

On-Trade-Off



06.03.22 – 21.08.22

Charging Myths

Vleugel 19

EN

Charging Myths

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

How is
technological
innovation
dependent
on natural
resources?

Our relationship with energy is a theme that is as old and mythical as it is strategic. In this exhibition, the artist collective On-Trade-Off follows the trail of lithium. Their starting point is Manono in Congo, where the world's largest stock of lithium ore was recently discovered. The former mining town is a place that hovers between past and present. While the scars of the colonial mining industry are still visible, multinationals launch large-scale mining of lithium, an important resource in the race for green energy.

The artworks zoom in on the global race for raw materials – from exploitation to financial speculation, from raw materials to high-tech products. The 'Trade-Off' is an unequal exchange. It takes place between technological growth and increasing inequality, between overconsumption and survival, between the precious metals we carelessly carry in our pockets and the hands that extract them from the earth.

The artists focus on cooperation and knowledge sharing and thus offer an artistic counterbalance to the economic logic of extraction and exploitation. Besides a critical look, they show the magic of energy and electricity, the resilience of man and land, and the belief in a new sun.



② Marjolijn Dijkman

Cloud to Ground #1, 2021-2022

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

① Pélagie Gbaguidi

Hunger, 2022

Gbaguidi links up the global theme of hunger with exploitation, inequality and survival. Her work is based on her stay with women who engage in artisanal mining in the Congolese Kipushi, where cobalt, an essential ingredient of lithium batteries, is mined. While a white sun fills the space, in the background you hear the poem *'We are a New Sun'* in combination with local noise from Kipushi. Gbaguidi wrote the text based on stories from the various artists and had it recorded in six languages. The poem runs like a refrain through the exhibition, providing a hopeful counterbalance. It summarizes poetically how a harmony of voices may give rise to new ways of living together.

③ Maarten Vanden Eynde & Musasa

Material Matters (Li3), 2018

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

④ Georges Senga

Tshanga-Tshanga (300 Maisons),
2022

While international mining companies establish themselves in Manono and put in large-scale infrastructural changes, the local population still suffers from the trauma, conflict and unemployment that emerged after the industrial tin extraction was ended there in the early 1980s. It was the Belgian company Géomines that started mining there in the early 20th century. Senga shows a town that finds itself caught between past and future. Besides witnessing its industrial ruins and dilapidated neighbourhoods, you also feel how the discovery of lithium is transforming Manono today. The title *Tshanga-Tshanga* refers to both the Swahili notion of 'mixing' and patchwork fabric.

300 Maisons shows the upscale neighbourhoods put in by the Belgian mining company Géomines. When the company left, the army occupied parts of the neighbourhood to control ethnic conflicts.

⑤ Georges Senga

Tshanga-Tshanga (Barsin),
2022

Barsin provides a frontal image of the early working-class homes, on a human scale. Members of the local population still live in some of the homes, but most have been abandoned since the last war. They earn a meagre livelihood by mining cassiterite (tin ore) and coltan in an artisanal way.



⑧ Femke Herregraven

A Prelude to:
When The Dust Unsettles,
2022 -2023

From a safe distance, with the help of machine learning and sophisticated remote sensing technologies, international mining companies today create a digital model of future sites, long before any ore is extracted from the deposits.

Purely constructed from data and pixels, these companies thus create an ideal image in hyper clean and futurist renders. The renders are meant to persuade politicians and investors, but also are largely detached from local impacts and realities. In her installation, Herregraven brings together the two worlds in a model combining the virtual realm with research materials gathered by the artist-collective in and around Manono.



⑨ Alexis Destoop

The Pits, 2022

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

10 Jean
Katambayi
Mukendi

M13, 2019

M13 is a technical drawing of a bolt with thirteen sides instead of the usual six. This particular design makes it incompatible with existing tools. The inspiration came after a visit to Manono, where huge remnants of old machinery are found all over. Too heavy to carry and without any practical use, they are left behind as permanent relics of colonial exploitation. The bolt that doesn't fit in any object symbolizes the total mismatch between of exploitation and the current needs of the local population.

11 Georges
Senga

Tshanga-Tshanga
(Mille Bêches), 2022

Senga zooms in on the artificial lakes around Manono. These are leftovers of the old mining pits. While the local population is still mining cassiterite and tantalum on a small scale, multinationals accelerate their effort to open up the town for the new lithium fever. *Mille Bêches* means 1000 shovels and is the name of a sand quarry that has been dug by hand for 16 years.





12 Alain Nsenga

Fantasmagoria, 2022

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

13 Pamela Tulizo

MATRICE, 2022

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

14 Maarten Vanden Eynde & Musasa

What All The World Desires, 2022

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

15 Georges
Senga

Tshanga-Tshanga, 2022

These intriguing images are an ode to the resilience of the landscape and the local population. You see how nature gradually takes over industrial ruins. This is also a metaphor for the challenges and intricacies in places where past, present and future visibly overlap.

16 Jean
Katambayi
Mukendi

The Concentrator, 2022

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

“Art is a powerful alternative to the vertical logics of political domination and economic exploitation. Many of the high-tech devices in global use can in fact be self produced with simple means, some patience, and imagination. In my practice, mathematics, electronics and speculative drawings allow for transforming the industrial remnants into tools for invention.”

Jean Katambayi Mukendi



①7 **Tétshim
& Frank
Mukunday**

Machini, 2019

The Congolese artists Tétshim and Frank Mukunday are genuine self-made men. For their stop motion films they work with chalk drawings, stones and recycled materials. In *Machini* they tell of the impact of mining and pollution on the town and of the gradual destruction of the landscape and the local population.



①8 **Dorine Mohka
& Elia Rediger**

Hercule de Lubumbashi, 2019

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

①9 **Sammy Baloji,
Jean Katambayi Mukendi
& Daddy Tshikaya**

Tesla Crash, A Speculation
(Model), 2019

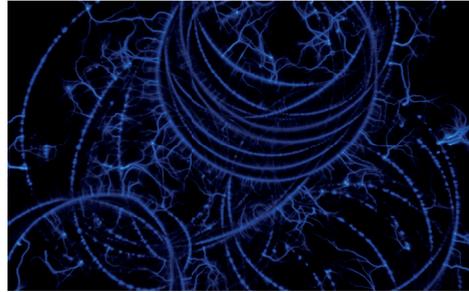
This miniature version of the Tesla Model X is made from recycled copper wire. The technique looks like the one used by children in Lubumbashi to make toy wire cars.



②0 **Pélagie
Gbaguidi**

Hunger, 2022

In the second installation of *Hunger*, Gbaguidi combines a series of drawings and paintings into a graphic display. The traditional bread oven and tables with lithographs feature prominently. The tables invite us to share food and conversations about the universal theme of survival. In addition, you see a documentary with women engaged in breaking stones in Kipushi.



②1 **Marjolijn
Dijkman**

Depth of Discharge, 2021
Cloud to Ground #2, 2021

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

Colophon

Artists

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

Curators

Ils Huygens & On-Trade-Off

On-Trade-Off is an artist run-project, initiated by Picha (Lubumbashi) & Enough Room for Space (Brussels).

The exhibition is a co-production of Z33 (Hasselt) & Framer Framed (Amsterdam)

With support from

FLACC (Alain Nsenga & Marjolijn Dijkman) and Mondriaan Fonds (Georges Senga & Marjolijn Dijkman)

Graphic design

Studio de Ronners, Antwerpen / Rotterdam

Photos:

Courtesy of the artists,
Photo Chain of Events by Steven Decroos

With thanks to the whole Z33 team.

This is a publication of Z33. This brochure was published on the occasion of *Charging Myths* (06.03.22 - 21.08.22) in Z33, Hasselt, Belgium.

House for Contemporary
Art, Design & Architecture

