started looking into it, I realised how seriously people actually take this theory, and how much work they put into warning the rest of us. On top of that, they disagree with each other – they're frantically looking for a consensus, which they try to achieve by posting videos and other evidence online. And there are countless other conspiracies and predictions like this. Since I don't share their paranoia, I can view it as an amazing source of material. Not just for my work, but also as a fascinating phenomenon. All this hard work and dedication. Such passion! I'd love to believe it too – share their incredibly firm convictions. It's like a subculture. I enjoy this friction: it's too bizarre for words. But at the same time, I want to be involved too. Those videos and websites are as good as they are because they're completely authentic. They show people's real-life attempts to get to know the truth. I can step into their world, but I can step out again. But for them, it's an entire philosophy.



Max de Waard,
The Fountain Of
Youth (2016), still.

Many of the theories you come across online are less at odds with everyday reality. There's a worrying twisting of the truth in the present media landscape – a subjective distortion that is rooted in a profound mistrust of the system. Take the US presidential elections, for example. People read this stuff, tell it to each other and to their children, and it becomes 'true'.

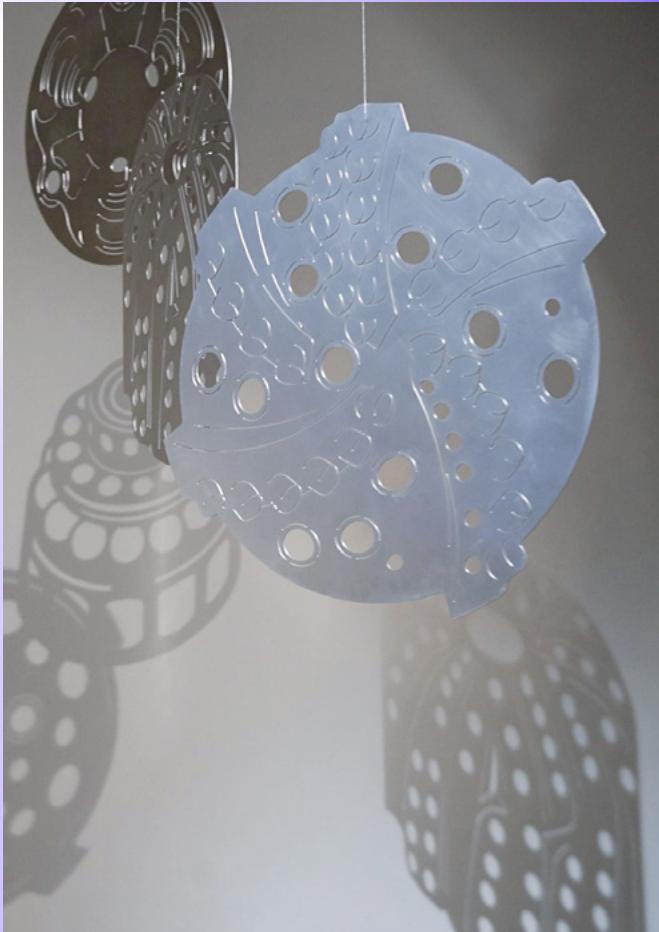
I agree that the theories that are being spun about real issues are a lot scarier. But my work isn't necessarily about the substance of these theories. I don't actually deal with social themes in this way. I consciously reserve my judgement. This video isn't about the Repilians. I use a lot of this stuff because I like the visuals; the way they make their videos. I'm interested in the way information goes round in circles; how theories like this start working for themselves in different ways. They incorporate the past, the present, predictions for the future. The way it all comes together as fragments in this wobbly structure... it somehow resembles my own work. I don't make portraits of conspiracy theorists, or say that they are nuts. The images, the details of their theories, the exchange of ideas, the process that brings it all about – to me, these things are all equal.

interview by Ilga Minjon

The background features abstract white line art on a purple gradient. The design includes various geometric and organic shapes such as circles, triangles, and wavy lines, all rendered in white against a purple background.

Act 2

Transformation Period — Notes



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Act 3

Monira Al Qadiri

“And how extraordinary is it that no dictatorship in the world can control [dreaming]? No system of inquisition can control one’s fantasies. They can throw you in jail but you still have the ability to live outside the prison without anyone holding you there. With the imagination, you can pass over the insurmountable walls without leaving any trace of yourself, and you can always go back.”
– Abbas Kiarostami
(1940-2016)

When asked why we dream as human beings, this is the reason that Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami described in a televised interview.

Monira Al Qadiri,
Prehistoria
(2016), five laser
cut aluminum
panels, 1 x 1 meter
each.

Using the dream maker that is art, we are allowed to travel through time, whether to dive into a dark medieval past, or a completely imagined sparkling future. We can look at today with a feeling of wonder and humor from a future perspective, or visualize ourselves living like monks inside some ancient cave in the wilderness. In “*100 Titles for a Different World*”, I have attempted to mentally travel through an experienced recent past, hallucinogenic political realities, and futuristic fantasies that may or may not be related to my personal life. Today we are living through a shape-shifting historical moment, commonly facing an increasingly uncertain fate. But instead of falling into despair, as Kiarostami stated,

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I propose we imagine ourselves in a different mythical future, looking back at this moment with intense interest and curiosity. In the work presented in this exhibition, I am looking at petroleum – my own lifeblood – as a post-oil Kuwaiti person, from a future perspective. Petroleum becomes a cryptic novelty from a long forgotten past that we do not understand anymore. As an energy producing substance, petroleum will become worthless sooner than later. But it has left an indelible cultural legacy behind it, and I want to visualize the historic heritage of the freak petroleum interval we are living through. If we can simply imagine a life without oil, no economic system can hold us down to accepting its absorption into our daily lives forever.

by Monira Al Qadiri

Monira Al Qadiri is a Kuwaiti artist born in Senegal in 1983. Having lived through the 1990-'91 Gulf War, she became fascinated by Japanese animation as a means of escaping the harsh realities she experienced. At the age of 16, she moved to Tokyo on a university scholarship. In 2010, she received her PhD in intermedia art from Tokyo University of the Arts where her research was focused on the aesthetics of sadness in the Middle-East stemming from poetry, music, art and religious practices. Her films, installations and sculptures explore the relationship between cultural and social identity, gender roles and the fabrication of past and future narratives. Currently she is a resident artist at the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam. Al

Qadiri is also a founding member of GCC collective, an international artist group working around the region's rapid transformations through the speculative lens of Gulf Futurism.

100 TITLES FOR A DIFFERENT WORLD

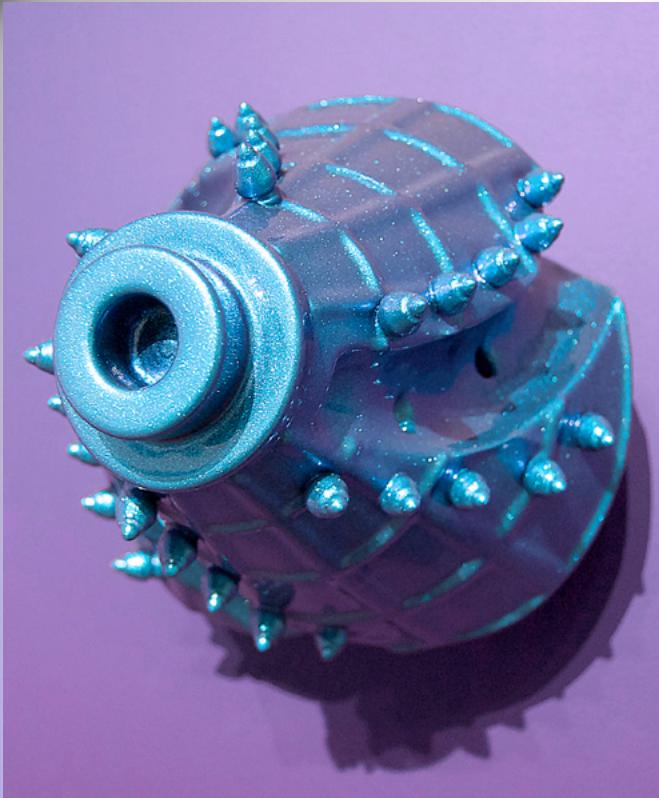
When the Oil Dies	Growing Fungal Fantasy
Drowning in a Pool of Petroleum Dreams	Minority Invades Outer Space
Fossil Story-Telling Program	Madness in Exile
Ancient Sunlight Cloud Computer	Inventing a Non-Existent Past
3D Printed Nightmare	800 Lashes in Purgatory
Current Tragedy Theme Park	Dubaification Hyperloop
Burning Smoke and Mirrors	Stealing Rhetorical Answers
Multi Polar World Soundtrack	Reunification Reparations
Perpetual Market Speculation Beats	Urban Slow Death

The Killers of Beauty	Receding Hairline, Short Tongue Palate
I Blame the Bauhaus for Everything	Glamour Beard
Functionalism Spam	Shouting in the Dark
Capitalism Kills Ornament	Misinformation Nation Autocratic Alien Emoji
Abayas for Days	Anti Corruption Food Truck
Neoliberal Exorcism	The Dictator's Umbrella
Political Suicide	Conspiranoia Addiction
Mature 35 year old Infestation	The Agency to Commit Evil
Arab Spring Water	Public Secrets
Drinking the Koolaid	Senegalese Alcohol Dealer
Wahhabi Abstract Expressionism	Privacy Fanatic Militant Environmentalist
Cemeteries are Not Built for Crying	Receding Land Lines Making Energy from Shit
God Commands You to be a Minimalist	The Beautiful Sadness

Apocalyptic Aspirations	Nepotism Fantasy
The Second Coming of the Market Messiah	Opinionated Whirlwind
Solidarity is a Dead Art	Drug Liberation
The Age of Disgust	Foaming at the Mouth
A Sea of Men in White	Emerging Inflations
Drugged Pickles in Disneyland	Torture Startup Culture
The Espionage Cat	Inflammatory Vegetable Seller
The Reversal	Leave Your Car at the Airport
Hysteria Factory	Spicy Victimhood
Bored into Action	Luxurious Turbulence
Secret Book Club	Idolized Massacre
Crack Crack Crack	Original Sin
Language Abyss	Feng Shui Dictator
Biased Translations	Arabized Dreamer Destroyer
Plastic Death, Dirty Skin	Another World in Prison
Fatal Humiliation	



Monira Al Qadiri, Spectrum 1 (2016), six 3D printed plastic sculptures with automotive paint, 20 x 20 cm each.



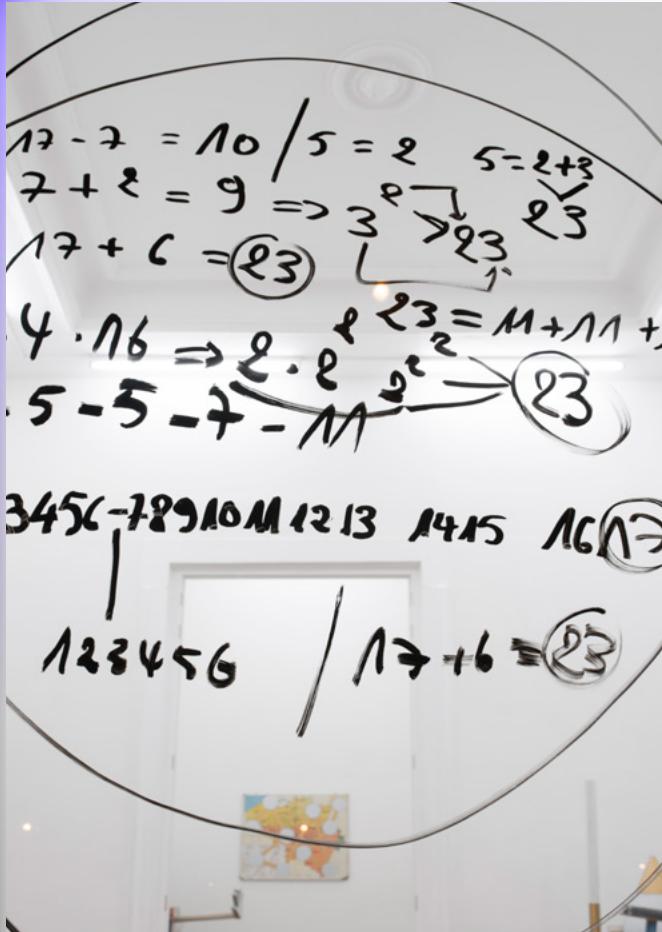
Monira Al Qadiri:
Spectrum 1 (2016),
Six 3D printed
plastic sculptures
with automotive
paint, 20 x 20 cm
each.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>Super Star Blogger</p> <p>A Revolutionary who Died Inside</p> <p>Millenial Disengagement Center</p> <p>Not a Serious Serial Killer</p> <p>Cheap Cookie Cup Noodle</p> <p>Doctorate from Hell</p> <p>Button to Shut Down All the Internet</p> <p>End of the World Forecast</p> <p>Materialistic Disease Therapy</p> <p>Waking Your Dead Battery</p> <p>Imperialist Anti Imperialist</p> <p>Empire Nostalgia</p> <p>Automatons for Life</p> | <p>The Tyranny of the Algorithm</p> <p>Cut Throat Singer</p> <p>Schizophrenic Interior Design</p> <p>Post-Truth Candy Store</p> <p>Parallel Universe Buddies</p> <p>Time Travel Security Check</p> <p>Color Phobia</p> <p>Future Melancholic Toilets</p> <p>The Fascist New Wave</p> |
|---|---|

The background of the slide features a repeating pattern of white, organic, flowing lines and loops. These shapes resemble stylized leaves, petals, or perhaps abstract representations of DNA helices. They are set against a vibrant purple gradient that transitions from a darker shade at the bottom to a lighter one at the top.

Act 4

Transformation Period — Notes



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Act 5

Jean Katambayi Mukendi and the quest for the smallest common denominator

"When the number of factors coming into play in a phenomenological complex is too large, scientific method in most cases fails."
– Albert Einstein

It seems difficult to pin down the work of Jean Katambayi Mukendi. For example, over the past five years, the Congolese artist's work has regularly been called 'conceptual' and discussed in relation to scientific activity. However, as a self-taught artist who primarily works with found materials, Katambayi Mukendi could just as easily be called an 'outsider artist'.

Jean Katambayi Mukendi, *On ne sait pas où on va* (2016), trampoline, Antwerp. Exhibition view.

Whatever the case may be, thanks to numerous residencies in both Africa and Europe, Katambayi Mukendi is gradually carving his own niche in the contemporary art world. For example, recent presentations of his work include both the Biennales of Cuba, Dakar and Lubumbashi, and exhibitions at venues like the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, M HKA in Antwerp and Thyssen-Bornemisza Contemporary in Vienna. Jean Katambayi Mukendi tends to keep a cool head about all the fuss – and a sense of humour:

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Jean Katambayi Mukendi, Gécaruines (2016), marker pen, paper, cardboard, plastic, MDF dust, glue, tape, beer crates, 159 x 72 x 96 cm.

after all, he has been working as an artist for over two decades, and for more than 15 years without any kind of recognition or visibility. He doesn't feel responsible for how other people decide to read, interpret and possibly appreciate his work. Nevertheless, he is always prepared to shed light on his thought processes and artistic practice.

If we wish to fully understand Katambayi Mukendi's universe and interests, it is inevitable that we consider a few aspects of his personal history. Jean Katambayi Mukendi was born in Lubumbashi in 1971, eleven years after the Belgian Congo gained its independence. Growing up, he saw how Congolese society was gradually transformed by the dismantling of the old colonial structures. Katambayi Mukendi's father was a technician, specialising in electrical systems, while

his mother worked as a secretary for Gécamines, a mining company established in 1967 after the dictator Mobutu nationalised the colonial Union Minière du Haut-Katanga. Katambayi Mukendi used sheets of scrap paper that his mother brought home from work for drawing and craft – a form of recycling that still forms the foundation of his practice today. Gradually, Gécamines discarded the colonial buildings and infrastructure: a transition that both impressed Katambayi Mukendi and concerned him. It wasn't just the decommissioning of the gigantic machines themselves – it was also the realisation that the knowledge required for putting them back into operation would be lost forever. It made him aware of the limits and flaws inherent in every system. Even the systems of Congo's former coloniser, which were bolstered by scientific knowledge and seen as a symbol of efficiency and modernity.

To ensure that he could make a living for himself, Katambayi Mukendi followed in his father's footsteps and trained as an electrician. However, the competences and know-how that he acquired during his time as a student didn't help him to secure a steady job in the very unstable Congolese economy. This expertise did have a tremendous impact on the development of his own artistic production. Katambayi Mukendi uses electricity to show how networks can channel energy and help organisms to function. Indeed, copper, which is extracted in the mines of his home town, is one of the artist's favourite materials. He also draws inspiration from the technical drawings of the mining industry – creating a new world of machinery in which the only functionality that can be relied on is poetry. This puts his brightly-coloured sculptures

made of cellulose – he prefers to use the name of the most common natural polymer rather than terms like ‘paper’ or ‘cardboard’ – in the company of works by artists like Tinguely and Panamarenko. In their references to the poetic power of motion, these objects pose questions about Man’s relationship with technology. They seem to attach less importance to progress than to creating a philosophical space dominated by self-deprecating humour.

Jean Katambayi Mukendi, *Commerce angulaire* (2016), marker pen on paper, 118 x 83 cm.

After graduating as an electrical technician, Katambayi Mukendi went on to study Mathematics. This allowed him to return to his childhood interest in algorithms. He applied his knowledge of numbers, patterns and structures to guide the transition from the invisible and intangible to the explicable. For example, the golden ratio and the beauty of pure geometry regularly resurface in his drawings. He uses the Fibonacci sequence to explain the consequences of specific phenomena. Prime numbers are the logical conclusion of philosophical arguments in which words are converted into numbers through a variety of methods. Statistics served as a revelation for him: by collecting, processing, interpreting and presenting data, he can arrive at new vantage points from which to view the world... In essence, his practice can be seen as a permanent quest for the smallest common denominator for a wide range of systems (be they economic, social or political). The complex – and at first glance often incomprehensible – lists found on his sketches not only testify to an exhaustive analysis, but also to the artist’s strong determination to develop a personal relationship with his environment.



However, the work of Jean Katambayi Mukendi isn't limited to drawings and three-dimensional objects. In an approach reminiscent of artists like Joseph Beuys, Katambayi Mukendi seeks out ordinary citizens in settings and circumstances that are as far removed from art as you can imagine. For example, he has created a full-fledged forum where citizens can share or debate their ideas, positions and opinions on a variety of political and social issues. He is not concerned with documenting actions like conversations with other passengers on Lubumbashi's bus lines: his main interest is interacting with his direct surroundings. Still, Katambayi Mukendi isn't the only artist who adopts this attitude in a country where many children are unable to attend school. An artist like Emmanuel Botalatala in Kinshasa – also known as the 'Ministre des Poubelles' ('Minister of Garbage') – uses his assemblages as a form of instruction. But what appears to set Katambayi Mukendi's work apart is a certain absurdist quality. A characteristic that can be traced back to the practicalities of everyday life in the Democratic Republic Congo, where the most unusual situations can arise due to a lack – or an excess – of rules and supervision. For example, Congolese citizens are currently buying a huge number of imported energy-saving bulbs, even though the vast majority of them don't have a meter – meaning it won't save them a penny on their energy bill. His pragmatic approach has led Katambayi Mukendi to offer the crystal lamp as a solution: a traditional light bulb like the ones already being used in the Congo, with a glass structure – in the shape of a piece of cut crystal – that distributes its light more effectively.

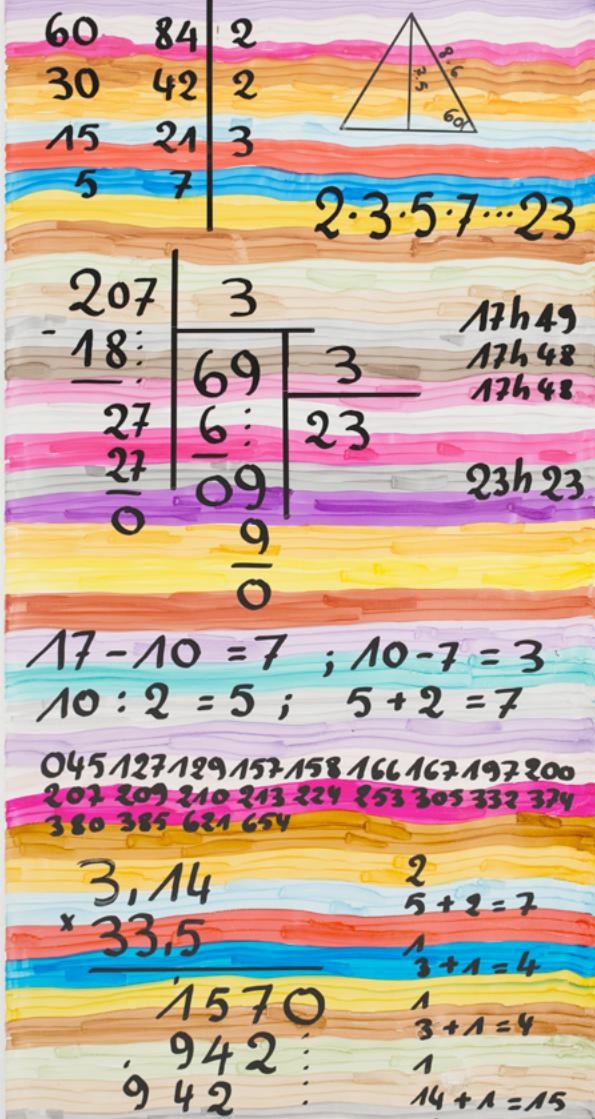
Jean Katambayi
Mukendi,
Gateaumium
(2016), paper.

Recently, after doing a residency at the WIELS contemporary art centre in Belgium in 2016, Jean Katambayi Mukendi started making sculptures that deal with the European context – Britain's withdrawal from the EU in response to migration issues, for example; or the Brussels bombings of 22 March 2016 by radicalised terrorists. His own explanation for this is that it was inevitable that something like this would happen sooner or later. Many of his works can be seen as an indictment of the growing divide between the situation in developed countries and the daily circumstances of people living in less prosperous regions like his own country. Katambayi Mukendi links the past to the present, by drawing parallels between, for example, the harvesting of natural resources by the





Jean Katambayi Mukendi, *On ne sait pas où on va* (2016), trampoline, Antwerp.
Exhibition view.



Jean Katambayi Mukendi, *Calcul mental* (2016),
felt-tip pen,
marker pen,
chipboard, 76 x
37 cm.

former European colonial powers and the present interplanetary missions undertaken by the United States, Russia and the European Union in search of new raw materials. While billions of euros are being invested in scientific programmes that lay the groundwork for future empires, nothing is done to maintain or develop existing structures in Africa or other parts of the world where people are literally starving to death. In his work, he also denounces examples of ecologically irresponsible behaviour.

It is tempting to view Jean Katambayi Mukendi as a modern-day successor to the Dadaists and Situationists. His work resembles theirs in the key importance that it assigns to humour in its social critique. The titles that he conceives for his fragile and sophisticated machines – the fruit of countless hours of labour – make enthusiastic use of wordplay and puns. Katambayi Mukendi's artistic activity rebels against people's fear of living in the here and now, of taking a risk by seeing things in a different light and opening one's mind to the unknown. With his free spirit, understanding, sympathy, optimism and confidence, Jean Katambayi Mukendi is able to re-enchant the world – to everyone's good fortune.

by Simon Delobel
trampoline, Antwerp
November 2016

Colophon

**Attempts to Read the World
(Differently): Three Exhibitions
in Five Acts**

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Stroom Den Haag presents this exhibition as a part of the ongoing programme *Attempts to Read the World (Differently)*.

Parallel to the exhibition, a programme of additional activities takes place. Please check our newsletter, our website or follow us by social media.

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