Climate, Capital, and Colonialism: A Congolese Perspective

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ABSTRACT

How do global inequities inherited from the past continue to profit some people and devastate the lives and lands of others? How is the contemporary physical environment suffused with traces of colonialism and how do its infrastructures accommodate neocolonial practices of extractive capitalism? What can artists, designers, and architects do to expose injustice and call for structural change? These are some of the questions the Congolese artist Sammy Baloji discusses with Dr. Becca Voelcker in a critical conversation about climate resilience and justice that considers colonial history and our extractive capitalist present.

INTRODUCTION

The Congolese artist Sammy Baloji is not interested in representing colonialism as nostalgia, or as a thing of the past. He is interested in exposing the continuation of that system and its effects on communities and climates today.

Working with photography and installation, Baloji raises important questions about climate justice. How do global inequities inherited from the past continue to profit some people and devastate the lives and lands of others? How is the contemporary physical environment suffused with traces of colonialism and how do its infrastructures accommodate neocolonial practices of extractive capitalism? What can artists, designers, and architects do to expose injustice and call for structural change?

Baloji was born in 1978 in the city of Lubumbashi, Katanga Province, a region of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) rich in natural resources. He now divides his time between Lubumbashi and the capital of the Congo's former colonial ruler, Brussels, Belgium. In 2008 Baloji founded Lubumbashi Biennale, one of Africa's most dynamic events for contemporary art and culture. Locating the Biennale there, thousands of miles from the nation's capital Kinshasa, and even further from European metropolises where exhibitions and fairs often take place, is an act of cultural decentering and a critique of hegemonic structures. Indeed, the history of European fairs constructing pavilions to exhibit objects and people from colonized territories is an important topic in Baloji's recent work, and one of the many themes discussed below.

Moving between geographies of colonizer and colonized, Europe and Africa, Global North and South, gives Baloji a keen sense of what he calls being "in-between"—a phrase that echoes W. E. B. Du Bois's idea of the double consciousness of black subjectivity that lives

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within a white supremacist society (D. L. Lewis, 2000, p. 38). Although most of Baloji's work visualizes places in the DRC, he always has one eye on Belgium and on how to use his dual location productively. To this end, in 2017 Baloji and his partner started Twenty Nine Studio & Production in Brussels, combining an art studio and a production strand for documentary and experimental film.

Documentary and photography carry significant imperial legacies. Colonizers conducted so-called objective scientific research to classify colonized peoples as inferior and therefore exploitable (Campt, 2017; Corbey, 1993; Hight & Sampson, 2013; Wolbert, 2000). Baloji's reappropriation of lens-based media specifically addresses this.

Many of Baloji's projects focus on the architecture and urban planning strategies of imperial reign. This focus derives from his understanding that spatial structures (designed for colonialism) determine social structures (of continued injustice). In this understanding, Baloji also echoes Du Bois, who argued that the material and discursive origins of European monumentalism, such as the gleaming boulevards of Brussels, were found in the brutal colonial regimes of the Congo (D. L. Lewis, 2000, pp. 394–396). Baloji extends Du Bois's idea by taking the reverse view to look at European traces that continue to shape life in Lubumbashi today.

Combining archival and contemporary images taken in Katanga Province with objects including plants and copper that testify to DRC's resource wealth, and the human rights violations and pollution that resulted from resource exploitation, Baloji's installations reveal connections among colonialism, extractive capitalism, and climate damage. They have been exhibited across the world, including at documenta 14 (2017) and Tate Modern (2022)—the latter venue a complicated one, given the source of the Tate family's wealth in sugar plantations and enslaved labor (Jazeel, 2012).

Legacies, afterlives, and experiences of continued exploitation infuse everyday life in DRC today, as in so many regions of the world living in the wake of slavery (Hartman, 2021; Sharpe, 2016). The Congo's history of slavery under Belgian colonial rule is a particularly menacing one. Congo was the first country to be created after the Berlin Conference of 1884, in which a group of European powers including Britain, France, and Belgium, carved up the African continent in an unprecedented land grab of extractive colonial-capital greed. Belgium's then ruler, King Leopold II, took over a portion of Central Africa measuring five times the size of his own country and containing an estimated population of 25 million. He called this land Congo Free State. Leopold's reign over Congo Free State was anything but free—it was nightmarish. Having promised to help end slavery, Leopold quickly enslaved the population and forced them to extract rubber from wild vines for the growing global tire industry. He kept a private army to police enslaved workers. Twenty years into his purchase of the territory, an estimated half of the population had been killed as a direct result of his rule (Faloyin, 2022, p. 38). When international condemnation increased, the Belgian government wrested the territory from their bloodthirsty king. Leopold died without once setting foot in Africa. DRC gained independence from Belgium in 1960 but, as Baloji documents extensively, its colonial legacy continues to shape everyday life because global powers continue to compete over its natural resources.

This global competition plays out spatially in Baloji's 2016 installation titled *802. That is where, as you heard, the elephant danced the malinga. The place where they now grow flowers*, currently on display at Tate Modern (Figure 1). The installation focuses on copper mining, a central industry and source of conflict in DRC. Arranged in a large room to resemble a museum display, copper objects on plinths quickly reveal themselves as mortar shells containing soil and growing plants. The plants are species native to DRC that are often found in

Figure 1. 802, That is where, as you heard, the elephant danced the malinga. The place where they now grow flowers, 2016. Collection Tate, London. Courtesy of Sammy Baloji and Imane Farès Gallery, Paris.

European botanic collections. The copper and plants both testify to European extraction. The title of the installation refers to phrases from a book documenting the involvement of African soldiers to the First and Second World Wars (Yav, 1990). Through this title, Congolese people as well as copper and plants are represented as having served global interests and suffered as a consequence.

The installation also includes photographs Baloji found in an ethnographic museum that date from the colonial era and show traditional scarification patterns on Congolese people's bodies. Scarification is a practice commonly used in many regions of Africa during initiation rites and for representing a person's community. The photographs both testify to local traditions and to the imposed colonial tradition of using photography to Other its objects of study as "primitive." Connecting images of bodies represented in such a cold, colonial gaze with copper extracted for colonial profit and arms trading, and plants labeled "exotic" and "foreign species" in European botanic collections, Baloji intersects human bodies with materials from the natural environment to emphasize the continuity between social and environmental damage under colonialism.

Despite its colonial references, this installation is not—or not only—about the past. Today, Congolese copper is integral in the making of electric vehicles, as well as solar, hydro, thermal, and wind energy production infrastructures. Ironically, considering these technologies' promises of clean energy, they depend on mining processes that are at present far from "clean" in terms of social and climate justice impacts. Mining in DRC today results in frequent conflict over international and domestic ownership, corrupt and clandestine mining practices, unsafe labor conditions, and environmental pollution (Mazalto, 2009).

Tackling past and present inequity in installations such as this, Baloji's work complicates ideas of climate resilience and justice. In photographic series such as Baloji's 2006 collection,

Mémoire, he collages archival images of colonial rulers over images of modern day landscapes scarred by ongoing mining and pollution to suggest that what's resilient in DRC is less a beleaguered populace than the unjust neocolonial logic that continues to exploit it. Extractive capitalism is what is able to last, to endure, to adapt flexibly to global demands in rubber for car tires, for instance, tantalum, tungsten, tin, and gold for mobile phones, or cobalt for electric vehicles sold to people in the Global North as solutions to the climate crisis. The problem with Green Capitalism, Baloji's work suggests, is that it is still capitalism.

By reading Baloji's work in this way, it becomes clear that capitalism's resilience is parametrically opposed to climate justice because it exploits people and the natural environment. Words like resilience and sustainability often sound "green" and conceal agendas to sustain a status quo. It is all well and good celebrating the undoubtedly brave resilience of poor people surviving the misery of climate catastrophes, but better to ask: what and who caused their misery in the first place? Baloji's work prompts such questions, offering an important critical approach to climate justice. As Neferti X. M. Tadiar has recently written in her Marxist feminist approach to climate justice, global capitalism depends for its survival (its "resilience") on the survival and resilience of a class of people it deems expendable. These people serve capitalism as an infrastructure of reproductive labor and are more often than not people of color and people living in the Global South (Tadiar, 2022). If we celebrate these people's resilience, are we not also (if inadvertently) celebrating the resilience of the machine their exploitation maintains?

The following is an edited conversation originally conducted in English and French over email as Baloji traveled to Brussels from Lubumbashi where he was working toward the forthcoming Biennale.

Becca Voelcker: You're coming from Lubumbashi today—could you tell me what you've been doing there recently?

Sammy Baloji: Over the past 18 months I've been working on a collaboration between Twenty Nine Studio and the Brussels-based architectural firm Traumnovelle, the artist and graphic designer Ayoh Kré Duchâtelet, and the photographer Chrystel Mukeba. We're exploring the colonial legacy of the Congo-Belgian pavilions presented between 1894 and 1958 in Antwerp, Liège, Ghent, and Brussels.

These pavilions emerged in the wider context of many international fairs and universal exhibitions, not only in Belgium but also in France and Italy. Human Zoos were included in some pavilions, presenting colonized people, including those from modern day DRC, as primitive and wild to justify Belgium's colonial project under King Leopold II. We're using art and architecture, and archival research, to critically examine Belgium's contemporary social fabric and urban landscape considering its legacy of creating these Congo-Belgian pavilions.

A critical examination of these pavilions is paramount because of the colonial and extractive capitalist purpose they served. The pavilions operated both as propaganda to advertise to investors the many exploitable resources available on Congolese territory (wood, ivory, rubber, minerals) and to mobilize Belgian laborers and civil engineers to commit to work in the colonies.

To make these Congo-Belgian pavilions attractive, the secretary general of the colonies hired Belgian architects, designers, and artists to appropriate cultural goods and natural resources from the Congo for making decorative objects and architectural structures to house these economic propaganda exhibitions.

The pavilions interest me because, on the one hand, they display influences of European architectural currents, including Art Nouveau, Art Deco, and the Bauhaus, and on the other, they reveal the very experimental character of the Belgian colonial project. The pavilions were speculative models of what Belgian colonial occupation could look like. For the European architects, designers, and artists involved, the opportunity to create Congo-Belgian pavilions fostered experimentation and creative research into architectural style. The lasting traces of these experiments are visible in the European urban landscape, and yet their contribution to the colonial project and its violence to Congolese cultures is erased.

BV: You spend much of your time on the other side of this colonial system, in Brussels. How do you view architecture in that city? And what about place names? Like the built environment, names also seem to evidence colonial relations. Brussels' African Quarter, Matonge, for example, is named after an area in Kinshasa. Kinshasa, meanwhile, was once called Léopoldville in honor of King Leopold II, and Lubumbashi was named Elizabethville, after a Belgian Queen.

SB: Belgium's urban landscape is whitened, its multitude of influences and connections with the Congo purged from sight, except for statues commemorating colonial rulers, or streets named after colonies. Conversely, Belgian colonies, including the DRC, remain dotted with colonial cities designed for racial segregation. I explore this in my 2013 installation, *Essay on Urban Planning*. (See Figure 2.)

BV: If I remember correctly, in that work you denounce methods of urban segregation used in Lubumbashi's city plan for eradicating local identities. The piece is organized as a grid of 12 color photographs, and a small historical photograph of two boys standing beside a pile of dead mosquitoes. I gathered that, during the Belgian colonial period, Congolese workers had to kill 50 mosquitoes a day in order to receive their rations. Six images in the grid feature aerial views of Lubumbashi and the "cordon sanitaire" strip of land that was designed to prevent the spread of malarial mosquitoes between Black and White quarters of town. The other six images depict mosquito specimens at the National Museum of Lubumbashi.

Let's talk about that piece more. I'm interested in the work it does as a multi-media installation. Connecting various media seems analogous to the way your work intersects issues of capitalism, colonialism, and climate. What this intersectionality does is to expose extractive violence as a simultaneous violence against people and planet. Your approach is "eco-intersectional," we could say, in the way it draws on architecture, mosquitoes, plants, copper, and other materials to diagram a matrix of human and more-than-human roles within extractive capitalism (Demos, 2020). You seem to use these more-than-human objects as witnesses to colonial and climate damage. Can you talk more about this way of working, and how installation helps you diagram intersecting topics dynamically in the gallery space?

SB: I am interested in human activity and its material production. I'm idealizing, perhaps, but I'd like to think that a community or collective comprises conscious individuals who voluntarily engage in a relationship of exchange, based on reciprocity, respect, and equity. The community is premised on negotiation between individuals. With this comes power. The question of who holds power in a negotiation is constantly in flux within a community, and this ephemeral, fragile state fascinates me. Community is constantly up for renegotiation, through verbal and nonverbal exchanges, and via objects and places that bear the trace of human activity. Places—the environment, climate, vegetation—influence human

Figure 2.   Essay on Urban Planning, 2013. Photo: Alessandra Bello. Courtesy of Sammy Baloji and Imane Farès Gallery, Paris

activity and negotiations, and are affected by them in turn. Intellectual, spiritual, and economic activity thus depends on the surrounding environment, including the climate and ecosystems.

The disciplinary tradition that separates art history, architecture, and sciences threatens to segment human activity and its material production, eclipsing important intersections of culture and climate. Art practice can remedy this by becoming a crossroads for several disciplines to render, in a fragmentary way, human activity in synergy with its environment.

I'm interested in the way human activities map directly onto scientific climate changes, such as reductions or increases in atmospheric carbon dioxide. For example, it's interesting that levels of CO2 changed in the 17th century because European settlers in the Americas massacred so many indigenous communities and planted timber forests on their lands (S. L. Lewis & Maslin, 2015). Moments such as this one reveal how interwoven human activity is with climate, and how colonial projects are absolutely part of this story. The many socioeconomic, political, and technological upheavals we're experiencing today are evidence of the

human impact on the environment of the appropriations and decimations of precolonial cultures in service of an extractive economy.

It is from this planetary perspective, and the context of modernity and its colonial methods, that I consider the exhibition space as a political space. Art installation is a way to summon the memory of conquered cultural practices (in my case, those of the Congo) confronted with the colonial and modernist project.

BV: Another major characteristic of your work is its refusal to separate the past from the present. You've said that you're not interested in colonialism as nostalgia, but in exposing its survival in contemporary practices of multinational mining companies, labor exploitation, and climate damage. Taking the long view in this way, your work chimes with Saidiya Hartman's description of the afterlives of slavery that shape contemporary life in the United States (Hartman, 2021). How do structures of architecture and urban planning derived from colonialism and slavery shape contemporary life in Lubumbashi? It seems that examining the built environment offers you a way of reckoning with history and its continuation in the present, and that this reckoning is a form of justice. You take the long view to resist the amnesia that capitalism induces in order to continue its extractive practices.

SB: Lubumbashi was built in 1910, an important year for the DRC because it marked the start of a network between the Congo's railways and those of Rhodesia (modern day Zimbabwe). This rail infrastructure enabled minerals extracted from landlocked regions to be transported to the coast and overseas. In other words, Lubumbashi was born at the same time as its mining riches became fully exportable. Mining was not geared to serve Congolese production and consumption, but was solely for the benefit of Belgium, and the colonial metropolis.

The 1930 Town Planning Manifesto in Lubumbashi (then named Elisabethville) bears witness to the segregation and racial hierarchy between colonial administrators and Black people, which was integral to Belgium's mining and export practices. The "cordon sanitaire," or "neutral zone" that you mentioned, and which I refer to in *Essay on Urban Planning*, kept colonizers safe from the sources of malaria, and from the supposedly rowdy activities of Black workers. The manifesto claims to create conditions of hygiene, salubriousness, and security in accordance with "the hopes and needs" of each racialized community (Lagae et al., 2013). It's worth adding that many members of this Black community in Lubumbashi were displaced workers from neighboring regions in and beyond Katanga province, and those deported from Rhodesia and Ruanda-Urundi (now Rwanda-Burundi). The city's demographic makeup is evidence of the fact that Lubumbashi was created entirely by colonial maneuvers in Central Africa, and not an internal, Congolese dynamic.

Despite independence in 1960, DRC remained a place of conflict and international power struggles. Congolese mineral deposits made it a strategic site of interest during the Cold War, with the West fighting to keep it from communist hands. It's in this context that the leader of DRC's first independent government, Patrice Lumumba, was assassinated in 1961 and Mobutu Sese Seko took power in a coup. Barely out of a colonial state, then, the country sunk into a chaos of rebellions and secessionist demands on both sides, torn by interests more international than local. Thirty-two years of dictatorship ensued. Even after the end of the Cold War, it took more than a decade until democratic elections were held. By then, Mobutu had liberalized the economic and mining sector so that private and international capital forced the local economy into a dependency on foreign powers—reinstituting historic relations of colonial exploitation. In short, what this history demonstrates is that the DRC (its own borders arbitrarily designed by colonizers) still cannot enjoy autonomy.

In my work, I look at these relations of continued dependency. I use tangible elements such as architecture and urban planning, collective memory, ethnography, and anthropology, as a material basis for this exploration.

BV: I was thinking about the arbitrariness of borders recently as I read Dipo Faloyin's *Africa Is Not a Country*, which narrates the histories of several African nations, including DRC. Faloyin discusses the troubled border between DRC and Uganda, which was hastily drawn up by Belgium using the Semliki River as a line. The problem is, the river changes its course frequently, leaving Cameroonian and Congolese people unsure on which national side they stand. As global warming increases and nearby ice caps melt, the Semliki changes even more—over the past 60 years the river has moved 100 times. More than confusing, this externally imposed border causes real conflict. Where the border cuts through Lake Albert, it divides a rich oil reserve that lies underground (Faloyin, 2022, p. 46). The border is like a signature of Belgium's appalling ignorance of climate and geography, not to mention human rights. And this signature is more than a line on a map because it sparks very real conflict, to this day. Thinking about historic traces and their very real implications got me thinking about photography as a medium in your work. Several of your works layer archival and contemporary images as visual hauntings or palimpsests of violence. Is this how you understand them?

SB: Indeed, the process of collage and the use of multimedia installation in my artistic practice comes from a long reflection on the medium of photography and on what constitutes an image.

BV: At the same time as photography invites ideas about the past and memory (we might think of Roland Barthes's iconic essay on photography here, *Camera Lucida*), shooting photos and film can also be an act of power and representational violence, as Susan Sontag explored in her essay, *On Photography* (Barthes, 2010; Sontag, 1979). Humanitarian "aid" and anthropological study are two fields that have long used photography in processes of colonial Othering (Rangan, 2017). It seems like you're attempting to reappropriate the medium to reverse its worst effects. In my eyes, your reappropriation of photography has a potential to address climate crisis with an emphasis on social justice, in the way it exposes the structures and traumas of violence and resists a humanitarian impulse to understand, pity, and distance subjects. Photography as a medium seems to offer you its capacity for being a medium, as in a mediator or go-between, that moves between topics that are often deliberately kept separate (economics, ecology, justice).

SB: Photography arrived in Africa at precisely the time that Europeans constructed metropolitan cities in the colonized territories. Photography was integral to this expansionist project because it represented the colonized "native" under the guise of scientific objectivity. This objectivity was soon questioned. The journalist Grace Flandrau visited the Congo in the 1920s and testifies, in her book *Then I Saw the Congo*, to photography's manipulation in the hands of power (Flandrau, 1929). Photography forged deep racial stereotypes, and was supported by anthropometry, ethnography, and anthropology. These disciplines still wield power and influence our vision of the world.

Photography, like all forms of image, is a process of codification, and it fascinates me because it's a kind of language and therefore expressive, context-dependent—and mutable.

BV: I like your articulation here because it suggests that images also have the capacity to convey counter-codes that disrupt the norm. I was thinking about this capacity in relation to the word "resilience." I have some problems with the way the word resilience is often used in climate discourse (Berbés-Blázquez et al., 2017; Borie et al., 2019; Chu et al., 2016; McEvoy & Mitchell, 2019). Aid and international development agencies seem to

celebrate poor countries' resilience to crises and downplay the structural inequities that lead to those crises in the first place, such as mining or waste dumping (Mackinnon & Derickson, 2013). So, I often find myself asking, resilience to what and for whose benefit? I take similar issue with "sustainability"… what are we sustaining and for whom? If we are sustaining business as usual, a status quo underpinned by exploitation, then I'd rather not…

SB: I completely agree with your observations that the words resilience and sustainability can hide an agenda that reinforces inequality between states and peoples. These words are sometimes used to comfort and insulate projects of universality and modernity. We cannot speak of resilience when there are regular and often suppressed demonstrations and demands for the right to justice, to health, to territory, to education. These manifestations can be classified as social or community movements, activism, artistic or cultural movements…

BV: And your art practice seems to exemplify these manifestations of artistic and activist aims. What I find interesting in it is a feeling of *resistance* rather than resilience. Your photographs and installations resist neat readings, and resist parceling off the past and present. Works such as *Essay on Urban Planning* seem to embody what the Anishinaabe writer Gerald Vizenor calls "survivance" (survival and resistance) (Vizenor, 2009). They reveal remnants of colonialism surviving in present-day Katanga province, and they resist erasing the horror.

Frederick Douglass celebrated the political power of "picture-making" for its ability to "see what ought to be by the reflection of what is, and endeavor to remove the contradiction" (Douglass, 2016, pp. 345–361). Douglass recognized the political potential of photography very early, though in this instance he was talking about poets and reformers. His phrase got me thinking about your work as a similarly reflective and projective process of "picture-making." It seems like you see actual landscapes and urban infrastructures in Lubumbashi and, by exposing their colonial design, invite audiences to imagine more just forms of spatial and social arrangement—forms that could and should have been.

Lubumbashi Biennale also seems central to your project for justice, gathering continental and diasporic artists to share their realities in the wake of colonialism and in the throes of modern global life and climate change. Maybe the Biennale is a form of resilience in a positive sense, in the way it facilitates conversations that don't depend on European gatherings (served by European flights that replicate colonial trade roots) (Rodney, 2012, p. 251).

SB: Yes. By creating the Biennale of Lubumbashi, one of my objectives has been to testify to the specificity of territories that were "invented" by the colonizer and the conditioning of life that results from subjugation to the extractive economy. In other words, as the philosopher Valentin Mudimbe indicates, it is a question of accounting for the impact of the "Colonial Library" and its agenda for fragmentating and converting previous social organizations (Bates et al., 1993, pp. 113–139). We need to find autonomous mechanisms for reconciliation and reconstruction.

BV: You live and work in both DRC and Belgium—perhaps gaining what W. E. B. Du Bois called a double consciousness that informs your work with two perspectives (Du Bois, 1997, p. 38). Travelling by boat between the United States, Europe, and the Caribbean, Edouard Glissant spoke of journeying as being a moment when one "consents not to be a single being," and to be instead many at the same time (Diawara, 2009). His words got me thinking about artists and filmmakers like Rosine Mbakam who travel between Belgium and Cameroon making films in both places, using that transit to think about colonial routes and their modern counterparts in globalization…

SB: Since I moved to Belgium, I made photos and art projects, but it took me a long time to find my physical and mental space. I would describe that space, created by the experience of living

and working between Brussels and Lubumbashi, as offering an in-between perspective in which both cities and contexts complement each other, but never form a cohesive whole. This in-between state is useful for me. From this perspective I can trace aspects of Belgium in the Congo, just as I can detect deeply embedded aspects of the Congo in Belgium's cities and landscapes. Six thousand two hundred eighty-two km separate the countries, which lie in different continents. Sometimes their political and economic entities interact, other times they don't. There are relations and discontinuities. It's from this context that my artistic work grows.

BV: Perhaps the in-between state you describe should be a state we all occupy, if we are to acknowledge the global entanglements that shape our past and present, and use what Glissant calls a "planetary consciousness" to face climate change in just ways (Glissant & Wing, 1997). In your work you demonstrate what is possible, from one person and one community, on a wider scale. You use pieces of the past to construct a proposal for less amnesiac futures. These futures are worlds in which corporate- and government-led extractive industries such as mining are exposed as continuations of colonial power structures, therefore challenged, and therefore dismantled. If the colonial pavilions featured in your forthcoming project are an example of speculative models built in the service of colonialism, then your own installations offer another kind of model—and your model imagines what climate justice could look like.

Shortly after our conversation, the 2022 Lubumbashi Biennale opened with a collectively curated exhibition, which explored toxicity and its social and climate effects, under the title *ToxiCité* or *ToxiCity*. Examining connections between contemporary life in the postcolonial context of Lubumbashi as well as across the urban Global South, and the historical and ongoing impacts of industrial processes on the dynamics of urban life, the exhibition resonated with Baloji's own work in mapping industrial and economic developments' impacts on culture and climate. Meanwhile, Brussels is celebrating all things Art Nouveau in 2023 to mark 130 years since the architect Victor Horta completed Tassel House, a foundational example of Art Nouveau architecture in the city. Under the working title of *Unmade Pavilion*, Baloji is collaboratively staging an exhibition that explores the colonial power relations that underpin the representational and appropriative practices of Art Nouveau. As Baloji emphasized in this interview, exhibitions that critically examine what lies beneath the facades of our cities often unveil relations and discontinuities that reinforce inequality. The process of unveiling that lies at the core of Baloji's practice holds the promise of opening the way for more just forms of autonomy and collaboration.

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