

CONGO STYLE

From Belgian Art Nouveau
to African Independence

RUTH SACKS



CONGO STYLE



AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES



Kelly Askew, Laura Fair, and Pamela Gupta
Series Editors

Congo Style: From Belgian Art Nouveau to African Independence

Ruth Sacks

*Writing on the Soil: Land and Landscape in Literature
from Eastern and Southern Africa*

Ng'ang'a Wahu-Mũchiri

Lagos Never Spoils: Nollywood and Nigerian City Life

Connor Ryan

Continuous Pasts: Frictions of Memory in Postcolonial Africa

Sakiru Adebayo

*Power / Knowledge / Land: Contested Ontologies of Land
and Its Governance in Africa*

Laura A. German

*In Search of Tunga: Prosperity, Almighty God,
and Lives in Motion in a Malian Provincial Town*

André Chappatte

The Infrastructures of Security:

Technologies of Risk Management in Johannesburg

Martin J. Murray

There Used to Be Order:

*Life on the Copperbelt after the Privatisation of the
Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines*

Patience Mususa

*Animated by Uncertainty: Rugby and the
Performance of History in South Africa*

Joshua D. Rubin

A complete list of titles in the series can be found at www.press.umich.edu

Congo Style

*From Belgian Art Nouveau
to African Independence*

Ruth Sacks

University of Michigan Press
Ann Arbor

Copyright © 2023 by Ruth Sacks
Some rights reserved



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. *Note to users:* A Creative Commons license is only valid when it is applied by the person or entity that holds rights to the licensed work. Works may contain components (e.g., photographs, illustrations, or quotations) to which the rightsholder in the work cannot apply the license. It is ultimately your responsibility to independently evaluate the copyright status of any work or component part of a work you use, in light of your intended use. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

For questions or permissions, please contact um.press.perms@umich.edu

Published in the United States of America by the
University of Michigan Press
Manufactured in the United States of America
Printed on acid-free paper
First published September 2023

A CIP catalog record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication data has been applied for.

ISBN 978-0-472-07631-4 (hardcover : alk. paper)

ISBN 978-0-472-05631-6 (paper : alk. paper)

ISBN 978-0-472-90388-7 (open access ebook)

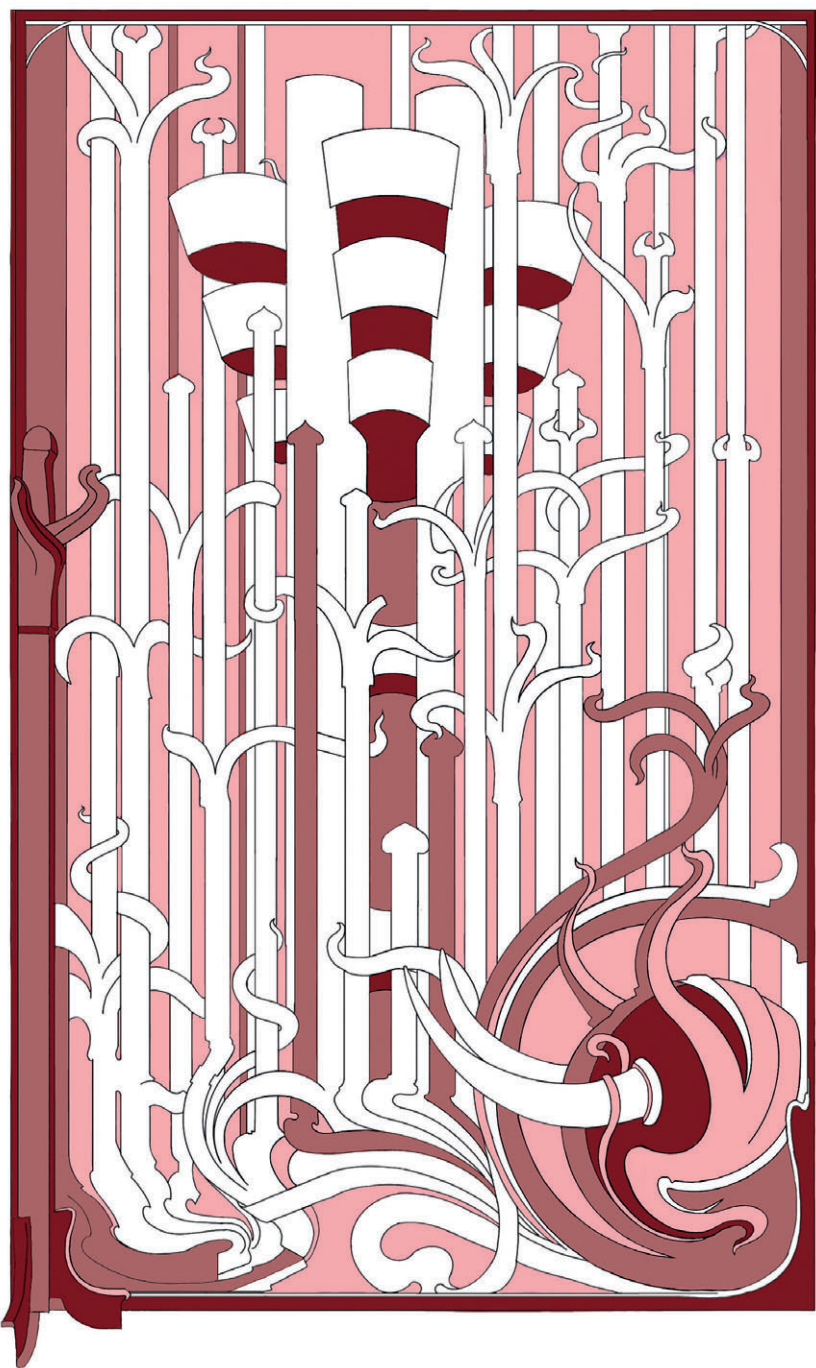
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.11519375>

Publication of this volume has been partially funded by the African Studies Center,
University of Michigan.

The University of Michigan Press's open access publishing program is made possible thanks to additional funding from the University of Michigan Office of the Provost and the generous support of contributing libraries.

Cover photograph: Tower of the Exchange in Limete, Kinshasa (2014), © Ruth Sacks.

*For my mother, June Jocelyn Sacks (1945–2001),
who I hope would have been proud.*



Original artwork by the author, the drawing is derived from images of the Tower of the Exchange (1974) in Kinshasa and a Congolese elephant by Victor Horta inscribed onto a wall inside the Hôtel Van Eetvelde (1898) in Brussels. (© Ruth Sacks 2022.)

CONTENTS

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	xi
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xiii
INTRODUCTION	
Entangled Histories	1
Situating Modernist Sites	1
Totality and the Nation-State	3
The Public Lives of Built Forms	8
Shifting Focus	11
Biased Narrative in a Troubled Terrain	20
Affective Patterns and Dividing Lines	28
CHAPTER 1	
Behind Congo Style: Navigating Research	31
A Question of Interdisciplinarity	31
Art History and the Congo	32
Categories of Culture	37
Inside and Outside Kinshasa	42
Reading, Writing, and Making Images	46
Between Labels and Archives	49
Part I. Style Congo	
CHAPTER 2	
Looking for the Congo in Style Congo: Art Nouveau and the African Colony	53
Brussels, the Capital of Art Nouveau!	53
Birthed in Belgium	56
Colonial Theater: Hôtel Van Eetvelde	60
Introducing Art Nouveau via the Congo: The Congo Pavilion	63

The Fabrics of Innovation	67
Object Bodies and Embodied Design	70
The Congo's Influence on Art Nouveau	74
What Was Left Behind in Belgium	77
Art Nouveau's Influence on the Congo	80
CHAPTER 3	
Style Congo in the Congo: Colonial Modernism Takes Root	83
Into the African City	83
Offshoots Sent to Africa	86
Iron and Infrastructure	91
The New Commercial Center: Leopoldville	94
Leopoldville's Vegetable Garden: Thysville	96
The Art Nouveau Village	98
Living Remains: The Courthouse, Mbanza Ngungu	102
Brittle Modernism: Palace ONATRA, Kinshasa	106
Narratives of Rust	111
Overgrown Categorizations	115
Part II. Congo Style	
CHAPTER 4	
Modernism, Congo Style: Authenticity and Tradition	119
Authenticating the State	119
Authenticity in Action	122
Modern Traditional Art	131
The Artists of Authenticity	136
Mediating Kinshasa's Modernism	143
The Authenticity Paradox	147
CHAPTER 5	
Kinshasa's Congo Style: Sites of Postcolonial Identity	151
Giant Kinshasa	151
Mobutu's Modernism	154
The World Watches Kinshasa: May 20 Stadium and the Presidential Park	159

Kinshasa Climbs: Tower of the Exchange, CNRT Tower, and Gécamines Tower	164
Authenticity and the Authentic City	177
Aesthetic Dependencies	181
Kinshasa Style	185
CONCLUSION	
From Total Artwork to Totalitarianism	188
Representing Regimes	188
Postmodernism after Authenticity	191
Living with Postcolonial Remains	193
<i>Map of Kinshasa</i>	199
<i>References</i>	201
<i>Index</i>	217

Digital materials related to this title can be found on the Fulcrum platform via the following citable URL:
<https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.11519375>

ILLUSTRATIONS

<i>frontispiece</i>	Original drawing by the author, derived from images of the Tower of the Exchange and a Congolese elephant inscribed onto a wall inside the Hôtel Van Eetvelde	
1	View of the Tower of the Exchange in Limete, from the site of the Kinshasa International Fair (Kinshasa, 2015)	4
2	Former ABC Hotel (Hotel Alimentation du Bas-Congo) with an Art Nouveau top story and Art Deco base (Kinshasa, 2015)	5
3	A money exchange stall among statues by students of the Academy of Fine Arts (Kinshasa, 2014)	12
4	A view of the Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA), still under construction (Tervuren, 2013)	20
5	A wooden structure by Georges Hobé from the 1897 Congo Pavilion, on the grounds of the RMCA (Tervuren, 2013)	48
6	The winter garden in the interior of Hôtel Van Eetvelde, built by Victor Horta in 1898, Brussels	61
7	The Hall of Exports by Henry Van de Velde in the 1897 Congo Pavilion, Brussels	69
8	The Hall of Ethnography by Paul Hankar in the 1897 Congo Pavilion, Brussels	72
9	View from the balcony of the ABC Hotel, Mbanza Ngungu (2014)	88
10	The ABC Hotel settlement, Kinshasa (then Leopoldville, ca. 1915)	90
11	The ABC Hotel settlement, Mbanza Ngungu (ca. 1915)	97
12	The ABC Hotel settlement, Mbanza Ngungu (2015)	100
13	A worker's cottage from the original Thysville settlement, Mbanza Ngungu, 2015	100
14	The Mbanza Ngungu courthouse (formerly the ABC Hotel), 2015	103
15	The Mbanza Ngungu courthouse balcony (formerly the ABC Hotel), 2015	104

16	The balcony of Palace ONATRA (formerly the ABC Hotel), Kinshasa, 2015	107
17	The balcony of Palace ONATRA (formerly the ABC Hotel) from below, Kinshasa, 2015	109
18	The remains of colonial trains, Mbanza Ngungu (2015)	116
19	A five-zaire note from the Bank of Zaire	128
20	Publicity image of Mobutu widely circulated during the late 1960s	130
21	<i>Musicienne</i> , by Alfred Liyolo, 1970	139
22	Mural by Emile Mokengo on the National Institute for Social Security building, Kinshasa, 2014	141
23	Interior of Stade du 20 Mai, VIP room, Kinshasa, 1974	161
24	Grounds of the National Museum at Mont Ngaliema with maize plants growing, Kinshasa, 2014	165
25	Tower of the Exchange in Limete, Kinshasa, 2014	166
26	A view from the walkway at the Tower of the Exchange, Kinshasa, 2014	167
27	CNRT Tower, Kinshasa, 2014	170
28	The gardens of CNRT Tower, with the sculpture <i>Messengers</i> (1975) in the foreground (Kinshasa, 2014)	171
29	Gécamines Tower, Kinshasa (2015)	172
30	The former presidential suite, Gécamines Tower (Kinshasa, 2015)	174
31	The view from a balcony of Gécamines Tower, with cannonball hole (Kinshasa, 2015)	174
32	Cité Salongo, Kinshasa (2015)	179
33	Installation view of <i>European Ghosts</i> at Mu.Zee, featuring vitrines by Gustav Serrurier-Bovy, Ostend, Belgium (2016)	193
34	Looking out from Mont Ngaliema toward the Intercontinental Hotel, Kinshasa (2014)	196

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book has been in the background and foreground of my daily life for almost ten years. From a sprawling theoretical PhD thesis written by a visual artist, begun in 2013, and numerous related artworks and exhibitions, to this publication, I have had a great deal of support. There are, consequently, a large number of people and institutions to acknowledge.

First, I am grateful to everyone at the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research (WiSER), which was my home for six years. Sarah Nuttall, my primary PhD supervisor, introduced me to a rich and vibrant landscape of academic theory that is now essential to all my work. It has been a privilege to have had access to such a theoretical force. From the Wits School of Art (Visual Art Department), my PhD co-supervisor David Andrew never let me forget that I am an artist and a teacher, for which I will always be in his debt. Thanks to Emery Kalema, for his meticulous translations and intellectual rigor in all our projects together and especially his input into this research. Pamila Gupta generously gave her expert knowledge and was formative in my early conceptualization of how to think about ornamentation. Isabel Hofmeyr's books continue to be a steady inspiration, as do our conversations. There were those who gave me substantial amounts of their time for discussion, reading of drafts, responding to conference papers, and the debate of difficult ideas. These include: Simon Gush, Cathy Burns, Corinne Kratz, Daniel Herwitz, Steven Jacobs, Jennifer Wenzel, Gary Minkley, Keith Breckenridge, Deborah Silverman, Nancy Rose Hunt, Hannah Le Roux, Candice Jansen, Noëleen Murray, and Dorothee Kreutzfeldt.

I am indebted to specialists in Kinshasa material culture from other fields who generously provided important ideas and directions for my research. Johan Lagae made time to catch up with me whenever I was in Belgium and set up a cornerstone of reference in architectural history on Kinshasa. Conversations with Sarah Van Beurden were highly generative and encouraging, and she was considerate enough to share some of her early research with me. Maarten Couttenier assisted me in navigating the Royal Africa

Museum at Tervuren and discussing aspects of his scholarly investigations. Special thanks go to my colleague Emi Koide who graciously assisted with my research-related activities during our 2014 Kinshasa trip, alongside her own. I am most grateful to my fellow academic and teacher, Henri Kalama Akulez, the current director of the Kinshasa Academy of Fine Arts, for his hospitality in Kinshasa and our lively debates. Patrick Missassi, the former director, kindly provided lodging at the academy in addition to voicing valuable insights and opinions. I was greatly saddened to hear of the passing of two of the original Avant-gardists who also treated my questions with patience. The figurehead of the post-independence Kinshasa modernist movement, Alfred Liyolo, passed away in 2019. Bamba Ndombasi Kufimba, the artist-writer of the group, passed in 2016.

For my research in Kinshasa, the list of people who I had conversations with is long and includes: Augustin Bikale, Yoka Lye, Kankonde Mbuyi, Sapin Makengele, Joseph Ibongo, Zola Kwandi, Francois Matondo, Rene Mpuru, Jacob Sabakinu, Vithois Mwilambwe, Louis-Joseph Kofi, Corneille Kanene, Martin Tshisuaka, Alexis Tshiunza, and Lema Kusa. Filip De Boeck, Pedro Monaville, and Joshua Walker were kind enough to share their ideas and experiences of field work in Kinshasa with me.

I learned a great deal through all conversations at the 2016 symposium *Mediating Past, Present and Future of D.R. Congo's Historical Narratives on Art in a Global South Dialogue*, that took place in Kinshasa at the Academy of Fine Art. I am especially indebted to all fellow members of the main organizing committee: Emi Koide, Mattias De Grooff, Patrick Missassi, Henri Kalama, and David Andrew. Gitte Zschoch and Robert Carruba also generously opened their Kinshasa home and ideas to me during this time. Thanks also go to those at the main archives I consulted: Anne Welschen and Lore Van De Broeck at the Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA), Tervuren; and Anne Lauwers and Francis Carpentier at CIVA, Brussels.

In recent developments, it has been fulfilling to interact with the curators of CIVA's group exhibition *Style Congo: Heritage and Heresy (2023)* and contribute an artwork. I appreciate that Sammy Baloji, Sylvia Franceschini, Nicholas Hirsch, and Estelle Lecaille were interested in my perspective on Congolese modernism and Art Nouveau, which they encountered in an early draft of this book.

The final stretch of preparing this manuscript for publication would not have been possible without the efforts of Shaifali Bramdev. Thanks also to my colleagues and students at the University of Johannesburg (UJ) Visual

Art Department for being unfailingly supportive and enthusiastic. All my students, past and present, make me want to be a better scholar. I greatly appreciate my ongoing conversations with my friend Jaysen Naidoo for presenting points of view from outside of the Humanities. No acknowledgments to any of my projects would be complete without recognition of my loving and encouraging father, Benny Sacks.

This book was made possible with the generous support of the following awards and funding bodies: Wits PhD to Monograph Publishing Award (Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand); WiSER Doctoral Fellowship (University of the Witwatersrand); the Oppenheimer Memorial Trust; the National Arts Council of South Africa; the African Critical Inquiry Program's Ivan Karp Doctoral Research Award; and a postdoctoral fellowship at the South African Research Chair for Social Change (University of Fort Hare).

Finally, I have tested the central ideas of this book at various conferences and workshops over the years. An early formulation of my methodology, as well as the case studies of chapter 3, appeared as "Lived Reminders: The Contemporary Lives of Iron Hotels in the Congo," *Architectural Theory Review* 22, no. 1 (2018): 64–82.

Introduction

Entangled Histories

If the Congo did not exist, it would be necessary to invent it.

—Jennifer Wenzel, “Decolonization”

SITUATING MODERNIST SITES

This is a book about how the Congo was and continues to be imagined in Kinshasa. I outline the way that coproduced visions of nation, modernity, and stereotypes of culture have taken material form in the postcolonial city. My aim is to trace what remains of past presentations of the Congo in the rich textures of key architectural and artistic sites in Kinshasa today. The book traverses three contingent moments in state architecture and related visual art from a contemporary perspective: the 1890s (Art Nouveau, also known as Style Congo), the 1910s (early colonial modernism), and the 1970s (post-independence high modernism). I follow a theory of totalizing forms by way of the now notorious political regimes of King Leopold II’s Congo colony and Mobutu Sese Seko’s Zaire. My aim is to highlight what remains of total artworks in the sites of post-independence design orchestrated by the totalitarian African state. I draw on the current material situations of iconic remains, alongside existing archives, for what they can tell of lingering power relations and cooling nationalist fervor in contemporary urban space.

The lives of sites in Kinshasa today inform this book’s trajectory. My starting point is colonial Art Nouveau in Belgium. I begin here in order to unpack architectural offshoots of the protomodernist design movement in the Congolese city, locating elements of Art Nouveau’s immersive imaginative power. The main focus of my analysis is Kinshasa’s relevant sites. Recognizing that

the postcolonial African city muddies the notion of both modernism and modernity as a Euro-American enclave, I focus on how meaning is made in distinctive, historical city forms. I do so by implementing firsthand experiential analysis of iconic sites as whole entities, rather than only homing in on their architecture and designers' intentions. My approach is based in my practice as a visual artist and is informed by how artworks and their exhibition have influenced how the Congo has been imagined and invented. The pages that follow therefore revisit key exhibitions, in addition to analyzing extant literature and archival material relating to aesthetics and the Congo.

While I hope this book will be useful to a broad range of scholars interested in the intersection of urban theory, postcolonial viewpoints, and modernist aesthetics, my interdisciplinary methodology will be most recognizable to creative practice researchers, art historians, and urban theorists, broadly conceived. The research methodology followed is that of a creative practice researcher in the sense that it is "personally situated, interdisciplinary and diverse" (Barrett 2010: 2). My situated approach involves combinations of archival research, textual and visual analysis, and experiential studies, including my own photographic practice. I proceed with the attitude that objects within postcolonial city space are, first and foremost, relational, relying on multiple associations across the present and the past. In this, I draw attention to the "specificity of situation" in which buildings and artworks are found, in addition to my own embodied experience of them (Doucet and Frichot 2018: 1).

I explore the prospect of the Global South city as a site for the creation of theory, a site whose complexity also instigates the imagining of the urban space as a relational entity (Robinson 2006; Simone 2019). My thesis is that how the Congo has been imagined through historical state sites and exhibitions, from both the colonial and post-independence eras, affects contemporary trajectories of remaining constructions. With some anchoring in Walter Benjamin's (1999) dialectical image, which references both past plans and present conditions, I take a keen interest in what the physical realities of a site can tell of underlying power structures. Through the analyses that follow, I extrapolate how the complexity of the postcolonial built environment challenges the polarizing categories of colonial modernity. I am interested in how late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century modernist colonizing structures set in motion a series of divisions: "traditional versus modern; oral versus written and printed; agrarian and customary communities versus urban and industrialized civilization; subsistence economies versus highly productive economies" (Mudimbe 1988: 17). I argue that modernist sites embedded in

Congolese urban space—used to entrench dichotomies—complicate and question didactic interpretations.

I build on work begun by Filip De Boeck and Marie-Françoise Plissart (2004: 228) regarding how Kinshasa breaks down the modernist separation of urban and rural. De Boeck and Plissart focus on the ethnographic relationship between urban reality and the city imagined by its inhabitants. I follow explicitly postcolonial concerns about the political underpinnings of modernism and their continued relevance. I draw on existing architectural histories of Kinshasa, most notably the body of literature by Johan Lagae, to pursue in-depth analyses of contemporary built environments.¹ All my chosen examples once attempted to imagine the Congolese city as a place of abundant possibility that could be controlled. Those sites and artworks in Kinshasa, the main focus of this book, have not yet been the subject of study.

In tracking how the Congo appears in modernist forms (in relevant artworks and exhibitions as well as architectural sites), I tackle the way state-sponsored aesthetics from the past aimed to shape subjectivity. While they never completely succeeded, they hold a certain political memory within the contemporary city (figure 1). The forms of government that commissioned total artworks and caused totalizing design to come into being are important to my argument. Histories of how early modernist design was married to nationalism are key to understanding the former's role in postcolonial Kinshasa.

TOTALITY AND THE NATION-STATE

At a time when Belgium, founded in 1830, needed to fortify an identity, an attempt was made to bind an idea of the African colony to a sense of national pride. In exhibitions and buildings promoting King Leopold II's Congo Free State (CFS, 1885–1908), the early modernist Art Nouveau movement was prevalent. Art Nouveau was used to sell an idea of the Congo as a lucrative natural bounty in Hôtel Van Eetvelde (1895), designed by Victor Horta and located in Brussels, as well as the 1897 Congo Pavilion, which formed part of the Brussels International Exposition. The year of this book's publication, 2023, has been declared the Brussels Year of Art Nouveau. The strong connections between the Belgian movement and the African colony have not been highlighted across the primary narrative of this city-wide celebration. I argue

1. Please see the reference list for a portion of this extensive body of literature.



Fig. 1. View of the Tower of the Exchange in Limete, with the foot of a giant drummer in traditional garb visible (from the 1969 sculpture *Batteur du Tam-Tam* by André Lufwa) from the site of the Kinshasa International Fair, Kinshasa, 2015 (Photograph © Ruth Sacks.)

that nostalgia for Art Nouveau in Belgium today selects fragmented aesthetic aspects of former total artworks and ignores both its colonial associations and its underlying ideology. This book describes how Hôtel Van Eetvelde and the Congo Pavilion provide eloquent examples of the way King Leopold II's regime incorporated Art Nouveau design into the colonial package. At the same time as these displays situated the culture of the colonized subject as an exotic other to that of Europe, Art Nouveau design provided a unifying frame, identified as uniquely Belgian.

The association between the modernist design movement and colonialism was taken further with industrialized versions of Art Nouveau that were sent to the Congo colony. Still-extant sites housing the prefabricated metal frameworks of the Hotels Alimentation du Bas-Congo (Lower Congo Foods Hotels, the ABC Hotels) continue to reveal their Art Nouveau lineage (figure 2). These structures were manufactured in Belgium and erected in approximately 1905–11 to serve as hotels connected to the Matadi-Kinshasa (then the



Fig. 2. Former ABC Hotel (Hotel Alimentation du Bas-Congo) with an Art Nouveau top story and an Art Deco base, Kinshasa, 2015
(Photograph © Ruth Sacks.)

Matadi-Leopoldville) Railway. Hotels that were once emissaries of the Belgian colonial mission are now aging organs within the body of the contemporary Congolese city.

Taking what I understand to be an African perspective, I argue that while the post-independence regime of Mobutu Sese Seko explicitly broke from Belgium's conception of the Congo as a colonial possession, it adapted stylistic tropes and spatial dynamics from Leopold II's regime. Both colonial Art Nouveau and post-independence state design perpetuated an aesthetics of control through the language of technological progress and economic prosperity. I therefore identify key aspects of the immersive and coercive qualities of Art Nouveau used to represent the Congo. Certain spatial and aesthetic features are then located in Mobutu's modernism, as seen in the dictator's state sites and the displays of artworks that accompanied them.

The sites installed at the beginning of Mobutu Sese Seko's three-decades rule (1965–97) hold distinct qualities that can be linked to the principles of the Art Nouveau environment. Within modernist sites that celebrated Congolese culture, continuations of caricatures of Africa were deliberately taken up as an act of self-representation. The sites and exhibitions erected under the banner of the state ideology of *retour à l'authenticité* (return to authenticity, what I will call simply Authenticity) were the first exemplars of the kind of modernism employed to describe the post-independence nation.² In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the government instigated a cultural policy aimed at rekindling elements of invented, precolonial tradition in Congolese daily life. Built forms, commissioned artworks, and exhibitions were wielded as the symbolic accretions of a mighty African power.

I address distinctive post-independence landmarks such as the Tour de l'Échangeur (Tower of the Exchange, c. 1974) and Tour Gécamines (Gécamines Tower, 1977) that have some affinity to the colonial sites under discussion. The postcolonial state constructions occupy prominent positions in Kinshasa, as do the artworks created to adorn them. When seen in relation to architectural projects, the work of a group of modernist visual artists known as the Avant-gardists further assists in evoking the post-independence nationalist imagination. Ostensibly made up of very different stylistic features to ornamental Art Nouveau and its prefabricated offshoots, Mobutu's ambitious constructions and their artworks may be seen to display similar overriding principles of manipulating and totalizing built environments.

2. As will be discussed, earlier regimes from the post-independence era (1960–65) were too unstable to establish cohesive construction projects.

Belgium's Style Congo encompassed a combination of architecture, art, and interior design to create captivating artificial environments. In blending different art forms in one construction, inside and out, these were a form of total artwork or *Gesamtkunstwerk* (see Watelet 1981). Juliet Koss (2010, xiii) maintains that "modernism itself must be understood in reference to the theoretical elaboration and historical development of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*." The foundational concept of the total artwork, closely associated with Wagnerian tradition, involves a merging of different arts (in this case, craft and high art, as well as ancient forms with modern). Because each total environment aimed at creating an illusion of unity and an organic whole, its tropes were often well suited to promoting nationalist agendas that sought to bind together a country's different cultures. The total artwork also functioned on a political level, blurring the boundaries between art and life (Koss 2010: xix; Finger and Follet 2011: 4). In the era of African independence, the totalitarian Mobutu regime's policy of Authenticity took effect across all aspects of cultural life and claimed to unify disparate peoples of the nation. I link the impossibility of national cohesion through culture to the false promise of harmony in the total artwork. The modernist principle of the total environment—and, by implication, total control—is always impossible to achieve.

The unfinished nature of the total artwork also functions as a way of "keeping it alive" (Schefer 2011: 35). My premise is that the artificial vision of lived harmony presented in the modernist sites of this book remains imaginatively and materially lively. The vitality of these sites' presence in the city can never be completely disentangled from the regimes that made them, but neither do the sites wholly represent these regimes.

Mobutu's modernist sites were conceived as an extension of the totalitarian state. Hannah Arendt's (1973) definitive conception of totalitarianism sees it as a form of governance that maintains leadership through terrorizing the populace, not only political dissenters. If the regime's public sites and artworks were instruments of the state's agenda, they were presented under the banner of unity and cohesion. The principle of unity could also be wielded as a warning against stepping out of the prescribed frame. Yet the sites to be discussed were never purely tools of terror. The Mobutu regime's versions of a Congo Style, or a design principle that claimed an idea of the Congo, are still a source of pride, valued highly as Kinshasa icons. In the case of Mobutu's Congo, part of the appeal of the Authenticity policy was that the new African nation now had the power to represent itself. After decades of harsh colonial rule that imposed the physical and psychological violence of a modernity

reliant on the intervention of Europe, the ability of an African government to utilize the forms of that modernity was symbolically powerful.

The ABC Hotel structures engendered by the colonial regime in the Congo, intended as prefabricated total artworks, and the state sites of the post-independence totalitarian government were awe inspiring in their time. But they were never completely autonomous enclaves or direct mouthpieces for their regimes. Just as the total artwork is always unfinished, the political regimes of this book, which terrorized the populace in their respective ways, were never entirely omnipotent or able to exert complete control. The two binding motifs of this book—the modernist total artwork and totalitarianism—do not provide the only keys for understanding constructions with complex meanings today. Sites erected by the governments of King Leopold II and Mobutu Sese Seko on Congolese soil are now framed by their urban surrounds. These, now as then, mediate the shifting reception of constructed symbols of the Congo and Congolese culture.

THE PUBLIC LIVES OF BUILT FORMS

Each site visited in this book has its own unique character that has been cocreated with its city. While this may be said of all constructions, those conceived to represent a version of the Congo are a way of glimpsing the momentous times of their birthing. In tracking the stylistic reverberations of parallel projects of nation-building between post-independence Congo and nineteenth-century Belgium, I use the African city as a space to think with.

In order to tease out more subtle, manifold narratives of public complicities and ruling persuasion, *Congo Style* addresses the public lives of buildings. My approach does not ignore the violence that underwrites these sites but seeks to relink these pasts to the realities of the present day. As I allude to the larger machinations of history, I address how built structures respond to the new demands of a changed regime and the blows of conflict and aging. Colonial remains and post-independence extravagances are made up of a multiplicity of meanings that reflect their eventful trajectories. Far from pristine, the significant edifices of the Congolese built environment function as more than merely representatives of historical eras. I therefore approach each site according to what its current material situation can tell of its singular history within urban dynamics. I focus on their experiential qualities more than their intended function.

Where the public is expressly informed what to think of Art Nouveau in the museums and heritage sites of Brussels, no clear label is provided in the Congo. Some guidebooks provide brief paragraphs concerning the origins and architectural styles of the buildings, but these are not easily accessible, as I detail in chapter 1. The legacy of historical edifices is more prominently given over to informal conversations and conjecture based on the various uses that they are put to. I form my opinions according to everyday experience and encounter as well as impressions of the sites themselves.³ I attempt to situate my descriptions of buildings and exhibitions within the particularities of their respective urban spaces. In an interpretation of recent thinking around new materialist theory (see Coole and Frost 2010), sites are approached as integral components within networks of man-made and environmental forces. I introduce architectural sites via my perception of the way they interact with their surrounds, made evident and tangible in the material traces overlaying them. While I metaphorically excavate built and crafted matter for the ideology programmed into their initial design, I am also open to what the present-day corporeal conditions of the structures can say to potentially counteract original messages.

Addressing the way architecture and its artworks are (and are not) integrated into the cultural and material circuits of their surrounding urban space reveals a lot about their initial design and its practical facilities. Importantly, this allows for consideration of the communal role sites play among other structures and variegated forms of formal and informal civic activity. I approach buildings as active agents within complex urban constructions that change over time. The different sites are treated as whole objects, whose interiors and allotted city space are integral components. A version of this way of thinking about design and exhibition space was introduced in the organic logics of the Art Nouveau total artwork. I believe this speaks to the complex legacy of the early modernist movement.

Taking a cue from Arjun Appadurai (1986: 5), I seek meaning in “the things themselves,” inscribed in their form and use. I pursue each site as having an active and public social life, animated by eventful histories that date back to tense origins. Instead of employing history as a source of facts to bolster visual analysis, this study looks at what traces and residues can

3. In cases where sites no longer exist, or are not accessible, I center others' photographs in my analysis, offering firsthand description of my own engagement with these photos. Sections where this process occurs are clearly marked.

reveal about interactions with people, things, and natural forces. Rather than detract from the original designs, this line of inquiry adds further layers of significance and nuance to historical constructions. By providing situated perspectives, I aim to circumvent the typical paths of those art historical texts that read architecture purely in terms of the message its commissioners and designers intended. I eschew a narrative dominated by the motivations and biographies of architects and the terms of their stylistic development within a closed system of architectural categories. Rather, I trace the temporal affectivities of whole sites over time, with the aim of freeing my analyses from the “fictitious abstracts” of “classes, species and kinds” (Deleuze 1988: 45).

My intention in exploring material traces is to underscore that our knowledge of history is “fundamentally relational” and only able to be grasped through the lens of the present context (Geissler et al. 2016: 15–31). Following a relational logic, I perceive architecture and artworks not as isolated but as emplaced within sites that affect their function and meaning. These emplaced forms are introduced as objects of the present time, interlaced with the residue of the past. Instead of providing conclusions to central questions based solely in archival research and ethnographic fieldwork, I seek impressions of thick and overlapping times. My aim is to confound a linear reading of these works’ history, according to what they can tell. Drawing analyses of historical edifices into the harsh light of present-day Kinshasa problematizes moralizing tales of the villains and heroes of Euro-American history as well as the hagiography of its architects and modern artists.

I do not ignore archival research or information provided by architects, designers, and artists. Rather, I recognize that complex designs carry some of the history and societal attitudes that influenced their making. As such, they can be recognized as articulations of past and present powers. As buildings and objects are claimed by their respective localities, from high-end official decree (becoming heritage sites or government and civic buildings) to informal networks on the ground, they represent different Congos. In reading the lines these constructions draw, within pockets of space and sky, and the wider connotations of their permutations that follow, I proceed with an awareness of the polarizing and essentializing philosophies that potentially underscore modernist form. I also allow for surprises, looking for possibilities that these have been overwritten, inventively reconfigured, or ironically refuted.

In speculating about the experiential qualities of man-made constructions and objects that were intended to entertain, delight, seduce, and impress, I look closely at what their formal composition can tell. I also consider what

their material affects say about what they are made of, which allows for a closer connectivity to the original spheres and activities that led to their making. This study seeks to reinsert some of the wonder of these sites. In looking at contemporary situations, I negate not the imaginative power of designed constructions, but the Eurocentric modernist narrative that scaffolds them. The ways in which they once beguiled their publics are still evident (if, at times, indistinct). As affective architecture endures, its initial message and innovation can never be read as simplistic.

In building on the idea of responding appropriately to the material to hand, it soon emerges that the translation of stylistic tropes and contemporary cityscapes into the written word only allows for a certain kind of commentary. To deal with this, sections of information are provided in visual form. A small number of the images are from archival collections. These are particularly relevant in the case of sites no longer in existence, necessitating that my experiential analysis be based on speculation into the information provided by the photographer. The rest of the photographs are the work of this researcher. My own visuals are intended to fill in other narratives and potentialities where words do not suffice.

The situated views that follow are intended to provide a sense of how the research was conducted (figure 3). My writing is interspersed with descriptive sections, which are intended to emphasize subjective experience.⁴ Spending time in immersive total artworks and overpowering architecture has led to the development of a mode of writing that responds to these built forms. I have therefore adapted an intentionally stylized way of writing that speaks to the content of its sites and themes. I do so with a keen awareness of how the Congo has been imagined in academic and popular literature.

SHIFTING FOCUS

One of my primary aims is to avoid well-trodden versions of the Congo story that highlight the avarice of Mobutu and King Leopold II. I draw focus away from the persons of these rulers (and the more obvious targets of their decadent personal palaces) to see what contemporary sites can tell of the aesthetic forms and patterns that once coalesced around particular types of gover-

4. Research in Brussels was conducted over protracted periods from 2008 to 2015. Kinshasa and its surrounds were visited from 2014 to 2016.



Fig. 3. A money exchange stall among statues by students of the Academy of Fine Arts, near the academy guesthouse (where the author resided), Kinshasa, 2014
(Photograph © Ruth Sacks.)

nance. My engagement with the individualized qualities of each site avoids a Congo story of “history moving from violence to violence, malfeasance to malfeasance” (Hunt 2016: 3). Part of the enduring power of such narratives is that, since the close of the nineteenth century, they have been told through convincing and emotional hyperbole as well as vivid imagery.⁵

The most enduring Anglophile construction of the Congo is Joseph Conrad’s novella *Heart of Darkness*, first published in 1899. Conrad’s powerful analogy, which ties connotations of Congo as Africa and Congo as colony to monolithic human darkness, has infiltrated all manner of scholarly literature. In this monograph’s reference list alone, academic texts that reference *Heart of Darkness* uncritically include those from James Clifford (1988: 10), Kevin C. Dunn (2003: 15), Adam Hochschild (1998), Nicholas Mirzoeff (1998), Debora

5. The Congo Reform Association, which first emerged around 1904, helped spearhead such narratives.

L. Silverman (2011–13), David Van Reybrouck (2014: 97), and Michela Wrong (2000). To be sure, some have critiqued the novella: Chinua Achebe (1977: 784) criticized the book for its “hypnotic stupor” and the casual racism it exhibited “while pretending to record scenes.”⁶ Edward W. Said (1993: 19–30) also subjected the iconic text to postcolonial critique, with an emphasis on Conrad’s ambivalence to colonialism throughout the dense exploration into the human psyche. Yet the book’s pervasiveness in English-language scholarship with a postcolonial mandate endures across disciplines.

Across the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, the Congo as a place of chaotic darkness, beset by poverty, war, and disease, has followed Conrad’s title into journalism and popular culture. The heart of darkness trope crisscrosses the story of the Congo when told from the outside, whether that story is sensationalist or sober. While much work has been done to expose the duplicity of King Leopold II’s supposed antislavery mission in the Congo, the role of the built environment is seldom a focus.⁷ It is therefore important that new histories of Art Nouveau take its relationship to early colonialism into account.

As a way of fully understanding Art Nouveau’s use of organic symbols in Belgium, the potential influence of Congolese nature forms on iconic total artworks needs to be addressed. Debora L. Silverman (2011, 2011–13) is among the few authors to have comprehensively studied how the Belgian design style set up an aesthetics of domination.⁸ Focusing on the historical links between Art Nouveau and King Leopold II’s colonial regime, she demonstrates how the circles in which the movement’s designers and artists moved were satu-

6. Achebe (1977: 786–87) interprets the ultimate horror at the heart of Conrad’s jungle to be that the archetypal white colonial, Mr. Kurtz, becomes as savage as the Africans around him.

7. The most well-known recent exposé is the popular history *King Leopold’s Ghost* by Adam Hochschild (1998). This book poses the story of the Congo as a tale of heroes (the Congo Reform Association) and villains (King Leopold II and his cronies). Hochschild attempts to track the historical figures on whom Conrad based Mr. Kurtz, the degenerate colonial official in his *Heart of Darkness*. Hochschild’s somewhat melodramatic book is based on research first seen in Daniel Vangroenweghe’s *Du sang sur les lianes* (1986).

8. In addition to Silverman, see also Sébastien Clerbois (2011) and Tom Flynn (1998). In the exhibition *Desire and Representation* (2008), visual artist Peggy Butth critiques the visual language of the 1897 Congo Pavilion, the foundational exhibition of what is today the Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA) in Tervuren. Another key example of an artwork on this topic is the exhibition *The Work of the Forest* (1992) by visual artist Judith Barry, who directly links Art Nouveau aesthetics to colonial activity.

rated with tales and images of a distant and exotic African colony. Crucially, Silverman proposes that a major Belgian Art Nouveau designer and theorist, Henry van de Velde, was influenced by depictions of Congolese body art. Chapter 2 takes up this line of inquiry to discuss Belgian Art Nouveau's various exotic influences, including its elusive African references.

Silverman works across a broad range of figurative sculptures, textiles, furniture, and household objects (including the Symbolist work in the movement's orbit) to make a case for Art Nouveau complicities in colonialism. Moving into a focus on architecture and design, I concentrate on the logics of Art Nouveau total artworks. The spatial dynamics of how every element of a building, from structural support to intricate detailing, works to create an immersive environment are addressed. In viewing Art Nouveau's Congo as a sophisticated and mesmerizing style of early modernist architectural philosophy, this study considers how the capabilities of architecture work in conjunction with the interior as an affective tool. This leads into a consideration of what the homogenizing environment needs to exclude in order to present a harmonious image (in terms of both aesthetics and sociopolitical message).

Importantly, while Art Nouveau's influence on twentieth-century European architecture is well documented, as are its various regional European offshoots, those examples that were sent to the Congo have not been subject to study before. Discussions concerning the iron hotels of chapter 3 thus aim to bring a new perspective to the Art Nouveau story. The intention is to reinsert the Congolese city into the conversation concerning the colonial history of the Belgian movement. Through this political positioning, *Congo Style* grounds its reading of Art Nouveau, its offshoots, and post-independence architecture in the lessons of postcolonial theory, particularly Saidian notions of essentialism.

In a shift of focus, this study foregrounds African perspectives by giving most of its attention to constructions and exhibitions in Kinshasa. Further, I consider the kinds of Congolese agency and influences present in these buildings from multiple angles. The framing of Congolese culture in the Art Nouveau colonial exhibition—and reference to its nature forms in buildings like Hôtel Van Eetvelde—sees that African influence appears under the nebulous terms of creative impetus and inspiration. In the case of colonial architecture in the Congo, its people have had a say in how meaning is made since its inception. Early Mobutu-era architecture, then, presents a conglomeration of forms of agency through the opportunity of self-representation. The array of modernist architecture commissioned by the Second Republic complicates

the idea of what it means for national design to be not only Congolese (or, between 1971 and 1997, “Zairian”) but also independent (in the sense of representing an autonomous, unified people).

Moving from early Belgian modernism to focus on the Congolese city and independence-era constructions necessitates working across temporal and ideological realms. *Congo Style* therefore takes a capacious approach to its terms. While the French appellation “Style Congo” was one of many terms for the Art Nouveau movement in Belgium (in itself indicative of the extent to which the movement was inveigled in the regime), this phrase, rendered in English as “Congo Style,” can also refer to Congolese aesthetics at large. The structures and exhibitions of chapters 4 and 5, developed by Congolese people or for them, laid out a distinctive aesthetic legacy and attitude in Kinshasa.⁹ Part I of this book, which deals with Art Nouveau forms, is therefore named “Style Congo,” while part II is “Congo Style.”

Following this line of thinking, my references to the buildings under discussion as “modernist” are not intended to convey a direct link to the modernist design movement of twentieth-century Euro-America. *Congo Style* challenges the hegemonic assumption that modernism was the product of Euro-American modernity. Rather, I take up Marshall Berman’s (1988: 5) foundational definition of modernism as “any attempt by modern men and women to become subjects as well as objects of modernization, to get a grip on the modern world and make themselves at home in it.” While I do not engage in extensive discussions on modernity in the Global South, I refer to concepts and symbols of modernity and the African city in relation to what I call Congolese modernism. I proceed with the understanding that African people, as well as their settlements, cities, and art, have always been modern. I use the logic of the African city—in this case Kinshasa—as I understand it to explicate how Euro-American notions of modernity, as expressed through their modernism, were formed around the idea of a primitive other.

In its scope and spirit, this book explicitly refutes the notion that progress and modernity are Euro-American enclaves. I follow the imperative that “it is no longer defensible to dispossess people and places of their creativity in the name of appropriating modernity to only certain sections of the world” (Robinson 2006: 21). In focusing on Congolese city space, I aim to destabilize

9. As Kinshasa remained the capital city in both colonial times (when it was known as Leopoldville) and after independence, this city and its locus are the focus for this study. Other Congolese cities, like Boma and Lubumbashi, have their own distinctive forms of Congolese modernism, which are beyond the scope of this book.

the assumption that urban modernity “is just a synonym” for Euro-America (Mitchell 2000: 1). I do not engage with Congolese modernisms to argue for some “alternative” modernity: “endlessly surprising” “combinations and recombinations” of what began in the Euro-American city (Gaonkar 2001: 22). The notion of an alternative modernity, as espoused by Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar (2001) and Arjun Appadurai (1996), strives for a positive image of self-sufficiency, a city “as good as” its Global North counterpart. This can lead to negating the injustices and violence that accompanied colonial modernity’s imposition on the colonies. Or, as James Ferguson (2006: 34) asserts, “to allow the material and social inequalities that have long been at the heart of African aspirations to modernity to drop out of the picture.” As I will explicate, Mobutu’s high modernist state sites continue to be admired, maintained, and emulated in Kinshasa today. Their promise of socio-economic prosperity is tied to an idea of urban modernity that is noticeably at odds with the precarity of the majority of the rest of the city. I therefore explore these modernisms according to how they speak back to the colonial construct of modernity.

With the above in mind, this book adds to an understanding of modernisms, specifically the many Congolese modernisms that exist, in a way that allows for co-modernisms that intersect, reflect, and flow from and against one another (Harney and Phillips 2019: 23). Across their different strands of modernist art and modernist architecture, all African modernisms are, I believe, as Chika Okeke-Agulu (2001: 30) writes: “not . . . simply an African manifestation of twentieth-century European art—even though we will certainly find many instances of artists consciously adopting, adapting, quoting, decomposing, critiquing, and even transgressing European avant-garde strategies.” From Okeke-Agulu’s writing on modernist painting and sculpture in Africa, I take the various modes presented by Congolese modernism (in both buildings and the artworks associated with them) to be the work of makers “engaged in a continuously evolving project of subject formation” (2001: 31). This construction can recognize the historical implication of forms within porous systems of cultural oppression.

My understanding of modernism further holds some affinity to Sarah Nuttall’s (2009: 22) notion of entanglement in cultural traffic, which signals “a multiplicity of repertoires” but “does not foreclose possibilities of resistance” or “deny the material fact of subjection.”¹⁰ Coming from a background

10. Nuttall’s cultural entanglements have some resonances with Duanfang Lu’s (2012) “entangled modernities.”

in visual art and art history, I attribute part of the epistemological violence of Euro-American modernism to systems of categorizing and labeling cultures. These systems not only involve seeing Global South cultures as primitive and backward, but also separate architecture and craft from high art.

According to official architectural and art histories (e.g., Frampton 2007; Pevsner [1936] 1960), modernism is a lineage of formal innovation in design and architecture that begins with the British Arts and Crafts movement, is followed by Art Nouveau, and leads into pared-down aesthetics that outwardly display qualities of rationalism and universalism. This chain of influence led to the crystalizing of form follows function in the International Style (1920s–1970s), dominated by Le Corbusier.

In visual art, modernism is commonly understood to have begun in the late nineteenth century, with French artists such as Vincent van Gogh and Paul Cezanne.¹¹ Art history details how figures like Pablo Picasso were influenced by so-called primitive art, or the arts of peoples named as tribal (with Congolese art as a major representative). Euro-American art history erroneously does not credit that art and its makers as having any modern sensibilities or aesthetic agency.¹² And yet, African artists also discovered Euro-American art during the early colonial period, and various modernisms emerged (Okeke-Agulu 2001). Moreover, as Z. S. Strother (1998) demonstrates through the ritual masks of the Pende in the twentieth century, art on the African continent is in a constant process of reinvention: the encapsulation of the spirit of modernism.

Despite African art, in all its forms, having been present since the start of Euro-American modernism, it continues to occupy an ambiguous space within authoritative definitions of the movement. I follow the path of modernist practice that concerns the Congo to emphasize efforts toward autonomous practice before and after independence. Throughout the Congo-related examples of this global pattern of design and aesthetics, there are no pure expressions of culture. Mainstream art history is not treated as an immutable canon. As chapter 1 will explicate, art historical narratives need to do more than simply allow modernism to exist in the Global South as a subsidiary to the main Euro-American event. Accordingly, I view all the sites of study

11. Maarten Couttenier (2015), however, emphasizes that it began far earlier, through cabinets of curiosities, and cites the 1897 Congo Pavilion as an important example of modernist primitivism.

12. The body of literature on this phenomenon is extensive, coalescing around William Rubin's 1984–85 exhibition "*Primitivism*" in *20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, which took place at the New York Museum of Modern Art.

as the result of intercultural exchange, albeit highly uneven in the European examples, as well as invention born of necessity.

I thus attempt to add to the growing body of work aimed at toppling evolutionist or teleological approaches to modernist aesthetics. Art and architectural history in Euro-America historically sees design as either improving or degenerating, according to the assumed degree of civilization of the peoples concerned. This bias is racially based, with the more impermanent habitation forms of non-Western cultures judged as primitive, compared to more technologically advanced modes of construction. *Congo Style* follows horizontal logics, whereby forms that remain and reoccur are deemed not more superior or refined but more able to adapt to their surroundings. I build my argument in conversation with scholarship that seeks to decenter Euro-American modernism (Harney and Phillips 2019; Wright 2001).

In the same way that this study recognizes that modernism, art history, and hegemonic discourse are not monolithic, it underscores that the colonial and postcolonial regimes referred to were never omnipotent. It is, in part, due to insecurity that impressive modernist innovation and technological feats were called into being. As imposing and immersive structures attempted to legitimize the powers in place, discordant voices and motivations are evident in the work of the various architects and designers who were called on by colonial and postcolonial regimes to represent them. In the face of incriminating histories, the erected buildings and related visual culture take on a life of their own within their cities.

My multilevel approach to city theory is indebted to numerous writers on the African city. The cadences and flow of language in the oeuvre of AbdouMaliq Simone echo those of the cities and urban situations in which he has immersed himself. I further note Ato Quayson's melding of history with contemporary impressions in *Oxford Street, Accra* (2014).

Key texts such as Sarah Nuttall and Achille Mbembe's *Johannesburg: The Elusive Metropolis* (2008) and Filip De Boeck and Marie-Françoise Plissart's *Kinshasa: Tales of the Invisible City* (2004) present, in different ways, city-centric views of massive tracts of urban space. So, too, does De Boeck's more recent collaboration with Sammy Baloji, *Suturing the City* (2016). While *Congo Style* does not provide city overviews as the above works do, my approach privileges the role the city plays in forming my sites of study.

Congo Style makes no claim to pursue an ethnography of the city, its sites, or exhibitions within it. Rather, it aims to grasp the "interfolding network of humanity and non-humanity" in the limits of places that hold a firm sense of

their origins (Bennett 2010: 31). From my practice as a visual artist, I believe that “things matter” and that the physical makeup of urban forms not only can tell a great deal about the activities of their human communities but can also have great effect on how local peoples negotiate their day-to-day (Bleecker 2009). I maintain that each site also contains its own sociohistorical realities.

Thinking of urban fabric as shared heritage, Johan Lagae (2013) sees Kinshasa as a “tangible city” that opposes the idea of the invisible architectures of Kinshasa espoused by De Boeck. Lagae’s investigations and collaborations, most notably with Jacob Sabakinu Kivilu (2018), form a foundation for any work on Congolese urban forms. Lagae presents a comprehensive contribution to architectural history through investigations into what information is available in the archives of the Congo and Belgium. As is fully explained in chapter 1, *Congo Style* takes a more flexible approach to urban modernism, architecture, and art. The analyses and discussions that follow aim to complicate and destabilize the strictures of Eurocentric art history and categories of modernism. This entails questioning the knowledge systems propagated by Euro-American museums. Institutions of the Global North dedicated to the Congo and Africa at large are irrevocably rooted in the racist ethnographic pursuits from which they developed.

Maarten Couttenier (2005) and Sarah Van Beurden (2015a) have traced the colonial machinations of Belgium’s Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA), in Tervuren (figure 4). Van Beurden examines the relations between the RMCA and the National Museum Institute of Zaire (today, the National Museum of the Congo) to investigate how Congolese artworks were deployed in fraught postcolonial relations. As will be discussed in chapter 4, this research has become more poignant in an era when demands for the return of African objects from the colonial period are frequent. The work of Couttenier and Van Beurden highlights how the underlying ideology of colonial museums has been manipulated by Belgian governments and Mobutu’s regime to further national political agendas.

What is at stake in how the Congo is imagined within different sites, whether museums, exhibitions, or buildings, is the way that knowledge claims, once established, live on within cultural memory. The lines drawn between what is modern and what is primitive through built constructions can never entirely conceal their underlying discursive structures. V. Y. Mudimbe (2013: 28) uses the motif of the line as a bounding mechanism: “one may . . . move towards the implication of the directionality of the line, both the idea of separation and the distinction of parts it creates. Our physical



Fig. 4. A view of the Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA), still under construction, Tervuren, 2013

(Photograph © Ruth Sacks.)

geography, the whole domain of our culture, including mental configurations and our relations to nature, are topographies structured by lines.” Mudimbe uses the analogy of lines to speak about alterity politics in Africa as rooted in colonial constructions of difference. With this, he provides the foundational motivation of this study: to read line formations—including actual architectural ones, which both decorate and direct the movement of people—as particularly effective and emotive framing devices. My aim here is to find routes, often circumlocutious and oblique ones, through complicated contexts. My goal is to shift and soften the established lines of Euro-American discourse. I complicate definitions that see certain forms and designs as homogeneously representative of Africa, Europe, the Congo, or Belgium.

BIASED NARRATIVE IN A TROUBLED TERRAIN

At the heart of *Congo Style* is the notion that the different imaginaries of the Congo since colonization (and before) have relied on the promise of its natural resources: “whatever natural resource became indispensable to European

capitalist expansion and technological innovation was to be found in the Congo in vast stores, beginning with slave labor in the sixteenth century” (Wenzel 2006: 1). To fully comprehend the violence behind the sites to be discussed, a brief historical overview is needed. The construct of this massive tract of central Africa as a single entity began with the explorer Henry Morton Stanley in 1885. Under the instruction of King Leopold II, an area made up of “2,345,409 square kilometers [905,567 square miles] . . . of extremely diverse” ecosystems and people was artificially corralled together (*500 Visages* 1975: 2).

The Congo Free State (CFS) officially existed from 1885 to 1908, when it was handed over to the Belgian government as a colony. Colonial inroads into Central Africa instigated by King Leopold II were posed as a humanitarian endeavor to bring civilization to the Congo and put an end to slavery, under the guise of the Association Internationale du Congo (International Association of the Congo) (Slade 1962: 39–41; Stengers and Vansina 1985: 315). The monarch’s colonial ambitions were further expressed as a nationalistic endeavor that would bring glory to Belgium. At the time, the comparatively new nation was attempting to assert itself in relation to nearby colonial powerhouses such as France and Britain. The Art Nouveau sites I discuss formed part of the regime’s drive to secure business partners and raise public interest in the CFS, essentially King Leopold II’s private endeavor.¹³

The CFS was a conglomeration of private trading companies and shareholders (mostly Belgian, but not all), controlled by Leopold II, its remote head. The CFS had no more of a bureaucratic state apparatus than the bare minimum needed for business to flourish (Gondola 2002: 64–71; Nzongola-Ntalaja 2007: 21). Local agents could therefore demand what they required from the Congolese in their areas, with little to no intervention from the colonial administration (Schildkrout and Keim 1998a: 13). The CFS refused to introduce a monetary system, ensuring that taxes were exacted in labor. The tiny white minority that held power allowed extreme violence to be exacted on the Congolese people and the natural environment to extract raw materials. This began with ivory harvesting, nearly depleting the local species of elephant (Clerbois 2011), before turning to rubber tapping, which was in high demand by the 1890s. By 1900, the white population of European business

13. The king’s colonial enterprise caused huge political friction. Belgian businesses supported the king, but the general populace, stratified by provincial loyalties (among others), had little enthusiasm for colonial conquest (Dunn 2003: 24).

agents, missionaries, and military officers numbered 1,182 people (Slade 1962: 173; Van Reybrouck 2014: 68; Vanthemsche 2012: 60).

The colonial army, the Force Publique (Public Force), was central in enforcing a culture of violence. Made up of African mercenaries, largely from outside the Congo, and led by Belgian officials, the army exacted discipline in matters of commerce and trade as much as in military campaigns in the East and repression of Congolese rebellions. In areas of concentrated exploitation—in Équateur, Bandundu, and Kasai, where rubber collection took place—the Force Publique committed numerous atrocities. Failure to meet rubber quotas resulted in harsh punishments, including flogging, torture, murder, and sexual violence (Harms 1975: 76–77; Hunt 2016: 2; Slade 1962: 180).

Ongoing upheaval and disruption, which started before the concentrated capitalist expansion of the CFS, led to the destruction of earlier long-distance trade routes by 1890. The diversion of food and labor to the invaders caused widespread hardship and frequent famine (Schildkrout and Keim 1998a: 15; Likaka 2009: 36). Food shortages and malnutrition saw hundreds of thousands of people starving. Mortal illnesses compounded by new types of diseases brought in by the colonists, most prominently sleeping sickness and dysentery, wiped out large swathes of the population (Vansina 2010: 143–44). Sexually transmitted diseases and alcoholism also contributed to widespread trauma and social problems, and a low birth rate ensued (Roes 2010: 645).

It is now an established fact that the years of Leopold II's reign in the Congo saw its population drastically depleted, with some scholars estimating that half its people were wiped out (Dunn 2003: 45; Roes 2010: 643). While reports of human rights abuses began to circulate internationally as early as 1890, they were not confirmed by the Belgian state's Commission of Inquiry until 1904. This confirmation led to pressure on the Belgium government to take control of the CFS as a colony. This took place in 1908, when the prolonged military conquest, which had begun in approximately 1890, was not yet completed (Vellut 1984: 690). The CFS was now to be known as the Belgian Congo.

During the changeover period into the Belgian Congo, work conditions marginally improved, especially due to the introduction of a monetary system, and the ABC Hotels were also installed at this time (approximately 1905 to 1911). However, many CFS officials remained in their positions, and the exploitation of the workforce and natural resources continued, as did the violent suppression of insubordination (Gondola 2002: 77–83; Van Reybrouck

2014: 104–5). Rubber collection was halted, but not for humanitarian reasons: the supply had been exhausted (Harms 1975: 77). Methods of rubber collection developed in the CFS had already spread to other colonies, for example with the Mpoko company in Congo-Brazzaville (Vangroenweghe 2006).

The Belgian Congo controlled the Congolese population with a paternal attitude that penetrated Congolese life, overseeing movement, religion, social welfare, and health care, with strict regulation of agriculture beginning in the 1930s (Young and Turner 1985: 32–37). Basic amenities such as schools, clinics, a safe water supply, and roads were installed. By 1945, Belgium was proud of its “network of *maternités* [maternity care], orphanages, and ante- and postnatal clinics,” which had overtaken those of other colonies (Hunt 1999: 3). These endeavors were all extensions of the *mission civilisatrice* (civilizing mission) that the Belgian Congo pursued after the international scandal of King Leopold II’s treatment of the local population (while continuing exploitative practices for the financial gain of Belgian companies).

Among the various Congolese rebellions and revolts against colonial rule from the late nineteenth century onward, those in the 1940s led to the emergence of African political parties. Many colonial subjects began to identify with ethnic nationalisms more strongly, which was to have great influence on post-independence politics (Gondola 2002: 102). Such sentiments were fostered during World War II, a time when the Belgian Congo was highly valuable to the Allies as a source of much-needed raw materials, including the uranium used in the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima (Vanthemsche 2012). A sense of Congolese selfhood expanded after the war as the army had proved itself a significant force in Africa, whereas Belgium had been swiftly subdued (Van Reybrouck 2014: 181–89). The establishment of universities in Kinshasa and Lubumbashi, in 1954 and 1956, respectively, led some Congolese graduates on a path of social mobility. In addition, Congolese *évolués* (the “evolved”), who held more skilled positions in the Belgian colony, contributed to “cultural, social, and ethnic” elements of nationalism (Gondola 2002: 102–3). As the first Congolese manifestos emerged after 1956, two main political divisions emerged: “unitarian” (perceived as radical) and “federalist” (understood as a more moderate form of separatism) (Young and Turner 1985: 40–41).

In 1958, the Belgian government undertook a cautious policy to gradually shift control of the Congo (Gondola 2002: 109–11). By this point, urban development had attracted large numbers of people from rural areas to Kinshasa (then Leopoldville), which ultimately led to the rebellion of 1959 (Nzongola-

Ntalaja 2007: 53). The situation in the capital was exacerbated by overpopulation and lack of employment as much as political agitation (Gondola 2002: 111; Van Reybrouck 2014: 234–36). Unable to control the masses, Belgium granted the Congo independence on June 30, 1960. Patrice Lumumba's federalist party was voted in, with Lumumba as prime minister and Joseph Kasa-Vubu (who supported a more decentralized form of government) as head of state. The uneasy independence that followed liberation was marked by intense political clashes, with violent ethnic discord and social insecurity being the order of the day.

Both the Belgian-backed secession of Katanga (a mineral-rich province in the southeastern Congo) and a Force Publique mutiny against Belgian officers took place in July 1960. Disagreements between Lumumba and Kasa-Vubu during the so-called Congo Crisis eventually led to a breakdown in their alliance, and they denounced each other in September 1960 (Vanthem-sche 2012). Mobutu staged his first coup in December 1960, announcing that the army was “neutralizing” both leaders, after which he held the top leadership position as head of the army (Gondola 2002: 125). Seen as a highly influential nationalist agitator whom Euro-American allies mistrusted, Lumumba was apprehended and kept under house arrest. After trying to escape, he was imprisoned in Mbanza-Ngungu (Thysville) and then, on January 17, 1961, secretly flown to Lubumbashi (Elizabethville). He was murdered shortly afterward by Katanga soldiers and two Belgian police officers. His death, announced on February 10, greatly affected Congolese student movements, which empathized with Lumumba's unitarian vision (Monaville 2019). It is widely understood today that the murder was orchestrated by the Belgian secret service but that the United States encouraged it (Gondola 2002: 125). Many scholars, beginning with Jean-Paul Sartre (1963), have come to see Lumumba's tragic end as symbolizing the intrusion of rival superpowers in African decolonization.

The breakdown of the First Republic was followed by provincial fragmentation in 1962–63 and rebellions in 1964–65 (Young and Turner 1985: 41). This disorder set the scene for Mobutu to take full power in a 1965 coup, partially backed by Euro-American support (Van Reybrouck 2014: 325–26; Vanthem-sche 2012). After years of instability, the military leader installed a centralized nation-state model that was initially welcomed and celebrated broadly within the Congo, renamed as Zaire (Dunn 2003: 108). Complete political authority was secured through the establishment of the Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution (MPR, Popular Movement of the Revolution), which the regime

announced in 1967 as the single legitimate political party of the nation (Gondola 2002: 137; Young and Turner 1985: 59–63).

The period from 1965 to 1974, in which the Second Republic established the cultural policy of Authenticity, brought about the cultural events, exhibitions, institutions, and buildings discussed in chapters 4 and 5.¹⁴ As government commissions, these cultural creations serve as expressions of the public face of the early phase of Mobutu's Second Republic. New laws were passed that saw dress codes altered and names changed to promote an African (or Zairian) way of life and eradicate European influence. Government control was extended across all businesses, as well as colonial corporations, unions, and churches. With "dazzling" prospects promised to the people, Mobutu's campaign of stability and prosperity still held conviction in 1970 (Young and Turner 1985: 63).

By 1974, Authenticity had merged with Mobutuism as the official state ideology. This saw the person of the president deified as the guiding force and father of the nation. The state borrowed heavily from foreign investors, and by 1975 its debt was approximately \$3 billion (Van Reybrouck 2014: 374). Nationalization and high taxation, especially in the mining industry, saw the country's resources largely devoted to the enrichment of the politico-commercial elite, with Mobutu the most prominent beneficiary. Few measures were put in place to provide for the welfare or security of the general public. Mobutu's ability to play foreign powers off against one another saw his regime enjoy the benefits of good relations with the United States in his early rule (Dunn 2003: 107–8). He further emulated Mao's China during this period through the adoption of nationalistic cultural festivals and dress codes of the Authenticity period (Ndaywel è Nziem 1998: 684). The regime also attempted to portray itself internationally as an African nation, promoting western ideas of chieftainship (Dunn 2003: 118). Rapacious state expansion was possible because of the wealth in natural resource extraction, particularly in the copper industry. After the extreme drop in copper prices of 1974, coupled with the rise of oil prices and exponential inflation, the nation was forced to accept the demands of the International Monetary Fund. It ceded control of its economy in 1978 (Gondola 2002: 150–51; Van Reybrouck 2014: 376; Young and Turner 1985: 70–79).

As the regime was threatened, it amplified an already repressive environment of a military rule. Any potential political challengers to the prevailing

14. In some cases, the completion of construction took place later in the decade.

leadership were publicly executed, purportedly found guilty of both insurrection and corruption (Vanthemsche 2012).¹⁵ The culture of fear that Mobutu engendered included assassinations, extrajudicial executions, massacres of unarmed civilians, and banishment to penal colonies (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2007: 141). Uprisings (such as those in the Katanga/Shaba region in 1977–78) were violently quelled. As morale had ebbed in the state army, the state called in expensive international troops to deal with crisis situations (Van Reybrouck 2014: 371–73). The Mobutu regime lasted until 1997, when Laurent-Désiré Kabila overthrew Mobutu. Kabila also changed the country's name from Zaire to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

Crawford Young and Thomas Turner (1985) are among the many who state that in its absolutism, the Mobutu regime was a revamped version of the Leopoldian one. This popular comparison can overshadow the fact that the Second Republic was never a direct copy of the CFS. Moreover, the comparison simplifies a highly complex and internationally entangled situation, to the point that the colonial regime following the CFS, the Belgian Congo, is potentially exonerated for its role in the current situation in the Congo. The Mobutu regime would not have happened without the depletions of colonialism, which, in turn, led to the inefficiencies of First Republic government of Kasa-Vubu and Lumumba.

Both King Leopold II and Mobutu have been vilified in history and contemporary lore. Regardless of their culpability, this tendency to demonize individuals can negate a systemic critique that addresses how oppressive political systems are built. At the start of the twentieth century, fierce international critique of human rights abuses in the CFS and personal attacks on Leopold II's personal greed were most prominently propagated by the Congo Reform Association. Because this was primarily a British initiative, many of the group's assertions were dismissed in Belgium as wildly exaggerated and rooted in British jealousy of Belgium's commercial success in the Congo (Stanard 2010; Vanthemsche 2012: 92–94).¹⁶ The predominant “top-down narrative, with its excessive focus on King Leopold's character and motives,” does not consider the many causes that fed into the CFS's “culture of violence” (Roes 2010: 635). It also sets up the CFS as an anomaly, leaving other forms of colonialism, including rapacious modern-day neocolonialist practices, as an acceptable status quo.

15. Public executions were defining feature of the era, starting with the June 1966 hanging of four ministers in front of a massive audience in Kinshasa.

16. Similarly, reports from Protestant missionaries were framed as pique for their having had to cede the Congo to their Catholic counterparts.

In the case of Mobutu, the dictator is today continually invoked as a defining, caricatured African kleptocrat in Euro-American press and literature. Kevin C. Dunn (2003: 131, 140) outlines how, although US administrations under Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, and George H. W. Bush had subscribed to a positive image of Mobutu as the key to Congolese unity, “by 1996, numerous anti-Mobutu interests had converged,” leading to an international condemnation of his exploitative regime. The international buffering that held him in place, particularly the excellent relations Mobutu held with the United States until the end of the Cold War, is seldom mentioned. The treatment of Mobutu has, in many ways, been one precedent for the “racially tinged myths” that separate corrupt capitalist practices of the Global North from those in Africa (De Grassi 2020).

In a now-familiar refrain, international reportage on the undoubtable corruption of the regime of Joseph Kabila, who held the DRC presidency from 2001 to 2019, and on the violent turbulence caused by his refusal to step down, has distracted Euro-American attention away from their nations’ complicity in the horrific conditions around cobalt mining in Katanga.¹⁷ The Congo is currently the world’s largest supplier of cobalt, which is used in multiple handheld devices, and well-known companies including Apple, Dell, and Tesla were involved in deals with the Kabila regime (*Africa Times* 2019). Unregulated mining practices are highly exploitative, with policies of child labor, twelve-hour days, and human rights abuses (Walt 2018).

The work of this study is not to provide a detailed critique of the violently oppressive regimes that have informed it. *Congo Style* focuses on core elements of the built productions and visual culture that these administrations introduced as a way of addressing architecture and design as a system, with a degree of autonomy. At the same time, I do not privilege the opinion of the “global public sphere” over that of the local, as is so often the norm (Van Beurden 2015a: 3). The pages that follow attempt to offer some insight into the power of Mobutu’s vision, which captured the Congolese popular imagination. As I pursue the imaginative strength of built material, I situate my analysis within a contemporary tradition of writing the Congo from the postcolonial city.

17. Kabila is son to Laurent-Désiré Kabila, who overthrew Mobutu in 1997 and held power until being assassinated in 2001. Felix Tshisekedi became president in 2019 after democratic elections were held.

AFFECTIVE PATTERNS AND DIVIDING LINES

I describe the way the Congo appears inside key architectural forms and exhibitions from the early colonial and postcolonial epochs, with the deeply troubled history outlined above in mind. My goal is not to bind sophisticated buildings to a loaded historical burden, thereby reducing them to tools of repressive systems: looking only for what these designs omit or reveal about the social conditions that birthed them can exhaust their possibilities (Felski 2011: 585). Rather, the analyses that follow seek to extrapolate recurring complications and slippages in the relationship between built materials and their surrounding city space. To understand how these sites are and are not complicit in supporting violent systems, I analyze their material functioning for their power as public entities, or structures in the public eye. I consider the potential enthrallment with and devotion to a fiction of what the Congo might be for the people who live with these inherited city forms.

Following V. Y. Mudimbe, I seek to delink my theoretical work from colonial systems of thought. My work exposes underlying master discourses of power while also, at the same time, experimenting with new theoretical grids. The discussions of chapter 1 use interdisciplinary work to undercut dominant knowledge systems of art history. This chapter makes a case for the necessity of working across academic disciplines to chip away at rigid categories, and it lays out the theoretical questions and lines of inquiry that underpin this study. With this clear framework established, the chapters that follow home in on the sites themselves.

Central themes of ornamentation, artificiality, and Congolese nature as resource are introduced in chapter 2. Belgian Art Nouveau was characterized by abundant embellishment based on organic principles. With the impression of nature being captured through copy, the aesthetic was one of frozen movement. In the case of *Hôtel Van Eetvelde* (1895) and the *Congo Pavilion* (1897), Art Nouveau appropriated depictions of the Congo and its people, bringing them into a world of artificial organics. Within these total environments of fake growth, racially based hierarchies prevailed. I discuss these total artworks in terms of their exclusionary project, privileging the bodies of their patrons (the urban elite).

New technologies of the railroad and iron introduced in the Art Nouveau environments of chapter 2 invented an exotic African haven of raw materials to be transformed and shaped by Belgian industrialization. In chapter 3, I describe how the total artwork concept and its dislocating work traveled to

King Leopold II's colony during its last throes. Analyses of the iron-based offshoots of Art Nouveau reveal that these structures were particularly well suited to the tasks of compartmentalization and racial segregation in the colonial settlement. In the actual place of the colony, the ABC Hotels framed the Congolese landscape. Intended as tools with which colonists could pursue their larger project of extraction—harvesting natural resources—they were initially dominating presences in the landscape. Where Belgian Art Nouveau attempted to create sculptural and pictorial representations of natural forces, the ABC Hotels were quickly surrounded by tropical growth. Today, as greenery has joined forces with heat and humidity, the current conditions of these early modernist buildings see them intrinsically enmeshed with their environment. The complete entanglement of these sites with their surrounds questions what is artificial and natural to the Congolese urban fabric.

As the Congo moved into the era of independence and Mobutu's Second Republic came to power, representations of the Congo were entangled with colonial modernism. Chapter 4 details the prominence of themes of artificiality and ornamentation in the performance of the rites of nationhood of post-independence Congo during the time of Authenticity. I draw attention to the government's notion of "authentic" traditions according to the urban culture it produced. Reclaimed traditional artworks and the work of post-independence modernist artists in Kinshasa were both expressly used as political agents within exhibitions and public sites in Kinshasa. Constructed amid the optimism, insecurities, and expediencies of post-independence Congo, artworks worked in tandem with architecture to present the public face of the new nation.

The towers and enclaves of chapter 5 present striking examples of potent nationalist symbols placed alongside one another. As shows of luxury cajoled witnesses and the oppressive rule made itself known through dominating scale and mass, totalitarian space is seen to take lessons of control from the total artworks of earlier eras and colonial modernism. With certain of Mobutu's representations of traditional Congolese tribal life echoing those of the colonial, the major modernist constructions of the post-independence era staged Congolese culture as a magnificent African ornament. In each site of this study, the Congo resists being simplified into a raw material that can be capitalized on. This is especially apparent in its mythic natural heritage.

Congo Style sees the motif of Congo as resource borrowed and reinvented across different traditions and administrations. The way it has manifested in built space and display environments reveals overlapping tendencies in

the spatial design of vastly different contexts. In their own ways, the sites of this book alienate individual human bodies, separating and obscuring privileged space from the mass of the city. The respective failures of each site to achieve the full promise of its design, whether it be animating unification or authoritative containment, are best viewed from the perspective of their urban surrounds.

CHAPTER 1

Behind Congo Style

Navigating Research

Ensembles do not play by themselves; they are situated somewhere; they rely upon the physicality of instruments and instrumentation for the players to address each other.

—AbdouMaliq Simone, *Improvised Lives*

A QUESTION OF INTERDISCIPLINARITY

This is a book about aesthetics and the Congo. I investigate architecture, interior design, and the artworks within them as ensembles, or “assemblages,” situated in a unique constellation (Bennett 2010: 34). In adopting a contemporary perspective on historical buildings, I acknowledge how design, in different cities, changes meaning over time according to the terms of its location. It is because this is a book that privileges locational and temporal context that textual representations of the said aesthetics are included in the chapters that follow.¹ In this chapter, I provide an overview of the scholarly landscape that preceded the main body of work that follows, highlighting the visibilities and invisibilities of an existing historiography of the modernist designs and artworks of the Congo.

My aim here is to provide some of the interdisciplinary issues at play in my approach to city forms. I include the background of how the situation of key sites in Kinshasa and Brussels influenced my thinking around them. In so doing, I make a case for a blended approach to analyzing architecture in the city at the same time as providing a more in-depth contextualization of the position this book occupies within publications on the Congo.

1. This writing method was developed from my practice in text pieces as a visual artist and has some affinity to Clifford Geertz's (1973) notion of thick description.

Each city has its own complexities and nuances. However, there is a marked quality to how the buildings, infrastructure, and exhibitions of postcolonial cities are initially read: in relation to their colonial foundations. *Congo Style* does not ignore relevant representations of the Congo by the colonial and postcolonial regimes. Nevertheless, I follow scholars such as Jean and John L. Comaroff (2011) and Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000) in ensuring that the Global North is not normalized. Neither is it the measure through which the Global South is judged (Edensor and Jayne 2012; Myers 2011; Parnell and Oldfield 2014; Robinson 2006). I am by no means proposing that Euro-American scholarship and publications should be discarded because of their dominance. Bodies of literature include research that is politically useful for progressive theories of decolonizing and spreading African points of view as well as that which propagates highly problematic politics centered on the Global North. This can take place within the same text. In the pages that follow, I lay out the terrain of literature on the topic and some of the implications of archives regarding the Congo because they effect whose voices are heard the loudest. Rather than only criticize the current situation, my aim is to propose a possible course of action to take.

I begin by outlining the historiography of Belgian Art Nouveau, according to how it refused to acknowledge the Congo's influence on this movement. While the fact that art history is Eurocentric comes as no surprise, I highlight the way Belgian Art Nouveau attempted to erase its colonial legacy for years, hiding it in plain sight. I then outline some of the categorizations in art history that have led to biased scholarship concerning both African art and the continent's past and present architecture. My next move is to describe writing concerning the first Congolese examples of self-representation in Kinshasa, alongside the ground conditions of traversing the city. I close with drawing in the greater contexts of modes of thinking materially through my subjective view of the Global South city as a visual artist located in Johannesburg.

ART HISTORY AND THE CONGO

Part of my rationale in pursuing a study that begins with Art Nouveau is the state of the existing literature that I encountered. Noticeable omissions in publications on Art Nouveau emphasize the need to, as Debora L. Silverman puts it, discuss the "elephant in the room" and "[put] the whip back in the

‘whiplash style’” (2011–13: vol. 18, 144 and 163). The first quotation refers to the ivory from Congolese elephants that the early colonial regime extracted. This was achieved to the point of threatening the species with extinction (Clerbois 2011). Silverman’s whip is the *chicotte* (what South Africans call a “sjambok”), one of the prominent weapons employed to terrorize Congolese subjects and forced laborers. Few have made the connection between the *chicotte* and the whiplash line, also known as the Belgian line. The distinctive curvature of the Belgian Art Nouveau line sets this branch of the movement apart from that of other nationalities (Schmutzler 1962: 30).

According to all but the most recent art history scholarship, the fact of the early Congo colony and Belgian Art Nouveau enabling each other has not been cause for speculation as to the implications of this interaction. This connection links one of the roots of European modernism to a violent and oppressive colonial regime (and presents the possibility for investigating other forms of early modernism and colonial involvement). I argue that such blind spots occur because of the path that Euro-American art history has taken over the course of the twentieth century.

Conventional overviews of the greater modernist project place Art Nouveau and its Belgian roots at the forefront, beginning with Nikolaus Pevsner’s *Pioneers of Modern Design*, first published in 1936. Numerous tomes on Art Nouveau exist and largely follow a set pattern: the movement is split into its different national branches, which are explained via stylistic specificities and their influences, prominent practitioners, and historical context.² In these publications, the sections dealing with Belgian Art Nouveau do not mention the large role of the colonial regime and its associates in funding major works or the use of Congolese raw materials in creating them (for some English-language examples, see Battersby 1967; Bouillon 1985; Duncan 1994; Fahr-Becker 2007; Greenhalgh 2000; Rheims 1966; Schmutzler 1962; Sterner 1982; Tschudi Madsen 1967; Waddell 1977; Wolf 2011).³ Exceptions within this body of scholarship are Stephen Escriitt (2000: 72–80) and Jeremy Howard (1996: 36–38). Both authors make brief reference to the patronage of the Congo Free State (CFS) administration and the way this led to the availability of Congolese raw materials. Against this trend, Klaus-Jürgen Sembach (2007: 42)

2. These national branches encompass France, Belgium, and Germany, primarily. The British Arts and Crafts movement is named as an influence. Czechoslovakia is occasionally mentioned, but Art Nouveau in Turkey, Japan, and Russia is generally not featured.

3. Paul Greenhalgh (2000: 9) does name the colonial regimes of Belgium and Holland an influence in one line, but he does not explore this point any further.

details King Leopold II's involvement in Art Nouveau and describes the monarch's colony as "unusual," "bold," and "profitable."

Specialized publications on the Belgian movement tend to follow the same approach. Across this literature, the involvement of the major Art Nouveau designers in the colonial exhibition of the 1897 Brussels International Exposition is discussed as historically important but only in terms of its innovative aesthetic approach, fueled by civic pride in Belgium. Discussions concerning Victor Horta's *Hôtel Van Eetvelde* (1898) state that the design was commissioned by the governor general of the CFS, but the primary concern is with Horta's stylistic contribution to Belgium's modernist legacy. Descriptions and analyses are highly enthusiastic and celebrate the mastery of crafting stone, iron, and wood that the designers achieved (see, e.g., Aubry and Vandebreenen 1996; Vandebreenen and Dierkens-Aubry 1991).

In general, art historians are not obligated to provide a political critique or to cast moral judgment on historical figures. However, there is a certain expectation in the canon to describe the social and historical context of artworks and movements. This is mostly achieved by providing information on individual artists. The volumes listed above key into Belgian Art Nouveau according to the symbolism of its materials and the ways they are crafted into organic sculptural features. Authors never fail to read evidence of the effect of the Industrial Revolution, new scientific discoveries, and European contact with the Orient on European Art Nouveau designers. Yet the Belgian relationship to colonial activity in the Congo is seldom mentioned, despite its designers' reliance on Congolese woods and ivory.⁴

The forced labor, loss of life, and exploitation of natural resources that came with the CFS was exposed in its time. In the early twentieth century, the protest campaign of the Congo Reform Association was effective in discrediting the regime internationally, as I discuss in the introduction. It was partly due to this activity that Belgium took over the colonial administration from King Leopold II. At this time, the state imposed a systematic propaganda program that rewrote the CFS as a heroic and daring philanthropic mission and

4. The inherent flaws in a system of research that excludes all but the most famous Euro-American men from the story of twentieth-century modernism continue to be the subject of revision, debate, and criticism in the field. In recent years, art historians have applied critical theory in race, feminist, queer, and postcolonial studies to challenge the established canon. I focus on the case of colonial Art Nouveau because I believe the extreme violence behind what was routinely omitted needs to be emphasized.

successfully skewed the scandal around King Leopold II in popular understanding (Roes 2010: 648; Vanthemsche 2006: 92). This version of the CFS matches the one told through Art Nouveau in the 1897 Congo Pavilion and is continued in the contemporary writing of art historians such as Klaus-Jürgen Sembach (2007), as discussed above. It is here that the timing of European Art Nouveau scholarship becomes important, especially in the way it corresponded to the historiography of colonial history.

Art Nouveau was a brief and flamboyant fashion that petered out in the first decade of the twentieth century.⁵ Once-popular total artworks went uncelebrated in exhibitions and were largely ignored in art historical scholarship for the greater part of the twentieth century. Belgium, its purported birthplace, was no different in its forgetting of the movement, and some of its influential buildings were destroyed.⁶ Stephan Tschudi Madsen's *The Sources of Art Nouveau* (first published in 1956) is considered the first comprehensive historical study of the European Art Nouveau movement (Schmutzler 1962: 279). The subsequent Art Nouveau revival emerged slowly, beginning in the 1960s. Belgian literature and retrospective showcases on the formerly undervalued movement largely came into full force in the 1980s. At this time in Belgium, mainstream education and popular thought still supported the idea that the CFS was a noble and philanthropic mission (Vanthemsche 2006: 97).

While Belgian historians, Jean Stengers foremost among them, had begun to collaborate with international colonial historians and expose the oppression imposed by the CFS regime (see, e.g., Stengers and Vansina 1985), the information had not yet filtered through to the general public or scholars of Art Nouveau. However, in the discipline of history, scholars had steadily unpacked different aspects of King Leopold II's regime from the 1970s, disproving the positive mythology around the cult of Leopold II (Roes 2010: 648; Vanthemsche 2006: 100–103). It was only when Adam Hochschild's sensationalist *King Leopold's Ghost* (1998) became an international bestseller that the CFS was, once again, seen as a humanitarian scandal. Nevertheless, attitudes in Belgium remain varied, and, as will

5. By mid-1905, what was understood as Art Nouveau were largely cheap, marketable products, kitschy knickknacks with curly ornaments that were a weak approximation of what were once total artworks (Tschudi Madsen 1967: 156; Sembach 2007: 37; Wolf 2011: 262). In Belgium, its main protagonists had either departed or moved on by 1905.

6. For example, Victor Horta's *Maison du Peuple*, built in 1899, was torn down in 1965.

be discussed in the chapters that follow, many subtle (and some far from subtle) colonial attitudes prevail in exhibition halls, art history books, and modernist designs themselves. My main point here is to underscore the long-standing lack of conversation between the academic disciplines of art history and history.

Art history's tendency to focus on archival information regarding artists and architects has led to a critical lacuna in this instance. This was aided by a prominent tendency of a strand of art historians to refer to previous works within their own field, rather than extensive sources from other disciplines. An excerpt from a highly positive review of a 2012 book on Victor Horta provides an example of this mode of thinking: "Michèle Goslar studies the origins of the commission, Horta's relations with the intended recipient of a residence or monument, the history of the design and the construction, backed with the plans and correspondence, and gives us a detailed analysis of the architectural innovations as well as of the décor, techniques, decorative motifs, and materials" (Jumeau-Lafond 2012). The same review favorably compares Goslar's scholarship to that of Debora L. Silverman:

When looking at this creative force and such a pure alliance of "decorative" form and structure, we can see how far removed they are from the sociopolitical analyses heard recently during a Parisian colloquium . . . and which . . . identified Van de Velde's "coup de fouet" [whiplash] forms in his productions as corresponding to the blows administered by the Belgian colonizers to the unfortunate Congolese people! . . . Reading Michèle Goslar's work is enough to soon do away with inept interpretations or manipulative instrumentalizations of this sort.

The reviewer's distaste for sociopolitical analysis is rooted in a belief that detailed visual analysis, based on the context of the artist's life, is justification enough for leaving out pivotal historical circumstances. I argue that given too narrow a focus, the history of art can take a long detour from the current social significance and, ultimately, continued relevance of the creative production itself. I do not seek to make moral judgments about the artists/architects or their art historians. My intention is to give some explanation as to how serious omissions continue to occur. Further issues that I find problematic stem from the categorization and subcategorization of the aesthetics of cultures that influenced Euro-American artists.

CATEGORIES OF CULTURE

The applied arts from previous European eras were indisputably an important influence on Art Nouveau (and therefore Euro-American modernism) and are named as such in mainstream art history, with, for example, art of the medieval period being linked to Belgian Art Nouveau. Influential too was the broad category of Oriental art. In particular, the arts of Japan are routinely cited as a foundational element contributing to the harmonious interiors of Art Nouveau, as well as a minimalism of form.⁷ But such discussions reflect a tendency among scholars to engage in generalization, taking “a fixed, more or less total geographical position towards a wide variety of social, linguistic, political, and historical realities” across broad areas of the globe, including India, Asia, and the Middle East (Said 1977: 50). Categories such as Moorish, Persian, Chinese, and Japanese homogenized large areas that had produced diverse material culture.⁸ Within these general areas and across vast time spans, individual artists or regional styles are seldom identified. In the majority of Art Nouveau books, focus stayed on European innovation. Contemporary Asian interpretations and adaptations of their antique cultures, and their responses to the Euro-American Art Nouveau movement, are not a feature.⁹

By rendering Oriental cultures homogeneous, scholars of Art Nouveau adhered to evolutionary and teleological theories of culture. In the mid-1800s, culture was considered a single evolutionary process and the basic, progressive movement of humanity (Clifford 1988: 92). This saw the European bourgeois Art Nouveau artist-designer judging other cultures from the apex of the fictional evolutionary ladder. As will be fully explicated in the following chapter, such attitudes automatically placed the highly inexact cat-

7. The opening up of Japanese trade with Europe in 1850 did a great deal to spread awareness of Japanese aesthetics, leading to a craze of Japonisme.

8. An iconic example of this structure of non-Western culture may be found in Owen Jones's *The Grammar of Ornament*, first published in 1856. In Jones (1997: 39), the chapter dedicated to “Egyptian Ornament” refers only to Ancient Egypt and makes no mention of the contemporary country and its people. This particular book, whose purpose was for designers to utilize the patterns provided, was popular among Belgian Art Nouveau architects. The idea of taking the aesthetics of colonial subjects understood as primitive, without considering the people who made them as equals was common.

9. Nozomi Naoi, Sabine Schenk, and Maureen de Vries (2015) allow for the possibility that some artworks by Japanese artist Takehisa Yumeji from the early 20th century are witty responses to European Art Nouveau.

egory of African, “Negro,” or “tribal” culture on the lowest rung.¹⁰ The arts of Africa, which were absent from art history relating to Belgian Art Nouveau until Silverman’s (2011–13) provocation, are also exoticized and stereotyped. However, the study of African art in Euro-American art history has a separate trajectory to that of European movements, which still struggle to lose prejudiced neocolonial perspectives within the canon.

During the early twentieth century, paternalistic attitudes prevailed, along with the assumption that African art had begun to degenerate after contact with modernity. For example, Marc Wallenda, who founded the Academy of Fine Arts in Kinshasa in 1957, insisted that Congolese artists confine themselves to traditional oeuvres (Mudimbe 1988: 34). The erroneous notion of precolonial culture as something static also split the art of Africa and the Congo into the work of discrete autonomous tribes. The styles of the material culture of the Pende, Mangbetu, and Kuba peoples (among others) were fixed into identities whose structures were considered primitive. Moreover, objects collected in the colonial period (c. 1880–1960) are incorrectly used to represent precolonial activity (Picton 1994, cited in Ogbechie 2011: 209). Categorizations within the canon of African art were, by and large, made according to what was available for analysis in Euro-American collections (Ogbechie 2011; Price 1989; Schildkrout and Keim 1998a).¹¹ The complex and intricately varied items from the area now understood as the Congo are pivotal to the canon of African art as Central Africa was a primary site of collecting in the “scramble” for African art of the first decades of the 1900s (Schildkrout and Keim 1998b).

Collectors on the ground in Africa did a great deal to shape the nature of the collections, which in turn dictated the course art history would take. For example, when Georg Schweinfurth traveled into the region of the Mangbetu in 1869–70, he considered them more advanced than other local peoples because of their range of well-crafted objects. Decades later, Emil Torday declared that the elaborate cloths of the Kuba he encountered between 1907 and 1909 marked them as superior. The reputation of these people has been

10. This is also evident in *The Grammar of Ornament* in the first chapter, “The Ornament of Savage Tribes,” where the skin tattoos of Australian and New Zealand First Nations peoples have been traced (Jones 1997: 18–25).

11. This tendency is evident in exhibitions ranging from the time of Alfred Barr (1930s) to that of William Rubin (1980s) at New York’s Museum of Modern Art. In such shows, freestanding wooden figurines and masks (separated from any accoutrements they once had) were the most popular items.

set ever since to the benefit of the museums and private collections featuring Mangbetu objects, as opposed to the contemporary descendants of the original makers.

The highly disproportionate position of Euro-American collectors on the ground in Africa vis-à-vis their suppliers (who were not entirely without a subversive agency) led to a wide variety of misunderstandings regarding what was being purchased. Diary entries by Leo Frobenius and Ludwig Wolf are filled with deep suspicions of being duped into purchasing an inauthentic object (Fabian 2000: 187–97), revealing a fundamental misunderstanding about the objects themselves. Rather than being objects that were originally made for the artists' own authentic cultures, the alleged fakes were produced or traded by adaptable artists and canny businessmen who did their utmost to supply the product that their powerful customers required.

The first attempt to classify Congolese art systematically was made in 1938 by F. M. Olbrechts and A. Maesen, to coincide with a major exhibition in Antwerp (Biebuyck 1985: 19; Couttenier 2005: 134). The period from approximately the late 1930s onward saw a plethora of exhibitions of the Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA) in Tervuren taking place in various European and American centers, which generated accompanying catalogs (the RMCA was known as the Museum of the Belgian Congo until Congolese independence in 1960 and is now also known as the AfricaMuseum). These exhibition catalogs stocked academic libraries across Euro-America. Catalogues by the Belgian art historian Joseph-Aurélien Cornet (the adjunct director of the post-independence national Congolese museum) served as explanatory guides to Congolese culture within the Congo itself (Van Beurden 2015a: 203, 241–43). With the onset of independence, the postcolonial regime under Mobutu Sese Seko commissioned Cornet's exhibition catalog for *Art from Zaïre* (1975). This book, and Cornet's earlier, more comprehensive, *Art of Africa* (1971) both follow the pattern of Euro-American categorization. In Mobutu's post-independence publications, the authoritative categorizations of Euro-America are assigned as a means of claiming culture back for the nation.

In a similar move, the prominent post-independence group of modernist artists in Kinshasa documented their own history according to the terms of the conventional art history they were taught under colonial education. The only texts available on the self-proclaimed Avant-gardists are those written by Congolese art historians. Unlike Cornet's tomes, which are present in most Euro-American libraries, these slim paperback volumes are not easy to locate,

even in Kinshasa. Works by Célestin Badi-Banga Né Mwine (1977), Joseph Ibongo (2009), and Bamba Ndombasi Kufimba (2010, 2014) are the only written testament to the work of pro-Mobutu visual artists in Kinshasa. The glossy exhibition catalog for *Beauté Congo* (2015), curated by André Magnin, presents a compendium of modern and contemporary Congolese art, but the Avant-gardists, who are not represented in any mainstream Euro-American collections, are excluded (I return to this topic in chapter 4). Although biased patterns of art history are slowly changing and more well-rounded scholarship has steadily been emerging, Euro-American dominance of the global cultural market continues to hold sway over Congolese art history.

For the greater part of the twentieth century, European styles were judged as such: in terms of broad, intercontinental movements, and in relation to one another in a linear progression. Art Nouveau was recognized as crossing art and applied arts, and the oeuvre of Horta and his colleagues was seen as a total artwork, incorporating furniture, utensils, and architecture. When attempting to garner information about the art of the Congo prior to the contemporary period, the researcher is faced with a scattered and unsatisfying array of scholarship. According to the globally used Dewey decimal classification system, African art is split into discreet categories of sculpture (730s), painting (750), printmaking (760), and graphic/decorative arts (740s). These imposed distinctions are inappropriate for objects that often straddle categories, especially in instances where the differences between craft and fine art, or curio and art object, were not of immediate concern to the maker. The category of galleries, museums, and private collections (708) provides the perspective of curators, dealers, and collectors who seek to advertise their art in the best light and often commission art historical texts to provide further information for customers and viewers.

Within the worldwide library system and the field of art, the categories of traditional art and architecture bring with them a legacy of racially charged essentialism. I continue to use the term *traditional* to refer to patterns of art and design that have been adapted for some time within communities that recognize them as having some origin with their cultural predecessors. Although I acknowledge that such categorizations have been used as a mechanism of control over subject populations, I believe that use of the term does not foreclose “tradition” as being constantly reinvented and influenced by a variety of different cultures, as explicated by Z. S. Strother (1998).

Traditional artworks traveled to Euro-America and, in changing ownership, were cataloged and documented according to the standards and aes-

thetics of their institutions and private owners. In comparison, uncollectible traditional architecture is not widely represented in private collections and modern art galleries, or their accompanying literature. Outside of sculptures and ornate features separated from their architecture to become stand-alone exhibits, the buildings of groups of peoples, erroneously presented as geographically fixed and autonomous cultures, were the content of ethnographic museum dioramas and displays. Whereas buildings like Horta's Hôtel Van Eetvelde (1898) are considered suitable material for analysis in terms of sophisticated art by a master architect, African cultures have been given very different treatment.

Descriptions and imagery of Congolese constructions first came to Europe with the reports of explorers, dating back to early Portuguese contact with the Kongo kingdom in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In the late nineteenth century, the explorer-collector Schweinfurth was effusive about the beauty of the woven royal court of the Mangbetu, decorated with wooden poles, which he also illustrated (Keim 1998). This theme of gauging a people's evolutionary status according to their material culture continued into architectural studies. Hermann Frobenius (the father of Leo, mentioned above) set up a detailed analysis of building types in Africa as an ancient and static system. His 1894 book on the topic summarized "formal, structural and aesthetic elements, which he then correlated with ethnic and linguistic categories" such as "Bantu" and "Sudan" types (Osayimwese 2013: 16).

In late nineteenth-century Belgium, the architecture of Congolese "tribes" was sometimes featured in colonial propaganda, such as the periodical *Le Congo illustré* (Illustrated Congo), which ran from 1891 to 1895.¹² Here, Congolese cultures were portrayed as ethnographic curiosities. Alongside such reports, articles promoted modernizing elements installed for colonial commerce and advertised the regular "progress" being made on the lethal and costly installation of the railway system. With the advent of photography, the mixed bag of Euro-Americans in the Congo colony (including military men, missionaries, and researchers) captured images of African tribes and their surrounds, framing them as exotic for audiences back home. For example, an issue of *Panorama du Congo* (Le Touring Club, 1912: 13) includes photographs of women standing in front of a structure made of wooden poles. The unnamed women are topless, attired in beaded skirts that reveal intricate scar-

12. After this it became *Le Mouvement géographique* (Geographic movement). Both periodicals were edited by Alphonse-Jules Wauters.

ification on their bellies, and posed in ways that would be considered provocative by their audience. The captions beneath read, “A Mayumbe Beauty” and “Mayumbe Native,” emphasizing that the whole image—objectified women and their rustic built surrounds—presents “convincing visual signs of difference” (Mirzoeff 1998: 168).

The theme of impermanent Congolese structures pitted against concrete colonial modernism is one I will return to and tease out across the pages that follow. In so doing, I locate a major fiction of modernism in the popular publications and scholarship outlined above. If existing architectural traditions are presented as entirely separate from, and vastly inferior to, those of Euro-American cultures, their positive aspects are also dismissed. The potential practical suitability of flexible building traditions to the local environment is not recognized, and their intricate language of societal function loses potency. I am not suggesting that a return to traditional architectures is desired by contemporary city dwellers (it resoundingly is not). My point is that present-day Congolese city forms continue to grapple with the societal assumptions of their colonial inheritance, assumptions that may also be located in early colonial publications.

INSIDE AND OUTSIDE KINSHASA

Trésor Lumfuankenda Bungiena (2017: 111) addresses the issue of the dominance of Euro-American perceptions in an understanding of Kinshasa. He stresses that “the [Euro-American] tradition of aesthetic values” need not dictate understandings of modernism in Kinshasa (that is, modernism in Kinshasa can and should be read as Congolese). I allow for the possibility that the city itself (as a multifaceted and agentic container) further has a say in how the respective modernisms of each site, over time, can take on their own aesthetic values. Moreover, in the case of the major African metropolis of Kinshasa, even a straightforward attempt to appraise its constructions in terms of the modes and motivations of Euro-American modernism is difficult because of the scarce amount of information on Congolese architects and designers.

Archives covering the Congo, most prominently those located in the country itself, are lacking. In Kinshasa, the situation was exasperated by a series of lootings in 1991 and 1993, driven by the growing desperation of Mobutu’s last years in office. The National Archives of the Congo, as well as those of the National Radio and Television Corporation and the state

museum, were severely depleted. These gaps extend to the archives of Congolese practitioners, whose personal and business archives are largely missing or as yet unlocated. This leaves commentary largely to Eurocentric colonial archives, the largest of which are in Belgium at the RMCA (AfricaMuseum) in Tervuren.

In my experience, the RMCA archives contain more information on twentieth-century Congo than those in the former colony itself. For example, comprehensive editions of newspapers and periodicals from the early Mobutu era (such as *Salongo*, *Elima*, and *Zaire*), which are not available at the National Archives of the Congo, are present and accessible at the RMCA, alongside various colonial reports on city infrastructure and demographics from different periods. Scholars must rely on the colonial archive to access primary information on even the post-independence era in Kinshasa. The trajectory of Congolese history has led to a situation whereby the “messy space” of the colonial archive, with all its inherent inconsistencies and prejudices, is the only one readily available to think with critically (Stoler 2009: 249).

The academic study of buildings in Kinshasa after 1960 is difficult because of scattered archives, especially those pertaining to Congolese architects (Lagae 2013: 13; Lumfuankenda Bungiena 2017: 105). The information that exists largely pertains to the European designers, overshadowing those Kinshasa architects with whom they partnered (after Mobutu made local involvement a requirement in 1973).¹³ However, a mix of writers have authored city guidebooks, with more general audiences in mind.

Two collaborative texts created by Belgian architectural historians Marc Gemoets, Johan Lagae, and Bernard Toulrier (2011; Toulrier, Lagae, and Gemoets 2010) provide as much data as possible about notable buildings. Jacques Fumunzanza Muketa's *Kinshasa: D'un quartier à l'autre* (From one neighborhood to another, 2008) enthusiastically maps Kinshasa according to its different suburbs and their histories. The content is partially indebted to a historical guide by Antoine Kiobe Lumenganeso, *Kinshasa: Genèse et sites historiques* (Genesis and historical sites, 1995), which attempts to establish a history for the city that precedes the colonial. While the first three texts named here were published in France and may be purchased online, Lumenganeso's more critical perspective was produced in Kinshasa and is only available in

13. Among the rare exceptions: Franco-Tunisian architect Olivier-Clément Cacoub published a showpiece book of images of his edifices in Africa (1974). The first director of the Kinshasa architecture academy, Santo Ortolani, produced two small books of his designs and theories in 1975 and 1977.

Kinshasa libraries.¹⁴ None of these texts are easy to obtain by the average citizen in Kinshasa.

All the above publications document Kinshasa's landmarks across historical periods, providing different versions of what Lagae (2004: 174) has proposed as a "shared heritage." Lumfuankenda Bungiena (2017: 111) believes there is an urgent need for Kinshasans to recognize buildings in the city as a part of Congolese heritage, sometimes with remarkable characteristics. *Congo Style* seeks to add an additional layer to the perception of city heritage as Congolese. I propose that a potential way to consider architecture as emplaced—belonging to its surrounds and, with this, historical underpinnings—is to allow the city itself to contribute to our understanding of sites. As outlined in the introduction, this approach follows the work of urban theorists such as Achille Mbembe and Sarah Nuttall (2008), AbdouMaliqu Simone (2019), and Ato Quayson (2014).

Drawing on the notion of the African city as a field for the creation of theory, my methods of research attempt to take on the logic of cities like Kinshasa, whose navigation requires constant reinvention and circumventions. The city itself is also a form of guide. It is the kind of guide that does not recognize more ordered environments as normative. Even when it presents obstacles, it informs the visitor of the state of things. In experiencing Kinshasa's more uncooperative aspects, I was forced to take a step back and consider my approach more creatively precisely in those instances when evidence was withheld and attempts at access frustrated.

Long stretches of being stuck in traffic, waiting, and negotiating were also opportunities to clarify my project. Because I am and was obviously an outsider in a city not accustomed to tourism, I had to justify my reasons for wanting access to almost all sites of interest. My assertion is that one thinks differently about a construction after being close enough to touch and smell it and (as was often the case) watch shadows move across its street life during the long period of being granted permission to enter. Unlike popular tourist destinations, where long queues end in access (and also serve as advertisements for passersby), sites in Kinshasa often need to be returned to more than once before access is granted. In my research conducted from 2014 to 2016, visiting local archives and libraries proved the extent to which rumors

14. Local publications from the Mobutu era, such as Kolonga Molei's *Kinshasa, ce village d'hier* (This village of yesterday, 1979), serve as uncritical vehicles for promoting Mobutu's rule.

of pillaging—even tales of important photographs and documents being used as cigarette papers—were true. My archival research in Kinshasa was characterized by empty and barely stocked folders. Memorably, my introduction to the archives at the national museum involved going through the collection cards and having each missing item pointed out to me. At its most recalcitrant and unpredictable, a city or a site can reroute the course of an argument and question foregone assumptions.

In my view, a close contextual analysis of architecture (including its artworks and interior design) does not look only at the intentions of the initial designers and city planners. It also addresses the way an entire site is integrated with and relates to its urban space. I do not eschew consulting those archives or plans of architects that might be available, and I seek them out wherever possible. Nevertheless, my mandate is to address the contemporary meanings of key sites in relation to their historical context.

While I do not celebrate them, the invisibilities of the Congolese archive forced me to seriously consider how much the material situation of sites in the city could inform me of their meaning. The process of securing and conducting meetings with a range of informants became as important to me as the content and opinions they supplied. Reading off this social fabric, in conjunction with other forms of information, enriches an understanding of the public lives of sites and artworks. As much as broad, establishing information is important, so too is detail. A great deal of waiting allowed for unexpected glimpses into the topic at hand. My fragmented experience of ephemera such as a textured concrete wall, a personal postcard underneath a pile of registered archival prints, or an outlandish logo on a hotel coaster stick to this book as much as its architecture and exhibitions.¹⁵

I believe that the process of encountering information, including the conditions around visiting archives and conducting interviews, has great effect on the researcher's opinion on the subject matter. The stories, unsubstantiated rumors, and sensory impressions, together with guidebooks and academic studies around sites in the city, are part of what makes and remakes these sites' meaning and value. *Congo Style* explores the extent to which this perceived network of informal and formal factors informs my individual research trajectory and theoretical positionality.

15. I deal extensively with these and other ephemera from the field, or marginalia, in the artist book *The Remaindering* (2022).

READING, WRITING, AND MAKING IMAGES

The multidisciplinary and materially orientated approach I put forward reflects my disciplinary and personal history. I am a practicing visual artist, and this study began as a series of artworks, from 2009, when I was living and working in Brussels. Coming from South Africa, where public representations of apartheid and colonial leaders are highly contested, I found the presence of King Leopold II in public statues and monuments unnervingly problematic. With some knowledge of the red rubber regime (largely Adam Hochschild's 1998 version at this early stage), I tried to locate the physical presence of the CFS in the visible cityscape through less obvious images. What I found was Art Nouveau.

On realizing that the timing of Brussels's distinctive design phenomenon coincided with King Leopold II's colony, I investigated further to discover the points of convergence and collusion between them. I began to systematically visit Art Nouveau sites, which I had started to see as unusual markers of the early colonial era. Its sinuous forms struck me as being somewhat sinister, a potential caricature of claiming space with thrusting and grasping lines.¹⁶

The methodology I follow in this theoretical study has not greatly deviated from my approach to the production of my research-based creative practice. I therefore identify my research as "personally situated, interdisciplinary and diverse" (Barrett 2010: 2). Like Michel de Certeau (1984: 99) and contemporary artist Francis Aljys (with his Mexico City-based *Seven Walks* [2005]), among others, I view walking in the city as an important way of gaining insight into a specific urban topic. While my experience of the blockages and informal solutions to research in Kinshasa greatly influenced how I then revisited Art Nouveau in Brussels, I would like to emphasize that my experience of these two vastly different socioeconomic environments was highly idiosyncratic.¹⁷

The libraries and archives of the RMCA at Tervuren are disorientating. A sense of dislocation begins with the lengthy and jerky tram journey (if

16. I am not alone in this. Art Nouveau has often been used in sci-fi imagery, to achieve unsettling effects. The most prominent example is H. R. Giger's work, popularized in the sets of Ridley Scott's *Alien* movie franchise (which released feature films in 1979, 1986, 1992, and 1997).

17. My perception of the African metropolis is further informed by my place of residence. I have lived in Johannesburg's inner city since 2012, and my perceptions of both Belgium and the Congo are seen through this lens.

taking public transport) that separates the museum from the rhythms of the main urban center. This situation was enhanced when, during rebuilding, I had to wade through dense layers of mud to get in and out (a phenomenon normally associated with Kinshasa streets during the rainy season). Further, I encountered some of the Art Nouveau pieces of my study in highly unorthodox positions. Georges Hobé's wooden structure from the 1897 Congo Pavilion, which once displayed Congolese export products, was recast as an outdoor sculpture (figure 5). This was sometimes decorated with fairy lights. In the storerooms of the science section of the museum, I encountered a large Henry Van de Velde table, another recognizable relic from the 1897 Congo Pavilion. This historic and valuable piece was in the process of being permanently imprinted with the weight of a humming cocktail fridge and a large, heavy, concrete cupid sculpture.¹⁸ I do not mention this example as an amusing anecdote. Many arguments against the return of museum objects to their African country of origin hinge on the assumption that local museums are unable to adequately conserve and protect their heritage (discussed in chapter 4).

I went to Kinshasa with the intention of locating a counternarrative to my version of the Art Nouveau story. I found not only a rich seam of fantastical, futuristic imagery in Mobutu-era constructions, but also versions of Art Nouveau in what were formerly known as the *Hotels Alimentation du Bas-Congo* (Lower Congo Foods Hotels, the ABC Hotels). It is now impossible for me to see the total artworks of Brussels without picturing the fragile former Hotel ABC building in Kinshasa, which overlooks a logging site on the banks of the legendary Congo River. The connection to the indigenous timber that was sent to Belgium to furnish extravagant Art Nouveau interiors is one I keep returning to. With this connection in mind, gaining access to buildings like *Maison Horta* and *Hôtel Van Eetvelde* in Brussels convinced me of the material seductions that Art Nouveau total artworks are capable of (which photographs do not adequately convey). At the same time, the strangely suspended state of official heritage sites, done up in an imitation of a moment in their past, does a great deal to enhance the sense of artificiality that pervades Art Nouveau.

What appeared to me as random sets of special rules that applied to visitors in different Kinshasa sites—where to stand, when to sit, how long to wait,

18. All of the above encounters all took place during my periods of research in Brussels from 2013 to 2016.



Fig. 5. A wooden structure by Georges Hobé from the 1897 Congo Pavilion, on the grounds of the Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA) at Tervuren, 2013
(Photograph © Ruth Sacks.)

whom to speak to—presented a Kafkaesque picture of arbitrary bureaucracy to my untrained eye. However, this was matched by some of the procedures I experienced in different Brussels archives. I had to go through very long waiting periods (sometimes in the snow), despite setting prearranged appointments. Further, the varied modes of protocol and daily forms to complete across different institutions seemed impractical for all concerned.

In both Kinshasa and Brussels, issues around entry into key sites and ownership of images, as well as the right to photograph, were fraught. Art Nouveau buildings in Brussels (at the time of my research) were protected both by the estates of their designers and by local municipalities.¹⁹ In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), photography of public spaces was forbidden by law due to potential military threat, and official certification had

19. The copyright on using Victor Horta's imagery was only lifted in recent years as sufficient time had passed since his death. In 2023 (the year of this book's publication), the city of Brussels is celebrating its self-proclaimed role as "the capital of Art Nouveau" as a tourist attraction. The various tours on offer mostly require an entry fee, which effects who is able to access this heritage.

to be obtained for negotiations to begin at different sites. In both countries, a fine was levied if the photographer was caught breaking these rules.

BETWEEN LABELS AND ARCHIVES

This book is, in part, a response to all the regulations and categories outlined above. As I consider processes of waiting and negotiating, I also deliberately attempt to blur some of the categories that were designed to situate African art and architecture in a lesser-than position. Had I only been interested in the formal category of Art Nouveau studies, my postcolonial critique would end with examples of the style in the Congo. But this would keep the primary focus on colonial architecture, without fully addressing the complexly woven pattern of early modernism with a multitude of traditions, not limited to those of the Global North. It would also leave out what the African city can tell of the life of modernist sites: how they are adapted, what importance they hold for locals, and how they have started to age (as much as how they speak back to their origins).

Amid the fragmented and disrupted history of modernisms in Kinshasa, my intention is to follow a trail that meanders and sometimes requires rerouting, despite the obstacles in the way. This not only echoes the intricate paths of dense city space, but also highlights the multiplicity of modernisms at play. Part of my inhabitation of the space between categories here involves moving across the boundaries of the early colonial and post-independence eras. This has allowed me to address Congolese self-representation as a part—rather than a result—of the course of modernism.

In addressing exhibitions alongside architecture, I attempt to disrupt their separation into categories of discipline, ethnicity, and medium. This entails writing between the lines of the traditional labels that have been placed there in the past. In so doing, I have aimed to look at objects and buildings as much as the labels. The fact of things themselves (their condition, material makeup, and message) can sometimes point to contradictions in more official channels. Plastic form and architectural space do not affect viewers via the eyes alone and, accordingly, are more evocative. Their curation within cities and collections has a great deal of influence on the social lives the sites and objects subsequently lead. As I will unfold in the pages that follow, this is also the case for the biased labels, including publications and established discourse, which hold a questionable authority.

PART I

Style Congo

CHAPTER 2

Looking for the Congo in Style Congo

Art Nouveau and the African Colony

No colonial system draws its justification from the fact that the territories it dominates are culturally non-existent.

—Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

BRUSSELS, THE CAPITAL OF ART NOUVEAU!

As seen in the common claim of tourist websites and guidebooks (with an echo of Walter Benjamin), Brussels holds its Art Nouveau heritage with pride.¹ Organizations like Atelier de recherche et d'action urbaines (ARAU, Workshop for Urban Action and Research) promote Art Nouveau tours with the not unsubstantiated claim that the city is the international movement's birthplace.² The City of Brussels has declared 2023 the Year of Art Nouveau, promoting a series of exhibitions, tours, and discussions to take place throughout the year (Brussels n.d.). This celebration of Art Nouveau heritage is to commemorate that 130 years have passed since Victor Horta built Tassel House (1893), understood as Brussels' first Art Nouveau total artwork that set off the movement. At the time of this book's publication, the Belgian capital continues to be animated by the style.

1. In *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin (1999: 6–18) looked back to the built remains of Paris from a time when it was “the capital of the nineteenth century.” The resonance of epochs that permeates *Arcades* echoes across this study. The refrain of Brussels as the capital of Art Nouveau has been taken up by the city's tourism promotion organization Visitbrussels.be for the Year of Art Nouveau campaign (Visit Brussels, n.d.).

2. Prominent Art Nouveau scholars such as Robert Schmutzler (1962: 125) and Stephan Tschudi Madsen (1967: 156) also see Brussels and Belgium as the foundation of high Art Nouveau.

Exposed iron tendrils of unfurling sinusoidal lines, particularly on curved stone walls and monuments, mark certain edifices as belonging to the Art Nouveau epoch. References to its distinctive asymmetrical forms are evident across the city: in the details of central tram stations, park signs, and the architectural ornaments on private homes from the early twentieth century. Among the hundreds of buildings in the style are popular museums such as the Victor Horta Museum, designed by the eponymous architect in his Art Nouveau phase (ARAU, n.d.). While Brussels openly embraces this distinctive national design, it takes little public account of the colonial underpinnings of this cultural heritage. Beneath the tourist facade, the city is also inundated with the Congo.

The presence of the former colony, although less explicit, is far more pervasive. King Leopold II reshaped the Brussels city center into its contemporary form with money from extractive practices in what was then his personal fiefdom. He also erected prominent city monuments such as Jubilee Park, the Palace of Justice, and the facade of the Royal Palace of Brussels. These are immediately identifiable as the financial rewards of the monarch's inroads into the Congo because he funded them personally with his share of the profits from the Congo Free State (CFS). Other examples are less clearly labeled. If we stay with tourism and tours, one of Belgium's major attractions is a chocolate industry of world renown. The fame of international brands such as Neuhaus and Côte d'Or is founded on the extensive supply of cocoa beans in the Congo.³ The chocolate trade is only one example of a Belgian industry whose growth spurt of experimentation and specialization of a national product was reliant on cheap raw materials siphoned from the colony. Art Nouveau, too, fits this category. In addition to the luxurious Congolese woods and ivory ornaments that define the interiors of Belgian Art Nouveau, a direct trail of money from colonial industry leads to Art Nouveau heritage sites.

The CFS officially existed from 1885 to 1908, effectively stretching from the formative years of Art Nouveau in Belgium to its decline in popularity. The high period of Art Nouveau in Belgium (approximately 1890–1900) precedes the vilification of King Leopold II's colonial endeavors in the international Euro-American community. As imperial inroads in the Congo were described to Belgians as a progressive and civilizing mission, modish Art

3. Although the name Côte d'Or refers to the Ivory Coast, the initial supplier of cocoa beans, the Congo took over as the source, leading to a boom in the chocolate trade that continues to this day.

Nouveau frames were employed to advertise the enterprise, in direct and indirect ways. At the surface, well-known examples of Belgian Art Nouveau on tourist routes present no visible representations of Congolese culture. I therefore consider examples with direct links to the former colony in my task of looking for the Congo in Belgian Art Nouveau, in order to take a wider view of the design movement. The buildings and exhibitions of this chapter present the framework for the modernist teleologies of Art Nouveau offshoots in the Congo, to be discussed in chapter 3.

I begin with a brief outline of Belgian Art Nouveau that underlines its major funding sources. This is followed by a study of Victor Horta's *Hôtel Van Eetvelde* (1898), which was the private home and office of the chief administrator of the CFS, Edmond Van Eetvelde. The foundational exhibition of what is today the Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA) at Tervuren, the 1897 Congo Pavilion, is then introduced. Featuring the work of major Art Nouveau designers, the showcase was, for many visitors, their first exposure to both the king's colony and the new avant-garde design style. This would later garner Belgian Art Nouveau the nickname *Style Congo*, a belated addition to the long list of (often derogatory) names given to the international movement.⁴ From revisiting this exhibition, with a particular interest in its colonial modernism, I then discuss the influence of Congolese art on Belgian Art Nouveau. The chapter closes with a discussion of the legacy of Art Nouveau, in the Congo as much as elsewhere.

The physical remains of the Art Nouveau Congo Pavilion today are fragments of structures, furniture, and vitrines. Its exhibits are scattered across the stores and showrooms of the RMCA and other museums, as well as in private collections. Not all of *Hôtel Van Eetvelde's* furnishings are still in place. As my emphasis is on the power of the total artwork and immersive experience, I therefore attempt to re-create what these sites were like in their heyday. My task is to ascertain what kind of Congo is portrayed in examples of immersive and fantastical design that blossomed with the CFS. As much as I seek to ascertain the (always uncertain) influence that Congolese culture had on *Style Congo*, and therefore on twentieth-century modernist design, I also aim to understand what Belgian designers said about the Congo, both consciously and unconsciously.

4. Other names included eel style, noodle style, yachting style, and more. The use of the term "*Style Congo*" was first documented in 1903 by Hippolyte Fierens-Gevaert (Luwel and Bruneel-Hye de Crom 1967: 60).

BIRTHED IN BELGIUM

Art Nouveau ushered in a new, mechanized age for Belgium. Horta, Henry Van de Velde, Paul Hankar, and Gustave Serrurier-Bovy grappled for a suitable aesthetic for a time of rapid industrialization that promised future wonders. This led to representations of movement in ornamentation and a focus on new technological building techniques with iron and glass. It is the latter that was to carry the spirit of the total artwork into twentieth-century Belgian colonial projects. Fin de siècle Art Nouveau buildings, designs, and interiors carried deep nostalgia for a connection to nature (as an imagined loss) and a romantic yearning for times past. This was developed by each designer through their individual studies of nature. A fascination with the organic was coupled with an attempt to harness new technologies. Caught on the cusp between two eras and never part of either, the movement occupied a tenuous position between high-minded craft and commercialized art.

Horta and his colleagues expressed conflicting pulls between a mechanized future and a romantic past, through immersive total design. Entire buildings and their interiors were set up according to their own unique aesthetic logic. The designers integrated ornament into structural form, rather than superimposing it as an afterthought. Harmonious environments wrapped social activity in secluded worlds of organic shapes and structures. These were encased with what were then ultramodern materials (iron and glass) to make a total artwork. As such, each building was bound by a unifying aesthetic and presented a manifesto for melding together high art (primarily painting and sculpture) and the applied arts (furniture, furnishings, architecture). The concept of the Gesamtkunstwerk was thus proposed as a respite from the fragmented nature of modern living prompted by the Industrial Revolution.

The total artwork was a feature of the Art Nouveau movement at large, but it took on a distinctive political aesthetic in Belgium. In a troubled young country, in need of a unifying identity, the Gesamtkunstwerk was a way of setting up harmonious space where the condition of being Belgian could be considered. Its primary designers strove to create buildings and environments that could represent the country and its zeitgeist. Architecture and ornamentation often incorporated regional techniques, motifs, and materials to claim preindustrial heritage. At the same time, King Leopold II's regime was trying to bind Belgian identity to its colony and encouraged artists and designers to utilize the Congo's natural resources. The fact that Art Nouveau

was an organic style of abstracted vegetal form is complicated by the specter of colonial inroads into the lush profusion of new nature that was the Congo (Silverman 2011–13: vols. 18 and 19).

With the building understood in terms of a “living machine” (Horta, qtd. in Aubry and Vandebreden 1996: 42), the total artwork took the logic of the plant into man-made structures in an early and highly ornate example of form follows function. This innovation, which also sought to flatten hierarchies of high art over craft, set forth the ripples that would lead to waves in twentieth-century modernist design, influencing architects Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright, among many more. At its core, an Art Nouveau object or entire building contained the basic elements of its built environment. Its ornamentation, derived from nature forms, intentionally spoke back to the object’s purpose. Through this combination, an expressive form of primitivism formed one of modernism’s roots.

Art Nouveau’s primitivism extends beyond today’s understanding of that word. Its Belgian branch, particularly Van de Velde’s oeuvre, has been named as such because of what are understood as its primal urges, expressed through nature-inspired forms. Robert Goldwater ([1938] 1986: 270) pinpoints Belgian Art Nouveau as among the first modern primitivist movements. He underlines how its forms derive from the lowest kinds of life as a deliberate move to counteract the overrefinement of prevailing styles of the time. In locating the essential qualities of natural growth (the bud and the stem, the anemone) and natural phenomena (storms, tidal pulls, wind), Art Nouveau organicism was defined as primitivist, even before the movement’s fascination with exotic cultures was broached. Part of the Art Nouveau drive against refinement was its pervasive reference to the ancient arts of what was then known as Oriental culture.⁵ The art of other peoples was drawn on as a way of revitalizing nineteenth-century European styles, as was, too, centuries-old Gothic architecture. According to the terms of Art Nouveau reference, then, Asian and Arabic cultures with strong contemporary traditions were equated with the European past. This flattening of cultural time set up a dislocated, timeless presence within each total environment, adding to the sense of escape into fantasy. The same treatment was applied to the Belgian peasantry.

In the enclosures, arcades, public halls, and private mansions of Belgian Art Nouveau, time is made to stand still. Striving to be of its time, the move-

5. This was a melding of the art of a multitude of countries and regions, among them Japan, China, Turkey, and the Middle East.

ment rendered non-Western cultures and a romanticized version of the European past timeless. This strand of primitivism in Belgian Art Nouveau lay in reanimating an idea of the other—be it nature, the Orient, or a Flemish peasant—as the furnishings for immersive total artworks. This was perceived as progressive for the time.

Adding to the sense of an avant-garde movement, Belgian Art Nouveau designers were associated with revolutionary socialist organizations that supported the working class in a time of extreme labor unrest. Serrurier-Bovy and Van de Velde merged visions of better working conditions with pre-industrial techniques and materials. Serrurier-Bovy embraced a romanticized idea of the artisan and accordingly developed an aesthetic of honest craftsmanship (Watelet 1970). Van de Velde, especially when under the thrall of British designer William Morris, also wrote about an idealized perception of the simple worker, making heavy reference to traditional regional Flemish architecture (Sembach 1989; Sembach and Schulte 1992). Van de Velde built the rustic Villa Bloemenwerf (1895) for his family so as to avoid living in the amoral surroundings of the industrialized city (Bouillon 1985: 85). Despite the evident idealism of these designers, their work was never disseminated for the benefit of the working class. Serrurier-Bovy's model for workers' housing (*cabinet de travail*) existed only as an installation in the 1902 World's Fair in Turin. Van de Velde's handcrafted furniture and homes were for the exclusive use of wealthy patrons.

Although associated with socialist ideals, Belgian Art Nouveau fed off the upper middle class. Writing in the 1920s, Walter Benjamin (1999: 36) was quick to identify Art Nouveau as bourgeois, its materialistic phantasmagoria generating a language of rampant individualism. Specifically referring to the work of Van de Velde, he describes contrived cocoons of undiluted fantasy that blocked out harsh realities of modern urban life for wealthy bourgeois clients. While the designers intended laypeople to be able to understand their work, it was seldom shown outside of elitist circles (Ogata 2001: 22; Sembach 1989: 10; Tafuri and Dal Co 1976: 11). This discriminative principle of the style was well suited to the task of promoting the colonial regime. The very seductions of form and melding of materials that art historians celebrate are what made a persuasive case for the colonial project. This exclusion may be seen to reverberate across multiple populations, shutting out not only those too poor to participate in luxury living, or those insufficiently educated to appreciate its sophisticated language of vegetal form, but also those who came from non-Western cultures.

Art Nouveau appropriated aesthetics from Asian cultures, as well as romanticized European pasts, for aesthetic consumption. The art and applied arts of Japan, China, and the Middle East were understood as ancient. These cultures' variegated contemporary developments and modernisms were overlooked. Medieval European life was sufficiently distant to be romanticized. European appropriation saw the messy business of real people undergoing hardship and indignities glossed over. Decontextualized from their original function, the design motifs of a generalized Orient and European peasant peoples fed a hungry avant-garde, determined to rejuvenate European culture and eradicate the "sickness" of derogative, weakening design (Van de Velde 1895: 12; 1898: 39). The resulting visions were of alluring, unsettling beauty that provided glimpses into fantastical elsewhere, conjured for the exclusive use of the upper echelons of society.

The iconic example of Hôtel Solvay (1898), renowned as one of Horta's most exquisite Gesamtkunstwerks, showcases Art Nouveau at its most luxurious. It is lined by an expansive palette of Congolese woods used in ornate patterns (Beeckman 1996: 141). These warm, glowing inlays mingle with all forms of precious elements, including ormolu and ivory, set into walls, custom-made furniture, and other fittings. In such an example, materials originating in the colony were part of a vocabulary of luxury. The purse that fueled this vision of seemingly unbridled opulence was greatly enriched by colonial industry. The Solvay family spearheaded innovation in pharmaceuticals and engineering, which gained a substantial boost from opportunities presented by the Congo's natural resources. In addition, Ernest Solvay, the father of Armand (for whom Hôtel Solvay was built), was a prominent benefactor of the Société d'Études Coloniales (Society for Colonial Studies). This organization was formed to encourage and sustain Belgian's colonies and even founded a (short-lived) colonial school. The Solvay name is prominent in the production of monuments to colonial heroes at Place du Trône (Throne Square) and Jubilee Park (Couttenier 2005: 316).

Another important Art Nouveau town house was that of Paul Otlet, whose extensive personal means came from his father's business activities. His home, Hôtel Otlet (1898), was designed by Octave van Rysselberghe and Van de Velde. Édouard Otlet, Paul's father, was a wealthy senator and businessman who was a primary benefactor of expeditions to the Congo.⁶ Today,

6. Maarten Couttenier (2005: 117, 125) writes of the many lives that were lost on these expeditions.

Hôtel Otlet is known for its integrated interior, defined by a generous central stairwell that gives a large section of wall to a striking sheet of patterned colored glass by Van de Velde. Debora L. Silverman (2011–13: vol. 18, 158) suggests that the bulbous curves found in the design outline the form of an elephant, pointing to a repressed fascination with colonial products. Quite oblivious to Silverman's speculations, ARAU used an image of this possible elephant as its poster for its 2013 tour offerings.

When we consider the entanglement of the Congo colony and Art Nouveau, prevalent themes within total artworks take on new meaning. Curling lines and forms that outline the new and strange are strongly linked to discovery and the frontier. Where Art Nouveau created a new world of ornament, its pioneering Belgian branch was irrevocably entangled with the new world of the Congo, opened to Belgium through aggressive colonialism.

COLONIAL THEATER: HÔTEL VAN EETVELDE

Hôtel Van Eetvelde (1898) is commonly known as one of Horta's Art Nouveau masterpieces (Greenhalgh 2000: 24; Schmutzler 1962: 126; Sembach 2007: 45). Van Eetvelde's town house also served as the backdrop to CFS business, with King Leopold II as a regular visitor. Like the monarch, the chief administrator of the colony never traveled to the Congo himself, instead partly commissioning his showcase home as a venue for business receptions and meetings. When the leaders of the CFS administration came to Hôtel Van Eetvelde, they were greeted with one of the regime's most seductive arguments for continued colonial activity.

The experience of guests at the Hôtel Van Eetvelde would have begun at the front door, with an intricate orange and red mosaic inlay of undulating plantlike tendrils, insulated with wall panels of dark Congolese wood. The guests would then have been led up a broad, gradually spiraling marble staircase circling a glass-domed winter garden to a set of high doors mounted with a stained glass landscape of blues and violets (figure 6). Inside they would find a sumptuous dining room, encased in warm orange- and red-hued woods. Engraved, painted patterns suggestive of exuberant foliage creep across the walls. This is the room that, across the entirety of Horta's oeuvre, contains the only obvious representation of the Congo.

An orchid-like flower in the mahogany fitting above the dining room hearth holds the star of the CFS flag. Less prominently placed is a lone ele-



Fig. 6. Contemporary image of the winter garden in the interior of Hôtel Van Eetvelde, built by Victor Horta in 1898, Brussels
(Photograph © Christine Bastin and Jacques Evrard, reproduced with permission.)

phantine outline, hidden in the corner paneling of a wall mural, amid a cornet of swirling grass-like fronds. The faceless, bulbous outline might read as another vegetal form but for its tusks.⁷ Pulsating lines and color push an electric energy through the room, setting up an interlocking rhythmic pattern that connects across the warm wooden interior. The distant African colony thus makes a fleeting appearance as part of the apparition of natural profusion, denuded of its people.

7. My illustration at the front of this book includes an outline of Horta's elephant in the lower right corner.

Like a snail, Hôtel Van Eetvelde is designed as an unfurling coil that winds tighter as it draws its guests into the house and upward. If they continued from the dining room, visitors might also have been swept along a balcony circling an octagonal enclosure of deeply veined marble, adorned with real plants, handcrafted furniture, and objets d'art. They would then pass beneath the thrusting network of iron branches holding up a glass cupola into the second entertainment area. This room is held together by a crisscrossing network of brass fittings, whose sinuous endings clasp slabs of onyx and quartz, all situated below handmade floral William Morris wallpaper. The complete journey would have been suffused with light, thanks to the central dome and the open floor plan. Glass panes and windows lining partitions between different rooms ensure that the space is interconnected and airy. A visitor would have been not only dazzled by the evident use of opulent materials, but also immersed in an enclosed well of merging lines, forms, and colors that glow and glitter according to how the light hits them. What would have been considered exotic forms, mixed with sumptuous textures and flooded with light, might have been seen to create a tropical atmosphere (Sembach 2007: 58).

Hôtel Van Eetvelde presented an aesthetic feast to those fortunate enough to enter. The entire edifice held those inside in a dynamic twist, studded with exquisite gleaming and budding details. The enveloping Art Nouveau interior thus also controlled the movements of people within. In comparison, the outside world must have seemed rudely chaotic and unmanageable. A perfectly stage-managed interior was set up as a space in which the intangible colony could be accessed in plans and schemes. It is through subtle artifice that Horta's immersive design embodies the myth of the CFS as a fertile location for enterprise, where raw materials could be refined into wealth and sophistication.

Horta's harmonious interior provided a canopy under which an elite bourgeois life could be lived. Hôtel Van Eetvelde, as it once stood, was a seductive performance of the financial possibilities available in the African colony. It was posed as a beautiful tropical haven that could be conjured, carved up, and consumed as deftly as its timber and ivory. As in Hôtel Solvay, much of its thrall relies on the sensual titillation of sumptuous materials. Horta sculpts both luxuriant Congolese woods and shining metals alike in sinuous, budding plant forms that vibrate throughout the building and are echoed in the structure of the furniture and tiny details of wallpaper motifs and door handles. Raw materials from the colony are put to work as luxury furnishings next to inlays of precious stones, marble, and expensive imported glass.

Palatial luxuries gleam from walls supported by the material of railway stations. At the time, such combinations were perceived as a daring mix of

the plebeian and the luxurious (Aubry 2013: 62–65). Crucially for twentieth-century architecture, exposed metal and wood structures demonstrated their function of holding up the walls and ceiling. The iron and wood frameworks set up across the interior of Hôtel Van Eetvelde billow and sprout in sympathy with the overall spiral plan. In later modernist architecture, “machines for living” would follow more minimal lines through exposed beams and scaffolding (Le Corbusier [1931] 1986: 144). When seen within the hearth of the CFS administration, the symbolism of forward-reaching iron and plentiful timber takes on a new dimension.

I find it impossible not to link back to the story of the railway that haunts the early colonization of the Congo, as well as the system of portage that it replaced. Harrowing conditions of transport dominate the story of Congolese exports. As will be discussed in more detail, the railway was one of the primary projects of King Leopold II’s colony. Prior to the construction of the Matadi-Leopoldville Railway in 1898, all raw materials were transported from the interior to the coast via caravans of foot porters. The lower course of the Congo River consists of numerous rapids that do not allow steamboats to operate. Porters had to navigate the difficult jungle terrain while carrying heavy loads, often while also shackled together. The task was highly dangerous, leading to a largely undocumented loss of Congolese lives (Slade 1962: 76). All the heavy woods and ivory trimmings of Hôtel Van Eetvelde, Hôtel Solvay, and other structures constructed before 1898 were part of this system.

Across Hôtel Van Eetvelde, Horta manipulates wood, iron, and stone to make them appear malleable, imbuing them with a sense of elastic tension (Wolf 2011: 100). As the qualities of different materials were masked, so too was the human cost involved in the extraction of dense blocks of timber and large ivory tusks (as opposed to local marble). In contrast, the Congo Pavilion presented a very different proposition to the depeopled jungle of Hôtel Van Eetvelde. Two years after the commissioning of Van Eetvelde’s home in 1895, the fairgrounds of Tervuren sported representations of Congolese people as a willing, romanticized workforce, alongside the actual bodies of human exhibits shipped from the Congo.

INTRODUCING ART NOUVEAU VIA THE CONGO: THE CONGO PAVILION

Hôtel van Eetvelde was an exclusive private home whose sensuous interior delights were enclosed and unavailable for general consumption (as is still the

case today). The Congo Pavilion, conversely, was part of the mass festivities for the Brussels International Exhibition of 1897, which celebrated Belgian accomplishments, including the possession of a colony. Art Nouveau designers were commissioned to create a Congo exhibition as a way of drumming up public enthusiasm and support for the king's colonial enterprise.

At the time of the exhibition, the CFS needed funding and good press. The CFS was the king's personal endeavor, for which he required backing. Stratified by provincial loyalties and labor protests, the Belgian state had displayed little enthusiasm for colonial conquest, and its parliament disagreed on the topic (Dunn 2003: 24; Flynn 1998: 190). The extraction of ivory and wood did not have enough financial returns for the initial investors, and interest lagged until the possibilities of harvesting wild rubber were explored, beginning in 1890 (Harms 1975: 76). Despite the financial gains to be made from the international rubber trade, projects like the Matadi-Leopoldville line were costly, and more financial backers were sought. At the same time as rubber harvesting grew, so did reports of the human rights abuses that went with it (see the introduction). This led to a greater need for a heroic counter-narrative in Belgium.

Many scholars have discussed how the king's supposed antislavery mission in Africa served at the founding exhibition of the RMCA as a disguise for a system of ruthless extraction (see, e.g., Couttenier 2005; Dunn 2003; Flynn 1998; Hochschild 1998; Silverman 2015; Van Beurden 2015a). Taking this duplicity as a given, I emphasize recurring themes of progress linked to annexed nature in order to understand the forms of primitivism and racial hierarchy embedded in the exhibition's structures. Paul Greenhalgh (2000: 25) names the Congo Pavilion as the foundational example of Art Nouveau at a world's fair, at the same time as he calls these international fairs the "greatest product" of Art Nouveau "machinery." With nineteenth-century world exhibitions at the heart of early Euro-American museum culture, the pavilion also cements certain attitudes toward other cultures for many more exhibition halls than only that of Tervuren. The Congo Pavilion presented an audacious spectacle fueled by nationalistic ideology.

Visitors to the pavilion began their "journey through the Congo" at Jubilee Park, where they could peruse traditional Belgian cottage crafts, like lace making and pottery. They then caught a newly built railway to the village of Tervuren on the outskirts of the city. The necessary travel was symbolic of the geographic separation between the European metropole and its African colony. It also linked expansion to progress and reminded the public of the need

for a railway in the Congo (Dunn 2003: 35; Flynn 1998: 199). The new tram system was an advertisement for new technologies, demonstrating how Belgian industrial prowess was penetrating the depths of the “dark” continent, connecting it to civilizing forces. The colonial pavilion took visitors through a phantasmagoria of King Leopold II’s imagined Congo, within a matter of hours, to then be transported by Art Nouveau flourishes, furniture, and displays. The Congo was reenacted through an artificial experience almost entirely orchestrated by designers who had never been there.

Outside of the immersive exhibition halls, more overtly titillating entertainment was provided in the surrounding grounds. In three villages, Congolese people were placed on show. In two of them, “authentic natives” reenacted their supposedly simple, pre-European contact, way of life, one rooted in hunting and fishing. Proof of the civilizing effects of the CFS administration was then demonstrated through the inclusion of a third, more regulated village, populated by Force Publique (Public Force) soldiers dressed in Western garb and marching in step. In this way, the idea that Congolese people lived in a state of prehistory until the paternal colonizing hand enabled them to progress was encouraged (Dunn 2003: 36). While the Art Nouveau halls were physically separate from the human zoo, they were unequivocally implicated in its intentions. Not only was the curation of exhibits honed toward emphasizing the uncivilized nature of the colonized subject, but, in a feature more specific to Art Nouveau, this subject was equated with nature (and therefore figured as another natural resource in need of refinement).

Maarten Couttenier (2005: 23) describes how expansion in Africa provided Belgian scientists (at the Anthropological Society of Brussels) with specimens of previously unstudied African people. From these human samples, the anthropologist Émile Houzé developed the theory of polygenism. This saw Black Africans as a separate species from Caucasian Europeans, evolving along different routes. Not only did Belgian anthropology consider Black people to be the least developed in the evolutionary hierarchy, but it questioned their very humanity. Most contact with the Congo and its people was carried out through military maneuvers up to that point, allowing this supposed science to encourage racist theories and the slaughter of humans understood as lesser than. Such ideas played out across the organic ornamentation of the Congo Pavilion exhibition (also known as the Colonial Palace) halls.

As numerous glass and iron arcades across Euro-America would attest, the immersive qualities of Art Nouveau were also employed for the purposes of popular consumption. The Congo Pavilion drew deeply on the Gesamt-

kunstwerk's ability to beguile. Art Nouveau was the style of choice because of its potentially fashionable and cosmopolitan appeal, bringing a cachet of novelty value to the general public (Dierkens-Aubry 1991: 198). Hankar, Serrurier-Bovy, and Van de Velde, alongside Georges Hobé, were awarded the exhibition, with Van Eetvelde as the supervisor.⁸ Hankar and colleagues laid out a fantastical version of Congolese culture for the delectation of their European audience. A vision of raw tropical wealth was rendered experiential. In the Congo Pavilion, Hankar's Grand Hall displayed various European objets d'art, alongside Congolese fabrics and objects. In the adjoining Hall of Ethnography, Hankar constructed the African colonial subject in the guise of a scientific exposition of different tribes found in the CFS. This led on to the Military Hall, where a parade of spoils from the Arab campaigns celebrated sophisticated European weaponry and the strength of the Force Publique (see the introduction).

Natural fauna and flora of the regions were exhibited in a dazzling aquarium built into an underground tunnel leading into a tropical hothouse. Here, fantastically melded circular display arches by Serrurier-Bovy continued the celebration of plants and their products. In Van de Velde's Hall of Exports, elegantly curling tables and wall-hugging cabinets of supple Congolese woods offered up a panorama of cheap trinkets, crockery, beads, clothing, and cosmetics, produced for the Congolese market. The final space, the Hall of Cultures, displayed imports from the colony. Here, Hobé entwined acajou and bilinga to create an all-encompassing structural framework, loaded with displays of various lucrative products from the Congo, including overflowing sacks of cocoa beans and specimens of rubber plants.

This procession of modern frames, stands, vitrines, cabinets, and furniture was modulated according to the style of each practitioner. The building housing the Congo Pavilion was designed in neoclassical style (conceived and built by architects Alfred-Philibert Aldrophe and Ernest Acker, respectively). As most of Leopold II's public works shared this conservative architecture, the building offered a familiar exterior to lead into the brazen avant-garde interior. Once inside, visitors were ensconced in a total environment of dynamic forms, offering up exotic African spoils.

The narrative of advancement in the colony was inscribed across each salon and on the greater grounds of the exhibition. On the site was a Gallery

8. The only member of the curatorial team who had spent time in the colony was Théodore Masui, the exhibition director.

of Machines, revealing the latest industrial developments, including a generator that fueled the grounds' celebratory fountains. In a specially crafted structure on the grounds, an early form of cinema provided moving images of colonial advancement, including footage of the railway being built. The most wildly popular attraction, however, was the monorail that transported visitors around the grounds at dizzying speed (Luwel and Bruneel-Hye de Crom 1967: 53).

THE FABRICS OF INNOVATION

The thrilling displays at Tervuren eloquently cemented the language of the railroad as one of modernity. With this came the idea that the construction of the railway line in the colony was the only way to bring European civilization to the Congolese people. It was therefore important that the Brussels International Exhibition showcase the new possibilities of Congolese natural exports as a display of modernity that was combined with the emerging modernism of Art Nouveau. Here, innovation and progress were defined by both new technology and new art.

In the Salon of Honor, Hankar arranged chryselephantine works—figurative ivory sculptures with additions in metals and precious stones—alongside a small selection of items collected in the African colony. The sculpted vitrines and stands housing the exhibits, designed by Hankar and Van de Velde, were defined with robust organic flourish, typical of the Belgian style. The chryselephantine works within were commissioned by the CFS administration. In this project, ivory tusks were donated to local artists to revive old traditions of religious Flemish carving (Adriaenssens 2002: 35; Flynn 1998: 192; Silverman 2011–13: vol. 19). The ivory sculptures provided a frame of artistic respectability at the start of the exhibition experience, linking back to sculptural traditions of antiquity.

Congolese fabrics, knives, and figurines (mostly *ndop* figures labeled as fetish) were displayed alongside what the public would recognize as high art (Couttenier 2015: 26; Ogata 2001: 53). The Salon of Honor and its chryselephantine grandeur also had many trappings of the private domain. Most of the sculptures were small enough for home salons, and the space was offset by two large potted palms. Materials and objects from the colony were thus presented as domesticated, collectible accessories that could augment luxurious interiors. At the same time, Congolese fabrics, baskets, intricate wood

carvings, and other handmade objects were displayed and labeled as inventive, made with expertly crafted natural materials (Liebrechts and Masui 1897: 3–8). In the grand entrance hall, a limited array of works made by African craftspeople was set up in juxtaposition to sculptures by Belgian artists. In the Belgian exhibits, the ivory, wood, precious stones, and metals were refined into smooth contours, compared to the rougher edges and symmetrical patterning of the Congolese objects.

The practical uses of ivory for billiard balls, piano keys, combs, and knives in European households were not extolled in the objects; rather, the artworks pursued a classical beauty. The Salon of Honor contained figurative ivory objets d'art by sculptors often associated with Art Nouveau, such as Phillippe Wolfers. As if to emphasize the notion of expansion and aggrandizement, certain pieces took on exaggerated proportions. The most pronounced of these pieces was *La Caresse du Cygne* (Caress of the Swan, 1897) by Wolfers. In the sculpture, standing nearly six and a half feet (two meters) high, a bronze swan holds a lightly engraved elephant tusk aloft. Against such a grand work, the knives and small figurines from the colony had to serve as comparative artistic practice. Under such circumstances, a narrative of difference between Congolese (African) culture and Belgian (European) sophistication was woven into the display. While this potentially allowed for both cultures to influence the other, the Congolese displays were outnumbered and strange to the audience.⁹

The symbolically rich material of Congolese ivory was used to make this point. By the time the Congo Pavilion was built, the Antwerp ivory markets in Belgium were the biggest in the world. Euro-American demand for this precious material not only destroyed the existing local trade in ivory, but went hand in hand with slavery, whether that of the Arabic trade system or the coerced labor of the European one (Clerbois 2011: 239; Flynn 1998: 189–91). Ivory had been a prized art material since antiquity, and its symbolism within Belgian Art Nouveau followed this tradition. The Congolese material that instigated change and new forms was wood. Although Art Nouveau is commonly associated with structural flourishes in wrought iron, the Belgian branch was fundamentally defined through wood, another proletarian material elevated to the status of artwork. Glowing, warm woods are the predominant material across the interiors of high Art Nouveau designers.

9. The exhibition guide encourages this idea of mutual influence by noting that certain metal cups by Wolfers were based on African models (Liebrechts and Masui 1897: 9).



Fig. 7. Archival photograph of the Hall of Exports by Henry Van de Velde in the 1897 Congo Pavilion, Brussels

(Photograph by Alexandre [Drains], Veuve A. & Fils, courtesy the CIVA collection, Brussels.)

As seen in *Hôtel Van Eetvelde*, Horta heightened the atmosphere of interiors with backdrops of shiny, flat sheets of Congolese woods. Combinations of wood with bronze, painted iron, glass, patterned wallpapers, and fabrics, as well as differently hued woods used together, were his trademark. Serrurier-Bovy was similarly devoted to Congolese timber, after being introduced to it at the Congo Pavilion. He particularly favored the pale pink limba for its strength, versatility, and elasticity and for the ease with which it could be obtained in Belgium (Watelet 1970: 31–32). What began as a practice of simple, rustic pieces became one of increasingly elaborate and glossy suites of furniture made for export (Ogata 2001: 111). The central cabinets in Van de Velde's Hall of Exports are extravagant forms, with dramatically curling handles (figure 7). Whereas Van de Velde's practice was formerly more austere, he demonstrated the extent to which the original piece of wood could be stretched (Dierkens-Aubry 1991: 196).

At the 1897 colonial exposition, the public witnessed local design invigorated through access to new types of timber and, with it, a distinctive emerging style. Congolese timber was used as a symbol of progress in a different way to that of ivory. Instead of looking to a past European language of wealth, it ushered in a new aesthetic of modern luxury. The Congolese forests thus presented an innovative source of this vital building product at a time when woods in the European countryside were under threat. At the same time, the colonial subjects and their way of life provided new objects of study for science and the budding discipline of ethnology.

OBJECT BODIES AND EMBODIED DESIGN

Hankar's Hall of Ethnography categorized the different types of peoples found in the CFS (represented through life-size sculptures), presenting them together with objects and structures to represent their lifestyles as the colonizers perceived them. The exhibition and its catalog categorized people found in the Congo colony into distinct cultural groupings, alongside the fauna and flora of the area. Dividing peoples into set ethnicities, each with an immutable culture, ignored the actual situation of complex political groupings that had close and sometimes conflicting political, social, and trade relations based in centuries of interaction and integration.

These groups were represented by an amalgamation of objects of varying quality that fixed their makers into homogenous ethnic types (Kasfir 1999: 90–103). A single utensil could conjure up entire worlds, fulfilling a dual symbolic function by embodying both a type of object that was used in a characteristic manner (knife, mask, pot, figurine, etc.) and a style that was definitive of a category of people. The exhibition catalog suggests that members of the Bantu "race" all share certain traits: "cannibalism . . . tattoos . . . hunting methods and apparatus . . . polygamy, circumcision . . . the same basic social order; the same religion: absolute fetishism . . . human sacrifices, and a death cult" (Liebrechts and Masui 1897: 57).

The exhibition and the colonial forces behind it negated Congolese cultural hybridizations. A lack of written records among these cultures was exploited to maintain the false belief in an Africa without history. The notion of Congolese tribal life being suspended in time was further accentuated by figurative murals in the Art Nouveau exhibition. Executed by Adolphe Cre-spin and Edouard Duyck, these friezes depicted Africans within a utopian

vista of unadulterated natural landscapes. Such scenes key into a nostalgia for untapped natural scenes that was common across art forms in the age of industry. They also suggest that colonized land is vast, empty of sophisticated cultures, and ripe for cultivation.

All the above features may be seen perpetuated across museums at the time and, in certain cases, into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. What was unique to this Art Nouveau display is that Hankar's design was sympathetic to the objects on display. Wooden stands, podiums, and furniture flattened and flared around each Congolese curiosity, including human figures, and echoed some of their forms. This begins with the floors, where motifs from Congolese textiles are directly quoted in Hankar's carpets (Dierkens-Aubry 1991: 198). The stylized, budding patterning is well suited to Art Nouveau organicism. In a less abstract play of forms, Hankar placed small, fetish-like figurines at the tips of his exhibition archways.

Among the petal formations that make up the crests of screens and stands (commonly understood to be neo-Gothic) are thorny protrusions. Along with the central doorway's spiky silhouette, crowned with a headdress-like tiara, these go against the encompassing logic of Art Nouveau form. The binding principle of curvilinear Art Nouveau is to enclose (Tschudi Madsen 1967: 17). In this instance, spear-like motifs reach outward, piercing the negative space around it. Visual clues suggest that elements of African aesthetics have been thematically integrated into the exhibition. This transference of Congolese forms onto an Art Nouveau framework complicates the exhibition narrative. In a logic very similar to the human zoo outside, Hankar's hall suggests that Congolese bodies and culture could be curated and animated through visual appropriation.

The overall design of the hall annexed space and objects through a pattern of repeated arching wooden beams, topped with bulbous knobs (figure 8). Riotous displays were aesthetic, with certain types of instruments—knives, figurines, calabashes, bowls—grouped together according to their plastic and visual qualities. The resulting patternmaking merges with organic Art Nouveau as decontextualized African objects were made part of a stylistic whole. The installation displayed these exhibits for their aesthetic qualities, not for their informative value (as later in ethnographic and natural history museums) or for their beauty as artworks (as in twentieth-century art galleries). In Hankar's total artwork, a distinctive kind of claim was made over Congolese material culture, flattening it into a generalized, organic scene that swept along the unnamed people who made the objects. Congolese bodies (includ-



Fig. 8. Archival photograph of the Hall of Ethnography by Paul Hankar in the 1897 Congo Pavilion, Brussels

(Photograph by Alexandre [Drains], Veuve A. & Fils, courtesy the CIVA collection, Brussels.)

ing their representation in sculptures and murals) were treated as one of the raw materials through which innovation could take place.

With this design, Hankar seems to have been the only member of the Art Nouveau group who responded to Charles Liebrechts and Théodore Masui's (1897: 3) observation that "these models of absolute sincerity and purity may offer an unforeseen aid for the development of modern aesthetic sensibilities." At face value, this appears to be a highly progressive statement. However, when the exhibition guide praises unnamed African craftspeople for their handicraft abilities and use of local natural materials, such traditions are described as passed down over generations for centuries, without development or change. The terms of potential cross-cultural reference presented here are highly uneven. Across Art Nouveau, the process through which designers gained inspiration from non-Euro-American cultures required appropriating those elements that were aesthetically useful. This entailed

discarding the embedded meanings and values of forms and, with this, the people who made them. According to the terms of Art Nouveau reference, a generalized vision of another culture is concocted.

Hankar's pursuit of aesthetic unity ensures that elements of the alien objects on display—portrayed as being from another era as much as from another race—were incorporated into his overall aesthetic scheme. At every turn, Congolese material culture is assumed to be the production of primitives who are not credited with sophisticated aesthetic logics or evolving techniques. With the imagined purity of the models on display about to be exploded through contact with the colonizing machine, it was up to avant-garde art to recognize Congolese culture's aesthetic qualities. In this way, "modern aesthetic sensibilities" could only further themselves by patronizing the subject people, looking to their objects rather than learning from communication with them (Liebrechts and Masui 1897: 3).¹⁰

Compared to this brief flirtation with the Congo in the 1897 exhibition, the influence of Japanese, Chinese, and Moorish art was far more pronounced across the Art Nouveau movement. Moreover, these cultural influences affected multiple aspects of the use and construction of architectural space, in structural form and contour as well as decorative details. While the Hall of Ethnography only hinted at the potential of mobilizing forms from Congolese culture, the whole Congo Pavilion presented an open embrace of Eastern stylistic influence. Johan Lagae (2007: 83) reads the overall effect as "Oriental."

At the site of one of the first meaningful encounters of avant-garde art with African objects, the art movement that sought to break down traditional hierarchies between craft and art was unable to consider Congolese material culture as having a serious artistic language, or its craftspeople as having a sophisticated relationship to the objects they produced. The African objects—encircled, held up, and absorbed by the curvilinear grasp of Hankar's line formations—are paraded as pure exotica, removed from a savage idyll to form tantalizing parts of his immersive whole. Unlike ethnographic museums to come, Hankar's exhibition design makes no pretense at objectivity.

Outside the phantasmagoria of Tervuren, Hankar's domestic and commercial interiors make no known reference to Congolese aesthetics. The same can be said of all the Art Nouveau practitioners. Although Congolese

10. In this way, the Art Nouveau designers were pioneer modernist primitivists. Visual artists such as Picasso and Matisse took only aesthetic elements of African art into their artworks and did not take the context of the colonized cultures (and the violence of colonial occupation) into account.

woods allowed for the emergence of more innovative forms, direct references to the African colony are reserved to CFS administration commissions. As acceptable “primitive” influences of Oriental art were swallowed up in the sensuous embrace of the dreamscape, the broad exclusion of Congolese imagery perpetuated the myth of the inferior tribal subject in need of civilizing. Congolese motifs were only deemed suitable for the bawdier fictions of the public fairground.

THE CONGO’S INFLUENCE ON ART NOUVEAU

Debora L. Silverman has sought to locate Congolese influence in the work of Belgian Art Nouveau artists, particularly Van de Velde. Silverman (2011–13) proposes that Art Nouveau in Belgium is a visual form of repression that is saturated with references to a displaced encounter with violence in the colony. In numerous examples of Horta’s and Van de Velde’s furniture and decor, she locates the outline of elephant heads, and she interprets the distinctive Belgian whiplash line as the result of a fascination with both wealth-bringing rubber vines and the *chicotte* (whip) (2011–13: vol. 18, 153–70). She suggests that Van de Velde’s imagery and motifs were developed in reference to tattooing and scarification patterns that the designer was exposed to via colonial propaganda (2011–13: vol. 19, 176–86). Silverman (2011) has also uncovered that Van de Velde’s brother was in the Congo on an expedition and deduces that letters from Willy Van de Velde must have ignited the designer’s enthusiasm for the conquest of the Congo.

Silverman’s work exposes the links between King Leopold II’s regime and Belgian Art Nouveau. Previously, this criticism had only extended to the symbolist chryselephantine sculptures mentioned above (see Clerbois 2011; Flynn 1998). Looking deeper than historical circumstances, she attempts to locate imagery from the colony in items of furniture and sculptures. However, her work also exposes how difficult it is to pin down the exact sources of high Art Nouveau in Belgium.

It is highly plausible that Van de Velde and his colleagues incorporated Congolese fauna and flora (especially the sinusoidal rubber plants) that resemble the creeping forms associated with Art Nouveau. However, while Congolese forms may well have informed the curling structural tendrils, this was never explicitly mentioned by Horta, Van de Velde, Serrurier-Bovy, or Hankar. In the case of Hôtel Ven Eetvelde, Horta unequivocally stated that

he had placed an elephantine outline among the symbols of Congolese plants as a tribute to Van Eetvelde's job (Aubry 2013: 62). Unlike the silhouettes of chairs and other objects that Silverman identifies as having an elephantine form, Horta's animal is recognizable via its tusks.

At the 1897 Congo Pavilion, the absorption of all manner of African natural life into exhibition imagery and display systems was explicitly embraced (Liebrechts and Masui 1897: 4). Françoise Dierkens-Aubry (1991: 198) notes that the furniture in the Hall of Honor appears to take the form of elephants, but she does not recognize these forms elsewhere. The unusual animals and tropical foliage of the Congo must have appealed to Art Nouveau artists and certainly gave rise to new and imaginative form combinations in the Congo Pavilion. However, outside of colonial commissions, these were absorbed into a broad lexicon of abstracted organic language.

The relationship between the Belgian whiplash line and the punitive *chicotte* is similarly difficult to substantiate. Silverman (2011–13: vol. 18, 170) points to comments made in retrospect by Van de Velde on the Art Nouveau movement; he claimed that his work, alongside that of Horta and Serrurier-Bovy, revitalized art in the manner of a mighty whiplash biting into the skin of an indolent public. While such tantalizing statements lead to all manner of conjecture, they were not elaborated on in any detail. In a well-documented style such as Art Nouveau, with outspoken practitioners whose writings circulated in books and periodicals (as was particularly the case for Van de Velde), it is odd that a major influence would have gone unmentioned. Moreover, given the proximity of colonial propaganda to Art Nouveau circles in Brussels, it is remarkable that so little reference is made to the intriguing land from which the raw materials for the art emerged. This does not disprove Silverman's (2011–13: vol. 18, 139) argument that the Art Nouveau movement "expressed a displaced encounter with a distant but encroaching imperial violence," but it does weaken her stance for those critics who require empirical substantiation.

Beyond African nature, there is the question of the influence of Congolese art forms. Whether patterning from Congolese body art made its way into Van de Velde's work is unclear. Silverman (2011–13: vol. 19, 183–85) locates two texts in which Van de Velde deals with scarification. In one, the Belgian designer compares tattooing to ornamentation. The other text jubilantly describes an imagined scene of a "savage" succumbing to vital urges and decorating the body of his baby child with a sharp knife. While permanent markings or scarification may very well have provided Van de Velde with the line

in its primordial form, his fascination with the exotic other remained general. All imagery, both natural and man-made, was purposefully submerged with a myriad of other sources.

Van de Velde (1910: 62) firmly believed that “the line should not represent, it should be about movement; the rustling of the banners that were carried, trumpets blaring, clinging armor, incense, dark churches.” From his expressive turn of phrase, many connotations can be drawn. I believe that Silverman’s pointed interpretation is a canny political strategy to expose colonial complicity. For me, the important work Silverman (2011–13: vol. 20, 42) does is declare a sense of moral urgency around Belgian Art Nouveau. Her writing urges us to listen for the crack of the *chicotte* in Leopold II’s Congo when we contemplate the Belgian line. Where there are aporias in museum labels and exhibitions, she insists on naming what has been left out.

I seek to add another layer to Silverman’s body of research, based in a recognition of the imaginative power of the total artwork. Rather than focusing on mimetic forms, I argue that the subtle sophistry of the abstraction seen in Hôtel Van Eetvelde and the Congo Pavilion makes a convincing argument for cultural appropriation and aesthetic colonialism. Across the 1897 fairground at Tervuren and the Brussels town houses, Art Nouveau forms resisted direct quotation, for the purposes of greater atmospheric effect.

This refined design language celebrates nature by relying on suggestion, distorting organic forms that look similar to (or that have an analogous sense of movement or growth as) those found in the living world. In warping, blowing up, and extracting details from plants, animals, and natural forces, Van de Velde and his peers rendered them exotic. Taking elements from these otherworldly qualities, they sought to animate and order nature’s incomprehensibility (Greenhalgh 2000: 69). When Art Nouveau form was applied to representing the Congo, Congolese culture became part of this unknowable nature and was celebrated as such. Nature and Congolese people are not only equated with each other but are presented as external to the Euro-American audience.

In the confluence of influences and experimentation that was the Belgian Art Nouveau movement, it is extremely difficult to tie any one abstracted form to a definite referent from life. This version of primitivist abstraction, in its quest for the essential, lends itself to interpretative speculation and may be employed in many services. Moreover, if an art form is taken up by, or associated with, a regime subsequently deemed questionable—as evidenced in Adolf Hitler’s

love of Richard Wagner's works, or Futurist artist Filippo Marinetti's infatuation with fascism—it is read differently, according to the prevailing morality of the time. In the case of Art Nouveau in Belgium, the fact that studies like Silverman's are beginning to appear, raising necessary provocations, suggests that there is an urgent need to reassess the influential movement.

WHAT WAS LEFT BEHIND IN BELGIUM

Silverman's (2011–13: vol. 18, 146) research was sparked by her attendance at the 2005 exhibition *La Mémoire du Congo, le temps coloniale* (The Memory of the Congo, Colonial Times) at the RMCA. Her protest of the lopsided version of history presented here thus joined a growing call by critics for the RMCA to be reformed. With pressure from many sources, renovations began in 2012 and were completed in 2018.

There is a great deal of obfuscation among the ostentatious new extensions to the museum, but only piecemeal measures in the way of reform. The more problematic sculptures from the 1897 Congo Pavilion (and after) have been confined to a room in the basement. In the main museum, efforts have been made to present a contemporary and vibrant Congo. However, there is little contextualization of or grappling with the violence of the colonial past. The museum's complicity in the process of cultural subjugation, outlined by scholars like Silverman, Maarten Couttenier (2005), and Sarah Van Beurden (2015a), is not addressed. The reopening of the museum has heightened demand for the restitution of Congolese objects to their country of origin. Not only did the reopening occur at a time when former colonies were agitating for return (see chapter 4), but the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) was constructing a new museum of cultural heritage.¹¹ Actions and decisions taken in the RMCA have a direct effect on those in the DRC and vice versa, with obvious connections stemming back to the Belgian museum's inaugural Art Nouveau exhibition.

The remains of the 1897 Congo Pavilion are a faint presence on the Tervuren site. Outside of the plaque on the original neoclassical building, the only visible remnant is Hobé's sturdy wooden framework from the Hall of

11. The National Museum of the Democratic Republic of Congo in Kinshasa opened in 2019.

Imports. This stands in the courtyard of what is now an administration block. In a testament to the claims made for the tenacity of Congolese woods, it has borne northern European weather conditions remarkably well. All photographs, newspaper articles, catalogs, and periodicals concerning the 1897 Congo Pavilion are primarily stored in the museum's History Library and are available upon request. Most Art Nouveau objects from the exhibition were moved to the Art and History Museum in Brussels when what had been the Congo Pavilion was replaced by the Museum of the Belgium Congo, which opened in 1910 (and which would eventually become the RMCA).

Art Nouveau is visible in Brussels but not necessarily more accessible to all. Visitors must pay for heritage tourism such as admission to the Horta Museum or attendance of an Art Nouveau tour. Private homes like Hôtel Solvay and Hôtel Otlet are available during specific tours. Van Eetvelde's original home, described in this chapter, belonged to a private company for years that seldom admitted visitors. During this period, staff were not allowed to bring any photographic equipment inside. While parts of the house retain their original furniture, the interior is sparser than in the fantastical mirrored palace featured in photographs from the Art Nouveau period.¹² In visiting these interiors, in various states of restoration, I found that violence in the Congo colony was seldom mentioned. Raw materials of Congolese wood and ivory were sometimes discussed, but without any apparent criticality for the colonial endeavor. Popular past exhibitions, such as *Henry Van de Velde: Passion, Function, Beauty* (2013) at the Cinquanteaire Museum, celebrated Art Nouveau artists rather than allow for multiple readings and postcolonial interpretations. The spirit of such exhibitions, upholding a heroic narrative of Art Nouveau as a spearheading force in Western modernism, is evident in planned events related to the 2023 Year of Art Nouveau. This program of talks, tours, and exhibitions, and its appeal to heritage tourists, arguably holds an echo of some of the nationalistic zeal from the time of the 1897 Congo Pavilion. The primary exception to this rule is the exhibition *Style Congo: Heritage and Heresy* (2023) at CIVA. This group exhibition sets out to address "the politics of cultural representation and appropriation" via work by contemporary visual artists and architects (CIVA N.D.). This exhibition, curated by Sammy Baloji, Sylvia Franceschini, Nicholas Hirsch, and Estelle Lecaille,

12. At the time of writing, plans are in place for Hôtel Van Eetvelde to become more open to the public.

pointedly seeks to reflect on the Art Nouveau contents of its own archives, which includes photographs of the 1897 Congo Pavilion.¹³

As tangible remains of Art Nouveau involvement with King Leopold II's regime, different elements of the 1897 Congo Pavilion have been dispersed. Evidence of the complicity of the style with oppressive colonialism is not immediately apparent. What was also lost is the full effect of the total artwork, which undoubtedly held power over its audience in its day. When furnishings and sculptures were moved to a separate location from the architecture that was meant to complete them, much of the overall effect of the Congo Pavilion and Hôtel Van Eetvelde was lost. I have therefore had to piece together fragments and look carefully at core theories and aesthetic tropes of this high period of Belgian Art Nouveau in order to make conclusions about the implications of total space and ornament as structure.

The movement's ability to build autonomous, artificial worlds bears some affinity to the colonial narrative of the CFS. The late nineteenth-century primitivist mindset that led to organic ornamentation provided a subtle complement to King Leopold II's exploitative scheme. The way deft manipulation of every aspect of form drew together Congolese materials into futuristic imaginings also spoke to the seductions of colonialism. Horta and his colleagues designed otherworldly aesthetics to drown out unpleasant news from outside. Rumors of systemic violence and commerce-related atrocities from the distant colony could well be part of the latter category. The way the Art Nouveau total artwork enveloped and expressed colonial propaganda provides some insight into how an extreme form of exploitation was able to take place: it was eloquently advertised via enticing new art.

The message of progressive art and design as a decontextualized marker of technological progress then flowed into the greater modernist project. Belgium's colonial project, like its British, French, and Portuguese counterparts, continued well into the twentieth century, aided and abetted by modernist design strategies. Modernist features of cultural generalization, lack of local specificity, and overall top-down aesthetics were already in place in the Art Nouveau colonial exhibition, in both art and design.

Perhaps the best example of the traits of modernism mentioned above is Hor-

13. My artwork on the exhibition, the *Unmade Pavilion (iron)* (2023) is a sculptural response to Victor Horta's unrealized plans for a Belgian Congo Pavilion at the 1900 Paris Exposition.

ta's proposed (but never realized) pavilion for the 1900 Paris Exposition. These drawings pull together various threads concerning how Art Nouveau architects imagined the experience of the distant colony. Horta planned for a portable Gesamtkunstwerk. This apparition of glass and iron would consist of mushrooming glass domes supported by slender temple pillars. The preposterous notion of a traveling glass museum in tropical climes illustrates Horta's complete inability to imagine or come to terms with the African colony in any real way.¹⁴

Horta's design, with its likeness to a medieval palace made of glass, finds echoes in two iconic structures from English fiction. First is the glass church from Peter Carey's *Oscar and Lucinda* ([1988] 1997), which the main character foolishly attempts to transport into the Australian hinterland. The second is Tony Last's dream of a lost medieval palace in the Brazilian jungle in Evelyn Waugh's *A Handful of Dust* ([1934] 1977). In each novel, the structure serves as a powerful symbol for the folly of settler communities.

Even in a drawing, the Congo presented an imaginary of experimentation and wild schemes, to which products could be sent and from which bountiful raw materials would emerge, without real people having to inhabit it. Despite highly practical concerns with dislocated design from afar, the idea of portable buildings remained after the high point of Belgian Art Nouveau. In the following chapter, the influence of Art Nouveau on the Congo will be traced via iron hotels that were manufactured in a Belgian factory and sent to the Congo.

ART NOUVEAU'S INFLUENCE ON THE CONGO

I have discussed how contact with the Congo was at the heart of Art Nouveau innovation in Belgium. The movement was invigorated with funding supplied by the CFS, and the raw materials that came with this money, especially wood, enabled the distinctive Belgian style. Iconic total artworks such as the 1897 Congo Pavilion and Hôtel Van Eetvelde reveal how incorporation of nature motifs and generalized depictions of an African other posed Congolese people in a subjugated position. In the upcoming chapters, I follow the Brussels phenomenon into its continuations and reverberations in the constructions of the CFS, the Belgian Congo, and post-independence Kinshasa.

14. Horta's proposal was also turned down, in part, for being too ostentatious in the face of international criticism of the king's activities (Dierkins-Aubry 1991: 196).

In order to describe Art Nouveau's influence on the Congo, I bear in mind the movement's influence on twentieth-century architecture and design. This includes the kind of primitivism that enforced the problematic cultural hierarchies that were evident in Art Nouveau exhibitions as much as in the pluralistic Art Nouveau aesthetic. The myriad offshoots of modernist architecture that have some roots in the Belgium movement bear a legacy of exclusion and opacity concerning the origin of materials. As high Art Nouveau proved unsustainable, obvious continuations are present in Art Deco. This 1930s offspring of the movement was more symmetrical, but it was no less primitivist in its references or lavish in its materials. As modernism veered away from ornamentation, the principle of form follows function—so expressively communicated in curvilinear Art Nouveau—is evident. As ornamentation gave way to pared-down aesthetics, in Central Africa as in the rest of the world, design principles carried top-down (colonial) ideologies with them.

The complicated net of interests, politics, and circumstances that informed Belgian Art Nouveau coalesced around the CFS. As the total artwork unraveled, its remaining fragments did not shake off their early colonial entanglement with primitivist logic and its fascination with the African other. The Belgian movement thus generated highly complex offshoots and ancestors.

Important, too, is the influence of Art Nouveau on the founding of the RMCA. Certain tropes of display and attitudes to Congolese objects are seen to filter into the later colonial period as well as into the post-independence era. As extractivist colonialism evolves into capitalist neocolonialism, I highlight recurring ideas about colonial ethnography and cultural value systems originating in the Global North.¹⁵ Racial prejudices located in Art Nouveau in the late nineteenth century led to cultural imperialism in the independent state of Zaire.

As the two surging mythologies of the CFS and Art Nouveau came together to underwrite the total artworks of the 1897 Congo Pavilion and Hôtel Van Eetvelde, the new colony and avant-garde art briefly enabled each other through mutual experimentation. When they separated, both splintered into factions and were dogged by their respective inconsistencies and internal discord. Even if rarely associated with the CFS, the modernist strand that Art Nouveau had put in place retained its underlying primitivist

15. In the case of museum display, Van de Velde's theories were to influence the white cube itself, in which Congolese objects, along with those of other African peoples, would play a starring role.

principles. Museum space that followed from the Congo Pavilion would carry with it the underpinnings of the total artwork, as well as build on its manner of dealing with exhibits. The process of attempting to locate the early colony in Style Congo exposes recognizable patterns to be repeated across the course of twentieth-century modernism. Relinking Art Nouveau to the context of Leopold II's Congo allows it to connect to its numerous other spheres, mutations, and situations, putting the otherworldly style back into the postcolonial world.

CHAPTER 3

Style Congo in the Congo

Colonial Modernism Takes Root

Railways across the bush, the draining of swamps and a native population which is non-existent politically and economically are in fact one and the same thing.

—Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

INTO THE AFRICAN CITY

In the 1897 Congo Pavilion and Hôtel Van Eetvelde, the Congo colony was swept up in a surging avant-garde fascination for the exotic, briefly incorporated into this early, intense strand of modernism. While the Art Nouveau moment in Europe was short, its legacy of minimal design, experimentation with industrial materials, and unifying principles across entire buildings would feed into how the Euro-American constructed environment took shape. European colonial powers in Africa saw that those principles of design that were most useful to extractivist expansion were used for early settlement. In the Congo, an offshoot of Belgian Art Nouveau—ornamented prefabricated metal buildings—appeared in early settlements connected to the Matadi-Kinshasa (or Matadi-Leopoldville) Railway.

By 1905, the era of the Belgian movement in Brussels had receded. Art Nouveau-esque decoration on new town house blocks was superficial, with none of the accompanying exposed structures and intricate environments that defined the movement's high point. In place of total artworks, Brussels was inundated with cheap, mass-produced products sporting curlicued trimmings. Larger versions of these industrialized offshoots of the high style are the topic of this chapter. While the Congo Pavilion and other Art Nouveau total artworks provided immersive, individualistic artistic visions of the col-

ony for a European audience, pared-down factory versions were deemed suitable for the fledgling settlements of European workers and businessmen in the Congo. The Hotels Alimentation du Bas-Congo (Lower Congo Foods Hotels, the ABC Hotels) in Mbanza Ngungu (then known as Thysville) and Kinshasa (Leopoldville) were completed in 1904 and 1911, respectively. These prefabricated buildings continue a line of certain Art Nouveau logics that leads from the metropole to the colony. As seen in the previous chapter, the explosion of exposed ironwork and retreat to interior space that defined Belgian Art Nouveau came with the rapid industrialization heralded by the railway. Its offshoots in the Congo followed suit, carrying imperial ideology with them.

The ABC Hotels slot into a rich tradition of prefabricated buildings being sent to the colonies. Prefabricated buildings that may be packed up, moved, and re-erected have been present across all cultures, dating back to the earliest architecture of mankind. This chapter links to parallel mobile architectures that came with European industrialization in the nineteenth century and the not-unconnected increase in the need to house colonial settlers. Among the most well-known of such structures are the British prefabricated metal “cottages” in Australia that date back to the 1850s, following the showcasing of the possibilities of architectural iron in the structure of the first world’s fair, the 1851 London Crystal Palace Exhibition (Keys 2019: 87). I connect the ABC Hotels to the 1897 Brussels International Exposition not to show how modernist innovations spread, but rather to explore how the Congo was invented at the colonial pavilion. Specifically, I follow the primitivist associations and racist assumptions that came with Belgian Art Nouveau, tracing how they played out in the Congo through these prefabricated buildings. The symbolism of the 1897 tramway leading from Brussels to the foundational exhibition of the Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA) at Tervuren is echoed in the prefabricated iron tracks that formed the Matadi-Leopoldville line. With the first colonial railway in the Congo came portable Art Nouveau stations and, at Mbanza Ngungu, an entire prefabricated village. I approach the ABC Hotels for what they reveal about the process of Belgian colonization in which they emerged.

Metal structures were developed in France for the tropical colonies in the early 1890s by Auguste Choisy.¹ I outline how the Belgian ABC Hotels, which

1. Choisy was also an architectural historian. His *Histoire de l'architecture* (History of Architecture, 1899) covered Egyptian, Greek, and Roman architecture, framing Rome as the pinnacle of architectural evolution and ancient Egypt as a Mediterranean civilization rather than an African one.

are seldom discussed in architectural histories, resonate with this French prefabricated colonial housing. However, in my postcolonial reading, I focus not on these cross-cultural affinities but on the way that the ABC Hotels continue the Art Nouveau imagining of the Congo, dismissing local Congolese building technologies as primitive at the same time as they use the new modernist architectural tools to optimize the mass extraction of Congolese resources and assert Belgian authority. Following Itohan Osayimwese's (2017: 5) architectural history of prefabricated architectures developed in Germany, I do not treat these early modernist structures as part of "the Enlightenment metanarrative of progress." Rather, I consider how Belgian modernism is implicated in traumatic colonial histories of industrialization. Approaching this history by way of the postcolonial African city, I am interested in how the ABC Hotels were foundational segments of current-day urban areas, having some influence on what grew up around them. I read the ABC Hotels as actants that interact with and are acted on by the African city and, with this, the greater environment in which they were implanted. Tracing how these imperial remains have been used since the colonial period allows for a reflection on the nature of colonial entanglement within the Congolese urban fabric.

I avoid reading colonial remains as a representation of their occupants (see Collins 2013), or as a metaphor for colonial organizational structures themselves. Ann Laura Stoler (2013: 22) identifies such readings as slipping "between metaphor and material object, between infrastructure and imagery." I respond to these observations with an object-centered approach, with an aim to trace how these buildings can escape neither their historical contexts nor their own material makeup. Within this object-based thinking, it is important to see the structures not as isolated elements, but as part of a greater landscape of temporal sediments. This perspective does not see railroad hotels stand in for the powers that built them. Rather, it provides insight into the kind of extractivist industrialization colonial iron brought to the colony, the consequences of which are still visible today.

As discussed in the previous chapter, portions of Hôtel Van Eetvelde and the 1897 Congo Pavilion have been preserved as museum items or private heritage, recorded in catalogs and newspaper articles. Documentation on the ABC Hotels is comparatively sparse. Nevertheless, their current situation has a great deal to say about how their meaning was and is made. This is why I address the mutual influence and converging trajectories of colonial architecture and urban space. The nature of the Congolese urban spaces under discussion demands that tropical growth be considered alongside the built

environment. The prominence of natural life in and around the hotels sheds new light on Art Nouveau organicism and its attempt to harness the vital forces of nature. Whereas the preserved remains of Art Nouveau in Belgium remain rigid, the ABC Hotels display traces of movement and changeable patterns, across broad temporalities. I therefore explore iron structures that were originally built for European use and have become part of contemporary Congolese life for what their provenance may tell of how their contemporary meaning is made. Rather than focusing solely on their histories, I construct my arguments from firsthand experience of buildings as living archives, as much as remaining documentation.

I begin the chapter with a discussion of the original function of the prefabricated iron structures and the building of a colonial railroad. As part of this history, I compare the ABC Hotels to their high Art Nouveau predecessors of the previous chapter. I start with the role the ABC Hotel played in early Kinshasa, before moving on to its sister structure in Mbanza Ngungu. The older hotel arrived with a prefabricated workers' village, and together these buildings formed the foundations of the municipality of Mbanza Ngungu. Following this discussion, I outline the embedded implications of the iron buildings for their surrounds, according to the kind of industrialized colonialism they ushered in. I then examine the role that the aging hotels play in current-day Mbanza Ngungu and Kinshasa. The chapter closes with a discussion of the human and nonhuman responses and renegotiations that the ABC Hotels have evoked. In returning to the legacy of Art Nouveau, I unpack the complex colonial modernism enmeshed in these Congolese cities and the ambiguous position it holds within the urban imagination.

OFFSHOOTS SENT TO AFRICA

In the early twentieth century, as King Leopold II's Congo Free State (CFS) was pressured to become the state-owned Belgian Congo, early colonial buildings were erected in the Congo. These housed small settler communities of missionaries, military units and colonial administrators. Imported prefabricated metal, largely produced by the Belgian company Forges d'Aiseau (Aiseau Forges), was commonly used for them all. Colonial buildings such as the Congo Trading Company building in Kinshasa were made with a general idea of the tropical climate in mind, and their aesthetic was eclectic (Toulier, Lagae, and Gemoets 2010: 44). Contrastingly, the ABC Hotels present pre-

fabricated colonial architecture that can be directly linked to the Belgian Art Nouveau movement and its associations of ornament and luxury.²

The original purpose of the two main sites of Art Nouveau architecture that I explore in this chapter was to cater to Euro-American travelers. The ABC Hotels in what were then the cities of Leopoldville (Kinshasa) and Thysville (Mbanza Ngungu) were outlets of the *Compagnie Commerciale et Agricole d'Alimentation du Bas-Congo* (Commercial and Agricultural Food Company of the Bas-Congo).³ The Matadi-Leopoldville Railway was a critical part of colonial commerce, as the Congo River was unnavigable between the Leopoldville trading post and the colonial coastal port at Boma because of cataracts. Thysville began as a station for European railway workers halfway between Leopoldville and Matadi. Named after Colonel Albert Thys, director of the Matadi-Leopoldville line construction, Thysville displaced the large Congolese marketplace of Nsona Ngungu and the conglomerate villages of Kitala and Ntala Ngudi that had occupied the verdant area. Its temperate climate gave rise to plans (in 1907) to develop it into a garden city, and Thysville became known as a fresh location that was suitable as a colonial health retreat (Baeck 1957: 116; Lagae 2010: 30).

Another ABC Hotel was built in Matadi, at the southwestern end of the railway line. This structure was constructed with pillars and stones, and it lacks a visible sophisticated iron exoskeleton or any apparent connection to Art Nouveau. The river city of Matadi had been a European trading post since 1879 and had various accommodation options for Euro-American travelers. It is in the inland stations that less laborious, prefabricated iron hotels were installed to alleviate the demand for comfortable places to stay. Prior to the building of a grand hotel in Leopoldville, travelers had largely been put up in private homes and mission stations. The opening of the Matadi-Leopoldville Railway in 1898 made the need for more suitable lodgings more pressing. When the colonial administration announced that an ABC Hotel would be erected in 1911, the small settler community greeted the news with enthusiasm.

2. This is certainly the case for the ABC Hotel in Kinshasa (Toulier, Lagae, and Gemoets 2010: 46; Lagae and Toulier 2013: 77; Vandembreden 2015: 12). David Van Reybrouck (2014: 85) makes a fleeting reference to Thysville as a rusting “Art Nouveau village.”

3. This company was a newly formed extension of the holding company *Compagnie du Congo pour le Commerce et de l'Industrie* (Congo Company for Trade and Industry), started in 1886 by Albert Thys.



Fig. 9. View from the balcony of the ABC Hotel, Mbanza Ngungu, 2014
(Photograph © Ruth Sacks.)

More than merely practical, the Leopoldville and Thysville ABC Hotels brought some Art Nouveau glamour to the colony. This is immediately evident from the repetitive ornamentation in their exposed metalwork. In the Leopoldville branch, metal balustrades wrapped around the building's outsides comprise sets of curling tracery. Structural support in the eaves take more familiar curvilinear proportions, seemingly of the same family as work by designers such as Victor Horta, although far simpler and more streamlined. The older hotel at Thysville has more mundane, even cartoonish, decorative flourishes of simple stars, circles, and triangles (figure 9). These are not the sophisticated, organic abstractions of the likes of Henry Van de Velde in the late 1890s. Nevertheless, they are close in appearance to more symmetrical work by later generations of Belgian designers evident in Brussels today.⁴

The iron hotels reflect Art Nouveau aims to bridge art, craft, and the mechanical in domestic situations. While they did not represent the Gesamt-

4. The work of architect Benjamin De Lestré, for example, was highly influenced by the possibilities of mechanized production.

kunstwerk abroad (in the same sense as Horta's proposal for the 1900 Paris Exposition, discussed in chapter 2), they came as massive, prepackaged parcels that speak of a different kind of design totality. The total artworks of Art Nouveau relied on architectural details to serve as microcosms of the overall structure. In the Congo, exterior prefabricated sheets and poles contained the core of the Leopoldville and Thysville ABC Hotels. As concentrated units to be distributed and fleshed out, they gave rise to greater architectonic patterns in fledgling colonial settlements (figure 10). Iron exoskeletons presented another sophisticated means of taking the colonial mission further afield. Art Nouveau had fabricated a luxurious fantasy of the Congo in the metropole; industrial Art Nouveau offshoots could now conquer physical space in the colony at greater speed.

Like their predecessors in Brussels, both hotels embodied the most advanced technology of their time. They were produced in a factory whose product range extended to yachts and steamers.⁵ After being shipped to the colony, they were transported inland by the newly opened railway. The Belgian authorities then commandeered Congolese laborers to assemble these giant frames into a two-story structure in Mbanza Ngungu and a four-story one in Kinshasa.

The reference point for the factory that produced the portable frameworks was high Art Nouveau itself. Beyond that, little is known: no single designer of the prefabricated hotels has been established, highlighting the extent to which they were considered in terms of utility more than giant artworks; and there are no records of who decided on the location of each foundation and the view each balcony should look out on. Further, and in keeping with much of high Art Nouveau, the prefabricated metal held no references to Congolese motifs.⁶ With actual space in the Congo being occupied, the necessity of representing the Congo fell away, and other needs took precedence: linking to greater European frameworks, transport routes, and mobilities serving extractivist oppression.

5. This was the *Grandes Chaudronneries de l'Escaut* (Grand Industrial Metalworks of the Scheldt) in Hoboken, Antwerp (Vandenbreen 2015: 13).

6. As discussed in chapter 2, certain elements of the 1897 Congo Pavilion, especially Paul Hankar's Hall of Ethnography, were seen to respond to motifs from the Congolese textile and sculptural shape formations. But even as it represented the CFS, the early Art Nouveau project in Belgium was infused by the aesthetics of other cultures, particularly the so-called Orient.

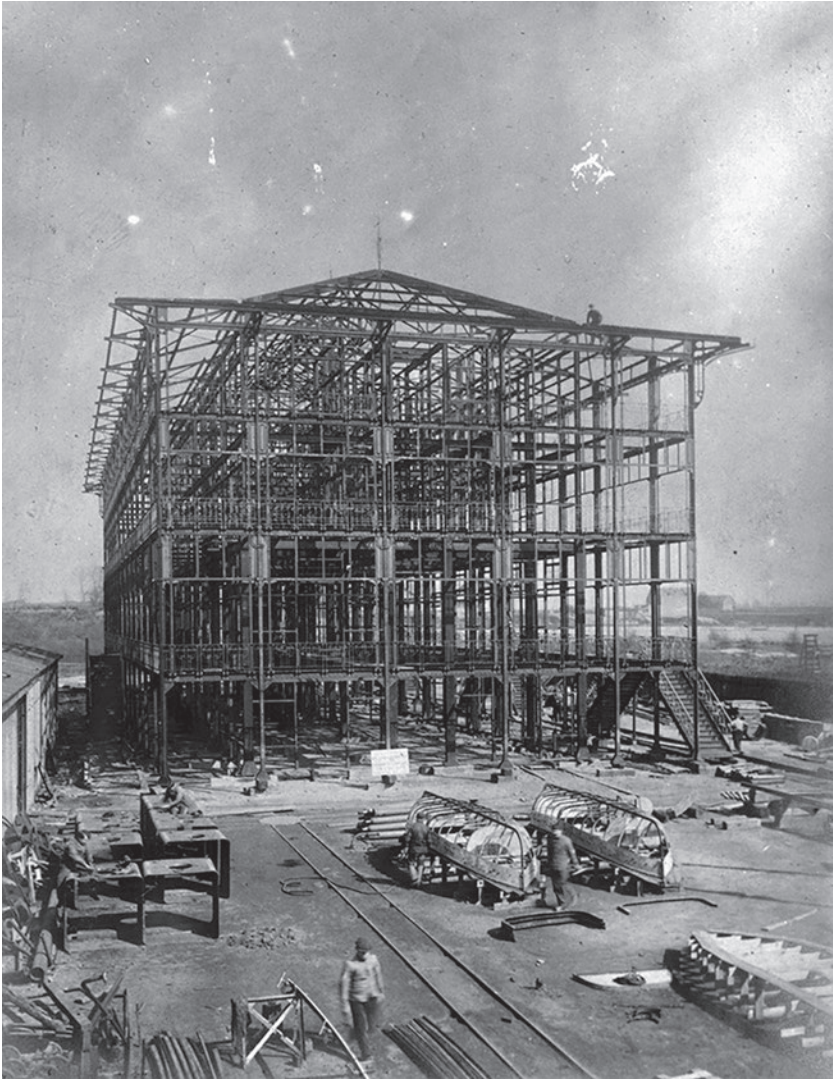


Fig. 10. The ABC Hotel settlement, Kinshasa (then Leopoldville), circa 1915
(Courtesy RMCA collection, Tervuren [AP.o.o.15609], photographer unknown.)

IRON AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The ABC Hotels were extensions of the probing machinery of expansion in both form and function. In the efficiency of their design, they support Osayimwese's (2017: 188) proposal that prefabrication was as important to early colonial occupation as "steamboats, rifles, quinine, and the telegraph" were. While Osayimwese is referring to late nineteenth-century colonialism at large, the ABC Hotels in the Congo are examples that were bound to the railway system and the industrialization that came with it. As time has passed, their physical forms describe not only the path that colonial industry took but the extent to which Belgium underdeveloped its colony.

As industrialization in Belgium boomed, expansion in the Congo did not extend to cementing industry further than what was useful to the colonial mission. I have outlined how cultural bigotry in the metropole painted Congolese objects as primitive, in exhibitions like the 1897 Congo Pavilion. In the Art Nouveau offshoots of the colony, the ABC Hotels laid down distinctive foundations of both systemic underdevelopment and hierarchical cultural attitudes. The hotels are a reminder of both early colonial export-orientated strategies and their consequences. From their positions on the banks of the Congo River and the Matadi-Leopoldville line, the iron structures formed central axis points for imperial traffic. The transport system saw greatly increased amounts of raw materials leaving the colony for processing in Europe. Colonial tools of occupation (the ABC Hotels included) further increased the number of Euro-American colonist-entrepreneurs, military men, researchers, and missionaries entering the interior. Iron was the material of rapidly accelerating irrevocable change in the space it sliced through.

The building of the railway was a deadly affair. While the actual death toll is difficult to ascertain, official reports from 1890 to 1898 state that 1,800 Black workers and 132 white officers perished, but these numbers are most likely too low (Axelson 1970: 204; and see Hochschild 1998).⁷ In a broader context, the railway signaled disruption and destabilization of power for the existing peoples of the area. The densely populated region was made up of branches of the larger decentralized Bakongo kingdom, which had been in contact with Europeans from the late fifteenth century. Long before the arrival of

7. Local legend, according to missionaries in the region, had it that each tie along the railway represented a Congolese life, and each telegraph post a European one (Axelson 1970: 204).

the modernist settler cities, the Bakongo city of Mbanza Kongo had thrived in the region. European travelers who visited the royal city in the late sixteenth century described it as a highly developed and well-populated center of trade famous for its textiles (Thornton 2001: 93). But in the early twentieth century, the Belgian regime recognized only the colonial city as a sign of civilization. The influx of colonial forces brought by the railway altered existing clan-based systems of government, whose work allocations had already been severely disrupted by the slave trade. Existing land rights and ancestral authority were undermined as power was awarded to those chiefs who were most sympathetic to the colonial cause (Anstey 1966: 47–49; Baeck 1957: 137; R. Cornet 1953: 81).

The penetration of industrialized networks—and, with this, modernist structures—impoverished local living networks and broke down existing systems of political power. Art Nouveau iron, employed as a symbol of avant-garde progress in the metropole, became one of colonial access, extraction, and control. This deepening of meaning puts pressure on the language of protomodernism the prefabricated structures represent. Across Africa, colonization was achieved through systems where “[cutting] railways across the bush, the draining of swamps and a native population which is non-existent politically and economically are in fact one and the same thing” for the colonizer (Fanon 1963: 182). The “slow violence” committed against Congolese nature, the “violence of delayed destruction” of local ecosystems through cash crops and toxic farming practices, came with the exploitation of colonized peoples (Nixon 2011: 2).

Treatment of the land and its resources went hand in hand with disenfranchisement of the Congolese peoples. The situation was further exacerbated by the metropole no longer being able to support the colony.

The Matadi-Leopoldville Railway, created to implement mass extraction of resources, was one of the factors that put great financial strain on the backers of the colonial mission in Belgium (Ndaywel è Nziem 1998: 327–28). Resultingly, the CFS, followed by the Belgian Congo, placed full responsibility on the territory to fund its own administrative, military, and other expenses. This led to a colonial assertion of power over Congolese society that was more severe than was usually the case with European colonies (Young and Turner 1985: 32). To counteract the turmoil caused by the violence such a system required, it was necessary to maintain the illusion of order. One role of early colonial architecture was to cover up the inherent messiness of prolonged

conquest. The ABC Hotels did this through the straight lines of the railway rising into luxury buildings.

From the first point of disembarking, to being assembled, painted, furnished, and added onto, these industrial Art Nouveau components became embedded in environments that their makers did not anticipate. The insidious idea of modernism coming from Europe to Africa—something that happens elsewhere first—was set in motion on unstable ground. This is evident in the literal threat of erosion as much as in the aging of modernist architecture. In the area of Bas-Congo (where Mbanza Ngungu is situated), irregularities of the terrain caused by mass farming drives led to the depletion of fertile soils and erosion (Baeck 1957: 145). Leopoldville's foundational grounds are also precarious. During the rainy season, erosion is a significant threat to whole neighborhoods, with poor drainage cutting through sandy hills to create spectacular abysses in the urban tissue (De Boeck and Plissart 2004: 229). As heralded by Frantz Fanon (1963: 182), colonial oppression and the devastation of the land were part of the same package.

As seen in late nineteenth-century Belgium, ownership of a colony inspired new spurts of invention and industry. The ABC Hotels embodied the latest technologies in the occupied African territory. As such, they presented an early version of the modernist machine aesthetic. This entailed the inclusion of decoration that existed within the parameters of the overall structure, rather than in addition to it (Greenhalgh 1990: 11–12). Despite not having the individualized specificity of their high Art Nouveau predecessors, the ABC Hotels communicated an insular system of imposed power relations created by and for the colonizers.

In both the Kinshasa and Mbanza Ngungu hotels, a network of balconies, decorative balustrades, and stairwells ensconce the overall structure in an interactive skin. As elsewhere in tropical colonies, this external layer was intended to serve as a cooling mechanism. The exoskeletons formed a protective layer, or buffer zone, between the comfortable furnishings of the hotel interior and the outside (Gemoets, Lagae, and Toulhier 2011: 41). As a space of comfort and privilege, reserved for Euro-American guests, the ABC Hotels alienated locals, who could only participate in hotel life as staff.

The structural logic of the ABC Hotels, within the context of settler colonialism, can be seen as a form of colonial exhibitionism. Euro-American hotel guests would have been able to look down from the elevated iron balconies onto the landscape from which they were separated. In this way, the modern-

ist hotels would also serve as a warning to those on the outside about who was claiming control. Congolese hotel staff would also have been on display as such. The external system of staircases would have made the performance of their various duties more visible. These prefabricated structures appear to have continued Art Nouveau's controlling aspects into tight systems of enclosure and Foucauldian surveillance. However, they also speak to the fact that no form of colonialism is monolithic or all-powerful. The hotels revealed vulnerabilities of the colonial occupation as much as assumption and ambition. The tallest structures in the area would have revealed the everyday foibles, inefficiencies, and dependencies of the travelers at the same time as declaring their privilege.

As the ABC Hotels introduced an early and sophisticated form of modernism to the colony, they brought with them the contradictions and cultural divisiveness that were to follow global architectural trends. Imported structures installed an aesthetics of difference and dislocation that was to be continuously inscribed on the landscape. While similar in design, the Kinshasa and Mbanza Ngungu ABC Hotels also had different lives according to the environments in which they became embedded.

THE NEW COMMERCIAL CENTER: LEOPOLDVILLE

As discussed in the introduction, the Belgian colony did not boast a large population of settlers in the early years of the twentieth century. At this point, the ABC Hotels would have entertained a mixed bag of European travelers. However, the Leopoldville establishment would become the social center for Europeans of the fledgling city by the 1920s (Mboka 2011a). Its then-impressive architecture formed part of a greater enterprise by Albert Thys and George Moulaert to develop Leopoldville as the commercial hub of the colony. In 1920, Leopoldville replaced Boma as the capital. While there was no enforcement of racial segregation by law yet, colonial social hierarchy saw the white settlers living separately to the Congolese. Importantly, the railway structured segregation, with white residential housing situated north of the tracks (Beeckmans and Lagae 2015: 204).

Colonial construction of Leopoldville necessitated housing for Congolese city dwellers, to provide a workforce. In 1911, concurrent to the construction of the ABC Hotel, a plot of land was assigned to Congolese workers who were

registered with the local administration (Mboka 2011b).⁸ Rather than emulating modern architecture, the houses built on this land were based on what were perceived as African aesthetics. A wide variety of informal structures were erected: huts and small houses made of different variations of wooden poles, woven straw, palm stems, and thatched roofs, all built within a grid pattern. Domiciles constructed with more durable foundations of brick and cement were avoided, deemed “more evolved” by colonial officials (Capelle 1947: 40). Nicknamed Belge, Kinshasa’s first *cit  indig ne* (Indigenous precinct) gave rise to further so-called native housing settlements, including those in the quartiers of Lingwala and Barumbu (Capelle 1947: 8–11). The binary structure of a colonial city that was to be highly segregated was thus induced by the colonial order’s early social and economic stratification.⁹

Given the language of architectural materials deemed fit for the Congolese people, the new iron hotel set up a system of contrasts. When the most advanced use of iron of that time was paraded in the colony for the exclusive pleasure of white people, luxury dwarfed all local dwellings. It presented the kind of architecture that all buildings, particularly those made of more ephemeral natural materials, should aspire to. As is widely the case with colonial domination, architecture understood as traditional was equated with backwardness. The “allegedly superior technology” of modernist machine aesthetics “delineated the colonized subject as primitive and therefore in need of civilizing” (Mudimbe 1994: 105).

An early grammar of urban difference was played out in the aesthetics and aura of the ABC Hotel in its heyday. Kinshasa’s first hotel held some of its Art Nouveau heritage of privilege and immersion. Jos Vandenbreenen (2015: 12) identifies its Art Nouveau lineage in the metal skeleton of the hotel, highlighting its pleasing sense of harmony, with all the metallic elements serving a greater aesthetic function.¹⁰ An elegant appearance was coupled with a reputation of grandeur. The hotel occupied a central position in the burgeoning city in the popular imagination as much as it did in the physical landscape. In one of the rare travelogues describing the early colony, Henri Segart (1919:

8. To live in this precinct, the Congolese had to have paid their taxes.

9. Racial segregation would be formalized as law in an ordinance of 1945, by which time larger influxes of Belgians had made their way to the colony (Beeckmans 2010).

10. Vandenbreenen (2015) further points out that Horta had previously interspersed handmade elements with manufactured details. He thus bestows credibility on the ABC Hotel in Kinshasa by deferring to Horta.

201) celebrated the modern ABC Hotel, calling the structure the most beautiful in the Congo Basin. He emphasized the elegance of the furnishings, the magnificent views from each bedroom, and the flow of architectural space. Importantly, he saw the surrounding urban space as “uncomfortably dusty and humid” (200). Evidently, the hotel and its terraced riverbank lawns provided pleasing respite. Dotted with clusters of low buildings and dense copses of vegetation, these formed a slow-moving hub of frontier activity, centered on rail and river commerce.

Echoing the fantastical apparitions of Art Nouveau interior design in Brussels, the ABC Hotel presented a language of luxurious interiority, achieving an immersive and revitalizing atmosphere, distinct from its greater surrounds. Luxury was laid on through familiar European products. Segart (1919: 202) enthusiastically lists imported fish, meats, and vegetables, rarities for the colonial traveler, and extols Leopoldville’s outdoor piano parties, casino, and top-class champagne. Situated in a locality with deep-reaching and sophisticated traditions of woodwork, the hotel eschews the natural export products of the colonial project for industrial iron. The Leopoldville ABC Hotel elevated those parts of European society not used to being at the epicenter of social activity. Contrastingly, while the older hotel in the Bas-Congo also provided a taste of Europe to the mixed bunch of colonial businessmen who arrived, the fertile environment surrounding it imbued it with a different nuance.

LEOPOLDVILLE’S VEGETABLE GARDEN: THYSVILLE

The Bas-Congo was renowned for its fecund plant life, and the fledgling Thysville settlement became an important hub for colonial agricultural programs. Dubbed “Leopoldville’s vegetable garden,” the European city was founded around its railway hotel and village. The station, hotel, and cluster of worker housing share sloped corrugated roofing and iron struts. As in Leopoldville, ironwork served as an exterior symbol, marking the hotel building as a modern element in the countryside and mediating interaction with the outside. Segart (1919: 238) describes the ABC Hotel experience here beginning with disembarkation, as travelers were greeted by staff on the platform. He thought the smaller hotel was just as comfortable as its counterpart in Leopoldville. Travelers arriving at night would have been introduced to the area by the reassuring sight of a glowing resting house, the only large, electrically lit mass amid dense vegetation.



Fig. 11. The ABC Hotel settlement, Mbanza Ngungu (then Thysville), circa 1915 (Courtesy RMCA collection, Tervuren [AP.o.2.6684], photographer unknown)

Postcards and photographs sent back to Belgium illustrate Thysville as an orderly, rural idyll. An early photograph shows a picturesque scene of a pathway meandering up a hill to the village and train station (figure 11). A copse of trees frames a cluster of pointed roofs and houses, nestled in a thick blanket of grasses. With different arboreal silhouettes, the landscape could be mistaken for the European countryside. This settler fantasy is without any people or Congolese settlements.¹¹ Imperial meanings are inscribed over the landscape through the unknown photographer's gaze. Such scenes encourage the viewer to contemplate the image from a removed position (Wenzel 2017: 461). In the closed circuit of the design of Belgian occupation, architecture and imagery were entirely for European consumption.

The view from the ABC Hotel balconies furthered a certain kind of colonial gaze in its time. Art Nouveau in the metropole created a fantasy by symbolically fusing nature with industry and colony with metropole. When Congolese bodies and cultures were represented, they were blended into this

11. Imagery of the empty landscape, a motif common to all colonial cultures, was used to justify the occupier's right to be there.

artificial nature. In the colonial outpost, in contrast, sharp edges of metallic decoration formed both a barrier and a domesticating frame against surrounding vegetation and, by implication, the people living in it. Bourgeois framing techniques, as seen from decorative balconies and mediated documentation, declare the viewer's ownership of what lies beyond. The implication of the constructed vantage point was that its guests could feel like overlords. However, even in the early days of the Thysville hotel, the attempt to stage-manage the Congo could not have been entirely convincing.

While the manufactured silhouette squares off against mossy wood, creepers, grass, and mist, these natural elements have more influence over its metallic matter. Bright verdant colors and bulbous forms, dripping with moisture, exceed the effects of the metallic framing techniques of the balustrade and trellises. Even in the hotel's heyday, the overpowering presence of natural exuberance must have made it appear flimsy and frail. Once the two hotel structures arrived in Central Africa, the saturated air began its work on their metallic surfaces, generating rust and encouraging small plants and insects. The implanted hotels speak more to a history of failure to fully prepare for the conditions of their context than they do to early technological innovation. Even during the time when prefabricated colonial buildings were being celebrated in the metropole, some experienced European colonists questioned the longevity of standardized solutions to varying equatorial conditions (Osayimwese 2017: 197). The impracticalities of the iron hotels speak to the catastrophic effect that Belgian industrialization brought to the immediate area.

THE ART NOUVEAU VILLAGE

The design of the Thysville workers' cottages, dating back to the inception of the hotel, presents similarly general solutions to the tropical climes. These cottages were built not for local Congolese but for the European laborers who came to build the railway. With a prominent component of prefabricated metal parts, the housing came in a few basic models, repeated across the village. More iron is incorporated in the central, grander buildings, flaunting decorative sheets of metalwork and more elaborate staircases. Around these are clusters of smaller, simpler bungalows. Except for the metal plinths that hold up some of these structures, only a few metalwork details are to be seen, in banisters and eaves. The entire early township for European labor-

ers is aesthetically connected through corrugated iron roofs, topped with the metallic flourishes of weather vanes. Whereas similar bungalows were to be found across the colony at this time, these stand out as having a sophisticated design. Not only is the visible metalwork more refined than in the average colonial home, but the clustered housing and the hotel were conceived as a whole complex.

Preplanned architecture came with its own system of hierarchies, and the railway company's order of command was inscribed into the fabric of the young town (figure 12). The showpiece hotel has more pronounced decorative edges than do the other prefabricated buildings, with elegant swoops at the edges of its roof and a curtain of repeated circles, squares, triangles, and stars. Grander homes were reserved for railway company managers. Smaller homes, some not much more than a couple of rooms on stilts, were clearly designed with the single European worker in mind, with no room for a family (figure 13). Tight spaces in shared dormitory houses and elevated huts would have insulated the men from their surroundings, as well as literally set them above and apart from Congolese workers. The iron-augmented village was intended as an enclave for white Europeans, and the local Congolese workforce was initially forced to live in makeshift shelter across a cleft in the land.

As the industrial town grew, further cottages for white settlers were built in the 1930s. Made of stone and cement, these exude a more permanent aura than the earlier structures closer to the railway line, with their more delicate lines of iron. Squat houses, topped with domed arches and sloping roofs that extend over rounded walls, are repeated across the crest of the central hillock of the colonial town. These uniform homes have a great deal in common with Belgian Art Nouveau's rural branch. Country homes such as Henry Van de Velde's *Villa Bloemenwerf* (1895) and Gustave Serrurier-Bovy's home, *L'Aube* (the Dawn, 1903), were Art Nouveau abodes, rooted in the English Arts and Crafts movement. When the English cottage style migrated to Belgium, regional features (especially Flemish vernacular) were incorporated. These cottages' purpose was to encourage a way of life closer to an imagined peasant past, living in communion with nature. However, the Thysville constructions, reminiscent of tortoise shells, suggest a different kind of sanctuary. Rather than taking refuge in nature, inhabitants are shielded from it. Unlike utopian social housing schemes in Belgium, which were seeped in nostalgia for pre-industrial times, the Thysville experiment ignored vernacular building traditions. Whereas colonial architects in Algeria, Morocco, and Libya attempted to create a style that incorporated local aesthetics, this did not take place in



Fig. 12. The ABC Hotel settlement, Mbanza Ngungu (then Thysville), 2015
(Photograph © Ruth Sacks.)



Fig. 13. A worker's cottage from the original Thysville settlement, Mbanza Ngungu, 2015
(Photograph © Ruth Sacks.)

the Congo (Lagae 2003: 43). European aesthetics were applied in a system that interrupted existing patterns of living within the environment.

In contrast to the rigidity of imported iron, the myriad Congolese forms of architecture reflected local sensitivities to working the land. Made of different combinations of natural grasses, leaves, and earth, these movable and impermanent homesteads were built by locals to follow cultivable farming areas. Common practice saw new dwellings laid over old fields, allowing land to lay fallow (Elleh 1997: 160). These were flexible designs that ensured that each structure within a complex could provide for different purposes, serving as kitchen, lodging for guests, or bedrooms. They also often reflected social hierarchy, as did colonial settlements and cities in Africa. However, the stylistic language of how this was enacted was very different to the multistory constructions of iron and brick that the colonial community introduced.

Johan Lagae (2004: 173) writes that to Belgian eyes, the vernacular building forms “lacked monumentality,” and that is why colonial architecture did not draw on them for inspiration. Yet the various forms of Congolese vernacular architecture were developed in sympathy with natural cycles and seasons.¹² Existing practices of working the land in the central farming area developed over time through interactions and trade with various other cultures and peoples. Portuguese traders introduced hardy crops from the Americas in the late sixteenth and seventeenth century (such as maize and cassava), which had slowly migrated into the interior and absorbed into existing diets. The systematic imposition of colonial agriculture, which set out to extract as much as the land could yield, overburdened the capacity of this land.

The Bas-Congo and Équateur were the primary source of cocoa during the colonial era. Except for the 5 to 10 percent of plantations run by small-scale farmers, known as “family farming,” these were plantations belonging to large export companies (De Beule, Jassogne, and Asten 2014: 21–22).¹³ Not only were preexisting farming, distribution, and trade systems destroyed, but so was biodiversity, impoverishing the soil.¹⁴ Large-scale colonial farming drives from the 1930s onward wreaked havoc in the Bas-Congo, and by 1957,

12. In addition to other factors, including spiritual belief systems (see Bourdier and Minh-Ha 2011).

13. Today, family farming makes up 80 percent of crops (D’Haese, Banea-Mayambu, and Remaut-De Winter 2013).

14. The Belgian State Decree of 1885 saw almost all Congolese land appropriated to be used or sold by the colonial administration or given as concessions to commercial companies.

the region, once known for its fertility, was declared unsuitable for colonial agricultural systems (Baeck 1957: 135). As a nodal point for industrialization, Thysville's early iron structures were harbingers of the depletion of yield and sustainable agricultural activity. Once the second most industrialized colony in sub-Saharan Africa, the Congo now has the poorest food security in this area (D'Haese, Banea-Mayambu, and Remaut-De Winter 2013).

LIVING REMAINS: THE COURTHOUSE, MBANZA NGUNGU

Contemporary Mbanza Ngungu is a slow-paced university town of approximately a hundred thousand people and is also home to a major garrison of the national army. Its main function is still as a transportation center, of sorts. Once Mobutu Sese Seko's Second Republic had established itself and the postcolonial nation was renamed Zaire in the 1960s, the railway village became the Office National des Transports (National Office of Transport, ONATRA), absorbing the colonial company that had gone before. The prefabricated colonial cottages are now assigned to ONATRA workers. Social hierarchies are continued, with the grander homes going to managers and their families (some of these house officials and army leaders) and the smaller ones going to workers.

Still in a central position, the former ABC Hotel is the courthouse serving the Mbanza Ngungu region (as it has done since the late 1960s). Its distinctive iron exoskeleton is now painted in the bright colors of the nation's flag (figure 14). The less ornate offices of the area's municipal leader are next door. With the railway line no longer in service, the courthouse stands as a branch of local governance and a national institution rather than a company hotel. This former marker of colonial land claiming, repurposed as a court of law, accentuates an irrevocable entanglement of identity. There can be no return to precolonial conditions of rule. Mbanza Ngungu's old center is now divided according to state-controlled decisions, while containing historical structural logics.

The old settler building has taken on its new identity with some reluctance. While it is relatively well kept, it has been palpably battered by heat and dampness (factors that have not had the same effect on the stone cottages from the later colonial period). Signs of stress and rust are most obvious in those sections of ironwork that are not coated in enamel paint. An iron bridge connecting the courthouse to its neighboring structure has been declared unsafe for use. The civic institution holds the bustling daytime traffic



Fig. 14. The Mbanza Ngungu courthouse (formerly the ABC Hotel), 2015
(Photograph © Ruth Sacks.)

of bureaucrats, various advocates, judges, and their clerks, as well as clients and witnesses, within a neatly serviceable interior. The courthouse's off-white walls have warped in the moist air and are marked with dark, wet rivulets. The court offices are furnished with solid, elderly wooden desks, mixed with mass-produced plastic chairs (ubiquitous to most work and social activities). Most people who work in the old hotel tell of discomfort. Insufficient space and leaky walls are unpleasant factors, with the main complaint being the structure's shabby appearance, deemed unsuitable for its august function (figure 14). The sculpted grass lawns from the hotel era have long since vanished, and the site's low walls make it easily accessible. Unlike in Kinshasa, security is slow to approach once the site has been breached.

The courthouse grounds are alive with the activities of female informal traders in the process of cooking on fires beneath a thatched roof erected for this purpose. Their goats and chickens mingle with the judges and advocates, who go about the business of the court in full regalia. Various messengers and office workers queue for food and chat. From the outside, the atmosphere is jovial, and the grounds of the courthouse merge with that of roadside traders.



Fig. 15. The Mbanza Ngungu courthouse balcony (formerly the ABC Hotel), 2015
(Photograph © Ruth Sacks.)

Balconies are seldom empty of small groups of men and women conferring during the working day. After hours, the building is integrated with the street. Pungent burned-out grass, goat droppings, and a lone cockerel attest to a busy day. The court grounds are worn bare from the constant human traffic.

While the courthouse is regularly patched up, the iron-laced cottages are in various stages of decay. Metal parts are rusting, leaving reddish streaks along the walls. Structures fall, especially those assigned to retired staff, who are less able to invest in maintenance. ONATRA tenants are upset at being forced to live in homes that sag and flood during the heavy downfalls of the rainy seasons. A senior worker, assigned to a cottage since 1965, complains of “cracks everywhere. . . . Tomorrow or after tomorrow, it could crumble. I am not of heart to stay in this house. If I could leave today, I would” (pers. comm., 2015). The foundational houses of Mbanza Ngungu are mired in the past. Still a halfway point, they now house people wanting to move on. Not only do their size and external decoration belie the status of their ONATRA-affiliated inhabitants, but they do not cater to the needs of contemporary Congolese lifestyles.

The rusting, often overgrown, bungalows have more in common with the corrugated iron of informal settlements than they do with other modernist

designs in the town. However, where informal structures tend to be more malleable in terms of alterations, the ONATRA homes are fixed, with no space for larger families. Occupants must make do with thin, damp walls and cramped rooms. Larger homes, which evidence renovations to make room for garages, usually house more than one family. It is common for their gardens to be utilized to grow maize and tomatoes. As moss and rust creep across the structures and farming encroaches on city space, boundaries between what is natural and artificial, as well as what is countryside and town, are muddled. In the old railway village, additions to the dilapidated homes tend to be informally patched with scraps. The stylistic unity of the early metal-laced village is now replaced by natural outgrowths, interspersed with stained walls and rusting metal details. Offshoots of Art Nouveau now give the impression of being slowly subsumed by nature.

Up the hill, colonial cottages from the 1930s are more satisfactory. Although also unsuited to the large families that are customary, they have more spacious interiors. The sturdier stone homes boast working firesides and garages, unlike prefabricated designs made in Europe. These cottages and other key structures demonstrate a strong Art Deco element, recalling the bold stripes, geometric patterns, and symmetrical design of prominent European buildings such as nearby Sacred Heart Church (1930) and Hotel Cosmopolite (c. 1935) in Mbanza Ngungu.¹⁵ The metallic aesthetics of the ABC Hotel and its accompanying cottages do not ostensibly influence the style of buildings that came after them. Nevertheless, as Art Nouveau iron was replaced by Art Deco stone and cement, an architectural tradition that only spoke back to Europe was continued. A hierarchical pattern that privileged European form was firmly established, even though the aesthetic of prefabricated metal was no longer used as an exterior.

The railway that set so much in motion has shifted in meaning over the years as its accompanying structures have evolved. A new line was built to replace the colonial-era one running through Mbanza Ngungu, and there is no longer an active station opposite the former hotel. Only one building is still used: the old workshop for rail repair and manufacture still operates as before. With the old railway line no longer in use, train parts are sent by road. The interior of the workshop is a mix of active areas, where ONATRA staff are

15. The name "Art Deco" came from the 1925 International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts in Paris. In Lubumbashi, Art Deco design by Raymond Cloquet and Julien Caen was the main feature of the Exposition Internationale d'Elisabethville (International Exposition of Elisabethville, 1931).

busy, and obsolete machinery, all punctuated by pools of water leaking from the roof. Neither a stagnant ruin, nor an energized workplace, it is a place of reordering and practical compromise. In Mbanza Ngungu, the colonial apparatus has been absorbed into the greater, slow-growing circuitries of its surrounds, constantly renegotiating early assertions of modernization.

In the yard, creepers and succulent plants engulf deteriorating carriages and tracks. In a reversal of Art Nouveau logic, living sinuous forms grasp husks of iron matter, adding to its decay at the same time as the metal provides disintegrating structural support. This is not nature controlled by or channeled into industry, but nature that adjusts to toxic levels of iron and overtakes. In a literal entanglement, growing plants—not all of them indigenous—are bound up with colonial debris (see fig. 18 below). Stained soil around piles of metal clippings provides a reminder of what the foundational metal of the early buildings is enacting under the deep sand.

Although the early industrialization the railway village brought destroyed the yield of the land for cash crops like cocoa, another kind of growth continues in abundance. While some plant (and animal) life is useful to locals as food, medicine, and building materials on a small scale (see Latham 2004), these forms are not suitable for official harvesting or agricultural farming. A micro-ecosystem has formed around the rusted metal of the former railway village, and it is thriving on its own vegetal terms, contrary to the needs of surrounding humans. Even as Congolese workers are trapped in the remains of Art Nouveau, frames for natural growth have long since been overpowered by their subject.

BRITTLE MODERNISM: PALACE ONATRA, KINSHASA

Unlike the effusion of greenery that threatens to overtake the rusting ABC Hotel buildings in Mbanza Ngungu, the Kinshasa site is fragmented and reduced. Now used as ONATRA offices, the former ABC Hotel in Kinshasa is isolated on the bank of the Congo River, sandwiched between haphazard waterside industry and the tall, hard angles of downtown Gombe. The lone building is dwarfed by massive high-rises as much as by its own previous reputation. Beneath fresh coats of paint—a combination of white and pale green that is highly susceptible to damp—the slow deterioration of the elderly structure appears to be only momentarily delayed.



Fig. 16. The balcony of Palace ONATRA (formerly the ABC Hotel), Kinshasa, 2015
(Photograph © Ruth Sacks.)

From inside Palace ONATRA, river breezes bring the smell of fresh rain, combined with odors of rotting waste. The view of the Congo River opens into a world of postindustrial remains including the hulks of ships, working cranes, and rusting chains. The top-floor balcony with the best vantage of the watery landscape holds a large and heavy wooden table (figure 16). This was long ago the property of the colonial governor. Looking toward the riverbank from this balcony, one sees Art Nouveau overhangs framing a functioning lumberyard and a defunct railway line. The leftovers of industry are present from every angle of the elevated view.

Across the water, the skyline of Brazzaville is distinct, but inaccessible due to national hostilities. A trickle of river traffic reminds the visitor of the massive tracts of unnavigable water that led to the railway being built. One small island visible from the balcony is said to be haunted by disappeared people Mobutu allegedly sent there. The interior of the former hotel is not suited to the needs of a contemporary office. Desks and people are squeezed into small rooms, originally intended as hotel bedrooms. Echoing

other ONATRA outlets in the area, offices are lacking in decoration and there are no computers.¹⁶

The hotel structure that once hosted lavish parties and provided a haven to colonial enterprise is now separate from the wealthy surrounding suburb. Residents of Gombe, Kinshasa's uptown, are of the moneyed classes, including expats and diplomats. From the high-rises that overtook the ABC Hotel long ago, the elite may look down on the dusty street activities of informal trading and all manner of transport. Cars tend to speed past the boarded-up sites, and pedestrians must walk far along the road to reach Ngaliema Beach, where goods and people travel in and out of Kinshasa. At Palace ONATRA, the liveliest activity in 2014–15 took place stories above, as a Chinese-funded behemoth of steel and glass was under construction. Palace ONATRA is now partially boarded up and guarded, with access to curious passersby firmly denied. With its terraced landscape overlooking the water long gone, the site's walls hem the building in. Its pithy fringe of greenery is unremarkable in a suburb where official buildings have well-tended gardens and sculpted embankments. Kinshasa is a city where surface values are highly prized, especially that which appears costly and new. The condition of the old hotel signals that it no longer counts as premium space.

Use of the colonial edifice is marked by expedience. The family of an engineer, who also serves as the caretaker, resides on the second floor. Children's games and family chores are played out on the balconies, staging informal domesticity amid office work (figure 17). The narrow strip of land around the building is populated by guards and a lone gardener. The former hotel now presents a multilayered ecosystem of different kinds of people that test the limits of its built matter. Whereas the prefabricated metal frameworks of the ABC Hotel were intended to house a certain caliber of colonial guest, the building's current situation mixes office work with daily life in ways that suggest the impoverishment of both.

The building's elderly body bears evidence of the different periods it has survived. Art Deco flourishes on the ground floor are the result of extensive renovations from the 1920s that were intended to increase the hotel's capacity. It was in this form, under the name of Hotel Palace, that the establishment enjoyed its most celebrated period—the years between the world wars—particularly under the auspices of private investor Joseph Damseaux, who

16. The main ONATRA center is housed in a large building on the main boulevard that was similarly emptied out.



Fig. 17. The balcony of Palace ONATRA (formerly the ABC Hotel) from below, Kinshasa, 2015

(Photograph © Ruth Sacks.)

took control of the hotel in 1937 (Mboka 2011a). Its current configuration of Art Deco base with Art Nouveau-esque trimmings on top embodies shifting allegiances in Belgian colonial architecture. Spindly prefabricated metal frames mark the period before the First World War, and Art Deco geometries point to what came after.

In Leopoldville, as in Thysville, colonial Art Deco reached its height in the 1930s and 1940s. Belgian architects only fully invested in projects in the colony from the 1920s onward, and after the Second World War, they experimented with different strands of modernism. A later, more expressive Art Deco was a prominent component, with Kinshasa's Forescom building being the most iconic colonial production, and other prominent examples including Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Boboto College, and the Sacred Heart Missionary buildings (Gemoets, Lagae, and Toulrier 2011: 73).¹⁷ Art Deco structures bring a

17. Designed by R. Fostier and completed in 1946, the Forescom building was built for the Société forestière et commerciale du Congo (Congo Forestry and Commercial Society). It resembles a massive boat in downtown Kinshasa. Richard Lequy's l'Hôpital Reine-Élisabeth (Queen Elizabeth Hospital) for colonial patients, which opened in

distinct character of pleated blocks, flat roofs, and domed entrances to their surrounds. Like Art Nouveau, Art Deco resulted from a confluence of cultural influences, among them Mesoamerica, Egypt, East Asia, the classical world, and Africa. This last was represented by the bold geometric designs of African textiles, as well as motifs of shields, sculptures, and stylized African figures. In Kinshasa, reference to Congolese imagery tends to be limited to architectural surface patterning rather than encompassing structural features.¹⁸ Art Deco notions of Africa arrived in the Congo via Paris.

Mementos from the interbella heyday of the iron hotel include typical Art Deco features in the background. A photograph of Congolese staff waiting tables reveals Egyptian-inspired lotus flowers crowning a pillar. Hotel tags from around 1930 sport stylized, geometric outlines of bare-breasted African women wearing indeterminate tribal headgear. These are typical of the Art Deco fascination with the ethnographic African object. As in 1930s Paris, the go-to hotel in the capital of the Belgian Congo casually promoted an extreme exoticization of the African body. The actual Congolese people within the hotel were present as servers, chefs, and cleaners.

After catering to colonial high times, the hotel saw its star wane. The building was handed over to ONATRA in 1946, at which point its second wing was demolished and the Art Deco regions were coated in stucco (Mboka 2011a). Newer hotels, like the Memling, Stanley, and Regina, provided more fashionable forms of entertainment and sported trendier looks. In 1983, what had been the Hotel Palace was ironically renamed Palace ONATRA.

Antoine Kiobe Lumenganeso's (1995: 144, 149) guidebook to Kinshasa lists the former hotel as a relevant heritage site, linking its style of metalwork to the Eiffel Tower in Paris. The value of the iron hotel is thus understood according to its relationship to Europe.¹⁹ There are several subtle ways in which Lumenganeso further encourages the idea that modern Congolese architecture should automatically be compared to the Global North.

1933, was inspired by Victor Horta's Art Deco design for Brugmann hospital in Brussels (1926). Private colonial homes from that era are not as visible in the public eye.

18. Johan Lagae and Denis Laurens (2001) have written about potential "Africanisms" in the work of Claude Laurens. While the Belgian architect was active in Leopoldville in the 1950s, his attempts to work with African architecture and tropes tended to be limited to international expos in Euro-America.

19. Lumenganeso does not speak of Belgian Art Nouveau. For recent guidebooks that make this point, see Gemoets, Lagae, and Toulrier (2011); and Lagae and Toulrier (2013: 35).

The book first mentions Palace ONATRA in relation to the baobabs found on nearby Ngobila Beach, marking the location of a former major market, *Insasa de Ntsulu*. In prioritizing natural edifices that are far older than colonial architecture, Lumenganeso attempts to emplace a long-reaching Indigenous sensibility over the ruptures imposed by colonial outsiders. However, he also (inadvertently) negates the existence of the architecture of precolonial inhabitants.

The guidebook format does not allow for the innovation and ingenuity of the temporary architecture of the original settlements of the Humbu and Bateke to be considered.²⁰ However, the cosmopolitanism of trading centers that operated long before the intervention of King Leopold II's agents present the fledgling urban life that would become today's Kinshasa. Henry Morton Stanley's first outpost of 1881 is cited as the beginning of Kinshasa as a city in most sources. Preexisting villages are represented as precursors to the main event of the first colonial settlement at the (freshly renamed) Stanley Pool. With modern urbanity understood to originate in colonization, Lumenganeso's guidebook is left with the difficult task of having to pick apart which aspects of its accompanying myths of modernization to accept and which to negate.

NARRATIVES OF RUST

From Segaert's (1919) description of luxurious hotels amid rough travel to Lumenganeso's (1995) overview of notable edifices in a city of erasures and overlays, narratives around the ABC Hotels hold common assumptions of colonial modernism as separate from and superior to the variegated forms of Congolese communities, past and present. The buildings' value is judged according to how they relate to the metropole, before the needs of the contemporary urban public are considered. While the assumption that Euro-American modernism is central is unsurprising, an alternative narrative is supplied by the Art Nouveau constructions themselves.

In Mbanza Ngungu and Kinshasa, the aging railway buildings are beginning to sag from the weight of daily activity, human and otherwise. On closer

20. The Bateke had two main villages along the riverbank where the nucleus of Leopoldville was to be located. Nshasha, later Kinshasa, was an important trading center. Farther north, Kintambo was headed by the Bateke chief Ngaliema.

inspection, the extreme onset of rust and the fragility of their metal framework come to the fore. The folly of dislocated designs from afar that only catered to temperature is tangible through surfaces that are now lively sites of plant and insect life, with varying combinations of mosses and tiny plants amid dark crusts of rust. The longer the former hotels remain in use, the more the nonhuman elements involved in their ongoing creation become apparent. Prefabricated metal now looks organic despite fresh coats of paint, due to decades of pounding temperatures, damp air, and tropical storms. The old iron frameworks appear to be slowly blending with their lush surrounds. Interlocked activity between man-made material and natural life defies the original claims of imported iron. Despite its machine-made language of efficiency, mobile architecture did not provide rational design solutions to the occupation of equatorial weather conditions.

I believe these small details play vital roles in larger sociopolitical vistas. Rusting metal and warped wooden boards signal more than everyday expediencies. The extractivist colonialism that birthed the iron structures led to impoverished systems of local industry and ways of life. While their inhabitants desire serviceable offices, the structural matter of the former hotels are highly impractical for their habitation. Renovations and more permanent restoration measures are too expensive for the state. Their inhabitants have to simply make do on a day-to-day basis. The immediate grounds around the former hotels have neat gardens, but these are punctuated by piecemeal farming to keep food on the table. Makeshift paneling and buckling fresh paint speak of needs at odds with means.

The variegated textures and surfaces of the former hotels present a densely layered version of their history. After prolonged use, the creaking structures hold their own sense of time. They are pulled toward their past by their patched iron exteriors while slowly being drawn toward a future merger with plant and animal life, appearing stubborn and stretched. As ONATRA workers and those of the court demand more dignified edifices, metal, wood, and cement bend toward dissolution and mutation. Within this push and pull, the iron-laced constructions are unable to provide a single narrative for their occupants.

On the sites of the ABC Hotels, colonial remains have developed into hybrid constructions. The formal work of the court is interwoven with informal trading, with the street-style restaurants outside holding more sway than the business of law within. Untrue rumors have circulated that Palace ONATRA is now a slum building. While this is patently incorrect, the offices do

not compare favorably to the upmarket homes and skyscrapers of Gombe. Children's toys and laundry occupy the balcony next door to the former governor's official table. Both sites are interwoven with care and disrepair, refusing any distinct categories of place.

The voices of the inhabitants provide mixed messages that chime with that of the aging architecture. Most ONATRA residents in Mbanza Ngungu complain bitterly of ill health caused by leaky, damp homes, especially in the small bungalows and cottages on stilts. Office workers in Kinshasa are cramped and uncomfortable in boxy rooms intended as sleeping chambers. At odds with this chorus of bitter complaint is a comment from the in-house gardener of Palace ONATRA: "A colonial building is a legacy. It is good that we inherited it from colonization, and it is our pleasure. It reminds us of that time" (pers. comm., 2015). Within a city center that prizes that which is new, shiny, and neat, the elderly relic is an object of colonial nostalgia for some.

Colonial nostalgia, as well as longing for the time of the early Mobutu regime (see chapter 5), is not unusual in Kinshasa. Since independence, the city has been subject to precarious living conditions due to political upheaval and soaring inflation. Amid a life of uncertainty, where making do has been a main preoccupation of most inhabitants excluded from the elite and middle class, longing for a time of order can prevail. Didier Gondola (2002: 34) attributes nostalgia for Belgian imperialism to the organization and control presented by the nanny state, which attempted to infiltrate every aspect of the colonized subject's life, including health care and basic education. Despite the extreme psychic and physical violence that came with paternalistic colonialism, it represents one aspect of a shared history. Colonial subjecthood was never a faceless mass; it was made up of different people whose individual suffering, resistance, and complicity with the regime were experienced in different ways.

The groundskeeper in Kinshasa, who has worked on the site for decades, has the small but vital agency of being able to repair and maintain it, for which he has more means than do the inhabitants of the prefabricated cottages in Mbanza Ngungu. His fondness for this "legacy" is a longing not necessarily for the regularity of colonial times but for the illusion of order the site itself once provided. At its core, the building still holds the skeleton of a time when things "looked right" on the surface (Bissell 2005: 217). The narratives of those who live with and in the ABC Hotel buildings are never even. Whatever changes the former hotels undergo, and despite the palimpsest of history overlaid on their metal structures, they can never escape their origin. The

prefabricated iron exoskeletons are a continuous reminder of the rigid logic of the first colonial regime, which imposed rather than interacted.

Monuments of the colonial era, particularly statues of Leopold II and Stanley, were removed by the Mobutu regime. Historians such as Lumen-ganeso (1995: 5) argue that these are part of city history and should therefore be maintained. If heritage objects are important for what they represent historically, their framing narratives are critical. There have been tentative discussions in Kinshasa and Mbanza Ngungu concerning the possibility of making the former ABC Hotel buildings into heritage sites. In the capital, current construction of a new history museum (funded by the South Korean company KOICA) has overtaken any ambitions for restoring colonial relics like the old ABC Hotel (R. L. Brown 2018).

A recent conference in Mbanza Ngungu, organized by the architecture department of the Free University of Brussels, broached the question of hotels as heritage sites. Yves Robert (2017: 149) views the courthouse as an exemplar of prefabricated architecture that embodies “the imperative of rapid construction.” He suggests that difficult colonial history is linked to the railway and interregional connections (141). This argument champions the narrative of technology as progress more than the issue of shared city history promoted by Lumenganeso. It also ignores the fact that the material memory of the buildings says very different things about the early colonial regime than would a pristine heritage site. Robert’s view fails to fully consider the state of entanglement of the railway village with its human and plant community. Moreover, it is unclear whether precolonial vernacular architectures of the region would be represented. Looking only at the modernist object of architecture, Robert ignores the fact that such a plan would necessitate removing the people who live in its locus and survive off the trade the courthouse brings. As recompense to current residents is highly unlikely, the plight of the resident ONATRA workers would worsen even further.

In the highly unlikely event of the Mbanza Ngungu ABC Hotel becoming a state heritage site, it would be frozen within the modernist historical narrative described by Robert, severed from its fragile socioeconomic context. The region, which is rich in natural and cultural attractions and has a game park, has not managed to attract a stream of wealthy tourists yet, given instability in “one of the African countries with the highest rate of poverty” (D’Haese, Banea-Mayambu, and Remaut-De Winter 2013: 8). As models for the Congo to follow, Robert (2017: 161) names heritage sites in Benin and Ivory Coast that have been successfully revamped. In so doing, he echoes the sentiments

of the early prefabricated architecture itself, which assumed that all tropical colonies could be treated in similar ways. Once again, the narrative around the ABC Hotel structures is being overlaid by solutions from abroad.

OVERGROWN CATEGORIZATIONS

Far from ruins, the former ABC Hotels are also not sanitized museums. In bearing traces of the various forms of life that they host, they are places of continual renegotiation. These Art Nouveau offshoots are never merely the voice of the conqueror, absorbing the blows of history. Neither are they entirely spolia, the central objects of the previous regime triumphantly claimed by its successor. Rather than representing a single era, these colonial remains are saturated by layers of overlapping histories, including those of the surrounding environment. Without losing their association with early Belgian colonialism, the metal-laced structures occupy a flexible in-between space. While their built matter gradually gives way to encroaching natural forces, the prefabricated iron skeletons—with their own slow life—affect their incumbents and their daily activities. The slippage between a colonialist-modernist language of progress and the contemporary state of the structures speaks to a sense of “reciprocal capture” (Stengers 2003: 36). A mutual process of identity construction continues to develop, whereby the manner in which the hotels have changed over the years is now how their meaning is made.

The ABC Hotels blur discrete categories and identities. Their various interdependencies muddy dualistic perceptions, such as what constitutes being foreign (European/Belgian) as distinct from Indigenous (African/Congolese) and the rural with the urban. Hierarchical taxonomies (for example, the canon of art and architectural history), which tend to read objects purely in terms of their cultural significance and privilege Euro-American cultures, do not prove to be the most useful way of understanding these colonial remains. The dense and teeming atmospheres of these sights expose the paucity of these categories (figure 18).

While they never entirely embody the historical period of their origin, the rusting exoskeletons of the ABC Hotels continue to externalize a reminder of it. Living testaments to an on-going interaction between colonial traces and present-day conditions, the ABC buildings make both past expectations and persisting expediencies vividly felt. Obeying the logics of exposed iron in the tropics, the buildings do not shape up to the behavioral tendencies of the



Fig. 18. The remains of trains, Mbanza Ngungu, 2015
(Photograph © Ruth Sacks.)

contemporary built environment in which more important official edifices are well kept. In speaking back to King Leopold II's regime and the failure of dislocated solutions they still tell of the impossibility of total control.

Despite their ghostly presence, there are no ghosts in the old hotels. They were accessories to greater violence done to communities and land, rather than sites where bodies went missing.²¹ Gradual ruination sees the railway buildings in a melancholic entanglement in urban space that neglects them but never allows complete degradation. The emplaced and entangled Art Nouveau remnants attest to the impossibility of either a return to a preindustrial past or the realization of a mythical modernist city to come.

21. By comparison, the ruins of Mobutu Sese Seko's palaces at N'Sele and Gbadolite are said to be rife with unquiet spirits.

PART II

Congo Style

CHAPTER 4

Modernism, Congo Style

Authenticity and Tradition

Zaire is happy and proud to contribute to civilization something strong and original, its Authenticity.

—Mobutu Sese Seko, foreword to *Art from Zaire*

AUTHENTICATING THE STATE

From the swirling lines of the 1897 Congo Pavilion to the iron symmetries of the ABC Hotels, Art Nouveau structures demonstrate how modernist design was used to support and promote the extractivist economy of the Belgian colony. Early colonial modernism from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century laid down a Eurocentric perspective of what progress looked like. Officials organized space over the malleable Congolese settlements and infrastructure that had been there before, setting the language and materials of modern technology as a sign of power. Thus far in this book, Art Nouveau has provided a path into the story of colonial modernism that points to the time when the new European nation sought a national style. From the perspective of the African city, the most apparent counterpoint to Belgian colonial Art Nouveau is the structures and exhibitions of the Second Republic under Mobutu Sese Seko. The modernist skyscrapers erected by the Mobutu regime during the late 1960s and early 1970s remain prominent landmarks in Kinshasa today. These buildings formed part of a greater cultural drive sponsored by the state that included art exhibitions and large-scale public events.

The Mobutu regime was the first government after independence in 1960 to be able to pursue major construction projects and cultivate a postcolonial culture. Mobutu, who was the chief of staff of the army in the First Congolese

Republic, seized power from the first independence regime (see the introduction for more of this history). This government, with Joseph Kasa-Vubu as president and left-wing Patrice Lumumba as prime minister, was established after independence on June 30, 1960. In the tumultuous five years that followed, secession of Katanga and Kasai took place alongside intense infighting across political factions. Lumumba was assassinated in 1961, a murder in which Mobutu, the US Central Intelligence Agency, and Belgian authorities were involved. With his bloodless second coup, in November 1965, Mobutu established himself as head of the single state party, the *Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution* (Popular Movement of the Revolution, MPR). He took the position of the ruler of the country that he would soon rename Zaire.¹ Prior to the period dubbed the “Congo Crisis” internationally, there had been little opportunity for the First Republic to attempt a comprehensive program of infrastructural and cultural development. Contrastingly, the period between 1965 and 1974 provided relative stability and economic buoyancy, which resulted in an upsurge of Congolese culture.

Initially backed by the United States and Belgium, Mobutu was able to shore up power around his own person and notoriously stayed in office until 1997. In the early years, part of his process in amassing political power was bound up in developing a national culture, ostensibly to “stop the mental alienation brought by the colonial experience” (Adelman 1975: 134). The policy of *retour à l'authenticité* (return to authenticity), which was soon changed to *recours à l'authenticité* (recourse in authenticity), aimed to rejuvenate precolonial cultural values depleted by colonialism through adapting them to modern life. The work of this chapter and the next is to tease out examples of the material productions and implications of the state-driven post-independence cultural policy. I have selected iconic examples to analyze and compare in terms of how they relate to the notion of precolonial culture that was foregrounded by the Mobutu regime.

While prominent literature concerning the music from the time of Authenticity exists (White 2008), its art and architecture are less well known. Key examples of built and material culture from the late 1960s and early 1970s are an iconic presence in Kinshasa today, yet they are not commonly referred to outside of the Congo. Mobutu's activities focused on his main locus of power in the capital, and the city continues to be marked by his Authenticity construc-

1. Despite this renaming, I generally refer to the country as the Congo, except within direct quotations or titles.

tions. Skyscrapers from the post-independence boom still overpower parts of the skyline. Modern sculptures, murals, and monuments installed during this period currently form the bulk of public art. Following the colonial modernist ideology outlined in the preceding chapters, modernist architecture, as introduced by Belgian colonialism, was separated from what was understood as African vernacular modes of building. The traditions of architecture of colonized cultures, along with craft and artmaking, came to be classified as the primitive other of new modernist technologies. In its “reclaiming” of a generic African tradition, the Mobutu regime did not encourage a national style of architecture with links to an “authentic” precolonial past. The symbolic political weight of interpreting African traditions was thus placed on the visual artists of Authenticity. This is in line with the differing paths of the larger global modernist movement, whereby the architectural movement had a forward-thinking, avant-garde ethos but, unlike its artistic, musical, and literary counterparts, did not call notions of universal rationality into question (Lu 2011: 4). This chapter unpacks the complex notion of aesthetic tradition through the lens of Authenticity, while the next chapter explores paintings and sculptures by post-independence modernists as embellishments to the Kinshasa sites built by the state in the post-independence period.

In previous chapters, I have explored how the possession of a colony spurred various forms of modernist innovation in the Belgian branch of Art Nouveau (in Brussels as well as in the Kinshasa region). The final chapters of this book unpack what the post-independence Authenticity movement recuperated for the notion of a new Congolese modernism and the way this unfolded through the visual arts and architecture. I examine symbols and structures that were “magnified and distorted” from colonial modernism, particularly those that I have discussed regarding Art Nouveau and its factory-made offshoots (Wright 2001: 225). In addition, I highlight the other major forces at play in the construction of nationalist modernism in post-independence Kinshasa. This necessitates locating architecture and key exhibitions brought into being in this era as an opposition to colonial culture. Taking the premise that certain elements of colonial rule were inevitably assimilated into the new cultural policy, I problematize ideas of a straightforward dialogue between pre- and postcolonial eras.

I locate the way which the Mobutu regime selected and mobilized elements from the vast cultural geography of the Congo to claim them as representative of the new nation of Zaire. The work of nation-building necessitates an “invention of tradition” that simplifies local, “traditional” cultures (Hobsbawm and

Ranger 1983). I highlight how certain Congolese traditions accumulated and distilled under the banner of Authenticity correspond to the colonial idea of the primitive ethnographic subject. As discussed earlier in the context of the Belgian 1897 Congo Pavilion, Congolese traditions—in particular, the material culture of Congolese peoples (including their architecture)—were incorrectly perceived as “fixed” and “formalized” (Hobsbawm 1983: 2).

This chapter delves into the role those traditional Congolese artworks played in forming an idea of the new African nation. While I discuss relevant state-sponsored exhibitions and artworks in terms of colonial modernist binaries, I also link to similar attempts to attain cultural cohesion in other recently liberated African nations. My goal is to establish how a version of the modernist aesthetic developed through Authenticity followed patterns and premises echoed across northern and southern continents in different times. Through unpacking the activities of post-independence modernist artists and state-sponsored exhibitions in Kinshasa, I also differentiate the artistic trajectory of Authenticity from post-independence artistic developments in other nations such as Nigeria.

This chapter outlines how Congolese post-independence culture was commandeered through Authenticity and how it continues to affect Kinshasa's identity. I begin by introducing the overarching cultural policy of Authenticity and its political motivations. The manifesto is unpacked in the context of other independence-era efforts at Africanization, to tease out key specificities of the Congolese situation. This is followed by a discussion of the large role traditional Congolese art played in the post-independence imagination and the exhibitions that displayed it. I explicate the way highly prized Congolese objects became important symbolic tools in Mobutu's postcolonial culture. From what was decreed “authentically African” and used to legitimize the post-independence state, I turn to a brief overview of the work of the Kinshasa artists who claimed the Authenticity mandate as their own (Van Beurden 2015a). The circle of painters, sculptors, and muralists who Mobutu favored is introduced in terms of their response to the colonial mythology of tribal artwork and their understanding of what constitutes artistic heritage.

AUTHENTICITY IN ACTION

The Mobutu regime introduced the broad policy of Authenticity via the N'Sele Manifesto of 1967 and declared its key features law in 1971. National culture was to serve as a vital, unifying force for the people as a way of healing colo-

nial acculturation and racial denigration. The manifesto encouraged recourse in precolonial tradition to foster pride in the “authentic” post-independence state. Authenticity’s premise was that an undivided nation, driven by progress and economic development, could only be achieved through pooling the vast repertoire of Congolese traditional cultural practices. In its declared “recourse” in tradition, the Mobutu regime followed the symbol-manufacturing processes of all new nations. However, its idea of what was and is authentic tradition, as defined in the 1967 and 1971 nationalist manifestos, played out differently across varying art forms and daily Congolese life.

What colonial rule had used to separate allegiances—an idea of fixed, unchanging tribal traditions—was now touted as a binding unction to mobilize the masses. A general idea of traditional culture was touted as an energy within the modernizing mission: “the motor of economic development.” The “metaphysical” concept of Authenticity aimed at uplifting the “inner being” of the newly liberated citizen through precolonial culture to forge a unified national identity. The language of the Authenticity manifesto emphasizes that those who are “most preoccupied with defining and redefining their position” are those who engage most profoundly with an idea of traditional culture (Kangafu 1973: 6).

After the cognitive dissonance of living under colonial violence, whereby Black people suffered “inferiority complexes,” all newly independent African nations were in need of mitigating conceptions of African identity (Fanon 1986: 9). The cultural tradition that the Mobutu regime wielded was markedly controlling.

A country of disparate peoples, forced together by colonial demarcations, was now delivered an imaginative national program that penetrated aspects of daily life. The combination of enticement and intimidation that made the regime so powerful was difficult for even those people with the strongest political convictions to resist (Lye M. Yoka, qtd. in White 2008: 226). As much as an idea of a traditional past, national ground and built space also needed to be performatively asserted. Various aesthetic declarations, in the form of buildings combined with artworks, were overlaid on top of land that needed to be symbolically returned to its inhabitants. The citizens of the new country had, through different forms of violence, been dispossessed of both their homeland and their sense of selfhood. Making citizens at ease in their own country, under Authenticity, meant setting up clear signage pointing toward new freedoms, while still controlling public space and movement.

As the Second Republic generated a new cultural aesthetic, some colonial monuments were removed. Photographs in the local press give a good sense

of attitudes at that time. Gleeful reporting on pulling down an equestrian monument of Leopold II is represented in two photographs in an issue of *Zaire: l'hebdomadaire de l'Afrique Centrale* from January 1972. The former is captured in transit, from a disrespectful view of its behind. In the next image, Leopold II's removal is represented by a pedestal bearing only his shoes. The rods previously supporting his giant body now stand exposed and impotent in the air. Seen from ground level, looking up, the objects of derision remain elevated above the people milling around, occupying almost all available pictorial space. The new histories to be written will be set up in direct response to that of the colonial oppressors. As with other post-independence regimes, the anticolonial message needed to be "defined in relation to the whites" (Fanon 1963: 214).

In a bid to dislodge colonial ideology, Authenticity insisted on an active engagement with a notion of Congolese tradition. Nezar AlSayyad (2004: 6) writes that "the tangible products of tradition are those processes by which identities are defined and redefined." When the principles of the Authenticity manifesto were woven into government decree, the ruling party attempted to engage with those tangible products to offer new possibilities for what Congolese identity could be. At the same time, it sought to both control this identity and fix it in a rigid concept of nationalism. State-organized public culture was to become an active part of everyday experience.

Aspects of the way Authenticity manifested in daily life ostensibly maintained the modernist dichotomy between the Zairian (African) and the European (colonial). European and Christian names were done away with. All aspects of the landscape, from streets to mountains, were assigned new appellations. The name of the country, its monetary units, and its major river became *Zaire* (a corruption of a Portuguese mistranslation of the original name).² The ceremonial twenty-one-gun salute was replaced by drumming. Honorifics of *monsieur*, *mademoiselle*, and *madame*, along with hair straightening and skin bleaching, were banned. The *citoyens* and *citoyennes* (male and female citizens) of Zaire were required to follow a national dress code. Women wore the *pagne*, a wrapped cloth; and men wore the *abacost*, an outfit of pants and tunic based on the Mao suits worn in the People's Republic of China under Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution.³ Thus, ideas of what were

2. From the Kikongo word *nzere* or *nzadi*, meaning "the river that swallows all rivers."

3. The word *abacost* is a shortened form of *à bas le costume*, meaning "down with the suit."

precolonial were merged with new influences to create something to suit the times. The influence of China, as a Global South power, was strongly evident during the Authenticity era.

Taking place concurrently with the first decade of Mobutu's regime, from 1966 to 1976, China's Cultural Revolution inspired certain elements of Authenticity, most notably the cult of personality around the leader (Ndaywel è Nziem 1998: 684). However, in contrast to Authenticity claims of adapting tradition to modern times, communist China sought to eradicate many traditional practices, on the grounds that they were associated with capitalism. Even so, the Chinese influence of an aesthetics of public life through dress and large-scale ceremonies may have been adapted in the new nation of Zaire as a way to instill citizens with national pride.

Official state parties and parades were thrown for the so-called great Zairian family on various occasions, including the opening of key sites. Both contemporary and traditional performances were used to "dramatize the Congolese nation" and "enforce a collective experience of belonging" to the post-independence state (Pype 2013: 60). Cultural weeks and fortnights that preceded the National Festival of Cultural Animation were huge, citywide events. Professional national troupes were set up to enact political propaganda. Musicians adapted traditional songs and chants used to praise ancestors or the positive elements of life to glorify the state (Adelman 1975: 135). At the same time, the regime employed highly influential contemporary musicians, like Franco Luambo and Papa Wemba, to praise Mobutu. Massive concerts were used as political propaganda and psychological manipulation, controlling some of the most personal forms of expression: singing, dancing, and movement (White 2008: 78). This performance of celebration began a brand of urban language that claimed precolonial Congolese culture as its inspiration by way of the person of Mobutu.

Authenticity mobilized two prongs of action in the arts: a reclamation of precolonial traditions, and the invigoration of new work that referred to these traditions. As outlined by Sarah Van Beurden (2015a), plans were put in place for various state institutions, such as a theater, a ballet, a library, archives, museums, and art schools. A 1970 decree announced that the Institut des Musées Nationaux du Zaire (National Museum Institute of Zaire, IMNZ) was to be established for both research and education, and the museum's collection was formed in 1971 (Tshiluila 1987: 50). In a move currently being echoed in contemporary times, the government also engaged in campaigns for the restitution of Congolese objects plundered

during the colonial era (Mobutu 1975: 9). These demands for the return of objects on display in Euro-American ethnographic and art museums were reinforced through Congo-sponsored exhibitions of traditional Congolese art in the United States. Artworks that aligned to an idea of tradition formed a core symbolic role in Authenticity, and the newly formed national museum organized temporary displays in Kinshasa.

The practice of taking recourse in the aesthetic power of traditional objects from sub-Saharan Africa in the Euro-American museum has strong links to pre-independence Black Conscious thinking, particularly Négritude, Pan-Africanism, and the writings of W. E. B. Du Bois. Négritude was a precursor to Authenticity in the sense that it looked to early twentieth-century modernist art, particularly the primitivist modernist movement in Paris spearheaded by Pablo Picasso. Négritude's founders were exposed to Euro-American modernism, and the Parisian craze of negrophilia, when studying in Paris in the 1930s.⁴ Léopold Sédar Senghor, Aimé Césaire, Léon-Gontran Damas, and other figureheads of Négritude were writers and poets who drew a sense of Black pride from collections of African art (understood as "tribal" and "primitive") in Euro-American collections acquired during the colonial period. Similarly, Du Bois and Pan-Africanism shared a broad call for dignity and solidarity for all peoples of African descent to locate "value and beauty in African culture and history as subjects in art" (Enwezor 2001: 12).

In contrast with these precursors, the Mobutu regime did more than merely draw inspiration from traditional objects in the Euro-American museum. It was a government dedicated to direct action (Adelman 1975: 136–37). Consequently, it demanded restitution of traditional objects that had been removed from the Congo during colonial rule. As such, the Authenticity emphasis was on professing national glory, as opposed to speaking on behalf of the continent, or all Black peoples (as was the case with Négritude and Du Bois). Kevin C. Dunn (2003: 117) proposes that the nationalist Authenticity identity was primarily constructed for the benefit of the rest of the continent, as its foundational philosophy was launched in Senegal in 1971.⁵

4. The term *negrophilia* was used to describe the craze surrounding Black culture at this time and its subsequent fetishization (as epitomized in the popular dances of Josephine Baker).

5. This philosophy was launched at the Dakar National Congress for the Union Progressiste Sénégalaise (the Senegalese Progressive Union, later the Socialist Party of Senegal).

However, while the new national identity had resonances with other post-independence African states, Mobutu desired the Congo to lead, with his person prominently at the helm.

Mobutu fashioned himself as the tastemaker of local modernist art as much as the champion of the traditional. Posing as a philanthropist of arts and culture, he made mass private purchases of artworks (Badi-Banga Né Mwine 1977: 99–101; Ndombasi Kufimba 2014: 16). The artists he favored—including the sculptors Alfred Liyolo, Bamba Ndombasi Kufimba, and André Lufwa; muralist Emile Mokengo; and painters Lema Kusa, Mavinga Ma Nkondo Ngwala, and N'damvu Tsiku-Pezo—formed a group called the Avant-gardists that set out to illustrate the spirit of the time.⁶ They were awarded major public commissions at the opening of new state sites such as the Supreme Court, N'Djili Airport, Presidential Park, the International Kinshasa Fair, and Mobutu's private residences (Badi-Banga Né Mwine 1977: 121; Ibongo 2009: 40; Ndombasi Kufimba 2014: 5–6). Following Authenticity's guidelines, the underlying premise of this art was to seek symbols of unity, with a general idea of tradition as a baseline inspiration (Badi-Banga Né Mwine 1977: 118–19). But where music and dance were used to promote Mobutu in mass public events, exhibitions tended to be on a smaller scale. Except for murals visible on the exterior of new buildings and public monuments, the artworks produced were primarily located within government buildings and the homes of the wealthy elite.

Architecture in Kinshasa of the Authenticity period had as its public face an international high modernist design style (which was understood as European), even as these structures were decorated with mosaics and sculptures by contemporary artists. A stylistic architectural language of teleological progress was consciously cultivated on the facade of new architecture, primarily in the wealthier suburbs and especially in Gombe (downtown Kinshasa). However, interior design was modeled on an Africanized “Zairian” aesthetic, using traditional materials like wood carving and weaving. The paintings and sculptures adorning these interiors employed what each individual artist understood as a language of modernism to allude to African traditions. These aesthetic divisions were not uncommon to post-independence

6. Alfred Liyolo and Bamba Ndombasi Kufimba allowed me to conduct interviews with them in 2014 and 2015, respectively. Sadly, Ndombasi passed away in 2016 and Alfred Liyolo in 2019.



Fig. 19. A five-zaire note from the Bank of Zaire

African nations, but the Mobutu regime implemented a notably stratified system across Kinshasa state buildings. Considering various official publications from the time, Johan Lagae and Kim De Raedt (2014: 183) suggest that juxtapositions of representations of modernity (via modernist architecture) and symbols of “the country’s natural and cultural richness [were] an intrinsic part of the postcolonial national identity.” Moreover, the artists themselves understood their role as providing a necessary “humanity” to modernist architecture understood as rational (Ndombasi Kufimba 2014: 25).

The juxtapositions of Authenticity are well illustrated in the five-zaire from the time (figure 19). In the foreground of the note is a carved statue that strongly resembles a Kuba royal statue, or *ndop*, through its calm demeanor and pose (with crossed legs). The note thus references the country’s international cultural pedigree via the Kuba, whose arts were considered “the most striking products of indigenous African arts” by the British Museum (Binkley and Darish 2009: 56). Meanwhile, in the backdrop of the note is the new Inga Dam (completed in 1972), a symbol of technological prowess, topped by majestic mountain peaks, to represent a rich natural heritage. In this well-constructed piece of invented tradition, sculpture and development are apposed to present a dual cultural force. It is, however, significant that the details of the *ndop*-like figure are not exact (it is missing its distinctive, protruding headpiece). The official symbols of the Mobutu regime set up

“reconfigured ‘tradition’” that could be perceived as “regionally neutral, and yet generically ‘traditional’” (ALSayyad 2004: 19).⁷

Authenticity sought to encapsulate a general sense of established pre-colonial tradition within the language of modernist design. While the work of architects looked to the future (as prescribed by the international modernist architecture movement), Zairian bodies were locked into codes of invented traditions of dress and comportment. Mobutu cemented himself as a dictator at the same time as the state penetrated multiple aspects of culture. As Authenticity became law, the regime centralized the country as a one-party state, under the MPR. National culture was collapsed into the person of Mobutu as Authenticity was turned into a “synonym” for Mobutuism (Bottombele 1976: 49). Press images from this period seldom show him without a general’s uniform, leopard-skin headgear, and a large wooden chieftain’s cane (figure 20). Mobutu’s manipulation of his public image to maintain an impression of control can be directly linked to his biography as having been both a journalist and an army administrator (Kankonde Mbuyi, pers. comm., 2015). From his home at Mont Ngaliema to other official staterooms and entertainment areas, the leader’s taste in objects was well documented in press photos. Animal skins, especially zebra and leopard, were featured in the interior decor, as were his favored local Kinshasa artists. As props in political theater, these artworks were expected to be emulated across the country by those with means.

Mobutu was not the sole author of Authenticity. Its architects were a group of advisers, including Dominique Sakombi Inongo and Bokongo Ekanga Bottombele, the commissioners of national guidance, culture, and arts. However, Mobutu’s deification within this process and subsequent attempt to control cultural activity overpowered any other voices. Even before the mid-1970s, when Authenticity was replaced by outright Mobutuism, autonomous self-styling was eschewed according to his whim. The leader chose his full Zairian name as Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu waza Banga, meaning, “the all-powerful warrior who, because of his endurance and inflexible will to win, will go from conquest to conquest, leaving fire in his wake.” An alternative meaning is, “the

7. Sarah Van Beurden (2015a: 199–205) documents a dispute between the Kuba king and the IMNZ in the 1980s. The king requested the return of key objects from the national Congolese museum collection to the Kuba people. While the Mobutu regime favored traditional Kuba aesthetics and objects, the IMNZ felt the nation was better served with the objects remaining in the Kinshasa museum.



Fig. 20. Publicity image of Mobutu widely circulated during the late 1960s

rooster that watches over all the hens” (see French 1997). With hypermasculinity driving the cult of his person, Mobutu invested in ambitious architecture and large public works at the same time as he supported those aspects of a tribal precolonial past that suited the idea of a powerful leader. A sophisticated display of power is evident in the way he dictated the exhibition of artworks understood as traditional during the time of Authenticity.

MODERN TRADITIONAL ART

At a 1973 UN General Assembly in New York, Mobutu demanded the return of Congolese art acquired during the time of colonization. This was a revolutionary move on behalf of African heritage in the aftermath of African independence. It would prove to be ahead of its time. Calls for the return of artworks removed from Africa during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century are common at the time of the writing of this book, with a few even proving successful.⁸ In 2017, while visiting Burkino Faso, French president Emmanuel Macron pledged to make the return of African cultural heritage a top priority. The French government then appointed Bénédicte Savoy and Felwine Sarr to assess the situation and provenance of French public collections of African art (Sarr and Savoy 2018). Savoy (2020) describes how the main point of contention with their 2018 report, which was in favor of restitution, was that the authors proposed “a change in the legal status of artefacts in general.” In the rich and burgeoning discourse surrounding restitution in the popular press and academia, it is seldom remembered that Mobutu first proposed this change in status on a high-profile international stage in 1973.

By the time of Mobutu’s announcement at the United Nations, the post-colonial Congolese state was already engaged in negotiations with the Belgian Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA). Congolese independence in 1960 had forced the RMCA, founded on the Art Nouveau Congo Pavilion of 1897, to reconsider its identity. The former Museum of the Belgian Congo broadened its focus after independence, becoming more of a scientific institution to distance itself from being an entirely colonial museum, and was therefore open to Congolese calls for repatriation (Asselberghs and Lesage

8. For example, in 2022, Germany pledged to return objects looted from Benin in an 1897 British military intervention. The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York returned two key pieces of the Benin Bronzes, as they are known, in 2021.

1999; Couttenier 2005). Sarah Van Beurden (2015a: 100–127) has detailed how the RMCA negotiated a deal whereby the Belgian institution would assist in setting up a national museum in Kinshasa and make a “gift” of certain art objects. This emphasis avoided the language of restitution and thus an admission of culpability for colonial violence. Negotiations ultimately resulted in the eventual return of a meager selection of 114 largely second-rate objects between 1976 and 1982 (Van Beurden 2015a: 120–23; Wastiau 2000: 7).⁹ But Mobutu went further than simply prompting this seemingly begrudging gesture; he also mobilized a shift in the narration of Congolese tradition in the form of a touring exhibition.

Art from Zaïre: 100 Masterworks from the National Collection began in 1975 in the United States. Pointedly starting at the African-American Institute in New York (today known as the Africa-America Institute), the exhibition asserted the Congolese nation’s aims to control the dialogue around what it claimed as its own. It was also a call to arms for the recovery of Congolese objects in international collections, “so that we may teach our children about the achievements of our parents and grandparents” (Mobutu 1975: 9). The exhibits, like those of the newly established IMNZ, comprised objects that had been in Congolese missionary and university museums as well as donations from European institutions (Van Beurden 2015a: 227; Wastiau 2000: 7). But the Belgian RMCA held far more objects that were of greater value than what was in the Congo itself (a situation that continues today).

Art from Zaïre was made partly in response to an earlier exhibition of key Congolese pieces from the RMCA. The Belgian exhibition *Art of the Congo* began at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in 1967, prompting a demand for restitution of all its objects from the Mobutu regime, in the form of a counterexhibition (Van Beurden 2015a: 224; Wastiau 2000: 4). The RMCA presented *Art of the Congo* as a comprehensive survey of the work of a vast and varied tract of land, categorized according to tribes whose objects were described as “well-rooted” in tradition and ritual (Friedman 1967: 7). The counterexhibition orchestrated by the IMNZ employed the same categorizations but made clear where the gaps were. In the *Art from Zaïre* catalog, Irwin Hersey (1975: 15) refers to these as “major omissions,” ensuring that they are rendered conspicuous by their absence.

9. These objects were mostly from the collections of the colonial museums of Kinshasa (the Institute of Scientific Research in Central Africa and the Museum of Indigenous Life), rather than the RMCA stock (Tshiluila 1987: 50).

The international opening of *Art from Zaïre* was followed by the installation of a temporary museum within the 1976 International Fair of Kinshasa (IFKIN). Here, a selection of work was made available to the Congolese public within a small building on the fairgrounds. The temporary exhibition space presented a display of objects as artwork, according to international norms of the time, in a minimalist style with white walls and plinths. Sarah Van Beurden (2015a: 186) describes how elements regarding the ethnographic origin of each object were included, such as photographs demonstrating how the objects were used. The issue of ethnography, and the separation of objects according to their perceived tribal origins, was evident in such Congolese exhibitions as well as the international *Art from Zaïre*. These were identities that colonialism had described as unchanged over centuries but that were actually fluid and subject to major changes (Kasfir 1999: 41; Ogbechie 2018: 432). However, even as tribal divisions were reiterated, museum displays were now purposefully framed as unified under the banner of an independent national identity.

All objects were reclaimed as state property for the museum collection in the capital as a national collection. The curators thus demonstrated how the volatile situation of ethnic and tribal division was to be mediated and narrated by the state (Van Beurden 2015a: 231). This was framed as a sign of modernity, with spokespeople like Kangafu Kutumbagana (1973: 6) emphasizing that “Authenticity takes what is needed from the past but leaves what is not modern.” The modern structure of statehood thus overruled ethnicity in these exhibitions as an attitude to be emulated in the Congo.

The Authenticity mandate demanded that the Congolese objects anointed as traditional art by the Euro-American museum fulfill a dual role. They had to both represent a powerful precolonial culture and, at the same time, embody modernity. Congolese museum objects, labeled as tribal, had already been doing this for some decades. Like all so-called tribal objects from sub-Saharan African and Oceanic cultures, Congolese traditional artworks saw a marked rise in popularity in the early twentieth century. Enid Schildkrout and Curtis A. Keim (1998a: 22–23) note that in the massive “scramble” for Central African artworks that ensued, up to a hundred thousand objects had been removed from the Congo by the 1914 start of World War I. Interest in this work began with colonization and grew in the late nineteenth century, as seen in the display of objects in the 1897 Congo Pavilion (see chapter 2). Interest would then grow exponentially over the next few decades, as the objects became incorporated into the narrative of twentieth-century Euro-American modernist art.

European art movements such as cubism, fauvism, and German expressionism took up certain aesthetic principles of African objects but paid scant attention to the objects' function, meaning, or cultural value in their places of origin. Influential artists such as Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse encountered these objects in colonial ethnographic museums and started to incorporate elements of what was perceived as primitive art into their work. The primitivist modernist gaze saw that abstracted aesthetics from othered objects were absorbed into Euro-American artworks even as their uses and meaning at their point of origin were disregarded (Clifford 1988: 193; Gikandi 2003: 456–58).¹⁰

While the exact nature of the influence of African art on early European modernism has been widely discussed and contested (especially in Picasso's case), the salient point is that works of African material culture first seen in the ethnographic museum were apprehended as primitive objects indicative of unsophisticated, precolonial ways of life (Gikandi 2003: 456–58; and see McGee 2007). These were the objects of sub-Saharan African Black peoples, from whom sculptures and masks with abstracted and distorted figuration were prized above naturalistic artworks (Clifford 1988: 192).¹¹ The objects of Islamic Africans were not included in museum collections of African art, but the works of the Kuba, Pende, Luba, Chokwe, and Lunda, the more abstracted styles from the Congo region, were particularly sought after.

African objects in the Euro-American museum were not considered modern, even if they were worthy of inspiration for modernist paintings and sculptures. Their styles and techniques were seen as following rigid standards over the years, which had only been interrupted by colonial encounter (and, as a result, the styles were now in danger of dying out). As discussed in chapter 2, this attitude ignored the deep histories of the people who made them. Cultural and social values of groups had shifted over time and, with them, their aesthetics. In a continuation of the colonial message, African cultures

10. For example, one figure in the iconic artwork *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.)* (The Ladies of Avignon, 1907) by Picasso, understood as a turning point in abstraction, has a fragmented and twisted face that William Rubin links to a type of Mbangwa mask from the Pende people of the Congo. This comparison was made in the exhibition "*Primitivism in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern* (1984–85) at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, where the two artworks were hung on opposite walls, inviting aesthetic comparison.

11. An iconic example of the kind of art understood as representative of Africa is the 1935 exhibition *African Negro Art* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. All the artworks were collected from European and American collections and follow the pattern outlined here.

were denied centuries of trade and creative exchanges with various peoples in the name of Euro-American aesthetic innovation (Kasfir 1992: 41; Vansina 1984: 4–29; Vogel 1999). In an inherently racist pattern of action, Picasso and his contemporaries, who considered Black peoples inferior, created artworks that emulated the plastic and visual qualities of these objects while never crediting their supposedly tribal makers with the intellectual skill to understand the value of what they had done (Clifford 1988: 193; Miller 1991: 56–58). Yet these objects made by the “primitive” ethnographic other were highly prized and valued.

By the 1970s, after most African nations had attained independence, the objects in question, as representatives of the precolonial era, had entered the realm of “masterpiece” (as *Art from Zaïre* and others would have it). Their role in the story of modernism had given them value in their places of origin, via movements such as Négritude. In *Art from Zaïre* and Congolese displays such as at IFKIN, the notion of primitivity was eschewed through the housing of the objects. In these exhibitions, the same minimalist designs developed in the Euro-American modernist museum were employed, expunging the idea that the objects were now to be used in ritual. This was a means to frame the objects as modern, and the Congolese people (who commandeered the technology of the museum and its modernist design language) as the authentic and rightful owners.

Sidney Littlefield Kasfir (1992: 41, 47) asks the question, “who or what determines [African Art’s] authenticity?” and therefore its meaning. In her critique of the Euro-American canon of traditional African art, Kasfir (1992: 43–44) debunks Euro-American myths of the purity, rigidity, and timelessness of African art by naming the collectors themselves as the self-appointed experts on the category of authenticity. In post-independence Africa, it was the state that took up this role, collecting objects and thereby confirming and commandeering their authenticity. The local and international exhibitions outlined above displayed objects that had already been vetted as ethnographically authentic by Euro-American experts. Exhibits of African tradition in Euro-American collections were essential to the project of capturing Africa through knowledge claims and anthropological categorization (Fabian 2000: 197). The Mobutu regime under Authenticity took up the role of narration. Contemporary, minimalist exhibition design underlined the right of the African collector (and, as I will outline, the artists themselves) to categorize the art. Objects used to embody an idea of precolonial tradition, in the Mobutu exhibitions, were labeled as colonial loot.

An important difference between *Art from Zaïre* and exhibitions like the RMCA's *Art of the Congo* was that the Euro-American framing made no mention of the violent acquisition of these pieces under highly unequal colonial relations. Mobutu (1975: 9), in contrast, refers to them as stolen goods that should be returned. This explicit motivation for the *Art from Zaïre* exhibition shifts perceptions of the state-sponsored display of traditional Congolese art, making it "a haunting" rather than "a copy" of Euro-American practices (Ferguson 2006: 17). Mobutu's demands for restitution were a deliberate and accusatory reminder of the unfinished business of cultural devastation that came with colonialism.

While the Congolese exhibitions undoubtedly preserved the colonial museum's separation of African peoples into separate tribes, frozen in an ethnographic present, the international exhibition *Art from Zaïre* was used as a tool of provocation in the face of Euro-American hegemonic cultural power. In Kinshasa, exhibitions like that at IFKIN were intended to inspire everyday citizens and contemporary artists. Whereas objects representing authentic tradition were imbued with modernity through their display systems, post-independence artists utilized the forms of twentieth-century primitivist modernism as a means of displaying their contemporaneity. The pro-Mobutu modernist artists were outspoken regarding their terms of reference.

THE ARTISTS OF AUTHENTICITY

The group of artists known as the Avant-gardists claimed the position of the official artists of Authenticity. Importantly, these painters and sculptors claimed the right to take liberties with any traditions of their choosing, whether these be Congolese, African, Asian, or European. The Avant-gardists founded an art movement in the wake of the first post-independence showcase of contemporary Congolese work. This showcase was held in 1973, to coincide with a conference of the Association Internationale des Critiques d'Art (International Association of Art Critics, AICA) that took place in Kinshasa.

The modern art exhibition was mostly representative of artists affiliated with the Kinshasa Academy of Fine Arts. Sarah Van Beurden (2015a: 192) notes that international art critics who attended the conference were decidedly underwhelmed by the exhibition, which was small in comparison to the more lavish display of traditional art at the national museum.¹² Unlike the

12. Despite grand gestures of patronage, Mobutu was more invested in traditional arts and folklore than contemporary practices (White 2008: 34).

traditional work and theater productions that were also presented, the visual art exhibition was viewed by the international critics as unoriginal and “intellectually conservative” (Badi-Banga Né Mwine 1977: 118). The Avant-gardists came together in opposition to these patronizing opinions. Their manifesto embraces the political moment of defiance, at the same time as announcing their pledge to be the visual mouthpiece of the new regime (see also Ndombasi Kufimba 2014: 16–17). Their revolution lay in transgressing the colonial cultural yoke and, with it, the opinion of the Euro-American AICA critics.

Joseph Ibongo (2009: 75) observes that there was little aesthetic rupture in the individual trajectories of these artists, before or after their manifesto. Each artist’s style was largely based on variations of European movements such as fauvism and cubists. Nevertheless, a revolution occurred in the role of artists within Congolese society (Henri Kalama Akulez, pers comm. 2014). State support for the modernist artists, which saw contemporary public art installed in key sites and public financial support for artists like Liyolo, changed the possibilities for what a career as an artist could be in Kinshasa. This facilitated the rise of the individual artist with their own brand of creative practice (as opposed to the ethnic label ascribed to traditional objects in the ethnographic museum). With lucrative prospects, the Avant-gardists embraced the freedom to pick and choose from whatsoever culture and era they wanted for inspiration.

Postcolonial African artists are seldom credited with a voluntary mobilization of the stylistic languages of abstraction associated with the modernist art movement (Okeke-Agulu 2015). In writing about the Kinshasa modernists, Bamba Ndombasi Kufimba (2010: 8), a visual artist and the group’s primary writer, names the nature of the group’s avant-gardism as part of a modernism that is “a repudiation of all alienation.” This underlines the spirit in which the work was made more than the stylistic development of the artworks themselves. Chika Okeke-Agulu (2001: 29) highlights that the idea of artistic license was directly opposed to European colonial ideology. The anti-colonial stance was paramount.

The Kinshasa modernists drew on Euro-American modernist traditions as they were taught during their colonial schooling at the academy prior to independence. Ndombasi’s commentary on that era suggests that this move was framed as an act of politicized mimicry—that is, the forms of the colonizer were mimicked as an act of defiance or even “menace” (Bhabha 1994: 89). From the artists’ own description, their intention was to disrupt the colonial frame. The Avant-gardist manifesto, as recorded by Ndombasi, could be seen to challenge both the former colonizer and the Euro-American AICA

critics. Through an appropriation of such movements as cubism and fauvism, the post-independence modernists were also making a countermove to those groups that enacted “the wholesale appropriation of African aesthetics” (Ogbechie 2008: 12). However, the artworks themselves suggest that the official art of the Second Republic put Mobutu’s doctrine before any antiestablishment artistic sensibilities.

The Avant-gardist manifesto calls for a “total recovery” of the autonomy of the arts in order to “animate hearts and spirits through the idea of Zairian humanism, thanks to their genius creator” (Ndombasi Kufimba 2014: 17; Ibono 2009: 43). Mobutu’s Authenticity is placed at the pinnacle of creativity: the ultimate artwork. The resulting paintings and sculptures, which were produced for the urban elite and state sites, bolstered a national cultural policy that stressed unity. Their message stemmed from the idea of tradition bound up in Authenticity and the N’Sele Manifesto of 1967 (which pledged funding to all the arts) and was similarly vague.

State policy emphasized a lack of tribal divisions in the new nation, and the artworks of Authenticity echo this lack of specificity. This is evident in pieces such as Liyolo’s *Le Bouclier de la Révolution* (The Shield of the Revolution, c. 1973). The maquette of this once-prominent public sculpture is visible in official press images of Mobutu from the time. Its simplified, abstracted human form has a clear lineage in European modernism and appears to have some stylistic similarities to the sculptures of Picasso and Constantin Brâncuși from the late 1920s and early 1930s. As in their work, the distortions of form in *Le Bouclier* are reminiscent of those in traditional African sculptures. The subject matter of Liyolo’s piece refers to older forms of warfare, without specifying any particular ethnic tradition. A similar mix of tradition and modernist style may be seen in Liyolo’s sculpture *Musicienne* (Female Musician, 1970; figure 21). The influence of the early modernist era of twentieth-century European art is easily visible through the distorted forms of the human figure represented. For example, the arms and hands of the seated musician are simplified into smooth planes that merge with the stringed lute she is playing. The instrument could be from a broad range of Congolese peoples. Ndombasi (2014: 25) describes such a relationship to tradition as a “familiar attitude or character” that is evident in the overall style of the work.¹³ Liyolo intended to allude to an African essence or spirit rather than

13. Ndombasi largely discusses artworks that deal with abstracted versions of human figuration, which was a feature of the Avant-gardists’ work.



Fig. 21. *Musicienne*, by Alfred Liyolo, 1970 (© Fondation Liyolo; photographer unknown.)

any one tradition (pers. comm., 2014). Here, cultural homogenization favors Authenticity's brand of nationalism.

All postcolonial creative practice on the continent faced similar predicaments and developed individual strands of modernism. These were steeped in a form of nationalism that varied across practitioners and governments (Harney 2004; Okeke-Agulu 2015). Whereas the Avant-gardists of Authenticity blurred the ethnic distinctions delineated in traditional art museums, this was not the case with all post-independence African modernist movements. The post-independence Nigerian modernists of the Zaria School referenced specific traditions combined with modernist forms. Conceptualized in the 1950s, long before the group of artists officially banded together, Uche Okeke's

(2019: 23–25) notion of natural synthetism sought to draw on “the cream” of European and Asian schools, “wedding them to our native art culture.” Okeke’s paintings leaned toward the specific, inserting references to northern Igbo artistic cultures, especially Igbo Uli mural traditions. The painting *Egbenuoba* (1961) is clearly executed in an expressionistic style influenced by fauvism, but it also alludes to the hunting rituals of north-central Igbo (Okeke-Agulu 2015). This was in stark contrast to the artworks of the Avant-gardists, such as Liyolo, with his generalized portrayal of an African essence or attitude. The Avant-gardists appear to have worked directly in line with a government cultural policy that put pressure on moving away from the highly complex issues of tribalism and ethnic allegiance, a policy that was, in turn, influenced by “the poets of Negritude” (Fanon 1963: 213).

The nature of the art education that the independence-era artists received was also important to their interpretation of modernism (Okeke-Agulu 2015). Colonial schooling undoubtedly influenced the Avant-gardists’ opinions about modernist artistic subjectivity. During the time of the Belgian Congo, certain settler-colonial teachers were deeply invested in developing local talent, efforts aimed at reviving the supposedly dying practice of traditional Congolese art making. The latter was perceived as “natural,” and protectionist education was designed to avoid hampering Congolese craftspeople with Western rules of perspective (Cornelis 1998: 150). Such protectionist ideas, espoused by writers like Gaston Périé in the 1920s, were taken up by educators in the Congo, including the Catholic missionary Marc Wallenda, who founded the Kinshasa Academy of Fine Arts in 1943.¹⁴ The settler colonialists and missionaries who instigated art education were not necessarily steeped in European art history and its theories, let alone in the vast and diverse pool of Congolese aesthetic traditions. When European modernisms like cubism and Dadaism were introduced by colonial teachers, this was presumably done without in-depth understanding of the subtleties of the developing modernist philosophy of societal critique and generational discontent with the stylistic status quo.

Congolese contact with the art of the early twentieth-century Euro-American modernists was disconnected on several levels. Housed too far away to be experienced in real life, well known Euro-American artworks were initially only accessible via outdated books and documentation. The colonial art education was based on a system of copies and secondhand experience. In

14. This was initially named St Luke School in the suburb of Gombe.



Fig. 22. Mural by Emile Mokengo on the National Institute for Social Security building, Kinshasa, 2014
(Photograph © Ruth Sacks.)

a reversal of the disembodied terms of the influence of African traditional art on European modernism, the Avant-gardists took on forms associated with European stylistic experimentation of decades before. The nature of their vanguardism was in these acts of appropriation.

In Kinshasa, human figures, especially mask heads, predominated (more than the animals or plants of the Lubumbashi school, which practiced concurrently) (Henri Kalama Akulez, pers. comm., 2014). These figures were rooted in an ecosystem of artistic referents that included art books, representations of other artworks, and local creative practices. Among the iconic examples of this Kinshasa brand of work are the mosaics of Emile Mokengo that may be seen across building facades of Authenticity-era buildings. Mokengo's giant abstracted figures of women fishing in unspecified traditional garb decorate the hypermodern building of the National Institute for Social Security (figure 22). Large, multicolored tiles map out simplified outlines of bodies, clothing, objects, and plants on a cream background. Figures, plants, and fish are

disconnected from one another, forming a fragmented decorative effect. As evidenced in the mural and in other artworks, the modernist artists identified themselves as urban citizens, with the artistic license to romanticize rural life. Their modernist practice was understood locally as an affiliation to the academy and Euro-American modernism. As such, they were in direct opposition to another strand of urban painters, the autodidactic *peintures populaire* (popular painters).

The work of the popular painters is also urban, but with cartoonish imagery that caricatures daily life and current or historical events. Characterized as sarcastic and witty, this street art is directed toward the general population and is often made with cheap materials. The popular painters started off catering to local households at affordable prices (and many still do), but the target market for more successful artists is now international buyers (Sapin Makengele, pers. comm., 2014). In addition to artists like Chéri Samba becoming well known in the mainstream international art world, academic literature by scholars such as Johannes Fabian (1996) and Bogumil Jewsiewicki (1992; 1999) drew attention to this genre. The popular painters are known as autodidactic and, unlike the Avant-gardists, were not associated with the academy.

To those with Euro-American schooling, there is a clear divide between fine art and populist, tourist art. In Kinshasa, these categories are represented by the Avant-gardists and popular painters, respectively. Tourist art is understood as clichéd and repetitive, while fine art is a serious creative endeavor in which originality and innovation are highly prized. Kwame Anthony Appiah (1992: 148) notes that the difference between high and low culture in Africa, broadly speaking, “corresponds . . . to the distinction between those with and those without Western-style formal education as cultural consumers.” In post-independence Kinshasa, these lines were blurred. New galleries for fine art (one of which was established on the grounds of the Kinshasa Academy of Fine Arts) sprang up at tourist and commercial sites, including an outdoor ivory market, Banque du Peuple (People’s Bank), and the Intercontinental Hotel (Ibongo 2009: 40–41). Documentation of exhibitions in newspapers show artworks displayed in the cluttered manner of shop merchandise, far from minimalist white cube conditions.

For both the Avant-gardists and the popular painters, “the artist is a worker, directly in conversation with a client . . . a sale is proof that the artist has met a need” (Jewsiewicki 1992: 223). The Kinshasa modernists catered to new wealth and an autocratic leader. Like the dealers and makers of traditional art that supplied the early twentieth-century Euro-American market, they too created their work according to their understanding of what their

patrons wanted (Kasfir 1992: 45). The audience for their artistic answer to Authenticity was unequivocally local, with Mobutu at the helm. The Euro-American system of commercial galleries, art museums, and academic discourse that demarcated fine/high art from merchandise and tourist curios was simply not as distinct in post-independence Kinshasa. Artist-teachers like Liyolo and Ndombasi, who did not have the buffering of the Euro-American art world, set their own standards for what they thought Congolese modernism should be. Whereas the Nigerian artist Uche Okeke is renowned in Euro-American discourse as a pioneer of African modernism (his work is in highly influential museums such as New York's Museum of Modern Art), Mobutu's artists saw their work largely stay within Kinshasa.

The Avant-gardists had to juggle their training in provincial and patronizing colonial schooling with the immediate demands of a military leader whose power base was located mere blocks away. Liyolo and his peers maintain that there was no censorship of the subject matter of the arts under Mobutu, who also allowed the popular painters to operate without censure (Koide 2018: 91). Nevertheless, a notable lack of independent, experimental practice or content relating to social critique appeared in the official art of Mobutu's independence.

MEDIATING KINSHASA'S MODERNISM

During Authenticity, the post-independence modernists became the establishment, and their brand of modernist painting and sculpture was entrenched at the Academy of Fine Arts, where most of them taught. The Kinshasa school continued to circulate increasingly exhausted motifs and themes. Few serious attempts were made to forge new paths, connect to international movements and currents, or challenge the artistic status quo. This changed with the advent of younger graduates, which started in the 1990s. Artists such as Mega Mingiedi Tunga, Henri Kalama Akulez, Pathy Tshindele Kapinga, and Vithois Mwilambwe introduced installation artwork, found objects, and abstract expressionism to the Kinshasa scene. Their activities set off the process of contemporary mediums like installation, performance art, and photography becoming more accepted.¹⁵

15. In 2016, Kalama was appointed director of the Academy of Fine Arts, ushering in a new curriculum and teaching methods. An exhibition called the *Yango Biennial*, which invited international artists who worked in a variety of mediums, took place in 2014, organized by the late Kiripi Katembo. A follow-up event was held in 2022 and focused

However, Liyolo continued to toe a conservative line regarding what is and is not acceptable as high art. These were in accordance with definitions of early twentieth century modernism in the Global North. Liyolo (who was also general director of the Academy of Fine Arts from 1981 to 1991) continued to name Picasso and Hans Arp as important influences on all artistic endeavors. His belief in the positive influence of early Euro-American modernism on the course of human aesthetic development at large, and adherence to conventional modernist mediums, did not result in the artist seeking acclaim from the Euro-American art world. When questioned about the contemporary international success of the popular painters, Liyolo was quick to point out his own accomplishments in China and Japan (pers. comm., 2014). He thus emphasized that Euro-American success was not the only international fame to be had. Regarding the popular painters, the Avant-gardists were supportive of their work. Ndombasi (2010; 2014) includes them in both of his books on Congolese modernism. Euro-American discourse, however, is not so all encompassing. It continues to disregard the Avant-gardists, treating the popular painters as the main event of the Kinshasa visual art narrative.

Street artists like Chéri Samba, first seen internationally in the 1989 exhibition *Magiciennes de la Terre* (Magicians of the Earth) at Paris's Centre Pompidou, are now well-known names in the mainstream international art world. Younger popular painters such as JP Mika, whose painting was the poster image for the exhibition *Beauté Congo—1926–2015—Congo kitoko* (Beautiful Congo) at Paris's Foundation Cartier in 2015, are fast becoming acknowledged. According to the logics of an art world dominated by its Global North center, high-profile exhibitions dictate the dominant narratives. *Beauté Congo* explicitly set out to represent Congolese histories of painting from the 1920s. The catalog for this large-scale exhibition includes articles by Congolese art historians (Magnin 2015). The book follows the same pattern as survey books written by Europeans, especially *60 Ans de peinture au Zaïre* (60 Years of Zairian Painting, 1989), compiled by Joseph Cornet. Artists from the Lubumbashi school (like Pili-Pili, who was favored by AICA critics in 1973) and their autodidactic predecessors (including Albert Lubaki and Djilatendo) are given lavish features. There is no mention of the Kinshasa Avant-gardists.

on activating local venues across Kinshasa (Tshinzam 2022). There are now a number of contemporary art collaboratives within the city, including Vithois Mwilambwe's Kin Art Studio. In Lubumbashi, the collective Picha (originally founded by Sammy Baloji and Patrick Mudkereza) began the now-established Lubumbashi Biennial in 2008. This is an internationally recognized, recurring event that held its seventh edition in 2022.

One main premise of *Beauté Congo* was to “widen people’s perceptions” of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). André Magnin, the exhibition curator, expressed the wish to reveal that the Congo was not all “war and death and suffering” while telling the story of its modernist painting tradition (qtd. in Ellis-Petersen 2015). This does not explain why the academy artists have been left out of the story of Congolese art, as their scenes of stylized unity and generalized tradition never referred to violence or poverty. Moreover, the art of the former Avant-gardists dominates Kinshasa’s public art, and Liyolo is revered to the extent that the entire suburb where he lived is named after him. The curators of *Beauté Congo* negate a pivotal part of Kinshasa’s art history at the same time as claiming to present an overview of Congolese art.

In discrediting one stereotype of the Congo (the pessimistic, Conradian heart of darkness), the curators of *Beauté Congo* replaced it with another. The exhibition’s emphasis is on paintings, interspersed with sculptures, that share a naive quality (according to the different intentions and styles of the artists).¹⁶ The exhibition also featured the work of Congolese artists who were already popular among Euro-American collectors, with many of these practitioners also being represented in Magnin’s commercial gallery.¹⁷ At the same time as the exhibition broadened knowledge about a selected kind of Congolese art, then, it also broadened the potential pool of buyers and added value and prestige to the curator’s stable of artists.

Looking only to positive aspects of Congolese life also negates the colonial roots (and neocolonial legacy) of the international African art market (Van Beurden 2015b). The neocolonial duplicity of the international art world ensures that the work of artists like Pili-Pili, Chéri Samba, and their peers is in the possession of museums and private collectors outside of the Congo. The organizers of *Beauté Congo* have not, as yet, made any concerted efforts for the exhibition to travel to the Congo itself, suggesting that the exhibition is for the consumption of those in the Global North alone. The right of Europeans to pick and choose the narrative of Congolese art thus continues. Proprietary attitudes toward exhibitions of Congolese modernist paintings, the disputed right to historicize Congolese modernism, are prevalent today.

Amid the clamor of African powers demanding restitution in the years since 1917, a reckoning with Euro-American neocolonial attitudes, and

16. The exceptions to this rule are the photographic artworks of Kiripi Katembo and Sammy Baloji.

17. Magnin’s gallery, MAGNIN-A, showcases such artists as Chéri Samba, Chéri Chérin, Steve Bandoma, Pathy Tshindele Kapinga, and Kiripi Katembo.

colonial collections, is taking place. In the time of Authenticity, Mobutu's demands for the return of museum objects, demands linked to the anti-colonial stance of his favored modernist artists, alienated Euro-American institutional powers. Histories of Authenticity, as told by Euro-American narrators in cultural institutions, tend to focus on the rapid demise of the post-independence cultural resurgence. Rumors concerning the ensuing theft of museum objects abound in Belgium, often with highly patronizing overtones. Generalizations about the situation in the Congo contend that because the national museum was not in a fit state to protect its objects amid the post-independence turmoil, the current national museum in the Congo will follow suit. Euro-American museums tend to assume the right to decide the suitable conditions and capabilities of custodianship and the discourse for objects taken during the time of colonialism.¹⁸ In the time of Authenticity, the now-discredited Mobutu regime sought to oppose such attitudes through its modernist modes of exhibiting traditional art. However, recent events hold an echo of negotiations from the post-independence era.

In 2018, the DRC formally requested the return of its objects. At the time it made this request, the RMCA was on the cusp of reopening after extensive renovations. Far from making accommodations for potential repatriation of the objects, the Belgian museum merely altered certain aspects of its display. Contemporary Congolese artists such as Aimé Mpane, Freddie Tsimba, and Sammy Baloji (all of whom were also represented on *Beauté Congo*) were included in the RMCA display. While these international artists have made work that is critical of Belgian colonialism (some of which is owned by the RMCA), a prominent artwork on display in the foyer of the renovated RMCA takes a more neutral tack.

Mpane's massive bronze and wood sculpture *New Breath* (2017) has been placed in the previous entrance room of the museum. It dominates the hall where a realistically rendered golden statue of Leopold II still stands. *New Breath* is a giant, simplified wooden head made of cut and glued wood, and it emerges from a base fashioned in the shape of Africa. A solid bronze palm tree grows out of the pale wooden head. Mpane explains that the artwork is intended to convey the message that "from now on, we will have to count on

18. In contemporary times, what is now the national cultural history museum of the DRC (opened in 2019) was supported by the South Korean Government (represented by the Korean Agency for Cooperation).

[Africa]” (qtd. in K. Brown 2018). In the spirit of the Kinshasa modernists, stylized human form is employed to symbolize a general sense of unity. The politics of the artwork rely on its placement in a space formerly occupied by monuments extolling the virtues of colonization. But its vague message of empowerment, when shown alongside King Leopold II, suggests an accord with the Belgian museum rather than a critique of it.¹⁹ Except for its employment of mixed media, this artwork would not be out of place in one of Mobutu’s state sites from Authenticity times.

THE AUTHENTICITY PARADOX

A prominent advertisement for Zaire cigarettes that was repeated in periodicals and newspapers, in the early 1970s, sums up the official Authenticity attitude toward the visual arts. Two crisp, white boxes of “La Première cigarette authentique de Prestige” (the first authentic Prestige cigarette) are backed by a dark wooden carving of an African head in the style associated with pre-colonial tradition. The sculpture is monolithic, hovering in smudged semidarkness as it balances the composition. Although no specific artistic tradition is referred to, the contemporary piece has all the stylistic tropes associated with classic African sculpture: simplified facial features that have been abstracted into symmetrical shapes and a patterned headdress. The unnamed artist’s work provides the appropriate accompaniment to the advertisement’s slogan, which translates to “luxury packaging . . . for all tastes.” Good taste lies in the globally acclaimed Congolese tradition.

The inexact provenance of the stylish artwork in the advertisement sums up the central, hazy role tradition held for Authenticity’s official artists. Contemporary art for the new era consciously looked at both Euro-American modernism and African tradition. At the same time as they repudiated colonialism, artists and designers consciously adapted many Euro-American styles and systems (Van Beurden 2015a: 19, 110). The Avant-gardists’ art displays a clear aesthetic allegiance to certain seemingly superficial Euro-American ideas about Africa and its art, ideas that have seldom been interpreted in a

19. Elaine Ericksen Sullivan (2020) makes a detailed argument concerning how other artworks by Mpane (as well as Michèle Magma and Freddy Tsimba), which are in the museum’s collection, highlight violent histories of colonization.

counterhegemonic way by outsiders. When the Kinshasa academy artists set about this task according to their interpretation of what was necessary for the new nation, they left the work of societal critique to the simplistic everyday moralism of the popular painters. Frantz Fanon (1963: 225) critiques national culture after independence, writing, “the artist who has decided to illustrate the truths of the nation turns paradoxically toward the past and away from actual events.” That is, artist-intellectuals who do not engage with the “actual events” of decolonization instead embrace a sense of timelessness in their artworks.²⁰ This attitude underpins displays of traditional Congolese art organized by the Mobutu government, which standardized narratives of pure pre-colonial traditions, accompanied by a sharp nationalistic edge. The Mobutu regime utilized colonial ideas about African culture as part of its anticolonial rhetoric and visual propaganda. This paradox makes the artworks difficult to process, outside of their situation in Kinshasa.

In terms of the needs of the cultural moment of the early Mobutu era, and the perspective of the local people, Sarah Van Beurden (2015a: 113) notes that cultural activities (including local exhibitions) held genuine appeal and “cultural legitimacy.” Even those younger artists who were highly critical of the Kinshasa Avant-gardists describe Authenticity as a great moment for art. During a tense conference at the Kinshasa Academy of Fine Arts in 2015, Mega Mingiedi Tunga declared that Authenticity art not only catered to but fulfilled the needs of the Congolese at the time (Koide 2018: 89). Artists like Mingiedi and Kalama tend to focus on Mobutu’s elevation of the artist as highly positive. The second and third generation of post-independence practitioners widely discredit those tenets of *Négritude* and Pan-Africanism that encouraged racial and ethnic essentialism. They nevertheless recognize that their needs are different to those of the first post-independence modernists.

It is commonly understood that the “Congolese sense of national belonging . . . is a heritage of Mobutu’s regime,” one that the later administration of Joseph Kabila failed to uphold (Pype 2013: 66). Or, to put it another way, the “elaborate Mobutu propaganda machine” left the Congo with a strong sense of patriotism and an escape from the colonial hold (White 2005: 83). The Mobutu regime made a persuasive argument that a national culture was

20. Fanon (1963: 242) does not deal directly with modernist artists but is scathing in his treatment of the production of “handicrafts,” which had formerly been “the dregs of art.”

needed. Its emphasis on images of economic prosperity and its financial support of culture further made a convincing show of postcolonial autonomy.

Mobutu's legacy of cultural spectacle continues to be remembered through Kinshasa's art world and institutions. A narrow focus on the underlying self-exoticism, primitivism, and Eurocentric cultural hierarchies of its artworks and exhibitions threatens to overshadow the patriotic agency that the Mobutu regime orchestrated. African artists in the first flush of postcoloniality looked to the precolonial past (Fanon 1963: 223–25). But neither the Avant-gardists nor the Mobutu regime commandeered the languages of colonialism—via modernism and its inherent creation of a primitive—unknowingly. An argument can be made for the adaptation of colonial systems in the period of Authenticity to be an act of cultural hybridity, as described by Homi K. Bhabha (1994). That is to say, the artists' cultural production was a conscious blending of the systems of the former oppressor with what they understood to be their own traditions (1994: 53–60). In quoting colonial modernism, the artists and writers of Authenticity were attempting to redefine their present.²¹

The Authenticity theorists and the artists of that time were far from “simple-minded essentialists.” David Scott (1999: 12) argues that the post-independence “questions of the moment” were not the same questions as those future generations would need to answer. There was never a discrete form of “Congolese” or “Belgian” cultural expression, any more than there was an “African” or “European” one. But there was a need to build a new nation, with a definitive culture to follow decades of denigration.

The modernist Avant-gardist artworks and exhibitions of traditional art were never a direct copy of the colonial. The change of context to Congolese curatorship and ownership was understood as critical to the meaning of the exhibitions. While certain key colonial constructions of culture were absorbed, the Mobutu regime initially attempted to instill in each citizen a sense of investment in the state, where being Congolese was a source of pride. A sense of national consciousness and the existence of a seemingly legitimate and stable government were also cause for celebration.

As Kinshasa moved in and then out of the postcolonial moment, the greater context of harsh military rule joined with that of colonial and neo-colonial forces that complicate and cloud the story of Authenticity culture.

21. Sarah Van Beurden (2015a: 125) emphasizes the nationalist motivations of the Congolese Avant-gardists and museum curators at this time.

What is left behind in Kinshasa are the urban forms and memories of a period of hope. The visual language and role of the artworks of the Kinshasa post-independence modernists become more apparent when seen as integrated in the state commissioned architecture and landscaping from this time. As I discuss in the following chapter, the sites of Authenticity each have a social life that does not completely discard the defiance of Mobutu and the modernist artists he patronized.

CHAPTER 5

Kinshasa's Congo Style

Sites of Postcolonial Identity

Ce géant est un monde. (This giant is a world.)
—*500 Visages du Zaïre* (500 Faces of Zaïre)

GIANT KINSHASA

Kinshasa was the epicenter of the Authenticity era, and parts of the city bear its aesthetic and planning principles. Mobutu's capital was also his government's primary locus of control. Due to an agglomeration of factors, including a colonial legacy of extraction and the continuation of strong anti-unitarian factors, the regime's influence was not as secure over the rest of the enormous country, particularly the eastern border and the Katanga province (a situation that continues into the present) (Kabamba 2012). The "explosion of styles" that erupted between 1960 and 1974 was most visible in the capital (Lumfuan-kenda Bungiena 2017: 106). The Second Republic's early years of civic hope and technological ambition are embodied in the fragmented assemblage of Authenticity-era city forms.

As seen in the work of the academy artists of the previous chapter, Authenticity was primarily an urban phenomenon. This saw Kinshasa, with its towering new constructions, dominating as a cultural force. The large-scale urban forms commissioned to house state exhibitions, media, concerts, and museums all share a bombastic quality. Moving from the comparatively small-scale exhibitions of the previous chapter, I turn here to sites that were intended to serve the general public, at a time when Kinshasa's population was swelling.

Congolese subjects from the rural areas were already beginning to flow

into Kinshasa in search of work during the last years of the Belgian Congo. Mass uprisings started in January 1959 in the capital, where the Congolese residents were largely unregulated and nascent political parties operated, catalyzing the move toward political independence. Kinshasa's exponential rate of growth has seen it expand to become the third largest city in Africa, and the largest Francophone city in the world, with an estimated population of fifteen million people (Shvili 2021). Approximately 70 percent of its residents are not formally employed, and informal systems dominate. Expansion has now obliterated the city's original colonial borders, as the urban sprawl grows in a westerly direction and blankets the hill range that once contained it in the eastern and southern directions (De Boeck and Plissart 2004: 32).

As the flow of people (and congestion) arriving in Kinshasa thickens, there have been no consolidated, official solutions to sustain the rising population. Resultingly, largely unchecked networks of living and working arrangements overflow the city around, and sometimes in the shadow of, Authenticity-era constructions. All state sites from the Authenticity period, roughly from the later 1960s to the mid-1970s, loom large in the pockets of cityscape they occupy. While they represent only a fraction of what had once been planned (Lagae and De Raedt 2014: 187), the sites tell a great deal of the Mobutu regime's ambitions for the city. After the collapse of the economy and the various depletions of the later decades of Mobutu's reign, there was not a great deal of comprehensive building activity. This situation would last until the regime change in 1997, outside of more sporadic sites and plans from foreign enterprises, most prominently French and Chinese companies (see Beeckmans 2018; Beeckmans and Lagae 2015).

The book *500 Visages du Zaïre* (1975: 2), created to promote the new nation under Mobutu, picks up on the Authenticity refrain that the Congo is the giant of Africa. If the country is a giant—approximately the size of western Europe—it encapsulates a colossus of a capital city.¹ The early architecture of the Mobutu regime appears to have conceived of the post-independence Kinshasa as a world within a world, and its most prominent sites were initially designed as cities within the city. It is these sites, some of which are pieces of never-realized, city-encompassing plans, that I explore in the final chapter of this book.

1. To emphasize the point, Filip De Boeck and Marie-Françoise Plissart (2004: 67) recount a Kinois (Kinshasan) man describing how he inhabited a giant demon named Kinshasa in an occult ritual.

There are many examples of public Authenticity-era state constructions that are not discussed in depth here. The structures added to the city's central marketplace (Safricas et Coletin, 1969 and 1971), the upmarket Intercontinental Hotel (Olivier-Clément Cacoub, 1971–72), and the highly expressive extensions to the national bank and mint (Eugène Palumbo and Fernand Tala N'Gai, 1978) are prominent examples that come to mind. My focus is on sites that pick up on key themes of enclosure and othering that have been discussed throughout this book. I have also sought to engage with constructions that feature (or once featured) the modernist artworks introduced in chapter 4. Like the colonial Art Nouveau edifices in Brussels I have analyzed, these sites are popularly understood as iconic modernist landmarks that mark the era of their creation and its spirit.

This chapter begins with some background as to how city planning and architecture unfolded under the auspices of Authenticity. I then introduce the renovated colonial construction that hosted the Rumble in the Jungle heavyweight championship boxing match (1974), followed by the Presidential Park at Mont Ngaliema (installed c. 1968–74). From there, I discuss prominent towers that cater to the masses in different ways. The iconic skyscrapers of Authenticity include Tour de l'Échangeur (Tower of the Exchange, c. 1974), Tour Radio-Télévision nationale du Congo (Congolese National Radio and Television [CNRT] Tower, 1975), and Tour Gécamines (Gécamines Tower, 1977). My analyses of these structures are followed by a view of these bounded official sites in terms of how they relate to the informal city. In the concluding sections, I consider the features that Kinshasa's defining post-independence-era sites share with the Art Nouveau designs of chapters 2 and 3 and, following this, the meaning that Authenticity landmarks hold in the city.

Some locations and urban phenomena I touch on have emerged in other scholarship. I do not speak directly to the immaterial networks of Filip De Boeck and Marie-Françoise Plissart's *Kinshasa* (2004); nor do I analyze the lived spaces that De Boeck explores with Sammy Baloji (2016) in terms of how they reflect collective action. I also do not map the archival architectural history covered in numerous articles by Johan Lagae (for example, see 2003; 2004; 2007; 2008; 2010; 2013) or Luce Beeckmans (2010; 2018), sometimes in collaboration with each other or with other scholars (as examples, see Beeckmans and Lagae 2015; Lagae and De Raedt 2014). While I draw from and value this work, I address key Authenticity sites in terms of their function within the city and, accordingly, my reading of their underlying politics. My intention is to draw out what the everyday materiality of these sites can

bring to larger conversations about complex cultural legacies embedded in the African city.

The opinions and aims of the architects of the constructions under discussion are largely unrecounted in this chapter. Whereas the Avant-gardists of the previous chapter published texts and were sometimes available for conversations with me, there is comparatively less material available for the designers favored by Mobutu, particularly those based in Kinshasa. My process has therefore been to conduct interviews with current-day architects, architectural teachers, and city officials, wherever possible, alongside exploring the sites themselves. In analyzing the politics of Mobutu's constructions, I do not treat this architecture as "the voice of Authenticity" or "the hand of Mobutu" himself (Lagae and De Raedt 2014: 187). I do, however, believe that all built forms have a politics, or an ideology, regardless of whether they were intentionally emplaced there by an architect, artist, or designer. The selected Authenticity-era sites have a distinctive pattern of form, spatial dynamics, and current-day quality that allows for some commentary on the regime to emerge.

MOBUTU'S MODERNISM

When Authenticity-era buildings were inaugurated, the accompanying celebrations included extensive press and radio coverage. The occasion of the arrival of the first Inga hydroelectric dam in 1972 (featured on the five-zaire note; see figure 19) and the erection of the TRICO-II nuclear reactor at the Centre Régional d'Études Nucléaires de Kinshasa (Regional Center for Nuclear Studies in Kinshasa, CREN-K) that same year led to paeans to progress through all these outlets. Mobutu made a spectacle of giant construction projects and grand gestures toward infrastructural development. These developments were announced as "evolving" to respond to "new orientations," with the government making a concerted effort to study local situations for better urban solutions from 1967 (Mabiala 1972: 18). In the capital, some major traffic arteries were carved out as sports stadiums, mass housing areas, and hospitals were laid down. Concurrently, lush private homes—Mobutu's palaces being the most extravagant of all—and looming edifices on Kinshasa's "Wall Street" pointed toward the corporate and governmental monoliths that fed them (*500 Visages* 1975: 213). The regime's ambition even saw Zaire briefly joining the space race in the late 1970s, with a rocket launch program in the

Shaba region. The architecture of individual sites reflects some of these ambitions through futuristic design and an embrace of technology.

In line with the propaganda of many other postcolonial Global South nations, modernist architecture was employed alongside new power plants, factories, and other conspicuous symbols of development as a key signifier of modernity and power in the nationalist project. The architectural modernisms that emerged in new nations after the Second World War were considered high modernism. This international development in urbanism became associated with nation-building and was defined by more grandiose, plastic forms that signaled a coherent political project of regulation and expansion (Bozdoğan 2001: 5; Lu 2011: 9–10). However, extant colonial-era architecture in Kinshasa had already established modernist and high modernist forms as European (see chapter 3).

Aspects of colonial culture had to be employed in order to appeal to a public that had assimilated colonial modes of communication. To a certain extent, the discourse of modernization promoted by the Mobutu regime, which privileged the development of urban centers, was based on Belgium's Ten-Year Plan of 1949, implemented after the Second World War (Vanthemsche 2012: 215). Moreover, because of the rapidity of Belgian flight from the colony at the dawn of independence, the regime that stabilized power had no choice but to use existing infrastructure (Kankonde Mbuyi, pers. comm., 2015). This had an indelible effect on the demographics of Kinshasa. As a Congolese elite replaced the colonial one, hierarchies of public and personal space were based on those originally favored by the Belgian regime. Affluent, formerly white-only areas, like Ngaliema and Gombe, were occupied by the new Congolese privileged class. Trésor Lumfuankenda Bungiena (2017: 108) outlines how taxpayer money that could have been invested in transforming Kinshasa was redirected toward constructing sumptuous private villas.²

In most cities, factors like municipal upkeep (or lack thereof) and the condition of the facades of buildings denote the proportion of rich, bourgeois, working-class, and destitute occupants in any given area. The borders between such areas may often be unclear and vary from site to site, but in Kinshasa, where conditions are highly unstable and poverty is rife, socioeconomic stratification tends to be consciously expressed through the durability

2. For the most part, these villas remained unfinished, especially after the change of regime in 1997 and the many lootings that took place during times of public unrest (Lumfuankenda Bungiena 2017: 108).

and height of structures. Nevertheless, terms developed elsewhere, like *working* and *middle classes*, are not always comfortably applied in the postcolonial city, where other kinds of hierarchies are in place.

New mass housing schemes, such as Cité Verte (Green Housing Project), Cité Maman Mobutu (Mother Mobutu Housing Project), and Cité N'Sele (N'Sele Housing Project), were constructed on Kinshasa's outskirts. In plans initiated by the Belgian administration, miles on miles of residential grids were laid out for workers' families (Kankonde Mbuyi, pers. comm., 2015). Mobutu's legacy thus entailed the ascription of colonial-derived modernist formulas to the problem of housing a rapidly increasing populace. As an example of these formulas, Beeckmans and Lagae (2015: 210) have outlined how a plan proposed by Maurice Heymans suggested a "modernist solution of a linear urban network of satellite towns." This system of remote large-scale housing projects was intended to keep the increasing number of Congolese inhabitants separate from Europeans.³ Such modernist schemes keep a large portion of the populace within less opportune areas and dictate the size and nature of "suitable" housing. In colonial times, the kind of housing supplied to Congolese in Kinshasa was insufficient to meet the needs of large African families (La Fontaine 1970: 54–56). Unlike the spacious gardens of wealthy areas, these structures soon became densely populated and their initial designs overlaid by multiple forms of use.

Moving from formulas for the masses to structures for the elite, Mobutu did not personally favor one architectural style. His own lavish palaces around Kinshasa show a hedonistic lack of commitment to any one design language. The Palais de marbre (Marble Palace, 1972), designed by Eugène Palumbo and Fernand Tala N'Gai, was of a hypermodern, circular design that incorporated segments of garden. Located in Binza (within the greater district of Ngaliema), it was associated with the predominant use of marble, which had been imported from Italy.⁴ In sharp contrast, Mobutu's Palais Chinois (Chinese Palace), in N'Sele, has a gaudy, faux-Chinese imperial style.⁵ However, Mobutu was clearly committed to setting up an image of a powerful nation that could utilize multiple international design languages and cater to internationals as much as locals.

3. The plan was based on the South African system of keeping the Black workforce separate (Beeckmans and Lagae 2015: 210).

4. The residence was initially intended for the director of the Central Bank.

5. An iconic example of Chinese imperial architecture is the Forbidden City, built in 1406–20.

As the leader of a mineral-rich country, Mobutu was a key figure in international African politics. The Belgian government played a prominent role in the early post-independence regime as it tried to maintain its commercial stronghold in the former colony. Concurrently, the Cold War was playing out on the African continent, and the United States bankrolled the regime for periods of time. Mobutu oscillated between American and Soviet superpowers, soliciting support from or canceling trade agreements with either side until 1989 (Schatzberg 2012: 119). Changing international allies are visible in Kinshasa through the various styles of the international architects who built Mobutu's city. Beeckmans (2018: 8) notes that international involvement was so prominent in Authenticity constructions that one of the functions of high-profile commissions was to flaunt new post-independence partnerships. This public exhibition of political collaboration was not extended to partnerships with other postcolonial African nations.

Mobutu's intentions for Kinshasa could be compared with examples such as Julius Nyerere's Dodoma (Tanzania) and Léopold Sédar Senghor's Dakar (Senegal), both of them highly ambitious post-independence architectural endeavors. But the leader of the Second Republic wanted the Congo to be "the giant" of Africa, outshining the others (Lumfuankenda Bungiena 2017: 108). The equals Mobutu aspired to were Brazil and China (Kankonde Mbuyi, pers. comm., 2015). Architects from the time often make aesthetic reference to the architecture of Oscar Niemeyer, who helped shape Juscelino Kubitschek de Oliveira's Brasilia (Gemoets, Lagae, and Toulhier 2011: 114; Corneille Kanene, pers. comm., 2015). There are strong architectural links to China from this era in the structure of the Palais du Peuple (Palace of the People, the House of Parliament), built in 1972–74 courtesy of the Chinese government.⁶

Outside of buildings and architecture built by China, Mobutu's architecture is still popularly perceived to be European. This is due not only to the necessity of using existing infrastructure and design, but also to the nature of the education systems that have been in place since liberation. In the Belgian Congo, architectural training for Congolese students only began in 1958, and the contemporary Kinshasa architecture academy continues to teach only European architectural history.⁷ This not only locates Euro-America as the home of architectural modernism but obscures traditional Congolese

6. The chief architect was M. Cheng Pin-San (Biwandu 1974: 49).

7. The full name of the architecture academy is the *Institut supérieur d'architecture et urbanisme* (Higher Institute of Architecture and Urban Planning).

architecture and local examples of iconic modernist and high modernist constructions.

Mobutu's inroads into Kinshasa were largely overseen by European designers, most prominently Eugène Palumbo and Olivier-Clément Cacoub. After the nationalization of all foreign business interests in the country in 1974, the Zairian architects Fernand Tala N'Gai and an architect known as Magema, who trained in Europe, started to be featured, largely working in partnership with Europeans. Today, contemporary Congolese architects insist that Tala N'Gai and Magema were not truly Congolese because of their training in France and Belgium (Louis-Joseph Kofi, pers. comm., 2015).⁸ In the current "industry" of international handouts and NGO-funded constructions, large-scale building projects continue to be carried out by international partners (Trefon 2011). This generally results in projects being managed and designed by outsiders but built with Congolese labor. Congolese architects largely work on affordable housing solutions and pursue an "architecture of the belly" whose creativity is geared toward saving costs (Louis-Joseph Kofi, pers. comm., 2015). In this way, the Authenticity policy of naming design by its nationality (in the case of South Korea and China), or simply as "European," continues.

The way Authenticity-era divisions have played out in Kinshasa differs across cultural forms. For example, at the Academy of Fine Arts, making art "for Europeans" was considered a negative critique up until quite recently (and this view still holds today among some students and lecturers).⁹ State mandates such as the banning of "European" dress emphasized the differences between racialized cultures, highlighting distinctions between white (colonizer) and Black (previously colonized) and enforcing homogeneity on national Congolese culture.¹⁰ Reading architecture and design as "European" ignores the fact that "all cultures, both ancient and modern, seem to have

8. An architect known as Mukadi, of the later Mobutu era, is considered to be authentically Congolese. He trained at the Kinshasa architecture academy and designed its current building. Mukadi's work is perceived to be limited due to funding constraints and has hence been called an "architecture of the belly" (Louis-Joseph Kofi, pers. comm., 2015).

9. When I taught a class on South African contemporary art in 2014, the majority of students referred to the examples I offered as being "for the European market."

10. In the previous chapter, I proposed that the phenomenon of modernist paintings and sculptures in Kinshasa could be interpreted as practicing a form of cultural hybridity. Considering whole sites, including their architecture, brings an additional layer to this argument.

depended for their intrinsic development on a cross-fertilization with other cultures” (Frampton 2007: 314–15). In the eclectic array of Authenticity-era high modernist sites that emerged, no attempt was made to incorporate any reference to regional architectural knowledge and traditions.¹¹ The rich architectural histories of peoples such as the Kongo (who established a major city in the late 1400s), Luba (1585–1889), and Mangbetu (first documented by Georg Schweinfurth in the late nineteenth century) were cast aside. State architecture during the time of Mobutu thus favored an architectural language that was falsely understood as “abstract and independent of place” (Lu 2011: 8). Moreover, these structures did not always incorporate the specific conditions of local sites such as climate and topography.

In colonial times and in the aftermath of rapid urbanization, urban design and architecture conceived abroad did not consider the ground-level conditions in which they would exist. Failure to examine ways in which successful modernist design solutions have and could be adapted to the needs of cities whose socioeconomic and environmental conditions differ from those of Euro-America seriously affects how urban space functions. In Kinshasa, certain particularities of the nationalistic vision of Authenticity, for all its agency and celebration of the culture of the former African subject, led to a divisive city space. This is evident in how new constructions were used to cater to the public, as opposed to how they were presented in the media.

THE WORLD WATCHES KINSHASA: MAY 20 STADIUM AND THE PRESIDENTIAL PARK

The Rumble in the Jungle provides an iconic example of how the state stage-managed new public sites. In this audacious international publicity stunt of 1974, Mobutu arranged a now-legendary fight between the African American boxers Muhammad Ali and George Foreman in Kinshasa. This grandiose gesture (whose spirit echoes that of the era’s architecture) caught the imagination of global audiences.

The event was a media-savvy cultural coup for the postcolonial nation, especially after Ali won. Whereas Ali, a prominent member of the Nation of Islam, took a public stand against racism and the Vietnam War, Foreman was largely perceived in the Congolese press as an apologist for America. Tradi-

11. The same can be said of the colonial tropical architecture discussed in chapter 3.

tional Congolese masks and sculptures were used to convey this message in a 1974 issue of *Elima*, in which Ali is photographed with Tsaye, Kuba, and Luba objects, while Foreman is posed in front of a blank backdrop (Malaquais 2012). Ali's victory in the match was trumpeted as a win for the Congo and the African continent. But the overall winner was Mobutu's capital city. The boxers resided in Kinshasa for months prior to the match, and there was an upsurge in international tourism. In the triumphant moment when newspaper headlines proclaimed that "the world watches Kinshasa," press images also showed off the city, along with the new hotels and stadium renovations that an event of this magnitude demanded (*Elima* 1974: 6).

Kinshasa's Stade du 20 Mai (May 20 Stadium) was constructed over the colonial Stade du Roi-Baudouin (King Baudouin Stadium) of 1952 to host the big match.¹² The original construction, which was built by Marcel Van Hentenryck and René Reygearts and which followed colonial standards of tropical architecture, was renovated to accommodate state-of-the-art features. Not only was the arena revamped, but the new regime installed five hundred telephone lines, darkrooms for the on-site development of photos, and powerful light towers (*Elima* 1974: 6). Part of the rebranding of the site included adding an "African" touch to its interior chambers, which were unseen by the public. Photographs from the time reveal that the Salon of Honor (the VIP area) was furnished with a wood-lined ceiling and a rustic stone-and-cement bar counter (figure 23). These natural materials make some reference to the Congolese locality. Tribal-inspired masks on the wall continue motifs adorning hand-carved chairs and woven raffia lampshades. The interior decor applies superficial Africanized decoration to the existing architecture.

As much as the Authenticity period relied on spectacle, it also utilized rumor and superstition. Prior to the "fight of the century," word went around that all local criminals were being rounded up and executed in the stadium (Wrong 2000: 96). Talk of a network of prison cells underneath the arena was rife. As a concept or imaginary, the stadium was constructed with the thrill of international pomp, mixed with throbbing crowds and an ever-present military force. Its success relied on controlled press and carefully monitored public passage. The Authenticity-era aesthetic of showy modernist outsides, glossy veneers, and open secrets catered to locals as much as to internationals.

The former May 20 Stadium is situated in the north of the Kulungu municipality, in between Boulevard Lumumba (a major highway) and the district

12. The stadium was named for May 20, 1967, the date of publication of the first N'Sele Manifesto. Today, it is known as Stade Tata Raphaël (Father Raphael Stadium).



Fig. 23. Interior of Stade du 20 Mai, VIP room, Kinshasa, 1974
(Photographer unknown.)

of Matongé.¹³ Mobutu's public revamping of the sports arena in 1974 brought African American sports heroes to an area that was recognizable as less than affluent at the time.¹⁴ The multilayered symbolism of this event—including the threatening presence of lines of military guards surrounding the public at the stadium—was carefully orchestrated. Other forms of claiming colonial land took place in more wealthy, formerly white, areas.

Mont Ngaliema was the historical center of the Belgian occupation and

13. Matongé is the vibrant music center of Kinshasa, where stars such as Papa Wemba emerged.

14. Ali and Foreman, however, resided at the luxurious riverside resort of N'Sele, according to newspaper articles.

was opened to the public by Mobutu via the Presidential Park. Previously called Mont Stanley, the hillock overlooking the Kinsuka Rapids had been a colonial monument. A triumphant bronze statue of Henry Morton Stanley that had stood at the top of the hill was removed in 1967 and replaced a few years later with Alfred Liyolo's *Le Bouclier de la Révolution* (The Shield of the Revolution, c. 1973). A new system of looped, sloping gardens—French, English, and Zairian—was established (Van Beurden 2015a: 169–71). The Presidential Park encompassed the site of the new National Museum complex and, farther up the hill, the complex of the African Union Organization (AUO). A substantial commission of numerous outdoor and indoor artworks came with the construction of the AUO building in 1967 (Badi-Banga Né Mwine 1977: 104). Under Authenticity, the hill was renamed after the Bateke chief Ngaliema, who, Stanley claimed, had afforded him the right to establish a settlement. The site symbolically holds colonial corpses at its center, where the regime erected a stone stadium for outdoor performances next to a graveyard of early settlers.¹⁵

In the late 1960s, the Presidential Park was a recreational open-air space, available to all every Sunday. It was overlaid with a system of snaking footpaths, elegant round lampposts, ancient trees, ponds, and cages for monkeys and birds. Wide roads sectioned the park into different areas, and secure barriers stemmed flows of visitors. Archival photographs and postcards from that time reveal that the summit overlooking the Congo River was constructed as a magnificent show of marble fountains, official buildings, and a rose garden, peppered with artworks by local artists (who would come to be known as the Avant-gardists).¹⁶ At night, the flower bed fountains were lit up in searing colors. One was decorated with blue tiles and marble slabs, featuring ceramic mask reliefs by Alexis Lemda, among others, that spat water through their mouths (Toulier, Lagae, and Gemoets 2010: 108). With its lively eclecticism of imported plants, landscaping, modernist architecture, and local artworks, the hilltop set a joyously lively stage for celebrating Authenticity.

The minimalist AUO building was built on the (currently unattainable) upper reaches of this blanket of spectacular, contained nature. Designed by Olivier-Clément Cacoub, the structure is an example of International Style,

15. The stadium was designed by Anabel Bado and Daniel Visart in 1971.

16. As the upper gardens and the AUO building are strictly out of bounds today, my observations are based on photographic documentation sourced from the Contemporary History Library of the Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA) at Tervuren, as well as postcards from the time that I have purchased or located online.

displaying an interlocking play of right angles, sheer white blocks, and thin crossbars. A tiled mural by Emile Mokengo augments the building's stark outer walls, with mosaics of giant, faceless women carrying fruit and babies. The juxtaposition of clean modernist surfaces and checkered, colorful figuration marks the building as a typical product of Authenticity. The pairing of architecture with sculptures and fine art was aimed at uniting efforts for "the same cause." An article in *Elima* from 1974 celebrates the role of artwork as to "animate" the "tabula rasa" of modernist architecture with a "human intimacy" (Ortolani 1974: 10). An uncritical understanding of architectural high modernism as a neutral, clean slate—which Duanfang Lu (2011: 8) notes was common to late-twentieth-century nationalism in the Global South—allows for the Authenticity mandate to claim cultural legitimacy by melding diverse cultural components into a new language. If architecture was neutral and rational, then its accompanying artworks were tasked with providing the emotional narrative. Sante Ortolani (1974: 10) makes a case for the combination of expressive artworks and form-follows-function architecture as a "neoplasm," with each site of new buildings and artworks an inseparable new entity. The role of artworks by Authenticity's artists, the Avant-gardists, in these state sites was thus critical.

In the surrounding gardens, sculptures by Alfred Liyolo, Bamba Ndombasi Kufimba, and others show enlarged and abstracted figures, in bronze and stone. The expressive sculpted bodies include, from sculptor André Lufwa Mawidi, a life-size reclining female suckling child, whose braided hair is far more defined than her facial features. The bronze gates of the top section of the park are fashioned out of welded squares depicting traditional masks and sculptures associated with different peoples.¹⁷ The spirit of precolonial culture, combined with an aesthetic of early twentieth-century modernist art (discussed in the previous chapter), is evident in the open-air park. Together, the sculptures, plants, and landscaping emphasize the visible act of claiming colonial territory on both stylistic and actual ground. To emphasize the idea of Africanizing European forms, the design of the garden's upper levels was explicitly based on Louis XIV's Versailles (Wrong 2000: 45). In its heyday, the Presidential Park must have exuded some of the French tourist attraction's excesses. In its showy mix of brightly lit triumphant fountains and large

17. Similarly to the imagery of the five-zaire note, discussed in the previous chapter, these works are semirecognizable to the objects of the Luba and Kuba, but not exact in all details.

sculptures, the upper park appears as audacious kitsch in photographic documentation from the time.

The Presidential Park was designed for popular appeal, and its reclamation of colonial land was posed as a gift to the city from its leader. By the time of the late Mobutu era, however, it had been closed to the public and was only opened for occasional public parties. The upper lawns overlooking the Congo River are now a military site.¹⁸ This makes the prospect of imagining them from postcards and images all the more tantalizing. The current conditions of this site, which was once at the center of Mobutu's vision for Kinshasa, emphasize its insularity. Its design had a built-in form of securitization, making it easy to barricade from its surrounds.

In Kinshasa today, the independence-era postcard image that so often featured Mont Ngaliema is a thing of the past. The site remains separate from the city life around it. Only its lower gardens around the museum are still accessible. Carefully monitored groups of schoolchildren and the occasional foreign visitor can access its small, makeshift museum rooms.¹⁹ The lower gardens now defy all but the most basic management. What were once clipped zoo lawns have given way to natural eruptions of soil and creepers, which threaten the stability of the museum's outer fencing. A large part of the ground is now used to grow maize for the military guard (figure 24). Isolated clotheslines hang not far down the slope from the displaced bronze statues of Leopold II and Prince Albert, propped up without plinths or great fanfare. With pockets of domestication dwelling alongside Ozymandian remains of deluded grandeur, glimpses of the everyday city creep across the enclave.

KINSHASA CLIMBS: TOWER OF THE EXCHANGE, CNRT TOWER, AND GÉCAMINES TOWER

If occupying Mont Ngaliema and the former colonial stadium once signified the appropriation of colonial territory, Mobutu's various skyscrapers may be seen as extensions of his ambitions to claim the sky. While he was in office, all television broadcasting would sign off by playing the national anthem and showing a clip of Mobutu, adorned with his trademark leopard-skin cap,

18. I made several attempts to enter the grounds in 2014–15 but was denied access.

19. The current museum was erected as a temporary arrangement while never-realized plans for an official museum were underway (Van Beurden 2015a: 172).



Fig. 24. Grounds of the National Museum at Mont Ngaliema with maize plants growing, Kinshasa, 2014
(Photograph © Ruth Sacks.)

descending from the clouds. This was accompanied by the motto *Suivez le Guide* (Follow the Guide). Taking on godly roles, Mobutu also expanded the metaphor by sculpting the skyline.

Across book covers, magazines, social media, and official websites, the defining symbol of Kinshasa is the Monument to the Nation's Heroes, commonly known as Tour de l'Échangeur or simply the Exchange (figure 25). The tower, located in the district of Limete, looms over the skyline between N'Djili (home to the airport) and the city's various centers, the Exchange straddles the major traffic interchange that inspired its nickname. Its gargantuan structure marks where the major traffic artery of Boulevard Lumumba intersects with subsidiary roads. The tower's arrangement of four enormous concrete poles emerges from a curving base of ramps, domes, and outlines of garden terraces. A floret of balconies juts out over the vast stretch of the city from a height of nearly seven hundred feet.

Construction on the Exchange began in 1970 but was never officially



Fig. 25. Tower of the Exchange in Limete, Kinshasa, 2014
(Photograph © Ruth Sacks.)

completed. The site's architect was Olivier-Clément Cacoub, a Franco-Tunisian known for designing major African landmarks, such as the Palais des congrès de Tunis (Tunisian Congress Center, 1969) and the Hôtel Président (1973) in Ivory Coast. The Exchange was initially intended as a museum and monument to former prime minister Patrice Lumumba, despite Mobutu being party to his 1961 assassination by the CIA and Belgian government. A museum of Congolese history was initially meant to be housed in the base of the tower. As testament to the building's original aims, a bronze statue of Lumumba stands on the eastern edge of the site, outside the perimeter security fence.²⁰ Waving stiffly down at the oncoming traffic, the sculpture appears as an afterthought to the surging concrete and iron extremities it fronts.

The aesthetics of the traditional, naturalistic memorial clash with Cacoub's futuristic architecture, which presents a monumental brutalism, topped with a Neo Art Deco crown. Circular shapes at the tower's base could be linked

20. Filip De Boeck and Marie-Françoise Plissart (2004: 89) note that this statue looks more like Mobutu than Lumumba.



Fig. 26. A view from the walkway at the Tower of the Exchange, Kinshasa, 2014
(Photograph © Ruth Sacks.)

to 1960s and 1970s imagery of outer space structures, particularly the aesthetic popularized by Afrofuturism.²¹ The Exchange's thickly ridged elevated walkways and floating elliptical terraces can be interpreted as the space stations of science fiction (figure 26). This fantastical architecture speaks more to Mobutu's ambitions to join the space race than to the task of memorializing a hero of independence. Over the years, the Exchange has been used as a police headquarters and prison. The "Eiffel Tower" of Kinshasa also serves as radio mast for the airport. At most times of day, the major interchange surrounding it is heavily congested. Traffic and nearby construction generate debris, dust, and fumes that hang over the complex's denuded grounds. High above, the glass windows in the tower twinkle as the business of airplane traffic continues.

At the time of writing this text, the site is accessible as the Museum of

21. Afrofuturism, championed by the American musician Sun Ra, promoted a progressive and resplendent Black future, based on ancient African cultures like Egypt, through sci-fi fantasy narratives. This was becoming popularized in the US at this time.

Contemporary Art and Multimedia.²² Visits to the museum's temporary exhibitions are arranged by appointment only, and guards escort guests through the emptied gardens. Plans have been in the works to reconstruct the site for some time but are regularly stalled.²³ Temporary worker dwellings are regularly erected to house laborers whose activities take place high above the ground at the tower's peak. The pools and neat shrubbery decorating the site present deserted leisure spots. Restaurants and shops once intended for the Exchange complex never materialized. Separated from the dense residential area of Limete in which the site is located, the vacant terraces are visibly affected by pollution. Moss and damp stains grow around tiles and empty water features. What was intended as the main entrance is boarded up, and the walkway, intended to stretch across the city, ends abruptly with the site's perimeter. Inside the museum, space is constricted, giving the impression of being inside an architectural flourish. That is to say, the original design seems more concerned with its outward appearance than with the comfort of human bodies inside. Sharp edges and coarse surfaces inside the tower's halls and passageways are rough on the skin. Unfinished interiors speak to the building's past and present expediencies.

Perhaps more than any other Authenticity commission, the Exchange personifies the Mobutu regime. My contemporary experience of the site, based on conversations with people in its vicinity, is dominated by its history of once serving as a police station of a violent government. No celebratory opening ever took place for the Exchange, and there is no discernible announcement in the press explaining the occupation of the mighty tower. Moreover, I believe that the choice to utilize the monument as a police base was not arbitrary. The Exchange's ambitious scale ensures that it is visibly imposing. Its striated concrete lines are more threatening than celebratory. From afar, its priapic mass suggests a watchtower monitoring its surrounds.

For those inside the grounds, the tower's central column overpowers, literally overshadowing all activity. The necessary military to guard the airplane radio tower are aided in their task by an imposing concrete encasement. This threatening atmosphere continues the closer one gets to the base. The flag-

22. The museum is a subsidiary of the greater museums of Kinshasa and has no permanent collection of contemporary art. It has hosted temporary exhibitions such as the 2014 Kinshasa biennale, *Yango*, and the traveling exhibition *Fragile* by Wolfgang Tillmans in 2018.

23. Renovations began in 2011, orchestrated under the government of Joseph Kabila, who lost power in 2019.

lined elevated parade area is only occasionally occupied by individual walkers, who tend to be staff or individuals attached to the construction activities. The relative quiet is punctuated by the sporadic school group. Any rowdiness is absorbed in the swells of concrete and the empty spaces of the complex's borders. There is little about the site today to suggest it caters to the general populace or will do so in the future.

While the Exchange's pinnacle communicates with airplanes, another major tower from this era was designed to steer the national media. Moving northwest along Boulevard Lumumba, past the site of the Rumble in the Jungle and heavily populated residential areas, one finds the Congolese National Radio and Television Tower looming at the start of what was once the colonial neutral zone, a space of separation between Congolese and Europeans. The site was completed in 1975 by French architects A. Arsac and M. Dougnac and is one of the few structures that came to fruition as part of a major scheme to develop a new capitol complex in central Kinshasa (see Beeckmans 2018). Officially known as the Cité de la Voix du Zaïre (Complex of the Voice of Zaïre), the multilevel, multistructure site is colloquially known as Tour RTNC (CNRT Tower), highlighting the part of it that is most apparent from a street view.

The tower, one of the tallest buildings in Kinshasa, declares Mobutu's intentions to dominate the airwaves and is the architectural showpiece at the heart of what was intended as a cluster of parliamentary buildings (Beeckmans 2018). Separated from the skyscrapers of Gombe, (the city's main business center), to the north and towering over the neighboring Palace of the People, CNRT Tower is a shooting curve of blue-gray glass and concrete that could be classified as structural expressionism (figure 27). The angled facade of windows, designed to allow as much light in as possible, is stylistically similar to Minoru Yamasaki's World Trade Center (1973) in New York (Toulier, Lagae, and Gemoets 2010: 122).²⁴ The actual work of broadcasting takes place in squat studios below the platform that houses the tower. Glass curtains veer back and upward for twenty-two stories to leave the job of human-scale communication to its accompanying sculptures.

While two anonymously created stand-alone abstract concrete works near the entrance area to the building have some affinity to the building's soaring curves, a tableau of bronze cast figures in its lower grounds jars against the

24. The World Trade Center, which briefly held the title of tallest building in the world in the early 1970s, was destroyed in the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001.



Fig. 27. CNRT Tower,
Kinshasa, 2014
(Photograph © Ruth Sacks.)

sleek architectural lines (figure 28). Made by Liyolo, the sculpture *Messengers* (Messengers) was intended to represent a central hero who calls the public to arms with a bugle (pers. comm., 2014). Although the figures are larger than life, the overall logic of the site sees the bronze figures pushed toward the ground by the towering column behind them. Despite being placed there to provide a human touch to the site, Liyolo's sculpture is relegated to decoration, set dressing for the main event of modernist architecture. His attempt to access a golden age of precolonial imagining lacks any stylistic unity with its designed surrounds. In the face of the tower block's self-contained teleology, the sculpture appears tacked on.

From up close, the glass of the severely run-down building appears cracked and dirty. A tour of the tower's television center includes surveying bullet holes in the walls from a violent interlude in 1993 when the station was held for ransom. A frontal view of the sculpture is severed from the street via



Fig. 28. The gardens of CNRT Tower, with the sculpture *Messengers* (1975) in the foreground, Kinshasa, 2014

(Photograph © Ruth Sacks.)

security walls. Staff use what were once ornamental lawns around a former water feature to grow vegetables (figure 28). Neat rows of leafy staples are protected from view of the busy road by security fencing. For me, the smattering of high windows that remain lit throughout the night emphasize the instability of an unreliable electricity supply. The power that is provided by the building's generator is insufficient for an operational elevator. Those who wish to reach the tower's upper echelons, including the CEO's office, must use the stairs. Further, the air conditioning system and automatic windows of the initial designs have never been operational (Beeckmans 2018: 14). Nevertheless, CNRT Tower still functions as a landmark, and radio and television continue to operate. While the building's initial design speaks to a time when electricity was expected to be on tap and the means to clean massive walls of glass were available, the site's continued role in the city is underscored by the tower's heightened visibility.

In riverside Gombe, Gécamines Tower is equally conspicuous among surrounding high-rises (figure 29). The Belgian regime commissioned the

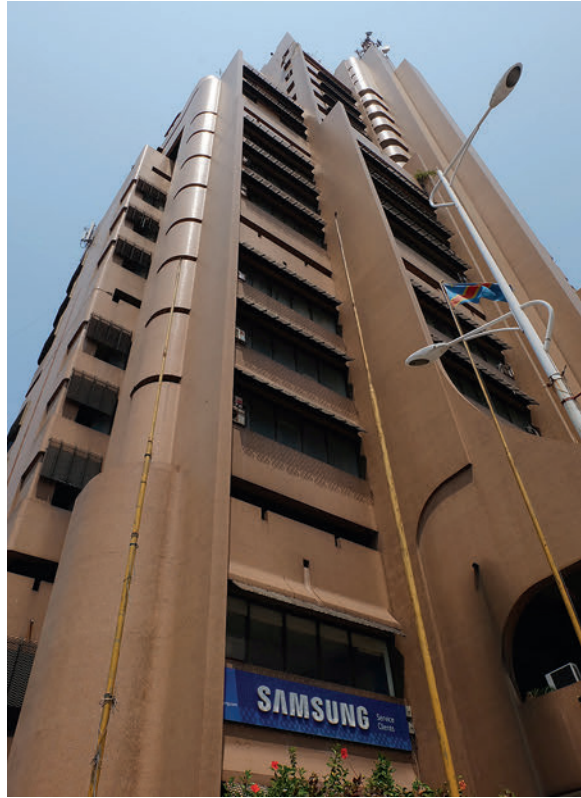


Fig. 29. Gécamines Tower, Kinshasa, 2015
(Photograph © Ruth Sacks.)

building, previously called Sozacom Tower, to house the offices of the General Mineral Company. It is now home to Gécamines, a state-controlled mining corporation. The building was originally intended to symbolize the mineral riches of Zaire through its copper color and mountainous proportions and contours (*500 Visages* 1975: 217). Architects Claude Strebelle and André Jacquemain sought to illustrate African modernity through sculptural volume, inspired by Art Deco (Lagae and Toulrier 2013: 113).

The Neo Art Deco/postmodern building's cavernous interior presents a series of whimsical counterpoints to its outer crust. Appropriately for a mining company, Gécamines Tower has (sparsely populated) parking bays reaching six floors underground. A resident team of engineers attend to the building's generator system, which keeps its main areas in working order. An elegantly proportioned core, starting with an oval hall and topped by a shell-like spiral ceiling, ushers visitors to bronze- and wood-lined elevators that

deposit them at polished reception offices. The rich textures lining these show areas include grainy woods, tiny, serrated tiles, and shiny marble. From its enclosed organic shapes to the luxury linings of its foyer and main offices, echoes of Belgian Art Nouveau are arguably more prominent here than anywhere else in Kinshasa.

Unlike the total artworks of earlier chapters, the massive edifice follows the conventions of tropical architecture. Its body is heavily padded, with shuttered horizontal slits for windows. Light is angled in from outside, flooding the interior while denying outsiders any views of the rooms. The insulated structure offers only its heft to the surrounding city. From inside, generous office windows, as well as an external system of service balconies, render the urban landscape pictorial.

As a self-contained domain with its own power supply, Gécamines Tower has clear hierarchies of space. Between the lush lobby and upper reception area are mundane offices. Their plain walls, plastic chairs, and chipped wooden desks, empty of computers, are like other government sites across the city. While it has the outward appearance of an international corporate powerhouse, the building holds all the dully worn aesthetics that characterize bureaucracy in Kinshasa. The stack of semi-vacant offices, held in place with rich disguise, is also testament to a novelesque biography. Once-luxurious apartments on the uppermost floors now stand deserted and dirty, with the carpeting ripped up (figure 30). A pile of abandoned furniture, topped by a mounted moose head, takes up most of a small, darkened room said to have been occupied by Mobutu's son. The adjoining hall, with high, sloped ceilings and long windows, was once the scene of opulent balls, where high society danced while looking out at the river and across to Brazzaville.²⁵

Set up in conversation with the skyscrapers of the neighboring capital, Gécamines Tower is scarred from conflict in Congo-Brazzaville during the 1997 civil war in the Republic of the Congo. One of the tower's upper balconies sports holes from cannonball fire (figure 31). The building's fortresslike nature becomes more apparent here as only its outer buttress took strain. Kinshasa's monument to a once-buoyant copper industry appears well equipped for a siege in real life. Partially abandoned chambers within architectural grandeur lend it the air of a Gothic mausoleum.

25. Brazzaville is the capital of the Republic of the Congo. Situated across the Congo River from each other, Kinshasa and Brazzaville are the two capitals closest together in the world, after the Vatican and Rome.



Fig. 30. The former presidential suite, Gécamines Tower, Kinshasa, 2015
(Photograph © Ruth Sacks.)

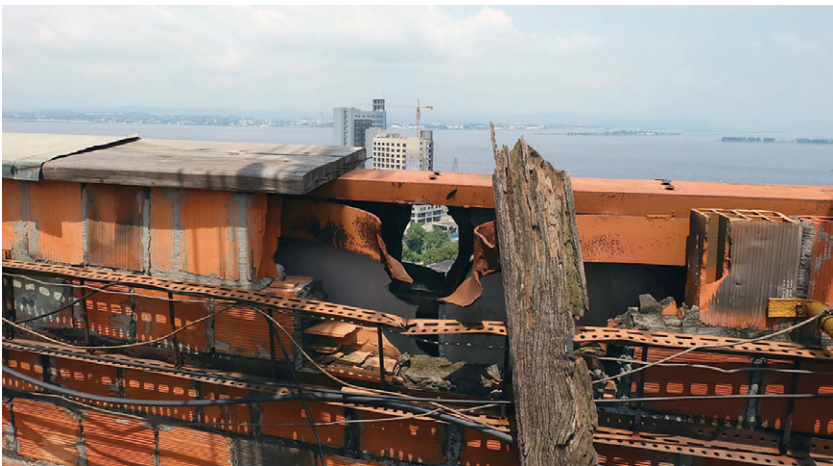


Fig. 31. The view from a balcony of Gécamines Tower with a cannonball hole, Kinshasa, 2015
(Photograph © Ruth Sacks.)

Gécamines Tower is a monolithic landmark visible from Congo-Brazzaville. It dominates the riverbank and other skyscrapers along Kinshasa's June 30 Boulevard because it is bulky as well as tall. The edifice has far overtaken the first colonial skyscraper, the Forescom building (1946), and it is an iconic reminder of how the Belgian Congo implanted an idea of modernist teleological progress in the city. A few miles away, just south of the opulent suburb of Gombe and the skyscrapers of downtown Kinshasa, CNRT Tower frames the postcolonial Parliament. In its prominence and former opulence, CNRT Tower is a vertical marker of Mobutu's ambition, far surpassing colonial structures.

CNRT Tower is in a topographically low area. Whereas most of Kinshasa's skyscrapers are located in the city's business center (Gombe), CNRT's height is accentuated by its comparatively low immediate surrounds. From 2010, Joseph Kabila's regime spearheaded building drives to construct super-tall skyscrapers (De Boeck and Baloji 2016: 274). The giant, jagged river's edge makes the individual silhouettes of towers to its south even more conspicuous. This is also true of the Exchange, which looms over the thick traffic and interlocking residential networks of Limete, a flat stretch of land. Like Gécamines Tower and the CNRT site, the Exchange speaks of might in the most obvious way. The more dominating a building's scale—in relation to other buildings, as much as human beings—the more it renders that which is below diminutive. For the average passerby, awe-inspiring architecture accentuates their own ordinariness. Concurrently, panoptic views from the towers deceptively suggest that the city could become a “readable text,” with sheer height seeming to nullify the individuations of the toylike structures below (Certeau 1984: 92). Anyone who has invested time in traversing Kinshasa is aware that the situation is very different at ground level compared to the top of the tower.

Filip De Boeck (2015: 87) focuses on a twelve-story tower in an industrial area of Limete built by a private individual known as Docteur. The ongoing construction presents a personalized folly to the post-independence and colonial skyscrapers. De Boeck and Sammy Baloji (2016: 3–4) link the height of the tower to mountainous forms within the Kinshasa landscape, drawing out its biblical connotations. This haphazard tower also indicates a “preoccupation with space and skies” and, like Mobutu's towers, harks to the spiritual domain of the heavens. However, De Boeck and Baloji (2016: 273) link this watchtower not only to surveillance, control, and unearthly powers but also to the Congolese Kitawala movement of the 1920s, which was adapted from

the South African branch of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, an offshoot of Jehovah's Witnesses.

The implication is that the Docteur erected this eccentric construction to provide a "safe haven" for those inside to escape the unhealthy city and the various catastrophes that may befall it (De Boeck and Baloji 2016: 273). Mobutu's Authenticity-era towers by no means propose a vision of urban healing. They embody top-down design solutions and emphasize urban divisions. Whereas the Docteur's tower looks like a series of typical Kinshasa brick constructions piled on top of one another, the post-independence landmarks are distinctly separate in their formations of swooping glass and steel, combined with concrete mass.

Drawing from an eclectic range of twentieth-century modernist traditions, Mobutu's skyscrapers bring strong personalities to the skyline. From the Exchange's neo-futurism and the Gécamines Tower's postmodern take on Art Deco, to the late modernist CNRT complex, each design sports its own language of high architectural modernism. The self-contained logics of each site are ostensibly appropriate to encapsulate the idea of post-independence self-reliance. But the teleological power to which their design refers demands a connection to an infrastructure continually powered by wealth that never fully materialized. When these towers are experienced firsthand, the lie of Authenticity bravado is evident. The more ambitious the structure, the more its latter-day disconnect from electricity and maintenance becomes visible: the highest towers are the least self-sufficient, and the glossiest materials the most tarnished. The message of calculated control is unable to maintain its own literal and aesthetic functioning.

History ensured that the Authenticity-era towers were the only constructions possible for decades. From 1974 onward, Mobutu's Authenticity construction of autonomous power foundered. The first symptoms were economic (sparked by the fall of copper prices), but the effects soon permeated state and society (White 2008: 219; Young and Turner 1985: 64). As the regime lost its grip on the nation, policing of Kinshasa increased, and spurts of public largesse petered out. Those construction projects that continued were largely achieved through foreign aid (through the support of countries like France and China).

In 1974, the government-controlled press kept up the public face of the regime. A newspaper article from the time, entitled "Kinshasa Climbs to the Sky!" describes buildings such as the Exchange and Gécamines Tower as "economic barometers" (Lukombo 1974: 11). Today, the skyscrapers can no

longer be employed as a means of measure. If they are to be read symbolically, their lack of maintenance now speaks to their isolation from the rest of the city. When one is inside what are now semi-occupied sites, the silences loom as much as do the giant towers. Authenticity's outlines in the cityscape speak to a time when they once attempted to transcend the horizontal city.

AUTHENTICITY AND THE AUTHENTIC CITY

The Mobutu regime's constructions erected distinctive pockets of sleek and luxurious architecture against Kinshasa's sprawl of dwellings, markets, industrial areas, housing projects, shopping districts, urban farms, dumping sites and combinations thereof. What the small colonial community had called shantytowns or slums are now Kinshasa's primary matter. Infrastructural maintenance to populous neighborhoods is highly irregular, and there is an overall lack of comprehensive state-provided amenities. Electricity is supplied in spurts, if at all, and it is uncertain when and where it will be turned off. Those who can afford to do so use generators. Running water is in short supply, and there are no adequate health facilities. Far from the *Kin-la-Belle* (Kin the Beautiful) of post-independence, Kinshasa has become *Kin-la-Poubelle* (Kin the Trashcan). This is cause for international aid, and a plethora of health and sanitation plans have been put in motion from outside the country. Theodore Trefon (2011) records that in the majority of situations, the locals relied on for information are not always accurate informants regarding what the situation requires. The system of aid has now become the only source of income for many state actors and community leaders who manage external projects. Less than useful or practical solutions are often implemented and encouraged for the payment that organizers and workers will receive.

Within this dense network of outside proposals and indefinite implementation, overlaid by the extremities of everyday life, I am struck by the grip Mobutu's aging post-independence sites have. As the city expands and agitates, the overarching mesh of Authenticity is retained. While their surrounding street life is saturated with the dusty clamor of teeming informal trade, gridlocked traffic, and profusions of people, the overgrown lawns and empty pavilions of the towers are still. The rustling of the tangle of plants and sporadic clotheslines around the cages of the Presidential Park's former zoo echo, and CNRT Tower audibly slices the wind when one is directly beneath it. From the Exchange's terraces, the city is a removed hum. The uninhabited

space and underused land around Authenticity edifices amplify their difference. As the military and private security continue to guard these sites, huge pressure is placed on their symbolic value. The vertiginous ambitions of post-independence stand their ground within a city overflowing at its sides.

A marked contrast between the government commissions of this chapter and the everyday city is well illustrated when the towers are compared to the housing schemes laid out for working-class families during the same period (figure 32).²⁶ These satellite cities provide a ground-level view of shuffling urban arrangements that overtake their initial planning. With the sites' modular designs catering to neither the expanding population nor the required patterns of use, the original concrete boundaries have buckled under the weight of shifting needs and usages. Crisscrossing circuits of unanticipated occupants overwhelm neatly apportioned pockets of built space. As these structures are built on, cut away from, and adapted, the original designs are rendered thickly porous, packed with the sediment of multiple interconnected living arrangements. Available open ground is tilled or utilized for dumping. Networks of informal trade frame populous street life on roads that bear little motor traffic. The multiple, interlaced networks of the decades-old housing projects have complex rhythms and textures that highlight the comparatively intact, if aging, Authenticity sites.

With vertiginous designs caricaturing their own base ambitions in the skyline, Mobutu's giant towers and enclosures lose an actual authentic experience to the uncontainable city in which they are embedded. If the word *authenticity* is understood as an original and legitimate experience, it peels off from the political doctrine of *recours à l'authenticité* (recourse in authenticity) and its otherworldly built remains. Nevertheless, the relationship between the horizontal city and Mobutu's monoliths is marked by regular overruns and flickering echoes from both sides.

As enforced borders separate chunks of choice real estate from their surrounds, informal elements trickle through. Liyolo's bronze messengers survey neat rows of vegetables and occasional drying laundry rather than an ornamental, public lawn. Large sections of the Presidential Park are given over to maize farming, and a visit to the National Museum of the Congo results in a list of what collection items were stolen during the tumultu-

26. These housing sites include Cité Salongo in Lemba, Cité N'Sele (outside the city to the east), and Cité Maman Mobutu and Cité Vert in Mont Ngafula (on the southern outskirts). The housing projects were largely continuations of colonial construction projects.



Fig. 32. Cité Salongo, Kinshasa, 2015
(Photograph © Ruth Sacks.)

ous 1990s, ending the trail of any further official records (Zola Mpungu Mayala, pers. comm., 2016). In Gombe, where even the smallest apartments are costly by international standards, Gécamines Tower has vacant penthouse floors with prime views. The yawning upper interiors of the edifice only allude to the furnishings and events it once held. The Exchange's elevated walkways provide the intermittent groups of visitors to its semiprivate museum with the space to survey the densely populated commune of Limete. The tower's vacant grounds form an eerie island in one of the most congested areas of the city.

Across the sites, spaces have been looted, walls are pockmarked and scarred, and the glass is clouded and cracked. Yet visitors must wait for hours to request permission to enter Authenticity enclaves and must follow a strict protocol once inside. Despite the everyday city encroaching, the rituals of respecting the hierarchy are maintained. Pressure from the informal surrounds does not break these still spaces but leaves them cracked and leaking.

Sites like the Exchange, the Presidential Park, CNRT Tower, and Gécamines Tower hold an ambiguous position. While their modernist frames tell of autarkic complexes of wealth and progress, their partial degradation means that they cannot do the aggrandizing work for which they were

intended. Yet these locations still enjoy a certain aura of mystique, permeated by nostalgia. In 2004, longing for the colonial era predominated, but nostalgia for the Mobutu era was on the increase (De Boeck and Plissart 2004: 94–95). In 2014, key architectural sites still inspired admiration for a time when the Congo could achieve such feats. The buildings speak not only to a time of prosperity, but also to an ambitious vision of what Kinshasa could have been.

As discussed in chapter 3, historical architecture often serves as a depository of the memory of a time of imagined order and stability (most especially to those who never experienced it). With the ABC Hotels, their nostalgic pivot is for an ebbing embodiment of a distant metropole, rendered increasingly frail as urban centers grow larger and more unpredictable. However, where aging colonial remains speak of an indistinct concept of Europe, the sites of Authenticity point to a never-realized fantasy of Africa.

Tightly policed, semi-activated sites allude to the insecurity of regimes in constant need of reasserting rule. At the same time, what is being fenced off drives fascination for what they might hold. Sweeping architectural forms and spatial planning—whether fantastical or grandiose—heighten the sense of drama. As seen in the Presidential Park, cut off by a military zone, and the Exchange, with its cavernous space below the museum area not open to the public, certain areas out of bounds. They are only visible from certain angles to most of the city. Those portions of Mobutu's sites that are accessible require patience and lengthy periods of waiting for authorization to enter. For me, the experience of distinctive forms—a jagged silhouette sticking out above rooftops, the fragment of a telltale mosaic through trees, the deep shadow of a monumental mass—was beguilingly fragmented. This visitor's nostalgic urge formed its own picture of the whole. Once someone is inside one of these buildings, the architecture of the space ensures that they continue to look to a different time. Set up against the city as backdrop, these spaces speak to potential African futures in a way that imperial modernist relics never can. Their often outlandish designs still do a lot of imaginative work to enclose a memory worth protecting, while never being fully preserved.

The giant objects of Kinshasa's Authenticity leave haunting, splintered impressions on the city psyche. Sites are still partly under the spell of the unseen violence that once took place. Underneath what was then the May 20 Stadium, in the former prison chambers of the Exchange, and on the river islands viewed from Gécamines Tower, missing bodies are remembered. There are no corpses to mourn. Bogumil Jewsiewicki and Bob W. White (2005: 1) make the connection between Central African mourning ritu-

als and the trauma that can accompany authoritarian rule. They highlight how, according to local beliefs, the bodies of the deceased must be present for the transformation from ghost to ancestor to take place. Without these bodies, the mourning process is unfinished; the person is dead, but not a full ancestor. The ghostly quality of Mobutu's sites may be more than their violent mythology. In their partial functionality, they are not failures that can be fully mourned. The surreal grandeur of unfinished architecture, overgrown lawns, and still fountains has not lost some form of potential. Given the thrall of the Authenticity mythology, it is conceivable that the sites inspire a longing for a time when the illusion of independence was in place, when colonial languages could be adapted and reformed so that the new nation might match with and therefore delink from the former oppressor.

Studies of African cities and the independence era commonly approach the topic as "reduced to a problem of economic underdevelopment and inequalities" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013: 5). The dire economic straits of the Congo's ruling powers are obvious in the cracks, mold, and natural eruptions of Mobutu's key sites. But this is not the only reading to be made. Lack of upkeep, often mixed with signs of domestic life, is a feature of many state-owned sites (as I detailed in chapter 3). I believe that iconic constructions such as the Exchange, the Presidential Park, and the Gécamines and CNRT Towers hold a sense of Authenticity ideology, even as they employ aesthetics understood as European. The latter may be understood as part of the Belgian colonial cultural package first seen in colonial Art Nouveau.

AESTHETIC DEPENDENCIES

Art Nouveau, inspired by the arts of Japan and Islam, attempted to wed high art with craft and design, influencing a chain of architectural events in Euro-America that led to more organic modernist design. At the birth of the International Style in the early twentieth century, a building could be conceived of as a totality, inside and out. Decades later, in the era of African independence, the state architecture of Authenticity flaunted a high modernist lineage. The expressive forms evident in the sweeping exterior curves of the Exchange and Gécamines Tower follow architectural organicism. Authenticity unified not through appearance but via representational language that best served the Mobutu regime and its cult of patriarchal personality. The resulting conglomeration of forms and symbols that make up each site were never art for

art's sake, as with Art Nouveau. Art in the service of the Congolese post-independence state tended to use direct expressions of might. Rather encoding their messages for certain audiences, state sites broadcast meaning that could be understood by the Congolese public and international powers alike.

Where Art Nouveau once situated the possession of a colony as a symbol of Belgian modernity and a source of national opportunity, the post-independence regime attempted to recuperate an aesthetic apparatus of forward-looking prosperity and status. In the same way that the ABC Hotels, in line with their Art Nouveau ancestry, were spaces of luxury in their time, Mobutu's Authenticity sites speak of a wealthy foundation. The expressive concrete forms of monoliths like the Exchange and Gécamines Tower, and the towering curvature of the CNRT complex, evidently required sophisticated engineering techniques. Ultramodern designs, in themselves, communicated the power to command high-end international talent.

Certain structures use expensive materials, such as the marble that lines the walls of Gécamines Tower and that gives the Marble Palace its name. Echoing Victor Horta's stone palaces of chapter 2, these address ideas of the European palace and are a far cry from the majestic woven walls of Congolese leadership, such as the Great Hall of the Mangbetu king Mbunza.²⁷ Across postcolonial Africa, for ceremonial chambers as much as everyday dwellings, traditional materials of earth and wood are widely eschewed in favor of permanent materials of adobe brick and concrete blocks (Strother 2004: 276). In the Congo, these materials tend to be separated into African/Congolese and European/Belgian forms. This idea persists even though cement was produced in Kinshasa during Authenticity. Showcase architecture and large-scale housing projects were achieved with concrete from new, job-creating factories. Z. S. Strother (2004: 272) notes that choice of building materials is based on the practicalities of permanent and impermanent structures, which override traditional aesthetics. While modern urban space unquestionably demands secure buildings with longevity, it is the functionality of cultural connotations in Authenticity state sites that I seek to highlight here.

Each construction discussed in this chapter is not only aesthetically and spatially separate from its surrounds but stylistically disjointed within. As illustrated at the AUO building at Mont Ngaliema, and the grounds of CNRT Tower and the former May 20 Stadium, there is a schism between modern-

27. Georg Schweinfurth, the first European to visit the Mangbetu, described the king's hall and the central building in volume 2 of his *The Heart of Africa* (1874), written four years after his visit. He refers to the Mangbetu as Monbuttoo, and Mbunza as Munza.

ist design and handmade Africanist interior decor and artworks. Ostensibly taking recourse in Congolese tradition, commissioned murals, paintings, and sculptures simplify precolonial culture into a rural idyll. The art of the Avant-gardists tended to reference unspecified African traditions and never made any great effort to obscure or challenge the overriding hierarchies, whether they were the aesthetic norms of a primitivist colonial education or social commentary. From Liyolo's trumpeters and warriors to Mokengo's mosaics, Authenticity's pictorial platitudes tell unambiguous stories to placate inflated state egos and other buyers. However, when they are set within high modernist architecture and landscaping, their implied meaning no longer conforms to the claims of their artists, despite their complicated positionality. Far from the "new language" that some wanted to see in the conglomeration of visual effects the sites manifested, they appear as disjointed (Ortolani 1974: 10).

The aesthetic language of the sites themselves suggests that their artworks are superfluous. Hard lines of skyscraper walls and buttresses—glass and steel, thick paint, and raw concrete alike—easily allow for their dissonant appendages of mosaic and sculpture to metaphorically slide off. The interior decor of what were once lavish halls and entertainment areas is less easy to locate, but what remains in empty rooms, photographs, and firsthand descriptions gives a good idea. Authenticity sites are commonly understood to have "European outsides with African insides" (Patrick Missassi, pers. comm., 2014). Expertly carved wooden chairs, bowls, masks, and ornate utensils of various hues and qualities are offset by intricate raffia hangings and throws of animal hide. The imagery on carvings and textiles is echoed in those bronze or painted artworks that adorn private palaces and staterooms. As movable items, many artworks and objects were also literally separated from their host structures during the pillaging. Those elements that represented Africa were impermanent in Mobutu's Authenticity, but this was due to how the lives of objects and buildings played out under Kinshasa's historical trajectory.

In Nairobi, Kenya, Africanization policies under Jomo Kenyatta after independence led to a more consciously Africanized state architecture. Kenyatta International Convention Centre (1974), an iconic twenty-eight-story skyscraper, has conical forms and an amphitheater that are commonly understood to reference a *baraza* (traditional meeting hut) (Hertz 2015: 52).²⁸ In the case of the Congo, it was in colonial exhibitions and fairs that such melding of traditional African architecture with European forms first took place (Lagae 2000). During the time of Mobutu, some evidence of this work may

28. Karl Henrik Nøstvik was the architect of the Nairobi convention center.

be seen in the sketches of Italian architect Sante Ortolani (1975; 1977), where built form largely echoes African traditional objects such as drums and figurines. Ortolani was the director of the Kinshasa architecture academy during Authenticity, but his plans never materialized into large public landmarks, only private villas. Other post-independence African nations addressed the whole built environment. For example, in Tanzania, the regime planned to integrate urban space with traditional village formations in the new capital city of Dodoma (Beeckmans 2018: 8).²⁹ In stark contrast to Mobutu's Authenticity, the built environment envisioned under Julius Nyerere's concept of *Ujamaa* (Familyhood) sought to be unmonumental.

If "monumentality is a characteristic almost intrinsically inherent to colonial architecture and urbanism," then this is a feature Mobutu pursued, through both the reuse of Belgian sites and the creation of new ones (Lagae 2004: 173–74). The identity in which the early Mobutu regime invested propagated an aesthetic of control and surveillance that aimed to surpass colonial monuments. Patterns of enclosure and gigantism remain all-encompassing and ensorcelling to this day. The Mobutu regime chased images of power to bolster its own strongman aesthetics, with a cynical adherence to different modernist designs. The current eeriness of sites such as CNRT Tower, the Presidential Park, Gécamines Tower, and the Exchange is due not only to their physical estrangement from the informal city but also to their strongly individualistic aesthetic personalities. The kind of autonomy they embody is one of self-containment, with each design pursuing its own callous extravagances of taking up space and materials in the public eye. Modernist architecture continues to make claims even as the power and ideology to fuel its creations has dissipated. As weakened physical conditions belie their claim to self-sufficiency, they continue to frame the city's inequalities. Looming towers and semivacant lawns are a constant reminder that Authenticity architectonics cloistered an African elite in place of a Belgian one, with little regard for the welfare of the general populace.

The legacy of Authenticity's state sites drives wedges in a city hungry for more space. At the same time, new plans are underway to further enforce the disparity between the inaccessible extraordinary and more mundane life. The Kabila regime planned to rehabilitate the Exchange as an amusement center, sealed off from the public at large. Cité du Fleuve (River City) is a partially realized plan for an entire neighborhood to be implanted on reclaimed

29. These plans were partially realized by urban planner Macklin Hancock in coordination with the postcolonial regime in 1973.

land on the Congo River. Expanding on the post-independence aesthetics of exclusion, this system of two artificial islands, started in 2008, boasts entertainment facilities, shopping malls, and academic institutions among state-of-the-art residential complexes (La Cité du Fleuve, n.d.). This haven for the wealthy, floating within spitting distance of Kinshasa's massing of informal street life, is reminiscent of Dubai's Palm Islands (opened in 2001), and similarly employs Chinese, Pakistani, and Indian builders (De Boeck 2011: 274). As new monuments form, the old colonial/anticolonial binaries have shifted to new global dependencies.

Advertising imagery of the new islands openly appeals to the Congolese elite and tourists. The scheme avoids civic responsibility by having its own power source, and not providing any assistance to solutions for the mainland metropolis. Although this haven for the wealthy will be as separate from Kinshasa as the whites-only area of colonial times was, one can only speculate how this future satellite city will be affected by the city's inevitable overflows and seepages. Comparatively, the underpopulated, landlocked islands of sites like the Exchange, the Presidential Park, and Gécamines Tower reveal their reliance on the city, even as it pushes up against their borders.

KINSHASA STYLE

Kinshasa, within searing contrasts and ineffective infrastructure, has style. The city is a center for the exaggerated international fashions of the *sapeurs*, a common subject of the brightly colored, ironic Congo of the popular painters.³⁰ Mobutu himself had a striking dress code, calculated to represent a new African chic. His partially public Authenticity sites were brash colonial mimicry on the outside and African pomp on the inside. Like the *sapeurs*, with their designer swagger, brutalist fortresses and tiered lawns stood proud in the face of staggering odds. High-end global styles were a conscious cosmopolitan status symbol. Kinshasa has its own, changeable, vivid, and acerbic style that absorbs and retains the remains of governments that offered straightforward images to highly complex city space. The excess, rupture, and intimidation of Mobutu's towers and fortresses are part of the greater whole.

Mahmood Mamdani (1996: 250) suggests that the question we must ask

30. A *sapeur* is so named for their affiliation with the fashion-oriented movement known as La Sape, short for La Société des Ambianceurs et des Personnes Élégantes (Society of Ambiance and Elegant People).

about the political culture of a regime is not where its roots are to be found (in traditional Africa or in colonialism) but, rather, how one particular style of leadership came to be accepted as the ruling order of the day. The Mobutu regime benefited greatly from initial buffering from Euro-America (followed by China and Russia), but his rule was also supported from within. The dictator stayed in power long after the period of Authenticity through the efforts of countless Zairian collaborators. The system of intimidation and enticement that made the regime so powerful was difficult for even those people with the strongest political convictions to resist (Lye M. Yoka, qtd. in White 2008: 226). Moving away from analysis that sees Authenticity architecture as “European” or “Congolese,” we find in these sites a vivid image of the seductions and menace of the regime.

Authenticity towers not only reached for the sky but toppled existing architecture built as the colonial state apparatus. The power to command high-tech accoutrements was brandished as Ali was invited to make a jungle of Kinshasa. Artworks were swept up in the glamorous system of largesse, which pandered to internationals as much as to a sense of patriotic nationalism. State showmanship extended to awe-inspiring design to provide a constant reminder of what kind of power was in charge.

Top-down architectonics pasted with picturesque Africanisms missed the opportunity for an aesthetic revolution to match the enormity of the political moment. Conceptually and practically, they do not delink from hierarchies of culture. This is revealing not just of the punishing system of dependency that colonial rule installed but also of the nature of the autocratic regime that gained power. The aesthetic contradictions of the sites discussed in these pages are undeniably the result of anticolonial gestures, but they fail to build a decolonized design that was committed to representing a liberated, collective cultural aesthetic for all citizens. Reactionary aesthetics not only were ill equipped for the intense economic pressures that ensued but showed little consideration for what a city that adequately caters to all its inhabitants could look like. Pride in national progress was paraded in terms that could only overwhelm. As audacious sites emerged and then failed to live up to their promise of founding an African super city, Authenticity lost the ability to speak on behalf of the average Zairian. Yet, unlike Mobutu’s personal palaces (at N’Sele and Gbadolite), they are not in ruins.

With imposing architecture still imprinted well over the top of the everyday city, Authenticity sites have not been repurposed. While by no means fully used as such (or in accord with standards set by the Global North),

CNRT Tower is a state media center, even if more people listen to the less sanitized news from *radio-trottoir* (sidewalk radio), as well as various online websites and social media sources. The Exchange hosts a museum, the Presidential Park still caters to tourists, and Gécamines Tower houses the national mining corporation in Kinshasa. What trappings remain of a costly and violent regime are hidden in plain sight, in the inner offices. The Second Republic's key sites remain buoyant even as they are punctured by history. While the ideology of Authenticity did not outlive Mobutu, its physical constructions did. Mobutu's thirty-two-year reign did not leave the Congo's capital in complete ruins either, despite being fundamentally depleted and corrupt in colossal proportions.

Mobutu's giant, unfinished total artwork of *recours à l'authenticité*, seeking to adapt tradition, continues to exude influence across the skyline as it does on the art world. Amid the skyscrapers of giant Kinshasa, itself contained by the giant that is the Congo, human bodies are overwhelmed and rendered insignificant. Looking down from the summit of any of the Mobutu monoliths, one sees the supine creep of Kinshasa's urban stretch unfold, exposing its many inheritances and aspirations, those laid down by the colonial regime among them. Familiarity with the sites themselves suggests that their elevated perspectives were not intended for the city. These structures were meant to be viewed from below. Living testament to its own violent history—cracked by bullet holes and looting as much as by inroads of time, pollution, and plant life—each site encapsulates its own ongoing mythology.

However idiosyncratic and run down, the living shells of Authenticity enchantment not only still stand but manage to pose a threat. Monuments to a political moment that failed its people continue to reach past the present to a terrifyingly spectacular, disembodied future. As Mobutu's commissions once repeated modernist assumptions of progress, they have been forced to adapt to Kinshasa, according to the city's terms. A horizontal approach to post-independence heights delineates an ongoing push and pull of disregard and respect. Overwhelming, thickening, and regenerating Kinshasa has many giants, the shadow of Mobutu and his cultural spectacles among them. In the gigantic city, where neat borders are rare and the harsh realities of daily life are visible, the messy edges of monuments to a creed of the Congolese nation are visible. Yet the sites still stand.

Conclusion

From Total Artwork to Totalitarianism

There is no such thing today as “an” African art.

—V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Idea of Africa*

REPRESENTING REGIMES

Tracking backward from a hard, concrete pinnacle piercing the twenty-first-century Kinshasa skyline, out of an enclosure of swarming plant forms, comes a taut serpentine line, trying to articulate its place in Belgium’s newly industrialized epoch. A snail-shaped town house grips a king’s fin de siècle ambitions as it tells of a tantalizing natural bounty. Fast-forward a couple of decades, and form in the exhibition tightens into a cool, white grip brandishing African sculptures as something ripped from ritual from the Congo to Belgium and then back again. As the century draws on, iron frameworks from Belgium give rise to the searing peaks and ruptures of Congolese high modernism and its state-sanctioned art. In Gombe, a mountainous hunk of concrete opens to its visitors for a glimpse of the delicate proportions of a seashell, dazzling before the degraded office quarters are viewed. As lines are copied, shapes and materials translated and traded, so are their feints. As we move sideways, skirting across Kinshasa to Brussels, from devastating wide angles to unsettling close-ups, we find different Congos shaped by modernist form.

The “bits and pieces . . . in a variety of media” of modernism that bounce off and reproduce one another, alternatively made for and inspired by the Congo, defy a bounded narrative of linear progression (Hofmeyr 2004: 21). In the multiplicity of modernisms that reverberate around the massive tract of contemporary culture that constitutes representations of the Congo,

recognizable stylistic features make their various claims on it, according to their different producers' understanding of modernist progress. Those ornamental architectural forms deemed too cumbersome fall away as the twentieth century develops. Yet they have as much to tell about the story of Congolese modernism (what I have named *Congo Style*), as those that had mobility and longevity.

Art Nouveau totalities were so persuasive that they blinded those within total artworks such as Hôtel Van Eetvelde and the 1897 Congo Pavilion to their own (and the makers') built-in Eurocentrism. As a result, their mode of practice could be used as an effective frame for the wild Congolese subject of Belgium's imagining. Of all the styles visited in this study, Art Nouveau in Belgium is the most hallucinogenic, leaving a searing image of itself before taking fragmented flight into cleaner forms. It is more insidious for its aesthetic ability to overlay its colonial allegiances. Outside of isolated (and isolating) exhibitions, those early and late modernist constructions that are in the Congo are more openly weathered. Their layered, relational histories are discernible, even when those of their makers are not. The fact that the ABC Hotels are neither ruins nor heritage sites speaks volumes. The informal uses of Mobutu Sese Seko's Authenticity-era sites draw out their greater significance. As living structures evade the romantic metaphors of ruination—of the colonial and post-independence regimes—the overt language of Mobutu's postcolonial remains still overwhelms human bodies. Both Authenticity structures and colonial modernist design rely on a politics of oppression and repression. However, neither are uncomplicated or exact reproductions of what came before.

While late nineteenth-century avant-garde design refused to acknowledge its own dominating tendencies, settler architecture sent to the colony had no such illusions. Employed as a means of rule, modernist form entrenched itself as European, only to be absorbed by a new African regime, determined to describe itself. Across the selection of environments discussed in *Congo Style*, the complete entanglement of ideas of Africa and Europe is evident. According to the formal terms of each exhibition, object, and building there is no fixed continental and national identity. Congolese architectural modernism, Kinshasa modernist art, early colonial modernism, and Belgian protomodernist design are neither mutually exclusive nor interchangeable. Above all, post-independence modernist experimentation, in art as well as architecture, is not equivalent to that of the colonizer; it is a conscious attempt to incorporate and overcome the colonizer's dominating ethos.

Moving from Art Nouveau's hazy Orientalist obsessions to Mobutu's state alliances with Global South powerhouses underlines how political geography involves far more than the locus of imperial power and its former colony. Modernist buildings, exhibitions, and state art belie varied and various influences, despite the nationalistic rhetoric that initially framed them. Located in Brussels and Kinshasa at opposing ends of the twentieth century, the sites discussed underscore regimes of mythic, systemic violence in the Congo. With both the Belgium colonial regime and Mobutu's dictatorship reviled by history, an examination of their aesthetic legacies can often lead to moralizing. The horror of King Leopold II's Congo, on the surface, seems to be in contradiction to avant-garde design. From early to late modernism in the arts and architecture, the practitioners discussed aimed to describe a better society, or at least a more efficient one. Yet material form was complicit in furthering never-realized attempts at total control. My greater task has been to tear the design situations of this book from the rigid categories to which Euro-American art history has bound them. A close reading of modernist representations of the Congo can expose the foundational lie of a Global North-centric story that set groups of forms and materials as culturally specific, over and above their greater contexts.

From the false organics of Art Nouveau total artworks that refused to recognize the corruption of colonialism to the duplicitously bombastic Gesamtkunstwerk of Mobutu's Authenticity, bodies have been lost. Depeopled colonial imagery, dehumanized displays, and disproportioned city sites have had to work hard to populate a study that covers periods of time in which masses of unidentified bodies went missing. I address the disembodied sense of time falsely declared in all the exhibitions and interiors discussed to draw attention to the violence around their conception. The bodies of Leopold II and Mobutu are both dislocated and absent from these buildings' lives. King Leopold II never set foot in the colony, and Mobutu dissolved into ever-expanding personifications of his own power, even as his grasp on the Congo began to ebb.

The histories of sites and exhibitions covered in *Congo Style* suggest that dwelling on the extreme wrongdoing of specific leaders draws attention away from the systems that supported them. This study highlights hierarchies within the aesthetics these regimes set loose. The pros and cons of Art Nouveau early modernism have been debated over the twentieth century, but the art of the Second Republic has seldom been studied outside of Kinshasa and its architecture has only begun to be fully broached. Whether successful or not, Mobutu-era experiments in shattering the European frame present rich points of depar-

ture. Both the Leopoldian and Mobutu regimes gave rise to often outlandish sites of seduction that attempted to control the viewer. The artificial worlds they attempt to describe once convincingly overwhelmed onlookers.

From Art Nouveau's exclusionary harmonies to the disjuncture of Zairian giganticisms, uncertainties and instability are never completely hidden. When elements of these environments are reused and curated in new aesthetics, reverberations of their political moments come with them. In each designed situation addressed, the extent to which ideology was built in, was applied, or crept in over time has been assessed according to the particularities of its form-making. These fabrications, intended as provocative fascinations, have complex and changeable meanings packed into their surfaces and teeming interiors. Unpicking their politics will never be a simple task.

The extraordinary productions of the giant regimes of this book employed different modernist constructions to describe that Congo, which they tried to claim according to different epistemological ideologies. Before the modernist frame existed, versions of the Congo were represented in other sophisticated built and crafted languages that were current to their time. It is significant that sculptural objects from the Congo, widely understood as traditional and pre-colonial, fundamentally transformed the course of the European movement. Even though African architecture and city cultures were disregarded, the way in which the Mobutu regime claimed objects of tradition under Authenticity layers them with rich, additional import. This is because "even the choice to defend tradition could be understood as a contemporary adaptation of the present" and, with all its particular nuances, a localized version of modernism. As the possibilities of meaning overflow the boundaries of neat labels and histories, it is time to accept that there is, indeed, no such thing as "an' African art," whether precolonial, modern, or contemporary (Mudimbe 1994: 31). As accentuated by fragmented sites in Kinshasa, there is also no one Congolese modernism. Within multiple modernist histories told by various players with different stakes and subjectivities, I have attempted to make space for the stories told by the objects and architectural artworks themselves.

POSTMODERNISM AFTER AUTHENTICITY

I have employed the sites and objects of this book as a means to pick away at the modernist fixtures around them that are understood as Euro-American. Modernism is not the only system this book has set out to deprovincialize. Attempting to derail its linear, hierarchical logics necessitates that various

of its categories are broken open, certain tools and strategies laid bare, and others made available for reimagining. To describe more than Euro-America, canonical words must be put to new uses. The most crucial word-tools to end with are the mutable and interlocking phenomena of *authenticity* and *postcoloniality*, words impossible to disentangle from the fiction-mongering of identity, ethnicity, and nationalism.

The issue of authenticity has manifested in different material formations across the scope of imaginings of the Congo dealt with in these pages. Art Nouveau, through all its artificialities, sought a fiction of the authentic in exotic and rustic pasts, paving the way for modernist painters to chase presumed primitivity into African sculptures, and cornering it in the Euro-American art gallery (figure 33). The exhibits are undoubtedly authentically African according to their provenance, but the authentic tradition they are made to represent in the modern museum (duplicitous given that a pure and unfettered art of precolonial times never existed) also renders them postcolonial. It is the authenticity bestowed by the Euro-American museum that underlined Mobutu's demand for their return. In the moment of making a nationalist fetish of tradition, the Mobutu regime during Authenticity objectified the very concept of the authentic, transforming it into political doctrine. In their language of now-depleted gigantism, Authenticity sites have become separated from an authentic collective construction that can cater to the average citizen.

As the Congo's postcolonial moment coincided with the postmodern one in Euro-American art and design, the inequalities of Congolese daily reality gave rise to urgencies that overtook intellectual aesthetic battles. As a result, the autonomous postcolonial moment in the Congo and the postmodern moment in modernist architecture, design, and visual art were too self-involved to take real measure of each other. Their revolutions against what had gone before were too consuming to step outside of (for any lengthy period), and they did not make meaningful alliances. And yet, at the same time as Andy Warhol's Campbell's soup cans were coolly rendered monumental (as were reproduced images of the authentic representative of Black Consciousness, Muhammad Ali),¹ Alfred Liyolo was setting up outdoor monuments to extravagant kitsch, without a hint of irony. With cynicism mostly left to the comfortable burlesques of Chéri Samba and the popular painters, no determined effort was rallied to break down the political status

1. Andy Warhol's *Soup Cans* (1962) and, later, *Muhammad Ali* (1978) are iconic examples of American postmodern art.



Fig. 33. Installation view of *European Ghosts* at Mu.Zee, featuring “traditional” vitrines by Gustav Serrurier-Bovy originally built for the 1897 Congo Pavilion, Ostend, Belgium, 2016 (Photograph © Ruth Sacks.)

quo. Moreover, the fragmented high modernist architectural productions of Kinshasa’s Authenticity era took the work of intimidation too seriously to be playful—a situation that, arguably, continues to this day.

The *post* of *postmodern* and *postcolonial* bolsters the symbolic power of the root words. If these words are Kwame Anthony Appiah’s (1992: 342–56) “space-clearing gestures,” they demarcate an area they are unable to fill. The *modern* in *postmodern* was the meat of its substance. In the immediacy of postcoloniality after independence, the urgent requirements of a decolonized design were all labeled as recourse to an authentic fiction. The dislocated modernisms of Authenticity relied on reactionary cultural essentialisms that were ill equipped for the intense pressures that ensued.

LIVING WITH POSTCOLONIAL REMAINS

This book has followed the forms of the Belgian total artwork through to Mobutu’s totalitarianism in terms of how they describe the Congo. From

a narrative of whole sites, architecture, and artworks, it emerges that the modernist motto of Form Follows Function equates to Form Follows Power. Modernist design and visual art employed by ruling regimes and fashionable elites propagate hierarchies and separate different kinds of people, all the while irrationally claiming to be rational. Cordoning off the “poor” and the “primitive” is far from a practical solution to city space or urban sites that were once public. To return to V. Y. Mudimbe (1988: 17), the dichotomies of coloniality that pitted “traditional versus modern . . . subsistence economies versus highly productive economies” were and are perpetuated through new modernisms in the Congo. It is the lens of the city of Kinshasa, its persuasive inconsistencies and inefficiencies, that points out the need for better urban imaginaries.

With current city conditions in mind, the respective rhetorics of colonial and postcolonial remains are sooner exposed by Kinshasa’s unrelenting conditions than in protected Art Nouveau enclaves. As fabricated traditions were merged with representations of nature, the giant Congo of so many imaginings formed (and continuously re-forms) its own urban ecosystem of aesthetic traditions. Symbols of progress and Africity grew over those of the African colony as progress, with hybridized mythology. Within Authenticity enclaves, separated out from day-to-day space, those sites on which urban and natural forces visibly encroach (such as the ABC Hotels and the Presidential Park) are the most independent as things in and of themselves. These, and other Kinshasa sites discussed, have more to tell us than they would if frozen in a museum. Revivified culture, whether it be buildings made into museums or objects placed in exhibitions, remains trapped. The exhibits of the artificial Congos seen in museums are forced to battle the whims of the master narratives that bear them. Contrastingly, sites where objects and buildings have weathered together within urban space undermine what art history has to say about them.

This study has tested the agentic qualities in inanimate built environments, and the persuasive powers of man-made artifice. Design situations in conjunction with artworks have been unpacked with the aim of delineating where the power to describe the Congo lies. While it is never possible (and highly inadvisable) to completely set the intentions of producers aside, I consider the material power of the objects and environments themselves. Detailing the interactivities and connectivity of these spaces, alongside their blockages and stagnant areas, allows a rich lexicon of imagery, tex-

tures, and symbols to come to the fore. I pry open the bigoted premise of modernism as Euro-American by examining what physical form can tell. Where overriding narratives of Euro- or Afrocentric regimes are not always useful, the sites of their built productions and artistic creations can be highly generative.

For me, sites invested with collective meaning allow for reflection concerning the visibility of the need to construct an other. Art Nouveau's strange beauty was based on othering exotic entities that fell outside of late nineteenth-century European urbanity, from Flemish peasants and African peoples to raw nature. In declaring themselves autonomous, Mobutu-era sites attempted to separate themselves from Europe (and any other power that was a threat). They succeeded in alienating the core mass of Kinshasa through dominating forms that told of real-life totalitarian rule. All the enclaves revisited here expose the class structure of their societies, according to whom they were built for and who could not enter. Perhaps the most significant factor that earns these sites a place in the expanding annals of modernist visual culture is that they are "constructed as a binary" active in the "defeat of an 'other'" (AlSayyad 2004: 1). The individualized qualities that inform the construction of alterities and divisions reveal a vibrant attachment to the myths of their own making. My primary aim in this study has been to track the forms, arrangements, and materials that this pattern of exclusion and othering takes, when dealing with the Congo.

From working through sites and contexts, from Brussels to Kinshasa, certain basic modes of approach can be drawn out. Primarily, the forms and patterns that ideologies take can be recognized according to the role they have come to embody within the localized networks of their existence (at both practical and conceptual levels). This helps us avoid ethnocentric approaches that search for signs of Europe or Africa, or for any Indigenous purity, in complex conglomerations of form and meaning. In trying to understand how particular circumstances and trajectories lead to fabricated solutions that weather in different ways, I have taken in the whole object and as much of its history as may be researched or surmised. This approach requires the researcher to be open to the situation and terms of research changing.

Ultimately, in attempts to expose underlying prejudices and primitivism in constructed environments, some self-awareness of the researcher's own complicities and allegiances needs to be accounted for. I have kept this in mind in the introduction and explanation of this project and inserted my

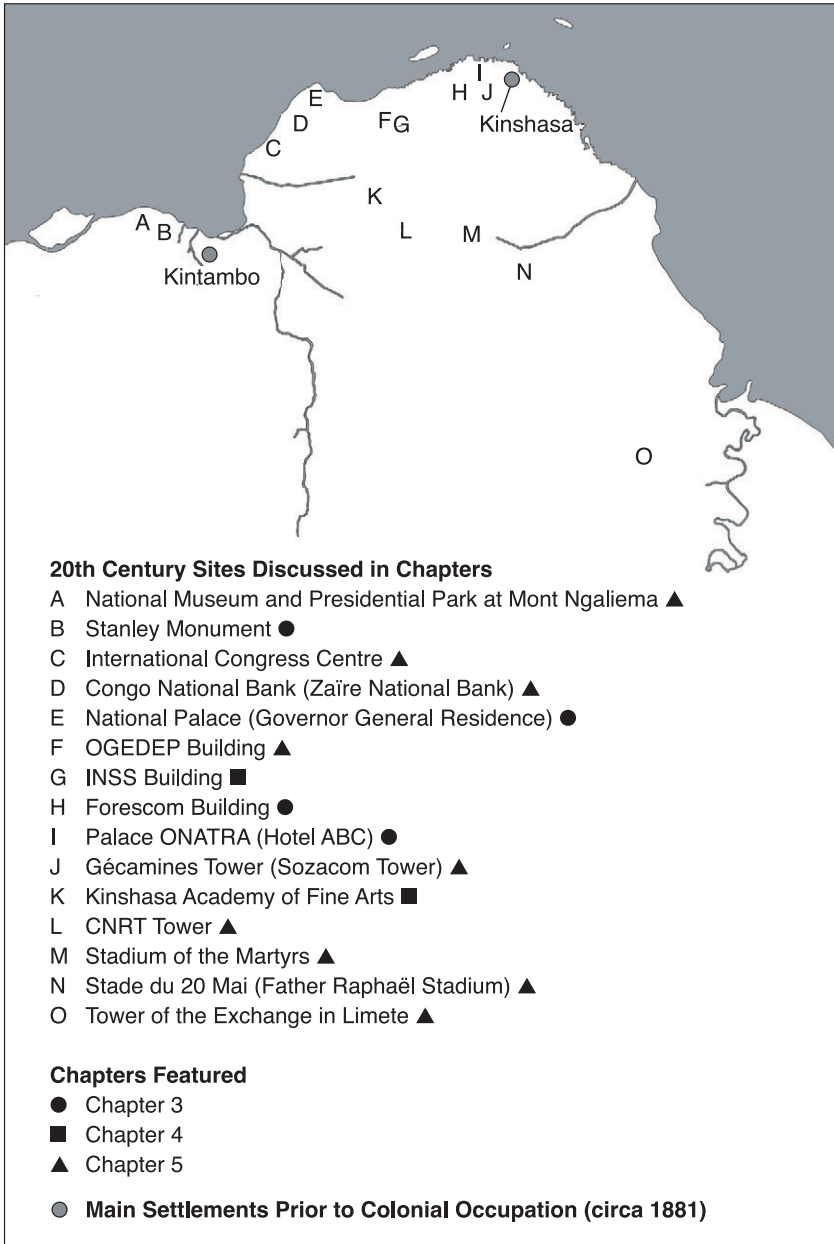


Fig. 34. Looking out from Mont Ngaliema toward the Intercontinental Hotel, Kinshasa, 2014
(Photograph © Ruth Sacks.)

story as an artist-researcher wherever possible. This book is in some ways a map of possible ways of navigating the existing theoretical terrain presented by working with representations of the Congo. It is based on my responses to individual sites and archives (or lack thereof). This was my methodological route, and I hope it is useful for the next person charting their own course through similar material, reaching different destinations (figure 34).

A built form is never ossified in the moment of its making but instead constantly being remade in conjunction with its surrounds. In looking at the complex sites of this study, each with its own intrinsic sense of embodiment, I have, to a certain extent, treated them all as if they were alive. Across all examples, the source of these objects' fascination has been a lively involvement with both their viewers and subject matter. The push-pull appeal of these fabulist, sometimes grotesquely compelling spaces, with swooping towers, curling ornament, painterly marks, sculptural shapes, or shining galleries, is that they are entertainingly sensuous and thrillingly escapist when viewed as whole sites. From the moment they take hold of the viewer's imagination, the promise of their built and manipulated forms can fleetingly hold true. Within this, the excluded other that is constructed—be it primitive man, colonial

subject, or enemy of the nation—is the basis on which the logic of the fantasy relies. No matter what we now know about the violent truth of the contexts of these iconic sites, it cannot be denied that they are eloquent in claiming space in special and powerful ways. I hope that bringing them into focus has allowed for some understanding and empathy for those who have been seduced by them.



Map of Kinshasa showing the key sites discussed in *Congo Style*

REFERENCES

- 500 *Visages du Zaïre*. 1975. Kinshasa: Le Bureau du Président de la République du Zaïre.
- Achebe, Chinua. 1977. "An Image of Africa." *Massachusetts Review* 18 (4): 782–94.
- Adelman, Kenneth Lee. 1975. "The Recourse to Authenticity and Négritude in Zaïre." *Journal of Modern African Studies* 13 (1): 134–39.
- Adriaenssens, Werner. 2002. "Beschaving en Barbarij: een utilitair kunstwerk als eerbetoon aan baron Edmond van Eetvelde." In *Philippe Wolfers: Beschaving en Barbarij*, edited by Werner Adriaenssens and Françoise Aubry, 33–48. Brussels: Koning Boudewij.
- Africa Times*. 2019. "Apple, Tesla among Tech Firms Sued over DR Congo Cobalt Mine Abuses." December 17. <https://africatimes.com/2019/12/17/apple-tesla-among-tech-firms-sued-over-dr-congo-cobalt-mine-abuses/>
- AlSayyad, Nezar. 2004. "The End of Tradition, or the Tradition of Endings?" In *The End of Tradition?*, edited by Nezar AlSayyad, 1–28. London: Routledge.
- Anstey, Roger. 1966. *King Leopold's Legacy: The Congo under Belgian Rule, 1908–1960*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Appadurai, Arjun. 1986. *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Appadurai, Arjun. 1996. *Modernity at Large*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Appiah, Kwame Anthony. 1992. *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- ARAU (Atelier de recherche et d'action urbaines). n.d. "Brussels: Capital of Art Nouveau." Accessed January 15, 2023. <https://www.arau.org/en/tours/brussels-capital-of-art-nouveau-2/>
- Arendt, Hannah. 1973. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Harcourt Brace.
- Asselberghs, Herman, and Dieter Lesage, eds. 1999. *Het museum van de natie: van kolonialisme tot globalisering*. Brussels: Y. Gevaert.
- Aubry, Françoise. 2013. "When the Congo Inspired Victor Horta." In *A Strange World: Hybridisation in Art Nouveau and Symbolism*, edited by Teresa-M. Sala, 62–65. Brussels: Reseau Art Nouveau Network.

- Aubry, Françoise. *See also* Dierkens-Aubry, Françoise.
- Aubry, Françoise, and Jos Vandenbreenen, eds. 1996. *Horta: Van art nouveau tot modernisme*. Ghent: Ludion.
- Axelson, Sigbert. 1970. *Culture Confrontation in the Lower Congo: From the Old Congo Kingdom to the Congo Independent State with Special Reference to the Swedish Missionaries in the 1880s and 1890s*. Falköping, Sweden: Gummessons.
- Badi-Banga Né Mwine, Célestin. 1977. *Contribution à l'étude historique de l'art plastique zaïrois moderne*. Kinshasa: Editions Malayika.
- Baeck, L. 1957. "Une société rurale en transition: Étude socio-économique de la région de Thysville." *Zaire* 11 (2): 115–86.
- Barrett, Estelle. 2010. Introduction to *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry*, edited by Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt, 1–14. London: I. B. Tauris.
- Battersby, Martin. 1967. *Art Nouveau*. Lincoln, UK: Hamlyn.
- Beeckman, Hans. 1996. "De Rijkdom van het Hout." In *Horta: Het huis Solvay*, edited by Yolande Oostens-Wittamer, 138–43. Brussels: Diane de Selliers.
- Beeckmans, Luce. 2010. "Agency in an African City: The Various Trajectories through Time and Space of the Public Market of Kinshasa." In *Proceedings of African Perspectives 2009: The African Inner City: [Re]Sourced*, edited by Karel A. Bakker, 115–30. Pretoria: University of Pretoria.
- Beeckmans, Luce. 2018. "The Architecture of Nation-Building in Africa as a Development Aid Project: Designing the Capital Cities of Kinshasa (Congo) and Dodoma (Tanzania) in the Post-Independence Years." *Progress in Planning* 122:1–28.
- Beeckmans, Luce, and Johan Lagae. 2015. "Kinshasa's Syndrome-Planning in Historical Perspective: From Belgian Colonial Capital to Self-Constructed Megalopolis." In *Urban Planning in Sub-Saharan Africa: Colonial and Postcolonial Planning Cultures*, edited by Carlos Nunes Silva, 201–24. New York: Routledge.
- Benjamin, Walter. 1999. *The Arcades Project*. Translated and edited by Rolf Tiedemann. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bennett, Jane. 2010. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Berman, Marshall. 1988. *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Bhabha, Homi K. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Biebuyck, Daniel. 1985. *The Art of Zaire*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Binkley, David A., and Patricia Darish. 2009. *Kuba*. Milan: 5 Continents Press.
- Bissell, William Cunningham. 2005. "Engaging Colonial Nostalgia." *Cultural Anthropology* 20 (2): 215–48.
- Biwandu, Kiefu. 1974. "Le palais du peuple." *Zaire: l'Hebdomadaire de l'Afrique Centrale*, August 12, 48–49.
- Bleecker, Julian. 2009. "Why Things Matter: A Manifesto for Networked Objects—Cohabiting with Pigeons, Arphids, and AIBOS in the Internet of Things." In *The*

- Object Reader*, edited by Fiona Candlin and Raiford Guins, 165–74. London: Routledge.
- Botombele, Bokonga Ekanga. 1976. *La Politique culturelle en République du Zaïre*. Paris: La Presses de l'Unesco.
- Bouillon, Jean-Paul. 1985. *Art Nouveau, 1870–1914*. London: Skira.
- Bourdier, Jean-Paul, and Trinh Minh-Ha. 2011. *Vernacular Architecture of West Africa: A World in Dwelling*. Abingdon and Oxon: Routledge.
- Bozdoğan, Sibel. 2001. *Modernism and Nation-Building: Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Brown, Kate. 2018. “With a \$84 Million Makeover, Belgium’s Africa Museum Is Trying to Appease Critics of the Country’s Colonial Crimes.” *Artnet*. December 8. <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/africa-museum-restoration-1408924>
- Brown, Ryan Lenora. 2018. “In Congo, a New National Museum Renews Quest to Reclaim History.” *Christian Science Monitor*, April 27.
- Brussels. n.d. “Art Nouveau Brussels 2023.” Accessed March 06, 2023. <https://www.brussels.be/art-nouveau-brussels-2023>
- Cacoub, Olivier-Clément, and Michel Rayon. 1974. *Architecture de soleil*. Tunis: Ceres Productions.
- Capelle, Emmanuel. 1947. *La Cité indigène de Léopoldville*. Leopoldville: Centre d'études sociales africaines.
- Carey, Peter. (1988) 1997. *Oscar and Lucinda*. Brisbane: University of Queensland Press.
- Certeau, Michel de. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 2000. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Choisy, Auguste. 1899. *Histoire de l'architecture*. Paris: Gauthier-Villars, Imprimeur Libraires.
- Clerbois, Sébastien. 2011. “The Revival of Ivory Sculpture in Belgium (1890–1910): The Material in Question.” In *Revival and Invention: Sculpture through Its Material Histories*, edited by Sébastien Clerbois and Martina Droth, 231–56. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Clifford, James. 1988. *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- CIVA. n.d. “Style Congo: Heritage and Heresy.” Accessed March 11, 2023. <https://civa.brussels/en/exhibitions-events/style-congo>
- Collins, John F. 2013. “Ruins, Redemption, and Brazil’s Imperial Exception.” In *Imperial Debris: On Ruins and Ruination*, edited by Ann Laura Stoler, 162–93. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Comoroff, Jean, and John L. Comoroff. 2011. *Theory from the South, or How Euro-America Is Evolving toward Africa*. Boulder: Paradigm.
- Conrad, Joseph. (1899) 1985. *Heart of Darkness and Typhoon*. Craighall, South Africa: Ad Donker.

- Coole, Diana, and Samantha Frost. 2010. "Introducing the New Materialisms." In *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, edited by Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, 1–46. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Cornelis, Sabine. 1998. "Éléments pour une approche historique des arts plastiques Européens et Africains non traditionnels au Congo Belge (1940–1947) et leur situation dans le contexte culturel de la colonie." *Revue des archéologues et historiens d'art de Louvain* 31:143–56.
- Cornet, Joseph. 1971. *Art of Africa: Treasures from the Congo*. New York: Phaidon.
- Cornet, Joseph, ed. 1975. *Art from Zaïre: 100 Masterworks from the National Collection*. New York: African-American Institute.
- Cornet, Joseph, ed. 1989. *60 Ans de peinture au Zaïre*. Brussels: Les Editeurs d'Art Associés.
- Cornet, René Jules. 1953. *La bataille du Rail: La construction du chemin de fer de Matadi au Stanley Pool*. Brussels: L. Cuypers.
- Couttenier, Maarten. 2005. *Congo tentoongesteld: een geschiedenis van de Belgische antropologie en het Museum Van Tervuren (1882–1925)*. Leuven: Acco.
- Couttenier, Maarten. 2015. "One Speaks Softly, Like in a Sacred Place': Collecting, Studying and Exhibiting Congolese Artefacts as African Art in Belgium." *Journal of Art Historiography* 12. <https://arthistoriography.wordpress.com/12-jun-2015/>
- De Beule, Hilde, Laurence Jassogne, and Piet van Asten. 2014. "Cocoa: Driver of Deforestation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo?" CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS), working paper no. 65. Copenhagen.
- De Boeck, Filip. 2011. "Inhabiting Ocular Ground: Kinshasa's Future in the Light of Congo's Spectral Urban Politics." *Cultural Anthropology* 26 (2): 263–86.
- De Boeck, Filip. 2015. "The Tower. A Concrete Utopia: Notes on a Video-Installation by Sammy Baloji and Filip De Boeck." In *Africa: Architecture, Culture, Identity*, edited by Michael Juul Holm and Mette Marie Kallehauge, 84–88. Humlebaek, Denmark: Louisiana Museum of Modern Art.
- De Boeck, Filip, and Sammy Baloji. 2016. *Suturing the City: Living Together in Africa's Urban Worlds*. London: Autograph.
- De Boeck, Filip, and Marie-Françoise Plissart. 2004. *Kinshasa: Tales of the Invisible City*. Ghent: Ludion.
- De Grassi, Aharon. 2020. "Luanda Leaks and the Limits of Liberalism: Can Anti-Corruption Work?" Open Democracy. February 9. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/democraciaabierta/luanda-leaks-and-limits-liberalism-can-anti-corrupti-on-work/>
- Deleuze, Gilles. 1988. *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*. San Francisco: City Lights Bookstore.
- D'Haese, L., J.-P. Banea-Mayambu, and A.-M. Remaut-De Winter. 2013. "Food Security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo." Royal Academy for Overseas Sciences.

- November 30, 2013. <http://www.kaowarsom.be/documents/Conferences/DHAESE.pdf>
- Dierkens-Aubry, Françoise. 1991. "Tervuren 1897." In *Art Nouveau in België: Architectuur en interieurs*, edited by Jos Vandenbreeden and Françoise Dierkens-Aubry, 197–99. Tielt, Belgium: Lannoo.
- Dierkens-Aubry, Françoise. *See also* Aubry, Françoise.
- Doucet, Isabelle, and Héléne Frichot. 2018. "Resist, Reclaim, Speculate: Situated Perspectives on Architecture and the City." *Architectural Theory Review* 22 (1): 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13264826.2018.1418127>
- Duncan, Alastair. 1994. *Art Nouveau*. New York: Thames and Hudson.
- Dunn, Kevin C. 2003. *Imagining the Congo: International Relations of Identity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Edensor, Tim, and Mark Jayne, eds. 2012. *Urban Theory beyond the West: A World of Cities*. London: Routledge.
- Elima (Kinshasa). 1974. "Kinshasa est prêt pour arbitrer la grande explication Ali-Foreman." September 7, 6–9.
- Elleh, Nnamdi. *African Architecture: Evolution and Transformation*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Ellis-Petersen, Hannah. 2015. "Paris Hosts First Ever Retrospective of Art from the Democratic Republic of the Congo." *The Guardian*, July 10. <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/jul/10/democratic-republic-of-the-congo-art-paris-fo-ndation-cartier>
- Enwezor, Okwui, ed. 2001. *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa (1945–1994)*. Munich: Prestel Verlag.
- Escritt, Stephen. 2000. *Art Nouveau*. London: Phaidon Press.
- Fabian, Johannes. 1996. *Remembering the Present: Painting and Popular History in Zaire*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Fabian, Johannes. 2000. *Out of Our Minds: Reason and Madness in the Exploration of Central Africa*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Fahr-Becker, Gabriele. 2007. *Art Nouveau*. Cambridge: Konemann.
- Fanon, Frantz. 1963. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press.
- Fanon, Frantz. 1986. *Black Skins, White Masks*. London: Pluto Press.
- Felski, Rita. 2011. "Context Stinks!" *New Literary History* 42 (4): 573–91.
- Ferguson, James. 2006. *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Finger, Anke, and Danielle Follett, eds. 2011. *The Aesthetics of the Total Artwork: On Borders and Fragments*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Flynn, Tom. 1998. "Taming the Tusk: The Revival of Chryselephantine Sculpture in Belgium during the 1890s." In *Colonialism and the Object: Empire, Material Culture and the Museum*, edited by Tim Barringer and Tom Flynn, 188–204. London: Routledge.
- Frampton, Kenneth. 2007. *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*. 4th ed. London: Thames and Hudson World of Art.

- French, H. 1997. "Mobutu Sese Seko, 66, Longtime Dictator of Zaire." *New York Times*, September 8. <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/library/world/090897obit-mobutu.html>
- Friedman, Martin. 1967. "African Art and the Western View." In *Art of the Congo*, 7–9. Minneapolis: Walker Art Center.
- Gaonkar, Dilip Parameshwar, ed. 2001. *Alternative Modernities*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- Geissler, Paul Wenzel, Guillaume Lachenal, John Manton, and Noémi Tousignant. 2017. *Traces of the Future: An Archaeology of Medical Science in Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gemoets, Marc, and Johan Lagae. 2013. "Construire sous les tropiques: Quelques jalons de l'architecture climatique à Kinshasa." In *Kinshasa*, edited by Johan Lagae and Bernard Toulhier, 132–38. Brussels: Centre International pour l'Architecture et la Ville.
- Gemoets, Marc, Johan Lagae, and Bernard Toulhier. 2011. *Kinshasa: Architecture et paysage urbains*. Paris: Somogy Éditions d'Art.
- Gikandi, Simon. 2003. "Picasso, Africa, and the Schemata of Difference." *Modernism/Modernity* 10 (3): 455–80.
- Goldwater, Robert. (1938) 1986. *Primitivism in Modern Art*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Gondola, Didier. 2002. *The History of the Congo*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Greenhalgh, Paul, ed. 1990. *Modernism in Design*. London: Reaktion Books.
- Greenhalgh, Paul, ed. 2000. *Art Nouveau: 1890–1914*. London: Victoria and Albert.
- Harms, Robert. 1975. "The End of Red Rubber: A Reassessment." *Journal of African History* 16 (1): 73–88.
- Harney, Elizabeth. 2004. *In Senghor's Shadow: Art, Politics, and the Avant-Garde in Senegal, 1960–1995*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Harney, Elizabeth, and Ruth B. Phillips. 2019. "Inside Modernity: Indigeneity, Coloniality, Modernisms." In *Mapping Modernisms: Art, Indigeneity, Colonialism*, edited by Elizabeth Harney and Ruth B. Phillips, 1–32. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Hersey, Irwin. 1975. Introduction to *Art from Zaïre: 100 Masterworks from the National Collection*, edited by Joseph Cornet, 15–17. New York: African-American Institute.
- Hertz, Manuel, ed. 2015. *African Modernism: The Architecture of Independence; Ghana, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Zambia*. With Ingrid Schröder, Hans Fockety, and Julia Jamrozik. Zurich: Park Books.
- Hobsbawm, Eric. 1983. "Introduction: Inventing Traditions." In *The Invention of Tradition*, edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger, 1–14. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hobsbawm, Eric, and Terrence Ranger, eds. 1983. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Hochschild, Adam. 1998. *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

- Hofmeyr, Isabel. 2004. *The Portable Bunyan: A Transnational History of the Pilgrim's Progress*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.
- Howard, Jeremy. 1996. *Art Nouveau: International and National Styles in Europe*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Hunt, Nancy Rose. 1999. *A Colonial Lexicon: Of Birth Ritual, Medicalization, and Mobility in the Congo*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Hunt, Nancy Rose. 2016. *A Nervous State: Violence, Remedies, and Reverie in Colonial Congo*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Ibongo, Joseph. 2009. *Éléments de la peinture publicitaire de Kinshasa de 1990 à 2000*. Kinshasa: Editions CACP.
- Jewsiewicki, Bogumil. 1992. *Art Pictural Zairois*. Sillery, QC: Éditions du Septentrion.
- Jewsiewicki, Bogumil. 1999. *A Congo Chronicle: Patrice Lumumba in Urban Art*. New York: Museum for African Art.
- Jewsiewicki, Bogumil, and Bob W. White. 2005. "Introduction: Mourning and the Imagination of Political Time in Contemporary Central Africa." *African Studies Review* 48 (2): 1–9.
- Jones, Owen. (1856) 1997. *The Grammar of Ornament*. Folio plates by F. Bedford. London: Day and Son. Internet Archive. Added March 24, 2011. <https://archive.org/details/grammarornament00Jone/>
- Jumeau-Lafond, Jean-David. 2012. "Victor Horta 1861–1947: L'homme, l'architecte, l'art nouveau." *La Tribune de l'Art*, October 15. <https://www.latribunedelart.com/victor-horta-1861-1947-l-homme-l-architecte-l-art-nouveau>
- Kabamba, Patience. 2012. "External Economic Exploitation in the DRC: 1990–2005." *African Studies Review* 55 (1): 123–30.
- Kangafu, Kutumbagana. 1973. *Discours sur l'authenticité: Essais sur la problématique idéologique du Recours à l'Authenticité*. Kinshasa: Les presses africaines.
- Kasfir, Sidney Littlefield. 1992. "African Art and Authenticity: A Text with a Shadow." *African Arts* 25 (2): 40–53, 96–97.
- Kasfir, Sidney Littlefield. 1999. *Contemporary African Art*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Keim, Curtis A. 1998. "Artes Africanae: The Western Discovery of 'Art' in Northeastern Congo." In *The Scramble for Art in Central Africa*, edited by Enid Schildkrout and Curtis A. Keim, 109–32. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Keys, Cathy. 2019. "Diversifying the Early History of the Prefabricated Colonial House in Moreton Bay." *Queensland Review* 26 (1): 86–106.
- Koide, E. 2018. "Œuvre d'art comme récit historique (Rapport des discussions du groupe de travail)." *Artl@s Bulletin* 7 (1): 85–92.
- Koss, Juliet. 2010. *Modernism after Wagner*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- La Cité du Fleuve. n.d. Website. Accessed January 15, 2023. <http://lacitedufleuve.com/>
- La Fontaine, J. S. 1970. *City Politics: A Study of Léopoldville, 1962–63*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lagae, Johan. 2000. "Displaying Authenticity and Progress: Architectural Representation of the Belgian Congo at International Exhibitions in the 1930s." *Third Text* 50:21–32.

- Lagae, Johan. 2003. "Modern Architecture in the Belgian Congo: A Forgotten Legacy and a 'Shared' Heritage." *Docomomo* 28:43–50.
- Lagae, Johan. 2004. "Colonial Encounters and Conflicting Memories: Shared Colonial Heritage in the Former Belgian Congo." *Journal of Architecture* 9 (2): 173–97.
- Lagae, Johan. 2007. "Celebrating a *Cinquantenaire*: The Section of the Belgian Congo at the 1935 World's Fair in Brussels." *Fabrications* 17 (1): 82–113.
- Lagae, Johan. 2008. "Bouwen in 'Le Katanga ultra moderne': Koloniaal architecturaal patrimonium in Lubumbashi, Democratische Republiek Congo." *Monumenten en Landschappen* 27 (2): 29–54.
- Lagae, Johan. 2010. "Het architecturale erfgoed in een voormalige kolonie: enkele notities." *OKV* 48 (1): 24–33.
- Lagae, Johan. 2013. "Kinshasa: Tales of the Tangible City." *ABE Journal: Architecture beyond Europe* 3. <https://doi.org/10.4000/abe.378>
- Lagae, Johan, and Kim De Raedt. 2014. "Building for 'Authenticité': Eugène Palumbo and the Architecture of Mobutu's Congo." *Journal for Architectural Education* 68 (2): 178–89.
- Lagae, Johan, and Denis Laurens, eds. 2001. *Claude Laurens: Architecture projets et réalisations de 1934 à 1971*. Ghent: University of Ghent.
- Lagae, Johan, and Jacob Sabakinu Kivilu. 2018. "Producing New Spatial(ized) (Hi)Stories on Congolese Cities: Reflections on Ten Years of Collaborations between UGent and UNIKIN." *Afrika Focus* 31 (2): 87–106.
- Lagae, Johan, and Bernard Toulhier, eds. 2013. *Kinshasa*. Brussels: Centre International pour l'Architecture et la Ville.
- Latham, Paul. 2004. *Useful Plants of Bas-Congo Province, Democratic Republic of Congo*. London: Department for International Development.
- Le Corbusier. (1931) 1986. *Towards a New Architecture*. Mineola, NY: Dover.
- Le Touring Club de Belgique. 1912. *Panorama du Congo*. Vol. 1, *Introduction historique et géographique, Bas-Congo et Mayombe*. Brussels: Charles Bulens.
- Liebrechts, Charles, and Th. Masui, eds. 1997. *Guide de la section de l'État indépendant du Congo à l'exposition de Bruxelles-Tervueren en 1897*. Brussels: Imprimerie Veuve Monnom.
- Likaka, Osumake. 2009. *Naming Colonialism: History and Collective Memory in the Congo*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Lu, Duanfang. 2011. *Third World Modernism: Architecture, Development and Identity*. London: Routledge.
- Lu, Duanfang. 2012. "Entangled Modernities in Architecture." In *The SAGE Handbook of Architectural Theory*, edited by C. Greig Crysler, Stephen Cairns, and Hilde Heynen, 231–46. London: SAGE, 2012.
- Lukombo, S. 1974. "Kinshasa grimpe vers le ciel." *Elima* (Kinshasa), September 2, 11.
- Lumenganeso, Antoine Kiobe. 1995. *Kinshasa: Genèse et sites historiques*. Kinshasa: Arnaza-Bief.

- Lumfuankenda Bungiena, Trésor. 2017. "L'architecture 'contemporaine' en République Démocratique du Congo (1960–2015) et les problèmes de sa reconnaissance comme patrimoine." In *Enjeux patrimoniaux en contexte postcolonial: Patrimoine et développement en République démocratique du Congo*, edited by Jean-Louis Genard and Judith le Maire, 105–13. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Luwel, M., and M. Bruneel-Hye de Crom. 1967. *Tervueren 1897*. Brussels: Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale.
- Mabiala, V. 1972. "Kinshasa le gâchis." *Zaire: L'Hebdomadaire d'Afrique Centrale*, April 3, 13–19.
- Magnin, André. 2015. *Beauté Congo—1926–2015—Congo kitoko*. Paris: Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain.
- Malaquais, Dominique. 2012. "Rumble in Kinshasa." In *Afropolis: City, Media, Art*, edited by Kerstin Pinther, Larissa Förster, and Christian Hanussek, 232–41. Johannesburg: Jacana.
- Mamdani, Mahmood. 1996. *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Mbembe, Achille, and Sarah Nuttall. 2008. "Introduction: Afropolis." In *Johannesburg: The Elusive Metropolis*, edited by Sarah Nuttall and Achille Mbembe, 1–36. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Mboka, Mwana. 2011a. "Kinshasa 1914—Hotel A.B.C. Opens Its Doors." *Kinshasa Then and Now* (blog). March 27. <http://kosubaawate.blogspot.co.za/2011/03/kinshasa-1914-hotel-abc-opens-its-doors.html>
- Mboka, Mwana. 2011b. "Leopoldville 1952—Office des Cités Africains." *Kinshasa Then and Now* (blog). September 30. <http://kosubaawate.blogspot.co.za/2011/09/leopoldville-1952-office-des-cites.html>
- McGee, Julie. 2007. "Primitivism on Trial: The 'Picasso and Africa' Exhibition in South Africa." *Anthropology and Aesthetics* 52:161–67.
- Miller, Daniel. 1991. "Primitive Art and the Necessity of Primitivism to Art." In *The Myth of Primitivism: Perspectives on Art*, edited by Susan Hiller, 50–71. London: Routledge.
- Mirzoeff, Nicholas. 1998. "Photography at the Heart of Darkness: Herbert Lang's Congo Photographs." In *Colonialism and the Object: Empire, Material Culture and the Museum*, edited by Tim Barringer and Tom Flynn, 167–87. London: Routledge.
- Mitchell, Timothy. 2000. "On the Stage of Modernity." In *Questions of Modernity*, edited by Timothy Mitchell, 1–34. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Mobutu, Sese Seko. 1975. Foreword to *Art from Zaïre: 100 Masterworks from the National Collection*, edited by Joseph Cornet, 9–10. New York: African-American Institute.
- Molei, Kolonga. 1979. *Kinshasa, ce village d'hier*. Kinshasa: Sodimca.
- Monaville, Pedro. 2019. "The Political Life of the Dead Lumumba: Cold War Histories and the Congolese Student Left." *Africa* 89 (1): 15–39.

- Mudimbe, V. Y. 1988. *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge*. London: James Currey.
- Mudimbe, V. Y. 1994. *The Idea of Africa: African Systems of Thought*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Mudimbe, V. Y. 2013. *On African Fault Lines: Meditations on Alterity Politics*. Scottsville, South Africa: University of Kwazulu-Natal Press.
- Muketa, Jacques Fumunzanza. 2008. *Kinshasa: D'un quartier à l'autre*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Myers, Garth Andrew. 2011. *African Cities: Alternative Visions of Urban Theory and Practice*. New York: Zed Books.
- Naoi, Nozomi, Sabine Schenk, and Maureen de Vries. 2015. *Takehisa Yumeji*. Leiden: Hotei.
- Ndaywel è Nziem, Isidore. 1998. *Histoire du Zaïre: De l'héritage ancien à l'âge contemporain*, Louvain-la Neuve, Belgium: Duculot.
- Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Sabelo J. 2013. *Coloniality of Power in Decolonial Africa: Myths of Decolonisation*. Dakar: CODESRIA.
- Ndombasi Kufimba, Bamba. 2010. *L'Art moderne en confrontation avec l'art Congolais*. Kinshasa: Académie des Beaux-Arts.
- Ndombasi Kufimba, Bamba. 2014. *Avant-gardisme ou renouveau dans l'art Congolais d'aujourd'hui*. Kinshasa: Academie des Beaux Arts.
- Nixon, Rob. 2011. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Nuttall, Sarah. 2009. *Entanglement: Literary and Cultural Reflections on Post-Apartheid*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.
- Nuttall, Sarah, and Achille Mbembe, eds. 2008. *Johannesburg: The Elusive Metropolis*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Nzongola-Ntalaja, Georges. 2007. *The Congo: From Leopold to Kabila, a People's History*. London: Zed Books.
- Ogata, Amy Fumiko. 2001. *Art Nouveau and the Social Vision of Modern Living: Belgian Artists in a European Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ogbechie, Sylvester Okwunodu. 2008. *Ben Enwonwu: The Making of an African Modernist*. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press.
- Ogbechie, Sylvester Okwunodu. 2011. *Making History: African Collectors and the Canon of African Art*. Milan: 5 Continents.
- Ogbechie, Sylvester Okwunodu. 2018. "Art, African Identities, and Colonialism." In *The Palgrave Handbook of African Colonial and Postcolonial History*, edited by Martin S. Shanguhyia and Toyin Falola, 429–50. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Okeke, Uche. 2019. *Art in Development: A Nigerian Perspective*. Bayreuth, Germany: iwalewabooks.
- Okeke-Agulu, Chika. 2001. "Modern African Art." In *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa (1945–1994)*, edited by Okwui Enwezor, 29–36. Munich: Prestel Verlag.

- Okeke-Agulu, Chika. 2015. *Postcolonial Modernism. Art and Decolonization in Twentieth-Century Nigeria*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Ortolani, San. 1974. "l'Architecture et la sculpture face à l'authenticité." *Elima*, September 1, 1974, 10.
- Ortolani, Sante. 1975. *Manifeste de l'architecture zaïroise authentique*. Kinshasa: La Grue Couronnée.
- Ortolani, Sante. 1977. *Essais d'architecture authentique, en république du Zaïre*. Rome: A. Pucci.
- Osayimwese, Itohan. 2013. "Architecture and the Myth of Authenticity during the German Colonial Period." *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* 24 (2): 11–22.
- Osayimwese, Itohan. 2017. *Colonialism and Modern Architecture in Germany*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Parnell, Sue, and Sophie Oldfield. 2014. *The Routledge Handbook on Cities of the Global South*. New York: Routledge.
- Pevsner, Nikolaus. (1936) 1960. *Pioneers of Modern Design: From William Morris to Walter Gropius*. London: Penguin.
- Picton, John. 1994. "Art Identity and Identification: A Comment on Yoruba Art Historical Studies." *The Yoruba Artist: New Historical Perspectives*, edited by Abiodun et al. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Price, Sally. 1989. *Primitive Art in Civilized Places*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Pype, Katrien. 2013. "The Drama(s) of Independence Day: Reflections on Political Affects and Aesthetics in Kinshasa (2010)." *Anthropology Southern Africa* 36 (1–2): 58–67.
- Quayson, Ato. 2014. *Oxford Street, Accra*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Rheims, Maurice. 1966. *The Age of Art Nouveau*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Robert, Yves. 2017. "De la villégiature à Thysville au tourisme patrimonial à Mbanza-Ngungu: Des héritages culturels cosmopolites comme levier de développement urbain." In *Enjeux patrimoniaux en contexte postcolonial: Patrimoine et développement en République démocratique du Congo*, edited by Jean-Louis Genard and Judith le Maire, 139–63. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Robinson, Jennifer. 2006. *Ordinary Cities: Between Modernity and Development*. New York: Routledge.
- Roes, Aldwin. 2010. "Towards a History of Mass Violence in the Etat Indépendant du Congo, 1885–1908." *South African Historical Journal* 62 (4): 634–70.
- Sacks, Ruth. 2018. "Lived Reminders: The Contemporary Lives of Iron Hotels in the Congo." *Architectural Theory Review* 22 (1): 64–82.
- Said, Edward W. 1977. *Orientalism*. London: Penguin.
- Said, Edward W. 1993. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Random House.
- Sarr, Felwine, and Bénédicte Savoy. 2018. "The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage: Toward a New Relational Ethics." Translated by Drew S. Burk. Report commissioned by Emmanuel Macron.

- Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1963. "La pensée politique de Patrice Emery Lumumba." In *Discours de Lumumba*, by Patrice Lumumba, iv–xlv. Brussels: Présence Africaine.
- Savoy, Bénédicte. 2020. "It's a Matter of Justice: Bénédicte Savoy on the Argument for Restitution." Interview by J. J. Charlesworth. *Art Review.com*, December 1, 2020. <https://artreview.com/it-is-a-matter-of-justice-benedicte-savoy-on-the-argument-for-restitution/>
- Schatzberg, Michael. 2012. "The Structural Roots of the DRC's Current Disasters: Deep Dilemmas." *African Studies* 55 (1): 117–21.
- Schefer, Olivier. 2011. "Variations on Totality: Romanticism and the total Work of Art." Translated by Danielle Dubois and Daniëlle Follett. In *The Aesthetics of the Total Artwork: On Borders and Fragments*, edited by Anke Finger and Danielle Follett, 29–51. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Schildkrout, Enid, and Curtis A. Keim. 1998a. "Objects and Agendas: Re-Collecting the Congo." In *The Scramble for Art in Central Africa*, edited by Enid Schildkrout and Curtis A. Keim, 1–36. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schildkrout, Enid, and Curtis A. Keim, eds. 1998b. *The Scramble for Art in Central Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schmutzler, Robert. 1962. *Art Nouveau*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Schweinfurth, Georg. 1874. *The Heart of Africa*. Translated by Ellen E. Frewer. Vol. 2. London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low, and Searle.
- Scott, David. 1999. *Refashioning Futures: Criticism after Postcoloniality*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Segaert, Henri. 1919. *Un terme au Congo Belge: Notes sur la vie coloniale, 1916–1918*. London: Forgotten Books.
- Sembach, Klaus-Jürgen. 1989. *Henry van de Velde*. New York: Rizzoli International.
- Sembach, Klaus-Jürgen. 2007. *Art Nouveau: Utopia, Reconciling the Irreconcilable*. Cologne: Taschen.
- Sembach, Klaus-Jürgen, and Birgit Schulte, eds. 1992. *Henry van de Velde: Ein europäischer Künstler seiner Zeit*. Hagen, Germany: Karl-Ernst-Osthaus Museum.
- Shvili, Jason. 2021. "Kinshasa." World Atlas. September 7, 2021. <https://www.worldatlas.com/cities/kinshasa.html>
- Silverman, Debora L. 2011. "Modernité Sans Frontières: Culture, Politics, and the Boundaries of the Avant-Garde in King Leopold's Belgium, 1885–1910." *American Imago* 68 (4): 707–97.
- Silverman, Debora L. 2011–13. "Art Nouveau, Art of Darkness: African Lineages of Belgian Modernism." 3 parts. *West 86th: A Journal of Decorative Arts, Design History, and Material Culture* 18 (2): 139–81; 19 (2): 175–95; 20 (1): 3–61.
- Silverman, Debora L. 2015. "Diasporas of Art: History, the Tervuren Royal Museum for Central Africa, and the Politics of Memory in Belgium, 1885–2014." *Journal of Modern History* 87 (3): 615–67.
- Simone, AbdouMaliq. 2019. *Improvised Lives: Rhythms of Endurance in an Urban South*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

- Slade, Ruth M. 1962. *King Leopold's Congo: Aspects of the Development of Race Relations in the Congo Independent State*, London: Oxford University Press.
- Stanard, Matthew G. 2010. "Learning to Love Leopold: Belgian Popular Imperialism, 1830s–1960." In *European Empires and the People: Popular Responses to Imperialism in France, Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and Italy*, edited by John M. MacKenzie, 124–57. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Stengers, Isabelle. 2003. *Cosmopolitics I*. Translated by Robert Bonnono. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Stengers, Jean, and Jan Vansina. 1985. "King Leopold's Congo, 1886–1908." In *The Cambridge History of Africa*, vol. 6, *From 1870 to 1905*, edited by Roland Oliver and G. N. Sanderson, 315–58. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sterner, Gabriele. 1982. *Art Nouveau: An Art of Transition, from Individualism to Mass Society*. New York: Barron's Educational Series.
- Stoler, Ann Laura. 2009. *Against the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Stoler, Ann Laura. 2013. "'The Rot Remains': From Ruins to Ruination." In *Imperial Debris: On Ruins and Ruination*, edited by Ann Laura Stoler, 1–38. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Strother, Z. S. 1998. *Inventing Masks: Agency and History in the Art of the Central Pende*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Strother, Z. S. 2004. "Architecture against the State: The Virtues of Impermanence in the Kibulu of Eastern Pende Chiefs in Central Africa." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 63 (3): 272–95.
- Sullivan, Elaine Ericksen. 2020. "Petit Petit" *Contemporary Art and Decolonial Horizons in Belgium's AfricaMuseum*. PhD diss., Culture and Performance, University of California, Los Angeles.
- Tafuri, Manfredo, and Francesco Dal Co. 1976. *Modern Architecture*. Translated by Robert Erich Wolf. Milan: Electa/Rizzoli.
- Thornton, John. 2001. "The Origins and Early History of the Kingdom of Kongo, c. 1350–1550." *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 34 (1): 89–120.
- Toulier, Bernard, Johan Lagae, and Marc Gemoets. 2010. *Kinshasa: Architecture et paysage urbains*. Paris: Somogy Éditions d'Art.
- Trefon, Theodore. 2011. *Congo Masquerade: The Political Culture of Aid Inefficiency and Reform Failure*. London: Zed Books.
- Tschudi Madsen, Stephan. 1956. *The Sources of Art Nouveau*. New York: De Capo Press.
- Tschudi Madsen, Stephan. 1967. *Art Nouveau*. Verona: World University Library.
- Tshiluilu, Shaje. 1987. "Inventorying Movable Cultural Property: National Museum Institute of Zaire." *Museum International* 39 (1): 50–51.
- Tshinzam, Costa. 2022. "2nd Yango Biennale of Kinshasa." *Contemporaryand*. Accessed March 20, 2023. <https://contemporaryand.com/magazines/toko-zela-lobi-te-a-bien-nial-fed-up-with-waiting-for-tomorrow/>

- Van Beurden, Sarah. 2015a. *Authentically African: Arts and the Transnational Politics of Congolese Culture*. Athens: Ohio University Press.
- Van Beurden, Sarah. 2015b. "The Congolese Burden." *Africa Is a Country* (blog). November 23. <https://africasacountry.com/2015/11/beaute-congo-wonderfully-represents-congolese-contemporary-art-yet-fails-to-completely-evade-european-colonial-baggage>
- Vandenbreeden, Jos. 2015. "L'Art nouveau inconnu: De la diaspora de la Belgique, la France et la Catalogne vers la ville de Kiev à l'Art nouveau exporté du port d'Antwerpen à Kinshasa par bateau." Paper presented at the CDF II International Congress, Barcelona, June.
- Vandenbreeden, Jos, and Françoise Dierkens-Aubry, eds. 1991. *Art Nouveau in België: Architectuur en interieurs*. Tiel, Belgium: Lannoo.
- Van de Velde, Henry. 1895. *Déblaiement d'Art*. Brussels: L'Avenir Social.
- Van de Velde, Henry. 1898. "Die Kolonial-Ausstellung Tervueren." *Dekorative Kunst* 1 (1): 38–41.
- Van de Velde, Henry. 1910. "De Linie." In *Essays*, by Henry Van de Velde, 181–95. Leipzig: Im Insel Verlag.
- Vangroenweghe, Daniel. 1986. *Du sang sur les lianes: Léopold II et son Congo*. Brussels: Didier Hatier.
- Vangroenweghe, Daniel. 2006. "The 'Leopold II' Concession System Exported to French Congo with as Example the Mpoko Company." *Revue belge d'Histoire contemporaine* 36 (3–4): 323–72.
- Van Reybrouck, David. 2014. *Congo. The Epic History of a People*. London: Fourth Estate.
- Vansina, Jan. 1984. *Art History in Africa*. New York: Longman Group.
- Vansina, Jan. 2010. *Being Colonized: The Kuba Experience in Rural Congo, 1880–1960*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Vanthsche, Guy. 2006. "The Historiography of Belgian Colonialism in the Congo." *Europe and the World in European Historiography*, edited by Csaba Lévai, 89–119. Pisa: Pisa University Press.
- Vanthsche, Guy. 2012. *Belgium and the Congo, 1885–1980*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Vellut, Jean-Luc. 1984. "La violence armée dans l'État Indépendant du Congo: Ténèbres et clartés dans l'histoire d'un État Conquérant." *Cultures et Développement* 16 (3–4): 671–709.
- Visit Brussels. N.d. "Capital of Art Nouveau 2023 Brussels." Accessed March 6, 2023. <https://www.visit.brussels/en/visitors/agenda/art-nouveau-brussels-2023>
- Vogel, Susan Mullin. 1999. "Known Artists but Anonymous Works: Fieldwork and Art History." *African Arts* 32 (1): 40–55, 93–94.
- Waddell, Roberta, ed. 1977. *The Art Nouveau Style in Jewelry, Metalwork, Glass, Ceramics, Textiles, Architecture and Furniture*. Minneola, NY: Dover.

- Walt, Vivienne. 2018. "Blood, Sweat and Batteries." *Fortune*, August 23. <https://fortune.com/longform/blood-sweat-and-batteries/>
- Wastiau, Boris. 2000. *ExitCongoMuseum: An Essay on the "Social Life" of the Masterpieces of the Tervuren Museum*. Brussels: Museum for Central Africa.
- Watelet, Jacques-Grégoire. 1970. *L'oeuvre d'une vie: Gustave Serrurier-Bovy, architecte et décorateur liégeois, 1858–1910*. Paris: Editions du Perron.
- Watelet, Jacques-Grégoire, ed. 1981. *Art nouveau België: Europalia 80, België 150, Vereniging voor Tentoonstellingen, Paleis voor Schone Kunsten, Brussel, 19.12.1980–15.2.1981*. Brussels: Robert de Smet.
- Waugh, Evelyn. (1934) 1977. *A Handful of Dust*. London: Back Bay Books.
- Wenzel, Jennifer. 2006. "Remembering the Past's Future: Anti-Imperialist Nostalgia and Some Versions of the Third World." *Cultural Critique*, no. 62: 1–32.
- Wenzel, Jennifer. 2017. "Decolonization." In *A Companion to Critical and Cultural Theory*, edited by Imre Szeman, Sarah Blacker, and Justin Sully, 449–65. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- White, Bob W. 2005. "The Political Undead: Is It Possible to Mourn for Mobutu's Zaire?" *African Studies Review* 48 (2): 65–85.
- White, Bob W. 2008. *Rumba Rules: The Politics of Dance Music in Mobutu's Zaire*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Wolf, Norbert. 2011. *Art Nouveau*. Munich: Prestel Verlag.
- Wright, Gwendolyn. 2001. "The Ambiguous Modernisms of African Cities." In *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa (1945–1994)*, edited by Okwui Enwezor, 225–33. Munich: Prestel Verlag.
- Wrong, Michela. 2000. *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz: Living on the Brink of Disaster in Mobutu's Congo*. London: Fourth Estate.
- Young, Crawford, and Thomas Turner. 1985. *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Zaire: *l'hebdomadaire de l'Afrique Centrale*. 1972. "Un anée pas comme les autres." January 10, 8.

INDEX

Note: Page numbers in *italics* refer to illustrations.

- ABC Hotels, 5, 88, 90, 97, 100, 103, 104; as Belgian Art Nouveau, 14, 44, 83–89, 189; and colonial nostalgia, 180; construction of, 22, 84, 89, 94–95; decay of, 98, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 111–16, 116, 189; documentation on, 85, 89; as heritage sites, 114–15; as hybrid sites in present-day, 102–4, 112–13, 115; as impractical, 98, 112, 115–16; locations of, 87, 91; Matadi ABC Hotel, 87; nature as reclaiming, 29, 85–86, 98, 105, 106, 112, 114, 115, 194; overview of, 83–86; purpose of, 4–6, 87; remains of, 85–86, 102–16, 189; as total artwork, 8, 28–29, 47, 89. *See also* Leopoldville ABC Hotel; Thysville ABC Hotel
- Academy of Fine Arts. *See* Kinshasa Academy of Fine Arts
- Achebe, Chinua, 13
- Acker, Ernest, 66
- AfricaMuseum. *See* Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA)
- African art: collecting, 38, 39, 133; and ethnographic classification, 37–42; as fixed in time, 38, 134–35, 136, 148; homogenization of in scholarship, 37–38; influence on Art Deco, 110; influence on modernism, 17, 73n10, 133–35; misuse/mis-display of, 38, 47, 77–78; as “primitive”, 15, 17, 38, 134–35; as tainted by modernity, 38, 140. *See also* Congolese art; repatriation of art; traditional architecture; traditional art
- African Negro Art* exhibition (1935), 134n11
- African Union Organization, 162–63, 182
- Afrofuturism, 167
- agriculture: and colonial depredations, 101–2; repurposing of gardens for food, 105, 162, 171, 178; and traditional architecture, 101
- Aldrophe, Alfred-Philibert, 66
- Ali, Muhammad, 159–60, 161n14, 186, 192
- Alien* (1979), 46n16
- AlSayyad, Nezar, 124
- Alÿs, Francis, 46
- Appadurai, Arjun, 9, 16
- Appiah, Kwame Anthony, 142, 193
- ARAU (Atelier de recherche et d’action urbaines), 53, 60
- architecture: and Africanization policies in other countries, 183–84; Art Deco buildings in Kinshasa, 108–10; author’s approach to, 8–11, 44–45, 85, 153–54, 195; and Belgian Art Nouveau, 3–4, 35, 53–63, 74–75, 78–80, 99; of Brussels city center, 54; and context of site, 11, 44; and context of sites, 45; guidebooks, 9, 43, 110–11; history and scholarship on Congolese, 18–19; and impermanence, 42; influence of Art Nouveau on modern, 81–82; palaces of Mobutu,

- architecture (*continued*)
 116n21, 154, 156; planned communities, 98–101, 157, 184–85; present-day Kinshasa, 108–10, 158; racial biases in history and scholarship on, 18, 40–42; research challenges, 42–45. *See also* ABC Hotels; traditional architecture; *specific buildings*
- architecture, Authenticity era: author's approach to, 8–11, 153–54; and decay of sites, 170–71, 173–81, 184–85, 189, 194; and international architects, 127, 157–58, 182; and intimidation, 193; Kinshasa as focus of, 120–21, 151; May 20th Stadium, 159–61, 161, 180, 182; as mix of modernist and traditional art, 181–83; as modernist, 14–15, 127–28, 150, 153–59, 160–63, 170–73, 175, 176, 179; monumentality of, 184–87; and national identity, 6, 14–15, 29, 123, 155, 159, 185–87; overview of, 119–22, 154–59; Presidential Park, 162–64, 165, 178–81, 182, 184, 187; reclamation of sites by nature, 164, 177, 194; and Rumble in the Jungle, 153, 159–61, 161, 186; scale of, 152, 168, 175, 184; scholarship on, 153; skyscrapers/towers, 6, 121, 153, 164–84, 187. *See also specific buildings*
- archives: and challenges of research, 42–45; of Congo Pavilion, 78
- Arendt, Hannah, 7
- Arp, Hans, 144
- Arsac, A., 169
- Art and History Museum (Brussels), 78
- Art Deco: and ABC Hotels, 5, 105, 108–9; buildings in Kinshasa, 108–10; and Exchange Tower, 166; and Gécamines Tower, 172; and primitivism, 81
- Art from Zaïre* (Cornet), 39
- Art from Zaïre* exhibition (1975), 132, 135, 136
- art history: on Art Nouveau, 32–36; author's approach to, 31–32; bias and primitive/civilized judgments in, 17, 18, 32, 38, 134–35; on Congolese art, 39–40; ethnographic classification and hierarchies in, 19, 37–42, 128, 134–35; exhibition catalogs, 39, 40; homogenization of non-Western art, 37–38; lack of coordination with history scholarship, 36
- artificiality: in Belgian Art Nouveau, 28; and national identity in Second Republic, 29; and presentation of sites, 47
- Art Nouveau: art history and scholarship on, 32–36; and Authenticity architecture, 181; and Authenticity ideology, 188–91; and consumerism, 65–66; control and enclosure in, 6, 62, 71, 94; decline of, 35; influence and legacy of, 1, 83, 188–89; influence of Oriental art on, 37, 57–58, 59, 73–74, 89n6; influence on modernist design, 57, 81–82; and kitsch, 35n5; lack of criticism in, 78–79; national branches of, 33n1; and ornament, 81; and primitivism, 17, 38, 57–58, 65, 81–82, 84; revival of, 35; as seductive, 47, 62, 191. *See also* ABC Hotels; Belgian Art Nouveau
- Art of Africa* (Cornet), 39
- Art of the Congo* exhibition (1967), 132, 136
- Arts and Crafts movement, 17, 99
- Association Internationale des Critiques d'Art (AICA), 136–37, 144
- Association Internationale du Congo, 21
- Atelier de recherche et d'action urbaines (ARAU), 53
- authenticity: museums as bestowing, 192; and postcoloniality, 192; of primitivism, 192
- Authenticity movement: and Avant-gardists, 39–40, 127, 136–45, 147–48, 149, 162, 183; and ceremonies and cultural events, 125, 148, 154, 159–61; China as influence on, 124–25, 156, 157; and dress codes, 25, 126, 129, 159, 185; ideology compared to Art Nouveau, 188–91; manifesto, 122–23; mixing of modernist and traditional art in, 6, 14–15, 29,

- 123–29, 131–39, 147–49, 163, 181–83, 191; and names, 25, 124; overseas exhibitions and, 126, 131–36, 148; overview of, 119–22; as policy, 6, 29, 122–31, 138; and state control, 6, 123, 124, 133, 135, 176, 184; as total artwork, 7, 187. *See also* architecture, Authenticity era; national identity and Authenticity
- Avant-gardists: artists and works, 136–43; exhibitions, 136–37; influence of Euro-American art on, 147–48; legacy and inclusion of, 40, 143, 144–45; manifesto, 137–38; as mix of modernist and traditional art, 138–39, 149, 183; Mobutu's support for, 127; and Presidential Park, 163; scholarship and writings on, 39–40
- Badi-Banga Né Mwine, Célestine, 40
- Bado, Anabel, 162n15
- Baloji, Sammy, 18, 78, 144n15, 145n16, 146, 153, 175–76
- Bandoma, Steve, 145n17
- Barry, Judith, 13n8
- Bateke settlements, 111
- Batteur du Tam-Tam* (Lufwa), 4
- Beauté Congo—1926–2015—CongoKitoko* exhibition (2015), 40, 144, 145, 146
- Beeckmans, Luce, 153, 156, 157
- Belge (neighborhood), 95
- Belgian Art Nouveau: architecture, 3–4, 35, 53–63, 74–75, 78–80, 99; artificiality in, 28; and control aesthetic, 6, 62, 71, 94; and cultural appropriation, 76; decline of, 35, 83; and Gécamines Tower, 173; influence of Arts and Crafts movement on, 17, 99; influence of Congolese art on, 14, 28, 32–36; lack of criticism in, 78–79; names and terms for, 1, 15, 55; and national identity, 3–4, 56, 64, 78; and natural resources, 3–4, 33–34, 47, 54, 56–57, 59–63, 66, 67–70; nature imagery in, 13–14, 28, 32–33, 56–58, 60–62, 71, 74–77, 80; and ornament, 28, 54, 56–57; overview of, 53–55; as seductive, 47, 79, 191; as sinister, 46, 189; and total artwork, 53, 56–57, 59–60, 65–66, 80, 189, 190; and tourism, 3, 48n19, 53–55, 60, 78–79; whiplash line in, 33, 36, 46, 54, 60, 74, 75–76. *See also* ABC Hotels; Congo Pavilion (1897); Hôtel Van Eetvelde
- Belgian Congo: administration of, 22–23, 92; and art education, 140; establishment of, 22; in historical overview, 1, 22–24; labor practices, 22–23. *See also* ABC Hotels; colonialism
- Belgian line. *See* whiplash line
- Belgian State Decree of 1885, 101n14
- Belgium: challenges of research in, 46–49; and death of Lumumba, 24, 120, 166; policy towards Mobutu, 120, 157; support for colonialism in, 21, 34–36; Ten-Year Plan of 1949, 155; tourism in, 3, 48n19, 53–55, 60, 78–79. *See also* Belgian Art Nouveau; colonialism
- Benin and repatriation of art, 131n8
- Benjamin, Walter, 2, 53, 58
- Bhabha, Homi K., 149
- bias in history and scholarship of art, 18, 28, 32, 37–42, 49. *See also* ethnographic classification
- Black Consciousness, 126, 192
- Boboto College, 109
- body and embodiment: alienation of human body in Authenticity architecture, 30; and author's experience of artworks, 2; and dress codes, 129; and missing bodies, 190; of sites, 196–97
- body art, 14, 38n10, 74, 75–76
- Botombele, Bokongo Ekanga, 129
- Brasilia architecture, 157
- British Arts and Crafts movement, 17, 99
- Brugmann hospital (Brussels), 110n17
- Brussels: challenges of research in, 46–49; Year of Art Nouveau 2023 campaign, 3, 48n19, 53, 78
- Brussels International Exposition (1897). *See* Congo Pavilion (1897)
- brutalism, 166
- Buth, Peggy, 13n8

- cabinets of curiosities, 17n11
 Cacoub, Olivier-Clément, 43n13, 153, 158, 162–63, 166
 Caen, Julien, 105n15
 Carey, Peter, 80
 Centre Pompidou, 144
 Certeau, Michel de, 46
 Césaire, Aimé, 126
 CFS. *See* Congo Free State
 Chakrabarty, Dipesh, 32
 Chérin, Chéri, 145n17
chicotte. *See* whiplash line
 chieftanship, 25, 92
 China as influence: on Art Nouveau, 73;
 on Authenticity, 124–25, 156, 157
 chocolate trade and cocoa, 54, 66, 101
 Choisy, Auguste, 84
 chryselephantine works, 67, 74
 CIA (Central Intelligence Agency), 120, 166
500 Visages du Zaïre, 151, 152
 Cinquantaire Museum, 78
 Cité de la Voix du Zaïre. *See* CNRT Tower
 Cité du Fleuve, 184–85
 Cité Maman Mobutu, 178n26
 Cité N’Sele, 178n26
 Cité Salongo, 178n26, 179
 Cité Vert, 178n26
 city theory, 18–19
 CIVA, 78–79
 “civilizing mission” of colonialism, 21, 23, 34–35, 41, 54–55, 64–67
 class: and Belgian Art Nouveau, 58; divisions in as commonality among sites, 195; and housing in Kinshasa, 155–56; replacement of colonial elite with local elite, 155, 184. *See also* hierarchies
 classification: of architecture, 40–42; and Authenticity-era exhibitions, 133; author’s approach to, 49; ethnographic classification, 19, 37–42, 66, 70–73, 128, 134–35
 Cloquet, Raymond, 105n15
 clothing: Authenticity dress codes, 25, 126, 129, 158, 185; fashion and *sapeurs*, 185; of Mobutu, 129, 164–65
 CNRT Tower, 170, 171; current use, 187; described, 169–71; effect on landscape, 153, 175, 176, 177; as paradox, 179–81, 182, 184
 cobalt mining, 27
 cocoa trade and chocolate, 54, 66, 101
 colonialism: and agriculture, 101–2; art history’s failure to address, 32–36; and Belgian national identity, 21, 115, 190; as “civilizing mission”, 21, 23, 34–35, 41, 54–55, 64–67; colonial nostalgia, 113, 180; and economics and wealth, 21–22, 54; and education, 59, 140; and empty landscape trope, 71, 97; and land devastation, 93, 101–2; Mobutu as continuation of, 26; natural resources extraction, 20–23, 28–29; and othering of colonized subject, 4, 66, 70–73, 80–82; perceptions of in Belgium, 21, 34–36; and railways, 87, 91; removal of colonial statues, 114, 123–24, 162, 164; and total artwork, 79. *See also* ABC Hotels; Congo Pavilion (1897)
 Colonial Palace. *See* Congo Pavilion (1897)
 Comaroff, Jean, 32
 Comaroff, John L., 32
 Compagnie Commerciale et Agricole d’Alimentation du Bas-Congo, 87. *See also* ABC Hotels
 Compagnie du Congo pour le Commerce et de l’Industrie, 87n3
 concrete, 166, 182, 183
 Congo: Eurocentric histories of, 11–13; historical overview of, 20–27; independence of, 24; name changes, 24, 26, 120, 124. *See also* Belgian Congo; Congo Free State
 Congo-Brazzaville, civil war in, 173
 Congo Crisis, 24
 Congo Free State: administration expenses, 92; and “civilizing mission” of colonialism, 21, 23, 34–35, 41, 54–55,

- 64–67; in historical overview, 21–22; and Hôtel Van Eetvelde, 55, 60, 62; Mobutu as continuation of, 26; and porterage system, 63; prefabricated buildings use, 86–87; as scandalous, 21, 23, 26, 34–35, 190; and wealth, 54. *See also* colonialism
- Congo-Kinshasa. *See* Congo
- Congolese art: and art education, 140–41, 142; art history scholarship on, 39–40; and classification systems, 39; in Congo Pavilion, 67–68, 71, 72; as entangled with European art, 189, 191; influence on Belgian Art Nouveau, 14, 28, 32–36; in Kinshasa architecture, 110; and new wave of Academy graduates, 143; popular painters, 142–43, 144–45, 148, 185, 192–93; repatriation of, 19, 47, 77, 125–26, 131–32, 136, 146. *See also* Authenticity; Avant-gardists; traditional art
- Congolese National Radio and Television Tower. *See* CNRT Tower
- Congo Pavilion (1897): aesthetic of frozen movement in, 28; archives on, 78; in art history scholarship, 34; as colonial marketing, 55, 84; Congolese art in, 67–68, 71, 72; and consumerism, 65–66; described, 63–74; displays and display furnishings, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71–73, 81–82, 192; Hobé's structure for Hall of Imports, 47, 48, 77–78; humans as displays in, 63, 65, 66, 70–74; modernity and modernism in, 67–70; and natural resources, 3–4, 66, 67–70; proposal for Paris Exposition (1900), 79–80, 89; remains of, 47, 48, 55, 77–78, 79; as total artwork, 65–66, 79, 80; tram, 64–65, 67, 84
- Congo Reform Association, 13n7, 26, 33
- Congo Style term, 15
- Congo Trading Company, 85
- Conrad, Joseph, 12–13
- consumerism, 65–66, 67
- control and enclosure: and ABC Hotels, 94; and Art Nouveau, 6, 62, 71, 94; and Authenticity, 6, 123, 124, 133, 135, 176, 184; and Congo Pavilion, 71; and Presidential Park, 164
- copper, 25, 172, 173, 176
- copyright, 48–49
- Cornet, Joseph-Aurélien, 39, 144
- Couttenier, Maarten, 17n11, 19, 59n6
- Crespin, Adolphe, 70
- cult of personality, 25, 125, 129–31, 164–65, 181
- cultural festivals, 25
- Cultural Revolution, 124–25
- curiosities, cabinets of, 17n11
- Dakar (Senegal) architecture, 157
- Damas, Léon-Gontran, 126
- damp and ABC Hotels, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 113
- Damseaux, Joseph, 108–9
- deaths: and missing bodies, 190; population loss during CFS, 22; and porterage, 63; and railway construction, 91
- De Boeck, Filip, 3, 18, 152n1, 153, 166n20, 175–76
- De Lestré, Benjamin, 88n4
- Democratic Republic of the Congo: in historical overview, 26–27; name change, 26. *See also* Congo
- De Raedt, Kim, 128
- description, thick, 31n1
- Desire and Representation* exhibition (2008), 13n8
- De Vries, Maureen, 37n100
- Dewey decimal system, 40
- dialectical image, 2
- displays and display furnishings: and bestowal of authenticity, 192; and Congo Pavilion, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71–73, 81–82, 193; and high/low culture, 142–43; of humans, 28, 41–42, 63, 65, 66, 70–74, 93–94, 190; misuse/mis-display of African art, 38, 47, 77–78; and overseas exhibitions in Authenticity era, 135, 136; and RMCA, 19, 47, 81–82; and scale, 68; and white cube, 81n15

- Djilatendo (artist), 144
 Docteur building, 175–76
 Dodoma (Tanzania) architecture, 157, 184
 Dougnac, M., 169
 dress codes, 25, 126, 129, 158, 185
 Dubai architecture, 185
 Du Bois, W. E. B., 126
 Dunn, Kevin C., 12, 27, 136
Du sang sur les lianes (Vangroenweghe), 13n7
 Duyck, Edouard, 70
- economics: and colonial monetary systems, 21–22; colonial wealth, 54; and decline of Mobutu regime, 176; Hôtel Van Eetvelde as economically performative, 60, 62; images of prosperity and Authenticity, 16, 25, 149; informal economy of Kinshasa, 152; national debt, 25
- education: of architects, 157, 158; art education, 140–41, 142; and colonialism, 59, 140; and high/low culture, 142; universities establishment, 23
- eel style, 55n4
Egbenuoba (Okeke), 140
 Eiffel Tower, 110
 electricity, 171, 172, 176, 177, 185
 elephant imagery, *vi*, 33, 60–61, 74–75
Elima, 160, 163
 enclosure. *See* control and enclosure
 English cottage style, 99
- entanglement: of African and European art, 189; of Art Nouveau and colonialism, 60, 81, 85, 102, 116; cultural, 16; of nature and sites, 106, 114, 116; of Second Republic and colonialism, 26, 29; of sites, 29
- ephemera, 45
 Escritt, Stephen, 33
- ethnographic classification: and art collections and museums, 134–35; and Authenticity-era exhibitions, 133; and bias in art history and scholarship, 19, 37–42; and colonial propaganda, 41–42; and Congo Pavilion, 66, 70–73
European Ghosts (2016), 193
 Exchange/Tower of the Exchange, 4, 166, 167; in artwork, *vi*; described, 165–69; effect on landscape, 6, 153, 175, 176; museum in, 166, 167–68, 187; as paradox, 176–77, 179–81, 184, 185
 executions, 26, 160, 180
 exhibitions: by Avant-gardists, 136–37; catalogs, 39, 40; and high/low culture, 142–43; overseas exhibitions by RMCA, 39; overseas exhibitions under Authenticity policy, 126, 131–36, 148; on primitivism and modernism, 17n12, 134n10; in 21st century, 13n8, 40, 78–79, 143, 144, 145, 146, 168n23. *See also* displays and display furnishings
 exposed structures/beams: and ABC Hotels, 84, 87, 88, 89, 93–94; and Belgian Art Nouveau, 62–63, 71; and Congo Pavilion, 71; and Hôtel Van Eetvelde, 62–63
 Exposition Internationale d'Elisabethville (1931), 105n15
- Fabian, Johannes, 142
 Fanon, Frantz, 53, 83, 93, 148
 federalist politics, 23–24
 Ferguson, James, 16
 Fierens-Gevaert, Hippolyte, 55n4
 First Republic, 24, 120
 Flemish vernacular architecture, 99
 food shortages and insecurity, 22, 102
 Forbidden City, 156n5
 Force Publique, 22, 24, 65, 66
 Foreman, George, 159–60, 161n14
 Forescom building, 108, 175
 Forges d'Aiseau, 86
 Foundation Cartier, 144
Fragile (Tillmans), 168n23
 France: exhibitions of Congolese art in, 144; and repatriation of art, 131; Versailles, 163
 Franceschini, Sylvia, 78

- Frobenius, Hermann, 41
 Frobenius, Leo, 39
 futuristic design, 155, 166–67, 176
- Gallery of Machines, Congo Pavilion, 67
- Gaonkar, Dilip Parameshwar, 16
 gardens: and ABC Hotels sites, 105; and CNRT Tower complex, 171; and Presidential Park, 162, 164, 178; repurposing of for food, 105, 162, 171, 178
- Gécamines Tower, 172, 174; current use, 172, 187; described, 171–77; effect on landscape, 6, 153; as paradox, 179–81, 182, 184, 185
- Geertz, Clifford, 31n1
- Gemoets, Marc, 43
- General Mineral Company, 172
- Germany and repatriation of art, 131n8
- Gesamtkunstwerk. *See* total artwork
- ghosts, 107, 116
- Giger, H. R., 46n16
- glass: and Belgian Art Nouveau, 56, 60, 62, 80; and skyscrapers, 183; as symbol of colonial folly, 80
- Goldwater, Robert, 57
- Gondola, Didier, 113
- Goslar, Michèle, 36
- Gothic art as influence on Art Nouveau, 57
- The Grammar of Ornament* (Jones), 37n8, 37n10
- Grandes Chaudronneries de l'Escaut, 89n5
- Grand Hall, Congo Pavilion, 66
- Greenhalgh, Paul, 33n2, 64
- guidebooks, 9, 43, 110–11
- Hall of Cultures, Congo Pavilion, 66
- Hall of Ethnography, Congo Pavilion, 66, 70–73, 72, 89n6
- Hall of Exports, Congo Pavilion, 66, 69, 69
- Hall of Imports, Congo Pavilion, 47, 48, 77–78
- Hancock, Macklin, 184–85
- A Handful of Dust* (Waugh), 80
- A Handful of Dust* (Waugh), 80
- Hankar, Paul, 66, 67–68, 70–73, 89n6
- health, 22, 177
- Heart of Darkness* (Conrad), 12–13
- Henry Van de Velde: Passion, Function, Beauty* exhibition (2013), 78
- heritage sites, ABC Hotels as, 114–15
- Hersey, Irwin, 132
- Heymans, Maurice, 156
- hierarchies: and ABC Hotels, 94, 99, 102; and African art as lesser, 38; and Gécamines Tower, 173; and ONATRA, 102; of tribes in African art, 38–39. *See also* class; ethnographic classification
- Hirsch, Nicholas, 78
- Hobé, Georges, 47, 48, 66, 77–78
- Hochschild, Adam, 13n7, 35
- Horta, Victor: Brugmann hospital, 110n17; and Congo Pavilion, 69; and copyright, 48n19; Hôtel Solvay, 59, 62, 78; influence on ABC Hotels, 95n10; Maison du Peuple, 35n6; museum, 54; Paris Exposition proposal, 79–80, 89; scholarship on, 36; Tassel House, 53. *See also* Hôtel Van Eetvelde
- Hotel Cosmopolite (Mbanza Ngungu), 105
- Hôtel Otlet, 59–60, 78
- Hotels Alimentation du Bas-Congo. *See* ABC Hotels
- Hôtel Solvay, 59, 62, 78
- Hôtel Van Eetvelde, 61; aesthetic of frozen movement in, 28; and CFS administration, 55, 60, 62; described, 60–63; as economically performative, 60, 62; elephant imagery in, *vi*, 60–61, 74–75; natural resources use, 3–4, 60–63; nature imagery in, *vi*, 60–62, 74–75; present-day, 55, 78; in scholarship on Art Nouveau, 34; as total artwork, 80

- housing: colonial-era Kinshasa construction workers, 94–95, 156; and Gécamines Tower, 173, 174; in present-day Kinshasa, 152, 155–56, 168, 177, 178, 179; Serrurier-Bovy and worker housing, 58; Thysville ABC Hotel/ONATRA complex, 96, 98–101, 100, 104–5, 113
- Houzé, Émile, 65
- Howard, Jeremy, 33
- human rights abuses: by CFS, 22, 26, 63, 64, 190; by mining industry, 27; by Second Republic, 26, 160, 180
- humans: alienation of in Authenticity architecture, 30; display of, 28, 41–42, 63, 65, 66, 70–74, 93–94, 190; exoticization of and Art Deco, 110; human figure as focus of Avant-gardists, 138, 141; landscape empty of, 71, 97; people as natural resource, 20–21, 72
- Humbu settlements, 111
- hybridity: of ABC Hotels sites, 102–4, 112–13, 115; of Authenticity, 149, 158n10; of Kinshasa, 194
- hypermasculinity, 131
- Ibongo, Joseph, 40, 137
- IFKIN (International Fair of Kinshasa) [1976], 4, 133, 135, 136
- Igbo art, 140
- Inga hydroelectric dam, 128
- Inongo, Dominique Sakombi, 129
- Institut des Musées Nationaux du Zaïre (IMNZ), 125, 129, 132, 165, 196
- Institute of Scientific Research in Central Africa, 132n9
- Institut supérieur d'architecture et urbanisme, 157
- Intercontinental Hotel (Kinshasa), 153, 196
- interiors: and Authenticity architecture, 127, 129; and luxury of Belgian Art Nouveau, 58, 59, 62–63; of May 20th Stadium, 160, 161, 183
- International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts (1925), 105n15
- International Fair of Kinshasa (IFKIN) [1976], 133, 135, 136
- International Monetary Fund, 25
- iron: and Belgian Art Nouveau, 56, 62–63, 84; Eiffel Tower, 110. *See also* ABC Hotels; rust
- ivory: and Belgian Art Nouveau, 33, 34, 54, 59, 63, 74; chryselephantine works, 67, 74; in Congo Pavilion, 67–68; in historical overview, 21
- Jacqmain, André, 172
- Japanese art as influence on Art Nouveau, 37, 59, 73
- Jewsiewicki, Bogumil, 142, 180–81
- Johannesburg (Nuttall & Mbembe), 18
- Jones, Owen, 37n8, 37n10
- Jubilee Park (Brussels), 54
- Kabila, Joseph, 27, 148, 168n23, 175, 184
- Kabila, Laurent-Désiré, 26
- Kalama Akulez, Henri, 143
- Kapinga, Pathy Tshindele, 143, 145n17
- Kasa-Vubu, Joseph, 24, 26, 120
- Kasfir, Sidney Littlefield, 135
- Katanga, secession of, 24
- Katambo, Kiripi, 143, 145n16
- Keim, Curtis A., 133
- Kenyan architecture, 183
- Kenyatta, Jomo, 183
- Kenyatta International Convention Centre, 183
- King Leopold's Ghost* (Hochschild), 13n7, 35
- Kinshasa: Art Deco buildings in, 108–10; as center of Authenticity, 120–21, 151; challenges of research in, 32, 42–45, 47–49, 179–80; and city theory, 19; growth of, 152; guidebooks, 9, 43, 110–11; housing, 152, 155–56; housing in present-day, 152, 155–56, 168, 177, 178, 179; new history museum, 114; in overview, 1–3; settlement history, 111. *See also* ABC Hotels; architecture, Authenticity era

- Kinshasa, ce village d'hier* (Molei), 44n14
- Kinshasa ABC Hotel. *See* Leopoldville ABC Hotel
- Kinshasa Academy of Fine Arts, 12; acceptance of new media, 143; and Avant-gardists, 136, 143, 145, 148; focus on traditional art, 38; founding of, 38, 140; and high/low culture, 142
- Kinshasa: D'un quartier à l'autre* (Muketa), 43
- Kinshasa: Genèse et sites historiques* (Lumenganeso), 43–44
- Kinshasa: Tales of the Invisible City* (De Boeck & Plissart), 18, 153
- Kitawala movement, 175–76
- kitsch, 35n5, 192
- Kivilu, Jacob Sabakinu, 19
- Kongo architecture, 159
- Kuba art, 38, 128, 129n7, 160, 163n17
- Kutumbagana, Kangafu, 133
- labor: and colonialism, 21–23, 33, 63, 64; in historical overview, 21–23, 26; mining industry, 27; porterage system, 63; Serrurier-Bovy on work, 58; unrest and Belgian Art Nouveau, 58; and violence, 21–22, 26, 33–34; and working conditions at former ABC Hotels sites, 112–13. *See also* worker housing
- La Caresse du Cygne* (Wolfers), 68
- Lagae, Johan: author's approach to, 153; on Claude Laurens, 110n18; on housing plans, 156; on Kinshasa as tangible city, 19; on mixing of symbols, 128; on Oriental influence, 73; as resource, 3, 43; on traditional architectural forms, 101
- La Mémoire du Congo, le temps coloniale* exhibition (2005), 77
- L'Aube (home of Serrurier-Bovy), 99
- Laurens, Claude, 110n18
- Laurens, Denis, 110n18
- Le Bouclier de la Révolution* (Liyolo), 138, 162
- Lecaille, Estelle, 78
- Le Congo illustré*, 41
- Lemda, Alexis, 162
- Le Mouvement géographique*, 41n12
- Leopold II: and Brussels architecture, 54; colonial policy, 21, 23, 26, 34–35, 54, 64–67; as focus of histories, 11; in historical overview, 21–23; statues of, 114, 124, 146, 164; vilification of, 1, 13, 23, 26, 35, 190. *See also* colonialism
- Leopoldville ABC Hotel, 5, 90; construction of, 84, 94–95; decay of, 106, 111–16; described, 94–96; exposed exoskeleton of, 88, 89, 93–94; location of, 87; ornament in, 88; present-day, 106–16; role of, 87; as total artwork, 89
- Lequy, Richard, 109n17
- Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (Picasso), 134n10
- l'Hôpital Reine-Élisabeth (Kinshasa), 109n17
- libraries and classification systems, 40
- Liebrechts, Charles, 72
- limba, 69
- line: as bounding mechanism, 19–20; whiplash line, 33, 36, 46, 54, 60, 74, 75–76
- Liyolo, Alfred: and CNRT Tower works, 170–71, 171, 178; and high/low art divide, 144; and kitsch, 192; lack of tribal specificity in works, 138–39, 140; and Presidential Park works, 162, 163; reputation of, 145; state support of, 127, 137, 143
- London Crystal Palace Exhibition (1851), 84
- Lu, Duanfang, 16n10
- Luambo, Franco, 125
- Luba art and architecture, 159, 160, 163n17
- Lubaki, Albert, 144
- Lubumbashi Biennial, 144n15
- Lubumbashi school, 141, 144
- Lufwa, André, 4, 127, 163
- Lumenganeso, Antoine Kiobe, 43–44, 110–11, 114
- Lumfuankenda Bungiena, Trésor, 42, 44
- Lumumba, Patrice, 24, 120, 166

- luxury: and ABC Hotels, 87, 93, 95–96;
and Belgian Art Nouveau interiors, 58,
59, 62–63; and Congo Pavilion objects,
67, 70
- Macron, Emmanuel, 131
- Maesen, A., 39
- Magema (architect), 158
- Magema, Michèle, 147n19
- Magiciennes de la Terre* exhibition (1989),
144
- Magnin, André, 40, 145
- MAGNIN-A gallery, 145
- Maison du Peuple, 35n6
- Mamdani, Mahmood, 185–86
- Mangebetu art and architecture, 38–39,
41, 159, 182
- Mao Zedong, 124
- map of key sites, 199
- marble, 156, 182
- masks: and Avant-gardists, 141; display
of without context, 38n11; influence on
European art, 134; and May 20th Sta-
dium, 160; Pende, 17; and Presidential
Park, 162, 163
- Masui, Théodore, 66n8, 72
- Matadi ABC Hotel, 87
- Matadi-Kinshasa Railway. *See* Matadi-
Leopoldville Railway
- Matadi-Leopoldville Railway: closing of
line, 105–6; commercial importance of,
87, 91, 96; construction of, 91; desta-
bilization from, 91–92. *See also* ABC
Hotels
- materialist approach, 9, 10–11, 44–45,
194–95
- Matisse, Henri, 73n10, 134
- May 20th Stadium, 159–61, 161, 180, 182
- Mbanza Kongo, 92
- Mbanza Ngungu courthouse, 102–4, 103,
104. *See also* Thysville ABC Hotel
- Mbembe, Achille, 18, 44
- Mbunza (king), 182
- medieval art influence on Art Nouveau,
37–57
- Messagers* (Liyolo), 170–71, 171, 178
- Mika, JP, 144
- Military Hall, Congo Pavilion, 66
- Mingiedi Tunga, Mega, 143, 148
- minimalism: and Art Nouveau, 37; and
display of art, 133, 135, 142
- Mobutuism, 25, 129
- Mobutu Sese Seko, 130; as continuation of
colonial regime, 26; coups by, 24, 120;
cult of personality, 25, 125, 129–31, 164–
65, 181; decline of regime, 176–77; as
focus of histories, 11; and foreign pol-
icy, 27, 120, 157, 186; names of, 129–31;
nostalgia for regime, 113, 180; overview
of regime, 24–26; palaces, 116n21, 154,
156; repatriation of art demands, 131–
32, 136, 146; rise to power, 24, 119–20;
and space race, 154–55, 167; support
for, 191; as tastemaker/patron, 127;
vilification of, 1, 26, 27, 190. *See also*
Authenticity
- modernism: and ABC Hotels, 85, 96;
African experience of, 15–18; and
Authenticity architecture, 14–15,
127–28, 150, 153–59, 160–63, 170–73,
175, 176, 179; author's approach to, 1–3,
15–20; and Avant-gardists, 136–43, 183;
and Belgian Art Nouveau, 79–80; and
Congo Pavilion, 67–70; defined, 15;
development of, 17; influence of Afri-
can art on, 17, 73n10, 133–35; influence
of Art Nouveau on, 57, 81–82; as mixed
with traditional art in Authenticity, 6,
29, 123–29, 131–39, 147–49, 163, 181–83,
191; as threat to land, 93; as total art-
work, 4, 6–8, 14, 28–29, 56, 89, 91. *See
also* architecture, Authenticity era
- modernity: alternative modernity, 16;
author's approach to, 15–16; and Congo
Pavilion, 67–70; as threat to African
art, 38, 140
- Mokengo, Emile, 127, 141, 141–42, 163
- Molei, Kolonga, 44n14
- MOMA (Museum of Modern Art) [New
York] exhibitions, 17n12, 134n10, 134n11

- money: art on five-zaire note, 128, 154;
colonial monetary systems, 21–22
- Mont Ngaliema, 161–62, 196. *See also* Presidential Park
- Mont Stanley, 162. *See also* Presidential Park
- monuments: monumentality, 184–87;
removal of colonial, 114, 123–24. *See also* Exchange/Tower of the Exchange
- Monument to the Nation's Heroes. *See* Exchange/Tower of the Exchange
- Morris, William, 58, 62
- mosaics, 141, 141–42
- Moulaert, George, 94
- Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution (MPR), 24–25, 120
- Mpane, Aimé, 146–47
- Mudekereza, Patrick, 144n15
- Mudimbe, V. Y., 19–20, 28, 188, 194
- Muhammad Ali* (Warhol), 192n1
- Mukadi (architect), 158n8
- Muketa, Jacques Fumunzanza, 43
- murals: Avant-gardists, 141, 141–42, 163;
and Congo Pavilion, 70–71; and Igbo art, 140; and Presidential Park, 163
- Museum of Contemporary Art and Multimedia, 167–68
- Museum of Indigenous Life, 132n9
- Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) [New York] exhibitions, 17n12, 134n10, 134n11
- Museum of the Belgian Congo. *See* Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA)
- museums: and ABC Hotels as possible heritage sites, 114–15; and Authenticity policy, 125; as bestowers of authenticity, 192; and ethnographic classification, 134–35; in Exchange Tower, 166, 167–68, 187; Kinshasa history museum, 114; political use of, 19; spaces and total artwork, 82. *See also* displays and display furnishings; Institut des Musées Nationaux du Zaïre (IMNZ); National Museum of the Democratic Republic of Congo; Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA)
- music and musicians, 125, 127, 161n13
- Musicienne* (Liyolo), 138–39, 139
- Mwilambwe, Vithois, 143
- Nairobi architecture, 183
- names: and Authenticity, 25, 124; of Mobutu Sese Seko, 129–31
- Naoi, Nozomi, 37n100
- National Archives of the Congo, 42–43
- National Festival of Cultural Animation, 125
- national identity: and Belgian Art Nouveau, 3–4, 56, 64, 78; and Belgian colonialism, 21, 115, 190; and Congo Pavilion, 64; and cultural events, 25; and Joseph Kabila era, 148; and total artwork, 7–8; traditional cultures and, 121–22
- national identity and Authenticity: and architecture, 6, 14–15, 29, 123, 155, 159, 185–87; and Avant-gardists, 149n21; and exhibitions, 133, 148; and leadership, 185–86, 190; and Mobutuism, 25, 129; overview of, 6–7, 120–22; as paradox, 147–50; as policy, 122–31; and self-representation, 6, 14–15, 32
- National Museum of the Democratic Republic of Congo, 77, 114, 162, 164, 178–79. *See also* Institut des Musées Nationaux du Zaïre (IMNZ)
- National Radio and Television Corporation, 42–43. *See also* CNRT Tower
- native housing settlements, 95. *See also* traditional architecture
- natural resources: and Authenticity architecture, 160, 172; and Belgian Art Nouveau, 3–4, 33–34, 47, 54, 56–57, 59–63, 66, 67–70; colonialism's focus on, 20–23, 28–29; and May 20th Stadium, 160; people as natural resource, 20–21, 72; present-day exploitation of, 27; and railway, 91; and Second Republic, 25, 29; and World War II, 23
- nature: architecture as refuge from, 99; privileging over architecture, 111;

- nature (*continued*)
 reclamation of ABC Hotels by, 29, 85–86, 98, 105, 106, 112, 114, 115, 194;
 reclamation of Authenticity architecture by, 164, 177, 194
- nature imagery: and Authenticity, 128;
 and Avant-gardists, 141–42; in Belgian Art Nouveau, 13–14, 28, 32–33, 56–58, 60–62, 71, 74–77, 80; in Congo Pavilion, 71, 75; in Hôtel Van Eetvelde, vi, 60–62, 74–75; and primitivism, 57
- Ndombasi Kufimba, Bamba: patronage and support of, 127, 143; works in Presidential Park, 163; writings by, 40, 137, 138, 144
- ndop* figures, 67, 128
- Négritude, 126, 148
- negrophilia, 126
- Neo Art Deco, 166, 172
- neoplasm, 163
- New Breath* (Mpane), 146–47
- Niemeyer, Oscar, 157
- Nigeria and Zaria School, 139–40
- noodle style, 55n4
- nostalgia: for Belgian Art Nouveau, 4; colonial, 113, 180; for Mobutu regime, 113, 180
- Nøstvik, Karl Henrik, 183n28
- N'Sele Manifesto of 1967, 122–23, 138, 160n12
- Nuttall, Sarah, 16, 18, 44
- Nyerere, Julius, 157, 184
- Okeke, Uche, 139–40, 143
- Okeke-Agulu, Chika, 16, 137
- Olbrechts, F. M., 39
- ONATRA (Office National des Transports): and Kinshasa ABC Hotel complex, 106–11, 112–13; and Mbanza Ngungu ABC Hotel complex, 102, 104–6, 112–13
- order and nostalgia, 113, 180
- Oriental art as influence on Art Nouveau, 37, 57–58, 59, 73–74, 89n6
- ornament: and ABC Hotels, 88, 98–99; and Art Nouveau, 81; and Belgian Art Nouveau, 28, 54, 56–57
- Ortolani, Santo, 43n13, 163, 184
- Osayimwese, Itohan, 85, 91
- Oscar and Lucinda* (Carey), 80
- othering: and Belgian Art Nouveau, 4, 66, 70–73, 80–82; as commonality among sites, 195, 196–97; and self-representation in Authenticity, 6, 14, 32
- Otlet, Édouard, 59
- Otlet, Hôtel, 59–60, 78
- Otlet, Paul, 59–60
- Oxford Street, Accra* (Quayson), 18
- Palace of Justice (Brussels), 54
- Palace ONATRA, 106–11
- Palais Chinois, 156
- Palais de marbre, 156
- Palais du Peuple, 157
- Palm Islands (Dubai), 185
- Palumbo, Eugène, 153, 156, 158
- Pan-Africanism, 126, 148
- Panorama du Congo*, 41
- Paris Exposition (1900), 79–80, 89
- peintures populaire*. *See* popular painters
- Pende art, 38–39, 134n10
- performance: of celebration and Authenticity policy, 125; Hôtel Van Eetvelde as economically performative, 60, 62
- Périer, Gaston, 140
- Pevsner, Nikolaus, 33
- photography and research challenges, 48–49
- Picasso, Pablo, 17, 73n10, 126, 134, 135, 138, 144
- Picha (collective), 144n15
- Pili-Pili (artist), 144
- Pin-San, M. Cheng, 157n6
- Pioneers of Modern Design* (Pevsner), 33
- Plissart, Marie-Françoise, 3, 18, 152n1, 153, 166n20
- police: base in Exchange Tower, 167, 168; Force Publique, 22, 24, 65, 66
- politics: destabilization from railway, 91–92; and museums, 19; rebellions

- and revolts, 23–24, 26; socialism, 58;
total artwork and, 7–8; unitarian vs.
federalist, 23–24
- polygenism, 65
- popular painters, 142–43, 144–45, 148, 185,
192–93
- portable buildings: and Belgian Art
Nouveau, 80; colonial use of prefabricated
buildings, 84–85, 86–87, 91; and
traditional architecture, 101. *See also*
ABC Hotels
- portage, 63
- postcolonialism: and art's relation to
power, 194–97; and authenticity, 192;
author's approach to, 1–3, 13, 14, 49, 85.
See also Authenticity
- prefabricated buildings: colonial use of,
84–85, 86–87, 91. *See also* ABC Hotels
- Presidential Park, 162–64, 165, 178–81, 182,
184, 187
- primitivism: African art as primitive, 15,
17, 38, 134–35; and architecture, 18–19,
38, 85, 121; and Art Deco, 81; and Art
Nouveau, 17, 38, 57–58, 65, 81–82, 84; as
authentic, 192; and modernist art, 17,
73n10; of Oriental art, 74
- “Primitivism” in *20th Century Art* exhibi-
tion (1984–85), 17n12, 134n10
- Quayson, Ato, 18, 44
- Queen Elizabeth Hospital (Kinshasa), 109
- Ra, Sun, 167n21
- railways: closing of line, 105–6; commer-
cial importance of, 87, 91, 96; design
influence on Hôtel Van Eetvelde,
62–63; economics and costs of, 64, 92;
support for, 64, 65; tram for Congo
Pavilion (1897), 64–65, 67, 84. *See also*
ABC Hotels
- recours à l'authenticité*. *See* Authenticity
- The Remaindering* (Sacks), 45n15
- repatriation of art: increase in calls for,
19, 131; Kuba request for, 129n7; and
misuse/mis-display of art, 47, 146; and
Mobutu, 131–32, 136, 146; and RCMA,
47, 77, 131–32, 146; and violence, 136
- Republic of Congo and civil war, 24, 173
- research: approach of author to, 2,
8–11, 28, 44–45, 49, 121, 154, 191–97;
challenges and ABC Hotels, 85; chal-
lenges of research in Brussels, 46–49;
challenges of research in Kinshasa, 32,
42–45, 47–49, 179–80; ownership and
copyright, 48
- retour à l'authenticité*. *See* Authenticity
- Reygearts, René, 160
- Robert, Yves, 114–15
- Royal Museum for Central Africa
(RMCA), 20; as archival source, 43,
46–49; colonialist display tropes in,
81–82; contemporary Congolese art
in, 146–47; criticism of, 77; exhibitions
overseas, 39, 132, 136; mis-display/mis-
use of Congolese art, 19, 47; origins of,
13n8, 81; renovations, 77; and repatri-
ation, 47, 77, 131–32, 146; scholarship
on, 19
- Royal Palace (Brussels), 54
- rubber, 21–22, 23, 64, 66, 74
- Rubin, William, 17n12, 134n10
- Rumble in the Jungle, 153, 159–61, 161, 186
- rust and ABC Hotels, 87n2, 98, 102, 104,
105, 106, 112
- Sacred Heart Church (Mbanza Ngungu),
105
- Sacred Heart Missionary (Kinshasa), 109
- Safricas et Coletin, 153
- Said, Edward W., 13–14
- Salon of Honor, Congo Pavilion, 67–68
- Salon of Honor, May 20th Stadium, 160,
161
- Samba, Chéri, 142, 144, 145n17, 192
- Sarr, Felwine, 131
- Sartre, Jean-Paul, 24
- Savoy, Bénédicte, 131
- scarification, 41–42, 74, 75–76
- Schenk, Sabine, 37n100
- Schildkrout, Enid, 133

- Schmutzler, Robert, 53n2
 Schweinfurth, Georg, 38, 40, 182
 Scott, David, 149
 Second Republic: and art history commissions, 39; in historical overview, 1, 24–26; and space race, 154–55, 167. *See also* architecture, Authenticity era; Authenticity; national identity and Authenticity
 Segaert, Henri, 95–96
 segregation, 29, 94–95, 99, 152
 self-representation and Authenticity, 6, 14, 32
 Sembach, Klaus-Jürgen, 33–34, 35
 Senegalese architecture, 157
 Senghor, Léopold Sédar, 126, 157
 Serrurier-Bovy, Gustave, 58, 66, 69, 75, 99, 193
 Silverman, Debora L., 13–14, 32–33, 36, 38, 60, 74–77
 Simone, AbdouMaliq, 18, 31, 44
 slavery, 13, 20–21, 68, 92
 socialism and Belgian Art Nouveau, 58
 Société d'Études Coloniales, 59
 Société forestière et commerciale du Congo, 109n17
60 Ans de peinture au Zaïre (Cornet), 144
 Solvay, Ernest, 59
 Solvay, Hôtel, 59, 62, 78
Soup Cans (Warhol), 192n1
The Sources of Art Nouveau (Tschudi Madsen), 35
 Sozacom Tower. *See* Gécamines Tower
 space race, 154–55, 167
 spear motifs, 71, 196
 spectacles and Authenticity, 125, 154, 159–61
 Stade du 20 Mai. *See* May 20th Stadium
 Stade du Roi-Baudouin, 160
 Stade Tata Raphaël. *See* May 20th Stadium
 Stanley, Henry Morton, 21, 111, 114, 162
 Stanley Pool, 111
 statues: of Lumumba, 166; in Mpané's work, 146; removal of colonial, 114, 123–24, 162, 164
 Stengers, Jean, 35
 Stoler, Ann Laura, 85
 Strebelle, Claude, 172
 street art. *See* popular painters
 Strother, Z. S., 17, 40
 Style Congo: as term, 1, 15, 55. *See also* Art Nouveau
Style Congo: Heritage and Heresy exhibition (2023), 78–79
 Sullivan, Elaine Ericksen, 147n19
 Sun Ra, 167n21
Suturing the City (De Boeck & Baloji), 18

 Tala N'Gai, Fernand, 153, 156, 158
 Tanzanian architecture, 157, 184
 Tassel House, 53
 tattoos, 38n10, 75
 technology: and ABC Hotels, 28–29, 89; and Authenticity architecture, 155, 160, 186; and Belgian Art Nouveau, 56
 thick description, 31n1
 Thys, Albert, 87, 94
 Thysville ABC Hotel, 88, 97, 100, 103, 104; construction of, 84; decay of, 98, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 111–16, 116; economic role of Thysville, 96; exposed exoskeleton of, 88, 89, 93–94; location of, 87, 96; ornament in, 88, 99; present-day use as courthouse, 102–4, 103, 104; remains of, 102–6, 111–16, 116; role of, 87, 96; as total artwork, 89; and views, 96–98; village complex, 98–102; workers' cottages, 96, 98–101, 100, 104–5
 Tillmans, Wolfgang, 168n23
 time: author's approach to chronology, 10–11; as standing still in Belgian Art Nouveau, 57–58; traditional African art/culture as fixed in, 38, 70–71, 72, 134–35, 136, 148
 Torday, Emil, 38
 total artwork: ABC Hotels as, 8, 28–29, 47, 89; Authenticity as, 7, 187; and Belgian Art Nouveau, 53, 56–57, 59–60, 65–66,

- 80, 189, 190; and classification systems, 40; colonialism's affinity with, 79; and Congo Pavilion, 65–66, 71, 79, 80; and elision of corruption, 190; modernist architecture as, 7, 181; and museum spaces, 82; and national identity, 7–8; overview of, 28; and totalitarianism, 7–8, 29, 193
- totalitarianism: defined, 7; of Mobutu, 1, 7–8, 24–26, 29; and total artwork, 7–8, 29, 193
- Toulier, Bernard, 43
- Tour de l'Échangeur. *See* Exchange/Tower of the Exchange
- Tour Gécamines. *See* Gécamines Tower
- tourism: and Belgian Art Nouveau, 3, 48n19, 53–55, 60, 78–79; tourist art, 142–43; travelers and ABC Hotels, 87, 96
- Tour Radio-Télévision nationale du Congo. *See* CNRT Tower
- Tour RTNC. *See* CNRT Tower
- traditional architecture: and Africanization policies in other countries, 183–84; and Authenticity architecture, 181–83; dismissal of as primitive, 40–42, 85, 95, 111, 121, 122, 159; flexibility of, 42; impermanence of, 42; and portability, 101; and worker housing, 94–95
- traditional art: and art education, 140; as fixed in time, 38, 70–71, 72, 134–35, 136, 148; and judgment of authenticity, 135; mixed with modernism in Authenticity, 6, 14–15, 29, 123–29, 131–39, 147–49, 163, 181–83, 191; as tainted by modernity, 38, 140; as term, 40. *See also* repatriation of art
- tram for Congo Pavilion (1897), 64–65, 67, 84
- Trefon, Theodore, 177
- tribes and tribalism: and Authenticity-era exhibitions, 133; classification and hierarchies of in art history, 38–39, 134–35; and classification in Congo Pavilion, 66, 70–73; as fixed in time, 38, 70–71; as unspecified in Avant-gardists, 138–40, 163n17, 183
- TRICO-II nuclear reactor, 154
- Tsaye art and Rumble in the Jungle, 160
- Tschudi Madsen, Stephan, 35, 53n2
- Tshisekedi, Felix, 27n17
- Tsiku-Pezo, N'damvu, 127
- Tsimba, Freddie, 146, 147n19
- Turin World's Fair (1902), 58
- Turner, Thomas, 26
- unitarian politics, 23–24
- United States: Congo policy, 24, 27, 120, 157; and death of Lumumba, 24, 120, 166; exhibitions of Congolese art in, 126
- unity: and Authenticity and Avant-gardists, 127, 138, 145; and total artwork, 7–8; and totalitarianism, 7
- Unmade Pavilion (iron)* (Sacks), 79n13
- urban planning, 184–85
- urban vs. rural divide, 2–3, 16, 115, 194
- USSR and Congo policy, 157
- Van Beurden, Sarah: on AICA exhibition (1973), 136; on Authenticity cultural plans and events, 125, 148; on IFKIN, 133; museum scholarship by, 19, 77; on nationalism of Avant-gardists, 149n21; on repatriation, 129n7, 132
- Vandenbreenen, Jos, 95
- Van de Velde, Henry: and colonial repression imagery, 74–76; and Congo Pavilion, 47, 66, 67, 69, 69; exhibition on (2013), 78; Hôtel Otlet, 59–60, 78; influence of body art on, 14, 74, 75–76; primitivism in, 57; Villa Bloemenwerf, 58, 99; on whiplash line, 75–76; on work, 58
- Van de Velde, Willy, 74
- Van Eetvelde, Edmond, 55
- Van Eetvelde, Hôtel. *See* Hôtel Van Eetvelde
- Vangroenweghe, Daniel, 13n7
- Van Hentenryck, Marcel, 160

- Van Reybrouck, David, 87n2
 Van Rysselberghe, Octave, 59
 vernacular architecture. *See* traditional architecture
 Versailles (France), 163
 Victor Horta Museum, 54
 views: and ABC Hotels, 89, 96–98; and author's approach, 11; and Palace ONA-TRA, 107; and settler's fantasy, 97–98
 Villa Bloemenwerf, 58, 99
 violence: of Authenticity architecture sites, 180–81; and CFS, 22, 26, 33–34; executions, 26, 160, 180; and labor, 21–22, 26, 33–34; and missing bodies, 190; of railway, 92–93; and repatriation of art, 136; whiplash line as signifier of colonial, 33, 36, 74, 75
 Visart, Daniel, 162n15
- Wallenda, Marc, 38, 140
 Warhol, Andy, 192
 Waugh, Evelyn, 80
 Wauters, Alphonse-Jules, 41n12
 Wemba, Papa, 125
 whiplash line: as common in Belgian Art Nouveau, 54, 60; as signifier of colonial violence, 33, 36, 74, 75; as sinister, 46; Van de Velde on, 75–76
 White, Bob W., 180–81
 Wolf, Ludwig, 39
 Wolfers, Phillipe, 68
- women, objectification of, 41–42
 wood: and Belgian Art Nouveau, 34, 47, 54, 59, 60–63, 68–70, 71, 80; and Congo Pavilion, 68–70, 71; and general Art Nouveau use, 74; and Hôtel Van Eetvelde, 60–63
 worker housing: and colonial-era Kinshasa construction, 94–95, 156; and Exchange Tower, 168; and Serrurier-Bovy, 58; Thysville ABC Hotel/ONA-TRA complex, 96, 98–101, 100, 104–5, 113
The Work of the Forest exhibition (1992), 13n8
 World Trade Center (NYC), 169
 World War II, 23
- yachting style, 55n4
Yango Biennial exhibition (2014), 143, 168n23
 Young, Crawford, 26
 Yumeji, Takehisa, 37n10
- Zaire: in historical overview, 24–26; renaming of Congo as, 24, 120, 124. *See also* Authenticity; Congo
 zaire (currency), 128
Zaire: l'hebdomadaire de l'Afrique Centrale, 114
 Zaria School, 139–40