

# The Museum of Modern Art

## THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART TO PRESENT FIRST MAJOR RETROSPECTIVE OF CONGOLESE ARTIST BODYS ISEK KINGELEZ

**NEW YORK, October 3, 2017**—Bodys Isek Kingelez (1948–2015), the Congolese sculptor who worked with paper, commercial packaging, and materials from everyday life to create what he called “extreme maquettes” that encompass civic buildings, public monuments, and private pavilions, will be the subject of a retrospective at The Museum of Modern Art. On view from May 26 through October 21, 2018, ***Bodys Isek Kingelez*** will span Kingelez’s career over three decades, ranging from early works that were included in the landmark 1989 exhibition *Magiciens de la terre* at the Centre Pompidou, to his streamlined, dramatic forms of the 2000s. The first retrospective of Kingelez’s work and the first substantial monographic presentation of his work in the US, this exhibition will feature works from each of the key periods of his career, from early single-building sculptures, to spectacular sprawling cities, to futuristic late works, which incorporate increasingly unorthodox materials. Kingelez was previously featured in the MoMA exhibition *Projects 59: Architecture as Metaphor* (1997). Although his work has long been featured in major international exhibitions, this will be the first opportunity in New York to explore the full breadth of his career. *Bodys Isek Kingelez* is organized by Sarah Suzuki, Curator, with Hillary Reder, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Drawings and Prints, The Museum of Modern Art.

Born in the agricultural village of Kimbembe-Ihunga in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (then the Belgian Congo), Kingelez first started making art in the late 1970s, finding himself compelled, in his words, to get his hands on “scissors, a Gillette razor, and some glue and paper.” Based on the technical mastery demonstrated by his earliest works, he was hired as a restorer of traditional objects at the Institut du Musées Nationaux du Zaïre (now Institut du Musées Nationaux du Congo) in Kinshasa, a post he held for six years until he devoted himself to his own art making.

His sculptures take the shape of imagined architectural forms for a fantastic urban landscape in a prosperous, peaceful future. Some sculptures reference contemporary works of architecture like La Grande Arche de la Défense à Paris, as in *Bel Atlas* (1989), or contemporary realities, such as *AIDS Hospitalization Center* (1991). Other structures are akin to national pavilions that suggest a local specificity—the pagoda-like form of *Mongolique Soviétique* (1989) and the nod to Dutch gables in *La Belle Hollandaise* (1991). Marking an increase in scale and ambition, the complex, multibuilding cityscape *Kimbembe Ihunga* (1994) reimagines the artist’s rural hometown complete with roadways and intersections, government buildings, arenas, apartment buildings, supermarkets, and railway stations.

Accompanied by a scholarly catalogue with texts by Suzuki, architect David Adjaye, and art historian Chika Okeke-Agulu, among others, the exhibition will unfold as a chronological display with a thematic approach, bringing together a group of his earliest, never-before-seen sculptures, works made during the artist's first trip to Paris in 1989, civic structures, public monuments, and fantastic takes on geographically-specific architectural tropes. The installation will capture his transition from single buildings to entire metropolises, culminating in a selection of Kengez's large-scale cities marked by soaring forms that characterize much of his late production. The exhibition will bring together rarely seen works from both public and private collections, including The Contemporary African Art Collection (CAAC—The Pigozzi Collection), Geneva; The Museum of Everything, London; and the Groninger Museum, Groningen, Netherlands.

Exhibition design produced in collaboration with the artist Carsten Höller (German, born 1961).

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