

Extended Artwork Wall Labels

Untitled 1982

Private collection, Paris



Religion played an important role in Kingelez's life from an early age. He attended a primary school run by Belgian missionaries, and divine visions served as inspiration throughout his career. To illuminate this work's otherwise modest color, Kingelez enhanced the facade with strategically placed, brightly colored paper accents and silver and gold crosses, and hung small foil balls from the building's peaks. The bright metallic star atop the sculpture is a motif that appears often in his work; he called it "a magisterial symbol for which All Powerful God the Creator communicated to His people on earth."

Maryland University USA 1981

Private collection, Paris



For Kingelez, education was critical to becoming a contributing member of society. He left the village where he grew up, Kimbembele-Ihunga, to attend university in Kinshasa, and before he began making art, he taught secondary school there. At the time, the education of young people was a top priority in the newly renamed nation of Zaire. *Maryland University USA*, one of Kingelez's earliest sculptures, attests to the high value he placed on education, and its representation of an American campus also demonstrates his strikingly international perspective.

Approche de l'Échangeur de Limete Kin 1981

Private collection, Paris



When Kingelez moved to Kinshasa in the late 1960s, Zaire was in the midst of restructuring post-Independence. The country's dictator, Mobutu Sese Seko, sought to establish Kinshasa as a major metropolis and glorify his reign by instituting ambitious architectural projects. In 1971, he commissioned the architect Olivier-Clément Cacoub to build the tallest structure in Africa, the Tour de l'Échangeur. Although it was never completed as planned, Kingelez was no doubt struck by this centrally located tower, the first skyscraper he encountered, and recreated it in this work. This is one of Kingelez's only replicas of an existing structure and is an early expression of the artist's sustained interest in skyscrapers. As he would later state, "A city without high-rise buildings is a dead city, a non-existent city."

**Aéromode
(Aéroport
Moderne) 1991**

CAAC—The Pigozzi
Collection, Geneva



**Étoile Rouge
Congolaise 1990**

CAAC—The Pigozzi
Collection, Geneva



**Reveillon Fédéral
1992**

CAAC—The Pigozzi
Collection, Geneva



Throughout his career, Kingelez created sculptures that suggest the civic functions he considered essential to the more equitable, well-planned society he envisioned. These three works represent some of Kingelez’s imagined municipal initiatives. *Étoile Rouge Congolaise*—dedicated to the citizens of the Republic of the Congo—houses what he dubbed the “High Multicultural Court of Wisdom,” where art and knowledge contribute to humanity’s well-being. *Reveillon Fédéral*, with its welcoming doorways marked in several languages, evokes a temple to democracy, while *Aéromode*, as Kingelez explains in a text on display nearby, is a highly efficient modern airport, designed for the next century.

The Scientific Center of Hospitalisation the SIDA 1991

Groninger Museum, Groningen, Netherlands



Believing that art should “contribute to science and a better life,” Kingelez often incorporated medical infrastructure into his civically minded sculptures. His deep concern with global issues is evident in this work, which he made in the midst of a rampant AIDS (SIDA in French) epidemic that particularly ravaged Kinshasa. This sculpture represents his vision of an advanced medical center that has all the functionality of a hospital—signs calling for silence, a large number of windows, multiple entrances, and a lab facility—but, with its rainbow palette and curvilinear design, is free from the sterility and coldness typically associated with such buildings.

Miss Hotel Brussels 1992

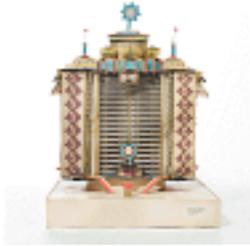
Lucien Bilinelli Collecton, Brussels/Milan



A fastidious cataloguer of his sculptures, Kingelez assigned a sequential number to almost all of them—this one is 330. His labeling system often also included his name, the work's title, date, and location where it was made, written in all caps or a stylish script that asserted his role as creator. The base of this work includes a special touch: each of its corners is wrapped with an emblem that features the artist's first name.

Paris Nouvel 1989

Long-term loan from the Centre National des Arts Plastiques, France, to the Château d'Oiron, France



Allemagne An 2000 1988

Long-term loan from the Centre National des Arts Plastiques, France, to the Château d'Oiron, France



In 1989 Kingelez's sculptures were introduced to an international audience in *Magiciens de la terre*, at the Centre Pompidou, Paris, which was one of the earliest global contemporary art exhibitions. *Paris Nouvel* and *Allemagne An 2000* were both included in this exhibition and reflect Kingelez's concern with symmetry, regularity, and repetition. The skeleton of *Paris Nouvel* is composed of repurposed packaging, and its exterior is fashioned from brightly colored cardstock, patterned paper, and gold embellishments. The facade of *Allemagne An 2000* features geometric forms dominated by colors that suggest both the East and West German flags. With typical confidence, the artist wanted to remind the viewer that he created this majestic structure, adorning the exterior with protruding abstract green and black *b*'s that serve as a kind of monogram for his first name.

Bel Atlas 1989

Sandro De Sanctis/African Collection



Stars Palme Bouygues 1989

van Lierde collection, Brussels



During a six-month stay in Paris in 1989, Kingelez was inspired by the city and its architecture, and he made both *Bel Atlas* and *Stars Palme Bouygues* there. They reference the Grand Arche de la Défense, a landmark built for the bicentennial of the French Revolution and inaugurated during Kingelez's sojourn. *Bel Atlas* shares the Grand Arche's distinctive hollow form, and while it is made up of three sides rather than four, it is likewise constructed from squared-off arches. *Stars Palme Bouygues* serves as a tacit challenge to Bouygues, the multinational industrial conglomerate that built the Grande Arche, to create a building as beautiful and structurally daring as the one the artist proposes here.

Centrale Palestinienne 1994

COLLECTION PROSPER—The Prosper Collection. Courtesy
Aeroplastics Contemporary, Brussels



Kingelez explicitly referenced social and political issues of global concern in many of his works. *Centrale Palestinienne*, distinguished by its futuristic minaret-like tower, is constructed in the red, green, and white of the Palestinian flag—likely Kingelez’s way of acknowledging the first Oslo Accord, which had been signed a few months earlier and affirmed Palestine’s right to self-government. He labeled one of the pediments above a gateway “Jerico,” the first city to be handed over to the Palestinian Authority. The work is an early example of Kingelez’s use of colored plastic and also features materials he had used for many years, including commercial packaging (here empty cigarette boxes) and toothpicks.

Kinshasa la Belle 1991

CAAC—The Pigozzi Collection, Geneva



When he was twenty-two, Kingelez left rural *Kimbembele-Ihunga* for the bustling metropolis of Kinshasa to attend university. The energy of the city had an immense effect on the artist, and he would live there for the rest of his life. Dissatisfied with the imploding promises of Mobutu Sese Seko's dictatorial regime, Kingelez conceived *Kinshasa la Belle* as an alternative to what he perceived to be the city's shortcomings, stating, "*Kinshasa la Belle* as planned by Kingelez is much nicer. Kinshasa's beauty is undying, but still, it has completely gone to waste." The blue facade of the building is his unique take on *brise-soleil*, an ornamental and practical architectural feature that reduces heat by deflecting light, commonly used by post-independence African architects. Regarding his transformation of this feature, he said, "These butterflies are sky blue. It's just a swarm of butterflies is flying round."

Place de la Ville 1993

Courtesy The Museum of Everything



Place de la Ville, a city square lined with simplified composites of the Zairian flag—green with a yellow circle at the center containing a brown fist wielding a torch of red flames—expresses Kingelez’s belief in the promise of Zaire. The flames around the perimeter of the square similarly evoke the flames on the flag. A bright red placard proudly displays the letters *MPR*, which stand for *Mouvement Populaire de la Revolution*, Zaire’s single legal political party, led by the dictator Mobutu Sese Seko. The work includes exacting details typical of Kingelez’s work—a clock frozen at 12:20 and a tag of the artist’s name visible under the bridge—and demonstrates his sustained interest in constructing communal gathering spaces.

Nippon Tower 2005

Courtesy Aeroplastics Contemporary, Brussels



One of Kingelez's most idiosyncratic combinations of found objects, commercial packaging, and translucent materials, *Nippon Tower* exemplifies the increasingly unorthodox approach the artist took in his later years. Composed of packaging from a plastic Smint box, a milk carton, BIC razor blades, and lightbulb boxes, and a playfully shaped plastic spoon, this work can perhaps be understood as a portrait of the artist through his materials, the brands he may have favored, and what he had on hand in his studio at the time. Its soaring form, constructed of clear and blue plastic, was characterized by Kingelez, according to the words he pasted to its base, as "super elegant."

Dirk Dumon

Belgian, born 1943

Kingelez: Kinshasa, une ville repensée (Kingelez: Kinshasa, A City Rethought) 2003

Digital transfer (color, sound)

30 min.

Produced by PIKSA 2003

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This documentary presents a first-person account of Kingelez's process, ethos, and life in Kinshasa. Kingelez moved to the city in the years following Zaire's independence from Belgium, and his experience of urban life there would prove to be an enduring influence; as he explained, "It was while living in Kinshasa that I had this inspiration...I wanted my art to serve the community and the population." While he initially believed in the promises of Mobutu Sese Seko, Zaire's president, Kingelez, like many Zairians, grew disillusioned with his corrupt dictatorial regime, which soon plunged the country into bankruptcy and infrastructural decay.

Here, Kingelez discusses aspects of the city that he both admires and would like to improve. While he praises the architecture left by the Belgians, he is critical of the colonial legacy. Kingelez believed it was through education, cooperation, and dialogue that the global utopian society he dreamed of could be realized: "Each of us must take part in globalization for it to revolutionize the entire world. Relations between countries and cultures must be handled with respect and consideration. We must listen to one another." Kinshasa would remain Kingelez's home for the rest of his life, and his works in large measure embody the unrealized potential he saw there.

Ville Fantôme 1996

CAAC—The Pigozzi Collection, Geneva



Kingelez said of his largest cityscape, *Ville Fantôme*, “There is no police force in this city, to protect the city, there are no soldiers to defend it, no doctors to heal the sick. It’s a peaceful city where everybody is free. It’s a city that breathes nothing but joy, the beauty of life. It’s a melting pot of all races in the world. Here you live in a paradise, just like heaven.” In this work, Kingelez created a utopian vision with elements of earthly reality. While his ideas for the city are grand, he also provides practical infrastructure, such as a power plant, a post office, and even public parking. Distinguished by translucent materials that imbue the work with an otherworldly character, *Ville Fantôme* also features what Kingelez called a “bridge for the dead,” which connects the two pedestals.

You can explore Kingelez’s self-governing *Ville Fantôme* in the virtual reality experience developed in parallel with the exhibition.

Kimbembele Ihunga 1994

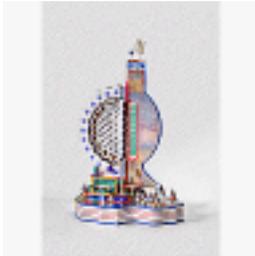
CAAC—The Pigozzi Collection, Geneva



“This town,” Kengelez wrote, “represents the shape of my imagination; it is the very image of my ability to create a new world.” He was referring to *Kimbembele Ihunga*, a transformed version of the agricultural village where he was born. Marking the first instance in which Kengelez created a large-scale city, this sculpture takes the shape of a glittering metropolis, where, as Kengelez explained, the boulevards are never congested, restaurants serve cuisine from around the world, and “everyone can feel at home.” With its towering skyscrapers and exuberant color palette and design, the work does not bear a visual resemblance to the artist’s hometown, but Kengelez included the names of families historically based there on certain buildings. It was to be a place that could bridge past, present, and future, at once “larger than life” and “so full of promise.”

U.N. 1995

CAAC—The Pigozzi Collection, Geneva



Kingelez created *U.N.* for a 1995 exhibition that celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations and included work by artists from fifty countries on five continents. *U.N.* combines patterned paper with uncharacteristically loose and expressive hand-applied designs, which he described as “an expansion” of his earlier work. About the dominant motif, he said, “The stars are distributed around the form of the building. They represent the member countries, which I want to be equal. In this palace, peace is an indispensable tool for the democracy of nations.”

Ville de Sète 3009 2000

Collection Musée International des Arts Modestes (MIAM),
Sète, France



Made during a month-long residency in the South of France, this is the only work in which Kingelez incorporated electric lights. While some of its features have real-life equivalents in the actual city of Sète, such as the Hôtel Azur, where Kingelez stayed, others, like the Baie d'Espoir (Bay of Hope), are pure inventions. Such seamless intermingling of the real and fictive is central to Kingelez's work. With its gardens, bank, administrative buildings, ecological office, stadium, police station, and marina, *Ville de Sète 3009* is a highly functional, prosperous, and sparkling city—however, it is not of today. The title's future tense invites us to join the artist in envisioning what he called “a better, more prosperous world.”