

CHARGING MYTHS



On / Trade / Off

FRAMER
LABORATORY

EXHIBITION

24 FEB–
4 JUN '23

EXHIBITION OPENING

23 FEB
2023

ARTISTS

Alexis Destoop
Marjolijn Dijkman
Pélagie Gbaguidi
Femke Herregraven
Dorine Mokha &
Elia Rediger
Jean Katambayi Mukendi
Musasa
Alain Nsenga
Georges Senga
Pamela Tulizo
Maarten Vanden Eynde

EXHIBITION DESIGN

Katharina Sook Wilting
& Tal

CURATORIAL ADVICE

Ils Huygens

CHARGING MYTHS

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INTRODUCTION

BY JOSIEN PIETERSE AND EVIE EVANS

Framer Framed presents *Charging Myths*, an exhibition by the artist and research collective On-Trade-Off. This collective was founded in 2018 and is linked to artists project space Picha in Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Enough Room for Space in Brussels (Belgium). On-Trade-Off has been collaborating for years to research the implications of a new lithium mine in Manono, a town in the DRC. Lithium is a scarce resource that plays a key role in the so-called 'green transition' necessary to imagine a more sustainable world. However, there is also a downside to this new rush on lithium. Since 2015, Framer Framed has been programming exhibitions around the social and environmental impact of mines on society; our unbridled need for raw materials comes at a high price.

The solo exhibition by artist Sammy Baloji – a previous member of On-Trade-Off – entitled *A Blueprint for Toads and Snakes* (2018) explored the contemporary effects of colonial history in his hometown of Lubumbashi – the capital city of the Katanga province and a major mining region in the DRC. His film *Tales of the Copper Cross Garden, Episode 1* (2017), for example, records the influence of the copper mining industry.¹ In the past, the region was dominated by copper mines set up by King Leopold during colonial rule. It was later exploited by the Union Minière de Haut-Katanga and then today's global corporations precisely because of its colonial foundations. By merely showing scenes of workers and daily life, Baloji highlights the intersection of colonial enterprise and the global economic market through the depletion of resources and environmental degradation.²

1.
Framer Framed, *A Blueprint for Toads and Snakes* by Sammy Baloji Hand-Out, 2018.

2.
Ashley Maum, *Framer Framed Activism Archive*.

A year earlier (2017), we presented the solo exhibition of Vietnamese artist Tuan Mami's multimedia installation and performance *In One's Breath-Nothing Stands Still* (2014- 2017) at Art Rotterdam – Intersections. It was an intimate interpretation of exploitative mining cultures reflecting "slow, insidious change" caused by corporations and governments around the world. *Pressing Matters* (2018), compiled by Dutch-Indonesian artist Kevin van Braak, built upon this theme by placing a magnifying glass on mining practices in Indonesia. The exhibition presented work by various artists such as Fitri DK and Muhammad 'Ucup' Yusuf – both members of artist group Taring Padi – and Agung Kurniawan, who all dealt with the expropriation of the raw materials of West Papua.

Our first exhibition on the subject was *Koempels* in 2015, with research centring on Limburg, Netherlands, in collaboration with SCHUNK*, Heerlen. A new generation of artists known as 'Amsterdam Limburgers' reflected on their sense of identity, heritage and collective memory 50 years on since the abrupt end of a period of economic security provided by coal mining work – despite its controversies. More recently, the *Court for Intergenerational Climate Crimes* (CICC), produced by lawyer and academic Radha D'Souza and Dutch artist Jonas Staal, in collaboration with Framer Framed (2021) offered a new framework to understand the catastrophic consequences of mining. During the CICC, a case was presented against the Dutch State for allowing trade agreements that authorised destructive mining in the Gobi Desert, Mongolia.

From *Koempels* to the CICC, Framer Framed is tracing a history of energy which is slowly transitioning from a fossil fuel culture to green power. For *Charging Myths*, we return to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, specifically to the town of Manono.

For the artists of On-Trade-Off a focus on ecology and the climate crisis becomes bound up in histories of extraction, illuminating the inextricable repercussions of colonialism.

Drawing on years of research, the artists illustrate how, when mining companies and their industry abandon exploited regions, they leave behind not only visible and lasting scars in the landscape but cause social disruption for the inhabitants. It affects the local economy and social system and damages the environment and wildlife – or even results in lingering health issues for the people that remain. It is lived history, embodied and endured for generations.

Though the works of On-Trade-Off have been shown at both Z33 – House for Contemporary Art, Design & Architecture in Belgium and the Lubumbashi Biennale in 2019 & 2022 together with Framer Framed the artists create a distinct iteration of *Charging Myths* embarking on a journey through the landscape of Manono. Hovering between past and present, the exhibition unbalances our understanding of mining, its extraction and exploitation of raw materials.

Josien Pieterse is, together with Cas Bool, founder and co-director of Framer Framed

Evie Evans is part of the team at Framer Framed.

On-Trade-Off: Countering Extractivism by Transnational Artists' Collaborations

BY LOTTE ARNDT AND OULIMATA GUEYE

The term extractivism signifies far more than the literal extraction of raw materials from soils: it speaks, in a broader sense, to the structural foundations of global capitalism, its colonial history, and its ongoing afterlives comprising contemporary *ecocides*. It refers to an “understanding that the world, and all its beings, are inherently commodifiable, violently turned into ‘things’, operating as a standing reserve for the accumulation of profit and power in the hands of a few.”¹

Global capitalism is fuelled by fossil energies, which are most often extracted for the benefit of transnational companies collaborating with national governments, but to the detriment of local populations. In the past decades, extractivism has been theorized mainly in South American scholarship highlighting the “dramatic material change to social and ecological life that underpins [racial capitalism]”.²

In an extended viewpoint, the critical discussion of power structures in the global art world refers to extractivism to describe the frequent incorporation of artists from the Global South into galleries, biennales, fairs and exhibitions located mostly in the urban centres of the North, often without long-term engagement for the sustainable working structures in their countries of origin. While the symbolic surplus of the artists’ practice is appropriated unilaterally, the power of the metropolitan centres remains largely untouched.

1.
Heather Davis “Blue Bling. On Extractivism”, *Afterall*, no. 48, Autumn 2019, <https://www.afterall.org/journal/issue.48/blue-bling-on-extractivism>

2.
Macarena Gómez-Barris: *The Extractive Zone. Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives*, Duke, 2017, p. xvii.

How can an artist collective address the profit-maximizing structures of extractivism? A collaboration between a dozen artists and writers on three continents, On-Trade-Off enters the “extractive zone”, critically examines its functioning, and searches for alternatives. Several artists and thinkers gravitating around the initiatives Enough Room for Space (co-founded by Marjolijn Dijkman and Maarten Vanden Eynde, Brussels, 2005) and Picha (co-founded by Sammy Baloji and Patrick Mudekerezwa, Lubumbashi, 2009) pushed their long-term conversations further and started to collaboratively inquire about lithium mining in the Congo, the pitfalls of the promises of the green energy revolution, and more broadly, the unequal distribution of risks, destruction, wealth and opportunities along global value chains. The group's configuration are evolving and dependant on the specific focus chosen for an exhibition or an event.³ It is nevertheless of crucial structural importance that the project relies on a collaboration between a collective in Lubumbashi, in central Africa, and another in Brussels, at the centre of Europe, with members joining from changing geographical locations, including Australia, requiring constantly to take into account the realities experienced on all sides.

The geographical starting point for the project is a site of extractivism par excellence: the Manono mine, situated in the Tanganyika province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 500 kilometers from Lubumbashi. While the mine has been exploited for its tin reserves since 1919, it recently became the focus of international speculation on strategic raw material for the green revolution: as explorative drillings conducted by the Australian company AVZ in 2018 have shown, the soil contains high concentrations of lithium, an alkali metal with high capacities to store electricity. The prospecting on the mine's ores that also contain cassiterite and coltan, both metals of strategic importance for wireless communication, constitutes a conundrum that On-Trade-Off examines: while promising to provide a more sustainable technology, the future extraction of the ore will most probably reproduce the exclusion of local populations from the wealth of their soils.

3. At different moments, the group involved so far the artists Sammy Baloji, Alexis Destoop, Marjolijn Dijkman, Pélagie Gbaguidi, Femke Herregraven, Jean Katambayi Mukendi, Dorine Mokha, Musasa, Alain Senga, Georges Senga, Daddy Tshikaya, Pamela Tulizo, Maarten Vanden Eynde, and the writers and curators Lotte Arndt, Oulimata Gueye and Rosa Spaliviero.

4. Chéneau-Loquay Annie, "Mobile Telephony in African Cities. A successful adaptation to local context", *L'Espace géographique*, 2012/1 (Vol. 41), p. 82-92. URL: <https://www.cairn.info/journal-espace-geographique-2012-1-page-82.htm>

A collaborative project between two artist collectives in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Belgium renders today's asymmetrical structures of the world-economy and their colonial history a palpable reality on many levels. While being connected through the value chains of global industries, artists participating in the On-Trade-Off project do not experience the same realities, due to their geographical situation. They work with different tools, undergo heterogeneous journeys, and adhere to diverse aesthetic approaches. The frequently abstract terminology that conceptualises extractivism materializes in the artworks as concrete takes on the world, engaging with the local aftermath of globally traded ores, and their transformation into consumer products.⁴ It is precisely this interconnected reality that the transnational artistic research project On-Trade-Off critically interrogates.

In this text we will stress that On-Trade-Off strives, by its very structure, its multi-sited geography, its collaborative intention, and the internal redistribution of resources, to resist the rampant extractivist logics of the global art field, including the neo-exotic tokenism of artists from the Global South. By developing On-Trade-Off as a permanent dialogue between artists living and working closely connected to the sites of extractive mining, and group members confronted in their direct environment rather to the seducing surfaces of the electronic end products, the project systematically connects the extremities of the world spanning value chains that oftentimes are dissociated.

How to work with the vocabulary of the neoliberal economy? On-Trade-Off advances in a field dominated by powerful corporate interests and the language of financial speculation. The collective's work is permanently obligated to deal with forces that exceed its own possible impact. Reformulating Audre Lorde's fundamental question, it must ask incessantly if the available conceptual and aesthetic tools can contribute to dismantle the extractivist house.

As a consequence, the group engages in continuous criticism and self-reflection, not only in the visual production, but also at a linguistic level: in neoclassical economic theory, a trade-off designates situations where increasing one part of an equation requires diminishing another.

TRANSNATIONAL COLLABORATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY

On-Trade-Off develops through evolving iterations and context-specific exchanges, taking part in a growing network of activists, researchers, and fellow artists. It considers that the plurality of experiences allows for a more precise understanding of the global realities of extractivism. The photographic work of Georges Senga (DRC/NL, 1983) is for example closely tied to the mining history of Lubumbashi, testifying of the decisive impact of the mining giant *Gécamines* for generations of the cities' inhabitants.

The artists Musasa (DRC, 1950) and Maarten Vanden Eynde (BE, 1977) work together on a series of tableaux representing the chemical elements, playfully quoting chalkboards and school charts and their educational usages (*Material Matters*, 2018-ongoing). Their approach breaks with the division of applied art and high art, brings together two artists of different generations and living situations, and explores how a collaborative learning and transmission process can look like.

But approaches can also remain distinct and still create strong resonances allowing for all parts to reach new dimensions. Such is the case for Jean Katambayi Mukendi's (DRC, 1974) hand-made speculative drawings and machine-sculptures, and the slickly designed multi-media installations of Femke Herregraven (NL, 1982), that often draw on financial data sets and the visualisation of speculation. Katambayi's work challenges the detrimental effects of mining on local populations by imagining how to appropriate the technological potential of the industrial tools, and to feed it into future design and urbanism. The research of Herregraven examines the abstract financial renderings of the world, which she interrogates critically as a means of domination, but also explores as a source of imagination.

DIGITAL WORKING TOOLS AND THEIR GLOBAL ENTANGLEMENTS

None of the complex structural questions interrogated by On-Trade-Off are external to the group itself. It is a transnational collective based on three continents that is strongly dependent on the very technologies scrutinized by the groups' research: the Covid-19 crisis with its worldwide impact presented a particularly paradoxical situation for the work of the highly mobile artists group. During the lockdown, members have been based in Lubumbashi, Sydney, Brussels, Paris, Amsterdam, and Zagreb. The transnational collaboration remained generally possible via computer and smart-phone screens, revealing the striking differences in quality, cost and accessibility of the internet connection, and more broadly electricity in each location. Even if the massive extension of internet-based communication led to decreasing international air-travel with its destructive ecological footprint, it nevertheless remains dependent on raw material consuming technologies, and their ongoing supply: we know about the energy consumption, water usage, toxicity, and waste caused by the production and use of digital media, that belie corporate myths of their immateriality.⁵ On-Trade-Off's research depends heavily on electronic media, and

5. Laura U. Marks: "Let's Deal with the Carbon Footprint of Streaming Media", *Afterimage*, 2020, 47 (2), p. 47. <https://doi.org/10.1525/aft.2020.472009>.

For a critic of the rhetorics of dematerialized communication see: Lisa Parks and Nicole Starosielski (eds.): *Signal Traffic: Critical Studies of Media Infrastructures*, Champlain, Illinois, University of Illinois Press, 2015.

thus takes part in an economy that extracts labour from bodies; minerals, gas, and oil from the ground, and that has no inherent limits to the permanent accumulation process.

Still, the ongoing research demonstrates that transnational collaboration can contribute to counterbalancing the structural exploitation. Efficient technologies, presented as the solutions of the ecological crisis in the North; the concentration of extraction and outsourcing of hazardous waste in the South, and anti-migration laws, and increasing social exclusion go hand in hand.

Australian based artist, Alexis Destoop (BE/AU, 1971) is working on a film on the history and becoming of lithium, reaching from cosmological tales of origin to its role as a supercharger in energetic cycles, and (re)tracing the journey of the transformation of this volatile element. From the vantage point of the Asia-Pacific, he sees the geopolitical struggle over the control of strategic resources intensifying. Destoop's research engages with the blind spot of his life in between Australia and Belgium, and their particular colonial histories, and strives for narrative and visual elements allowing to navigate a horizon obstructed by dystopia.

Pélagie Gbaguidi's (BJ/BE, 1965) work addresses the existential urgencies generated by techno-capitalist exploitation and connects its local realities to global entanglements. During a residency in 2019, she travelled from Brussels to Lubumbashi, where she worked with women labouring in an informal mine close to the nearby town Kipushi, where cobalt, another central ingredient for the production of lithium batteries, is extracted in health-threatening conditions.

UNRAVELLING SPECULATION

The group evolves between analytical criticism of extractivism in the artworks, and its own implication in the asymmetries of the global economy, without ever claiming to remain unaffected by the powerful structures that it interrogates. Marjolijn Dijkman (NL/BE, 1978) dives into the history of

electricity, its pre-scientific staging as a spectacle, and the constitution of scientific electrical knowledge in the 18th century. Dijkman's research highlights the parallels drawn by Benjamin Franklin, author of core elements of today's electricity storage. For Franklin, the control over power promised to master nature, and to counterbalance poverty by wealth. Dijkman questions his faith in progress, and connects it to the promises of today's green revolution.

MAKING AND CRASHING TOGETHER

Today, the rhetoric of sustainability and global responsibility is common in the communication of global companies. Tesla Inc. for instance announces to accelerate the "world's transition to sustainable energy" by selling high-end electric cars, designed to move with regenerative energy, stored in lithium batteries. For its batteries, Tesla Inc. requires huge supplies of lithium - and may thus be one of the clients of the prospective mining of the ore in the city of Manono.

In the present distribution of power, it is likely that "the promise of the green car of the future is valid only for the part of the world that will enjoy its use, [while] the environmental impact is displaced in the areas of extraction and refining of materials that compose it."⁶ Challenging this situation, the artists Jean Katambayi Mukendi, Sammy Baloji (DRC/BE, 1978) and Daddy Tshikaya (DRC, 1986) conceived and constructed, in their hometown Lubumbashi, a real-size Tesla car using copper wire: *Tesla Crash: A Speculation*. The remarkable object is an outcome of collective intelligence and collaboration, using copper, a raw material that is present in high quantities in the soils of the Katanga region, and has been mined extensively since pre-colonial times. The copper-wire Tesla car has been skilfully constructed over several months at Picha in Lubumbashi (2018-2019), gathering numerous concerned and interested audiences around the daily construction process, or in workshops dealing with energy and technologies for the future.

6.
Oulimata Gueye:
"No Congo, No Technologies", *Digital Earth* 2019,
<https://medium.com/digital-earth/no-congo-no-technologies-163ea2caec0a>

Far more than an object, the car is still generating collaborations. During the Lubumbashi Biennale in 2019, artist Dorine Mokha (DRC, 1989 - † 2021) weaved his performance around it, entering call-and-response with the audience, and initiating future collaborations with the On-Trade-Off project. In close conversation with the three conceivers of the wire car, Marjolijn Dijkman prepared the performance *Charging Tesla Crash: A Speculation*. Jean Katambayi led through the ceremony, while Dijkman discharged from a home crafted electric Tesla coil 3 million volts over a distance of 2 meters on the highly conductive copper car

At the modest scale of an artist collective, On-Trade-Off strives to counter extractivist structures and to collaboratively speculate on possible scenarios for alternative manners to live together on an interdependent planet, to open ideas beyond the protective localism of wealthy ecological policies, and the structural racism of global techno capitalism. Examining future modes of travel and transnational collaboration, and the continuous self-reflecting on the group's structure and its inherent biases, are among the challenges for the coming months and years. While it cannot pretend to mitigate the destructive power of capital, it "stays with the trouble" (Haraway 2016) and engages enthusiastically in collaboration as a source of learning in multiple perspectives, and mutual transformation.

ARTISTS / WORKS



Alexis Destoop - *The Pits* (2022) | Photo: Maarten Nauw, Framer Framed



Dorine Mokha & Elia Rediger - Video still *Hercule de Lubumbashi* (2019)

Photo: Maarten Nauw, *Framer Framed*



Marjolijn Dijkman - *Cloud to Ground #1* (2021) | Photo: Maarten Nauw, Framer Framed

ALEXIS DESTOOP

The Pits (2022)

Video installation and print
Variable dimensions

The Pits opens with post-industrial landscape images of Manono. Destoop interrogates the problematic role of his personal and Western gaze in relation to these sites. He turns our conventional top down gaze inside out, as it were, pushing it upward along a vertical axis - reminiscent of a mine shaft - towards the light. He modified historical topographical engravings of mine shafts on the Swedish island of Utö, where lithium was first discovered in 1800.

Alexis Destoop Lives and works in Sydney, Australia and Brussels, Belgium. He has a background in photography & philosophy. His productions examine the experience of time, elements of storytelling and procedures of identification and memory. In recent years his situated practice has focused on particular transitional environments where ecological pitfalls, economical aspirations, geopolitical tensions and colonial histories coalesce. Rather than treating landscape as a passive element or as a sublime natural object, he approaches it as a thoroughly human construct - with stratified meanings and histories.

MARJOLIJN DIJKMAN

Cloud to Ground #1 (2021-2022)

Sand sculpture with electrified pieces
314 cm x 400 cm x 30 cm

Fulgurites or 'lightning tubes' are a magical phenomenon of nature. These amorphous, hollow structures of sand are formed when lightning strikes the ground in places where the soil is marked by quartzose or silica-rich sand and sediments. Inspired by this phenomenon, Dijkman created artificial fulgurites. In making these sculptures, she electrically charged soil from Belgian and Congolese mining areas. In this way, she created three-dimensional snapshots of something equally intangible, mythical and essential as energy.

Depth of Discharge (2021)

Video

This immersive film translates the 18th century magic of electrical demonstrations and tries to visualize electricity. The film shows all sorts of items associated with technology and energy use, such as lithium, coal and charged printed circuit boards. The artist used a self-developed photographic technology with high voltage and a tin-clad discharge board.

Marjolijn Dijkman lives and works in Brussels, Belgium & Saint-Mihiel, France. Her practice is research-based and multi-disciplinary including film, photography, sculpture and installation. The works themselves can be seen as a form of

speculative-fiction; partly based on facts and research but often brought into the realm of the imagination. Her work is concerned with residues of enlightenment ideology, manifestations of collective memory, blind spots of representation. "I strongly believe that the critical challenges that are at the core of On-Trade-Off can best be faced collectively and from a multitude of perspectives and artistic voices."

PÉLAGIE GBAGUIDI

Hunger (2022)

Poem, audio and site-specific wallpaper
Variable dimensions

Bache (2022)

Print on textile
Variable dimensions

In *Hunger* Pélagie Gbaguidi combines a series of drawings and paintings into a graphic display. Gbaguidi links up the global theme of hunger with exploitation, inequality and survival. Her work is based on her stay with women who engage in artisanal mining in the Congolese Kipushi, where cobalt, an essential ingredient of lithium batteries, is mined. While a white sun fills the space, in the background you hear the poem 'We are a New Sun' in combination with local noise from Kipushi. Gbaguidi wrote the text based on stories from the various artists and had



Pélégie Gbaguidi - *Hunger* (2022) | Photo: Eva Broekema, Framer Framed

it recorded in six languages. The poem runs like a refrain through the exhibition, providing a hopeful counterbalance. It summarizes poetically how a harmony of voices may give rise to new ways of living together.

Pélégie Gbaguidi lives and works in Brussels, Belgium. Gbaguidi calls herself a contemporary "Griot". Her work is an anthology of signs and traces on the trauma. This readjustment of the imaginary arouses in the artist the urgency to give it form, a writing of liberating images and a corpus to draw contemporary forms. She has participated in numerous international exhibitions such as the Stadtmuseum, Munich (Germany) 2013, MMK Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt (Germany)

2014, National Museum of African Art - Smithsonian Institution, Washington (USA) 2015, documenta 14 in Athens and Kassel 2017 and at the Lubumbashi Biennial of 2019, 11th Berlin Biennial 2020, and Centrale for Contemporary Art in Brussels (Belgium).



Femke Herregraven - *A Prelude to: When The Dust Unsettles* (2022) | Photo: Eva Broekema

FEMKE HERREGRAVEN

A Prelude to: When The Dust Unsettles (2022)

Video Installation with topographical model of Manono

Femke Herregraven's research on potential lithium extraction focuses on Manono's so-called "digital twin". Nowadays, long before any ore ever leaves the ground, international mining companies like AVZ create a digital model of their future megaprojects today from a safe distance using sophisticated remote sensing, modeling, and machine learning technologies.

Out of data and pixels, an ideal image of mines is thus created in hyper-clean and futuristic depictions. These so-called digital twins are used to present many simulations of the extraction process to convince politicians and investors of their potential gains and profits. The relationship between the physical impact, the pollution and toxicity of the landscape, the social and physical exploitation of the workers and local population are far from clear in this. In this installation, Herregraven brings these split realities together in a model that combines the virtual with elements of Manono's reality.

Femke Herregraven investigates which material base, geographies, and value systems are carved out by financial tech-

nologies and infrastructures. Her current work focuses on the financialization of the future as a 'catastrophe' and uses language, the voice, and the respiratory system to examine these monetized speculative catastrophes within our social, biological, and technological ecosystems. She is an alumnus of the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten in Amsterdam (2017–2018). In 2016, she collaborated with Dutch investigative journalist on the Panama Papers. In 2019, she was nominated for the Prix de Rome. She is currently a Creator Doctus (practice-based PhD) candidate at Sandberg Instituut (2020–2023).

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DORINE MOKHA & ELIA REDIGER

Hercule de Lubumbashi (2019)
Video

This musical composition for Congolese and European musicians is based on Handel's *Hercules*. One of the things we see is a fragment of the choir, which refers to the former orchestra of Gécamines. This Belgian mining company started the large-scale extraction of copper and cobalt in Lubumbashi. The work is reminiscent of the inextricable bond between art and economy, but also of the universal power of music, dance and humour.

Dorine Mokha (1989 - † 2021) was a Congolese dancer, choreographer and author, artistic co-director of ART'gument Project in Lubumbashi and associated artist with Studios Kabako in Kisangani. Open to multidisciplinary, he participated in numerous workshops in theatrical improvisation, film initiation, theatre writing, project writing and more recently in visual criticism and artistic production. He participated in international programs such as the Pan-African PAMOJA Residencies (2013-2015), the TURN Fund Meeting (2014), the Berlin Platform – Goethe Institute Coproduction Fund (2018); Avignon Festival, the Ruhrtriennale, the Theater der Welt or the Theaterformen. Dorine Mokha was a member of On-Trade-Off and tragically passed away in 2021.

Elia Rediger is a Swiss artist born in Kinshasa/Democratic Republic of Congo. He is an artistic director, composer, writer and singer. In addition to orchestral compositions ("Oh Albert", 2016, Basel), he was an in-house writer at the Konzerttheater Bern (2016/2017), frontman of the pop group The Bianca Story and the big band orchestra Brigade Futur 3. At Deutsche Oper Berlin he directs the music theater format *Macht der Künste / Aus dem Hinterhalt*. *Hercules of Lubumbashi - an oratorio of mines* was his second collaboration with the Congolese choreographer Dorine Mokha after the play "Oh Boyoma - 387 verses about a forgotten city" (KonzertTheaterBern 2017).



Jean Katambayi Mukendi - *The Concentrator* (2022) | Photo: Maarten Nauw, Framer Framed

JEAN KATAMBAYI MUKENDI

The Concentrator (2022)
Mixed material sculpture
3.5 m x 1.25 m x 2 m

Broken Fan (wet van de natuur) (2023)
Acrylic on MDF

Katambayi is fascinated by the relics of the mining industry. He appropriates them and deploys them to stimulate a better world through magical and philosophical machines. For this work he found inspiration in *The Concentrator*, a technological feat by the mining industry that is used to separate minerals from ordinary rocks and sediments. Inside the machine, Mendeleev's elements, portraits of chemists and scientists are jumbled up thoroughly.

Jean Katambayi Mukendi is an artist and scientist who lives and works in Lubumbashi (DRC). He has also studied and is passionate about technology, mechanics, geometry and electricity, which form a foundation for his artistic approaches. He creates fragile and complex installations animated by sophisticated electrical mechanisms. His technological discoveries are part of a search for solutions to the social problems of current Congolese society. His main source of inspiration is the permanent questioning of our society, which seems dichotomous.

Katambayi is the recipient of the Thami Mnyele Foundation award, completing a residency in Amsterdam, during which he is producing a new work for *Charging Myths*.



Sammy Baloji, Jean Katambayi Mukendi & Daddy Tshikaya - *Tesla Crash, A Speculation* (2019)
 Photo: Maarten Nauw, Framer Framed

**SAMMY BALOJI,
 JEAN KATAMBAYI MUKENDI
 & DADDY TSHIKAYA**

Tesla Crash, A Speculation (2019)
 Copper wire sculpture

This miniature version of the Tesla Model X is made from recycled copper wire. The technique looks like the one used by children in Lubumbashi to make toy wire cars.

**MUSASA &
 MAARTEN VAN DEN EYNDE**

Material Matters Li3 (2018)
 Acrylic paint on linen canvas
 92 cm x 126 cm

This painting comes from a series showing elements such as gold, uranium, lithium and copper, based on traditional classroom wall charts. The drawings, pictograms and symbols form a visual rebus, which summarizes the origin, transformation and influence of lithium.



Musasa & Maarten Vanden Eynde - *Material Matters Li3* (2018) | Photo: Maarten Nauw

***What All the World Desires* (2022)**

30 small paintings on hardboard

Variable dimensions

Vanden Eynde and Musasa went out to look for the most iconic symbols of the history of energy. Their work collects most divergent references to energy production and storage. The result is a family tree or analogue 'cloud', where as a visitor you can endlessly detect new connections.

Musasa lives and works in Lubumbashi. He is an artist and teacher at the Academie of Fine Arts in Lubumbashi. He is specialised in figurative painting, focusing on habits, rules and systems that are part of life in rural environments and ancient societies. He developed most of the visual language used in the National Museum of Lubumbashi explaining the origin and use of a variety of natural and industrial materials and processes. Musasa and Maarten Vanden Eynde have been collaborating several times since 2015. Their collaborative works have been featured in numerous international exhibitions including: *An Unfinished Symphony. Polyphony in the collection*, Mu. Zee, Ostend, BE (2020), *Tallinn Photomonth - Contemporary Art Biennial* (curated by Heidi Ballet) EE (2019); *Future Genealogies*, 6th Lubumbashi Biennale, DRC (2019). *Copper Connection and Wheel of Fortune* were acquired by Mu.Zee, Ostend, BE. Musasa's work has been exhibited over the past 40 years in DR Congo in local exhibitions in Lubumbashi, Likasi, Kolwezi and Kolwezi.

MAARTEN VANDEN EYNDE

***Future Flora: Manono IV* (2022)**

Circuit PCB board style

wall installation made with seeds

1.67 m x 1.67 m

The Australian multinational AVZ Minerals is one of the first companies active in Manono. The artist shows the map of the mining area on an electronic device's PCB (printed circuit board). Seeds and grains from the region take the place of transistors and electronic components. Together they imitate a lukasa, a memory board used by members of the Mbudye society in the kingdom of Luba (today part of the Congo) in the 19th and 20th centuries. The lukasa served as an archive of topographical information on the landscape, but also works as a timeline that helps memorize political or mythical events or figures. At the same time, the artwork is a mini seed bank of the rare plant species which grow in the area and whose growth is influenced by the minerals found in the soil.

***A Chain of Events* (2021)**

Sculpture of mixed materials

15 m

History is not a succession of disparate events but rather a chain of interconnected events which also mutually influence each other's course. Like *Future Flora*, this sculpture functions as a physical memory tool. Materials like rope, buttons and crystals are multifunctional. They served as means of



Maarten Vanden Eynde - *A Chain of Events* (2021) | Photo: Maarten Nauw, Framer Framed

payment, as measuring instrument or to record administrative and military info. The purpose of the various materials within the chain change from traditional to industrial. In an associative way, they bring together different stories centring on global trade and communication.

Maarten Vanden Eynde is an artist and co-founder of Enough Room for Space. He graduated in 2000 from the free media department at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. His practice is embedded in long term research projects that focus on numerous subjects of social and political relevance such as post-industrialism, capitalism and ecology. His work

is situated on the border between the past and the future; sometimes looking forward to the future of yesterday, sometimes looking back to the history of tomorrow. Currently he is investigating the influence of transatlantic trade of vital commodities like rubber, oil, ivory, copper, cotton and uranium, on evolution and progress, the creation of nations and other global power structures.



Alain Nsenga - *Fantasmagoria* (2022) | Photo: Maarten Nauw, Framer Framed

ALAIN NSENGA

Fantasmagoria (2022)

Mixed media

Alain Nsenga grew up in a miner's family. This fed his fascination for the history and impact of mining. When, for instance, he interviewed Congolese and Limburg miners, he heard many overlapping stories of migration, hard work and underground friendships. In *Fantasmagoria* Nsenga looks at those various yet shared mining histories. It is an imaginary search for a place where the ghosts of the past become the guardians of the future.

Alain Nsenga lives in Lubumbashi where he works as a graphic designer and photographer. He graduated in Design & Multimedia at the Ecole Supérieure d'Informatique Salama (ESIS) where he currently teaches. His photos are a permanent quest for originality and authenticity. His encounter with the Picha association in Lubumbashi and his activities as a graphic designer led him to participate in several workshops and to work with the team of the Lubumbashi Biennale since 2013. In 2019, he is artist in residence at Wiels - Centre for Contemporary Art in Brussels and participates in the Lubumbashi Biennale and presents the series affirmation and the impact of the gaze of the other. A series that also questions a postcolonial conception of beauty.



Georges Senga - *Tshanga-Tshanga: Mille Bêches* (2022) | Photo: Maarten Nauw, Framer Framed

GEORGES SENG

Tshanga-Tshanga: 300 Maisons (2022)

Photographic print on dibond
1.14 m x 1.5 m

While international mining companies establish themselves in Manono and put in large-scale infrastructural changes, the local population still suffers from the trauma, conflict and unemployment that emerged after the industrial tin extraction was ended there in the early 1980s. It was the Belgian company Géomines that started mining there in the early 20th century. Senga shows a town that finds itself caught between past and future. Besides witnessing its industrial ruins and dilapidated neigh-

bourhoods, you also feel how the discovery of lithium is transforming Manono today. The title *Tshanga-Tshanga* refers to both the Swahili notion of 'mixing' and patchwork fabric. *300 Maisons* shows the upscale neighborhoods put in by the Belgian mining company Géomines. When the company left, the army occupied parts of the neighborhood to control ethnic conflicts.

Tshanga-Tshanga: Mille Bêches (2022)

1.14 m x 1.5 m

Senga zooms in on the artificial lakes around Manono. These are remnants of the old mining pits. While the local population is still mining cassiterite and tantalum on a small scale, multination-



Pamela Tulizo - *Les Creuseuses* (2022) | Photo: Maarten Nauw, Framer Framed

als accelerate their effort to open up the town for the new lithium fever. Mille Bêches means 1000 shovels and is the name of a sand quarry that has been dug by hand for 16 years.

Georges Senga is a photographer based in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He develops his photographic work around history and the narratives revealed by "memory, identity and heritage", illuminating our actions and the present. Three of his projects explore memory, looking for the resonances that people, their facts and their objects leave behind, and the resilience of memory in his country. Georges Senga is part of the artistic dynamic of the city of Lubumbashi at the Picha art centre in DR Congo and at the Photo Market and

Phototools workshop in Johannesburg, South Africa.

PAMELA TULIZO

Les Creuseuses (2022)

Photo collage on dibond
0.84 m x 1.18 m each

Tulizo follows the trajectory of resources: from their exploitation by creuseuses, women who under harsh conditions engage in artisanal mining to their final destination in luxury products such as smartphones, laptops and electric cars. In a photomontage she brings these

separate worlds together, showing the life of African women from a fresh, critical perspective.

Pamela Tulizo initially studied journalism, then graduated from the Market Photo Workshop school of photography in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2019. Her work focuses primarily on expressions of female identity. In her series entitled *Double Identity*, which comprises 13 self-portraits, the photographer embodies an African woman torn between her own sense of self and the role attributed to her by a globalized society. She is a contributor to Agence France-Presse and was artist in residence in 2020 in Wiels, Brussels, Belgium. The same year she won the Dior Photography & Visual Arts Award for Young Talents 2020. Recent exhibitions include: *Future Genealogies*, 6th Lubumbashi Biennale, DRC (2019).

tation and transformation of Lithium in the context of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The content changes and material is added depending on the context in which it is shown and the availability of new items. It serves as a visual illustration of the OTO: (Re)source Collective, an open source initiative of related site-specific histories, raw materials, consumer goods and scientific or administrative documents that can be used by all On-Trade-Off participants.

ON-TRADE-OFF: (RE)SOURCE COLLECTIVE

Scramble for Manono (2022 - ongoing)

(Re)source collective timeline
6.2 m

The objects, rocks, books and documents in this vitrine accompany the long-term On-Trade-Off (OTO) research project that looks at the influence of speculation on the extraction, transpor-

EXHIBITION DESIGN

Inspired by the thematic bond of the On-Trade-Off collective, and the different view of and from Manono, the exhibition design of *Charging Myths* invites the visitors to find their unique path through the landscape, explore different routes and engage with the artworks from multiple perspectives. The movement through angles and tilts of the scenography suggests - rather than imposes - directions. On their way we encourage the visitors of *Charging Myths* to challenge their preconceived notions and inspire them to question their perceptions.

Katharina Sook Wilting is an interdisciplinary designer, art director and cultural worker in theatre and film. Viewing the world through her Korean-German identity, she addresses topics like Asian diaspora, racial heritage and intersectional feminism in her artistic practice. In her work, Katharina Sook Wilting is deeply committed to a collaborative approach, due to her desire to build diverse and collective networks and find like-minded allies.

CURATORIAL ADVISOR

Ils Huygens is curator, writer and researcher of contemporary art and design. She curated exhibitions and public programs at the verge of art, science and society such as *The School of Time*, *Seasonal Neighbours*, *Learning from Deep Time*, *Nuclear Culture* and solo shows with Basim Magdy, Jasper Rigole and Kristof Vrancken for Z33 House for Contemporary Arts in Hasselt. She co-curated two editions of Artefact Leuven: *This Rare Earth: Stories from Below* and *The Act of Magic*. She is co-editor of the book *Studio Time: Future Thinking in Art and Design*. Her recent research focuses on multispecies interactions crossing art, nature and science

COLOPHON

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