

Congolese sculptor's elaborate cityscapes go on view at MoMA

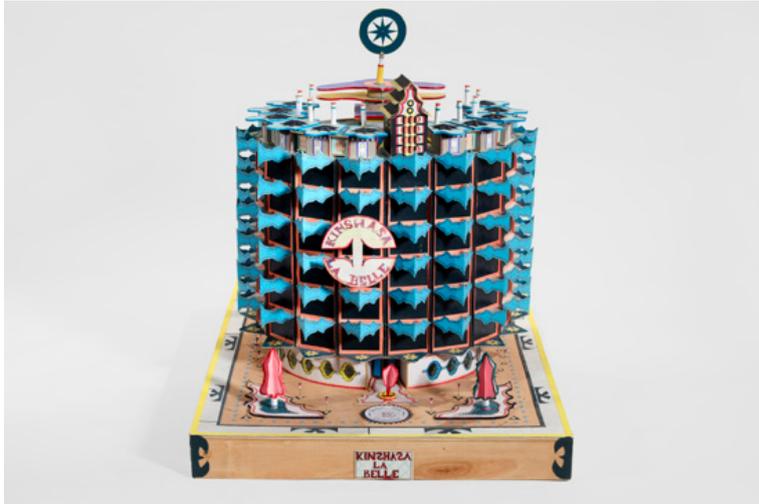
By Matthew Marani • May 3, 2018



Bodys Isek Kingelez. *Kinshasa la Belle*. 1991. Paper, paperboard, and other various materials, 24 13/16 × 21 5/8 × 31 1/2" (Maurice Aeschmann/Courtesy CAAC – The Pigozzi Collection)
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On May 26, MoMA is opening *Bodys Isek Kingelez: City Dreams*, the first retrospective of the late Congolese sculptor and artist's three-decade career.

Born in 1948 in what was then the Belgian Congo, Kingelez was known for creating what he termed "extreme maquettes." The exhibition will feature over 30 of these maquettes, built of colorfully detailed everyday objects, ranging in size from individual buildings to miniaturized utopian cityscapes, some measuring over 70 square feet.



Bodys Isek Kingelez. *Kinshasa la Belle*. 1991. Paper, paperboard, and other various materials, 24 13/16 × 21 5/8 × 31 1/2" (Maurice Aeschimann/Courtesy CAAC – The Pigozzi Collection)

Kingelez's work is described as attuned to world events, versed in contemporaneous architectural trends, and knowledgeable of foreign vernacular forms. For example *Kinasha la Belle* (1991) incorporates a distinctively Dutch gabled house wedged into a pastel-coloured circular residential complex, sporting cardboard pendants and a marked frieze.

Towards the end of his career, Kingelez's work grew more adventurous in terms of scale and material composition. MoMA points to *Nippon Tower* (2005) as a particularly idiosyncratic architectural model by the artist, built of "a plastic Smint box, packaging from a milk carton, BIC razor blades, light bulb boxes, and a playfully shaped spoon."



Bodys Isek Kingelez. *Ville de Sète 3009*. 2000. Paper, paperboard, plastic, and other various materials, 31 1/2 × 9' 10 1/8" × 6' 10 11/16" (Pierre Schwartz ADAGP/Courtesy Musée International des Arts Modestes).

The cityscapes created by Kingelez are diverse in their architectural forms and scales. Crafted of plastic, paper, and paperboard, *Ville de Sete 3009* (2009) is a futuristic city populated by

shard-like, sheer, and terraced skyscrapers, which are connected by an illuminated network of Haussmannian boulevards.



Bodys Isek Kingelez. *Ville Fantôme*. 1996. Paper, paperboard, plastic and other various materials, 47 1/4" × 8' 8 7/16" × 7' 10 1/2" (Maurice Aeschimann/Courtesy CAAC – The Pigozzi Collection).

Ville Fantôme (1996), Kingelez's largest cityscape on display, will also feature a virtual reality component developed by Third Pillar. Through VR, visitors will be able to traverse through the utopian city which Kingelez described as "a city that breathes nothing but joy" and "a peaceful city where everyone is free."

City Dreams is curated by MoMA's Sarah Suzuki and Hilary Reder, and closes on January 1, 2019.

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