

“A new gallery for contemporary and classical African art in Antwerp’s trendy museum quarter.”

“Through the use of grounded minerals, Ngamba refers to the non-Congolese control over Congo’s mineral resources.”

“A Congolese visual artist whose multi-faceted universe consists of drawings, paintings, photography, video, installations, and performance.”

“Ngamba challenges systemic inequalities of the colonial framing installed in the history of her country.”

“It’s the gallery’s ambition to give more visibility to art from the African continent.”



“ALLIANCES”

HADASSA NGAMBA

B.1993, D.R. CONGO

June 17 - July 9, 2023
Thu-Sun, 13-18h
And by appointment

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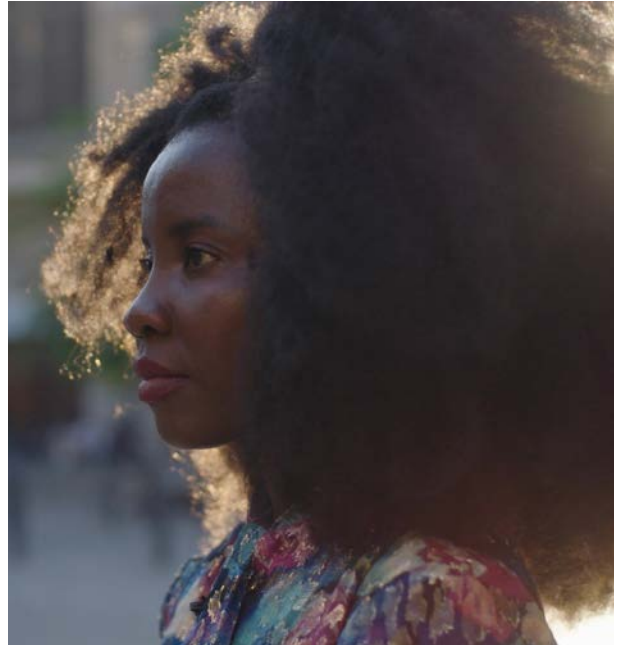
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“ALLIANCES” HADASSA NGAMBA



Hadassa Ngamba (b. 1993) is a Congolese visual artist whose multi-faceted universe consists of drawings, paintings, photography, video, installations, and performance.

Growing up in Kizu in the Kongo-Central Province, an environment marked by the colonial industrial exploitation, she considers her personal history as a starting point to approach that of Congo. Confronted with violence and abuse within her family from a young age, she connects her personal experiences to colonial traumas. Ngamba seeks personal and collective responses to issues related to the pre-colonial and colonial memory of her country.

In her work, the artist aims to redefine the false stereotypes of the Congolese identity rooted in the country’s troubled past and present. The colonial cartography of Congo is a key element in Ngamba’s artistic research. She is interested in how the mapping of the country’s resources enabled the exploitation by imperialist capitalist structures.

Through her work the multi-disciplinary artist challenges the foundations on which capitalism was build and confronts the inhumane character of the failing and unequal system. Deeply rooted in her personal histories and experiences, her work explores the country’s past, with the intention to overturn the dominating narratives in a process of healing. Ngamba views her work as a way to reveal the truths to a new audience, at home and abroad, and be part of the ‘repair’ of the country and its people.

“Having grown up in Boma (the prototype of Congolese industrialization) and in Lubumbashi (a large mining town in the Haut-Katanga region), I started working with maps. The maps reveal the signs of exploitation. My deep-seated decision to become an artist stems from the dissection of humanistic scientific, geological and political maps on which civilizations were based and on which capitalist



Hadassa Ngamba, Cerveau 4 (2023). Oil on canvas, 217 x 346 cm



Hadassa Ngamba, Banza-Mambu (2021). Welded corten steel, 83 x 42 x 90 cm



institutions were built. When I went to Congo Central as part of my research, I discovered that the map of my country was drawn with the intention of serving an industry, to produce goods that were almost entirely for export. To this day, maps are drawn and roads built for the purpose of dispossessing local people and generating wealth and power that fuels neocolonialism."

Through the use of grounded minerals (such as the green malachite from Katanga), Ngamba refers to the non-Congolese control over Congo's mineral resources. Signaled by the inclusion of these minerals, a key theme of her oeuvre are the distressing social and environmental issues resulting from the continued exploitation of the country's wealth.

"My work is much more than an interest in Congolese cartography. My research indeed often involves me working on the ground and engaging in dialogue with local people, historians, archivists, scientists, etc. but another particularly large part of it springs from a certain restlessness of an existential nature, from my experience as a woman, as an artist living in a society primarily focused on profit. The objects and materials I use such as fabrics, sewing work, minerals, marble, wood, reflective surfaces, etc. refer to the places where I work and live. They are often imbued with meaning and symbolism of the organization of strategic and social places. Using all kinds of mediums, such as drawings, paintings, photography, video, installations, and performances, I study the intuitive flow, the spirituality, the associative combinations of elements, the mythical stories and technologies, as well as Congolese stories, in a quest to redefine paradigms."

With "Alliances", presenting a dialogue between older and new works, Hadassa Ngamba offers new perspectives on the past, present, and future of her mother country.

Centerpiece of the exhibition is "Cerveau 1", the first work in this ongoing series, created in the artist's atelier in Lubumbashi in 2017, and addressing the disunity of Congolese cartography while linking it with an imagined map of her brain. A piece of cotton canvas is divided into uneven grids and colored with grounded minerals such as malachite from Katanga. Using different lines, colors, and surfaces, Ngamba brings attention to the vast fragmentation of her country. Central in the exhibition is a new large-scale work of the "Cerveau" series. The monumental canvas is divided into unequal grids, painted in red, yellow, green and blue. With this new, different type of cartography the artist transcends the narrative. The numerous dots representing individuals, she puts the Congolese people back on the map. Considering mapping as the act of owning, the painting is a powerful statement about her role as an artist. From 2018, five black-and-white photographs in large format document Ngamba's first performance, "Nketu-Tungu" (kiyombe for 'an empowered woman').

"I wanted to initiate a discussion with the people from Lubumbashi, so I created a space for dialogue with this performance. I had a 66 centimeter long braid in my hair. Traditionally worn, I had it upright and wrapped in a local organic yarn (singa brassa). During the performance I started a conversation with many people. Many were very curious about my performance, which resulted in a large crowd. The police feared disruptions, but of course everything went well."

Created in 2021, "Banza-mambu" was last exhibited at Netwerk Aalst during the group exhibition



“New Songs for Old Cities”. Based on a traditional Kongo chair, yet made in steel, it invites you to reflect on important issues as sitting on this chair obliges one to look upwards. Just as the enormous hair braid of “Nketu-Tungu” reaches to the sky, the sculpture pursues a connection with the transcendental. “Banza” is kiyombe for “to reflect”, while “mambu” means “problems” – once more stressing the questioning nature of Ngamba’s practice. “Alliances” presents three captivating works from the new series “Project Ngamba & Investment”. Inspired by a SIM card’s shape, they address topics as communication and memory, while also referring to the natural resources that leave the country to be used in modern technologies.

Especially for her first exhibition at Duende Art Projects, Hadassa Ngamba has created six glass-shaped sculptures. Made in porcelain, the transformative process of their creation for the artist symbolizes her ambition to change paradigms. A plan of the ideal colonial city, published by the Belgian ministry of Colonies in 1946, has been transposed on these sculptures. Many Congolese metropolises, such as the capital Kinshasa, were developed according to this plan, with a railway as the horizontal axis and placing industry central, a lay-out highlighting the exploitive character of the colonization. Ngamba has reconfigured this plan, challenging capitalism, and offering a fresh perspective. For the artist, the wine glass, made to toast, is a metaphor for several alliances, between Congo and Belgium, but especially between the present and the past. Libations to the ancestors create the alliance with her roots, to act with fairness and strength in the present.

After studying criminology at the University of Lubumbashi, Ngamba took part in the Off-Program of the Biennale of Lubumbashi in 2017 and was invited by Sandrine Collard to the 6th Lubumbashi Biennale in 2019. The News York Times featured her work in an article dedicated to this edition of the Biennale. Ngamba moved to Belgium in January 2019 to participate in the WIELS residency program in Brussels, which was followed by a post-graduate course in visual arts at Ghent’s HISK (2020-2021). She was the Prize winner of the 2019 Lubumbashi session of the Laurent Moonens Award and her work is included in the collections of SMAK (Ghent), IKOB (Eupen) and the National Bank of Belgium (Brussels). In 2022 she was a laureate of the Fintro Price. After her exhibition “Configurations” at CC Strombeek in 2021, “Alliances” is the artist’s second solo exhibition.

At a time when museums around the world are called upon to proceed with their “decolonization”, art sits at the heart of these changes. Hadassa Ngamba creates new visions of the past and reimagines the future. In her paintings and sculptures presented during ‘Alliances’, Ngamba challenges systemic inequalities by referring to elements from colonial and recent history, cartography, religion, personal memories, and the body in a thought-provoking and inspiring reconfiguration of the colonial framing installed in the history of her country.



Hadassa Ngamba, Nketu-Tungu (2018). Black and white print on Hähnemühle ultrasmooth paper on Dibond, 150 x 100 cm



Hadassa Ngamba, Nkudu 1 (2023). Porcelain, enamel, 14 cm



Hadassa Ngamba, Cerveau 1 (2017-18). Malachite, white gravel, acrylic, coffee on hard cotton, 65 x 114 cm



ABOUT DUENDE ART PROJECTS

Duende Art Projects' ambition is to inspire people and enrich their lives by sharing our profound passion for the art of the African continent.

Our purpose is to strengthen Africa's visibility and significance within the global and diverse art world through a strong digital presence, curated exhibitions on unique locations and the participation to art fairs such as PAN.

Our mission is to connect people — the curious and interested, aspiring and seasoned collectors, connoisseurs, emerging and renowned artists, art advisors, curators and writers — with art from the African continent.

We facilitate easy access through compelling exhibitions — offline and online, in Antwerp and on location. Our online platform provides insightful educational content and wishes to be a home for ideas, news and stories. We offer a bespoke and discrete art advisory service that covers all aspects of building and managing a collection.

Duende Art Projects was founded in 2021 by Bruno Claessens, a passionate art expert with 15 years of ample experience in the African art market. Previously, he was the European director of the African art department at Christie's for 5 years.

Bruno has published three books on African art (Ere Ibeji (2013), Baule Monkeys (2016) & UNÛ (2021)) and has ran a popular blog on the subject since 2013. Throughout his career, he gained a profound knowledge of art of the African continent, both classical and contemporary, and has developed a great network of collectors, curators and scholars as well as strong institutional ties. The gallery's first year saw two major group exhibitions, "Threads" and "Unsettled" at Zwartzusters Monastery in Antwerp, as well as a first participation to the renowned art fair Parcours des Mondes in Paris and the PAN art fair in Amsterdam. Having relocated in 2023 to a new space in Antwerp's trendy museum quarter, the gallery has been showing an exciting programma of contemporary solo exhibitions juxtaposed with classical African art.



List of Exhibitions | Hadassa Ngamba

- 2021 Configurations, CC Strombeek, Brussels (BE)
- 2021 Exercises, WIELS Project Room, WIELS, Brussels (BE)
- 2021 Scale, Landscapes, Ghent (BE)
- 2021 Force times distance: on labour and its sonic ecologies, Sonsbeek 20 – 24, Arnhem (DL)
- 2021 Various Positions, HISK Laureates exhibition, Gosset Site, Brussels
- 2021 New Song for Old Cities, Netwerk Aalst, Aalst (BE)
- 2021 The Hisk Affair, Gosset Site, Brussels (BE)
- 2021 The Best of Times, The Worst of Times, online exhibition.
- 2021 Open Studio at HISK, Ghent (BE)
- 2020 Estafette (duo exhibition with painter Tsibumba Kanda matulu), l'Edition Populaire, Antwerp (BE).
- 2020 Occupie Paradit, Netwerk Aalst, Aalst (BE).
- 2020 Open Studio at HISK, Ghent (BE)
- 2019 Future genealogies received from the equator, 6th Biennale of Lubumbashi, Lubumbashi (DRC).
- 2019 Atelier Tuna Wina, Galerie du Hangar Picha, Lubumbashi (DRC)
- 2018 Nketu-Tungu (performance) Lubumbashi (DRC) & Kinshasa (DRC)
- 2017 Rencontres Picha, 5th Biennale of Lubumbashi, Lubumbashi (DRC)

List of Exhibitions | Duende Art Projects

- 2023 [Alliances](#) by Hadassa Ngamba, Antwerp, Belgium
- 2023 [A World Unheard](#) by Raymond Fuyana, Antwerp, Belgium
- 2023 [The Blind Side](#) by Sibusiso Ngwazi, Antwerp, Belgium
- 2023 [Manifestations](#), Unravelling five antique African sculptures, Antwerp, Belgium
- 2023 [Pathfinder](#) by Mostaff Muchawaya, Antwerp, Belgium
- 2022 [Living with Art](#), Duende Magazine, online exhibition
- 2022 [Van Strien Collection](#), PAN, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- 2022 [Sweet Dreams](#), Parcours des Mondes, Paris, France
- 2022 [Unsettled](#), Zwartzusters Monastery, Antwerp, Belgium
- 2021 [Threads](#), Zwartzusters Monastery, Antwerp, Belgium